

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION: ANALYSIS AND DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, after appropriate analysis, proposes a number of principles, which guide both an understanding of the new evangelization as formulated by Pope John Paul II and how the new evangelization can be applied.

The key insight of the new evangelization is that growing numbers of people, especially in Western countries such as Australia, whilst retaining what can be termed a “loose” form of Christian affiliation, can no longer be described as having a living sense of the Gospel. This makes these people distinct from the classical focus of missionary activity, namely, those who have never heard the Gospel proclaimed. Pope John Paul II’s exposition of the new evangelization arose from his understanding of key conciliar and post-conciliar documents. In this understanding, the new evangelization is one of the clear fruits of the Council, a path that can be traced from *Ad Gentes* (1965) to *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) to the writings of John Paul II.

The concept of the new evangelization is a response to the new reality of this growing number of loosely affiliated Christians and can be interpreted on a number of levels. In essence, this concept proposes a reorientation toward a deep, personal, and abiding relationship with Christ. The new evangelization is also a living out of this renewed relationship manifested most obviously by a desire to bring others into communion with Christ. It has a clear ecclesiological dimension as a closer communion with Christ is experienced as part of a community of faith. Following from this, the new evangelization is well situated within an ecclesiology of communion, which arises from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (1964). Within this ecclesiology, a discipleship model of Church is privileged.

The thesis engages a wide range of scholarly thought in seeking to better understand the conditions that have led to the need for the new evangelization. Changes in socialization patterns along with the emergence of a diffuse spirituality have led to what is described as a “new Catholic mentality,” which is marked by, amongst other things, a reluctance to strongly commit to Christian belief and practice. Another perspective, offered from a more theological lens, describes modern culture as moving from a classical to an empirical basis. A manifestation of this shift is that religious conversion and experience of a transcendent dimension to life have become increasingly marginal.

Modern societies can also be conceived of as ones where the compelling meta-narratives of previous eras no longer have the same hold. In such an environment, religion can become one choice amongst many. In these circumstances, a key question focuses on what the Church has to offer those who are accustomed to living as consumers in a culture of choice? The argument is made that concepts such as vicarious religion and secularization, understood as movements of religious salience from the public to personal domain, explain well the social terrain in many Western countries. For many, this cultural context facilitates a loose sense of religious affiliation.

In response to these modern conditions, the Church needs actively to consider ways in which strong religious commitment can be nurtured. In a consumer choice orientated culture, the Church needs to cultivate plausibility so that people – especially younger people – can develop and strengthen their religious bonds and sensibilities. Strategies such as developing plausibility structures, building strong affirming faith communities, and providing a ready experience of the divine can be used to help realize the new evangelization. These are part of a wider plan, which

describes the Church as taking on a more evangelical demeanor where proclamation is given a high priority.

The new evangelization is both necessary and a well-conceived response to the challenges facing the Church in Western societies. It recognizes that the loose affiliation that typifies many in countries such as Australia is a harbinger of a more long lasting disconnection and, as such, is a situation that needs to be addressed. The new evangelization is not in conflict with Church reform; rather, it is an appropriate response to a changed pastoral reality, one that provides significant challenges.

The thesis culminates in the final chapter, which seeks to synthesize the previous discussion into a number of guiding factors and principles of the new evangelization. Guiding factors such as the importance of the human element, and principles such as providing cogent answers, strong and sustaining boundaries, and experiences of supportive communities, flow from an understanding of the new evangelization and a realization of how it could come to fruition.

Below is a list of publications by the researcher that contain material presented in this thesis:

(2010) *Introduction to Catholic Theology: A Primer for Educators* (New York: Linus Publications). In press.

(2010) A Fork in the Road: Religious Quest and Secularization. *Australasian Catholic Record*. In press.

(2010) Conversion and the New Evangelization: A Perspective from Lonergan. *Heythrop Journal*. In press

(2009). The New Evangelization and Church Reform: Reform before Evangelization? *Journal of the Canadian Fellowship of Catholic Scholars*, Winter/Spring, 48-59.

(2009) Religious Education in Times of Change: Recollections of RE Teachers Working in Catholic Secondary Schools 1976-1985. *Journal of Religious Education* 57(4), 14-21.

(2009). Nurturing Well-Being Through Religious Commitment: Challenges for Mainstream Christian Churches. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 14(3), 249-260.

(2008). Is a New Evangelization Really Necessary? *Journal of the Canadian Fellowship of Catholic Scholars*, Summer/Fall.

(2009). John Paul II's New Evangelization. *Australian Ejournal of Theology*, July, Vol 11.

(2009). Some Comments on the Parameters of Dialogue in a New Millennium. *Compass* (42), 3-8.

(2009). A Context for Religious Education in Postmodern Times. *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 25(1), 25-3.

(2009). Who will Labour in the Vineyard? The New Catholic Mentality and Religious Commitment, *Journal of Religion and Society* 11.

(2008) Who is Coming to Class Today? The Challenge of an Emerging Catholic Evangelical Student Identity for Catholic Colleges and Universities. *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 27(2), 239-252.

(2009). Theological, Sociological and Historical Factors Influencing the Evangelical Turn in Contemporary Catholicism. *New Blackfriars Review* 91(1033), 253-266.

(2009). The Family as Domestic Church: A Study of Active Catholic Parents. *Journal for the Study of Marriage and Spirituality* 14(2), 195-204.

(2009). A New Catholic Narrative. *Compass: A Review of Topical Theology* 42(3), 5-10.

(2008). Why Go to Mass on Sunday? *Journal of the Canadian Fellowship of Catholic Scholars*, May (2), 3-7.

PREFACE AND DEDICATION

The genesis of this thesis can be traced back to an exchange between a close friend and me nearly thirty years ago. At the time, we were university students heavily involved with the Catholic student group, the Newman Society, at both local and national levels. In conversation my friend unexpectedly asked: “What would we do if a person came to us interested in Catholicism, wanting to find out how he could learn more with a view to becoming a Catholic?” It was, and still is, a good question. The Catholicism that we lived in the early 1980’s was not oriented towards evangelization. We lived with a hard-to-articulate sense that evangelization was not something modern Catholics engaged in; rather, evangelization was a manifestation of a bygone and superseded era. This was, after all, a time where the Church was still in the turmoil of the post-conciliar era and was, in many ways, re-orientating itself. In this atmosphere evangelization was not something that was at the forefront of Catholic consciousness. In Dulles’s terms, it was an era where “religious dialogue replace[d] missionary proclamation.”¹

As we tussled with the question, we soon became aware that what our hypothetical enquirer wanted was not a lecture or a book or readings. More important was personal witness and an encounter with a vibrant community of faith – a place to see the Holy Spirit alive and at work. I reflected that we needed something like the fellowship evident in the university Evangelical Union. Here were people who seemed to be alive with the love of Christ; a little effusive perhaps, but nonetheless sincere. The Evangelicals were also very keen to bring others into a deeper relationship with Christ or, as we termed it then, to ‘recruit’. My friend and I just could not think of any Catholic equivalent to this so we had to reassure ourselves that in all

¹ Avery Dulles, *The New World of Faith*. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 107.

likelihood no one would ever ask us about becoming a Catholic. Nevertheless, the question, along with an impression of Evangelical Christians, has stayed with me.

At about the same time my friend and I were having our conversation, Pope John Paul II was beginning to enunciate a concept – the so-called “new evangelization” – which was aimed primarily at those who had lost an active sense of the Catholic faith but who had not, in many cases, abandoned all religious allegiance or sensibility. The unstated assumption in the conversation my friend and I were having was that the questioner was not a Catholic and never had been. Strictly speaking, this distinguished him or her from the principal target groups of the new evangelization. However, if we had been more reflective we would have realized that there was another important dimension to our discussion about welcoming people into the Church. Some elementary calculations would have revealed a telling point. The university we were attending had well over 20,000 students. Assuming the enrolment reflected national trends, we could estimate that about 5,000 students were Catholic. But, our Catholic student club had no more than 30 active members. We could have easily asked ourselves at least two additional questions. First, why were so few Catholics joining the club, assuming that wanting to join a Catholic student group was a sign of wanting to deepen religious commitment? Second (and a development of our actual discussion), if an ‘inactive’ Catholic came to us wanting to reanimate his or her faith what we would suggest?

For many decades there has been a sense in the Catholic community that this lack of strong religious commitment will, in time, right itself. A common corollary of this view, what Argyle and Beit Hallahmi call the “traditional theory,” was that this lack of fervor would correct itself and after a period of searching, many would re-emerge at some time in the future as

engaged and committed Catholics.² Instead of seeing the issue of so many loosely affiliated Catholics as urgent, many argue that the glass is not half empty but half full. But there are some consequences to this view. For example, such a view can lead to a certain complacency, as if those involved in leadership and planning do not need to take action given that what is being played out is almost a natural life history. In this mindset, alarmist over-reaction, which does not recognize the lifecycle of faith development, needs to be avoided.

More recently, in 2004, I was approached to lead a research project to examine the needs, concerns, and aspirations of Catholic university students. Funding for the project was not extravagant. Our methodology depended on being able to speak to participants who were members of functioning groups. We did not have the resources to identify students ourselves so we planned to make contact with university Catholic student groups and ask them to assist us in contacting suitable participants. The project was never undertaken because it was very hard to find extant university Catholic student groups. Even at my *alma mater* where the student enrolment had grown to close to 35,000, the Newman Society had been defunct for many years.³ In the intervening decades, the vitality of Catholic university fellowship did not seem to improve. From any number of perspectives this is neither a reassuring nor an isolated situation. At the very least, the lack of an active university presence at many universities could be a significant portent of the future and part of a much wider trend that needs to be both understood and responded to.

² Michael Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 65.

³ An interesting aside was that many of the universities we contacted had what appeared to be vibrant and well subscribed groups catering for overseas Catholic students. The arguments presented in the thesis may throw some light on this phenomenon.

This thesis proceeds on the hopeful basis that the mentality that surrounds discussion of such issues has changed. More than forty years after the Council it is time to discuss responses, both pastoral and conceptual, which recognize that to admit the serious challenges facing the Church is not a capitulation to an unfounded pessimism, but an acknowledgment of the present reality and of the Church's ability to respond.

I dedicate this thesis to my longstanding friend and questioner Dr. Brian Conway.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Research Problem

A significant problem facing the Catholic Church in Western countries such as Australia is the issue identified as the central concern of the new evangelization, namely, the existence of large numbers of Catholics who “live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.”¹ Another way of conceptualizing this problem is to focus attention on the diminishing number of committed Catholics. In practical terms, any religious group that cannot point to a substantial number of highly committed members faces the dilemma of a problematic future.

This dilemma can be seen in a range of Catholic agencies.² For example, one important illustration of this dilemma is Catholic educational institutions, which, in many countries, are a critical public face of Catholicism.³ In their study of Catholic higher education, Morey and Piderit pointed out the following:

The vibrancy of organizational culture requires knowledge about content, its beliefs, and its shared assumptions and norms. Cultural knowledge alone, however, it is not enough to sustain the vitality of organizational culture beyond the present generation. Cultural inheritability in a group or organization requires significant levels of commitment from the community of cultural catalysts and citizens in order for there to be any chance it will appeal to the future generations required to sustain it. Commitment connects what a person wants to do with what he or she is supposed to do.⁴

Whether one conceives the essential role of Catholic educational institutions as ministry or mission, those Catholics within these organizations who are strongly committed and in full

¹ John Paul II, ‘Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*’, in J. Michael Miller, (Ed), *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*. (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Inc, 1996).

² Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007); Frederic Schweitzer, ‘From Plurality to Pluralism: Pluriform Identities and Religious Education’, *Journal of Religious Education*, 2007, 55(3), 3-8.

³ In Australia, Kelly captures well the significance of Catholic schools when he comments: “The flagship of Catholic commitment to Australian culture has been the enormous institution of Church schools.” Tony Kelly, *A New Imagining: Towards an Australian Spirituality*. (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1990), 46.

⁴ Melanie Morey and John Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 271. The article referred to in the quotation is James Provost, ‘The Sides of Catholic Identity’ in John Wilcox and Irene King, (Eds), *Enhancing Religious Identity*. (Washington.D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 23.

communion provide an indispensable service to both dimensions of educational endeavor.⁵ This is not simply a question of relatively passive agreement, for there are many individuals prepared to work in Catholic educational institutions and to ‘support its ethos’, to use the ubiquitous expression. Many of these people exhibit a high level of general education and bring a high level of professional competence to their working lives. They may accurately describe themselves as ‘spiritual’, where spirituality is understood as a private and personal set of beliefs. This spirituality, however, often does not lead to an active, ongoing role in strengthening the Catholic identity of the institution. The question and the dilemma, therefore, arise as to who will give embodiment and witness to the beliefs and values that the institution proclaims? In the past, professed religious often provided this witness. Today, however, the greatly diminished number of priests and men and women religious is a manifestation of the much larger problem of finding highly committed individuals for all aspects of the Church’s mission. The short-term consequences of this situation are relatively minor in that the *status quo* that has emerged in the forty or so years since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) remains intact. However, even within one decade the consequences of inaction will start to become unavoidable.

The human element is an irreplaceable part of the Church’s ability to proclaim its message in the third millennium. Without a strong, contemporary, and future human expression through the witness and action of its members, there is the decided danger that Christianity will, in some places, become a lifeless, historical curio. Pope Benedict XVI articulated this concern well when he commented, “It should be everyone’s concern to ensure that the day will never come when only its stones speak of Christianity.”⁶ Of course Catholic institutions do not need to

⁵ Ormerod discussed the two dimensions of Catholic schools in terms of an *ad intra* (ministry) and *ad extra* (mission), Neil Ormerod, ‘Catholic Schools: Ministry or Mission?’ *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 2008, 85(2), 212-219.

⁶ Made in a speech on his arrival in Austria and reported in the *New York Times*, September 7, 2007, 5.

be made up exclusively of people of strong personal commitment, and, indeed, it is not essential that the majority of people show this dedicated service.⁷ However, there is a point below which the work of the Church in the world is imperilled if it does not have a sufficient number of highly committed individuals to carry this work forward. This highly committed group is not in opposition to the more loosely affiliated individuals, but they are distinct from them because they are prepared to live out their deepest religious convictions and to practically support the work of the Church. One important consequence of this living witness is that Catholic identity and culture come to life not as an abstraction but as a concrete reality, a point that Chaput, a bishop with wide pastoral experience, has pointed out: “Catholic culture comes from an active Catholic faith. Unless we truly believe and practice our faith, ‘Catholic culture’ is just a dead skin of nostalgia and comfortable habits.”⁸

1.2 The Engagement of Theology and Culture as a Methodological Approach

Situated in the context described above, this thesis addresses the issue of evangelization and, more specifically, new evangelization, or the evangelization of loosely affiliated Catholics. Implicit in the thesis is the notion, well supported in the literature consulted for this study, that the study of society and the study of theology enrich each other. Lonergan, for example, sees culture and theology as inextricably linked. This is no better expressed than in his famous first line of *Method in Theology*: “A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance

⁷ McBrien, writing about Catholic universities, argued along similar lines noting that a critical mass of “committed and active Catholics” need not be a simple majority. Richard McBrien, ‘What is a Catholic University?’ in Theodore Hesburgh, (Ed), *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University*. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 156.

⁸ Charles J. Chaput, *A Light to the Nations: The Meaning and Future of the Catholic Church*. Obtained on 1/4/2008 from <http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/columns/guest/charlesjchaput/alight.asp>. Chaput is the Archbishop of Denver.

and role of a religion in that matrix.”⁹ Understanding the underlying cultural matrix is an indispensable precursor to theology. Culture is mutable; in the span of Christian history it has changed often. What does not change in Lonergan’s schema is “God’s self-disclosure or our faith.”¹⁰ This approach recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of theological enquiry, an insight that Bosco described as one of the major impacts of Lonergan’s writings. Bosco noted that one of Lonergan’s main contributions was “to reconceive Catholic theology as an interdisciplinary enterprise that influences – and is influenced by – all of human culture.”¹¹

The programmatic project of this thesis – exploring the theoretical and practical implications of Pope John Paul II’s new evangelization – is deliberately interdisciplinary in its method. The thesis does not approach the topic from a singular point of view, valid as this approach may be. Rather, in this thesis a number of perspectives are examined but none dominates. It calls on Lonergan’s “framework of collaborative creativity” as theology seeks to mediate the meaning and place of religion in a given culture. A particular point of reference is the issue of how religious meaning is communicated. To strengthen the analysis, a number of specific functional specialties, especially systematics in ecclesiology, are used. Disciplines that focus on the cultural side of communication, such as sociology, are also examined in order to present the new evangelization as a response to particular cultural situations. This task includes examination of some of the societal forces, which have made the new evangelization necessary, as well as a discussion of how religious groups are able to prosper in an environment that is often unfavorable to growth.

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), xi.

¹⁰ Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Future of Christianity’ in William F. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrell ,(Eds), *A Second Collection*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 163.

¹¹ Timothy P. Fallon and Philip B. Riley, (Eds), *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 261-276.

The style of much of the analysis in this thesis is deliberately discursive in that it seeks to weave together at least two disciplines, theology and the social sciences. This form of discourse is best understood as a parallel process where a variety of perspectives are used to examine a complex issue. These varying positions build on each other and, while not mutually exclusive, offer differing and, at times, overlapping conceptual lenses. Especially valued are common themes that emerge from different theoretical perspectives. This interdisciplinary discourse culminates in the conclusion of the thesis, which can be read as a summation and distillation of the all arguments presented and discussed. The conclusion of this thesis is a series of principles, which seek both to explain the new evangelization as a concept and also to point toward how it can be implemented in countries such as Australia.

Some comment needs to be made, however, about the parameters of the discourse. The potential scope for interdisciplinary dialogue in the topic under review – the new evangelization – is vast, and some decisions need to be made about the disciplines that are included. It is important to select important and representative scholarship, and a rationale for selected sources is now provided. Key sources consulted for this thesis are described below.

Theological sources

From a theological perspective, the thesis engages with the writings of a number of scholars. The thought of Pope John Paul II is critical, since the concept of the new evangelization was conceived and developed by him. In addition, the thought of Ratzinger, a major figure in Catholic theology since the Second Vatican Council, is widely discussed in the thesis. After his election as Pope Benedict XVI, Ratzinger's theological vision became even more significant in view of his universal teaching role. Lonergan is the first of two other

authoritative and influential theological sources.¹² Chapter Five of the thesis in particular is devoted to some of his ideas derived from his seminal work, *Method in Theology*. Lonergan represents a most significant attempt to tackle the modern problems of pluralism and relativism in a systematic way.¹³ He sought to engage with culture in a manner that recognized that many of the certainties of the past have now all but disappeared. He presented an attempt to find God within a framework that prized philosophical integrity and empirical validity. Comments on Lonergan's theological approach can in some ways be contrasted with a more historical methodology, which privileges the sense of continuity in Christian thought and practice. Ratzinger is a representative of this more historical school, as is the second major theological voice that is heard throughout the thesis, that of Dulles. Dulles's voluminous output covers a wide range of theological disciplines.¹⁴ He brings to the discourse a strong sense of the unity and breadth of Catholic theology. There are other theological perspectives raised in the thesis such as those of Guardini. He is, in some ways, a prophetic figure who was described by Krieg as a precursor to Vatican II.¹⁵ During his priestly ministry, he sought to develop in young people the close union with Christ, which is at the heart of the new evangelization. Guardini's views have stood the test of time and have been vindicated by the Council.¹⁶ The esteem in which he is held

¹² Murray puts Lonergan's significance in these terms: "[He] is counted among the major Catholic thinkers of the twentieth century. His contribution to philosophy with its major work *Insight*, and to theology with its crowning achievement, *Method in Theology* has been widely recognized," Elizabeth A. Murray, 'Lonergan, the Key to Philosophy' in Mark Bosco and David Stagaman, (Eds), *Finding God in All Things: Celebrating Bernard Lonergan, John Courtney Murray and Karl Rahner*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 52.

¹³ Stephen Toulmin, 'Pluralism and Authority', in Timothy P. Fallon and Philip B. Riley (Eds), *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 17-31.

¹⁴ Egan described Dulles's influence in these terms: "Cardinal Dulles's impact has been so profound and so far-reaching that it will require many years to track his...immense influence on theological learning across the world." Edward Egan, 'Preface' in John M. McDermott and John Gavin, (Eds), *Pope John Paul II on the Body: Human Eucharistic and Ecclesial, Festschrift Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J.*. (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2007), vii.

¹⁵ Robert A. Krieg, *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II*. (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

¹⁶ In his day, especially during his time in Berlin, Guardini was considered to be at the very "edge" of Catholic theology. Krieg, *Guardini*, 17-29.

across the theological spectrum is also significant. He offered insights into the modern condition, and his ideas regarding the place of the Church in the wider culture are of particular value.

Social science sources

The number of viewpoints offered by the social sciences is broader, due partly to the nature of the disciplines involved which, compared with theology, do not have the same direct connection with the concept of new evangelization. Primarily, sources were selected that specifically addressed the social edge of the new evangelization, namely, how the loose affiliation of many Catholics may be understood, and how higher levels of commitment may be realized. The social sciences are introduced in Chapter Four where the writings of Bauman are used to propose the idea of postmodernity into the discourse on the new evangelization. Other sources from the social sciences include the seminal work of Berger and Luckman and their concept of plausibility structures. Among Australian social theorists, the work of Mason, Webber, and Singleton is given prominence due to its validity, power, and contemporary relevance. Among North American writers, the work of Greeley, Wuthnow, Bibby, Stark, and Smith are often discussed. From a European perspective, the work of Davie and Dobbelaere add depth to the discourse.

The new evangelization in a Western context

It is necessary, for the sake of precision, to limit the discussion of the new evangelization to Western countries such as Australia. There has been substantial literature concerning the new evangelization in developing countries, most particularly those in Latin America; indeed, some of Pope John Paul II's initial presentations on the new evangelization were given to Latin

American audiences. The social and political context in regions such as these is, however, different enough to warrant a separate study with a dedicated focus. This thesis will restrict discussion to those countries sharing common cultural assumptions with Australia, such as a relatively high standard of living, low infant mortality, a Christian heritage, relatively advanced economic and political structures, and entrenchment in an increasing globalized mass culture.¹⁷

1.3 The Focus and Structure of this Thesis

The focus task, research questions, and their placement within the thesis are given in the table below.

¹⁷ These descriptors are in accord with Beckford's classification of many Western countries. See James Beckford, *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society*. (London: Unwin-Hyman, 1989), esp. 7-29.

Table 1: An overview of the structure of the thesis

Focus task	Research questions	Location in the thesis
Exploration and exposition of the concept of the new evangelization as proposed by Pope John Paul II and placing this in an ecclesiological framework.	What is the new evangelization?	Chapters 2 and 3
A description, using perspectives from theology and the social sciences of the contemporary social context, that have led to the need for the new evangelization in countries such as Australia.	What conditions have led to the need for the new evangelization?	Chapters 4, 5 and 6
A conceptualization of the new evangelization as a response to changes in the wider culture, including a discussion of some of the factors that can assist evangelization and taking into account some potential criticisms.	How can the new evangelization be conceptualized and implemented?	Chapters 7, 8 and 9
The formulation of a series of principles, based on discussion in the entire thesis, which seeks to understand and actualize the new evangelization in countries such as Australia.	What are some principles of the new evangelization?	Chapter 10

While this study attempts to provide a rich basis for a conceptual grasp of the new evangelization, it also has a practical dimension. Its intention is to distil the essential principles of the new evangelization. It is also hoped that this thesis will have clear implications for action. The author is mindful of what Bibby has described as the dangers of academics talking to each

other, their ruminations never leaving the halls of the academy.¹⁸ Certainly in the writings of Pope John Paul II there is a strong reminder that the new evangelization cannot be left at the conceptual stage, but must be translated into action. This implementation, to be sure, is often the most difficult aspect.

The new evangelization, as a call to conversion, grace and wisdom, is the only genuine hope for a better world and a brighter future. The question is not whether the Church has something essential to say to the men and women of our time, but how she can say it clearly and convincingly!¹⁹

1.4. Justification of the Research Questions

What is the new evangelization?

The term “new evangelization” is becoming more widely used, especially in discourse within the Catholic community, and it can be used in a number of ways. An indispensable part of a discussion of the term is a detailed examination of its origins and how it can accurately be understood. The term new evangelization came to prominence in the writings and, more generally, in the pontificate of Pope John Paul II; it can be described as the *leitmotif* of his apostolate.²⁰ Therefore, a discussion of the new evangelization based on his conception of the term gives legitimacy to the thesis. The Second Chapter provides an examination of the origins and implications of the new evangelization as set out by Pope John Paul II. It lists key features and their origins. The new evangelization is described as having two major characteristics, namely, a call to a deeper relationship with Christ as well as a challenge to evangelize others. It

¹⁸ Reginald W. Bibby, *Restless Churches: How Canada's Churches can Contribute to the Emerging Religious Renaissance*. (Toronto: Novalis, 2004).

¹⁹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* 1999. Obtained on 2/6/2008 from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia_en.html.

²⁰ Weigel remarked, “The new evangelization [is] the basic concept central to the pontificate of John Paul II,” George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. (Cliff Street Books: New York, 1999), 554. Szulc, in a somewhat disparaging tone, remarks the new evangelization is John Paul II’s “crusade,” Tad Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography*. (Scriber: New York, 1995), 458.

is based on a particular understanding of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the ways in which these developed in the post-conciliar period.

It is important to situate the new evangelization within an appropriate ecclesiology, one that takes into account the perspectives offered by the Second Vatican Council. In this way, the new evangelization can be seen as one of the fruits of the Council, a continuation of the tradition but addressed to changing social circumstances. It takes its point of reference from a broader sense of the history, culture, and teachings of the Church rather than being over concentrated on the pre-conciliar era. It provides a concrete example of what Pope Benedict XVI has described as the “hermeneutic of continuity”²¹. The new evangelization needs to be seen as (if not emerging from) at least closely coinciding with a particular understanding of the nature of the Church. In Chapter Three, an overview of post-conciliar ecclesiology is given, and the argument is made that an appropriate ecclesiology for the new evangelization is one that sees the Church as a communion emphasizing the discipleship of the followers of Jesus. The departure point for this discussion is the ecclesiology of the conciliar constitution *Lumen Gentium*, where the Church is seen as being evangelical by its very nature.

What conditions have led to the need for the new evangelization?

The need for the new evangelization is addressed in terms of both social theory and theological reflection. The approach of the thesis is a discussion of the new evangelization using a number of theoretical perspectives. Chapters Four, Five and Six address the new evangelization through different conceptual lenses, each of which provides a context for further

²¹ Vito Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 35-47. James Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas: Wise Cautions & Legitimate Hopes*. (Paulist Press: New York, 2009), esp. 93-97.

analysis. Chapters Four and Six are complementary chapters that attempt to gain a better understanding of the social *terrain* today in countries such as Australia in which the new evangelization must operate. A key feature of this section is the detailed examination of the *raison d'être* of the new evangelization – why so many Catholics retain some loose affiliation with the Church but lack a strong commitment. A number of arguments, such as the lack of religious socialization, the impact of postmodernism, and the perversity of religious choice are put forward to explain this. These chapters have a special emphasis on younger population cohorts, Generations X and Y. A key idea that is raised here is that the Church must be more prepared to recognize that many younger Catholics do not have an automatic and unreflective allegiance to the Church. This mentality, a strong feature of the recent past, is no longer operative and recognition of a new mentality is necessary. This new mentality realizes that the Church, like many other agencies, must be prepared to present its message anew and it recognizes that many today, especially younger people, do not respond to compulsion. In such an atmosphere, it is critical for the Church to reflect on what is being offered to those who are already part of the faith community as well as those on the margins. In keeping with the discursive nature of the thesis, Chapter Five examines the need for the new evangelization through a primarily theological lens by examining Lonergan's concepts of conversion and transcendence as concepts that can greatly illuminate the weakening affiliation of many Catholics. Viewing the new evangelization against the backdrop of a recognized theological schema deepens the discourse. How conversion is best understood and the factors that contribute to or impede it are important contextual questions.

How can the new evangelization be conceptualized and implemented?

Chapters Seven and Eight build on the discussion in earlier chapters by examining the new evangelization from a more empirical perspective. For example, a salient issue in earlier chapters is a better understanding of the lack of strong religious commitment amongst many Catholics. From this discussion, a number of practical questions emerge. First, how, in general terms, can religious commitment be enhanced? Chapter Seven examines some of the factors that make strong religious commitment more possible, using the concept of plausibility structures developed by Berger and Luckman. The role of strong supportive faith communities, such as the family, in building religious commitment is highlighted. The second part of the chapter also proposes some of the practices of growing Evangelical Churches as a way of better understanding how to reach out to Catholics. Chapter Eight builds on the arguments of earlier chapters and sets out a case for a more evangelical Catholicism in the future. This is seen as appropriate both in terms of the demands of the new evangelization, the Church as a communion of disciples, and the cultural and social landscape of countries such as Australia, which tend to produce religious consumers and where no one group has a privileged position. As a response to all of these factors, it is argued that one way of conceptualizing the Church's response to the new evangelization is the development of a more evangelical Catholicism. A number of dimensions of this are spelled out. The Ninth Chapter draws together many of the points previously made and gives them a new configuration. It serves as a review and specifically addresses some objections and critiques of the new evangelization in the form of a dialogue with three main objections or critical reflections. This chapter sets the stage for the final chapter, which has a more practical focus.

What are some principles of the new evangelization?

Chapter Ten contains the central argument of the thesis: the principles of the new evangelization, as distilled from all of the preceding discussions. These principles are framed by three guiding factors, the most critical of which is identified as one of personnel, or the issues of who will carry forward the new evangelization.

This first chapter has introduced the rationale and structure of the thesis as well as the research questions that guide it. In the next chapter, the discursive analysis begins by examining the new evangelization in the writings of Pope John Paul II.

Chapter 2: John Paul II and the “New Evangelization”: Origins and Meaning

Introduction

This chapter addresses the first question set out in the introduction to this thesis, namely, “What is the new evangelization?” In this chapter, a detailed description and contextualization of the origins and scope of the new evangelization in the thought of Pope John Paul II, and in other relevant writings, will be provided. This chapter will establish the new evangelization as arising from a legitimate understanding of the missionary nature of the Church and in continuity with not just the teachings of the Second Vatican Council but the broader Catholic tradition. Situating the discussion in this context allows for some of the dimensions and implications of the new evangelization to be spelled out, although a more complex and detailed discussion of contemporary missiology and related issues is outside the scope of this thesis.

The key reference point for the new evangelization is the Encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio* of Pope John Paul II.¹ This Encyclical can be seen in an historical continuum starting with the conciliar decree on missionary activity, *Ad Gentes*, and Pope Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In this regard, *Redemptoris Missio* provides an example of the Catholic understanding of the Tradition as both conserving the essentials of the past as well as responding to new realities and challenges.²

For Pope John Paul II, this new phase of evangelization was not new in the sense of being an innovation that moved beyond the Church’s traditional mission of proclaiming the Gospel to

¹ John Paul II, ‘Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*’, in J. Michael Miller, (Ed), *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*. (Huntington, Indiana; Our Sunday Visitor Inc, 1996). Hereafter referred to as “RM.”

² This dynamic and personalist understanding of tradition is spelled out by Dulles in Avery Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism: Current Challenges in the Theology of Church*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 75-93. Here, Dulles acknowledged the contribution of Blondel to his argument.

all nations. Rather, a new sense of evangelization emerged from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and in the social reality of many countries such as Australia.³ Pope John Paul II identified three elements in the Church's commitment to evangelization. The first was the essential missionary focus of the Church on proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to those who have not heard it.⁴ This remains the proper, or classical, sense of the term. The second element focused on those with strong Christian affiliation who were "fervent in their faith and Christian living."⁵ However, there was a third, intermediary element, and it is from here that the new evangelization, as treated in this thesis, takes its meaning.

Particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel..., in this case what is needed is a "new evangelization" or a "re-evangelization."⁶

The Pope's understanding of evangelization has clear points of reference in *Redemptoris Missio*: a) evangelization is fundamental to the Church's mission and has its origins in the Trinity itself;⁷ b) evangelization is always focused on faith in, and a personal encounter with, Christ, and this results in a profound experience of conversion;⁸ c) evangelization is the task of the entire Church and is concretely located in the activity of the local Church;⁹ d) evangelization seeks to engage and transform culture, takes place in a variety of contexts, and should, therefore, be creative in a bold range of expressions so as to address new situations.¹⁰

³ Dulles, *Reshaping*, 144-149.

⁴ In this thesis, for stylistic reasons, Church is used to signify the Catholic Church unless otherwise stated.

⁵ RM, 33.2.

⁶ RM, 33.3.

⁷ RM, 46.

⁸ RM, 41-49.

⁹ RM, 72.

¹⁰ RM, 32.

The material of this chapter is presented under the following headings: a) From Vatican II to John Paul II's New Evangelization; b) *Redemptoris Missio*; c) Developments in the Later Writings of Pope John Paul II; and, d) The Growing Range of Reference.

2.1 From Vatican II to Pope John Paul II's New Evangelization

Origins of the new evangelization

Schindler argued that the intellectual origins of the new evangelization can be traced to John Paul II's Christocentric reading of *Gaudium et Spes*.¹¹ In the Pope's anthropology, each person is created in the image and likeness of God. Thus, each person has inalienable rights and inviolable dignity.¹² The fundamental task of the Church is to promote and defend this dignity at every opportunity. Dulles described this vision as a "prophetic humanism": "The central and unifying task of the Church, for John Paul II, is to rediscover and promote the inviolable dignity of every human person."¹³ Although many are immersed in cultures, which do not value the transcendent, people of today cannot avoid the profound existential questions that emerge in their search for meaning and purpose.¹⁴ Their searching is rooted in their origins as creatures of God. A sense of unease or incompleteness is part, therefore, of the human condition. Human history

¹¹ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, in Austin Flannery (Ed), *Vatican Council II. The Sixteen Basic Documents*. (Northport, N.Y: Costello Publishing Company, 1996). David L. Schindler, 'Reorienting the Church on the Eve of the Millennium: John Paul II's New Evangelization', *Communio*, 24(Winter), 1997, 729-779. For a sense of how John Paul II interprets *Gaudium et Spes* (hereafter referred to as "GS"), see John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. (Alfred A. Knopf: New York: 1994), 48-50.

¹² GS, 12. This has long been a concern of Pope John Paul II. Dziwisz remarks that John Paul's contribution to the Council was "[the] reassertion of the centrality of the person within a robust Christocentric framework," Stanislaw Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol: My Forty-Year Friendship with the Man Who Became Pope*. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 19.

¹³ Avery Dulles, 'The Prophetic Humanism of John Paul II' in Avery Dulles, *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 142-156 at 143.

¹⁴ Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II*. (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1993); John Saward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

can be seen, then, as a long tale of the search by people for answers about their existence, origins, final destiny and, perhaps most urgently, a clear sense of how to live. For many, this search is unfulfilled, and no more so than in the past few centuries when human questioning has often been resolved in violent and contradictory ideologies.

For Pope John Paul II, these existential and unavoidable questions find their ultimate resolution in an encounter with the living Christ, who is preeminently experienced in communion with the Church. In *Gaudium et Spes*, this is expressed as Christ uniting himself in some way with every human being.¹⁵ The presence of Christ, therefore, reaches into every aspect of human culture because of the divine identity of each person. To evangelize, then, is not to impose something on human beings; rather, evangelization seeks to address a profound human need, to provide something that is lacking but which is sorely needed. One of the tasks of the Church is to proclaim this message in many situations where culture is seen in far more positivistic terms and where discussion of God is pushed to the margins of public discourse.¹⁶

In its witness to Christ, the Church has a cultural role of synthesis in its effort to relate Christian faith to particular cultures. Nevertheless, a genuine synthesis has yet to be achieved.¹⁷ Indeed, in many places, the dominant cultural forces push people further away from the Gospel.¹⁸ This is particularly the case in many Western, developed countries (their ancient Christian traditions notwithstanding), and in countries such as Australia, despite a period of unprecedented missionary growth in previous centuries. In order to make Christ known, the Church – which is missionary by its very nature – must adopt a new posture with innovative

¹⁵ GS, 22.

¹⁶ GS, 56.

¹⁷ Bosch argued that this sense of disjuncture characterized by a lack of overlap of worldviews is something that the contemporary Christian must face up to and overcome as it is a permanent condition of much of contemporary culture. David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future; Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998).

¹⁸ John Paul II in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* lists some of the specific factors by which a culture should be evaluated. John Paul II, 'Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*', *Origins*, 20, October 4, 1990, 273.

strategies and approaches in response to a changed cultural context. In this new approach, responsibility for evangelization is broadened, not to devalue the role of priests and religious, but to include the whole ecclesial community. Hence, the laity has a critical role in the new evangelization.¹⁹ The Pope's renewed emphasis on the evangelizing role of the laity builds on Vatican II's teaching on the mission of the laity as it is expressed in the document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.²⁰

The new evangelization and the laity

The contribution of the laity was further promoted in the Apostolic Exhortation of 1988, *Christifideles Laici*.²¹ This document spelled out the role of the laity as integral to the missionary activity of the Church.²² The involvement of the laity in "temporal affairs and earthly activities" is seen as essential if the Church is to fulfill its role as a leaven in society.²³ To illustrate this point, the scriptural image of "laborers in the vineyard" was used to underline the obligation of all the People of God, not just the clergy and professed religious, to proclaim the Kingdom.²⁴ The unity of the Church as a communion of individual believers comes from their communion with Christ: "From the communion that Christians experience in Christ there

¹⁹ Giovanni Magnani, 'Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?' in Rene Latourelle, (Ed), *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives: Twenty Five Years After (1962-1987)*, Volume One. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 569-633.

²⁰ Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 5.

²¹ Peter V. Hai, 'A Study of John Paul II's Theology of the Laity in Ecclesia in Asia with Reference to the Documents of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences', *Australian EJournal of Theology*, 2007, Pentecost Edition.

²² John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (hereafter referred to as "CL"). (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1988).

²³ CL, 15- 17. The basis for engaging in temporal affairs and then ordering them to the Kingdom of God is drawn from 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Lumen Gentium*', (hereafter referred to as "LG") in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 31. A distinction is often made between two types of lay ministry in the wider society and "ecclesial lay ministry", which is service to the Church. See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 'Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium', *Origins*, 10, November 27, 1980, 409-415.

²⁴ CL, 2. At the same time *Christifideles Laici* reiterates the difference between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of all believers, CL, 23. Jurcak discusses the need for a reconceptualization of traditional roles in, Lawrence Jurcak, 'An Apostolic Presbyterate of the New Evangelization', *Seminary Journal*, 2005, 11(1), 79-86.

immediately flows the communion which they experience with one another: all are branches of a single vine, namely, Christ.”²⁵ The ecclesial identity of the laity was underlined by Pope John Paul II when he stressed that being part of this communion was both a gift and a task for lay people, one which directs them to a closer union with God.²⁶ This idea recalls the great conciliar theme, spelt out most clearly in *Lumen Gentium*, where all are called to holiness, which is an inner conversion marked by a strong personal relationship with Christ.²⁷ With their communal life centered in Christ, all members of the Church act in the unity of the Holy Spirit in their outreach to the world. *Christifideles Laici* clearly related the common responsibility for mission to an authentic ecclesial existence. The imperative of evangelization flows from membership in the Church, where all share St. Paul’s sense of the critical nature of their vocation: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.”²⁸ The centrality of evangelization is a manifestation of a radical way of life. Hai pointed out that the call to holiness and to witness as used by Pope John Paul II can be equated with what is called in other magisterial documents “the perfection of charity.”²⁹

Emerging social conditions add critical urgency to the evangelizing responsibility of the laity. In Australia, and many other countries, the numbers of those in ordained ministry or who are professed religious is steadily declining. In addition, the connection of many people, including Catholics, to the Church through parish networks is becoming far more tenuous. The

²⁵ CL, 18.

²⁶ CL, 20. For an elaboration of this point see Avery Dulles, ‘The Mission of the Laity’ in *Church and Society*, 485-497.

²⁷ LG, 78. For a discussion of the universal call to holiness see William E. May, ‘Evangelization: The Apostolate and the Personal Vocation of Laymen and Women,’ in William E May, (Ed), *The Church’s Mission of Evangelization: Essays in Honour of the Most Reverend Agostino Cacciavillan*. (Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1996), 265-286. Wittberg gives an interesting perspective on the impact that the universal call to holiness had on religious life. She argued that if everyone is being called to holiness then this makes religious life far less attractive as it loses its distinction. She comments, “in one stroke it [*Lumen Gentium*] nullified the basic ideological foundation for eighteen centuries of Roman Catholic religious life.” This foundation, according to Wittberg, was that only vowed religious could achieve spiritual perfection. Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders*. (Albany: SUNY, 1994), 214.

²⁸ 1 Cor 9:16.

²⁹ Hai, ‘Theology of the Laity’, 4, cf. CL, 16.

people most likely to come into contact with those who have “lost a living sense of the Gospel” are lay people in the course of their everyday professional and personal lives. When traditional approaches are proving ineffective, new types of lay associations with a specific evangelical focus are required.³⁰ This aspect of the new evangelization is often discussed, namely, the emphasis on using new methods.³¹ In an often reported speech to the bishops of Latin America in Haiti in 1983, John Paul II commented on current changed social conditions affecting the Church’s mission, and the need to find innovative solutions to these new realities. Evangelization needs to be renewed in at least three senses: “[in] its ardor, methods and expression.”³² For example, *Christifideles Laici* points to the new media of mass communication as one way of narrowing the gap between faith and culture.³³ Pope John Paul II also singled out World Youth Day as an example of a new method of outreach where, “the authentic values found in popular piety” are to be found.³⁴

The importance of Ad Gentes

³⁰ Avery Dulles, ‘John Paul II and the New Evangelization’, *America*, 1993, 166(3), 23-29. For a discussion of the role of lay movements as agents of evangelization see John Paul II ‘*Ad Limina* address, The Laity, Their Life and Mission’, *Origins*, 28, 78-80, 1988. For another perspective on lay movements and the new evangelization see Seamus O’Grady, ‘Catholic Schools and the New Evangelization’, *Journal of Religious Education*, 2005, 53(3), 36-43.

³¹ Realizing these new approaches is not straightforward. Levada, for example, called for a new catechesis to accompany the new evangelization but did not indicate what this involved. William J. Levada, ‘New Evangelization Requires a New Catechesis’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 1998, 1543, January 7, 11. (All references to *L’Osservatore Romano* in this thesis are to the English version).

³² John Paul II, ‘The Task of the Latin American bishops’, *Origins* 12, 1983, March 24, 659-662. This 1983 speech is widely recognized as one of the first uses of the term ‘new evangelization’ by John Paul II. The earliest reference this author could find was contained in an address during John Paul II’s first visit to Poland in 1979, where he states: “[F]rom the Cross of Nowa Huta began the new evangelization, the evangelization of the second millennium. This Church is a witness and confirmation of it. It arose from a living, aware faith and [the Church] must continue to serve the faith”. ‘Homily at Nowa Huta’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 1979, 16 July, 11. This places John Paul’s discussion of the new evangelization at the very beginning of his papacy.

³³ CL, 44. For a general discussion of the role of media in the new evangelization see Avery Dulles, *The New World of Faith*. (Huntington, In.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 115-117

³⁴ John Paul II, *Threshold*, 115-117, at 115.

In his writings on the new evangelization John Paul II made frequent reference to two documents. The first was the decree of the Second Vatican Council on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*.³⁵ His extensive use of this decree established continuity between the teaching of the Council and his own thought: "On the one hand we can rediscover, and, as it were – read the magisterium of the last Council in the whole previous magisterium of the Church, while on the other we can rediscover and re-read the whole preceding magisterial in that last Council."³⁶ Miller has noted that a characteristic feature of John Paul II's Encyclicals is the manner in which he embedded the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in his own writing. To illustrate this, he noted that in the twelve Encyclicals written prior to 1996, John Paul II made over 170 references to *Lumen Gentium* and about 130 to *Gaudium et Spes*.³⁷ The theological orientation of *Ad Gentes* draws heavily on *Lumen Gentium* in that it sees the Church as a sacrament.³⁸ Based on this sacramental ecclesiology, the first chapter of *Ad Gentes* establishes a doctrinal focus for the whole document, and parallels the missionary life and activity of the Church with the Trinitarian life of God. Just as the life of the Trinity is understood as dynamic movement, the Son and the Spirit being sent by the Father into the world, so the Church looks beyond itself and sends out its members to bring the salvation of Christ to all.³⁹

The central concern of *Redemptoris Missio*, establishing the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, is thus seen as a legitimate development of conciliar teaching, as

³⁵ 'Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*', (hereafter referred to as "AG") in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 2-5.

³⁶ John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal, The Implementation of Vatican II*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 40. Pope John Paul II identifies himself here with the "hermeneutic of continuity," a term which will be explored in the third chapter.

³⁷ J. Michael Miller (Ed), *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*. (Huntington, In.: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1996), 29.

³⁸ AG, 1.

³⁹ AG 3.

the Council did not envisage any decrease in missionary fervor in the post-conciliar period.⁴⁰

Indeed, in a speech made prior to the Council, Pope John XXIII remarked: “The purpose of the Council is, therefore, evangelization.”⁴¹ In *Ad Gentes*, missionary evangelization is seen as an

essential manifestation of ecclesial life, a point captured well in the opening sentence of the document: “The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary.”⁴² In *Ad Gentes*,

evangelization is never seen as being tangential to the life of the Church; it is always an area of perennial importance.⁴³ It cannot then be properly described as an activity undertaken by a small

number of specialists but, rather, should be something that marks, to some degree, all the people of God. *Ad Gentes* maintains, nonetheless, the traditional conception of Christian mission as an outreach to “two billion people – and their number is increasing day by day – who have never, or barely, heard the Gospel message.”⁴⁴ Seeing the agents of evangelization in wider terms opens

up the possibility of viewing mission not as something only directed to the “mission lands” of the third world, but as an activity which can be carried out wherever Christians find themselves.⁴⁵

As most Christians are not clerics or part of religious congregations that have a particular missionary focus, one of the principal means of evangelization is the witness given by Christians in the conduct of their daily lives. This implicit broadening of the concept of the missionary

⁴⁰ Carl, E. Braaten, ‘A Papal Letter on the Church’s Missionary Mandate’, *Dialog*, 30, 182-183, 1991. Timothy O’Donnell, ‘The Crises of Faith and the Theology of Mission: A Reflection on Redemptoris Missio’, *Faith and Reason*, 18(3), 5-13, 1992.

⁴¹ Quoted in Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), vol 1, 439.

⁴² AG, 2. *The New Dictionary of Theology* notes that in recent times the discussion of mission has been closely connected with evangelization and “a distinction between the two is often seen as formal and arbitrary,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane, (Eds). (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier Inc, 1987), 664-668.

⁴³ Suso Brechter, ‘Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity’, in Herbert Vorgrimler, (Ed), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1987), Vol IV, 87-183.

⁴⁴ AG, 10.

⁴⁵ William R. Burrows, ‘Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity’ in Timothy E. O’Connell (Ed), *Vatican II and its Documents: An American Reappraisal*. (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986), 180-197.

agent is an important antecedent for the new evangelization, aimed as it is at regions that have a Christian heritage.

For all Christians, wherever they live, are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, that new man put on at baptism and that power of the Holy Spirit by which they have been strengthened at Conformation. Thus other men, observing their good works, can glorify the Father.⁴⁶

The importance of Evangelii Nuntiandi

The second document quoted extensively in *Redemptoris Missio* is the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI, which was written in 1975, after the third general assembly of the Synod of Bishops on evangelization.⁴⁷ This is regarded as one of the major documents of the pontificate.⁴⁸ Paul VI set out a number of themes, which reappeared in the writings of Pope John Paul II on the new evangelization. Indeed, John Paul II acknowledged that the foundation of the new evangelization can be found in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.⁴⁹ The document identifies a group of countries in the Western world to which new evangelization is addressed, namely, “a very large number of baptized people who for the most part have not formally renounced their baptism but who are indifferent to it.”⁵⁰ Evangelization is seen as central to the Church’s mission and identity, and is a task that brings with it new challenges in contemporary culture:

We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace

⁴⁶ AG, 11.

⁴⁷ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, On Evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (hereafter referred to as “EN”). (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1975).

⁴⁸ Hebblethwaite, Paul VI’s biographer, made the following comment about the document: “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, his last and finest apostolic exhortation...it is a work of discernment and synthesis.” Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI, the First Modern Pope*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 651.

⁴⁹ “The foundations of [the new evangelization] were laid down in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI”, John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (hereafter referred to as “TMA”). Obtained 5/6/2008 from, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html, 21.

⁵⁰ EN, 56.

and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.⁵¹

The centrality of mission is underlined in the first chapter of the document, which is entitled, “From Christ the evangelizer to the evangelizing Church.” Christ is portrayed as the template for evangelization, the one who transforms the Church from an evangelized to an evangelizing community. An inseparable link is thereby established between the Church, Christ and evangelization. By identifying the Church with the evangelizing Christ, Pope Paul VI reiterated the Trinitarian nature of mission set out in *Ad Gentes*. He linked evangelization with other essential actions of the Church such as, teaching, reconciling sinners, and “perpetuating Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection.”⁵² Evangelization in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is a theological and pastoral concept rich with ecclesial and missiological connotations. It is at the heart of the Church’s identity and mission.

Pope Paul VI identified a range of qualities that characterized the evangelizing Church.⁵³ A predominant feature is a clear and unambiguous proclamation of Jesus as Lord.⁵⁴ Evangelization does not, however, stop at this kerygmatic proclamation. It includes dimensions of inner and ongoing transformation.⁵⁵ In this respect, evangelization is not restricted to a historical and temporal project. Its horizon aspect is eschatological in that it connects the person and the community with eternity, a transtemporal realization, as it links the person and the community with the world to come through a profound personal encounter with Christ.

Evangelization is comprehensively person-centered in its historical and eschatological range. Here, Pope Paul VI, anticipating *Christifideles Laici*, appealed to the exemplary character

⁵¹ EN, 5.

⁵² EN, 4.

⁵³ EN, 6-16.

⁵⁴ EN, 22.

⁵⁵ EN, 23.

of Jesus' own ministry. Jesus encountered people from all walks of life—thereby evoking something of the mission of the laity in the Church's mission to the world. The ecclesial vocation of the laity positions them in a world of limitless contacts often beyond the direct influence of the ordained ministry. In his concern to privilege the secular involvement of the laity, Pope Paul VI wrote: "Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization."⁵⁶ Whilst not denying the importance of ordained ministry or the witness of the consecrated life of religious communities, Paul VI's strong emphasis on the laity laid the foundation of the new evangelization.⁵⁷ Accordingly, ministry emerges as an activity that engages the whole Church.⁵⁸

Evangelii Nuntiandi shows a refined anthropological appreciation of the influence of culture. In some respects, it must be recognized that contemporary culture is driven by priorities that are contrary to the Gospel, and at odds with its values. This conflict is not a new feature in the relationship of the Church and the world. While not repudiating the openness to the world envisaged in *Gaudium et Spes* and other conciliar documents, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* introduces a cautionary note, especially given the present cultural situation, which Paul VI sees in particularly dramatic terms:

The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or, more correctly, of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ EN, 70.

⁵⁷ The influence of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on *Christifideles Laici* in this regard is quite obvious.

⁵⁸ There is a need to recognize the complementary roles of the laity, clergy and those in religious life in bringing about the new evangelization. Christian, for example, makes the point that an important part of priestly formation should be the ability to cultivate cooperation with the laity in bringing about the new evangelization. Robert Christian, 'Priestly Formation for a New Evangelization', *Seminarian*, 1991, 31(Jan-Mar), 18-134.

⁵⁹ EN, 20.

Clearly, then, the proclamation of the Gospel, which is the essence of evangelization, must appreciate the cultural context in which it is conducted. He pointed out that the Gospel is not identical with any particular culture but it is within a certain culture that it is proclaimed and mediated.⁶⁰ A critical enculturation is needed, however, if the Gospel is to take root, or be planted again in any culture—especially in the highly secularized milieu of contemporary societies, as is the case in Australia.⁶¹ This enculturation rests on a proclamation of the Gospel, both by word and by deed and an understanding of how a particular culture mediates meaning, especially in relation to foundational beliefs. It is a mistake, however, to see sensitivity to culture and a strong emphasis on missionary proclamation as being in tension with each other.⁶² Even a brief examination of some of contemporary cultural norms bears this out.

Gibbs has pointed out that many contemporary cultures offer unique challenges that call for a new approach to evangelization, one that straddles traditional and modern settings. This is evidenced, for example, in island communities in Oceania where the homogeneity of village life has been fragmented beyond recognition.⁶³ Youth and young adults move to the large cities and live in a new cultural milieu, which has more in common with the poverty of the developed world than the traditional rhythms of village life. The proclamation of the Gospel to these transplanted villagers must acknowledge the different circumstances in which they live when compared with their parents and grandparents. In countries such as Australia, the surrounding culture is not overtly hostile to religion but can be described as being largely indifferent. The experience of sectarianism, a vital issue in the recent past, has become far less common today. Religion, especially one that results in strong commitment, is often seen as a product of a bygone

⁶⁰ EN, 21, 40.

⁶¹ Philip Gibbs, 'The Transformation of Culture as New Evangelization for the Third Millennium in Oceania', *Studia Missionalia*, 1999, 48, 327-347.

⁶² John Paul II, *Asia*, 5.

⁶³ Gibbs, 'Transformation', 327-328.

era. It may retain sentimental value but has lost its power to shape culture and the lives of individuals. To engage with this culture requires a desire to dialogue, that is, to learn the voice of the culture and how this was shaped as well as its likely trajectory. Critically, however, the Church must be able to offer something of its own in this exchange, lest the dialogue become too one-sided and passive. The essential content of evangelization, what the Church has to offer, is both a witness to the presence of God and to life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Evangelization will also always contain – as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy.⁶⁴

The notion of evangelization as expressed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is not only a call to personal conversion; it also sees conversion on a wider social tableau, that is, in communal terms. There is no tension between these two aspects and they need to be seen in harmony. Personal conversion and evangelization of culture are inextricably linked. Cultures allow individuals to develop social and other networks, and these are pivotal in assisting the transmission of meaning in both personal and communal senses. To evangelize culture, therefore, is an indispensable part of the process of individual catechesis because it recognizes the importance of community in mediating meaning. This does not stop at infrequent, episodic or superficial efforts at accommodation, but must aim for a far more profound engagement with the symbols, history, meaning and values that animate the culture in question. Here, Pope Paul VI insists that enculturation cannot work “in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a

⁶⁴ EN, 27. See also EN 26: “To evangelize is first of all to bear witness, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to bear witness that in His Son God has loved the world - that in His Incarnate Word He has given being to all things and has called men to eternal life.”

thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their [i.e., the cultures'] very roots."⁶⁵ To evangelize a culture in its entirety does not allow the mission of the Church to be atomized into any number of individual contacts, if only for the reason that no individual existence can be abstracted either from the world of nature, from the social setting of human life, or from the culture that moulds the meanings and values that animate society itself.⁶⁶ The critical vehicle for the evangelization of culture remains, however, the witness and activity of individuals who have, themselves, been deeply transformed by the action of God in their lives. It is a mistake to see evangelization of culture, certainly in countries such as Australia, as a prelude to individual conversion.⁶⁷ Both occur in close unison and are dependent upon each other.

In many ways the Australian Catholic Church is an example of the “younger Churches” referred to in *Redemptoris Missio*.⁶⁸ The split between the Gospel and culture to which Pope Paul VI referred is also manifestly present and, we may suspect, is continuing to widen and, thus, demands serious attention. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* calls for new experiments if the message of the Gospel is to be heard. The “essential content, the living substance” remain what it has always been.⁶⁹ Yet Pope Paul VI spelled out a number of “secondary elements” as means to achieve the

⁶⁵ EN, 20.

⁶⁶ Evangelization of culture is a strong theme of *Gaudium et Spes*, for example: “it is a feature of the human person that it can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature”, GS, 53.

⁶⁷ The concept of pre-evangelization was popularized in the 1960's by authors such as Nebreda. He was writing about the missionary experience and pastoral strategy in countries with very little deep exposure to Christianity such as Burma. In these contexts the idea of a prelude to proclamation of the Gospel has more utility but the critical question remains, how is pre-evangelization carried out? A more extensive examination of this concept is beyond the scope of this thesis. Alfonso Nebreda, ‘The Preparation of the Message’, in Mark Link, (Ed), *Faith and Commitment*. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1965), 113-135.

⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 2001, 1. Obtained on 20/10/2007 from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20011122_ecclesia-in-oceania_en.html.

⁶⁹ EN, 25. John Paul II makes a similar point when he warns against the tendency to make evangelization a merely human concern by appearing to describe it as new or unprecedented, as if it was some type of human construction. New here cannot refer to the essence of evangelization which is an encounter with the unchanging Christ. John Paul II, ‘Opening Address, Santo Domingo’, in Alfred T. Hennelly, (Ed), *Santo Domingo and Beyond*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 41-60.

goal.⁷⁰ These arise from the changing circumstances of both individuals and the cultures in which they live, “the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social.”⁷¹ Most of these secondary elements, such as preaching and pastoral care, fall within the ambit of traditional approaches, while others, such as utilization of mass media, point to new possibilities in countries that have well developed means of communication. Further ideas for innovation are sagaciously left to the practical imagination of subsequent generations, as Pope Paul VI could hardly have envisaged the vast expansion in virtual communication that has taken place in the last two decades.

2.2 *Redemptoris Missio*

Redemptoris Missio sets forth Pope John Paul II’s explicit teaching about the new evangelization. Published in 1990, in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Ad Gentes*, *Redemptoris Missio* was John Paul II’s eighth Encyclical letter, and it stands out as a key document in his pontificate.⁷² The very title, “the Mission of the Redeemer,” anticipates the Pope’s presentation of the mission of the Church as flowing from the mission of Jesus himself.

Church and mission

In the Encyclical, John Paul II reaffirmed the basic missionary nature of the Church as it is treated in the conciliar and in post-conciliar documents. The impulse to mission has shaped the history of the Church from its very beginnings. As Urena has pointed out, one of the goals of the Encyclicals is to revive the sense of mission in changed social circumstances. The Church,

⁷⁰ EN, 40-48.

⁷¹ EN, 29.

⁷² Urena pointed out that although it was signed in December of 1990 it was made public in January 1991 during the First Gulf War. Manuel Urena, ‘The Missionary Impulse in the Church According to *Redemptoris Missio*’, *Communio*, 1992, 19, 94-102.

by its very nature, is missionary. From this flows an obligation to evangelize, not as an act of proselytization but as one of service.⁷³ John Paul II saw evangelization, in its purest form, as an encounter with the Christ described in the terms of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed.⁷⁴ In this way the notion of the Church as missionary is, at the same time, animated by a sense of communion with Christ and communion with others in Christ.⁷⁵ In this context, and using Acts 4:12 as a source text, John Paul II claimed, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given by mortals by which we must be saved.” Thus he reiterated that Christ was the only redeemer of humanity.⁷⁶ He noted that the message of St. Paul was given in contrast to the prevailing polytheism of his day, which was marked by a multitude of rather weak and, at times, vindictive gods battling for supremacy. The Pauline God, by contrast, was compelling and powerful, and was the Word made flesh.⁷⁷

Proclaiming Christ

There is a clear imperative for the Church today to proclaim Christ, not in the dichotomous terms of “Jesus of history” and “Christ of faith,” but as the indivisible Incarnate Word.⁷⁸ As such, Christ’s salvific action ensures full communion with God through the actions of the Holy Spirit. Urena commented that this understanding of Christ as the only Redeemer of humanity contrasts with what he calls “parallel salvific mediation,” a view prominent in many theological circles, often in response to the issue of the eschatological situation of the multitudes who have never heard the Gospel.⁷⁹ Pope John Paul II maintains the unique status of Christ as

⁷³ RM, 46.

⁷⁴ RM, 4.

⁷⁵ The idea of the Church as communion will be developed in Chapter three.

⁷⁶ RM, 5.

⁷⁷ John 1:14.

⁷⁸ RM, 6.

⁷⁹ Urena, *Missionary Impulse*, 97.

Redeemer, but does not imply that salvation is restricted to those who believe in Christ and have entered the Church. He recognized that:

Today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept gospel revelation or to enter into the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions.⁸⁰

There is an underlying reference here to Rahner's "anonymous Christians."⁸¹ The fate of these individuals can be conceived of in a number of ways, all of which bear on the Christological underpinnings of evangelization. Kasper noted that in Rahner's transcendental Christology, the anonymous Christian achieves salvation in a three-step process.⁸² First, there is an experience in cognition and freedom of inconceivable mystery, which is at the heart of the human condition. This is followed by a "daring hope" that this mystery, if entered into, will provide human fulfillment. Finally, a meditation on this mystery leads to the "very principle of the Incarnation" as an openness to God's self communication of the ultimate mystery. These steps, especially the third, are not taken by all. But, by opening themselves to the fullness of being human, men and women are opening themselves to the possibility of accepting the Son of Man. Kasper, however, observed one of the limitations of this Rahnerian process by pointing out that it lacks a clear connection to Christ, and runs the risk of "metaphysicizing historical Christianity and canceling by philosophical speculation the scandal of its specific reference."⁸³ The specific reference here is the life and atoning death of Christ, which is the essence of the Church's missionary proclamation and self-identity.

⁸⁰ RM, 10.

⁸¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol VI. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974).

⁸² Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 49-51.

⁸³ Kasper, *Christ*, 50.

Another way of looking at the eschatological dimension of those who do not believe in Christ and who have not entered the Church is to re-evaluate the scope of Christ's atoning death. This emphasizes the unique and unrepeatable nature of Christ's death and resurrection. Rather than drawing attention away from Christ, this understanding centralizes it. As such it underlines the intimate link between Christ and evangelization. Urena commented that a better way of conceptualizing the fate of those outside the Church is to argue that such people enter into the salvific process by God's grace achieved by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus, a principle stated in *Ad Gentes*.⁸⁴ This is reinforced in *Redemptoris Missio*, which quotes *Lumen Gentium* (13):

To this catholic unity of the people of God, therefore all are called, and they belong to it in various ways, whether they be Catholic faithful or others who believe in Christ or finally all people everywhere who are by the grace of God are called to salvation.⁸⁵

The possibility of parallel salvific mediation is excluded, and thus "a necessity lies upon the Church, and at the same time a sacred duty, to preach the Gospel. Hence, missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity."⁸⁶ Evangelization is an essential aspect of the Church's mission and as such never ceases. Without it, the Church cannot be understood in any theological sense.⁸⁷ The mission to evangelize is deeply inscribed into the life and activity of the Church because it overflows from the self-communicating action of the Trinity itself. Just as there is the Father's 'mission' or 'sending' of the Son into the world, there is the 'mission' of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son to be the crowning gift of salvation. The Trinitarian life of communion is, as it were, projected and prolonged into the world of time. The Word is made flesh in the incarnation and the Holy Spirit is poured out to be the energizing gift

⁸⁴ AG, 7.

⁸⁵ RM, 9.

⁸⁶ AG, 7.

⁸⁷ Godfried Danneels, 'Evangelization Never Ceases', *Lumen Vitae*, 1986, 41(3), 247-259.

empowering the Church to bear witness to Christ. The mission of the Church is the historical manifestation of this divine mission. The People of God proclaim Christ and act in the power of the Spirit of Pentecost—as described throughout the *Acts of the Apostles* and elsewhere in Scripture.⁸⁸ In the light of its inexhaustible and continuing Trinitarian origins, the mission of the Church is never reducible to a particular human activity or explicable in sociological categories—even though, of course, the human dimensions of Christian mission remain a legitimate subject for sociological and anthropological analysis. The most profound ecclesiological issue is the divine origin of mission:

The first beneficiary of salvation is the Church. Christ won the Church for himself at the price of his own blood and made the Church his co-worker in the salvation of the world. Indeed Christ dwells within the Church. She is his Bride. It is he who causes her to grow. He carries out his mission through her.⁸⁹

Trinity and mission

Elaborating on the Trinitarian foundation of both ecclesial evangelization and communion, John Paul noted that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of mission, and the principal witness to the living Christ.⁹⁰ As Urena pointed out, a contemporary approach to evangelization that is rooted in *Redemptoris Missio* proceeds on the basis of the harmony of the Holy Spirit’s activity in Jesus Christ.⁹¹ Echoing *Gaudium et Spes*, John Paul II asserted that the Holy Spirit allows all the possibility of sharing in the Paschal mystery.⁹² The harmony of the Holy Spirit and Christ is further spelt out thus:

⁸⁸ See for example, Acts of the Apostles: 4:20: “we cannot but speak”, 10:1-34, the conversion of Cornelius, 15, decisions about emerging problems, 16:6, choice of regions to be evangelized. See also Heb. 1:1-2, Col. 2:9, 1 Cor. 15:27-28. In this thesis, all references to Scripture are taken from, *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version*: Catholic Edition. (Nashville: Catholic Bible Press, 1993).

⁸⁹ RM, 9.

⁹⁰ RM, 21.

⁹¹ Urena, *Missionary Impulse*, 101.

⁹² RM, 28, cf GS, 10, 15, 22.

This is the same Spirit who was at work in the Incarnation and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit.⁹³

In the context of John Paul II's Christological understanding of mission, the heart of evangelization is found in the proclamation of Christ the Savior, whatever the situation might be.⁹⁴ Consequently, the goal of evangelization is not an imposition of Christian doctrine such that it would mean merely a passive and external acceptance of orthodox teachings in faith or morals. Because this accent has compromised the Church's missionary efforts in the past, at least to some degree, John Paul II placed special emphasis on an evangelization that derives from and leads to a personal encounter with Christ.⁹⁵ In this intimate Christological focus, John Paul II, echoing the teaching of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, stated that evangelization must aim to bring about an internal conversion of heart and mind, in an authenticity built on "a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel."⁹⁶ The critical sign of this conversion of mind and heart is the desire to communicate the Gospel of Christ to others. Authentic Christian life is oriented to mission and evangelization.⁹⁷

Redemptoris Missio seeks to promote "a new awareness that missionary activity is something for all Christians, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and

⁹³ RM, 29.

⁹⁴ RM, 44, cf EN, 27, AG, 13.

⁹⁵ John Paul II made frequent reference to the new evangelization as in essence being an encounter with Christ, for example, "[new evangelization] is not a matter of merely passing on doctrine but rather of a personal and profound meeting with the Saviour." John Paul II, 'Commissioning of Families of the Neo-Catechumenal Way', *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 14, 1991, 12.

⁹⁶ RM, 46, cf. EN, 20.

⁹⁷ John Paul II, 'Address to Bishops of Southern Germany on their Ad Limina Visit', *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 23, 1992, 5-6.

associations.”⁹⁸ In this way, it is the activity, not of individuals alone, but of the whole Church. In this regard, John Paul II reiterated the importance of the laity as missionary agents. He recalled the prominence given to lay involvement as expressed in the writings of Pius XII, through to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and subsequent papal teachings, including his own.⁹⁹ The new evangelization is based on the conviction that mission is the responsibility of all members of the Church. Moreover, it is not now only a matter of sending out missionaries to other lands, but of also realizing the need for Christians in secularized cultures to evangelize their many fellow citizens who, despite the evangelization that occurred in the past, are no longer animated by the Gospel. The new evangelization does not replace previous missiological expressions of witnessing to Christ, but enlarges the understanding of mission by taking into account the new situations. Accordingly, John Paul II proposed a more flexible, creative and informed approach to missionary work, given the variety of contexts in which it operates. In light of these differences, the local ecclesial community, with its familiarity with regional conditions, bears a special responsibility for mission in the pluralistic societies of today: “Mission is seen as a community commitment, a responsibility of the local Church.”¹⁰⁰

Evangelization and culture

Evangelization must involve an engagement with culture. On this point, John Paul II extended Paul VI’s approach as expressed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. He specified two principles: “compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church.”¹⁰¹ This emphasizes the complementarity of mission and communion as goals underpinning an ecclesiology sensitive

⁹⁸ RM, 2.1.

⁹⁹ RM, 7.1.

¹⁰⁰ RM, 27.

¹⁰¹ RM, 54.1.

to the needs of the new evangelization. Echoing Paul VI, John Paul admitted that the optimism of the past decades regarding positive engagement with wider culture may have been, to some extent, misplaced. The “new springtime” envisaged by some has not eventuated, especially in the missionary outreach to other nations.¹⁰²

With this in mind, John Paul II set out the cultural context of mission in today’s world in Section IV of *Redemptoris Missio*. The scope of missionary activity is evoked in the title of this section, “The vast horizons of the mission *Ad Gentes*.” The mission is a huge theatre of activity, and much of this is still the traditional work of missionaries in foreign lands, largely in the developing world with a comparatively brief history of Christian witness. However, the scale of the mission is enlarged when one considers a new evangelization in those regions not traditionally regarded as mission areas. As John Paul II remarked: “Even before the Council it was said that some Christian cities and countries had become mission territories; the situation has certainly not improved in the years since then.”¹⁰³

New means are called for, but the essence of the mission tradition must be preserved. For example, the Pope had no intention of undermining the traditional conduct of mission work, and certainly no wish to discourage “persons who have a special vocation to be life-long missionaries *ad gentes*.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, all mission work relies on an ecclesiastical mandate in that “the bishops, as shepherds of particular Churches, are ultimately responsible for evangelizing

¹⁰² “Nevertheless, in this new springtime of Christianity there is an undeniable negative tendency.... Missionary activity specifically directed to the nations (*ad gentes*) appears to be waning, and this tendency is certainly not in line with the directives of the Council and of subsequent statements of the Magisterium,” RM, 2.2.

¹⁰³ RM, 32.1. As an example of this pre-conciliar awareness, Rehard, commenting on the life of Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Rheims 1930-40 and then of Paris 1940-49, noted that the cardinal was acutely aware of the absence of any sign of Christian faith in many areas and had developed a pastoral strategy that anticipated, in many ways, the new evangelization. Pierre Rehard, ‘Cardinal Suhard and the New Evangelization’, *Lumen Vitae*, 1986, 41(3), 350-54.

¹⁰⁴ RM, 32.3, 66.

efforts.”¹⁰⁵ Now, however, the context is broadening to include those who have not heard the Gospel, those who are part of Christian communities, and those in between who have lost a living sense of the faith.¹⁰⁶ This “in between” or intermediary group is most clearly the focus of the new evangelization. Quoting Acts 17:22-31, *Redemptoris Missio* describes St. Paul addressing the Areopagus as an ancient metaphor for reaching out to this intermediate group. On his arrival in Athens, Paul had spoken without inhibition to a learned assembly in one of the great cultural centers of the ancient world. On the basis of his communion with Christ through the Church he proclaimed Christ to an audience that was intellectually and philosophically sophisticated—perhaps not unlike the educationally privileged classes who, though disaffected with traditional religious practices, still search for life’s meaning and, therefore, are a special concern of the new evangelization.¹⁰⁷

In summary, *Redemptoris Missio* captured a number of essential components of John Paul II’s understanding of the new evangelization. The new evangelization arises out of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar writings, most notably *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The Church is missionary in an ontological not functional sense. This is based on its Trinitarian nature and is expressed in Scripture, most notably in the *Acts of the Apostles* and the Pauline epistles. At the centre of the Church’s missionary identity is the proclamation of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the redeemer of humanity. This proclamation of Christ takes place within a variety of cultural contexts but is never subservient to them. The new evangelization needs to take serious account of the cultural context in which it takes place. A

¹⁰⁵ RM, 63.

¹⁰⁶ RM, 33.1-33.3. For a concise discussion of the idea of a number of missions see, Marcello Zago, ‘Church Mission: Is it One or Many?’ *L’Osservatore Romano*, 1991, 9, 7-9. John Paul II acknowledges that the boundaries between each situation of evangelization are not rigidly set but this need not distract discussion around these issues, RM, 34.2.

¹⁰⁷ RM, 37.4.

better understanding of culture assists in the proclamation of the Gospel and facilitates not so much learning about Christ but an encounter with him. Because the Church is missionary, all the faithful are called to evangelize.

2.3 Developments in the Later Writings of Pope John Paul II

John Paul II continued to elaborate on the theme of the new evangelization in his writings and addresses after the publication of *Redemptoris Missio*.¹⁰⁸ For example, in *Fides et Ratio*, published in 1998, he made a particularly powerful appeal to philosophers to help explain the Church's message.¹⁰⁹ This "Areopagus" of philosophy, of reason in its most critical and self-reflective form, is an especially vital area in the evangelization of culture. Implicit or explicit philosophical standpoints regarding the power of reason to arrive at truth or to discern the truly good are powerful forces shaping culture. These standpoints need to be critically examined and evaluated. Philosophy, especially in its traditional meaning as the 'love of wisdom', has a fundamental role in any evangelization of culture and in promoting the dignity of the human person and its flourishing.¹¹⁰ On this point, and with special reference to countries that have a long-standing Christian tradition, John Paul II wrote:

I have unstintingly recalled the pressing need for a *new evangelization*; and I appeal now to philosophers to explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the word of God gives access. This task becomes all the more urgent if we consider the challenges which the new millennium seems to entail, and which affect in a particular way regions and cultures which have a long-standing Christian tradition.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ John Paul II, 'Address to Bishops from the Pacific, No Task is More Important in the Pacific than the New Evangelization', *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 16, 1998, 7-8; John Paul II, 'Address to the Bishops of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference Stating the role of Fatima in the New Evangelization', *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 20, 1991, 8; John Paul II, 'Address to Bishops from Tuscany on Ad Limina Visit about the Necessity for New Evangelization', *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 8, 1982, 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (hereafter referred to as "FR"). (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1998).

¹¹⁰ Allen H. Vigneron, *The New Evangelization and the Teaching of Philosophy: Essays on Fides et Ratio*. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2003), 91-108.

¹¹¹ FR, 103.

In *Veritatis Splendor*, published in 1993, he drew attention to the de-Christianization of society and the erosion of previously shared moral principles.¹¹² A fresh effort of evangelization is a positive response to this declining moral sense. Here, he emphasized the moral dimension of the Christian proclamation of the Gospel:

Evangelization – and therefore the new evangelization – also involves the proclamation and presentation of morality. Jesus himself, even as he preached the Kingdom of God and its saving love called people to faith and conversion.¹¹³

We see a reiteration of an important theme in the writings of John Paul II on the new evangelization, namely, the encounter with Christ manifesting itself in practical actions. In *Veritatis Splendour*, the encounter is in terms of a proclamation and presentation of morality. In other writings, manifestations of the new evangelization appear in other ways. While there is an intensely personal dimension in the new evangelization, it necessarily overflows into a vigorous social commitment, as argued in *Centissimus Annus*:

The “new evangelization,” which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine.¹¹⁴

We see the close connection between evangelization of the person and evangelization of culture. The two are inseparably linked. One of the characteristics of the new evangelization is that it leads to a desire to lead others to Christ and to proclaim his Kingdom. Therefore, to see the new evangelization as a private and interior process is to misunderstand its power. The new

¹¹² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor* (hereafter referred to as “VS”) in Miller, J.M., *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*. (Huntington, Indiana; Our Sunday Visitor Inc, 1996), 664-771(106) at 758.

¹¹³ *VS*, (107.1) at 760.

¹¹⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centissimus Annus* (hereafter referred to as “CA”). (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul Publications, 1991), 5.

evangelization calls for not only a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine but also an engagement with it in a variety of tangible forms.

Evangelization as outreach

The need to see the new evangelization as having a strong dimension of outreach is related to how John Paul II saw contemporary culture. As noted earlier, he shared the concerns of Paul VI about the widening gulf between the Church and wider culture. For John Paul, this gulf was a critical development as it estranges culture from Christ, the source of all life. Moving away from Christ leads to suffering and despair. When the requirements of the new evangelization are lived out, they provide a tangible way in which Christ can be made manifest in wider culture and human suffering in all its forms can be addressed. This is another reason why the Church must live out its missionary identity. This witness is needed in a world where people have forgotten about the Gospel. It is the role of all Christians to stress Christ, and especially the suffering Christ, as the heart of missionary endeavor:

The cross of Christ must not be emptied of its power because if the cross of Christ is emptied of its power, man no longer has roots, he no longer has prospects: he is destroyed! This is the cry of the end of the 20th century. It is the cry of Rome, of Moscow, of Constantinople. It is the cry of all Christendom: of the Americas, of Africa, of Asia, of everyone. It is the cry of the new evangelization.¹¹⁵

In summary, the new evangelization can be expressed in a number of dimensions, all of which, however, can be traced back to an intimate and life changing encounter with Christ. From this encounter flows the power to engage and critically shape culture. This encounter allows specialists to see their disciplines as a locus for evangelization, for example, for philosophers to use their expertise to critically engage in a dialogue with others. The new

¹¹⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen*. (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul Publications, 1995), 3.

evangelization must have a public face, one that is seen by others. This can occur only if it is rooted in a personal and intimate union with Christ that helps to give Catholicism an evangelical sharpness manifested in a desire to spread the Gospel by proclamation and witness.

The more radical the conversion to Christ, the more intense the commitment will be to the new evangelization reiterated in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, which emphasized the focal reality of Christ in the life of the Church and its mission of evangelization.¹¹⁶ Here, the model for conversion is St Paul. The sign of this conversion is a desire to preach the Gospel.

Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the *new evangelization*. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.”¹¹⁷

It is worth noting that *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in accord with his constant Marian devotion, John Paul II invoked Mary as the “Star of the New Evangelization.”¹¹⁸

The new evangelization is a constant theme in the writings of John Paul II. This is evidenced by explicit references to it as well as its incorporation in other papal writings, which address a wide variety of themes. A common element in all of this discourse is the notion of the new evangelization as transformative. It radicalizes the life of the Christian. From a number of starting points, the new evangelization leads the individual into a new and deeper relationship with Christ that transforms both personal and private life. One clear manifestation of this transformation is a renewed emphasis on taking the Gospel of Christ to the public domain in whatever way best reflects the interest and expertise of the individual. The new evangelization thus moves from a private and personal encounter with Christ to proclamation.

¹¹⁶ ‘Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (hereafter referred to as “NMI”). (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 2000), 15.

¹¹⁷ NMI, 40.

¹¹⁸ NMI, 58.

2.4 The Growing Range of Reference

The new evangelization and synodal conferences

While the phrase “the new evangelization” has been described with specific reference to John Paul II’s major writings and addresses, its range of reference continues to grow in contemporary Catholic discourse. In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, John Paul proposed a special assembly of the synod of bishops for each of the five continents to prepare for the new millennium. At these synods, “the theme underlying them all is *evangelization* or rather the *new evangelization*.”¹¹⁹ These synods were convoked in Europe, America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.¹²⁰ A brief comment on three of these documents will give a sense of the centrality of the new evangelization as an analytical tool in a number of cultural contexts.

In many ways, the preeminent audience for the new evangelization is Europe, especially Western Europe. Dziwisz, John Paul’s secretary for over forty years, remarked on the origins of the new evangelization in John Paul’s thought: “The idea came to him when he noticed – especially during trips – that there was an urgent need to reinvigorate Churches in old Christian countries. He thought this was particularly true of Europe.”¹²¹ In *Ecclesia in Europa*, written after the European Bishops’ Synod in 1999, John Paul II first identified that “Jesus Christ is our

¹¹⁹ TMA, 21.

¹²⁰ The new evangelization appears in many other papal writings to ecclesial communities, perhaps no more prominently than in documents addressed to European and American audiences, Europe being, in many senses, the heart of the new evangelization. For example *Ecclesia in Europa*, contains the following direct references to the new evangelization, 2,23,32,37,45,46,55,60,79. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Europa* (hereafter referred to as “EE”), 2003. Obtained on 10/09/2007 on the Vatican website at www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_exhortations/documents/ht_jp-iiexh_20030628_ecclesia_in_europa_en.html. For an overview of the new evangelization in Europe see: Friedemann Walldorf, ‘Toward a Missionary Theology for Europe: Conclusions from the ecumenical debate on the new evangelization of Europe’, *European Journal of Theology*, 1997, 13(1), 29-39; James Sweeney, ‘Europe: A New Evangelization’, *Month*, May 1986, 19, 156-163.

¹²¹ Dziwisz, *Karol*, 159.

hope.”¹²² This again underlined the indivisibility with which Christ and evangelization are spoken of. The situation of the Church in Europe was described in terms that are widely used in European sociology of religion, namely, loss of memory:

I would like to mention in a particular way *the loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage*, accompanied by a kind of practical agnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression of living without spiritual roots and somewhat like heirs who have squandered a patrimony entrusted to them by history.¹²³

This is the context into which the new evangelization must enter. The consequences of this loss of memory are manifold. Some of these are described as: fear of the future, existential fragmentation, a feeling of loneliness, increased weakening of interpersonal solidarity, and perhaps most significantly, an attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ.¹²⁴ The answer to these problems is a return to Christ, “our hope.” This should be expressed in a variety of ways, notably through his presence in strong Christian communities and through the witness of holy men and women.¹²⁵ The document also identified the intimate connection between Christ and the Church. Jesus Christ was described as being alive in his Church.¹²⁶ This point was made strongly to counteract the view that the Church is an unnecessary mediator between God and man. Although this point was made, in different forms, at the Reformation, in the modern European context the view that the Church is an unnecessary mediator between God and man is seen as arising out of a heightened personalism that feeds off the fragmentation of culture in many European countries.

¹²² EE, 6. Interestingly, in proclaiming the Gospel to Europe, John Paul uses the Book of Revelation as his scriptural icon. He regarded this as a book of prophetic witness. Usually the scriptural anchor for the new evangelization is the writings of St. Paul. This is perhaps a reflection on the state of Europe, which is described in EE, 8 as one of “silent apostasy.”

¹²³ EE, 7.

¹²⁴ EE, 8-10.

¹²⁵ EE, 17-22.

¹²⁶ EE, 22.

In *Ecclesia in America*, John Paul II recognizes the religious ambience of the Americas, which can be contrasted with the old world of Europe:

A distinctive feature of America is an intense popular piety, deeply rooted in the various nations. It is found at all levels and in all sectors of society, and it has special importance as a place of encounter with Christ for all those who in poverty of spirit and humility of heart are sincerely searching for God.¹²⁷

Evangelization was, nonetheless, also proposed as the fundamental framework for understanding the role of the Church in America.¹²⁸ John Paul II reiterated the task of the new evangelization, to transform not just individuals but whole cultures: “[new evangelization involves a] clearly conceived, serious and well-organized effort to evangelize the culture.”¹²⁹ This evangelization of culture, however, has at its root a transformative encounter with Christ, which then leads to an “impulse” to communicate this to others:

An encounter with the Lord brings about a profound transformation in all who do not close themselves off from him. The first impulse coming from this transformation is to communicate to others the richness discovered in the experience of the encounter.¹³⁰

Ecclesia in Oceania was a significant document, an Apostolic Exhortation, which specifically addressed the Church in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific, and surrounding regions. The concept of new evangelization was prominent in the document, and was first raised in the following terms:

When Christians live the life of Christ with deeper faith, their hope grows stronger and their charity more radiant. That was the goal of the Synod, and it is the goal of the new evangelization to which the Spirit is summoning the whole Church.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (hereafter referred to as “EA”). (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999), 16.

¹²⁸ EA, Sections 66-74 deal specifically with the new evangelization.

¹²⁹ EA, 70.

¹³⁰ EA, 68.

¹³¹ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania* (hereafter referred to as “EO”). (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications), 2001, 8, see also 18.

The goals of the Synod and those of the new evangelization are seen as identical. The imperatives of the new evangelization have increasingly moved to the centre of Catholic discourse. For instance, *Ecclesia in Oceania* clearly acknowledged that the missionary efforts of the Church in the past were largely the domain of missionary priests and religious. While these efforts are appreciated, what is needed now is a new kind of evangelization: “The call to mission is addressed to every member of the Church. The whole Church is missionary, for her missionary activity ... is an essential part of her vocation.”¹³² There is no distinction made between who is to conduct this missionary work. Indeed, this work is seen as the responsibility of all the faithful in the light of the new situations affecting the life of the Church.¹³³ In countries such as Australia, the challenges facing the Church are especially acute. These “are experienced by all the local Churches in Oceania, but with particular force by those in societies most powerfully affected by secularization, individualism and consumerism.”¹³⁴ In these environments, however, the Church needs to be mindful of its primary evangelical focus – to proclaim Christ.¹³⁵

General Directory of Catechesis

Moving now to some other documents which address the new evangelization, The General Directory for Catechesis was produced by Congregation for the Clergy in 1997 as a revision of the 1971 General Catechetical Directory.¹³⁶ The 1997 General Directory sought to

¹³² EO, 13.

¹³³ For a fuller discussion of this point in a largely European context see, Suquii Goicoechea Angel, ‘The New Evangelization: Some Tasks and Risks of the Present’, *Communio*, 1992, Winter, 19, 515-540.

¹³⁴ EO, 18. Hamilton has also identified some of the issues impacting the new evangelization in places like Australia. Andrew Hamilton, ‘New Evangelization’, *Pacifica*, 1993, 6, 347-349.

¹³⁵ “Evangelization is the mission of the Church to tell the world the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ,” EO, 18. Or, later, even more bluntly, “the Church’s mission [is] to tell the truth of Jesus Christ,” EO, 22.

¹³⁶ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (hereafter referred to as “GDC”). (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul Publications, 1997).

balance the contextualization of catechesis in evangelization as envisaged by Evangelii Nuntiandi and the appropriation of the content of the faith as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.¹³⁷ It appealed to writings of Pope John Paul II in its content. As a “general” directory, it contained within its scope not only the formation of new generations of Christians, but also the activity of the Church in every region in which it had an institutional presence. In this regard, it recognized that the Church’s mission needed to adapt to different cultural settings if it is to be effective.¹³⁸ The new evangelization is integral to the process of catechesis, as John Paul II had repeatedly emphasized. The new evangelization takes on a special urgency especially in countries under a strong secular influence:

These concrete situations of the Christian faith call urgently on the sower to develop *a new evangelization* especially in those Churches of long-standing Christian tradition where secularism has made greater inroads. In this new context of evangelization, missionary proclamation and catechesis, especially of the young and of adults, is an evident priority.¹³⁹

The *General Directory* recognized the universal call to evangelize, but it laid particular emphasis on the role of lay catechists. They do not replace priests or religious, but they do have an indispensable role as agents of the new evangelization.¹⁴⁰ Given the complexity of missionary activity, clear distinctions related to precise roles are not always possible. Nonetheless, the *General Directory* restated the threefold distinction used in *Redemptoris Missio* to identify the targets of missionary activity.¹⁴¹ The goal of new evangelization remains,

¹³⁷ GDC, 14-15.

¹³⁸ GDC, 59.

¹³⁹ GDC, 26.

¹⁴⁰ GDC, 232. A key lay group in the new evangelization is religious education teachers in Catholic schools. For a discussion of their role see, Therese D’Orsa, ‘The New Evangelization and its Implications for Religious Educators’, *Australasian Catholic Record*, 2002, 80(3), 287-305; Stephen Schenck, ‘Catholic Secondary Schools and the New Evangelization’, *Living Light*, 1993, 30, 24-32.

¹⁴¹ GDC, 59, cf. RM, 34.2.

however, a profound experience of conversion and not just exterior conformity.¹⁴² Thus, “primary proclamation and basic catechesis are priorities.”¹⁴³

The new evangelization and Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI, both before and after his election as the successor of John Paul II, has referred to the new evangelization in a manner which indicates his familiarity with and support of his predecessor’s teaching on this point.¹⁴⁴ The most substantial treatment of new evangelization in the writings of Cardinal Ratzinger was in an address given in 2000 on the occasion of the Jubilee of Catechists.¹⁴⁵ He began by stressing the difficulties inherent in the new evangelization aimed as it is at highly secular cultures that have, in many instances, lost all reference to the divine and transcendent in life.¹⁴⁶ Such an acknowledgment makes the proclamation of the Gospel a struggle, given the indifference and ignorance of many in regard to the Christian message. Agents of the new evangelization cannot expect that their labors will yield a substantial harvest at the beginning. Ratzinger quoted an old proverb, “Success is not one of the names of God.”¹⁴⁷ This idea is repeated in *Spe Salvi* where Benedict, in his second Encyclical, proposed that the Christian virtue of hope does not equate to human progress or an

¹⁴² Such situations require “a new evangelization.” The peculiar nature of this situation is found in the fact that missionary activity is directed towards the baptized of all ages, who live in a religious context in which Christian points of reference are perceived purely exteriorly. GDC, 58c, cf. RM, 33.3.

¹⁴³ GDC, 58c.

¹⁴⁴ In this thesis, works published prior to his election in April 2005 will be referred to by Benedict XVI’s given name, Joseph Ratzinger.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Address to Catechists and Religion Teachers’, 12 December 2000. Obtained on 12/10/2007 from Zenit News Service at www.zenit.org/article-17125?l=english

¹⁴⁶ A number of others have also made this observation about the new evangelization, for example, see Eugene F. Henrick, ‘What Challenges does the New Evangelization Hold?’, *Priest*, 49, April 1993, 43-48.

¹⁴⁷ CRT, 3. It can be only noted here but many have written on what could be called the difference in *demeanor* between John Paul II and Benedict XVI with regards to the relationship between the Church and the modern world, especially in relation to Europe. For a good overview of these issues see D. Vincent Twomey, ‘Introduction’, in John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varence (Eds), *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches*. (Harper: San Francisco, 2007), xvii-xxxix, and Mary Ann Walsh, *From Pope John Paul II to Benedict XVI*. (Oxford: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 72-87.

unfounded optimism. Hope is not to be measured by worldly success but needs to be seen in a more eschatological sense.¹⁴⁸ The course of the new evangelization, according to Ratzinger, derives from the close connection of the evangelist to the person of Christ, through frequent prayer and a rich sacramental life. Only on this basis can the evangelist move to proclaim the Gospel as a personal witness.¹⁴⁹

Bearing in mind that the pontificate of Benedict XVI is still in its early stages, the number of substantial documents (such as Apostolic Exhortations or Encyclicals) that have been written has been comparatively small. Nevertheless, Benedict referred to the “new evangelization” in his address for World Youth Day 2008, where he reiterated the point made in *Ecclesia in Oceania*:

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church in Oceania is preparing for a new evangelization of peoples who today are hungering for Christ.... A new evangelization is the first priority for the Church in Oceania.¹⁵⁰

In another address, Benedict expressed his conviction in the following words: “If faith is truly the joy of having discovered truth and love, we inevitably feel the desire to transmit it, to communicate it to others. The new evangelization to which our beloved Pope John Paul II called us passes mainly through this process.”¹⁵¹ Benedict likewise endorsed other dimensions of the new evangelization as enunciated by John Paul II. In answer to a question about how to bring about the new evangelization, Benedict’s response was twofold: first, by proclaiming Christ

¹⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi*. Obtained 1/12/2007 from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/Encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html, 2007, 17-20.

¹⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *Address to Catechists*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Papal Message for the XXIII World Youth Day: Sydney, Australia, July 2008, *L’Osservatore Romano*, July 25, 2007, 6-8.

¹⁵¹ Benedict XIV, ‘Message to the Diocese of Rome Convention at the Basilica of St. John Lateran’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, June 20, 2007.

clearly and unambiguously, and second, by living in an evangelical fashion.¹⁵² In a 2006 address to diocesan clergy, Benedict recognized the three-fold distinction found in *Redemptoris Missio*, and so spoke of new evangelization as aimed at those with “reduced” faith as opposed to the continuous evangelization of those associated with parishes.¹⁵³

Concluding Comments

The new evangelization was a central theme of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. It seems likely to remain a critical part of Catholic discourse in the future and is the precursor of what shall be described later as a more evangelical Catholicism. In John Paul II’s thinking, the new evangelization is one of the clear fruits of the Council, a path that can be traced from *Ad Gentes* to *Evangelii Nuntiandi* to his own writings.

Evangelization is an activity that is fundamental to the Church and expresses its Trinitarian nature. The evangelizing Church proclaims the risen Christ and this proclamation is a task of all Christians. The role of clergy and religious is not diminished, but a new aspect of evangelical activity is the indispensable role of the laity as agents of the new evangelization.¹⁵⁴ The new evangelization recognizes that the missionary outreach of the Church takes places in a variety of contexts. Some of the newest and most challenging of these are cultures with a Christian heritage in which many baptized Catholics have either a loose connection with the faith

¹⁵² Benedict XVI, ‘Meeting with the Clergy of the Diocese of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso’. Obtained on 3/12/07, Vatican website at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedictxvi/speeches/2006/august/documents/ht_ben-xvi_spe_20070724_clero-cadore_en.html.

¹⁵³ Benedict XVI, ‘Address to the Priests of the Diocese of Albano’. Obtained on 21/9/2007 Vatican website at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedictxvi/speech/2006/august/documents/ht_ben-xvi_spe_20060831_sacerdoti-albano_en.html.

¹⁵⁴ For an interesting account of the differences in spiritual practices of laity when compared to priests and religious see, James D. Davidson, Thomas P. Walters, Bede Cisco, Katherine Meyer and Charles Zech, *Lay Ministers and their Spiritual Practices*. (Huntington: In: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), esp. 59-82.

community or have moved away completely. In addressing the practical challenges of the new evangelization there must be openness to new methods and processes to engage the changed societal circumstances in many countries.

The new evangelization as envisaged by John Paul II is a demanding task. It sets as its goal much more than a passive and loose identification with Christ or with the Church. This chapter began with a series of points that sought to encapsulate the main themes of the new evangelization as set out in *Redemptoris Missio*. These proved a suitable framework for understanding the origin, content, and implications of the new evangelization. In concluding this chapter, one way of refining these points is to conceive of the new evangelization as revolving around two fundamental points. The first is an emphasis on an ever deepening, personal relationship with Christ; the second is a desire to bring others into communion with Christ.

Another important perspective on the new evangelization seeks to integrate it within a contemporary understanding of the Church. This contemporary understanding is able to incorporate the issue identified in *Redemptoris Missio* as the fundamental definition of the new evangelization, namely, “where entire groups of the baptized have lost a sense of the faith, or even no longer consider them members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.”¹⁵⁵

The next chapter contextualizes the new evangelization within the ecclesiological thinking that has arisen since the Council. It seeks to deepen the discourse initiated in this chapter by considering different understandings of the nature of the Church and how these relate to the new evangelization. This embeds the new evangelization in a theological framework that strengthens future chapters which provide analysis, both empirical and conceptual, of some of

¹⁵⁵ RM, 33.3

the factors that have led to a large number of Catholics retaining some kind of loose affiliation but who fall short of being animated by the spirit of the Gospel.

Chapter 3: The New Evangelization in an Ecclesiological Context

Introduction

This chapter contextualizes the new evangelization in an ecclesiology that takes into account both the rich Catholic Tradition in this area and the new pastoral realities in countries such as Australia. In addressing the first research question, “What is the new evangelization?” the ecclesiological perspective provides an important foundation for the emerging discourse on the growing number of Catholics who, in the words of Pope John Paul II, “live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.”¹ This study, however, is not primarily concerned with ecclesiology so the discussion is necessarily limited and directed toward the question, “What is an appropriate ecclesiology for the new evangelization?” This question is necessary because any conclusions about how to understand and respond to the new evangelization should be grounded in an understanding of the how the Church, in the light of recent, post-conciliar Catholic scholarship, sees itself as a community of faith. As Pope John Paul II has noted, the new evangelization arises out of and is the work of local ecclesial communities. The mission of the Church to evangelize, therefore, arises from a deep sense of communion with others through Christ.

No single approach to ecclesiology can fully explain the complex nature of the Church.² The ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* will be taken as a starting point, since this represents an authoritative and contemporary approach, from which a number of perspectives are addressed. The argument is made that the concept of new evangelization is best analyzed within an

¹ RM, 33.3.

² Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church Expanded Edition*. (New York: Image Books, 1987).

ecclesiology of communion and of evangelical discipleship. An ecclesiology that privileges both communion and evangelization allows for a strong Christological foundation and also guards against a self-enclosed sense of the Church as being only inward looking.

The content of this chapter is presented under three headings: a) The Ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*; b) Church as Communion; and, c) Discipleship and Communion.

3.1 The Ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*

Pilgrimage of the People of God

The departure point for a discussion of an appropriate ecclesiology for the new evangelization is the Dogmatic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*.³ This document is of fundamental importance in contemporary Catholic ecclesiology.⁴ Pottmeyer noted that, “the basic idea followed in *Lumen Gentium* is the Church as the people of God on pilgrimage.”⁵ He maintained that the great strength of *Lumen Gentium* is the way it, “looks back” beyond Trent and the medieval period to earlier times, and tries to recapture a sense of Church that was evident in the first millennium.⁶ The first two chapters of *Lumen Gentium* are testimony to this. The first chapter establishes the Church as a mystery, quite a different image from the legalistic sense of both the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and The First Vatican Council (1869-1870). In *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is introduced as a part of salvation history and is described in a litany of rich biblical images such as “a sheepfold,” “God’s farm or field,” and “our mother.”⁷ *Lumen Gentium* warns against the temptation to regard the Church as two

³ LG, 19-84.

⁴ Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger, Life in the Church and Living Theology: Fundamentals of Ecclesiology with Reference to Lumen Gentium*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 114.

⁵ Hermann J. Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I & II*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 111.

⁶ Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy*, 112-114.

⁷ LG, 6.

distinct entities, the first being an earthly structure with visible and hierarchical elements that “communicates truth and grace to everyone,”⁸ and the second being more mystical, a spiritual community and a Church focused on the things of heaven. *Lumen Gentium* argues that there is a problem with viewing the Church as composed of human and divine elements. To focus on one element only is to do an injustice to the richness of conciliar ecclesiology. Ultimately, the Church is a complex reality and needs to be seen as a mystery: “The Church is compared, in no mean analogy, to the mystery of the Incarnate Word.”⁹ The second chapter of *Lumen Gentium* uses the biblical image of the “People of God” to describe the Church.¹⁰ The extensive use of imagery seeks to convey a view that the Church is an instrument of human salvation.¹¹

The basis of this view is established in the opening of *Lumen Gentium* by reference to salvation history as set out in Scripture. A critical link is created between the story of the people of Israel as told in the Old Testament and the notion of Church in the New Testament.¹² Grillmeier pointed out, however, that the notion of the People of God needed to be balanced so as not to reduce the New Testament notion of Church to the Old Testament notion of People of God.¹³ In chapter two of *Lumen Gentium*, a vision of the Church as the people of God is spelled out. This stresses the fundamental equality of all members of the Church. The Church is seen as a community of the faithful, many of whom are distinguished by their involvement in the world. In his monumental work, *Lay People in the Church*, which was published in French in 1953,

⁸ LG, 8. For a commentary on the significance of this section see, Christopher Schonborn, *Loving the Church. Spiritual Exercises Preached in the Presence of Pope John Paul II*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 145-147.

⁹ LG, 8.

¹⁰ Philips notes the radical changes that were made to the schema of the document that would eventually become *Lumen Gentium*. The ‘Mystery of the Church’ and ‘The People of God’, the first two chapters of *Lumen Gentium* were not mentioned in the original schema. The schema was rejected and a second draft prepared which was the basis of further discussion at the Council. Gerard Philips, ‘Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution’, in Herbert Vorgrimler (Ed), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol I* (Palm Publishers: Montreal, 1967), 105-137.

¹¹ LG, 9.

¹² LG, 2-4.

¹³ Aloys Grillmeier, ‘The People of God’, in Vorgrimler, *Documents of Vatican II*, 154.

Congar anticipated this view of the Church as a community of the faithful with less emphasis on clerical and lay divisions. In his introduction, Congar, influenced by Newman, spelled out the need for the laity to take their full role in the life of the Church so that as “the Church, secure in her foundation, boldly throws herself open to lay activity, she will experience such a Springtime as we cannot imagine.”¹⁴ Those in ordained ministry are part of the same community, and their role is understood as one of service rather than exercising juridical authority.¹⁵ This unity of the laity and the ordained ministry is further exemplified by the common vocation of all members and their mutual bond as part of a community of salvation.

In discussing the Church as the People of God there is, however, always a danger that this becomes merely a descriptive category, or is used in a sense that sets the people up against the hierarchy and becomes disconnected from new cultural forces.¹⁶ A superficial use of the term People of God, for example, would not recognize the issue at the heart of the new evangelization, namely, how we conceive of the large group of Catholics in countries such as Australia who have lost a living sense of the Gospel. In a superficial reading, those individuals are already part of the People of God by virtue of their baptism.¹⁷ In developing a more grounded sense of the term a key event was the 1985 Extraordinary Synod. Dulles noted that some bishops were

¹⁴Yves M. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*. (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1965), xviii.

¹⁵ To illustrate the need for a more egalitarian Church, Congar, in a memorable passage recommends, “The Holy Roman Empire no longer exists, but there still remains in the Church many titles and insignia, many elements of ceremonial and so of her visible aspect, borrowed at some time from the dazzling imperial splendor. Surely it is high time and surely it would be to everyone’s advantage, to shake off the dust of the Empire that has gathered since Constantine’s day on the throne of St. Peter,” in Yves M. Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964), 127.

¹⁶ Much is made of the ordering of chapters in *Lumen Gentium* with the chapter, ‘The People of God’ preceding the chapter, ‘The Church is Hierarchical’. Anton, for example, quoting Congar, describes the insertion of the ‘People of God’ before the chapter on hierarchy as a “Copernican change,” Angel Anton, ‘Post-conciliar Ecclesiology: Expectations, Results and Prospects for the Future’, in Latourelle, *Twenty Five Years After*, 413. Grillmeier, by contrast, notes “the People of God does not mean the mass of the faithful in contrast to the hierarchy, but the Church as a whole, with every group of its members,” Grillmeier, *People of God*, 153.

¹⁷ The use of the concept of the People of God as an argument for more democratic structures in the Church has been strongly debated. Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 51-55. For a contrasting view see, Peter Hebblethwaite, ‘Exit the People of God’, *Tablet*, February 8 1996, 140-141.

concerned that the term People of God in post-conciliar discourse was being used to re-conceptualize the Church as a civil society governed by democratic principles.¹⁸ In another view, Prusak saw these concerns as, “attest[ing] to a narrowness of mind, closed to new possibilities.”¹⁹ This comment, however, failed to recognize that the connection with the faith community for many Catholics is weakening, and the best response to contemporary challenges needs to be grounded in both an analysis of culture and a well-grounded ecclesiology. There is a need for an ecclesiology that recognizes distinctions between canonically baptized Catholics and provides a theological framework for dealing with them.

In *Lumen Gentium* there is recognition of this growing dilemma that although all are called to be part of the “new People of God” distinctions can be made. These, however, are largely directed to non-Catholics and others such as those who “do not profess the faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter.”²⁰ When discussing those “fully incorporated into the society of the Church,” *Lumen Gentium* makes a distinction between possessing the Spirit of Christ and accepting the entire structure of the Church.²¹ This has some overtones with the body and soul of the Church dichotomy introduced by Bellarmine.

¹⁸ Dulles, *Reshaping*, 187-190. For the Final Report, ‘The Message to the People of God’ as well as several addresses of the Extraordinary Synod see, *Origins* 15, December 19, 1985.

¹⁹ Bernard P. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology Through the Ages*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 304.

²⁰ LG, 13-15. *Lumen Gentium* when discussing those, “fully incorporated into the society of the church” makes a distinction between possessing the Spirit of Christ and accepting its entire structure, LG, 14. This has a connotation of the body and soul of the Church mentioned by Bellarmine.

²¹ LG, 14.

Church as the Body of Christ

In order to be more theologically grounded, the concept of the Church as the People of God needs to be thought of in more expansive terms and alongside other images of the Church contained in *Lumen Gentium*. Another key image is the Church as the Body of Christ.²² Congar argued that this image is necessary as it allows for the notion of the People of God to be incorporated into proper theological discourse linking its sense of Church with Christological themes.²³ At the same time, Schnackenburg and Dupont noted that the image of Church as the People of God also had a corrective sense for other images: “The notion of the People of God can prevent the concept of the Mystical Body of Christ from becoming a stiff, all-too-pat model able to solve all ecclesiological problems.”²⁴ The image of the Church as the body, or mystical body, of Christ ties the believers into an intimate union with Christ, one that is profoundly interior and life changing. The theme of union with Christ, through his body, is central to Congar’s ecclesiology. He writes that “everything is contained in this; the Mystical Body becomes a reality once our life belongs to Christ.”²⁵ In Congar’s thought, these ideas are foundational and predate the Council by decades.²⁶

In terms of the new evangelization, Congar’s conception of incorporation into the Body of Christ is a point of conversion.²⁷ If the Church is seen in these terms then its members are, by definition, closely identified with Christ and are his presence in the world. The advantage of this alignment is that it expresses the Trinitarian and metaphysical sense of the Church spelled out

²² LG, 7, cf, 1 Cor 12:27.

²³ For a fuller discussion of this see, Yves Congar, ‘The Church: The People of God’ in *Concilium*, Vol .1, 1966, 11-39.

²⁴ Rudolph Schnackenburg and Jacques Dupont, ‘The Church as the People of God’, in Edward Schillebeeckx, (Ed), *Dogma/Vol. 1, Concilium – Theology in the Age of Renewal*. (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1964), 119.

²⁵ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*. (Helicon Press, Baltimore, 1960), 75.

²⁶ As Congar pointed out in the preface, *The Mystery of the Church* was based on an earlier piece published in *Bulletin des Missions* in September 1938.

²⁷ Congar, *Mystery*, 77.

later in *Lumen Gentium*. Guardini made a similar point about taking a one-dimensional view of the People of God, and that this metaphor needed to be seen in the context of other biblical images. While recognizing the predominance of the image of the People of God, he argued that this image needs to be seen in the context of the more traditional understanding of the Church as “the edifice that he [Jesus] would build upon the rock.”²⁸ Guardini was making a point that is established in *Lumen Gentium*:

The mystery of the holy church is already brought to light in the manner of its foundation. For the Lord Jesus inaugurated his church by preaching the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God.²⁹

People of God: Some other clarifications

Ratzinger also made a number of important clarifications on the use of the term People of God as a description of the Church.³⁰ He noted that the People of God is a term used in the Old Testament to describe the people of Israel. The term, however, is not used indiscriminately. The People of God are only described as such when they are faithful to the covenant as expressed by the Torah. When they are engaged in some other activity, such as a political action, the term does not apply.³¹ In this context, use of the term in the New Testament can only refer to those who are faithful to the new covenant sealed by Christ:

²⁸ “There is one image which is today seemingly predominant in men’s thoughts – the image of the people of God. It is marvelously vivid and full of movement, and expresses immediately something that is particularly important for the thought of our time: the historical element, the church’s existing and working in time, her wandering and struggling. But we must not forget the other image which the Lord himself contributed to Christian thought when he spoke of the edifice that he would build upon the rock.” Romano Guardini, *The Church of the Lord*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), 112.

²⁹ LG, 5.

³⁰ It is worth noting that Ratzinger has had a longstanding interest in ecclesiology. His doctoral dissertation published in 1953 was titled, “The People and the House of God in St Augustine’s Doctrine of the Church”, quoted in George Weigel, *God’s Choice: Pope Benedict XVI and the Future of the Catholic Church*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 167. For a discussion of the significance of Ratzinger’s early ecclesiological writings see Heim, *Life in the Church*, 286-297.

³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Salt of the Earth: Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 186-189.

One could say that the term Torah is replaced by the Person of Christ, and, in this sense, the “People of God” category, though not applied directly to the new people, is tied to communion with Christ and to living like Christ, or, as St. Paul says: having the mind of Christ “ (Phil 2:5). Paul goes on to describe the “mind of Christ” with these words: “He became obedient unto death on the cross.” Only when we understand the term “People of God” in its biblical usage do we use it in a Christian way.³²

An important part of the concept of the People of God is the interaction and bonds that develop between people. There can be, however, an over reliance on the horizontal or human dimension of seeing the Church in this way. Dulles made a similar point when he remarked, somewhat acerbically, “It is not clear that outgoing friendliness in point of fact leads to the most intense experience of God. For some persons, perhaps, it does, but not for all.”³³ The absence of the transcendent from the concept of the People of God problematizes the whole concept, as Ratzinger remarked: “The crisis of the Church as it is reflected in the concept of People of God is a crisis of God.”³⁴ Uniting the concept People of God with the idea of “living like Christ” and “having the mind of Christ” ensures the metaphysical dimension of ecclesiology is maintained. Taking this Christological emphasis also allows another aspect of the relational dimension of the Church as the People of God to emerge. This is the relationship of the believer with Christ through the Church. If this is properly understood, the vertical dimension of the People of God is guaranteed and ensures that the Church is seen as more than a human assembly. Ratzinger was at pains to stress the need to see the Church in supernatural terms, and as more than a human construction: “The Church does not exhaust herself in the ‘collective’ of the believers: being the ‘body of Christ’ she is much more than the simple sum of her members.”³⁵

³² Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 187.

³³ Dulles, *Models*, 61.

³⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, ‘The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, Vatican 2: Lumen Gentium’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 19 September 2001, 5. To support his argument Ratzinger quotes John Baptist Metz: “The crisis reached by European Christianity is no longer primarily or at least exclusively an ecclesial crisis.... The crisis has become a crisis of God,” Ratzinger, ‘Ecclesiology’, 2.

³⁵ Messori, *Ratzinger*, 47. John Paul II makes a similar point when he comments, “the Kingdom, as they understand it, ends up either leaving very little room for the Church in reaction to a presumed “ecclesiocentrism” of the past,

3.2 Church as Communion

Pottmeyer noted that the retrospectivity of *Lumen Gentium* is also, paradoxically, its greatest weakness as it fails to address the future by not resolving the juxtaposition of the different ecclesiological images it presents.³⁶ Indeed, *Lumen Gentium* can leave the reader perplexed, for example, when, after establishing the Church as mystery and as the People of God, the third chapter reiterates a dominant theme common in the last four centuries, that of the Church as hierarchy.³⁷ A new post-conciliar synthesis is required that takes into account the richness of the Church's tradition as well as the insights of the Council. The need for a new synthesis can be understood, in part, by the new social context that has arisen in many countries such as Australia since the Council. An area of perennial ecclesiological interest, but outside the scope of this discussion, is the relationship between the Catholic Church and other Churches or ecclesial communities.³⁸ This relationship was certainly emphasized at the Council and *Lumen Gentium* was written with this very much in mind.³⁹ In the years since the Council, there had emerged a discussion, germane to this thesis, concerning the vitality and identity of many Catholic institutions. An ecclesiological synthesis, therefore, in the post-conciliar period needs to be able to address new realities as well as classical themes. A strong motif in interpreting the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* is the concept of Church as communion. Pope John Paul II put

and because they consider the Church herself only a sign, for that matter a sign without ambiguity. This is not the Kingdom of God, as we know it from Revelation. The Kingdom cannot be detached either from Christ or from the Church," RM, 17-18.

³⁶ Pottmeyer, *Papacy*, 111.

³⁷ Anton notes that the most urgent task facing post-conciliar ecclesiology is to address, among other things, "doctrinal ambiguities." One of the most prominent of these ambiguities is the "insertion of Chapter II on the People of God in *Lumen Gentium*" in the conciliar texts, Anton, *Post-conciliar Ecclesiology*, 407-428.

³⁸ This ecumenical interest was renewed after the Second Vatican Council which was able to produce a more balanced ecclesiological vision than what had been proposed at the hastily concluded First Vatican Council. For a fuller discussion of the First Vatican Council see, Cuthbert Butler, *The Vatican Council*. (Maryland: Newman, 1962).

³⁹ Giacomo Martina, 'The Historical Context in Which the Idea of a New Ecumenical Council was Born', in Latourelle, *Twenty Five Years After*, 54-56.

the centrality of communion as an interpretive tool for the Council in unequivocal terms: “The ecclesiology of communion is a central and fundamental concept in the conciliar documents.”⁴⁰

Anton argued that, “the concept of communion is without a doubt the key concept for interpreting the ecclesiology of Vatican II and the one that best summarizes its results in ecclesiological doctrine and in the renewal of the Church.”⁴¹ Ratzinger pointed out, however, that the idea of Church as *communio* or communion was not explicitly presented at the Council and needed to be drawn out in subsequent theological discussion.⁴²

A post-conciliar ecclesiology

The Extraordinary Synod of 1985 was called to evaluate the teachings and impact of the Council twenty years after its completion. Here, the ecclesiology of communion emerged as a dominant paradigm, and “if properly understood, can serve as a synthesis of the essential elements of Christian conciliar ecclesiology.”⁴³

Sullivan observed that the notion of communion is derived from the New Testament term *koinonia*, which means to have something in common.⁴⁴ The things that the Church as communion holds in common can be discussed in two major ways. The first way, which will not be elaborated upon in this thesis, is the important discussion of communion between Churches

⁴⁰ CL, 18.

⁴¹ Anton, *Post-conciliar*, 416.

⁴² *Communio* and communion will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

⁴³ Ratzinger, ‘Ecclesiology’, 4. In terms of synthesis Ratzinger notes that the term *communio* incorporates Christological, salvation history, ecclesiological and sacramental aspects. For an overview of the 1985 synod see, Avery R. Dulles, *Vatican II and the Extraordinary Synod: An Overview*. (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1986). Ormerod argued that this emphasis on *communio* needed to be balanced by “an emphasis on the mission of the Church as defining its identity,” Neil J. Ormerod, ‘The Times They are A-Changin’ in Stephen Schloesser (Ed), *Vatican II. Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 175.

⁴⁴ Francis A. Sullivan, ‘Authority in an Ecclesiology of Communion’, *New Theology Review*, 3, 1997, 18-30.

and between the local and universal Church.⁴⁵ In many ways, this aspect of communion is the dominant one in public discourse as it has many ramifications for ecumenical dialogue, the role of the papacy, and the authority of local bishops.⁴⁶ The second way is the intra-Church aspect of communion, the communion between believers and between believers and God. This aspect of communion is the focus of this discussion as it has the most relevance to the new evangelization. The basis of this internal communion is Christ, as expressed in 1 John 1:3: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”⁴⁷ *Communio* is manifested by the proclamation of Christ by those who have already experienced his saving power. The assembly of believers, the Church, then takes this message to others so they too can come to enjoy fellowship in the Spirit. An understanding of the Church as communion, therefore, leads to outreach and mission. This is a call to evangelization and reflects well the defining principle of the new evangelization: the Church is, by its very nature, missionary.

Basis of communion

The communion of people is achieved by their union with the Triune God or, in the words of Pope John Paul II: “Its (communion’s) fundamental meaning speaks of the union with God brought about by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁸ God sent his Son as the mediator of

⁴⁵ Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 75-101, esp. 86-89.

⁴⁶ Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 114-144. For another perspective see, Avery Dulles, ‘Ratzinger and Kasper on the Universal Church’, *Inside the Vatican*, June 2001, 37-42.

⁴⁷ Another scriptural image of Church as communion is provided by John Paul II: “Again we turn to the words of Jesus, ‘I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser.... Abide in me and I in you’” (Jn 15: 1, 4), John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*. (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1988), 18. For a more detailed account of the use of the term *koinonia* in the New Testament see Thomas Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005), 70-72.

⁴⁸ CL, 19.

grace, and God also sent the Spirit to enliven the faithful and to strengthen the bonds between them. The idea of a Spirit-filled community of believers empowers that community in many ways and transforms it from a human assembly into one where Christ is present and proclaimed. Lennan pointed out that our knowledge of Jesus is mediated through a community; it is the community that identifies Christ for us.⁴⁹ Pope John Paul II made a similar point about the role of the Spirit in the Church, where the Spirit both confers grace and energizes members.⁵⁰ For Lennan, a characteristic feature of the Church as communion was the presence of the Holy Spirit who draws the Church into communion with God, and also draws the individuals within the Church to each other. Faithfully responding to the Spirit prevents the Church from becoming either, “a form of dictatorship” or “a cacophony.”⁵¹ Being part of this faith community brings with it the inevitable tension between personal and communal belief, especially in certain areas; but this is what being part of the communion of faith entails.⁵²

The Church as communion embodies both the vertical and horizontal aspects of ecclesiology, a feature that is lacking in some other models.⁵³ The Church, as the sacrament of salvation, makes possible the divine communion by making Christ, who expresses the complete love of God, present. Communion brings about the union of people with God. This is achieved through the Church because it embodies the very presence of God in a unique way that is not

⁴⁹ Richard Lennan, *Risking the Church*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 102.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *The Church: Mystery, Sacrament, Community. Catechesis on the Creed*, vol (4). (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1998), 198.

⁵¹ Lennan, *Risking*, 103-104. The unifying aspect of the Holy Spirit was also stressed by John Paul II: “One and the same Spirit is always the dynamic principle of diversity and unity in the Church,” CL, 20.

⁵² Sullivan makes a similar point when he comments: “The sharing of the Christian faith and sacraments necessarily takes place through participation in a Christian community and through its ministry,” Sullivan, ‘Authority’, 22-23.

⁵³ The distinction between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the Church is well known. Dulles provides a four dimensional discussion of aspects of the Church. Height represents the Church as heavenly mystery and not just an earthly communion; depth recognizes the Church as a place for sinner in need of repentance; breath is its extension beyond its outward signs; and, lastly, length represents the Church of history extending into the future. Avery Dulles, *The Dimensions of the Church*. (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1967), 6-20.

achievable through human fellowship or personal encounter.⁵⁴ This union can also be seen as the invisible aspect of the Church.⁵⁵ The human visible form of communion is expressed in the image of the Church as the body of Christ, which expresses the relationship between members. This communion also reflects a Christological dimension because the unity between members of the Church is a unity that is based on their relationship with Christ. This is expressed in belief, practice, and ritual. Sullivan, following Aquinas, described this aspect of the Church as ecclesial communion, which is typified by “sharing of Christian faith and participation in the Christian sacraments.”⁵⁶

Eucharistic communion

The perfect expression of the communion of the visible and invisible aspects of the Church is the Eucharist where Christ builds the Church by feeding the members of his body and uniting them to God and to each other.⁵⁷ The body of Christ refers both to the ecclesial communion and to Christ’s Eucharistic body.⁵⁸ Ratzinger expressed the Eucharistic nature of the Church as communion in these terms: “[C]ommunion [refers] first of all to the Eucharistic center

⁵⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 70. Although it can only be mentioned here, it is worth noting that Küng and others treat this idea of the Church as the dwelling place of God and an instrument of salvation with some suspicion seeing the Church in some ways obscuring the encounter of the believer and God: “God has been obscured in our Churches, and often by their actions, so that the only remaining possibility is to close one’s eyes in order to turn inwards and find the all-encompassing God in the secrecy of my inner self, to sense, feel and experience him at the core of my being,” Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*. (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 90.

⁵⁵ “Ecclesial communion is at the same time both invisible and visible. As an invisible reality, it is the communion of each human being with the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit, and with the others who are fellow sharers in the divine nature in the passion of Christ, in the same faith, in the same spirit. This link between the invisible and visible elements of ecclesial communion constitutes the Church as the *Sacrament* of salvation.” Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion’, *Origins*, 22, June 25, 1992, 108.

⁵⁶ Sullivan, ‘Authority’, 22.

⁵⁷ Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*. (London: Burns and Oates, 2007), 96-99.

⁵⁸ As Dulles points out, “Jesus Christ has three bodies, and the three are one. When we speak of the Body of Christ, we may be referring to any of three realities: his natural body, his Eucharistic body, or his ecclesial body.” Avery Dulles, ‘The Church as Body of Christ’, in McDermott, *John Paul II on the Body*, 155.

of the Church, and so again returns to the understanding of the Church as the most intimate place of encounter between Jesus and mankind, in his act of giving himself to us.”⁵⁹ Communion links people with God through the sacrifice of Christ and also with each other: “[W]hoever receives him in Communion necessarily communicates with all his brothers and sisters who have become members of the one body.”⁶⁰ Lennan extended this idea by pointing out that the Eucharist also gives the Church a missionary focus, as it directs the attention of those who experience it to outreach and evangelization.⁶¹ The idea that the Eucharist is a core expression of the ecclesiology of communion, although developed in the post-conciliar period, has clear roots in *Lumen Gentium*.⁶² The mystery of the Eucharist present where the faithful are gathered and united with their pastors around the altar of the Lord is a rich symbol of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. Kasper took this further to define the Church in terms of Eucharistic assembly: “The Church is to be found wherever Christians assemble around the table of the Lord to celebrate his Supper.”⁶³ The Eucharist not only defines the Church but also gives it life and sustenance. By receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus the community is “transformed into what they have received.”⁶⁴ They are united in Christ through the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity’, *L’Osservatore Romano*, June 2, 2002, 5-8.

⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Communion*, 82.

⁶¹ Lennan, *Risking*, 116.

⁶² See, for example, LG 26, “The mystery of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated so that, by means of the flesh and blood of the Lord the whole brotherhood and sisterhood of the body may be welded together.”

⁶³ Walter Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity: The Eucharist and the Church*. (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2004), 118.

⁶⁴ Prusak, *Unfinished*, 291.

⁶⁵ The critical role of the Holy Spirit in understanding the Church subsisting in the Catholic Church is given in Michael E. Putney, *The Mission of the Church in Australia Today*, speech given to Diocesan Assembly, Wollongong, December 15 1999.

Church as fellowship

The various dimensions of Church common to communion models of ecclesiology are seen in other theoretical perspectives. Congar saw the Church as fundamentally a fellowship, which is expressed in two ways. The first expression is the fellowship of people with God and also an intra-personal fellowship of people with each other in Christ: “In her ultimate reality the Church is men’s fellowship with God and with each other in Christ.”⁶⁶ In this view the Church is seen as an assembly, which gathers to worship God or to listen to his word. The connection that the people have with God distinguishes the Church from a conventional assembly. This is seen in the Old Testament, especially in the Septuagint, where the Greek word *ecclesia* describes a messianic community raised by God.

The second expression of fellowship described by Congar was the Church’s ecclesial reality where it is a means provided by God to bring people into fellowship: “According to another aspect, the Church is the totality of the means provided by the Lord to bring men to his fellowship.”⁶⁷ This is what distinguishes the Church from all other human assemblies because the Church exists “antecedently to the faithful, to constitute them, and precisely as their mother.”⁶⁸ In this sense, the essence of the Church is a mystery drawing in the faithful and leading to communion with God. This image of the Church was well established in the patristic period.⁶⁹ Congar saw the renewal of this ecclesiological thinking among Catholic as a welcome step. Such thinking should, amongst other things, encourage ecumenical dialogue with other ancient Churches. The visible hierarchical aspect of the Church and the mysterious invisible

⁶⁶ Congar, *Lay People*, 28.

⁶⁷ Congar, *Lay People*, 29.

⁶⁸ Congar, *Lay People*, 30. Congar used the terms *Heilgemeinschaft* to describe the community of the faithful as the reality of salvation and *Heilsanstalt* to describe the aggregate of all means of salvation, the sacrament of the reality.

⁶⁹ For a general discussion of the ecclesiology in the patristic period see, Ludwig Hertling, *Communio: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity*. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1972).

aspect are parts of the same entity and this tension has long been recognized, as evidenced in the writings of St. John Chrysostom and St. Cyril of Alexandria.⁷⁰

Hamer developed the idea of a two-fold understanding of communion by stressing the foundational communion between people and God. This is the distinctive feature of communion. The invisible bond between people and God opens up the divine life to believers by an encounter with the Incarnate Word communicated by the Holy Spirit. Once this invisible communion has been established, the outward and visible signs of communion are manifested in a variety of ways, but they depend on this deeper, more mystical, communion, which is mediated by the Spirit.⁷¹ Stressing one aspect of communion over the other can lead, however, to the danger of seeing the Church as some kind of spiritual community with a limited visible or tangible aspect. If this occurs, the Church can become a highly personalized structure with no common bond uniting members aside from a very loose self-described affiliation. This sense of Church as a loose, mystical association where members are free to arrive at their own beliefs with little or no communal expression is one of the major challenges facing those involved in the new evangelization. If the model of Church as communion becomes one-sided, this model, like others, runs the risk of disrupting the balance between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of a proper ecclesiology.

In order to keep these dimensions in harmony, the foundational aspect or divine nature of each dimension needs to be stressed. In the vertical dimension, the divine nature is the communion between people and God, and the Church can never be just an association of like-minded people with no metaphysical aspect. In the horizontal dimension, the divine is stressed

⁷⁰ Prusak describes this tension well: "The complex organizational development of the early Church did not displace the basic notion that the Church was the Body of Christ enlivened by the Spirit," Prusak, *Ecclesiology*, 148. See also Congar, *Mystery*, 15-53.

⁷¹ Jerome Hamer, *The Church is a Communion*. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 156-204.

in the communion of people with each other, but with the realization that this is through Christ. Stressing communion with Christ as the basis of fellowship reinforces an important aspect of the new evangelization, which has as one of its tenets a proclamation, an encounter, and a personal response to Christ. Seeing the Church in these terms ensures that it does not primarily become a loosely defined sociological category but a theological reality.

One way of describing members of the Church in this understanding is as disciples. This image of the Church is an ancient one. Rausch captured well this notion when he wrote:

The Church has existed from the moment that the friends and disciples of Jesus, scattered by his arrest and crucifixion, were gathered together again by his new, risen presence among them. In its essential nature the Church is the community of the disciples of Jesus.⁷²

3.3 Discipleship and Communion

Dulles noted that a recent development in Catholic ecclesiology, which has its roots in seeing the Church as a communion, is a rediscovery of the discipleship model of Church. Communion in this model is understood as providing the basis for evangelic outreach in that what is being presented to the world is not, to use a Pauline analogy, worldly philosophy but an encounter with the living God.⁷³ As discussed in Chapter Two as a template for understanding Pope John Paul II's conception of mission, Paul, at the Areopagus, demonstrates that mission must be animated by a strong sense of communion. This perspective accommodates well a key aspect of the new evangelization as envisaged by Pope John Paul II, namely, the close and deepening link between the believer and Christ and a subsequent willingness to communicate this to others. This is a Christ who startles and challenges, one who, Dulles notes, evokes the

⁷² Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism: At the Dawn of the Third Millennium*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), 40.

⁷³ I Corinthians 1:23

reaction: “This is what God must really be, and if he were to become man, this is how he would behave.”⁷⁴ This presentation of Christ distinguishes him from a conventional figure who “neatly fits the aspirations of middle class culture.”⁷⁵ In developing the discipleship model of the Church, Dulles took as his departure point a passage from the first Encyclical of John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*: “The Second Vatican Council devoted very special attention to showing how this “ontological” community of disciples and confessors must increasingly become, even from the “human” point of view, a community aware of its own life and activity.”⁷⁶ The precursor of the discipleship model can be seen in the New Testament where Jesus selected a relatively small group of followers to be his disciples. This suggests a gradation in the levels of commitment of his followers. Dulles illustrated this point using the parable of the rich young man.⁷⁷ He suggested that the man cannot agree to a total commitment to God but is still a believer. The number of followers of Jesus exceeds the number of disciples, so the disciples were called forward for training and supervision by Jesus.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Avery Dulles, *Apologetics and the Biblical Christ*. (London: Burns and Oates, 1968), 56.

⁷⁵ Michael Warren, *Communications and Cultural Analysis*. (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1992), 118.

⁷⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis*. (Washington DC, United States Catholic Bishops Conference, 1979), 21.

⁷⁷ Dulles, *Models*, 206. Imbelli describes ‘Models of the Church’ as “Dulles’s best known work.” He also gives an informative account of the circumstances that lead Dulles to republish the 1974 version as an expanded edition in 1987. The most notable inclusion was a new chapter on the community of disciples model, which Dulles saw as an attempt to move beyond the polarization of ecclesiological debate that had characterized much discussion in Catholic circles. Robert P. Imbelli, ‘Foreword’ in Avery Dulles, *Church and Society: Laurence J. McGinley Lectures*, xii-xiii.

⁷⁸ The number of disciples is always a point of contention. In the first chapter of Acts of the Apostles we read about 120 disciples with Mary, Peter and the Eleven in Jerusalem. Dulles makes the point that what is important about disciples is not their overall number but that they were distinguished from followers of Jesus, Dulles, *Models*, 208.

Discipleship in Scripture

Discipleship has a strong scriptural basis, which has parallels for the new evangelization. In the Gospels the call to discipleship is to all, not just a religious elite or ritually pure caste.⁷⁹ As described in Mark's Gospel, disciples are chosen; they do not choose to follow Jesus.⁸⁰ Being a disciple means both a radical conversion and also a sharing in the ministry of Jesus, illustrating again the relationship between communion and mission. Disciples are sent out to cast out demons, to heal the sick, and to proclaim the Kingdom of God. This is premised on their interior conversion and attachment to Christ and his message.⁸¹

In the post-Easter communities, however, as evidenced in early Christian writings, the term 'disciple' became synonymous with follower of Jesus.⁸² In the pre-Constantine era there was a strong sense of the Church being composed of disciples, men and women who were prepared to make sacrifices for their beliefs in order to belong to a group somewhat on the outside of pagan society and always under the threat of persecution. The way of Jesus meant taking up one's cross and sharing in both the suffering and resurrection of Christ.⁸³ This situation changed after the rule of Constantine when Christianity eventually became the official religion of the Empire. Now, discipleship could be seen in a number of ways, not always applying to all Christians. Perhaps the strongest examples of discipleship were those who chose to live out their Christian vocations as monks in austere conditions. There developed over time a view that those in religious life exemplified the discipleship aspect of Christian life to the highest degree. One of the consequences of the Second Vatican Council, with its call to holiness and

⁷⁹ See Mark 2:16, Luke 8:2. Rausch elaborates on this point. Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 98.

⁸⁰ Mark 1:17, 2:14.

⁸¹ Mark 6:7-13, Luke 10:2-12, Matt 8:20.

⁸² For example see, Acts 6:2: "And the twelve called together the whole community of disciples."

⁸³ Rausch, *Catholicism*, 99.

emphasis on the universal priesthood of all believers, was that the term disciple became easily extended to the laity. The discipleship model of the Church has a universal reach but also ensures the prevention of what Ratzinger referred to as “the loss of God.” In a discipleship model, God cannot be forgotten because the central focus is on the relationship between the believer and God.

Discipleship and conversion

Discipleship in our modern context is marked by service to the poor and needy as well as living in harmony with the Gospels.⁸⁴ Discipleship is, however, most clearly characterized by an inner conversion and a close friendship with Christ as evidenced by a deeply sacramental life. This inner conversion is also one of the goals of the new evangelization. The interplay between communion and discipleship can be seen in the importance of community to discipleship. One way the Church as communion is expressed is in the bonds between individuals. They hold in common an ongoing relationship with Jesus. Communities are not merely human associations but they are congregations of faith centered on the presence of Christ. Disciples are not formed and sustained in isolation but in community. These communities of faith need not be religious communities in the conventional sense. They can and do include new ecclesial associations and, most importantly, the family. The family is especially critical as it is the human community that most people experience. If the family is animated by the love of Christ, the horizontal dimension of communion is fully realized. Without the support of faithful families, the development of Christian life in countries such as Australia is greatly imperiled.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Dulles uses a powerful shorthand definition for disciple: “those who take religion seriously.” Dulles, *Models*, 219.

⁸⁵ John Paul II often extended the idea of Church as communion by comparing the Church, on a theological level, to a family or the family of God borrowing an image that is used in *Lumen Gentium*, 6: “The Year of the Family is for

As in the time of Christ, the discipleship model of the Church recognizes that there are followers of Christ who are not disciples and so responses of different groups are to be expected. Those called to be disciples are, like the early Christians, required to make sacrifices for their beliefs, but they are sustained by a communion with other disciples. Other followers of Jesus who do not make such a commitment are likely to drift further and further away from an active, living faith because they do not have the support of a faith community.⁸⁶ This situation well describes the position of many Catholics in Australia today. From an ecclesiological perspective, the community of believers is critical because in this community Christ is present in all members.

Those who are disciples of Jesus are also much more likely to embrace the missionary aspect of their calling and engage in evangelization, since this flows from their communion with each other and with Christ. The universal call to evangelization is an important part of the new evangelization, so a discipleship model of the Church would provide well for this. The discipleship model is a relatively severe one. It promises no “cheap grace” and involves a high cost in human terms. This term, “cheap grace,” was of seminal importance in the writing of Bonhoeffer.⁸⁷ He saw cheap grace as forgiveness without repentance, or fellowship without discipleship. The textbook for Christian life, for Bonhoeffer, was the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew’s Gospel, with its call for complete transformation into the image of the resurrected and victorious Christ. To reach this stage, however, it is necessary to take on the crucified Christ – this is one of the consequences of discipleship or costly actual grace. Discipleship provides a

all of us a call to make the Church ever more the household of God in which his family lives,” John Paul II, ‘Holy Thursday: Priesthood and the Pastoral Care of the Family’, *Origins*, 23, March 31, 1994, 722.

⁸⁶ This point is put powerfully by Pope John Paul II: “A member of the lay faithful can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited,” CL, 20.

⁸⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 1-64.

clear sense of boundary and identity for the follower of Christ. This clear sense, in turn, gives disciples a definite and, in many cases, a welcome sense of their identity. Discipleship is not, however, understood as the free decision of the individual to join a group of similarly motivated and inspired individuals who share a common vision.⁸⁸ The Christian call to discipleship comes from God, and, in this sense, respects the invisible aspect of the Church as communion. In this conception, the Church exists to make people holy by drawing them closer to God in ways that are both mysterious and respectful of free will. This is an essential manifestation of the catholicity of the Church: it is open to all who respond to the invitation of God through the Holy Spirit.⁸⁹

Concluding Comments

An ecclesiology of communion and discipleship has great synergy with the new evangelization. The basis of mission is communion with Christ and with others in Christ. The new evangelization recognizes that many Catholics today do not manifest a living sense of the Gospel but are also reluctant to sever ties with the Church completely. A discipleship model of Church acknowledges that many Catholics do not see themselves as disciples of Jesus and all that this entails, but are content with a less demanding, more worldly, form of association. The goals of the new evangelization can, therefore, be reflected in an ecclesiology, which aims for a communion of believers with each other and with God through Christ. Cultivating this close, personal, and ongoing relationship with Christ is also an aspiration of the new evangelization as elucidated by Pope John Paul II.

⁸⁸ As Ratzinger expresses this idea in a phrase worth quoting, “the Church is not a club of friends or a leisure association that brings together men with the same likes and related interests,” Ratzinger, *Communion*, 77.

⁸⁹ Sullivan, *Church*, 93-108.

An ecclesiology of communion and discipleship is a profoundly Eucharistic one. The Eucharist is what builds up the Body of Christ both in a corporal sense and in an individual one. By uniting both the human and transcendent aspects of the Church, the Eucharist strengthens the Body of Christ and also empowers individuals to go out and evangelize. This is an expression of the core identity of the Church and the vocation of its members. Any programme of new evangelization must be centered on the Eucharist as an expression of the theological reality of the Church and also the notion that the Eucharist feeds the Body of Christ.

This chapter concludes the first section of the thesis, which has examined the research question, “What is the new evangelization?” The discourse now takes a different direction by examining some of the conditions that have led to the need for the new evangelization.

Chapter 4: The Dawn of a New Era: Post-Conciliar Generations and the New Cultural Landscape

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the cultural context of the new evangelization. It is the first of three sequential chapters that specifically address the second question proposed in the introduction, “What conditions have led to the need for the new evangelization in countries such as Australia?” The chapter argues that many Catholics lack strong religious commitment. These Catholics cannot be realistically described as disciples of Jesus, and are clearly a target group for the new evangelization as defined by *Redemptoris Missio*. The term ‘commitment’ is used in this chapter in two ways. In theological terms, commitment implies a close relationship with Christ, both personally and through the Church, as well as a desire to evangelize others. In sociological terms, commitment, following Stark and Glock, is made up of five factors: beliefs, practice, knowledge, experience, and consequences.¹ Committed members, therefore, have strong religious beliefs, have a high level of participation in religious practices and rituals, are well networked with other like-minded people, and are prepared to devote time and other resources to their religious community. They know, and seek to know more, about their religious community, its history, teachings, and demands. Committed believers also have characteristic religious experiences both of a personal and communal nature. Their membership in a religious community has clear, direct, immediate, and long-lasting consequences for how they live.²

¹ Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, *American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 14-15.

² Another overlapping measure of commitment is provided by D’Antonio and his colleagues. In their work, to be considered highly committed respondents one must meet three conditions: a) say that the Church is the most

Both empirical and theoretical studies that address the issue of the religious socialization of Catholics born after the Second Vatican Council are examined in this chapter. The Council is seen as the key demarcation event in better understanding changes in socialization. A generational approach is followed using “Generation X” Catholics, the first post-conciliar generation, as a departure point. Recent studies of “Generation Y” are then discussed in light of the new evangelization. The chapter argues that a crucial factor in understanding both Generation X and Generation Y Catholics is that their religious socialization was markedly different from those who grew to maturity in the pre- and immediate post-conciliar period. One key difference is the emergence of a sense of personal spirituality that is dissociated from religious community. The dominant Catholic narrative of strong formative experience and transition to a new religious understanding has been replaced by a new mentality, which is characterized by, among other factors, weak affiliation. The new evangelization, if it is to be effective, needs to recognize and respond to this new mentality.

The content of this chapter is presented under six headings: a) Prologue: The End of an Era; b) Generation X Catholics: The Lost Generation; c) The Religious Socialization of Generation X; d) An Overview of Generation Y; e) The New Catholic Mentality: A Synthesis; and, f) An Epilogue: A Vignette of the New Religious Landscape.

important part, or among the most important parts of their lives, b) indicate that they will never leave the Church, and c) attend Mass at least weekly. William V. D’Antonio, James V. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Mary Gautier, *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 10.

4.1 Prologue: The End of an Era

Ours is a time that criticizes and debunks the past, that teaches an ideology, that looks forward to a utopia.³

Any discussion of the cultural context for the new evangelization must acknowledge from the outset the pivotal impact of the Second Vatican Council, and especially the situation of the Council within the tradition of the Church.⁴ Is the Council a radical, but nonetheless valid, departure from what preceded it? Is it a “*hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture*?” Or should the Council be seen through the “*hermeneutic of reform [or] continuity*,” having an obvious connection with other Councils and not marking a clear break with the past?⁵ As Dulles pointed out, for theologians such as Pope Benedict XVI, the only way forward is for the Church is to stress the continuity thesis.⁶ This recognizes that for any major world religion the past must not be seen as a burden but rather a foundation that gives direction to the future. As Wuthnow put it: “The Church must ... be backward looking; it has a special mission to preserve the past, to carry on a tradition.”⁷

³ Bernard Lonergan, ‘Belief: Today’s Issue’ in William F. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrell (Eds), *A Second Collection*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 93.

⁴ William V. D’Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Katherine Meyer, *American Catholics: Gender, Generation and Commitment*. (New York: Alta Mira Press, 2001). This is not to say that the Council did not occur in a much wider context of religious disquiet and realignment, a theme well develop in Hugh McLeod, H. *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ These terms are from Pope Benedict XVI: “On one hand, there is an interpretation [of the Council] that I would like to call hermeneutics of discontinuity and rupture. It was frequently able to find favour among mass media, and also a certain sector of modern theology. On the other hand, there is the hermeneutics of reform, of the renewal of the continuity of the single Church-subject, which the Lord has given us.” Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia Offering Them his Christmas Greetings, December 22, 2005. Obtained on 10/6/2006 at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_ro_man-curia_en.html. For a sense of the antecedents of these contrasting interpretations see John O’Malley, ‘Reform, Historical Consciousness and Vatican II Aggiornamento’, *Theological Studies*, 1971, (32), 573-601; Hubert Jedin, ‘The Second Vatican Council’, in Hubert Jedin, Konrad Repgen, and John Dolan, (Eds), *History of the Church*, Vol. X. (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 140-162; Stephen Schloesser (Ed), *Vatican II. Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

⁶ Avery Dulles, ‘Pope Benedict XVI: Interpreter of Vatican II’, *Laurence J. McGinley Lectures*, 468-484, esp. 471.

⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48.

For a generation of Catholics, the Council proved to be a seminal experience, marking a transition from one way of being a Catholic to a new understanding. For many, the suddenness of the change was disconcerting.⁸ Instead of viewing the wider society with suspicion, many in the immediate post-conciliar era had a much more dynamic and positive view of the relationship between Church and State.⁹ Dulles has characterized the relationship between Church and culture into three categories, which help understand this cultural shift: confrontation, synthesis, and transformation.¹⁰ The post-conciliar era can be described as moving from a confrontation model, with its emphasis on the incompatibility of the culture with the Church, to a synthesis model. In this new understanding, the aim is for culture and faith to blend, or at least to achieve a high degree of overlap. Adopting this more conciliatory demeanor, the Church stood ready to shape and promote the transmission of the Gospel in different contexts.¹¹ Seeing wider society in this way required many Catholics to question their beliefs and practices and to try to see them in harmony with wider societal norms. This transition was often marked by a profound personal experience of change to which many individuals took years to adapt.¹² The danger with synthesis, however, is that it can too readily lead to assimilation where the cultures of different groups begin to merge with a consequent loss of identity, especially for the weaker, less resilient

⁸ James Forsyth, *Catholicism Revisited: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (Ottawa: Novalis, 2001), 11-15. R. Scott Appleby, 'Present to the People of God: The Transformation of the Roman Catholic Priesthood' in Jay P. Dolan, R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne and Debra Campbell, (Eds), *Transforming Parish Ministry: The Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity, and Women Religious*. (New York: Crossroads, 1989), 107-121.

⁹ Edmund Campion, *Rockchoppers: Growing Up Catholic in Australia*. (Victoria: Penguin, 1982), 14-27; Ken Dryden, *The Moved and the Shaken*. (New York: Viking, 1993), 101-103.

¹⁰ Dulles, *Reshaping*, 34-50. Dulles acknowledges that this characterization is based on a condensation of Niebuhr's five-fold model.

¹¹ This positive sense of culture is well expressed by Guardini when he writes that the Church is "the living reality that comes to maturity by means of the help of culture, which was given to it by Christ," cited in Arno Schilson, 'The Major Theological Themes of Romano Guardini' in Robert A. Krieg (ed), *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World*. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), 36.

¹² Richard M. Rymarz, 'Constructing the Future: A Reflection on the Post-Conciliar Generations', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 1999, (1), 24-33.

party.¹³ In contrast to synthesis, the third model of the relationship between the Church and the wider culture is more active and interventionist. The transformative model seeks not just to acknowledge the wider culture but also to transform it in Christ.

Expectations of the Council

Prior to the Council there was a sense that the Church was in a position of strength, and the strong allegiance of many Catholics in countries such as Australia would endure and be passed on to future generations in a relatively unchallenged way.¹⁴ In his opening address on October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII set the tone for many for the gathering and what was to follow: “The Council now beginning rises in the Church like daybreak, a forerunner of most splendid light. It is now only dawn.”¹⁵ Some have commented that, as a result, the Council proceeded on an optimistic assumption about what the future held for the interaction between the Catholic Church and wider culture, suggesting more of a harmonious convergence.¹⁶ The idea that the culture of the Church and secular culture would achieve more of a synthesis in the post-conciliar era has not yet been realized, certainly not in Europe and in countries such as Australia.¹⁷ This assumption was predicated on the culture of the Church remaining strong,

¹³ Dean Hoge, ‘Interpreting Change in American Catholicism: The River and the Floodgate’, *Review of Religious Research*, 1986, 27, (4), 289-299.

¹⁴ Wilde proposes that many bishops at the Council were swept up in a euphoria that had connotation of both Turner’s *comunitas* – an overwhelming sense of community – and Durkheim’s collective effervescence – where people feel as if they have been swept up into a different world. Melissa J. Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 24.

¹⁵ Pope John XXIII, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott (Ed). (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 703-704 (Appendix).

¹⁶ Gilles Routhier, ‘Finishing the Work’, in Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, (Eds), *History of Vatican II, Vol 5*, (Netherlands: Peeters Publishers, 2005), 49-143.

¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Turning Point for Europe: The Church in the Modern World-Assessment and Forecast*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 145-170; Charles Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead: The Future of the North American Church*. (Toronto: Novalis, 2008).

cohesive, and a formative influence in the lives of younger Catholics.¹⁸ It was not anticipated at the Council, for instance, that in the subsequent decades the Church would face the challenge of maintaining a strong Catholic identity in institutions which, in the past, had been synonymous with Catholic presence, evangelization, and outreach.

Two examples of this challenge are provided and illustrate its scope. Miscamble argued that the Catholic identity of the University of Notre Dame, perhaps America's most prominent Catholic university, was being imperiled by the lack of committed Catholics among its faculty.¹⁹ In a response to this concern, McGreevy pointed out that the difficulty that Notre Dame and other Catholic universities had was that there were insufficient numbers of Catholic scholars in general in the academy.²⁰ He quoted a 2006 Harvard University study of the top fifty research universities in the United States, which showed that only six percent of tenured or tenure-track scholars in the arts, science, or business self-identify as Catholic.²¹ In terms of human resources, therefore, for Catholic universities who wish to employ committed Catholic faculty the pool is very low. It is fair to speculate that those at the Council would not have anticipated these challenges facing even the most prestigious Catholic institutes of higher learning. In a similar vein, Carlin and his colleagues reported on a shortage of suitable applicants applying for principalships in Catholic schools across Australia, although there is no shortage of teachers who wish to work in the system and support the ethos of the schools. On the basis of their research, they proposed that one of the reasons for the reluctance of senior teachers and others to apply for

¹⁸ Austin Cooper, 'Vatican II – The Context', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 2003, 80(3), 334-342, at 342. Avery Dulles, 'Vatican II: Substantive Teaching: A Reply to John O'Malley and Others', *America*, March 31 2003, 14-17, at 15.

¹⁹ Wilson D. Miscamble, 'The Faculty Problem: How can Catholic Identity be Preserved', *America*, September 10 2007, 26-28. A similar problem exists in Canada. See 'University Leadership in Short Supply', *Western Catholic Reporter*, November 3, 2008, 3.

²⁰ Christian Smith, 'Secularizing American Higher Education: The Case of Early American Sociology' in Christian Smith (Ed), *The Secular Revolution*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 97-159.

²¹ John T. McGreevy, 'Catholic Enough? Religious Identity at Notre Dame', *Commonweal*, September 28, 2007, 7-8.

principalships is that these positions require a far greater commitment to overtly Catholic principles. There is not opposition to these principles, but comparatively few are prepared to strongly and publicly identify with them.²² At the time of the Council, the majority of teachers and principals in Catholic schools were professed religious.²³ It may have been hard to predict that this situation would change so radically in the following decades to a point where finding suitable, committed Catholic school leaders would present substantial difficulties.

This prologue is not intended to be a wistful looking back at the past. Although outside the scope of this thesis, a discussion of some of the reasons for the sudden demise of what seemed to be a resilient and cohesive Catholic culture would centre on the nature and deficiencies of the culture itself. The point of this discussion, however, is to propose that the Council marked the end of an era and with it a mentality characterized, as it was for many, by a formative and enduring socialization into a faith tradition. The change was both sudden and unexpected and, as a result, very difficult to anticipate and respond to. The assumption that there would always be a large, captive audience of Catholics ready to respond has proved unfounded. The new era is premised on a different assumption, namely, that the Church must work much harder at gaining and retaining allegiance. In some ways, after a protracted hiatus, the new evangelization can be seen as a response to this cultural shift and perhaps the first sign of the promised new dawn.

²²Paul Carlin, Tony d'Arbon, Jeff Dorman, Patrick Duignan, and Helga Neidhart, *The VSAT project – Leadership Succession for Catholic Schools in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania*. (Australian Catholic University, 2003).

²³ Maurice Ryan, *Foundations of Religious Education in Catholic Schools: An Australian Perspective*. (NSW: Social Science Press), 9-23.

4.2 Generation X Catholics: The Lost Generation

We must admit to a period after the Council when the communication of the faith to a newer generation lost its way. A generation of young people emerged from that period – now parents of a newer generation – who “fell between the cracks”. My experience as the Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University (1994-1998) taught me a great deal about the profundity of content and the pedagogical skills that are nowadays used in the process of communicating the faith. However, we have lost a generation, and they are not to be found working at their Bibles, or attending seminars and sessions that are now increasingly difficult to run successfully. The task of recapturing the interest and enthusiasm of the present generation of young people demands extraordinary dedication and considerable skill.²⁴

This discussion of the cultural context for the new evangelization begins by examining so-called *Generation X* Catholics. Social commentators have coined the term Generation X to describe those born between approximately 1960 and 1975.²⁵ The precise chronological boundaries of Generation X are difficult to define and not of critical importance.²⁶ The characteristics of Generation X are the subject of a sizeable literature and this discussion is not intended as a thorough review. Rather, it seeks to raise a number of issues that are pertinent to a discussion of the new evangelization.²⁷

²⁴ Francis Moloney, ‘Vatican II: The Word in the Catholic Tradition’, *The Mix*, May 2002. Obtained on 14/6/2002 from: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au. D’Antonio and his colleagues express a similar sentiment in an American context: “Even if we avoid such comparisons with older generations and focus just on today’s young adults, the evidence suggests that young adults are only loosely tethered to the Church,” D’Antonio et al, *American Catholics Gender*, 83.

²⁵ That is, the population cohort that followed the *Baby Boomers*. The term Generation X was popularized by the Canadian novelist Douglas Coupland. See, for example, his novel, *Generation X*. (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1991).

²⁶ Some sociologists are now classifying Catholic generational cohorts in relation to this Council. D’Antonio and his colleagues use, in part, the following classification in their 2007 publication: pre-Vatican II Catholics (those born in 1940 or earlier), Vatican II Catholics (those born between 1941 and 1960), post-Vatican II Catholics (those born between 1961 and 1978), and Millennial Catholics (those born between 1979 and 1987). D’Antonio et al, *American Catholics Gender*, 7.

²⁷ William Dunn, *The Baby Bust: A Generation Comes of Age*. (New York: American Demographic Books, 1993); William Mahedy and Janet Bernardi, *A Generation Alone: Xers Making a Place in the World*. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1994).

The disengagement of Generation X

The new evangelization recognizes that many Catholics maintain some form of loose affiliation with the community of faith. A critical point, therefore, in gaining a better sense of the religious disposition of Generation X Catholics is to look for measures that are indicative of higher levels of commitment. A critical indicator is participation in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.²⁸ Pope Benedict XVI put the Eucharist's historical significance in these terms [for early Christians]:

The Sunday Eucharist was not a commandment, but an inner necessity. Without him who sustains our lives, life itself is empty. To do without or to betray this focus would deprive life of its very foundation, would take away its inner dignity and beauty.²⁹

The Eucharist is the principal means of realizing the Church as communion, as it unifies the Church's horizontal and vertical dimensions and, as such, nourishes the Church's missionary endeavors. In terms of its own self-definition, the Church describes the Eucharist as extremely important, "the source and summit of Christian life."³⁰ Mass attendance becomes especially critical for Catholics in contemporary culture where many religious groups lack sociological boundaries, that is, beliefs and behaviors that distinguish them from others in the wider society.³¹ For Roman Catholics many other distinguishing practices, of which plainchant and fasting are

²⁸ Stark and Finke would describe Mass attendance as a prime example of objective religious commitment (Definition 14). It is objective in the sense that the tradition identifies this practice as important. Roger Stark and Rodney Fink, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 103. Fishbein and Ajzen also argue that frequency of Church attendance is as good a general religious measure as any other. Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, *Belief, Attitudes, Intention and Behaviour: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), esp. 44.48.

²⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, 'Homily Given at Saint Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna', *L'Osservatore Romano*, Monday, 10th of September 2007. See also Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity*, 18-19.

³⁰ See Synod of Bishops XI Ordinary General Assembly, *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*. Obtained on 9/10/2007 from the Vatican website: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/vc_synod_doc_20040528_lineamenta-xi-assembly_en.html. See also, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls/Libreria Editrice, 1995), 2181- 2182. For another perspective see, Paul W. Cashen, *From Sacred Heart to the Heart of the Sacred*. (Kensington, NSW: Nelen Yubu Productions, 2006), esp.188-190.

³¹ Rahner, writing in 1970's, argued that the Sunday Mass obligation should not be treated, "as if it had been proclaimed at Sinai as divine law, valid forever." This attitude, perhaps, reflects an earlier era which was still coming to terms with some of the pastoral implications of the Second Vatican Council. Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*. (London: SPCK, 1974), 95.

but two examples, have effectively been lost.³² Finally, Mass attendance is closely connected with the trajectory of religious faith. Charron notes that the first stage in the development of irredeemable religious indifference is “abandonment of regular attendance at religious services.”³³

In this context, Mass attendance takes on additional significance as it remains, perhaps uniquely, a marker of Catholic belief and practice. Using Mass attendance as an indicator, it would seem that large numbers of Australian Generation X Catholics have become disconnected from a pivotal religious practice.³⁴ Utilizing data from the Australian National Church Life Survey, Dixon put the percentage of Generation X Catholics attending Mass on any Sunday at around 8%.³⁵ Dixon also pointed out that the idea that large numbers of Generation X Catholics return to Church at a later time often correlated with having children, is not supported by empirical evidence.³⁶

³² Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination, New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 133. Eammon Duffy, ‘Fasting: A Lost Rite’, *Tablet*, 31 January 2004, 14–17. Once historically and anthropologically rooted practices disappear, it is very difficult to reinstate or replace them. Often all that can be done is to ruefully reflect on the process. George, for example, noted that the loss of much Catholic ritual in the post-conciliar era was “sociologically naïve.” Interview with Cardinal Francis George, *National Catholic Reporter*, October 2, 2007, 4.

³³ Andre Charron, ‘Les Divers Types de Distant’ *Nouveau Dialogue*, 1975, vol. 11, quoted in Michael J. Gallagher, *Struggles of Faith*. (Dublin: Columba Press, 1990), 43.

³⁴ Patrick McNamara, *Conscience First: Tradition Second*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 23–45. David Voas and Steven Bruce, (Research Note), ‘The 2001 Census and Christian Identification in Britain’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 2001, 19, 23–28. James E. Curtis, Edward G. Grabb and Douglas E. Baer, ‘Voluntary Association Membership in Fifteen Countries: A Comparative Analysis’, *American Sociological Review*, 57, 139–152.

³⁵ This information derived from the 2006 count of Mass attendees was provided in a personal communication from Robert Dixon, Director, Bishop’s Office for Pastoral Planning, November 20, 2007. The figure for 20–24 year-old Generation Y-ers is 5.5%, the lowest of any cohort.

³⁶ Robert Dixon, ‘Mass Attendance Trends Amongst Australian Catholics: A Significant Challenge for the Catholic Church’, *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies*, 28(2), 2004, 133–143.

Generation X and "Sheilaism"

The number of Generation X-ers who self-identity as Catholic is, of course, higher than the number who attend Mass on a regular basis.³⁷ Many seem willing to retain some connection to the Church but are keen not to overplay this and thereby appear to be overtly religious.³⁸ Kaiser noted a characteristically Italian variation on this sentiment. When asked about their religion, Romans are apt to reply, "*siamo cattolici, non fanatici*" – "We're Catholic but we're not fanatics."³⁹ In terms of the definition of the new evangelization, many Catholics have lost a sense of the communal, orthodox faith of the Church but retain their own sense of what faith means in modern society.⁴⁰ Bellah and his colleagues captured this sentiment well when they quoted the classic self-description given by "Sheila Larson", a young nurse in their study:

I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to Church. My faith carries me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice.... It's just try to love yourself and be gentle with yourself. You know, I guess, take care of each other. I think He would want us to take care of each other.⁴¹

Sheila is the personification of a movement toward individualism in religious expression. A feature of this transition is an emphasis on morality or what we do, and away from creedal conviction or what we believe.⁴² On the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the study by

³⁷ Michael Evans and Jonathon Keeley, *Australian Economy and Society 2002: Religion, Morality and Public Policy in International Perspective 1984-2002*. (Sydney: Federation Press, 2004), 51.

³⁸ Many people, both adults and teenagers, already affiliated with Christian Churches do not find the association comparatively enjoyable. When asked to select sources of enjoyment both adults and teenagers rated their religious group as last in a nine category scale. Reginald W. Bibby, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada*. (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 213.

³⁹ Robert B. Kaiser, *A Church in Search of Itself*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 61.

⁴⁰ For a general discussion of what is often termed in Protestant circles as "nominal affiliation" see, Eddie Gibbs, *In Name Only: Tackling the Problem of Nominal Christianity*. (Wheaton, III: Bridgeport/Victor, 1994).

⁴¹ Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William H. Sullivan, Ann Swindler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. (New York: Harper Row, 1986), 221.

⁴² Wuthnow, writing fifteen years after Bellah and his colleagues, argued that this transition identified as "Sheilaism" has continued. This has developed to a dominant form of spiritual expression where the emphasis is no longer on dwelling or belonging to a faith community, but is a more amorphous sense of seeking on one's own personal terms. Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), 87-116.

Bellah and his colleagues, Yamane commented that, “if Sheila Larson had today’s language available to her during the interview, she would surely have offered the contemporary mantra, ‘I’m spiritual not religious’.”⁴³ This sentiment is also indicative of the resilience of the religious impulse. The relentless march of atheism predicted by the nineteenth century positivists has not occurred. Rather, when more traditional forms of religious belief and expression become less common they often emerge in what Bell described as new and different forms.⁴⁴ Bell based his argument on the ideas of Talcott Parsons, who saw religion as a human universal, as typical and normative as language. The fact that many today see spirituality, or something similar, as replacing religion should not fill those concerned with the future of religious groups with confidence. This is an indication that these groups are not meeting a basic human need and the connection between religion and spirituality has been loosened or even severed. When this occurs there are a number of consequences.

Generation X and spirituality

Mason and his colleagues have described spirituality as one of the “master ideas in Western culture.”⁴⁵ Its origins can be traced to the philosophers of Ancient Greece, where it was defined as immaterial and giving rise to human attributes such as thought and reason. Later, when associated with Christianity, spirituality was seen as the way an individual Christian lived out their beliefs. It could be contrasted with the public worship of the Church and was centered on private, interior, and personal practices such as prayer. When Teresa of Avila, for example, was described as having an intense spiritual life, this was the assumed sense of the term. In

⁴³ David Yamane, ‘Symposium on the 20th Anniversary of Habits of the Heart: Introduction, Habits of the Heart at 20’, *Sociology of Religion*, 68(2), 2007, 179-187, at 183.

⁴⁴ Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 161-163.

⁴⁵ Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber, *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia*. (Melbourne: John Garrett Publishing, 2007), 33.

contrast, when a person was described as lacking spirituality, often this referred to a superficial, external practice of religious duties and obligation without much personal conviction.⁴⁶

In recent times, spirituality has been used to describe a far wider range of practices and experiences.⁴⁷ Of particular interest is the sense in which Yamane used the term, contrasting it with religion. Spirituality in Yamane's sense often retains some of its original meaning, namely, being an interior and personal response, but it allows individuals almost complete freedom in what they choose to incorporate into a worldview and demands little. Most importantly, it does not act as a transformative agent but allows individuals to retain a loose association with the transcendent, but on their own terms. To anticipate Lonergan's poetic analogy of conversion, spirituality in the new sense bears little resemblance to falling in love with God. In fact, if traditional Catholic spirituality, as exemplified by Teresa of Avila, was an intense, almost all-consuming effort to become closer to God, the new sense of the term can be seen, in contrast, as keeping God at a distance.

The idea of spirituality being disassociated from any strong connection with the divine is supported in relevant literature. Bouma, for example, in his discussion of contemporary uses of spirituality, noted that in its common usage it only has a tangential reference to God as one of a variety of external references which serve as the focus of the spiritual quest.⁴⁸ The external reference can be some type of divinity, an aspect of the natural world or, more typically, a sense

⁴⁶ E. James Cuskelly, *Walking the Way of Jesus: An Essay on Christian Spirituality*, (Strathfield: St. Paul's Publications, 1999), 12-16.

⁴⁷ Carrette and King have caustically remarked, "Spirituality has no universal meaning and has always reflected political interests," Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. (London: Routledge, 2005), 30, esp. 13-17. A major thesis of theirs is that spirituality has become a private affair in contemporary culture and, more importantly, has become commodified.

⁴⁸ Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the 21st Century*. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7-16.

of the other.⁴⁹ This type of diffuse spirituality tends to reinforce decisions already taken rather than encourage new insights and perspectives. Rather than being seen as the practical expression of religion, spirituality in this sense can be quite remote from a particular religious tradition.⁵⁰ It may or may not involve any tangible connection to a community in terms of participation in common worship or services, or expressing belief in public communal forms. This religious expression would, to return to Sheila Larsen's language, violate "my own little voice." The spiritual domain then becomes essentially a personal and private one without a common, external referent. Many today have a highly individualized spiritual expression, one that does not have a generalized applicability and cannot easily be related to others. Without recourse to a wellspring of religious symbol, belief, and metaphor, spirituality runs the risk of lacking creative and formative power and also commonality of meaning. When Teresa of Avila wrote of her spiritual experiences it was in a language that was replete with reference to the spiritual universe of Catholicism, and this provided a ready reference point. Without this connection, spirituality arguably becomes idiosyncratic, superficial, and, in a certain sense, undisciplined.⁵¹ It can be described as "quest spirituality."

Quest spirituality

There are a number of distinctive and, to some extent, predictive aspects of quest spirituality. First, quest spirituality does not see traditional markers of Catholic identity, the most notable being participation in the sacraments, as being of particular and distinctive

⁴⁹ "At the core of spirituality is the encounter with the other, some other, be it God, nature, a tree, the sea, some other person or the core of our own being," Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 12.

⁵⁰ David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*. (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004).

⁵¹ Tacey, *Spirituality Revolution*, 36-37.

importance.⁵² In this view, there are many ways in which Catholic identity can be expressed and the fixation on any one form leads to distortion and is indicative of an earlier era.⁵³ The fact that so many are not regular worshipers does not seriously challenge this sense of being a Catholic. Other individually chosen indicators of religious identity, therefore, become especially important. Despite this highly personal aspect, there are a number of features of religious identity that are common to those who see contemporary religion in terms of spiritual quest. For example, religious identity is not defined by theological views but by a strong sense of moral values. These values are often seen as being indicative of a more genuine spirituality as opposed to the external piety associated with institutional religion. This leads to the second aspect of quest spirituality, namely, making a critical distinction between the institutional Church and a more amorphous Church, the latter being the one that claims the stronger allegiance.

The institutional Church is associated with the worshiping community and holding common foundational beliefs. The more amorphous Church is, by definition, hard to characterize but makes significantly fewer demands. Related to this is the third aspect of quest spirituality, namely, that it recognizes that individuals do not completely disassociate themselves from Catholicism but remain connected on their own terms. Implicit here is a loss of strong commitment to any view or affiliation with any organization and also reluctance to completely disassociate from any view or group.⁵⁴ Fourth, quest spirituality looks to the more active and committed allegiance of younger Catholics sometime in the future. It sees the religious journey

⁵² Dean Hoge, William Dinges, Mary Johnson and Juan Gonzales, J., *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice*. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

⁵³ D'Antonio and his colleagues note that 76% of American Catholics do not see weekly Mass attendance as an important indicator of what constitutes a good Catholic, D'Antonio et al, *American Catholics Today*, 27.

⁵⁴ Many have termed this type of religious affiliation "cafeteria Catholicism," where the individual chooses what part of the tradition they want to incorporate into their own lives. For a discussion of this term see, Graeme English, 'Cafeteria Catholics', *Catholic School Studies*, 72(2), 1999, 18-23. Ebaugh makes a similar point about the emergence of a highly personal form of faith but uses the more elegant term, "selective Catholicism" to describe it. Helen R. Ebaugh, 'The Revitalization Movement in the Catholic Church', *Sociological Analysis*, 1991, 52, 1-12 at 7.

as being marked by conflict and then some resolution, which may include a reconnection on a more significant level with the religious tradition. As a result of this, perhaps, as a global statement of pastoral intent, quest spirituality sees younger Catholics as displaying a spiritual strength that is expressed in different ways, most commonly in a concern for others and for the wider world. The Church needs to accompany people on their journeys and minister to them from “the side” rather than making too many demands.⁵⁵

A key feature of contemporary culture is its ineffectiveness in imparting formative religious experiences that can form the basis of a later exploration of spirituality within a specific context. This context is not the end of the search, but it does provide a strong foundation. A key contributing factor in understanding the culture in which many youth and younger adults are immersed is its lack of strong, common, formative religious experiences. Although it can only be noted here, this in turn calls into question many of the conventional models of the religious trajectory of adolescents and emerging adults. The five-fold path used by Tacey, for example, to support his argument of a spiritual resurgence among youth and young adults seems to be based on a false premise, at least as it relates to younger Catholics today. His first two stages, “1. Natal faith – I was born into a religious family, and inducted into its faith traditions; and 2. Adolescent Separation – I began to ask questions about faith in teenage life, questions for which I did not receive satisfactory or adequate answers,” simply did not exist for many post-conciliar Catholics.⁵⁶ The lack of formative religious experience marks a strong distinction between generations of Catholics and needs to be further examined as one of the important conditions that have led to the need for the new evangelization in countries such as Australia.

⁵⁵ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 6-37.

⁵⁶ Tacey, *Spirituality Revolution*, 107. Tacey seems to base his arguments on data that he gathered from his own students. There are serious methodological and ethical issues with this type of data gathering.

4.3 The Religious Socialization of Generation X

One pivotal factor that works against high levels of religious commitment but does not lead to an immediate and definite disassociation is a lack of religious socialization. Generation X-ers often lack common formative experiences in youth. In recent times, this has also marked the growth to maturity of many younger Catholics where the impact of religious socialization has been greatly weakened. Cornwall noted that religious socialization is of critical importance in encouraging and maintaining religious beliefs and practices.⁵⁷ Socialization allows the social base of religion to develop. Once this is established individuals then know how to live in the religious world inhabited by those like them. This gives rise to a certain commonality of views. One way of viewing Generation X Catholics is to draw a distinction between them and earlier generations by focusing on their religious socialization.⁵⁸ The point of discrimination is the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).⁵⁹ For pre-conciliar generations of Catholics in Australia and elsewhere, the transition from childhood to adult modes of religious affiliation were marked by a number of structural processes that ensured that the transition was supported.⁶⁰ Writing about his childhood, Moloney described this era well:

I had been brought up a practising Catholic and the social and cultural setting of my life was steady as a rock. There was no need for the Bible, as I had the Pope, the Bishop, the Priest and weekly Mass. My belief system came from the family and a Catholic schooling, reinforced by the weekly sermon, the Sacraments of the Catholic Church, and various devotions.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Marie Cornwall, 'The Social Bases of Religion: A Study of Factors Influencing Religious Belief and Commitment', *Review of Religious Research*, 1987, (29), 44-56.

⁵⁸ Jonathon Kelley and Nan Dirk De Graaf, 'National Context, Parental Socialization, and Religious Belief: Results from 15 Nations', *American Sociological Review*, 1997, vol. 62, 639-659.

⁵⁹ Alberic Stacpoole, *Vatican II: By Those Who Were There*. (London: Chapman, 1986).

⁶⁰ Karl Rahner, *Mission and Grace*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 2-17.

⁶¹ Francis J. Moloney, 'To Teach the Text: The New Testament in a New Age', *Pacifica* 11, 1998, 168.

In the 1960's, the process of religious socialization was dramatically challenged. Bausch calls this "the collapse of total Church."⁶² Another way of describing this change is as a movement away from a monopolistic Catholicism where the choices and options available to Catholics were heavily prescribed.⁶³ Generation X Catholics have little knowledge of the cohesive Catholic culture of the pre-conciliar world where religious socialization was a dominant influence.⁶⁴ As they were growing up many of the factors that had assisted the religious socialization of earlier generations were either no longer in place, gravely weakened, or in contradiction with each other. As Greeley claimed, what most affected religious socialization from a Catholic perspective was the rapidity, in historical terms, and nature of change: "When you change something that was unchangeable for 1,500 years, you are going to create a religious crisis."⁶⁵

Berger and Luckman have noted that successful socialization is dependent on common and agreed divisions in society, where socializing agents and forces are directed to the same end.⁶⁶ In medieval times, for example, the socialization of individuals was preconfigured at birth, with family and other institutions providing socialization toward a common goal, "a knight is a knight and a peasant is a peasant, to others as well as themselves."⁶⁷ In contemporary

⁶² William J. Bausch, *Catholics in Crisis? The Church Confronts Contemporary Challenges*. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999), 155.

⁶³ Changes in socialization did not just affect Catholics. Bendroth has noted that the impact on mainstream Protestants was also severe: "By the early 1960's scattered rumblings of doubt among Protestant denominational officials were clearly audible within the larger Church, echoing the louder reverberations of a culture in the throes of rapid transformation," Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children and Mainline Churches*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 119.

⁶⁴ Richard M. Rymarz, 'Lost Generation: The Cultures of Generation X Catholics', *Australasian Catholic Record*, April 81(2), 2004, 144-154.

⁶⁵ Andrew Greeley, 'The Failures of Vatican II after Twenty Years', *America*, 1982, February 6, 86-89.

⁶⁶ Berger and Luckman describe this as "a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality." Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 163.

⁶⁷ Berger and Luckman, *Social Construction*, 164.

culture, however, socialization is a far more asymmetrical and contentious phenomenon.⁶⁸ Socialization processes compete, and if religious socialization is not strong enough then individuals will be formed and socialized into other worlds. Religious socialization is largely mediated by family, peers, and institutions.⁶⁹ In a culture where religious socialization is strong, all three work together to provide if not a seamless then a harmonious process where the individual learns, in many often subtle ways, what it means to be a member of that religious group. In a seminal fashion a religious imprint is left on the core identity of the person as he or she matures.⁷⁰ In countries such as Australia, however, religious socialization among individuals is not strong, especially in the critically important early years when core identity is being established.

Establishing identity

Hammond distinguished between individual core identity and chosen identity. One's core identity, such as being born female or into a particular family, cannot be chosen and tends to endure for life in some form.⁷¹ In the early stages of life, socialization is especially important as it reinforces specific aspects of core identity. Religious socialization during this period is primarily in the family and augmented elsewhere. Contemporary culture, however, places the family under various pressures, such as how time is utilized and what choices are made from a wide array of competing priorities, and this makes the task of religious socialization much

⁶⁸ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1967), 127-148, esp. 138.

⁶⁹ Sabe argues that the classical model of religious socialization is now so tenuous that it needs to be replaced by a new conceptual model. Jordi, C. Sabe, 'The Crisis in Religious Socialization: An Analytical Proposal', *Social Compass*, 2007, 54(1), 97-111.

⁷⁰ Janice L. Templeton and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, 'The Relation Between Spiritual Development and Identity Processes', in Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Pamela Ebstynne King, Linda Wagener and Peter L. Benson, (Eds), *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006).

⁷¹ Phillip E. Hammond, 'Religion and the Persistence of Identity.' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1998, 27, 1-11.

harder.⁷² One way of conceptualizing the contemporary family dynamic is to see it in terms of what Linton describes as “design for living.”⁷³ Modern society is complex and loosely integrated and offers no overriding cultural blueprint but in its stead allows for a range of alternatives. “Life design” is the pattern of life embraced by a particular sociological group. It includes a number of determining factors but the most important is how members of the group spend their time. The family dynamic of many households in which Generation X Catholics grew up made familial religious socialization problematic. Practices such as family prayer, for example, became quite unusual. These practices became subject to choice rather than an integral and necessary part of family life – as they had been previously – and, thus, no longer contributed to the religious socialization which, in turn, weakened the establishment of core identity in the post-conciliar era.⁷⁴ Older siblings who in the past may have acted as mentors often chose to discontinue religious practice leaving no example for younger brothers and sisters to follow. The establishment of core identity raises a number of issues that are outside the scope of this thesis. One issue, however, which will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters, is the pivotal role of the family as an agent of the new evangelization. This pertains to the irreplaceable role of the family as a socializing agent and where core identity is established.

⁷² Raymond H. Potvin and Douglas M. Sloane, ‘Parental Control, Age, and Religious Practice’, *Review of Religious Research* 27, 1985, 3-14; Joep De Hart, ‘Impact of Religious Socialization in the Family’, *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 1990, vol. 3, 59-78. These authors also draw attention to the higher levels of family dysfunction, family breakdown, and blended families in contemporary culture, which destabilize the context in which religious socialization would have occurred. A prescient study, which anticipates many of the changes in Catholic family life after the post-war period is John Taylor, *The American Catholic Family*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Greenwood Press, 1956).

⁷³ Ralph Linton, *The Tree of Culture*. (New York: Knopf, 1969).

⁷⁴ Richard M. Rymarz and John D. Graham, ‘Drifting from the Mainstream: The Religious Identity of Australian Core Catholic Youth’, *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality*, 2006, 11(3), 371-383. Compare this with Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 121.

In addition to the family, secondary socialization also aids in the development of core identity.⁷⁵ Secondary socialization involves other agents such as peer groups, institutions such as schools and Churches, as well as general cultural norms and plays an important role in religious socialization.⁷⁶ Secondary socialization, too, was compromised as Generation X matured. An example of this was the declining authority of the great institutions of society, such as government, to command respect and to be followed (albeit not unquestioningly). General cultural norms also worked against religious socialization as the divergence between the cultures of the Church, at least in a formal sense, and the wider culture became greater. The movement from seeing religious practice and affiliation as a necessary part of an accepted cultural identity to seeing religious practice and affiliation as a voluntary decision is a subtle change, but one which has a profound impact. In earlier times, Christian Churches could expect society to reinforce the values and attitudes they were trying to inculcate into children and teenagers but this is now no longer the case in countries such as Australia.⁷⁷

In a culture of what Roof and McKinney have called a “new volunteerism,” where individuals respond to immediate needs from particular circumstances, it is up to each social agency to provide a rationale for people to remain associated once life circumstances change.⁷⁸ In terms of the new evangelization, the challenge is to encourage strong commitment over time and to one body and not to dissipate effort.⁷⁹ As Appleby pointed out, however, the centrifugal forces of modern culture make the task of religious groups in this area difficult, due largely to the

⁷⁵ Berger and Luckman, *Construction*, 130.

⁷⁶ Marie Cornwall, ‘The Influence of Three Agents of Religious Socialization: Family, Church, and Peers’, in David L. Thomas, (Ed), *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1997), 207-231.

⁷⁷ Bibby calls this “culturally dominant socialization,” where the culture dominates individual groups in society, Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 288.

⁷⁸ Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), esp. 21-67.

⁷⁹ David J. O’Brien, *Public Catholicism*. (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 242-252.

hegemony of the view that no decision or belief is anything more than a personal choice, one option among many.⁸⁰ Any group that wishes to claim strong allegiance must work especially hard at overcoming this cultural tendency to retain many loose associations, with no one association being privileged.

Generation X Catholics growing up

When Generation X Catholics were growing up, many of the traditional markers of Catholic identity disappeared very quickly and were not replaced with new distinctive rituals.⁸¹ For example, the practice of Confession or the First Rite Reconciliation all but disappeared, and popular expressions of piety, such as solidarities or organizations, became far less popular and visible.⁸² Extenuating the loss of identity was the emphasis placed on the harmony and continuity between the culture of the Church and the wider culture. Finke and Stark have described this as a transition from a high tension model, where a group has many beliefs and practices that set them apart from its environment, to a low tension model where such difference are relatively slight.⁸³ A group that sees itself in opposition to others has a sure means of promoting socialization into the group, as the surrounding culture can be seen as hostile and

⁸⁰ R. Scott Appleby, 'Decline or Relocation? The Catholic Presence in Church and Society, 1950-2000', in Leslie Woodcock Tentler, (Ed), *The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholicism since 1950 in the United States, Ireland & Quebec*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 208-238.

⁸¹ Andrew Greeley, *American Catholics Since the Council: An Unauthorized Report*. (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1985).

⁸² Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*. (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1985), 173-249. Many have described this breakdown of cohesive religious communities as "depillarization," a process where societies are no longer organized along confessional lines. When this occurs secularization is extremely rapid, as evidenced by the social transformation of the Netherlands and of Quebec. Dekkar and Ester, for example, estimate that the percentage of the Dutch population whose "primary ideological perception" was Catholic declined from 42% to 26% between 1958 to 1975 (the figures for the Reformed Church are even starker). Paul Dekkar and Peter Ester, 'Depillarization, Deconfessionalization and Deideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society', *Review of Religious Research*, 1996, 37(4), 325-341, at 330. Bibby reports a decrease in weekly Mass attendance in Quebec from 83% in 1957 to 23% in 1990, Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 10.

⁸³ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press), 43-44.

unwelcoming.⁸⁴ Generation X Catholics, however, were brought up in an era where denominational differences were far less important than in earlier times, and where they were no longer the “out” group – the group experiencing alienation or discrimination.⁸⁵

The post-conciliar era also brought a sense, correct or incorrect, that much of what Catholics had believed had changed or would change in the future. As a result of this, many Catholic beliefs, practices, and teachings were challenged in a way that was unimaginable before the Council. In such an atmosphere, it was understandable that many were reluctant to strongly proclaim a distinctive Catholic position on a range of issues. To take one example of this, speaking of the 1960s and 1970s, Piderit and Morey comment:

Many young Catholics, who at this time were trying to figure out what it meant to be a Catholic, did not get the message that weekly Mass attendance was part of the faith and cultural package. Rather, they got the unfortunate impression that Mass and Eucharist were nice, but not necessary.⁸⁶

This hesitancy resulted in some legitimate confusion about what were the important parts of the Tradition and how these should be passed on, and whether strong religious socialization was necessary. A wider theological consensus would have made the task of communicating meaning to a new generation less contentious.⁸⁷

The formative religious experiences of Generation X Catholics, therefore, tended to be more diffuse and idiosyncratic. A connection with the transcendent dimensions of Catholicism was often lacking. Barron also used the term “lost generation” to describe those Catholics who

⁸⁴ Duncan MacLaren, *Mission Implausible: Restoring Credibility to the Church*. (Milton Keys, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 197.

⁸⁵ Donald H. Bouma, ‘Understanding Group Life: Ten Contributions of Modern Society Stand Out as Helping People Comprehend Social Roles’, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 1991, 50(2), 57-76.

⁸⁶ John Piderit and Melanie Morey, *Renewing Parish Culture: Building for a Catholic Future*. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 76.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Anscombe, *Contraception and Chastity*. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1975); Robert Hoyt, *The Birth Control Debate*. (Kansas City: National Catholic Reporter Press, 1968); Joseph Fitzmeyer, J., *Scripture and Christology: A Statement of the Biblical Commission with a Commentary*. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 3-47.

came to maturity in this era.⁸⁸ He commented that a characteristic of this time was that, “the biblical and theological tended to be replaced by the political, the sociological, and, above all, the psychological.”⁸⁹ Generation X Catholics find it difficult to easily recall adolescent experiences that marked their enculturation into their religious tradition. This can be contrasted with earlier generations who have a far stronger, even if not always positive, recollection of being raised Catholic.⁹⁰ These experiences have been translated into a literary sub-genre.⁹¹ It is unusual, by contrast, to find accounts that depict growing up Catholic in the 1970’s or later. One constant feature of this era, however, was the continued strong enrolment in Catholic schools.⁹²

The Catholic school and Generation X

The Catholic school, in the absence of other formative influences, became a critical factor in the religious socialization of Generation X Catholics. Rymarz has identified a number of significant points that characterized the formative experience of Generation X Catholics in schools.⁹³ These include an overall positive experience. Generation X Catholics do not generally report negative or hostile feelings about their time in Catholic secondary schools. There is no doubt, however, that the religious education they received lacked educational focus. Generation X Catholics have a relatively poor understanding of the content of Catholicism, and most Generation X Catholics were never presented with a strong and coherent Catholic worldview, either at home or in educational settings. This resulted in a lack of religious content knowledge,

⁸⁸ Robert Barron, *Bridging the Great Divide: Musings of a Post-Liberal, Post-Conservative Evangelical Catholic*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 193.

⁸⁹ Barron, *Bridging*, 17. Barron’s discussion of Religiousness A (bland, abstract, and epic) and Religiousness B (spicy, concrete, and lyrical) is also very pertinent here, 11-21.

⁹⁰ These issues are discussed further in Rymarz, *Constructing*, 27-28.

⁹¹ Two examples of this subgenre are, “The Devil’s Playground,” a semi autobiographical movie by director Fred Schepisi, and Ron Blair’s one act play, “The Christian Brothers.”

⁹² Frank Martin, ‘Catholic Education in Victoria 1963–1980’ in *Catholic Education in Victoria Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*. (Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, 1983) 65-98.

⁹³ Rymarz, *Generation X*, 149-151.

a point that has been widely discussed elsewhere.⁹⁴ Because their religious socialization was weak, many Generation X Catholics have not developed a religious vocabulary that would allow them to feel at home with the Tradition at least in a cognitive sense.⁹⁵ When many Generation X Catholics speak about their lives and aspirations they frequently use spiritual or non-religious language to describe themselves and their lives. They see questions about God, prayer, and spiritual flourishing under the rubric of personal autonomy. Religious socialization, if it did occur, placed great importance on experience as opposed to direct instruction and participation in religious ritual.⁹⁶ To illustrate this point, for many Generation X Catholics, their dominant memory of secondary school was the retreat, a time largely given over to shared reflection, which was an emerging part of the whole school curriculum in that period.⁹⁷

If students' expectations and experiences of Catholic schools had changed, the same could be said of teachers. By the 1970's, the teaching profile of staff in Catholic schools had radically altered.⁹⁸ By far the most significant change was the inexorable rise in the number of lay teachers. The Council encouraged the laity to see themselves as an irreplaceable part of the missionary nature of the Church.⁹⁹ This understanding emerged out of a key Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ, which brought with it changes in the perception of teaching as both a career in the conventional sense and a living out of a vocation.

⁹⁴ Marcellin Flynn and Magdelana Mok, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12, Students in Catholic Schools*. (Sydney: Catholic Education Commission, 2002). John C. Cavadini, 'Ignorant Catholics: The Alarming Void in Religious Education', *Commonweal*, 131, April 2004, 22.

⁹⁵ Rochford makes a similar point about the use of religious language. Denis Rochford, 'The Faith of Young Australians', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 78(3), 2001, 300-309.

⁹⁶ Strommen and Hardel associate strong identity with a series of ritualized practices that are part of group affiliation. Mereton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*. (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 2000).

⁹⁷ Richard M. Rymarz, 'When I was at School', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2001, 24(1), 20-32.

⁹⁸ Frank Martin. 'Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980', in *Catholic Education in Victoria Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*. (Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, 1983).

⁹⁹ LG, 31

Many schools were undergoing profound structural changes and this had an impact of teaching staff.¹⁰⁰ One example of this was the amalgamation of schools often as a consequence of the virtual disappearance of teaching religious. In many instances, single sex schools merged into one co-educational facility and control of the school shifted from a religious congregation to a central agency such as the Catholic Education Office. Class sizes, which were enormous in the 1950's by present standards, reduced significantly in the 1970's and 1980s due largely to government funding which allowed for the employment of more teachers. Among other things, this altered the student-teacher relationship and allowed for a more personal relationship that would become an important factor in the way religious education was taught.

In classroom religious education in the 1970s, there was a pronounced shift toward more experiential pedagogical models.¹⁰¹ In many ways, the experiential approach to religious education was anticipated by the short-lived kerygmatic paradigm.¹⁰² Crawford and Rossiter have typified this era as a movement toward religious socialization and away from religious education, making classroom religious education "less school like" and more personal.¹⁰³ These changes placed great emphasis on the learner and his or her experience of the world. This can be contrasted with the traditional style of religious education, which relied more on didactic instruction and authoritative texts.¹⁰⁴ The change in religious education affected not just process but also content, that is, the material that went into the curriculum and classroom teaching. The idea that key concepts and formulas needed to be at the core of the curriculum was replaced by a

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *Catholic Education*, esp. 23-32.

¹⁰¹ Graham Rossiter, 'A cognitive basis for affective learning in classroom religious education', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 1997, 4(1), 4-11. Michael Buchanan, 'Pedagogical drift: the evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education', *Religious Education*, 2005, 100 (1), 20-37.

¹⁰² Ryan, *Foundations*, 94-98.

¹⁰³ Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, *Reasons for Living: Education and Young People's Search for Meaning, Identity and Spirituality*. (Melbourne: ACER Press, 2006), 424.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Rymarz, 'Texts, Texts! An Overview of Some Religious Education Textbooks and Other Resources used in Catholic Schools from the 1950's to the 1970's', *Journal of Religious Education*, 2003, 51(1), 50-57.

more dynamic understanding of Revelation that was again rooted in the learner's existential sense of how God acted in his or her life.¹⁰⁵ These changes produced a great deal of confusion, which was addressed by the development of Guidelines for Religious Education first in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and then elsewhere. These Guidelines sought to apply some rigor and system to teaching while remaining faithful to an experiential approach to religious education.¹⁰⁶

In the absence of strong communal religious socialization, like many of their contemporaries, Generation X Catholics constructed an identity from the forms that dominated the wider culture. This resulted in a personal, private, and atomized identity.¹⁰⁷ For many Generation X Catholics, their socialization was into a culture that was suspicious of authority. For them, the idea of unquestioned magisterial teaching was not even a memory, much less something to which they could give strong allegiance.¹⁰⁸ With this background, many Generation X Catholics developed a pattern of religious life where strong expressions of belief and practice, such as regular Mass attendance, were lacking.¹⁰⁹ In their place were weaker connections characterized by attendance at Church on special occasions such as Christmas or weddings, baptisms and funerals. The predominant link to the Church for Generation X Catholics, in this analysis, is their ongoing connection with Catholic schools. As their experience of them was, on the whole, positive, many Generation X Catholics want the same

¹⁰⁵ McDermott, J, 'Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J.: The Man in his Times for Christ's Church', in McDermott and Gavin (Eds.), *Pope John Paul II*, 224-226.

¹⁰⁶ Terence Lovat, *What is This Thing Called R.E. A decade On?* (Australia: Social Science Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁷ Paul R. Loeb, *Generation at the Crossroads*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁸ Therese Pirola, 'Children of Vatican II: Young Adults in the Church Today', *Australasian Catholic Record*, 1987, 74(1), 1987, 314-321; Naomi Turner, *Ways of Belonging. Stories of Catholics 1910-1990*. (Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1992).

¹⁰⁹ The issue of the mentality of young Catholics after leaving school has long been a concern. Writing in 1976, in a little known pamphlet, Pell expressed his anxiety in these words: "The main concern is that so many young people are leaving our schools without a commitment to Christ as Teacher and Saviour, without any real notion of the importance and transcendence of God, and with little loyalty or feeling for the visible Church." George Pell, *Bread Stones or Fairy Floss*. (Melbourne: ACTS, 1976), 12.

experience, which was not one of religious enculturation, for their own children. Enrolments in Catholic schools remain strong in most parts of Australia, therefore, because these schools meet the needs and expectations of most parents for a much more diffuse experience.

In summary, the expression of Catholicism, in which many Generation X Catholics grew to maturity, can be described as communitarian.¹¹⁰ It is characterized by weak religious socialization. Individuals see themselves as part of a wider group, but this expression is not part of their core identity and, as a result, does not have a strong impact on the way they live. Being Catholic brings with it advantages such as being able to maintain links with key institutions such as schools and with family of origin. In terms of the new evangelization, many Generation X Catholics are comfortable with this level of commitment and are averse to being seen as stridently religious.¹¹¹ To encourage higher levels of religious commitment is a difficult task. Generation X Catholics tend to reflect the views of the wider culture into which they were enculturated. Just like their peers, they do not embrace commitment or close affiliations, but insist on keeping their options open. They like to see themselves as part of a broad community and are often uneasy in establishing boundaries between themselves and others on religious grounds. In this sense, Generation X Catholics are clearly post-conciliar, an era marked by the relative absence of sectarianism.

¹¹⁰ Richard M. Rymarz, 'Communitarian and Commitment Models of Religious Identity', *Journal of Religious Education*, 55(3), 54-60.

¹¹¹ There is more than a strong echo here, as quoted earlier, of Sheila Larsen's, "I'm not a religious fanatic."

4.4 An Overview of Generation Y

Generational changes?

The various descriptors of Generation X apply, with perhaps greater force, to subsequent generations. The lack of religious socialization of younger Catholics should be more acute than for Generation X as the factors that mediate religious socialization are even more imperiled today than they were during the childhood and adolescence of Generation X. Gallagher argued that many young adults today have few or no formative experiences with religion.¹¹² This should equate to less Catholics expressing high levels of commitment as a function of age. One example of the direction of religious affiliation amongst Catholics has been supplied by D'Antonio and his colleagues.¹¹³ D'Antonio *et al.* observed that a trend to less commitment and greater disaffiliation seems to be becoming established. They report comparisons between generational cohorts of Catholics. The table below shows the decline in commitment to the Church amongst American Catholics. The contrast between Generation X and Generation Y and earlier generations is marked.

¹¹² Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 110-112.

¹¹³ D'Antonio et al, *American Catholics Today*, 38-42.

Table 2. Level of commitment in demographic categories in US Catholics, 2005

Generation	High Commitment %	Medium Commitment %	Low Commitment %
Pre-Vatican II (born 1940 or earlier	43	46	12
Vatican II (born 1941-1960	20	68	12
Post-Vatican II (born 1961-1978) identified in this study as Gen X	17	67	16
Millennials (born between 1979-1987)	0	73	27
Identified in this study as Gen Y			
All Catholics	21	64	15

Given the nature of quantitative statistical analysis, the finding that no millennials reported a high level of commitment to the Church is remarkable. The analysis was based on a randomly selected sample of 875 self-identified Catholics; 9%, approximately 79 individuals, were identified as millennials, making it a relatively small sample and thus it should be treated with some caution. Notable also in the table is the high number of Generation X and Generation Y respondents in the middle category, indicating an intermediary or “wait and see” attitude as opposed to low commitment or stronger disaffiliation.¹¹⁴ This is further evidence of Generation X and Y typically wanting to keep their options open. The table also confirms the radical change in religious belief and practice that occurred between pre-conciliar Catholics and the generation immediately following them.¹¹⁵ This is the fundamental generation gap since

¹¹⁴ Avril Baigent, *The Y Church Report*. (RC Diocese of Northampton, 2002), 14-15.

¹¹⁵ Gary Bouma and Michael Mason, ‘Baby Boomers Downunder: The Case of Australia’, in Wade C. Roof, John Carroll and David Roozen, (Eds), *The Postwar Generation and Establishment Religion: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995), 39-53.

following generations, with regard to religious belief and practice, resemble each other quite closely.

The spirit of Generation Y

A further examination of younger population cohorts is necessary to assist in the Australian contextualization of the new evangelization. The departure point for this discussion is Australian research on 13-24 year olds (born between 1981-1994) conducted by Mason and his colleagues.¹¹⁶ One of their most significant findings was that in terms of religious beliefs and practices, Generation Y are very similar to their parents (45-59 years old). This again underlines the similarities between Generations X and Y.¹¹⁷ Mason and his colleagues developed a typology of Generation Y to describe major groupings of spiritual and religious expression. Half of the Generation Y cohort, 54%, did not identify as Christian. They were classified as either New Age, secular, or “other” which included non-Christian religions.¹¹⁸ Of the 46% Christian, 9% were committed, 8% regular, 12% marginal, and 17% nominal.¹¹⁹ The numbers of Generation Y who express membership of a particular denomination has declined.¹²⁰ Amongst Generation Y Catholics, 13% were committed, 17% regular, 25% marginal, 26% nominal, and 18% New Age.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 131.

¹¹⁷ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 134.

¹¹⁸ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 69.

¹¹⁹ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 141. In terms of the interest of this thesis it is worth noting the criteria used here to identify committed Christians. They are: Identification with a Christian denomination, definite belief in God and Jesus (that Jesus was God and rose from the dead), attendance at Church weekly or more often, praying weekly or more often, having little belief or involvement in alternative spiritualities, 143. Criteria for other classifications are also given on 144-147. They also note that interest in esoteric “New Age” spiritualities by Gen Y is relatively low and has often been overstated in public discourse.

¹²⁰ Amongst Gen Y Catholics the percentage decline is 21% in the five-year period between the 1996 and 2001 census, Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 75-76. Of the entire sample 46% of Gen Y were classified as traditional Christian, 28% secular, 17% new age and 9% other.

¹²¹ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 142.

Thirty percent of Generation Y are moving away from Christian origins.¹²² This is indicative of a generational movement away from Christianity, which has become stronger as the chains of memory that bind individuals to particular traditions become looser. This finding has great significance for the underlying rationale of the new evangelization, as it suggests that the trajectory for many, who today could be described as having lost a sense of the Gospel but who are not totally disconnected from the faith Tradition of origin, is toward, over time, complete estrangement. Bibby described this process well when he commented on intergenerational religious affiliation data:

The adult change has not involved a movement to outright atheism so much as a movement from decisiveness about belief in God to tentative belief or increasing agnosticism. With teens we see what amounts to an ongoing intergenerational shift – from tentativeness to agnosticism, and from agnosticism to atheism.¹²³

This estrangement may be accompanied by some identification with spirituality, but this should be of little comfort for Christian leaders for reasons that are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six of this thesis. At this stage, it is enough to note that if, in the end, more and more Christians become disconnected from their Churches, it matters little if this path is smooth and imperceptible or sudden and obvious. Most in Generation Y, 51%, did believe in God but this often did not resemble the personal Christian God. A significant proportion of Generation Y, 32%, were unsure about belief in God.¹²⁴ Moreover, the trend is away from commitment to more marginal and nominal expression of Christian belief and practice. Generation Y Catholics are more likely than older generations to agree that morals are relative, although on many other

¹²² Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 185. This can be contrasted with Bouma's discussion of "the rise of spirituality," Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 61-63.

¹²³ Reginald W. Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation is Responding to Change and Choice*. (Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books, 2009), 169.

¹²⁴ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 83.

measures of belief they are very similar to their parents, and content to remain within the tradition into which they were born rather than seeking out new modes of religious expression.¹²⁵

This confirms the view that Generation Y, like their parents, are keen to keep their options open and not to commit to any view exclusively. This represents a safe option in that it does not compel the person either to believe or not believe. To find peace and happiness most Generation Y-ers turn to friendship, music, work, or study. Few turn to religious or spiritual resources even those who have some connection with religious groups. This suggests that even when these links exist they are not strong or directional. Generation Y tends to be highly individualistic in outlook and at the same time is not actively searching for meaning and purpose in life. Most seem content to live in a fairly proscribed circle of friends and family, to search for happiness and to avoid above all else forcing views on others.

Other Australian research

In other Australian research, Rymarz and Graham have specifically examined active Australian Catholic youth.¹²⁶ In this work, following the descriptors used by Fulton and his colleagues, the term ‘active Catholic’ was defined as having two of the following three criteria: regular Church attendance, regular Church attendance and involvement in the parish by parent(s), and being involved in something *extra* as a result of faith commitment, such as being part of a prayer group.¹²⁷ For most active Catholic youth, their links with the Church can be typically described as familial (either strong or weak). It is not something that they themselves see as important but something which arises out of a commitment by their families. They are

¹²⁵ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 134.

¹²⁶ Rymarz and Graham, *Drifting*, 375. Richard M. Rymarz and John D. Graham, ‘Going to Church: Attitudes to Church Attendance Amongst Australian Core Catholic Youth’, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 2005, 26 (1), 55-64.

¹²⁷ Fulton et al, *Young Catholics*, 7-9.

also not well networked with other active Catholic youth.¹²⁸ Most of their friends are reflective of the wider community. Most active Catholic youth are unable to articulate well their religious views, especially those that distinguish them from other groups in the community. Active Catholic youth find it hard to have their questions answered and to identify suitable religious mentors who will assist them to make the transition to adult models of faith. There was also clear evidence of a developing disengagement among many active Catholic youth. Many students expressed the view that in the future their level of commitment and involvement would lessen. Some, perceptively, saw this as a result of decreased familial interaction corresponding with moving free of parental expectation and influence. In this way, they were repeating the pattern of their older siblings. This was, again, not a complete disaffiliation but a movement to a more culturally acceptable position where they do not disavow their religious heritage, but where it becomes much less important and requires very little of them as individuals. Finally, the active Catholic youth had great difficulty in articulating what they believed in or what the Church taught.¹²⁹

Soul searching

One of the largest on-going projects examining youth spirituality, led by Christian Smith, examines the religious affiliation of American teenagers.¹³⁰ Much of this work supports the claim that many teenagers today express a form of religious affiliation that makes their beliefs and behaviors hard to distinguish from general cultural norms. In terms of connection and strong

¹²⁸ Compare with Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 121. Mason and his colleagues discuss this figure in light of the problem of over reporting in survey work.

¹²⁹ Rymarz and Graham probed understanding in two areas, the Eucharist and Jesus. See Richard M. Rymarz and John D. Graham, 'Australian Core Catholic Youth, Catholic Schools and Religious Education', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2006, 28(1) 79-88. D'Antonio and his colleagues noted a similar problem, D'Antonio et al, *American Catholics Today*, 82.

¹³⁰ Christian Smith and Melinda Lindquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005).

identification with their Tradition, Catholic teenagers have the second weakest affiliation just ahead of Jews, but well behind conservative Protestant groups and Mormons.¹³¹ Most US teenagers find it extremely difficult to explain what they believe. Smith and Denton argued that many religious communities are failing rather badly in religiously engaging and educating their youth. Where engagement and education of youth by their religious communities is weak, the faith of teenagers tends to degenerate into “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (MTD).¹³² This belief, in essence, sees religion as a moral system which, at best, generates behaviors that benefit the individual. It is highly personal and positivistic and the notion of God is relegated, not unlike in the thought of some eighteenth-century philosophers, to a kind of impersonal, distant force that is part of the universe but not in an involved or decisive way. This type of belief is not unique to Christians, but forms the background of much current discussion of the cultural forces that shape society in countries such as Australia.¹³³ In many ways, MTD is a type of default position to which most without strong counter views can easily subscribe.

MTD can also be seen as an expression of a contemporary understanding of spirituality. This is not characterized by what Mason and his colleagues described as “a conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent,” but a far more elusive sense that lacks discriminatory power.¹³⁴ The fact that many in Generation Y have not eschewed an abstract belief in God, and in some senses are trying to live a moral life, does not tell us much about them. Spirituality for them is not something that is transformative and influences in a profound way how the person thinks or behaves.¹³⁵ The spiritual dimension of life, at least in its original conception, is not strongly developed in Generation Y. A private, personal, and diffuse spirituality is often

¹³¹ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 23-37.

¹³² Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 162-170.

¹³³ Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 1-35.

¹³⁴ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 13.

¹³⁵ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 182-185.

evident.¹³⁶ This makes few demands and can be incorporated into a variety of worldviews, Christian or otherwise.

The religious trajectory of many in Generation Y, furthermore, seems to be away from strong religious commitment. In a five-year follow up study, participants in the original Smith and Denton study were re-interviewed.¹³⁷ Here, emerging adults were the least religious group in the United States and the most likely to explicitly move away from religious origins. In the ensuing five years, for example, the proportion of the sample group identifying as Catholic had declined from 24% to 18%. By way of comparison, the not-religious group had risen from 14% to 27%.¹³⁸ Certainly, most emerging adults see religion as having a positive effect as a place where basic moral principles are acquired, but beyond this religion has an increasingly minor role to play. Smith and Snell describe this as a view among many emerging adults that they have “graduated” from religion in the sense that they have gained from it all that they need and have now moved on.¹³⁹

To summarize this section on Generation Y, these youth are particularly challenging for those who seek to engage them in discussion about religion, because they like to keep their options open and are unlikely to commit to something if they cannot see some tangible benefits arising.¹⁴⁰ They are aware of the range of choices that are available to them, including the option to select to have some low level allegiance to a number of positions. D’Antonio and his colleagues have suggested that one way of regarding youth and young adults today is as shoppers

¹³⁶ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 201-214.

¹³⁷ Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³⁸ Smith and Snell, *Transition*, 114.

¹³⁹ Smith and Snell, *Transition*, 286-287.

¹⁴⁰ David Tuohy and Penny Cairns, *Youth 2K*. (Dublin: Marino Institute of Education, 2000), 48-49.

or consumers.¹⁴¹ This consumer analogy to describe young people and religion has also been used by Bauman and others.¹⁴² One of the earliest uses of the concept was by Kavanaugh.¹⁴³ The idea of the contemporary young person as a consumer rather than a seeker is gaining increasing currency, and seems to fit well with the conceptual frameworks outlined in this thesis. Mason and his colleagues expressed this as a movement from obligation to consumption.¹⁴⁴

4.5 The New Catholic Mentality: A Synthesis

It has been argued in this chapter that the religious experience and expression of post-conciliar Catholics, referred to here as Generation X and Y, is different from previous generations. A useful way of synthesizing the issues raised in the preceding discourse is to speak of a new Catholic mentality. Furthermore, understanding this mentality provides us with a powerful way of conceptualizing how the need for the new evangelization arose and the challenges facing it.

Generation X and Y and those who come after them, have far more in common with each other than with the generation whose formation was shaped by the monopolistic pre-conciliar era or the immediate period of transition after the Second Vatican Council. Many Catholics today, born well after the Council, are characterized by a number of features, one of which is a more casual, less committed type of religious affiliation. Whilst not disavowing Catholic identity completely, it is weaker than previous generations. What seems to be lacking here is a sense of strong commitment and personal conversion in many Catholics today, especially younger ones.

¹⁴¹ D'Antonio et al, *American Catholics Today*, 149-150. For a more detailed discussion of consumer culture see, David Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), esp. 8-28.

¹⁴² Zygmunt Bauman, *Imitations of Postmodernity*. (London: Routledge), 222-225. Crawford and Rossiter, *Reasons for Living*, 181-192. Paul Louis Metzger, *Consuming Jesus: Beyond Race and Class Divisions in a Consumer Church*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), esp. 13-39.

¹⁴³ John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 25th Anniversary Edition, 2006). This was first published in 1981.

¹⁴⁴ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 255-272.

This does not equate, in most cases, to hostility toward religion but rather a sense that religious belief does not have a significant impact on how life is lived or on major life-shaping choices. Many Catholics lack an identity that makes them different or distinctive from others in the general culture. Different here does not have a moral connotation. It does not mean better, but it does refer to a clear and obvious way of living and of believing that sets apart the believer from others. One way of marking this difference is by being prepared to make significant life decisions on the basis of deeply held religious convictions. These decisions may involve some personal cost. Many younger Catholics, however, seem more content to minimize the demands that being a Catholic may place on them.

In terms of the new evangelization, many Catholics, especially youth and younger adults, have lost a strong sense of the Gospel and of fellowship with others in Christ. In ecclesiological terms, this situation is not in keeping with seeing the Church as a communion of disciples, but seems to suggest a more sociological understanding of Church as a horizontal association of individuals sharing some common interests and goals.

A key factor in understanding the religious affiliation and commitment of Catholics today and into the future are changes in religious socialization in the post-conciliar period. The pre-conciliar mentality, which was heavily marked by both strong religious socialization and the impact of intense and sudden change, is no longer the dominant narrative of most Catholics. As a result, the idea that Catholics need to be shaken out of a complacency that arises from progressing through life in a relatively unreflective mode needs to be challenged. Catholics are no longer carried along by their membership of a strong and cohesive group that facilitates their movement toward adult forms of faith expression.

Collapse of the “conveyor belt”

Metaphorically speaking the “conveyor belt” that moved Catholics from cradle to grave has irretrievably broken down. Younger Catholics today have many more options before them, and without a strong socialized sense of religious belonging are more likely to exercise this choice than to be active in a community that does not occupy an important part of their life. One choice that many make is to retain some allegiance without ever taking this to a deep, personal, or transformative level. In terms of how Pope John Paul II conceived the new evangelization, a profound connection with the salvific Christ is usually lacking. This is one consequence of a greatly attenuated sense of God. It is one thing to say that God exists but quite another to enter into a relationship with the awe inspiring and personal God revealed in Scripture and elsewhere.¹⁴⁵

Another feature of the new Catholic mentality as described in this chapter is recognition that the Church, at present in countries such as Australia, in an historical sense, has a much diminished capacity to influence wider culture and the lives of individuals. The days when the Church represented, if only even in popular consciousness, a powerful monopoly capable of teaching with uncritical authority appears to be over.¹⁴⁶ It does not have unlimited resources or energy and these should be prudently directed to areas where they are most likely to be effective. An important consequence of the breakdown in communal socialization is the recognition that, in order to nurture and sponsor religious commitment, especially at transition points in life, little can be taken for granted. Rather, the Church must be prepared to constantly evangelize. As well as being prudent this is also being true to its missionary identity. In the future, Catholic

¹⁴⁵ Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, *American Piety in the 21st Century: New Insights to the Depth and Complexity of Religion in the United States*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004).

¹⁴⁶ Mason and his colleagues make a similar point, Mason, *Generation Y*, 338. See also RM, 30.1. Griffiths suggests, following *Redemptoris Missio*, that Christians adapt a threefold approach to evangelization comprising proclamation, persuasion, and presentation, Griffiths, *Diversity*, esp. 133-135.

socialization will recede even further into the background. It cannot, moreover, be recreated anymore than the world and mentality of, for example, pre-Revolutionary French Catholicism can be. This is not to say, however, that nothing can be learned from the pre-conciliar period or that the Council marked a decisive break with Tradition. On the contrary, Catholics need to be able to feel at home in the broad expanse of their history and Tradition. This involves discernment and a clear and firm sense of the needs of today. The beacon for determining how the past should be best appropriated is the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, interpreted within a hermeneutic of continuity. If we take as the norms for interpreting the teachings of the Second Vatican Council those provided by the 1985 Synod of Bishops, a firm basis for emphasizing the continuity of the Church's life and teaching is established. These norms are summarized by Dulles into six points, and the fifth of these reads: "The Council must be interpreted in continuity with the great Tradition of the Church, including earlier councils."¹⁴⁷ A change of emphasis, for example, in showing how the Council reaffirmed or renewed key teachings may be in order especially for those younger Catholics who have no experience of older mentalities.¹⁴⁸

4.6 An Epilogue: A Vignette of the New Religious Landscape

A dominant discourse in contemporary Catholicism has been to draw a contrast between the pre and post-conciliar eras. There are numerous instances of this, but one example is the pedagogical approach taken with parents whose children are to receive sacraments in Catholic

¹⁴⁷ Avery Dulles, 'Vatican II: The Myth and the Reality', *America*, 2003, February 24, 188. In an interesting reflection O'Malley commented, "As they stand these norms could hardly be improved upon. They need to be completed by a seventh norm that takes account of discontinuity." By this O'Malley does not mean discontinuity to "substantive teaching" but to certain historically conditioned beliefs and practices. John W. O'Malley, 'Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?' in Stephen Schloesser, (Ed), *Vatican II. Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 84.

¹⁴⁸ Such a modification was already being suggested by Dulles over thirty years ago. Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), esp. 17-31.

primary schools. The author is not aware of any published study which has systematically examined these presentations, but he relies only on personal experience. This is not intended to be an empirical argument but does illuminate several of the stated principles. As such, it serves as what Higgins calls a “type of micro-narrative,” a brief story that is both dense and illustrative.¹⁴⁹

Held in the evening, information sessions give parents a general introduction to the sacrament their child will be receiving. In the case of the sacrament of Penance, a common strategy is to contrast “Confession” before and after the Second Vatican Council. This poses at least two problems. Parents who in 2009 have children in grades 3 or 4 (aged 8 or 9) can, for the most part, be assumed to have had little or no experience of the pre-conciliar Church. In the future, this lack of experience will only become more acute. It should be realized that all references to the Church before the Council may make an impression on older baby boomers or their parents, but for those typically attending information sessions in the school or parish hall now and in the future, this is an era of receding historical interest only. The Second Vatican Council took place approximately 50 years ago, well before today’s parents of primary school children were born. To the untutored ear, moreover, talk of “Confession” before and after the Council may give the impression that a new discovery has been made and that what was done in the past has now been discarded. To an audience who may be attending under sufferance, this message may only confirm their lack of interest in exploring their religious heritage. Secondly, the religious socialization of these parents and their children has, on the whole, been weak and this is unlikely to change in the future. Most parents will have had only a limited experience of

¹⁴⁹ Stephen H. Higgins, ‘The Value of Anecdotal Evidence’, in Lorne Tepperman and Harley Dickinson, (Eds), *Reading Sociology: Canadian Perspectives*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11-16, at 11.

the sacrament of Penance.¹⁵⁰ To contrast “Confession” before and after the Council is to completely misunderstand their reality.

In terms of the new evangelization, in general, it may be more appropriate to proceed on the basis that those to be evangelized have only ever encountered a weak religious socialization, one that was never challenged or quickly transformed. Whilst not discounting the importance of the tensions and changes that emerged after the Second Vatican Council, these may be an example of what this author has called “the boomer dialogues.”¹⁵¹ These issues have great resonance for older population cohorts but younger generations are not part of this conversation as their formative experiences were quite different and much more diffuse, exposed as they were to “chill winds of modernity.”¹⁵² Instead of assuming much “baggage” on the part of parents with children in Catholic schools, for example, it may be sounder to proceed on the basis that much of what is being presented at information nights and similar events is being addressed to an audience that does not have a strong sacramental sense in either cognitive or affective dimensions. A more evangelical tone may be in order, one that highlights what the Tradition is offering.¹⁵³

Concluding Comments

Lack of socialization and the currency of diffuse spirituality have important consequences. One of the most significant is that many younger Catholics do not disassociate

¹⁵⁰ For an excellent account of the Catholic experience of going to Confession and how this changed after the Council see, James M. O’Toole, ‘In the Court of Conscience: American Catholics and Confession’, in James M. O’Toole, (Ed), *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth Century America*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

¹⁵¹ Rymarz, *Constructing*, 24-33, at 29.

¹⁵² Bernard Lonergan, ‘Belief: Today’s Issue’ in William F. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrell (Eds), *A Second Collection*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 93.

¹⁵³ For a superb example of a boomer dialogue, see *Compass*, 10 April 2008, Obtained on 11/11/2008 at: <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s2210667.htm>. All references to the journal *Compass: A Review of Topical Theology* are without page numbers as it was accessed on line and page numbers did not appear.

from the Church completely. For many, the weak positive experience, whilst not cultivating strong commitment, does not close the door to a more fragile connection. All of this is indicative of what can be called a new Catholic mentality. The discussion around the new evangelization in countries such as Australia needs to take serious account of this change in basic narrative and assumptions. The experience of transition, which was so formative of older Catholics, is no longer a dominant discourse. What has replaced it is far more ineffable and more easily typified by what is absent and, as such, is not reactive or hostile. Many people today, especially younger ones, are aware of the options available to them and can be typified as consumers. Whilst the work of evangelization may be more difficult, it does present new opportunities for outreach, especially if religious communities are able to offer something of perceived value. Here we can return to Dulles' third categorization of the relationship between the Church and culture to provide a way forward. If we conceive of the immediate post-conciliar period as marked by a transition from confrontation to synthesis, it may be appropriate now to move into a more transformative phase.¹⁵⁴ In this phase, there is reciprocity between the Church and wider culture. On the one hand, the Church is influenced by the prevailing culture and, on the other hand, the Church is able to shape culture. This is based on the Church having both something to offer and a willingness to impart this.

The new evangelization can be interpreted on a number of levels, but as Pope John Paul II pointed out, it is in its essence a reorientation of people toward Christ. It is also a manifest living out of this commitment. Seen in these terms this is something that the Church has to offer wider culture, a proclamation that Christ calls those who have been described here as loosely affiliated Generation Y and Generation X to communion with Him. Pope John XXIII captured

¹⁵⁴ Dulles, *Reshaping*, 34-50.

this notion well when he commented: “It is the Church which must take Christ to the world.”¹⁵⁵

The commitment to do this is prescribed at least in a theoretical sense because, as pointed out in Chapter Two of this thesis, the Church’s deepest identity calls it to evangelize.

Changes in religious socialization and associated factors are, however, only one way to understand the current Australian context of the new evangelization. The following chapter examines the new evangelization through a more theological lens, while still exploring the second research question concerning what conditions have led to the need for the new evangelization in countries such as Australia. Using some of the thought of Bernard Lonergan, it addresses the social reality in countries such as Australia and utilizes concepts such as transcendence and conversion to explain further the need for and the scope of the new evangelization. Thus, the following chapter seeks to provide another perspective on some of the points raised here and to thereby drive forward the overall argument of the thesis.

¹⁵⁵ Radio message of Pope John XXIII, 11 September 1962. Obtained on 24/9/2008 from: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxxiii_spe_19620911_ecumenical-council_it.html.

Chapter 5: Conversion, Transcendence, and the New Evangelization: A Perspective from Lonergan

Introduction

This chapter seeks to continue and deepen the discourse on the second question proposed in the introduction: “What conditions have led to the need for the new evangelization in countries such as Australia?” The previous chapter of this thesis argued that younger generations of Catholics are products of a social and cultural milieu that has changed significantly in recent decades. A feature of the formation of younger Catholics was a relatively weak religious socialization. This has a number of consequences for understanding the social context of the new evangelization. In this chapter, a more theological perspective is examined. The chapter considers the interface between Lonergan’s thought and the new evangelization by using some of his key ideas. His approach to self-transcendence and conversion serves to expand our understanding of the conditions that have given rise to the new evangelization.

The content of this chapter is presented under seven headings: a) Love and Conversion; b) The New Cultural Situation and the Search for Self-Transcendence; c) Community and Conversion; d) Seeing Evangelization in a Cultural Context; e) The Need for Authenticity; f) Utilizing Carriers of Meaning; and, g) Addressing the Lack of Technical Knowledge.

5.1 Love and Conversion

Many Catholics today could be described as having an acquaintance with God without this relationship ever developing to a deeper, more profound level. This is another way of describing the religious affiliation of Sheila Larson and many others of her vintage.¹ The sense of God that is conveyed in this affiliation is a theistic conception. God exists in some ineffable form, inhabits some type of moral universe, and values upright behavior, but is defined by remoteness from everyday life. This is in direct contrast with Lonergan's conception of the Divine.² He described the quest for God in human life in terms of love and conversion. Lonergan likened true conversion to being in love with God, and this in turn had many parallels with human love: "For the love of God, being in love with God, can be as full, as dominant, as overwhelming and as lasting an experience as human love."³ It follows that if someone is in love then he or she is likely to manifest this love in ways that overlap with the descriptors of commitment given in the previous chapter. Absence of this love, on the other hand, could be another way of conceptualizing what is a key insight of the new evangelization, namely, the loss by so many today of an animating sense of the Gospel.

Exogenous and endogenous conversion

In his discussion of religious conversion, Carrier made a classical distinction between exogenous and endogenous conversion.⁴ Exogenous conversion is linked to some external event,

¹ Bellah et al, *Habits*, 221.

² "I have conceived being in love with God as an ultimate fulfillment of man's capacity for self transcendence," Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 111.

³ Bernard Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento" in Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, (Eds), *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 222-23. Compare this with a more formal definition: "Conversion... is a perceptible change in one's religious identity, a conscious self transformation, which is often discussed and proclaimed for all to see," Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, *Religious Behaviour*, 114.

⁴ Herve Carrier, *The Sociology of Religious Belonging*. (New York: Herder and Herder), 70-74.

which “upset[s] and re-orientate[s] the fundamental attitude of the subject.”⁵ Endogenous conversion, which is the process written about most eloquently by Newman in his *Apologia*, is an interior process leading to a transformation of consciousness marked by an almost simultaneous disintegration of the previous self with new insight and understanding emerging.⁶ Lonergan’s sense of conversion falls within the endogenous category. Endogenous conversion can be an almost imperceptible movement, but it remains one that is active and engages all aspects of the person.⁷ As Wilson pointed out, using Augustine of Hippo as a model, conversion in the post-modern world is a dynamic process that engages the whole person and needs to be seen in individual terms and not as a mass movement.⁸ Although it can be imperceptible, conversion makes a radical difference to how persons see themselves, others, and their place in the world.⁹ It echoes the Pauline theme of the new creation: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old one has passed away and, behold, the new has come.”¹⁰ Conversion is the culmination of a long process and is intimately associated with the culture in which people are embedded.¹¹ In light of the elusiveness and importance of endogenous conversion, an examination of contemporary culture can shed light on how the new evangelization can be better understood and then implemented.

⁵ Carrier, *Religious Belonging*, 70.

⁶ Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neo-Scholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 106.

⁷ Anthony Kelly, *A New Imagining*. (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1990), 63.

⁸ Phillip Wilson, ‘Shaping the Future of the Church’, *Origins*, 2007, 78, 37-41, at 40.

⁹ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Toward a Post-Critical Philosophy*. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 149-151.

¹⁰ 2 Cor. 5:15.

¹¹ Peter Halama and Julia Halamova, ‘Process of Religious Conversion in the Catholic Charismatic Movement: A Qualitative Analysis’, *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 2005, 27(1), 69-92.

5.2 The New Cultural Situation and the Search for Self-Transcendence

Classical and empirical culture

Lonergan argued that contemporary culture had moved away from the premises and assumptions of earlier times, and this required a reformulation of many of the suppositions theologians bring to their task. This alteration of the cultural matrix in which Christianity exists is almost an inevitable part of Church history:

Changes...occurred when the first Christians moved from Palestine into the Roman Empire...when the Empire succumbed to the Dark Ages...when the medieval Church built its cathedrals with their schools and founded universities...when Scholasticism yielded to Humanism, the renaissance, the Reformation and the Counter reformation.¹²

Lonergan experienced Catholic culture in Canada, England, Italy, and elsewhere prior to the Council.¹³ He described his early formation as being very much in the classical mode, even though this culture was under serious challenge, especially outside the Catholic world of the early twentieth century. He argued that contemporary culture had changed from a classical to an empirical matrix.¹⁴ The change in culture that he is concerned with is a movement over hundreds of years. For Catholicism though, the “massive breakthrough” from classical to a modern empirical culture occurred at the Second Vatican Council.¹⁵

Classical culture is normative and abstract.¹⁶ It does not conceive of itself as a culture among many but the one that all should aspire to, “the only culture any right-minded and cultivated person would name [as] culture.”¹⁷ In the classical era, which began to seriously erode from the beginning of the seventeenth century, theology was directed to a clear and, in

¹² Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Future of Christianity’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 163.

¹³ For biographical information on Lonergan’s life and teaching career see Kerr, *Catholic Theologians*, 105-121.

¹⁴ Bouma likened this to a “cultural shift from rationality to experience”, Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the 21st Century*. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37.

¹⁵ Lonergan, *Future*, 160.

¹⁶ Philip Egan, ‘Lonergan, Evangelization and the British Context’, *The Heythrop Journal*, 2008, 49(5), 794-821, esp. 801.

¹⁷ Lonergan, *Future*, 160.

some sense, objective goal. Theology was viewed within the wider framework of culture that allowed the educated person to “assimilate the substance of the cultural superstructure and to follow intelligently and critically the work of pioneers.”¹⁸

In an empirical culture, by contrast, individuals need to ascertain for themselves “the set of meanings and values that informs a way of life.”¹⁹ The great communal worldview that was sustained in classical culture no longer has the strength to bind individuals together. Religious affiliation, to give one example, becomes a loose connection, one that does not result in either strong intellectual or emotional bonds. The individual does not develop robust and sustaining relationships that allow for serious reflection, and thus the goal of much human striving is to find and then to sustain supporting networks. This type of affiliation can be contrasted with what Lonergan envisaged as the goal of human development.

Empirical culture often subverts the individual quest for enduring and non-conditional meaning. This is especially so when considering how people see themselves in relation to others and to varying worldviews. For Lonergan, the ready answer to the challenge of living in contemporary culture was to cultivate self-transcendence, which he saw as the ultimate realization of what it means to be an authentic human being.²⁰ Self-transcendence can be seen as involving a cognitive aspect, a type of knowledge that allows the individual to see beyond their immediate horizon and ask whether what is being presented to the intellect is in fact so. All human knowing occurs within a context, a *Weltanschauung*, and apart from this it loses sense, significance, and meaning. Further, the sweep of one’s horizon is proportionate to one’s self-transcendence.²¹

¹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, ‘Belief: Today’s Issue’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 92.

¹⁹ Lonergan, *Method*, xi.

²⁰ Lonergan, *Method*, 104.

²¹ Lonergan, *Future*, 162.

Self-transcendence

Self-transcendence is actualized in four closely related levels of consciousness: the empirical, the intellectual, the rational, and the responsible.²² The empirical is the level of direct sensate experience, and also involves perception, imagination, and speech. This level of consciousness is directed toward attentiveness to both the outer world and how the individual interprets this world. The intellectual level is based on enquiry and understanding and this is expressed. This level of consciousness allows access into the world of meaning. It marks a distinction between the human world of the mind and that of purely responding to sensory data. The rational level moves beyond comprehension and understanding to the question of truth. The rational is directed toward whether what we are reading, thinking about, or discussing is correct. It moves beyond the statement of ideas and theories toward whether or not these notions are grounded in truth and reality. The responsible level of consciousness moves beyond the previous three, in that it is directed toward action. Given consideration, understandings reached and judgments made, what is the course of action to be followed? In other words, what is the responsible path to take given prior knowledge? The interplay between these different levels of consciousness and intentionality leads to a heightened sense of interiority, where there is a renewed emphasis on reflection and deliberation. Interiority is not, however, an end in itself but rather allows for a renewed engagement with the world based on methodical exigency. An interior reflectivity leads to what Lonergan calls a “moral transcendence,” which is concerned about objective value and seeing the world as being composed of moral agents.

²² Lonergan, *Future*, 9-10.

Self-transcendence and conversion

Self-transcendence is at its most transformative when it is linked to the process of conversion. For Lonergan, conversion is at the heart of the study of religion, “For religion is conversion in its preparation, in its occurrence, in its development, and also, alas, in its incompleteness, its failures, its breakdowns, its disintegration.”²³ Conversion can be described in at least three senses, each of which can be seen as a modality of self-transcendence.

Intellectual Conversion

First, there is intellectual conversion, which Lonergan described as arising from the responsible level of consciousness: “It is the type of consciousness that deliberates, makes judgments of value, decides, acts responsibly and freely.”²⁴ Intellectual conversion is the radical clarification which allows the individual to see knowledge as much more than seeing or perceiving the world of immediacy.²⁵ This world is only a small part of knowledge, especially if knowledge is conceived of as mediating meaning. A deeper sense of knowledge includes experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing.²⁶ Lonergan here described knowledge in a broad sense, and it does not especially pertain to religious topics and themes. By following these operations, however, we are adhering to what he termed “the inbuilt law of the human spirit.”²⁷ First comes experience, to which the individual must attend. This leads, after reflection, to understanding. Understanding, however, is not an end in itself. It leads to further enquiry and checking what has been learned. The natural end of this process of enquiry and validation is judgment or decision. We can see this sense of knowledge in Lonergan’s theological method.

²³ Bernard Lonergan, ‘Theology in its New Context’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 67.

²⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, 107.

²⁵ Lonergan, *Method*, 238.

²⁶ Lonergan, *Method*, 238.

²⁷ Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Response of the Jesuit’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 169.

Lonergan was critical of much of his Catholic primary and secondary school education, as laying too much emphasis on acquisition of information in a regulated and unreflective manner.²⁸ What was needed was more emphasis on higher order cognitive skills, which did justice to the empirical basis of modern consciousness, which favored the concrete over the abstract, and purposeful change over stasis.

The key task, then, in contemporary Catholic theology is to replace the shattered thought forms associated with eternal truths and logical ideas with new ones that accord with the dynamics of development and the concrete style of learning.²⁹ Lonergan used the term “new learning” to describe the modern field of education. New learning involved whole new disciplines, the explosion in modern languages, and the increasing specialization of even traditional disciplines.³⁰ In all forms of education, the scope of the content required a new approach to human understanding. In laying out a generalized method in theology, Lonergan categorized a number of process or functional specialties that are both mediated and mediating. In terms of the functional specialties, theology needed to move from discovery and probing, which are termed first order functions.³¹ These functions, research, interpretations, history, and dialectic lay the foundation for mediating theology. Mediated theology, on the other hand, arises from foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.

Moral and religious conversion

Second, moral conversion involves basing one’s actions not on some expedient principle, but on values that transcend the self. Lonergan likened this to moving from a childlike

²⁸ Bernard Lonergan, ‘An interview with Fr Bernard Lonergan, S.J.’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 209-210.

²⁹ Bernard Lonergan, ‘Philosophy and Theology’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 202.

³⁰ Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Problem of a Philosophy of Education’, in Doran and Crowe, *Collected Works*, 17.

³¹ Lonergan, *Response*, 127-138.

consciousness where one is compelled by others to act in a certain way, to a more adult posture where decisions such as choosing a certain action are a reflection of the autonomy of the individual. Conversion occurs when this autonomy is directed toward values and not satisfaction: “Moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict.”³² This marks a shift from making decisions based on the external other to the originating self, and from a particular value to values in general. Like the standard definition of conscience, moral conversion is not simply knowing what the right thing is. It also involves acting on this.

Finally, religious conversion should not be seen as the final phase of the conversion process, following intellectual and moral conversion, although each process can lead to a sublation of the other.³³ It is, however, the most profound aspect of conversion as it is directed to the ultimate concern, which is a total and permanent self-surrender.³⁴ It does not imply a fixed and total inner transformation, but anticipates future periods of stress and alienation, even complete reversion: “Besides conversions there are breakdowns. What has been built up so slowly and so laboriously by the individual, the society, the culture can collapse.”³⁵ Religious conversion brings the inner sense of having come into a profound relationship with God, a bond that once established can never be passed over lightly, much less forgotten.³⁶ Lonergan, following Aquinas, identified religious conversion as operative grace where the heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh.³⁷

³² Lonergan, *Method*, 240.

³³ Neil Ormerod, ‘Faith Development: Fowler and Lonergan Revisited’, *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 1997, 15(2), 191-208.

³⁴ Ormerod, *Faith Development*, 240.

³⁵ Lonergan, *Method*, 247.

³⁶ Walter E. Conn, ‘Affective Conversion: The Transformation of Desire’ in Timothy P. Fallon and Philip B. Riley, (Eds), *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 261-276.

³⁷ Fallon and Riley, *Religion and Culture*, 241.

In Lonergan's theological methodology, the idea of conversion is central. The description of religious conversion as falling in love with God in total self-surrender offers a valuable point of discrimination in assessing, in regard to many Catholics, the quality of their relationship with God—a point not irrelevant to our approach to the need for a new evangelization. It is, therefore, apposite to consider some of the factors that favor conversion, especially religious conversion, as these are critical to better realizing the new evangelization.

5.3 Community and Conversion

Community and the process of conversion

Lonergan saw the community as a place where the love of Christ can grow. He used the well-known analogy of faith as a seed needing fertile soil to flourish. Religious conversion is usually not a decisive moment, but rather the culmination of a longer process. It is aided by the support of others. Once reached, it is rarely an unchecked path with no doubts or second thoughts. These could be alleviated, however, by a supportive community.

As Charlie Brown needs all the friends he can get, so Christians need all the help they can get. Great saints are rare, and even they call themselves vessels of clay. The need of teaching and preaching, of rituals and common worship, is the need to be members of one another, to share with one another what is deepest in ourselves, to be recalled from our waywardness, to be encouraged in our good intentions.³⁸

Without community Christians have no place to live out their convictions and to see others bearing testimony to the reality of God in their lives. As Dulles pointed out, Christianity is propagated “by the testimony of transformed lives.”³⁹ Religious belief is in a perilous position if it remains an abstract notion in a cultural milieu, which places much more emphasis on the concrete and the immediate. Without embodiment it can be seen as irrelevant and other-worldly

³⁸ Lonergan, *Future*, 157.

³⁹ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 64.

in the worst sense of the word. One way to overcome this perception is to stress the communal aspect of Christian life. In regard to the functional specialties, most of these are intimately connected with fellowship. The theological method that Lonergan proposed is not meant to be acted out in solitary isolation. Indeed it needs the input of others to provide the substance for judgment and intelligibility.⁴⁰

Community is also critical because it is one agent that provides what Lonergan called “common meaning.”⁴¹ He described meanings as having four functions: cognitive, efficient, constitutive, and communication.⁴² The last two of these have special relevance for common meaning. Constitutive meaning is the meaning expressed in social institutions and human cultures. It is meaning that can be reinterpreted, but gives shape to daily life through religion, art, language, science, and literature. Constitutive meaning shapes identity as it helps shape consciousness. Knowledge of God, for example, has a clear cognitive sense, that is, for Christians it can be expanded upon by reading the Scriptures or by reflection on the experience of the early Church. It is also constitutive in that it brings with it a sense of being in relationship with God, which alters how the world and the individual’s place in it is observed. Communicative meaning concerns how meaning is communicated intersubjectively. This involves not just individual exchange but intergenerational transfer through training and education. From a conjunction of constitutive and communicative meaning, we can see the importance of community for common meaning. Common meaning has a number of dimensions. It can be formal or actual and can be expressed in the common understanding, common judgment, and common commitments of a variety of communities. Without a sense of

⁴⁰ Lonergan, *Method*, 135.

⁴¹ Lonergan, *Method*, 79.

⁴² Lonergan, *Method*, 77-79.

community, however, common meanings are imperiled not just in the present but also well into the future.

As it is only within communities that men are conceived and born and reared, so too it is only with respect to the available common meanings that the individual grows in experience, understanding, judgment, and so comes to find out for himself that he has to decide for himself what to make of himself.⁴³

A religious community is not different from any other in that it needs to provide a community where members can encounter the common meaning of the group. For a religious group, this common meaning would be conveyed intersubjectively through shared worship, prayer, and rituals, amongst other things. This development of common meaning is more than religious socialization, but socialization is an important aspect of what communities do to sustain and encourage commitment over successive generations:

A rich store of common meaning is not the work of isolated individuals or even of a single generation. Common meanings have histories. They originate in single minds. They become common only through successful and widespread communication. They are transmitted to successive generations only through training and education.⁴⁴

Community competition and communication

From Lonergan's perspective, changes in socialization patterns would be viewed with alarm, since the void could be filled in other ways. The need for community in formation in Lonergan's thought is normative, and if religious communities do not provide this then individuals will be formed by other communities. The new evangelization does not assume that many have totally lost their sense of being part of a wider Catholic community. What seems to have occurred is that other communities, be they virtual or actual, which may be quite removed from the faith community, are taking an increasing hold on many Catholics. Lonergan conceived

⁴³ Lonergan, *Method*, 79.

⁴⁴ Frederick E. Crowe, *Bernard Lonergan and the Community of Canadians: An Essay in Aid of Canadian Identity*. (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute, 1992), 12.

of modern culture as one which allows for a diversity of expression and which is characterized by fluidity. One of the challenges for the Church is to adapt to this culture, and to be prepared to accommodate the needs of a variety of people with diverse interests and differing senses of community. This is implicit in Lonergan's conception of the movement from classical to empirical mindsets. Failure to adapt to an empirical culture and adopt new methods leads to culturally inappropriate methods of communication. One of the vestiges of classical culture, according to Lonergan, is its identification of the proclamation of the Gospel with a particular normative culture. In classical thinking, this culture is superior to others and proper education involves learning to be at home there.⁴⁵ In the modern world, however, the Church needs to recognize a plurality of cultures and communities within these cultures and to speak in culturally appropriate ways to different groups. If this is not done then the initial encounter with the Gospel, the foundation of the establishment of the Christian message, will be severely impaired. Rather, the process of communication must be robust and involve concerted effort and planning.

For ours is a time of ever increasing change due to an ever increasing expansion of knowledge. To operate on the level of our day is to apply the best available knowledge and the most effective techniques to coordinated group action.⁴⁶

Effective communication requires persistent effort and may not always be fruitful. This is not because of any lack of intelligence, but because the current cultural multiplicity does not avail itself of one approach or one methodology. This is more easily understood in terms of the mission *ad gentes* where the differences between, for example, European culture and that of a typical mission area, such as equatorial Africa, are in stark contrast. The notion of cultural sensitivity can also be applied to countries such as Australia.

⁴⁵ Lonergan frequently quips that the classical culture is marked by the ability to speak in Latin, to write in Greek, and read Hebrew, see Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 16.

⁴⁶ Lonergan, *Method*, 367.

5.4 Seeing Evangelization in a Cultural Context

An analysis of culture is a means by which the proclamation of Christ can be better achieved. This proclamation is at the heart of both the new evangelization and the Church's unchanging mission. In Lonergan's thought, culture is not a static thing and, in an empirical framework, a variety of cultures can exist in quite close proximity. This is not to say, however, that many countries do not share cultural similarities, as these are often more apparent than any differences. As the United States bishops pointed out, the pervasive influence of media ensures a commonality of language and increasingly of meaning:

And what should we say about the cultural globalization produced by the power of the media? Everywhere the media impose new scales of values which are often arbitrary and basically materialistic, in the face of which it is difficult to maintain a lively commitment to the values of the Gospel.⁴⁷

An Australian context

In providing a contextualization of theology, an articulation of the active and distinctive cultural forces at work in particular regions is of fundamental importance. One such analysis is provided by Kelly.⁴⁸ He proposed a number of "limit situations" that frame the environment in which theology takes shape in Australia. Perhaps the most critical of these situations is the isolation in which the nation was formed, and which continues to exert an influence on national consciousness. Related to isolation is the theme of migration, which sees Australia as a land shaped by the stories of many who have journeyed vast distances and endured much hardship, in many forms, to come to this new land. This sets up a context for both the religious attitudes of many Australians who, in this analysis, shun expression of the communal in favor of much more private expressions of spirituality, which are intrinsically suspicious of authority and its claims

⁴⁷ EA, 20.

⁴⁸ Anthony Kelly, 'Theology in an Australian Context', *Compass*, 1978, 12(1), 1-7.

on individual autonomy. This leads to an almost national reticence when it comes to discussing the metaphysical dimensions of life.⁴⁹ Without historically strong institutions which could act as carriers of meaning, the Australian psyche has never had the intimate link to religious memory that typifies many European nations. The connections with religion, when they existed at their strongest, were heavily influenced by allegiance to socio-cultural class. Certainly, the Irish influence was initially very strong, but this allegiance was predicated on a sense of the Irish as the underdogs in Australian society. When this stigma was removed, one of the strongest shapers of Catholic identity lost much of its formative power. Due to the isolation of Australia and its “newness” as a nation, other cultural forces were not in place to provide a strong religious orientation for the seeker, or for those connected with any particular faith tradition. The new evangelization in Australia cannot, therefore, rely on any appeal to an oppressed minority but must rely on other factors if it is to be successful.

A history of migration also explains the profound unease of the Australian culture toward the indigenous population, who were displaced by the arrival of not only foreign people, but also foreign ideas and ways of engaging with the fragile and unique Australian ecology. The Churches in Australia have always stood, apprehensively, in relation to the land and especially to theologies which take as their inspiration the link between the land and the quest for meaning. This is especially relevant, as such connections could form part of a new meta-narrative that could take the place of older ones, which have declined in recent decades. In order for such a meta-narrative to develop, serious account of indigenous thinking needs to occur as this is best placed to articulate the relationship between the land and the people who live on it. A consideration of factors such as these gives theology a reference point, especially as it seeks to evangelize or re-evangelize a nation with a distinctive past. In terms of the new evangelization,

⁴⁹ Kelly, *Imagining*, 11-14.

the question arises as to how the proclamation of the Gospel may be better achieved in this context?

A New language?

One of the fruits of an engagement with culture is that communication can be enhanced due to a greater sensitivity to how meaning is mediated in specific settings. The language of discourse, for example, becomes an important consideration.⁵⁰ Tacey proposed that the secular or non-religious person, as well as the “lapsed” Catholic, may be invited into a new understanding of the Western religious tradition, if only language can be found that is meaningful and effective.⁵¹ In terms of the new evangelization, however, a new language can only be formulated if it remains faithful to the Tradition’s sense of what is important. A call for a new language cannot rest on the supposition that the Church has at its disposal a multitude of forms and modes of expression, which can be altered and shaped to meet innumerable contexts. The core of the Church’s message is, to a large extent, fixed, and so a new language must seek a new modality of expression within prescribed limits. In terms of Lonergan’s method, dogma is one of the sources on which communication is based. Dogmatics is not, however, fundamentally reshaped by communication. It also needs to be kept in mind that the audience for this new language is one that is becoming increasingly distant from the religious meta-narrative. A language that assumes prior knowledge runs the risk of not being grounded in the lived experience of the hearer. This is another manifestation of the new Catholic mentality, which is

⁵⁰ We need to be mindful here, as Rahner pointed out, that a constant danger in the Church’s teaching role is to make theology so dense and impenetrable that the ordinary Catholic cannot clearly understand it, Karl Rahner, *The Christian Commitment*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 103.

⁵¹ Tacey, *Spirituality Revolution*, 68.

not premised on a reappraisal of prior knowledge and experience but rather on an awareness that many have had little or no experience of religious socialization or enculturation.

How, then, can a language more attuned to the new evangelization be framed? Any consideration of this question needs to be based on a compelling understanding of contemporary culture. This can result in differing responses. Küng, for example, called for a language that speaks to those who did not see themselves as theologians or “dogmaticians”:

All those with almost no religious upbringing are engaged in a permanent quest for themselves, for identity, security, community and meaning, and at the same time, openly or in secret, are looking for religious experiences. If they often fail to find them, this is largely the fault of theology and preaching which is still too much in the head choked with dogma and pastorally inefficient: theology for theologians, dogma for dogmaticians.⁵²

Küng made a strong point about the need for clarity in the communication of meaning. He also acknowledged that many people today have no religious background to speak of. Küng gave an example of the need to refine dogma to a barer, less technical form when he discussed the Trinity in the following terms:

In the light of the New Testament, no more is required than that the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit should be interpreted in a critical and differentiated way for the present. The ‘heart’ of Christian faith is not a theological theory but belief that God the Father works in revealing, redeeming and liberating way in us through his Son Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Any theological theory must not complicate this basic statement; rather, it must be seen simply as an instrument for clarifying it against differing cultural horizons.⁵³

One can see here a strong desire to present a message which is amenable to the modern person, one without a great interest or desire for complex theology. There is more than an echo here of the new evangelization’s sense of proclaiming a clear message and one which is directed to the personal transformation of the hearer. It is also cognizant of a wider culture where

⁵² Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*. (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 86-87.

⁵³ Hans Küng, *Christianity: Essence, History and Future*. (New York: Continuum, 1995), 305.

individuals have many options and wish to hear what is being offered to them in fairly explicit terms. There is, however, a tension with stressing an encounter with Christ in the absence of a faithful presentation of the person of Christ as revealed in the Church's teaching and collective memory. Placing too much emphasis on experience as opposed to hearing about, comprehending, and responding to Christ runs the risk of leaving people ignorant of basic Christology. This, in turn, jeopardizes the encounter with Christ, which is at the heart of conversion.

Küng's somewhat minimalist approach to the Trinity can be compared with Kasper's position on what the Church needs to do to engage youth and young adults in contemporary culture.

In the face of the radical challenge to the Christian faith, help will come not from a feeble, general and vague theism, but only from a decisive witness to the living God of history who has disclosed himself in a concrete way through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴

Kasper's sense of culture and the language needed to respond to it seems to have much overlap with the concerns of the new evangelization, as it remains centered on a Christological core. This core is not "feeble, general or vague" but concrete. In this way we can see how sensitivity to culture need not negate a strong proclamation of Christ. This is a theme that was well treated by Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*:

This proclamation is to be made within the context of the lives of the individuals and peoples who receive it. It is to be made with an attitude of love and esteem toward those who hear it, in language which is practical and adapted to the situation.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*. (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 315.

⁵⁵ RM, 44, see also RM, 39: "She [the Church] respects individuals and cultures, and she honors the sanctuary of conscience. To those who for various reasons oppose missionary activity, the Church repeats: Open the doors to Christ!"

Christ is presented not as an abnegation of culture but as its fulfillment. For those engaged in the new evangelization, the study of a culture can never be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of better presenting the person of Christ in a variety of contexts. Due to the fragmentation of culture, the language with which the Gospel is communicated needs to be modulated to suit the needs of diverse groups. For example, the culture of a remote indigenous community is quite different from that of affluent, urbanized youth and young adults. A further challenge is to realize that, even within micro-cultures, individual discourse may change over relatively short periods of time. In the case of urbanized affluent youth, new technology and the accompanying language are likely to be very significant factors in determining how one might most effectively communicate with that group. Moreover, given the rapid pace of technological change, forward planning in this regard is difficult if not impossible. This fluidity is one reason that Lonergan stressed the need for active co-operation between Christians and experts in other fields. With the explosion of knowledge in empirical culture, no one person can have a sufficient grasp of all that needs to be known in order to communicate effectively, much less challenge others with a proclamation of the Gospel. Christians are, therefore, required to learn what they can from others and to work in serious partnerships with a range of people who can assist them in creating a new and engaging language which is more open to the possibility of conversion.

5.5 The Need for Authenticity

Lonergan underlined the importance of authenticity in these terms: “Man’s deepest need and most prized achievement is authenticity.”⁵⁶ Lonergan defined authenticity in at least two ways, the first having a personal sense: “Authenticity is realized when judgments of value are followed by decision and action, when knowing what is truly good leads to doing what is truly

⁵⁶ Lonergan, *Method*, 254.

good.”⁵⁷ Authenticity, like conversion, is not a fixed state but one that requires sustained effort on the part of the individual.⁵⁸ Authenticity also has a communal meaning. The actual life of a community should reflect its teachings, and its integrity should be expressed in both word and action. This is another example of community having a strong, positive influence. The classical sense of culture, with its implicit sense of authority, has been subverted in the West for many years, and in the Catholic community in particular, in a dramatic fashion in the period after the Second Vatican Council. In this new empirical era, people look for and value authenticity in communities but do not readily accept any inherent sense of credibility in institutions. Lonergan described authenticity as pivotal in the effective communication of the Christian message:

Those then that would communicate the cognitive meaning of the message must, first of all, know it.... Next they must live it. For without living the Christian message one does not possess its constitutive meaning; and cannot lead another to share what one oneself does not possess. Finally, those who communicate the effective meaning of the Christian message must practice it. For actions speak louder than words while preaching what one does not practice recalls sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.⁵⁹

For Christians, this authenticity moves beyond the intellectual to a close, enduring, and deeply transformative relationship with Jesus Christ: “In the Christian, accordingly, God’s gift of love is a love that is in Jesus Christ. From this fact flow the social, historical, doctrinal aspects of Christianity.”⁶⁰ Christ is understood as the fullness of humanity and divinity as expressed in the great conciliar decrees of the patristic period.⁶¹ If Christians do not manifest to outsiders a close connection to Christ the conversion process may be severely curtailed. The natural movement to conversion, in Lonergan’s thought, often begins with a natural interest and curiosity about who Christians are and why they live in this way. If those who have some connection to the Church

⁵⁷ Lonergan, *Future*, 152.

⁵⁸ Lonergan, *Response*, 166.

⁵⁹ Lonergan, *Method*, 362.

⁶⁰ Lonergan, *Future*, 156.

⁶¹ Hugo A. Meynell, *The Theology of Bernard Lonergan*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 103-118.

do not see the reality of Christ's love in those who profess to be Christian, they are unlikely to reflect, judge, and then decide to pursue the Christian life in more earnestness. Lonergan captured this sense of the importance of the group as both a means of conversion into the group and, to those already part of it, of belonging in a more personal and committed fashion when he wrote:

Conversion involves more than a change of horizon. It can mean that one begins to belong to a different social group or, if ones' social group remains the same, that one begins to belong to it in a new way. Again, the group will bear witness to its founder or founders whence originated and preserve its high seriousness and mature wisdom.⁶²

Authenticity and tradition

Authenticity also relates to the tradition as a whole. Lonergan spoke of authentic and unauthentic tradition. He defined authentic tradition as being faithful to its original message and seeking to "repeat the original message afresh for each age."⁶³ An authentic tradition also embodies and promotes conversion. An unauthentic tradition, by contrast, does not point toward conversion or seek to reinterpret the message of Christ for today. Rather, it is a diminution of tradition. Lonergan's description of unauthentic tradition is quite pointed: "[I]t may consist in a watering down of the original message, in recasting it into terms and meanings that fit into the assumptions and convictions of those that have dodged the issue of radical conversion."⁶⁴

⁶² Lonergan, *Method*, 269.

⁶³ Lonergan, *Method*, 162.

⁶⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, 162.

5.6 Utilizing Carriers of Meaning

A faith community without vigorous and vital “carriers of meaning” is unlikely to facilitate conversion. Community is one significant carrier of meaning.⁶⁵ Lonergan listed a number of other carriers of meaning, but only the most relevant of these are discussed here.⁶⁶ Symbols are significant carriers of meaning. Lonergan defined symbols as “a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.”⁶⁷ One of the chief functions of symbols is to provide a real and concrete expression of the meanings that underpin a community. Symbols also provide a bridge between the cognitive and the world of emotion and feeling.⁶⁸ Symbols give shape to the affective response to religion and, as such, are critically important in both maintaining and expressing religious meaning. Dulles even goes so far as to say, “without symbols, no revelation could be effectively communicated.”⁶⁹ For a religious community, therefore, the significance of symbols cannot be overstated. The world of younger Catholics, however, is one where the experience of symbols, although not negative, lacks both power and frequency. One manifestation of this is the loss or marginalization of many symbols, especially those associated with ritual action. This can be as simple as the lack of exposure to religious art or, at a deeper level, the loss of ritually significant actions and practices.⁷⁰ Without encountering religious symbols, the process of conversion is impaired.

⁶⁵ Lonergan, *Method*, 64.

⁶⁶ Lonergan, *Method*, 67-73.

⁶⁷ Lonergan, *Method*, 64.

⁶⁸ “Symbols obey the laws not of logic but of image and feeling,” Lonergan, *Method*, 66.

⁶⁹ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 65.

⁷⁰ Douglas’s masterful discussion of the loss of fasting in the Roman Catholic tradition is a good example of the loss of symbolic meaning, Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1970).

Technical language as a carrier of meaning

At an even more basic level, meaning is carried by language.⁷¹ Lonergan conceived this so-called linguistic meaning as one of the most significant consequences of “the Greek discovery of the mind.”⁷² In language, meaning finds its greatest expression and what Lonergan terms “liberation.”⁷³ Language is able to convey meaning on a number of levels such as the ordinary, technical, and literary. Literary language can be seen as an abstraction to an ideal. For a specific community, literary language can involve deep and lasting levels of meaning. Literary language is precise and is the language of a particular *opera* or work. The precise meaning here is difficult to abstract and it is full of allusion and “floats somewhere in between logic and symbol.”⁷⁴

Ordinary language is the discourse that enables people to carry on day-to-day activities in pursuit of their own good and the good of others. This language lacks permanence and responds to the needs and habits of the day. Eventually, a technical language emerges which is more decisive and, as such, is the particular language of experts or initiates within a particular subgroup. In a religious sense, technical language would involve discourse about the meanings, symbols, and rituals that are associated with a particular group. An example that is important for Christians is the technical language that surrounds the identity of Jesus as defined at the Council of Chalcedon (451). It is important that members of a religious community develop a certain level of sophistication about such technical issues, as these often convey the deep meanings, which the community regards as important and also that distinguish them from others. It is in this technical area that many younger Catholics today experience pronounced deficiencies.

Rymarz gave a good example of the lack of technical language competence in a study, which

⁷¹ Lonergan, *Method*, 70-73.

⁷² Lonergan, *Method*, 90-93, “Linguistic argument has emerged as an independent power that could dare to challenge the evidence of the sense.”

⁷³ Lonergan, *Method*, 70.

⁷⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, 72.

researched Catholic adolescents' understanding of Jesus.⁷⁵ If the technical language is not developed then the Christian narrative can never be engaged with at a level that is likely to lead to adult comprehension.⁷⁶ In Lonergan's schema, the second phase of theology – where theology is mediated – contains the elements of foundation and doctrine, but these depend on an adequate initiation in the first phase so that decisions that are made reflect a sophisticated understanding of the Tradition.

5.7 Addressing the Lack of Technical Knowledge

The lack of technical language is an even more urgent problem given the decline in other carriers of meaning such as symbols in the wider society or in literary language. To illustrate the lack of a supportive cognitive background, it is instructional to ask how much of the Christian story a person would imbue if they had to rely, not on any particular instruction or the strong example of a faith community, but just what they saw around them in the wider culture. This would include all forms of multi-media and interpersonal communication. With a weaker sense of community, the importance of familiarity with technical language amongst Catholics, especially those who have not been socialized into the Tradition, is more important than in previous times. The need for greater emphasis on technical language and its acquisition is an important consequence of applying some of Lonergan's thought to the new evangelization.⁷⁷

An important question arising from this discussion is how to address this lack of technical knowledge. What, for example, are some ways in which Catholics, especially younger ones, can

⁷⁵ Richard M. Rymarz, 'Talking about Jesus', *Journal of Religious Education*, 2006, 54(2), 79-84, at 81.

⁷⁶ "At its real root, then, foundation occurs on the fourth level of human consciousness, on the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision. It is a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against," Lonergan, *Method*, 268. In Lonergan's schema the second phase of theology, where theology is mediated, contains the elements of foundation and doctrine, but these depend on an adequate initiation in the first phase so that decisions that are made reflect a sophisticated understanding.

⁷⁷ In educational settings, Cavadini has argued for a much more direct and explicit instruction. Cavadini, *Ignorant Catholics*, 13-15.

become more proficient in the technical language of the faith tradition? Liddy remarked that, in a conversation with Lonergan when he was a student, Lonergan had no objection to direct instruction or memorization of material provided that this served as a basis for further understanding.⁷⁸ This idea of providing students with directed instruction on technical issues as a prelude to a more spontaneous learning dynamic is well captured in contemporary learning theory, notably in the writings of Vygotsky and his followers.⁷⁹

A new style of theology

In order to invigorate its carriers of meaning, the Church needs to reflect more deeply on the context in which it seeks to communicate its message. One of the characteristics of an empirical culture is that it can change its configuration quickly and unexpectedly. This does not mean that culture is unimportant, but that it needs to be monitored more closely, since although it is fluid, it still has a decisive impact on theological thinking, especially as it relates to communicating meaning.

Of all the steps in Lonergan's method, communication is perhaps the most relevant to the new evangelization. The earlier discussion recognized that many of the carriers of meaning that have assisted the Church in the past to communicate its message have been weakened. The task of communication is certainly a difficult one, and requires constant effort and planning. In order to facilitate this process, it may be necessary to alter some of the assumptions that have guided theological enquiry in recent times. Dulles noted three prominent styles of theology. The first two styles, "propositional-linguist" and "experimental-expressive," can be equated to

⁷⁸ Richard M. Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993)

⁷⁹ Yuri Karpov, 'Vygotsky's Doctrine of Scientific Concepts: Its role for Contemporary Education' in Alex Kozulin, Boris Gindis, Vladimir Ageyev, and Suzanne Miller, (Eds), *Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 65-82.

scholasticism and modernism respectively and, he argued, are outdated because they no longer address the cultural milieu in which most Christians find themselves.⁸⁰ Dulles proposed a third style of theology, which he called “ecclesial- transformative.” This style of theology is characterized by a number of features. It looks to the transformation of the individual, but a transformation that takes place within the ecclesial community, so it runs counter to the excessive individualism of the age. It also suggests replacing the dominant hermeneutic of suspicion, which has had a widespread adherence in theological circles, with a hermeneutic of trust. This trust should be directed most especially toward the Church’s major constitutive symbols.

These symbols represent more than affective meaning. They are pivotal in conveying the cognitive content of the faith tradition. The task of building up these symbols is difficult as many have an already well-developed critical disposition that is particularly suspicious of religious claims. The situation, especially in the Church, is far different from even a few decades ago. In the past, perhaps in reaction to the movement from a monopolistic expression of culture where meaning was assimilated in an uncritical fashion, many in Catholic circles sought to better integrate experience and the foundational aspects of belief by encouraging a critical attitude to constitutive symbols.

Very few today have an equivalent initial attitude. Nichols put it well when he commented: “When, as now, cognitive skepticism about morals and faith tend to rule, it is important to show how firm epistemic commitments in these areas may still be responsible human acts.”⁸¹ A postmodern consciousness is well attuned to deconstruction of meaning. What is needed is a hermeneutic that builds up meaning principally by seeing connections in what

⁸⁰ Dulles, *Craft*, 69.

⁸¹ Aidan Nichols, ‘Avery Dulles: Theologian in the Church’, *Chicago Studies*, 2008, 47(2), 135-155.

appear to be unrelated areas.⁸² This is a difficult, challenging, and, to some extent, counter-cultural task, but one which is assisted by the cultivation of trust in the symbols of the Church.

Concluding Comments

Lonergan provided another powerful conceptual metaphor for understanding the new evangelization, namely, the need for thinking about it in terms of conversion. The idea of conversion as a transformative action is a story that has often been told in Christian history. It perhaps explains why St. Paul can be seen as a great patron of the new evangelization because in the life of Paul we see the radical change from persecutor of the Church to lover and promoter of Christ. The power of the conversion experience can be seen in the impact of disciples such as Paul. The new evangelization sets itself a high standard, and that success needs to be understood in incremental terms. There is the possibility for long term and sustainable change if individuals respond to the call of the new evangelization in the manner of Paul.

In a discussion of types of conversion, Dulles drew a distinction between what he called two schools of fundamental theology. The first sees the act of conversion as a primary act of grace that can occur even in the unevangelized. The other sees conversion as the direct consequences of reflection on demonstrated historical facts through the use of reason. Dulles tried to bridge the gap between these two poles by stressing the importance of Christ in the act of conversion. Just as Christ is central to both an understanding of the new evangelization and to the Church as *communio*, an encounter with Christ is the decisive act in conversion. Even if transcendental conversion has been experienced, conversion to Christ “is a radically new

⁸² Anthony Kelly, *An Expanding Theology: Faith in a World of Connections*. (Newton, Australia: E.J. Dwyer, 1993).

discovery requiring the heuristic process here described as conversion.”⁸³ Dulles described the role of the mediating community as critical in this conversion process. This is a point often stressed in the writings of Lonergan.

In contemporary culture, many of the conditions that make conversion more likely and assist in conveying a transcendent dimension to life have disappeared. The next chapter seeks to deepen the discourse by examining other explanatory perspectives that can provide a better understanding of why so many Catholics, especially younger ones, do not sense a call to conversion but still retain loose affiliation.

⁸³ Dulles, *Craft*, 58.

Chapter 6: The Social Context for the New Evangelization: Three Theoretical Perspectives

Introduction

This chapter concludes a set of three chapters that have focused on understanding the conditions that have led to the need for the new evangelization. This chapter develops some of the points already raised in Chapters Four and Five, and works toward the articulation of a series of principles by which the new evangelization can be both better understood and implemented.

The three largely sociological perspectives presented here are not exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive, as the complex reality of Catholics and their engagement with the Church cannot be simply described. They do offer, nonetheless, a variety of powerful conceptual lenses for further understanding the post-conciliar generations and propose valuable insights for contextualizing the new evangelization. Further, the discussion in this chapter establishes a theoretical platform for subsequent chapters on the implications of the new evangelization.

The two previous chapters argued that most Generation X and Y Catholics manifest a new mentality.¹ This mentality, amongst other things, makes religious conversion as understood by Lonergan difficult.² In order to further explore the conditions that have led to the new evangelization becoming a prominent feature of Catholic discourse, some salient ideas about the social, religious, and cultural *terrain* of countries such as Australia are now presented. This chapter argues that in countries such as Australia societal conditions as understood from a

¹ Andrew M. Greeley, *The Communal Catholic: A Personal Manifesto*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

² David Martin, *Christian Language in the Secular City*. (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2002), 139-141.

number of sociological perspectives offer explanations as to why many people now describe their religious affiliation in loose, rather than overtly negative terms. At the same time, these conditions also make strong religious commitment problematic.

The contents of this chapter are presented under the following headings: a) Living in the Postmodern World; b) Post-Conciliar Catholics Making Choices; c) Post-Conciliar Catholics and Vicarious Religion; and, d) Six Features of the Contemporary Cultural Landscape and Some of Their Implications for the New Evangelization.

6.1 Living in the Postmodern World

Generation X has ample reasons to be depressed. Unwelcome, tolerated at best, cast firmly on the receiving side of socially recommended or tolerated action, treated in the best of cases as an object of benevolence, charity and pity (challenged to rub salt into the wound, as undeserved) but not of brotherly help, charged with indolence and suspected of iniquitous intentions and criminal inclinations, it has few reasons to treat 'society' as a home to which one owes loyalty and concern.³

An overview of Bauman's postmodernity

An approach to analyzing the religiosity of post-conciliar Catholics is to use the concept of postmodernity to better understand their religious affiliation. The conception of postmodernity developed by Bauman is used as an analytical framework. Bauman provided a number of strong images, such as the harshness of living from "hand to mouth" and the "pain of being stripped of self-assurance and self-esteem," to describe the situation of Generation X.⁴ A powerful feature of Bauman's analysis was that the world of Generation X is, in many instances, an unforgiving place, a world of uncertainty and of alienation. Individuals are lost and without a

³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts*. (Cambridge: Polity Press), 13.

⁴ Bauman, *Lives*, 14.

clear sense of purpose.⁵ Postmodern life places great emphasis on the individual, private sphere of life and on personal reflection, especially as it relates to adapting to ever changing social and political contexts. Individual identity is never complete, and is dismantled and reconstructed regularly, so that the angst and uncertainty of the individual is also projected into the world in which he or she lives. This has resulted in a state of flux both on a personal and communal level.⁶ Bauman concurs with the cautionary notes that both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have made about contemporary Western culture.⁷ Part of this concern is the tendency to see faith and reason as contradictory, which contributes to a sense that no unified vision on the place of men and women in the cosmos can be achieved and all that can be hoped for are fragmentary ideologies.⁸ The postmodern landscape, then, is typified by a loss of belief in the “grand narrative”. Individuals need to rely much more on their own resources to create meaning, and this may change many times to suit particular circumstances.⁹

It is difficult to create one’s own meaning without much support from a sustaining community, and so we see the emergence of personal narratives, which lack coherence, structure, and stability. This, in turn, creates insecurity as individuals are faced with a plethora of narratives, none of which are compelling or authoritative. This results in a bewildering number of options that people cannot really comprehend. The multiplicity of choice creates uncertainty, as individuals are not naturally disposed to take such radical control, at least in a theoretical

⁵ This echoes Coupland’s sense of the term: a group with no name or identity.

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 178.

⁷ One area of overlap that can only be noted here is between Bauman’s collapse of the meta-narrative and the rise of relativism which is perhaps one of the major themes in the writings of Benedict XVI. See Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today,’ *Origins*, 26, October 31, 1996, 310-317.

⁸ Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 77-79.

⁹ Bauman, *Imitations*, 23-62. Savage and her colleagues proposed the term “midi narrative” to describe the worldview of many contemporary youth and young adults. This focuses on the being happy and having good friends. Sara Savage, Sylvia Collins, Bob Mayo and Graham Cray, *Making Sense of Generation Y: The World Views of 15-25 Year Olds*, (London: Church House), 39-89.

sense, of their own lives. For Bauman, one of the features of the modern world was the loss of shared, uncontested, and binding values and visions. These gave individuals a clear guide and platform in the moral, political, and religious spheres. To live without a guidebook, to use Bauman's terminology, is not easy and, at the very least, undermines social cohesion.¹⁰

The religious meta-narrative

The variety of religious expression was, for Bauman, an important aspect of postmodernity. He argued that some religious manifestations in postmodernity, such as fundamentalism, were attractive because they freed the individual from the tyranny of constant choice and a place in a meta-narrative.¹¹ Without a shared vision, a person's views and sense of self may change significantly over time as one system of meaning is replaced with another. Wuthnow described a process where young adults, in the face of so many options, "tinker" with what is available to them and arrive at a personalized system of meaning, which is never stable but is always being modified and adapted.¹² This creates a sense of fluidity in today's youth and young adults, which makes them reluctant to commit to the future whether in relationships or as part of communities.¹³ The sense of temporality has direct implications for religious groups as it contests their claims to be authoritative meta-narratives. Religion and, in this case, Catholicism, provides an example of the grand narrative *par excellence*. Catholicism is a narrative which situates the believer in a community with thousands of years of history and a worldwide

¹⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*. (Blackwell, Oxford, 1993), 2-37.

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, 'Postmodern Religion', in Paul Heelas with David M. Martin and Paul Morris. (Eds), *Modernity and Postmodernity*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 55-78.

¹² Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How the Twenty-and Thirty- Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13-17. Wuthnow does not see this as a pejorative term; rather, he regards "tinkerers" as "the most resourceful people in any era", 13. He acknowledges the origins of this concept to the great French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's writings on the *bricoleur*.

¹³ Richard Usher, 'Lifelong Learning in the Postmodern', in David Aspin, Judith Chapman, Michael Hatton and Yukiko Sawano (Eds), *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. (Kluwers Academic Publishing: Dordrecht, 2005), 165-183.

presence.¹⁴ The narrative also links the believer with the world to come, so the scope of the message is infinite. It speaks of life as a pilgrimage and a lifelong commitment. The call to become part of this grand narrative puts many Catholics, especially younger ones, in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable position and one for which contemporary culture has not prepared them.

The absence of community

A feature of acceptance of the grand narrative is that it places the person into a community and, therefore, into relationship with others. The pull of contemporary culture is in the opposite direction toward individualization, subjectivism, and atomization.¹⁵ Bauman captures this sentiment of the tension between the individual and the wider community in his description of many contemporary adults as strangers for whom bonds with others, and also with culturally held norms, are transitory and tenuous.¹⁶ Contemporary culture is a world where hope has been replaced with more cautious emotions, or to use Bauman's expression, postmodernity is a place we go "to hide from our fears" – fears about what the future will bring.¹⁷ The harshness of the world that many of Generation X inhabit is a feature of Bauman's writing, and it can be contrasted with the more benign descriptions of authors such as Mackay who used terms such as "moral boundary riders" to describe Generation X.¹⁸ Mackay's phrase connotes people who are

¹⁴ John Rate, 'Challenge of Postmodernity', *Compass*, 2006, 40(2).

¹⁵ Taylor makes a similar point when he notes that one of the most significant changes in modern culture is the movement toward subjective expressions of identity. These are fashioned by the individual as opposed to external institutional forces. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 123-149.

¹⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 47-93.

¹⁷ Bauman, *Imitations*, xvii. In this context it is worth noting that Benedict XVI's sees one of the main tasks facing the Church to be the need for Christian hope to be revitalized. See Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*. Obtained on 15/12/07 at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/Encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html.

¹⁸ Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*. (Pymble: Angus and Robertson, 1998), 1-34.

in the strong position of having a number of attractive choices available to them. Bauman would see these choices as real but, nonetheless, heavily proscribed.¹⁹ He recognized that some of the significant choices that were available to earlier generations are inaccessible or not freely available to Generation X and even less so to recent generations. Choices such as what job or career to choose or where to live are limited. Generation X and those following them are often pitted against each other in competition and real choice, especially for attractive and secure options, is often illusory. For many Catholics born after the Second Vatican Council, to see the Church as communion is a daunting prospect because communion, even at a human level, is unfamiliar and, to some extent, feared.²⁰

The challenges of postmodern living

Belonging to Generations X and Y brings with it a number of significant and daunting challenges, not the least of which is the establishment of a sense of identity and a place in the world. Whereas older generations were the products of a self-confident culture that gave a clear sense of direction, Generation X and Y came to maturity in a time of relative social introspection.²¹ This was true of Catholicism in countries such as Australia where the self-confidence or even triumphalism of the pre-conciliar era was replaced with uncertainty and tension. The response to living in more introspective times is not a conscious, deliberate, and resolute decision. Dealing decisively with significant issues is replaced by identification, often

¹⁹ Bauman, *Liquid*, 45-46.

²⁰ Davie makes the point that the decline in institutional religion needs to be seen alongside the decline in membership of all voluntary groups in postmodern societies. One of the features of postmodernity is the decrease in all institutional communities. Grace Davie, 'The Persistence of Institutional Religion in Modern Europe', in Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas and David Martin, (Eds), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 101-111.

²¹ Wade C. Roof, *A Generation of Seekers*. (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 27-78. David Lipsky and Alexander Abrams. *Late Bloomers: Coming of Age in America*. (New York: Times Books, 1994), 29-52.

temporarily, with a range of uncontested options or choices.²² The defining issues for earlier generations do not persist for Generations X and Y because a range of responses is now considered to be acceptable. Implicit here is a loss of strong commitment to any view or affiliation with any organization, along with a reluctance to completely disassociate from any view or group. The need to protect autonomy is paramount and acts as a type of social regulator, which prevents the individual from being too exposed to harm.²³ In the postmodern milieu, personal autonomy is, on the one hand, violated if individuals identify too closely with any of the many options available and also, on the other hand, infringed upon if one is precluded from any view or association. In this prevailing attitude, many Catholics still see themselves as part of the tradition but on their own terms, choosing what they think appropriate but never reaching a high or ongoing level of commitment.

Autonomy is also associated with freedom from commitment along with only a modest interest in ideology.²⁴ For post-conciliar Catholics, this translates into little concern for doctrine or prescribed behavior. In place of commitment, more emphasis is given to the importance of human experience as a means of personal validation. Personal experience, however, does not lead to a strong sense of the collective and communal. If the personal always takes precedence over the collective, then claims of any group over the individual will always be feeble. The primacy of personal experience also leads to suspicion of ascendant institutional authority.²⁵ When there is no strong collective sense, maintained by recognized authority, the commitment of individuals will never be strong. This is a special problem for the Catholic Church in which the

²² Mackay describes Generation X as the options generation because of the number of choices that they have in a range of areas. Hugh Mackay, *Generations*, (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1997), 67-97.

²³ Ebaugh, *Revitalization*, 9.

²⁴ George Barna, *Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation*. (Chicago: Northfield, 1994), 89-97.

²⁵ Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998).

belief that God is present within the community is a pivotal doctrinal principle and one of the foundations of an ecclesiology of communion.

The cost of postmodernity

To conclude this discussion, it is important to reiterate a major insight of Bauman's that has significant pastoral implications for the new evangelization. The lack of commitment of Generation X, and even more so Generation Y, comes at some personal cost to the individuals of these groups. Few people want to remain as strangers, forever on the periphery, lacking strong and abiding links to others.²⁶ The proliferation of choice and the phenomenon of weak group association bring insecurity and not the real sense of community that MacLaren described as "the yearning of the post-1960's generation."²⁷ Those groups that are able to provide a transcendent sense of meaning and belonging, relying not on societal coercion or expectation but on other means, may provide an attractive option to some who are looking for more permanence, a way to put down roots, in a transitory world.²⁸ Or, to use Herberg's terminology, many may be seeking assistance in answering the fundamental existential question: "What are you?"²⁹ To make a choice to be strongly committed must, nonetheless, be seen as a fulfillment of personal autonomy and not its abnegation. As Taylor pointed out, a feature of contemporary culture in many Western countries is the triumph of "expressive individualism." This, above all else, highlights the importance of living out one's own humanity as a matter of personal choice.³⁰ The Church then must look to ways it can best present itself as a body that offers the individual a chance to

²⁶ Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community*. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), esp. 32-55.

²⁷ MacLaren, *Mission Implausible*, 132.

²⁸ Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), proposition 8 at 116.

²⁹ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1955).

³⁰ Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 65-96.

be part of a much wider supportive and life-giving group which at the same time responds to and respects the individual. The new evangelization will be advanced by those who see their role in it as one of their own choosing, and not something that they are directed to do as a corporate activity. Catholics of the future, in countries such as Australia, will identify strongly with the Church only because they have chosen to do so, and they will be agents of the new evangelization only because this is something they want to do.³¹

6.2 Post-Conciliar Catholics Making Choices

The religious marketplace or secularisation?

A further framework for analysing the social context for the new evangelization is to see choice as fundamental to religion. This approach has chiefly been associated with the American sociologist Rodney Stark.³² His first premise is that individuals make religious choices on the basis of perceived benefit and cost. In other words, their behaviour can be understood as a rational choice and not, as held by many social theorists, as an illogical response to group pressure, lack of education, or superstitious fear.³³ In Stark's conception, religion is seen as competing in the market place for followers.³⁴ This process has gone on for centuries and is dynamic and responsive. This view is often a counterpoint to the so-called secularization thesis

³¹ It is worth noting that a number of books are now appearing that address this identity question. To name just one, William J. O'Malley, *Why be Catholic?* (New York: Crossroad, 1997). In providing his answer, O'Malley likens being a Catholic to having an altered DNA which seems to downplay the role of religious socialization, O'Malley, *Why be Catholic?*, 169. While these arguments can be contentious the significant point is that they are being made.

³² Some credit the first elaboration of Rational Choice Theory to R. Stephen Warner in his 1993 paper, 'Work in Progress Towards A New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98, 1044-1093.

³³ Proposition 1, "Within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes, humans attempt to make rational choices." Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 85.

³⁴ The idea of the religious marketplace has been developed by Iannaccone. See Laurence R. Iannaccone, 'The Consequences of Religious Market Regulation: Adam Smith and the Economics of Religion', *Rationality and Society*, 1991, 3, 156-177.

articulated by Bruce and others.³⁵ The secularization thesis maintains that modern Western culture is marked by the inexorable decline in religious belief and practice, evidenced most strongly in Northern Europe and increasingly so in Britain.³⁶ While there is some dispute over the role religion plays on a personal level, there is a broader consensus on its decline as a significant social factor.³⁷ Overtly Christian leaders, for example, no longer have a significant impact on the political process, especially when compared with earlier eras.³⁸ In a secular culture, the formative influences on people are not religious in nature and the power of religious symbols and explanations to shape meaning and behavior is weakening.³⁹ This has implications for the new evangelization since one of its critical aspects is the evangelization of culture. In a country such as Australia, this is a difficult task because of the unfamiliarity of many with the Christian meta-narrative, and the difficulty that the Churches have in communicating religious meaning even to those who are part of their faith communities.

A limited discussion of secularization theory can offer some insights into the situation of post-conciliar Catholics, especially regarding how and why they make religious choices. First, “classical” secularization holds that religious beliefs decrease as a society evolves or modernizes.⁴⁰ A number of statistically powerful studies have shown, however, that metaphysical beliefs such as belief in God have remained high even in Europe. What have

³⁵ For a combative exposition of the secularization hypothesis see, Steven Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*. (Oxford: Blackwell). Bruce also offers a robust critique of Rational Choice Theory in Steven Bruce, *Choice and Reason: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

³⁶ The ‘Statement of Conclusions’ issued in 1998 makes frequent reference to culture of secularism as a dominant force in Australian life. See, *Statement of Conclusions for Meeting of Australian Bishops and the Prefects and Secretaries of Six Dicasteries of the Roman Curia*, 10, 18, 20, 22, 29, 32, and 35,56,57,60. Obtained on 12/10/2007 from: www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=1046.

³⁷ Emphasizing the decreasing influence of religion in society as a whole as opposed to on individual beliefs is a development of secularization theory. For a discussion see, David Yamane, ‘Secularization on Trial: in Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1997, 36:109-122.

³⁸ David Sikkink, ‘From Christian Civilization to Individual Civil Liberties: Framing Religion in the Legal Field’, in Christian Smith, (Ed), *The Secular Revolution*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 310-354.

³⁹ Mark Chaves, ‘Secularization as Declining Religious Authority’, 1994, *Social Forces*, 72(3), 749-775.

⁴⁰ Peter Berger, ‘Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger’, *Christian Century*, 114, 974.

declined are characteristically Christian beliefs, such as in a personal God, which have real life consequences as evidenced by clear demands and expectations.⁴¹ Religious beliefs *per se* then have not disappeared but have become more individual, less demanding, and not representative of a common creedal position.⁴² Indeed, religious beliefs may emerge under the general heading of “spirituality” and are, at best, comforting rather than strongly formative.

Secularization as process

The view of secularization as a process where belief becomes more individual and privatized is well summarized by Dobbelaere.⁴³ He outlined a three dimensional model, which includes separate but not completely independent movements. The first dimension or movement is a decline in religious practice, typically in the ritual forms of a particular group. For Catholics, this includes activities such as participation in and reception of the sacraments. Second, religious institutions become weaker in the sense that while they may maintain the allegiance of their followers, they lose their capacity to direct and influence both individuals and society at large. The final secularization dimension involves religion becoming interior and private, an affair which results in religious beliefs becoming highly personal and eclectic and religious practice private to the point of being almost hidden.⁴⁴ This dimension or movement, in cultural terms, is gradual but one which has been occurring in many Western countries at least since the Enlightenment.

⁴¹ A compilation of a number of studies such as the European Values Survey, the World Values Survey and the 2001 British census are reported in Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*. (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 112-116.

⁴² Individual beliefs lack a communal expression and so cannot be reinforced by others. In these circumstances Mason comments, “the beliefs which survive best ‘without belonging’ are those which are less costly, such as belief in an undemanding, indulgent deity”, Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 56.

⁴³ Karel Dobbelaere, ‘Secularization: A Multi-Dimensional Model’, *Current Sociology*, 1981, 29(2), 1-216.

⁴⁴ John H. Simpson, ‘Religion and the Churches’, in James Curtis and Lorne Tepperman, (Eds.), *Understanding Canadian Society*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1988), 57-94.

The movement of individuals from a religious perspective to a secular view is not achieved in one movement and can often take some time, even generations.⁴⁵ It is best described as a process that can be discussed from a number of theoretical perspectives. Lambert offers a nine-stage model.⁴⁶ The first three stages involve a rupturing of what he calls the “vertical aspect of religion.” This is where the clear referent in religious teaching to the divine and the transcendent is undermined. For Lambert, a key aspect of this stage of the secularization process is a diminished sense of the importance of sin and of life after death. Once religious groups take on a worldly aspect, belief and expression become highly individualized and, as a result, lose their formative power. In Lambert’s terminology, once religion has lost its transcendent dimension and also its communal expression, the stage is set for what he calls the “spiritual quest” – seen here as one stage of the secularization process. The spiritual quest, described in Chapter Four of this thesis, is not a resolution of religious questions but rather a gradual ebbing of the ability of religion to shape and direct life. The quest is not resolved by some discovery or reconnection with the home tradition. Rather, the journey leads to a further distancing from communal beliefs and practices and develops into pragmatic and relativistic conceptions about the importance of religion to the individual.⁴⁷ In this view, religion is useful if it serves a purpose or if it helps in a particular situation. It does not, however, have any overriding valid

⁴⁵ Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*. (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2006), esp.306-324.

⁴⁶ Yves Lambert, ‘New Christianity, Indifference and Diffused Spiritualities’, in Hugh McLeod, Werner Ustorf (Eds), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). 63-77.

⁴⁷ Smith and Snell point out that the empirical evidence linking communal practice and belief is strong: “Little evidence supports the idea that emerging adults who decline in regular external religious practice nonetheless retain over time high levels of subjectively important, privately committed, internal religious faith. Quite the contrary.... The emerging adults who do sustain strong subjective religion in their lives, it turns out, are those who also maintain strong external expressions of faith, including religious service attendance.”Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 252.

truth claims or hold a superior worldview to the myriad of other views that modern culture throws up. The end result of the quest is the ninth and final stage of secularization when religion for the individual becomes, to use Lambert's expression, "à la carte." When faced with a menu in an expensive restaurant, the individual is free to choose what he or she wants. These choices, however, reflect the prevailing cultural norms and can be anticipated by demographic indicators such as socio-economic status, level of education, and family of origin.

Benefits of religious choices

Stark challenged the idea that contemporary culture is growing more secular and argued that earlier times were just as secular as today.⁴⁸ It is a mistake to see the past as a golden age where rates of religious practice and affiliation were much higher. The remarkably high rates of religious participation by Catholics, in Australia and elsewhere, in the immediate post-war era would be explained by Stark as an unusual confluence of factors which made religious affiliation attractive. Some of these included high conflict with the surrounding culture, strong metaphysical compensators, internal social cohesion, and high birth rates.⁴⁹ Historically, this situation was not typical.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ A well-known study, which supports this contention, is the longitudinal work on "Middletown," a pseudonym for Muncie, Indiana. These studies show, among others things, higher rates of religious observance in the 1980's as opposed to earlier times such as the 1920's. Theodore Caplow, *All Faithful People: Change and Continuity in Middletown's Religion*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

⁴⁹ Davidson reports that in 1945, 75% of Americans attended Mass weekly, although only 40% received communion. James D. Davidson, *Catholicism in Motion: The Church in American Society*. (Ligouri, Missouri: Ligouri Publications, 2005), 162. By way of comparison, weekly Mass attendance in 2005 was 34% (figures for those receiving communion are no longer compiled). *Official Catholic Directory*. (Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). Greeley notes that in 1963, 82% of American Catholics went to confession at least once a year, Andrew Greeley, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait*. (New York: Basic Books), 127.

⁵⁰ The so called golden age of faith for Rational Choice Theory theorists never existed and it is a serious mistake for Christians today to measure themselves against a standard that never existed. Stark, commenting on the "era of faith," makes this point: "as for the ordinary people, during the middle ages and the Renaissance, the masses rarely entered a Church, and their private worship was directed toward an array of spirits and supernatural agencies, only some of them recognizably Christian," Rodney Stark, 'Secularization R.I.P' in William H. Swatos and Daniel V. Olson (Eds), *The Secularization Debate*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), 47.

Levels of religious commitment have fluctuated over time. Religious groups can emerge quickly if they meet perceived needs and also fall away suddenly if they no longer fulfil a need.⁵¹ From this argument flow two important principles. First, for individuals to make the choice to associate with religious groups there must be some perceived benefit.⁵² Indeed, the greater the benefit the stronger the commitment. There are many benefits that accrue from being part of a group, such as social networking, shared activities, and assistance in times of need. A primary incentive for affiliation, however, is a perception that the religious group facilitate an “exchange with the gods.”⁵³ Through association with a religious group, an individual should be able to have an active relationship with the gods, one that brings with it unique benefits.

However, churches today function in a culture where belief in God is challenged.⁵⁴ Lonergan refers to five specific challenges: antiquated theology, demythologisation of Scripture, the thrust of modern philosophy, the collapse of Catholicism, and a softening of the dogmatic component of Catholic theology.⁵⁵ In the face of these challenges, one of the principal tasks of Churches should be to constantly make the case for the connection between the faith community and the divine, for this is what the Churches have to offer. A communion ecclesiology incorporates both strong human fellowship and a transcendent focus. But, in contemporary culture, the Church’s role in maintaining an ongoing connection with the divine is most

⁵¹ Finke and Stark use the example of the Methodist Church in the USA (in contrast to the Baptists) to illustrate the point that religious groups can emerge, flourish and decline in relatively rapid succession. Finke and Stark, *Churching*, 156-197.

⁵² Definition A2, “Humans seek what they perceive to be rewards and avoid what they perceive to be costs.” Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 27.

⁵³ Proposition 8, “In pursuit of rewards, humans will seek to exchange with a god or gods.” Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 91.

⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Absence of God in Modern Culture’ in Ryan and Tyrell, (Eds), *Second Collection*, 109-111.

⁵⁵ Lonergan perceptively notes that the absence of God from what he calls the superstructure of modern culture is distinct from the “everyday, familiar domain of feeling, insight, judgment, decision.” Lonergan, *Method*, 111. For a further discussion of this distinction see Bernard Lonergan, ‘Natural Knowledge of God’ in Ryan and Tyrell, (Eds), *Second Collection*, 117-133.

imperilled. When this occurs Churches can become just a sociological phenomenon, lacking the vital connection with God, which in Catholic terms is communion through Christ. In terms of seeing religion as a rational choice, a loss of emphasis on the divine in religious groups is a grave situation, not only for theological reasons, but because the group is tampering with the essential benefit that comes from being a member. If the connection with the divine is lost, one likely scenario is that religious groups lose the power to attract and retain strong communal allegiance. Individual beliefs become more personal and eclectic, typical of a secularized culture. In Stark's argument, religion will not entirely disappear, but will remain dormant until religious groups again offer something of high cost and value.

Religious choice as minimizing costs

Another principle of what Stark calls "Rational Choice Theory" (RCT), which is of great relevance to the new evangelization, is that the individual will seek to minimize the cost of association with a group without decreasing the perceived benefits.⁵⁶ If a religious group becomes just a human fellowship, it competes with a large number of other groups, each of which could perhaps offer greater benefits. For example, Generation X and Y Catholics are part of a large cohort that in much of the Church's contemporary pastoral practice capitalizes on the perceived importance of inclusion.⁵⁷ In terms of RTC, many Catholics effectively manage to reduce the cost of religious affiliation without losing any of the benefits.⁵⁸ They avoid an existential void by identifying, albeit loosely, with a historically significant group. They do not

⁵⁶ Proposition 17, "People will seek to minimize their religious costs." Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 100.

⁵⁷ Some have described this inclusive model as a *big tent* model of Church. For a discussion of these see, O'Grady, *Catholic Schools*, 36-43. In the terms of this thesis such an approach would have parallels with an undifferentiated sense of the Church as the People of God. This view was critiqued in Chapter 2.

⁵⁸ A seemingly simplistic but quite telling analogy that is often used to elaborate this point in Rational Choice Theory is a low cost insurance policy that offers the holder extensive coverage. In these circumstances there is little incentive for the holder to pay a higher premium, as he or she is already perfectly happy with their level of coverage.

need to confront alone major existential questions. To use a postmodern term, they have a place in a meta-narrative if they should desire it. There is also a range of very practical benefits. Post-conciliar Catholics can maintain, if they wish, a strong familial religious connection. They can celebrate Christmas with their families by going to Mass. If they wish, they can marry in a Church, bury their parents in a religious service, send their children to Catholic schools, and associate with a wide range of people who are very much like them. All of this can be gained for very little cost.⁵⁹ There is no requirement to attend services, hold difficult or challenging beliefs, give up a substantial portion of their income, or take part in any ritual or process that may stigmatize them. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that many post-conciliar Catholics choose not to disaffiliate formally from Church membership, at least for the time being, when it offers so much and allows the individual so much freedom. It seems rational, therefore, that the inexorable pull on most post-conciliar Catholics is toward a loose form of affiliation.⁶⁰ As a result, the new evangelization must provide some compelling reason for Catholics to move beyond an exchange relationship where they perceive great benefit in preserving the *status quo*.

What is to be done?

To conclude this discussion a key question focuses on what religious groups can do to challenge the *status quo*. In terms of Stark's argumentation, they should strongly emphasize their

⁵⁹ Malloy provided an interesting anecdote to illustrate high cost religion. He asked his first year university students to imagine that they had applied for a position with a prestigious law firm. He then asked if they would take "Catholic" off their resume "if the law firm...subtly communicated to you that you should tone down the fact you attend Mass every Sunday and teach CCD." Eighty percent of the students said they would drop the mention of Catholicism from their resume. Richard G. Malloy, *A Faith that Frees: Catholic Matters for the 21st Century*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books), 48-49.

⁶⁰ Hechter comments that a rational person will not join an organization if he or she can reap the benefits of membership without participating. Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 27.

transcendent elements and most especially their connection with the gods. Furthermore, they need to emphasize that this connection can only be maintained by membership in the group, and that this discipleship brings with it high expectations but also metaphysical compensation. RTC argues that religious groups need to make demands, since the natural inclination of people is to minimize the costs associated with association and to become what some have called “free riders.”⁶¹ Strong religious affiliation is sustained further when individuals can readily use supernatural categories to describe their lives.⁶² So when a member of the group prays, for example, they should see this as a form of communication with God, where God listens and responds. Because of these interactions God is seen to be alive in their lives and can influence their behaviour. The lesson here for the new evangelization is to stress its metaphysical claims – a closer and more intimate connection between the believer and the divine *logos*. In a general sense, a recent tendency in Catholicism to demythologize key teachings should be recognized and every opportunity to re-sacralize beliefs and actions should be taken.⁶³ Attending Mass, for example, should be seen as an expression of the theological reality of Christ as the source of communion with each other and with God.

⁶¹ Iannaccone has written extensively on the free rider problem. This is where individuals associate with a group but contribute very little or nothing at all to it. To minimize this he suggests, amongst other things, that group membership should require some sacrifice and attract some stigma. Laurence R. Iannaccone, ‘Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes and Other Collectives’, *Journal of Political Economy*, 1992, 100(2), 271-292.

⁶² Bouma makes a similar point about the importance of transcendent descriptive categories. Gary Bouma, *Religion: Meaning, Transcendence and Community in Australia*. (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992), 63-91.

⁶³ There is overlap here with the classical sociological notion dating from Weber that one of the key pillars is “magic,” which is characterized as using spiritual forces for worldly ends. For a discussion and updating of this concept see, Randall Collins, ‘H. Paul Douglas Lecture. The Four M’s of Religion: Magic, Membership, Morality and Mysticism’, *Review of Religious Research*, 2008, 50(1), 5-15.

6.3 Post-Conciliar Catholics and Vicarious Religion

I believe in a higher power than myself. I'm not sure if it's God yet, but I do believe in something – that there's a higher power. There is something which I can leave things to, let go of those things – this higher power takes care of. – *Jarl, a 41-year old Swede*.⁶⁴

A diminishing God

Another perspective on the weakening association of post-conciliar Catholics with the Church is offered in the writings of Grace Davie.⁶⁵ Davie wrote from a European perspective, coining the phrase “believing without belonging.”⁶⁶ In this view, belief is best understood by fairly generic metaphysical categories rather than orthodox Christian beliefs such as acceptance of a Trinitarian and personal God.⁶⁷ In these terms, most Europeans, as exemplified by Jarl in the quotation provided above, are believers because the alternative, a stark atheism, is not a position with which many are comfortable identifying, a point made by a number of influential modern theologians.⁶⁸ Solle, for example, argued that atheism needs to be re-conceptualized to avoid overemphasizing its ideological or philosophical basis. She pointed out that the classical distinctions between atheism and theism are no longer relevant or descriptive.⁶⁹ One reason for this is that many Europeans are, in effect, living out a form of pragmatic atheism, which does not see itself as a counterpoint to any ideological or theological position. In distinguishing between

⁶⁴ Phil Zuckerman, *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations on Earth Can Tell Us About Contentment*. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 129

⁶⁵ Not that there are no parallels to Davie's thought in other parts of the world. Kavanaugh, writing from an American perspective, for example, develops some similar ideas under the heading of “a culture of lived atheism,” Kavanaugh, *Following Christ*, 112.

⁶⁶ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

⁶⁷ This definition of belief is described as a soft form of secularization by Voas and Crockett. David Voas and Andrew Crockett, ‘Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging’, *Sociology*, 2005, 39: 11-28. Mason and his colleagues comment that many of these beliefs would be more accurately characterized as “inconsequential opinions on matters religious,” Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 56.

⁶⁸ In the post-war period, de Lubac addresses three kinds of modern “humanistic” atheism, the Nietzschean perhaps being closest to what is being discussed here. Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism*, (New York: New American Library, 1963), 5. Rahner devotes much to a discussion of atheism, identifying four basic pillars. See, Karl Rahner, (Ed), ‘Atheism’, *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), I, 117-119. There is also some overlap with Küng's notion of “secular quasi-religiousness,” Küng, *God*, 555-556.

⁶⁹ Dorothee Solle, *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology*. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 171-182.

three kinds of atheism, Kasper supported this idea. He described the most prevalent form of atheism, at least in a European context, as a practical one, which is not a denial of God but which regards an indifference to God as the plausible stance to take.⁷⁰ An important manifestation of this attitude is a willingness to agree with what Solle saw as superficial statements such as, “Do you believe in God?” but bewilderment with more substantive questions that make real demands on belief and action.⁷¹ This has a parallel in Davie’s terminology where belonging as typified by participation in Church rituals or strong identification with the Church is markedly on the decline.⁷² Thus, religious affiliation acts as a metaphorical safety net. Its main purpose is to help people in difficult times but it is not an active or formative influence. Brown described this very restricted use of religion in times of crises as an example of its “functional irrelevance” in the lives of many people.⁷³ Like all safety nets, it is not designed or supposed to be used too often but it gives a sense of reassurance and if removed would make life more uncertain and anxious.

Benign religious affiliation

This idea of religion as a safety net can be extended to a generalized argument about the nature of religious belief in contemporary culture. The attitude of many Catholics to the Church is not hostile. The typical pattern of religious socialization has been weak and has left few scars. The Church exists and this is a good thing. Many feel in some way part of it, albeit, in a distant

⁷⁰ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*. (New York: Crossroad, 1996), esp. 7-12. The other two forms of atheism are a cerebral type, which rejects the “God hypothesis,” and one that arises out of harsh life experiences, 16-26. Bibby makes a similar point when he describes the many so-called a-theists, namely, that they are not really denying the existence of God but holding a type of theism. Bibby, *Restless Churches*, 1.

⁷¹ Kasper, *Jesus Christ*, 183-195, at 186.

⁷² Certainly in Britain a key question that cannot be addressed fully here is how long a person can hold religious beliefs or, perhaps more to the point, orthodox Christian beliefs without belonging to a community. This issue is discussed further in Steven Bruce, ‘The Truth about Religion in Britain’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1995, 34, 417-430.

⁷³ L.B. Brown, *The Psychology of Religious Belief*. (Orlando, FL,.; Academic Press, 1987). 217.

sense. Having the Church there makes people feel comfortable; it is reassuring to know that there are committed religious believers as long as there is no expectation that one must join them. This attitude has been called vicarious religion, which Davie defined as “the willingness of the population to delegate the religious sphere to the professional ministry of the state Churches.”⁷⁴ In terms of the new evangelization, this delegation of responsibility results inevitably, if not immediately, in a loss of personal connection to the faith community. Given the choice, few people would want a metaphysical safety net removed. One of the strongest manifestations of this is religious affiliation in the Nordic countries and Germany. In these countries, people pay substantial taxes to keep Churches running in some style. Bureaucracies are staffed, buildings, especially Churches, are maintained, and special events funded. The population takes great civic pride in preserving their heritage and does not want to see the substantial signs of the past disappear. There is, however, in terms of Christian commitment, a Potemkin quality about all of this. Religion does not play a significant part in the lives of most people.⁷⁵ The exception is, perhaps, in times of crisis such as a disaster or the death of a popular public figure, or at significant life transition points. This sentiment is well captured in responses to the following quote, provided by Bibby:

Some observers maintain that few people today are actually abandoning their religious traditions. Rather, they draw selective beliefs and practices, even if they do not attend services frequently. They are not about to be recruited by other religious groups. Their identification with the religious tradition is fairly solidly fixed, and it is to these groups that they will turn when confronted with marriage, death and, frequently, birth.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59.

⁷⁵ This attitude has been described (as a pun on Davie's original term) as belonging without believing.

⁷⁶ Reginald W. Bibby, ‘Secularization and Change’ in W.E. Hewitt, (Ed), *The Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Focus*. (Toronto: Butterworths, 1993), 65-80, at 79.

Amongst Canadian Catholics, 61% found this statement accurate. A further 31% found it somewhat accurate.⁷⁷

The chain of memory

Vicarious religion also serves as a link to the historical memory of religion.⁷⁸ It is a tenuous link to a meta-narrative that no longer figures in the lives of many who cannot, nonetheless, bring themselves to part from it entirely. In ways that are difficult to articulate, the religious memory connects the immediate to the ultimate and this is what gives it its enduring quality. To live without these chains, or rather to live when these chains have been suddenly severed, is to be rootless and drifting in a sea of indistinguishable choices and possibilities – a very postmodern image.⁷⁹ Over time other chains of memory will emerge and individuals will re-orientate themselves to a new reality based on the bonds that have developed to replace the old ones. This process takes time and can be unsettling, so it is no surprise that many in Western countries seek to keep alive the memories that they have. It is unlikely, however, that these bonds will ever become strong and compelling in the sense that they have a direct or decisive influence on how people live.

The idea of vicarious religion offers many insights into the world of post-conciliar Catholics. It explains Church attendance on special occasions: it is important for individuals to mark these events as reminders of a different reality that can be re-entered when necessary.

⁷⁷ Responses of Catholics in agreement with this statement were higher than average. The national figures were 48% found the statement accurate and 33% somewhat accurate. Hewitt, *Sociology of Religion*, 79.

⁷⁸ This idea is developed in Daniele Hervieu Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

⁷⁹ For a contrasting view on how choice impacts on religious vitality see, Mary Jo Neitz, *Charisma and Community: A Study of Religious Commitment within the Charismatic Renewal*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1987), 257-258; Lynn Davidman, *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 83-85. These authors, and others, argue that what is critical is not the number of choices but the quality of the religious options available.

Perhaps more significantly, it offers an explanation for the continued popularity of Catholic schools.⁸⁰ Catholic schools in Australia exist as, perhaps, the most tangible part of the general religious memory. For an interlude of years they provide a daily point of contact between the Church – once or twice removed – and the individual. Parents send their children to Catholic schools for many reasons, but religious formation is not the primary or even secondary one. Flynn has shown that in a five point forced response, parents consistently place religious considerations last as their reason for choosing Catholic schools.⁸¹ Nonetheless, they like having Catholic schools available, and would oppose any initiative that would make them less accessible. We see here, again, the vicarious principle in action: that which in their regular lives is absent is present at the school. Parents and students may feel comfortable, for example, with symbols such as religious pictures and crucifixes around the school even if these are not present in the home. Catholic schools also offer a sense of history and continuity, and keeping alive the religious memory in a very concrete way. For many families, earlier generations may have gone to the same school as well as siblings. Many Catholics feel that it is beneficial for their children to have some mild religious instruction, and develop a homogenous moral sense that they attribute to the school imparting certain values. Along with this are also taught inoffensive and largely generic religious views.⁸² One day, however, this association with the school will end

⁸⁰ Anthony Spencer of the Pastoral Research Centre Trust notes that in England and Wales many parents have their children baptized specifically to get them into Catholic schools, which are seen as a more academic alternative. This explains a curious “bump” in figures for late baptisms, a 5% increase against a steady decline in total number of baptisms. It is also worth recording that figures in the study for Catholic participation in the three “rites of passage” – baptism, marriage, and funerals – has fallen 23% since 1958, with marriage the most affected. Spencer comments that the decline is “pretty horrific.” Anthony Spencer, ‘Children Baptized to get into Catholic schools’, *Daily Telegraph*, Obtained on 14/1/2008 at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/01/12/nedu312.xml>.

⁸¹ Marcellin Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*. (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul’s Publications), 171. Students’ religious expectations are similar. Of the 12 lowest priorities for Catholic schools, 11 listed by students were of a religious nature, 164.

⁸² Mason and his colleagues remark that the beliefs that remain “are those which are less costly, such as belief in an undemanding, indulgent deity... a person’s former faith has dwindled to the point where they now think that on balance there’s something out there.” Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 55.

and it will not be replaced by a connection with the worshiping community of faith, since this would involve too high a level of commitment.

In the shorter term, however, the existence of relatively large numbers of Catholics who have exercised a choice to retain a loose level of affiliation, or to use the safety net of vicarious religion, presents at least two important consequences for the new evangelization. On the one hand, these people have retained a connection with the faith community, albeit loose and often on their own terms. They are not hostile to the faith tradition and may be open to being invited to a deeper commitment. In terms of pastoral outreach, this situation is easier than reaching out to Catholics or others who have no connection whatsoever with the faith community. On the other hand, large numbers of loosely connected yet satisfied members make the task of renewal difficult. At the very least, it makes change harder to implement because there is no immediate felt need for it. The new evangelization as envisaged by John Paul II sets for itself a demanding standard, that of closer union with Christ and a desire to tell others about this. Any Catholic agency that seeks to engage in the new evangelization will face a difficult task as many members of the community will not see the need for such a renewal. One of the most powerful options that Catholics today can exercise is the choice to remain a member of the faith community in a loose sense, one that guarantees them a right to their own personal, private, and ineffable spirituality that does not, amongst other things, lead to adherence to common creedal positions.

6.4 Six Features of the Contemporary Cultural Landscape and Some of Their Implications for the New Evangelization

To draw together by way of summary some of the themes developed in the discourse in this chapter, six points are now made. These extend some of the arguments already made in this

and earlier chapters, and raise questions that are considered in greater detail in succeeding chapters.

First, the Church in countries such as Australia has been relatively successful in giving many people a loose sense of affiliation and, in many ways, the wider culture supports this type of connection. With regard to the new evangelization, however, a number of difficulties present themselves. In ecclesiological terms, Bonhoeffer's warnings about the Church as a dispenser of "cheap grace" could well apply here.⁸³ The Church of the loosely affiliated certainly does not closely resemble a community of disciples. It lacks the metaphysical dimension of Church where members are united with each other and with the Church in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. For many, being part of the Church has become a sociological exercise with no obvious supernatural dimension. The dangers of this are apparent in the loss of the uniqueness of the Christian message. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, it would seem that the words of Pope Benedict XVI that "the crisis of the Church is a crisis of the absence of God," are quite telling. It would be erroneous to see the current situation as a manifestation of the Church as the People of God. The People of God as a sole metaphor for the Church is inadequate and, as Congar and others pointed out, it needs to be seen alongside other metaphors such as the Body of Christ.⁸⁴

Second, the Church needs to reconceptualize many of its pastoral strategies and sense of its mission in the light of its current disposition.⁸⁵ What is needed now, in broad terms, is a

⁸³ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1-64.

⁸⁴ Congar's views are discussed at length in Chapter 2.

⁸⁵ For an early and prescient application of the same logic, that is, with limited resources priorities need to be identified, see Moran's comments on religious education in schools in Gabriel Moran, *Vision and Tactics: Toward an Adult Church*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 143-147. Brown, in his analysis of the decline of religion in Britain, notes that one of the key factors was the decline of the "industry of evangelization," that is, the amount of effort required to effectively evangelize in contemporary culture. Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization 1800-2000*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 166-169.

strengthening and reinvigorating of the Body of Christ and a renewed perception that Christian belief and commitment are reasonable positions. The need for this renewal is one of the founding assumptions of what Dulles has called “post-critical theology.”⁸⁶ Post –critical theology arises out of an awareness that the fundamental relationship between the wider culture and the Church has changed, largely in terms of a disproportionate power relationship, where the Church lacks the capacity to engage with culture on an equal footing. The Church has lost its privileged position, has become one voice among many, and to be heard must be able to articulate its message with power and conviction. It needs to be clearly re-stated that religious beliefs can be firmly held by reasonable people. Dulles put this well when he wrote: “Our contemporaries, well aware that religious tenets are capable of being questioned, need to be shown how firm religious commitments may nevertheless be responsible.”⁸⁷

Third, a feature of all the theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter is that they describe many Catholics as being on the periphery of the Church and that they may have no real inclination to change this state of affairs.⁸⁸ As religious consumers, many have made a strong bargain, which precludes a high level of religious commitment. Many have experienced, in their view, what Catholicism has to offer, taken what they want from it and seem to be more than content with their current position or the choices they have made. To many, O’Loughlin’s assessment of Christian affiliation in Australia could apply: “Many people continue to call

⁸⁶ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 3-17,

⁸⁷ Dulles, *Craft of Theology*, 6. It can only be noted here but this attitude can be contrasted with other recent approaches, which place great emphasis on some type of critique. Groome, for example, in his concept of “Shared Christian Praxis,” argues that educators need to employ, amongst other things, a “hermeneutic of suspicion” in relation to “the Christian Story/Vision.” Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. The Way of Shared Praxis*. (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 232. Groome does name other hermeneutics, such as retrieval and creative commitment, which could be given more emphasis as a way of balancing an undue emphasis on suspicion, especially when “Shared Christian Praxis” is used in the classroom.

⁸⁸ In a sense, they reflect on a personal level what Brown said on a cultural level: “British culture did not so much turn hostile to organized religion as indifferent. This sense of the secular that grew in Britain between 1960 and 2000 was not an intruding sense in peoples’ lives, but rather a comfortable absence.” Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*. (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2006), 316.

themselves Christian, but they give that word a meaning so weakened that the traces of its roots in Christ and his Gospel are hard to find.”⁸⁹ A very pertinent question arises as to what is the best pastoral and strategic approach to take when dealing with people who have assimilated a Christian sensibility, but do not display the deep inner conversion that is at the heart of the new evangelization? It should be recognized and acknowledged that ministry to this group is difficult. Ministry needs to be carefully conceived while success may be best measured in small incremental steps and targeted toward specific groups.

Fourth, in their excellent study of generations of American Catholics, D’Antonio and his colleagues interspersed well-presented quantitative data with a series of dialogues between a hypothetical mother and daughter. One represented a more socialized, highly committed Catholic and the other was more typical of the Generation X/Y pattern. A critical question arises as to what the granddaughter, the next generation of Catholic, will contribute to this dialogue? Is the existence of large numbers of loosely affiliated Catholics indicative of a consistent pattern that will continue into the future, or is it a more terminal scenario, where following generations drift out of the Catholic orbit altogether? For Brown, this question has been answered conclusively.⁹⁰ He proposed a three generational process of religious disaffiliation from the mainline Christian Churches in Britain. The third generation becomes thoroughly secular in the sense that their worldviews and opinions are indistinguishable from the general public. In terms of the theoretical positions presented in this chapter, there is some support for this notion. The individualization and uncertainty of postmodernity, for example, seem likely to continue.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Frank O’Loughlin, ‘The New Evangelization of the Twenty First Century’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 2007, 401-413, at 408. Kerkhofs makes a very similar point about Europe in Jan Kerkhofs, ‘Present-Day European Mentalities and the Preconditions of a New Evangelization’, *Lumen Vitae*, 1986, XLI (3), 23-35, at 25.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 189-194.

⁹¹ Davie makes a similar point and notes that this “is an extremely pertinent question.” Grace Davie, ‘Europe the Exception That Proves the Rule?’ in Peter L. Berger, (Ed) *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 65-83 at 83.

A similar argument could be made about the other benefits of maintaining a loose religious connection. Writing about the future of Catholicism in Quebec, a community that has experienced a dramatic decline in religious practice, Christiano noted that while the historical place of Catholicism is recognized, most Quebecers had an ever-weakening connection with these historical roots.⁹² He observed, “whether future generations of Quebecers, more than ever imbued with the secular attitudes of their most accomplished artistic, intellectual, and economic elites (if not the critical foundations of those attitudes), will find such loose attachments to religious tradition either useful or ultimately satisfying is still an open question.”⁹³ In terms of vicarious religion, what happens when the historical memory of faith becomes very weak or the number of committed Christians grows so small that not even they can keep alive the sense of faith for others?⁹⁴

Fifth, it seems that many Generation X and Generation Y Catholics are, to use Rahner’s analogy, somewhere in the middle as the Church changes from a national Church where membership was automatic, if unreflective, to one where individuals make a personal decision to be associated.⁹⁵ At the very least, this realization must make the Church more attuned to responding in a proactive way by encouraging people to become part of the faith community and to nurture those already affiliated. The era of uncritical, almost passive, enculturation has ended. Evangelization is not an option as much as a necessity in a culture where options abound. There may be a suggestion of a way forward in Neitz’s study of charismatic Catholics. She pointed out

⁹² Kevin J. Christiano, ‘The Trajectory of Catholicism in Twentieth-Century Quebec’, in Leslie Woodcock Tentler, (Ed), *The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholicism since 1950 in the United States, Ireland and Quebec*. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 21-61.

⁹³ Tentler, *Confronts Modernity*, 61.

⁹⁴ Davie, quoting Hervieu-Leger, has suggested that the traditional form of Catholicism in France today has all but collapsed and in the future will be replaced by a new configuration. Davie, *Sociology*, 48.

⁹⁵ Karl Rahner, *Shape*, 50. Berger makes a similar point from a sociological perspective noting that Churches have moved from an imposition model to a marketing model. Berger, *Canopy*, 145. See also Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 228-254.

that these people have chosen a particular “religious reality.”⁹⁶ They have done so, in the face of many options, because they see this as an attractive and life-giving decision. They are not overwhelmed by choice if something stands out as exceptional. Here, choosing to be a Christian is a mark of discipleship rather than of tribalism, so this is in accord with the ecclesiology that underpins the new evangelization. In keeping with the notion of the religious consumer, Wuthnow commented that many young adults today are in a bargaining position, not just with religious affiliation but with many other aspects of their lives, and an important factor in this bargaining is perceived benefit.⁹⁷

The Church faces the challenge of having to articulate a message and a rationale to a no longer captive audience. If we accept this notion of the Church needing to take a more evangelistic tone, in the sense of proclaiming its mission to a more disconnected, distracted, and discerning audience, one important consequence concerns those who hear and accept this message, who respond to the call of the new evangelization. They are likely to display the characteristic of the religiously highly committed. They are not Catholic because their parents were or because they drifted into this unreflectively. They have made a decision to join or to remain a part of the faith community. They are likely to see themselves as disciples of Christ in the terms spelled out in the ecclesiology of communion. They could also be described, using Lonergan’s terminology, of having fallen in love with God. For them, the call to evangelize and to ever deepen their relationship with Christ will be a priority. One significant consequence of the emergence of this group is the way in which the wider Church deals with them. They are coming into a Church that is still very much in transition from a monopoly to a community of

⁹⁶ Neitz, *Charisma*, 257-258.

⁹⁷ Wuthnow comments: “But people have to get something out of the bargain, too. Everything social scientists have learned about volunteering, philanthropy, and joining organizations underscores this fact. There is no such thing as pure altruism. Human Nature is self-interested.” Wuthnow, *Baby Boomers*, 217.

conviction. It may be that their zeal and ardor is viewed with suspicion by some. They take religion seriously. In a culture where religion is accepted most readily in its benign and private forms, those who take on a much stronger commitment may not always be received with enthusiasm, even by some in their own faith community. They do, after all, have some resemblance to St. Paul, who experienced perhaps history's most famous exogenous conversion experience. He is presented in *Redemptoris Missio* as the human exemplar for the new evangelization. Paul of Tarsus was a figure who challenged others to a higher standard and to move out of what had become comfortable and complacent positions. Even a brief perusal of the Acts of the Apostles indicates that Paul was not always greeted with open arms either by the Jewish or Roman officials or the nascent Christian communities.

Sixth, and finally, at least for the short to medium term, the number of Catholics who express a loose affiliation with the Church will remain quite large for the reasons outlined in this chapter. It would be perilous to take this as some kind of vindication of current pastoral strategies. The fact that, for example, demands for places in Catholic schools remain high is not an indicator of resurgence in strong religious commitment on the part of parents.⁹⁸ Indeed, enrolment patterns in Catholic schools could change. In the United States overall, Catholic school enrollment now stands at about 2.3 million, down from the peak of 5.2 million in the early 1960s.⁹⁹ In Canada, both Newfoundland and Quebec, provinces with at least nominal Catholic majorities, have abolished funding to Catholic schools, a move undertaken without widespread protest.¹⁰⁰ Catholic schools seem especially vulnerable if parents are sending their children to

⁹⁸ It is especially perilous to see participation in Catholic schools as some type of alternative to Mass attendance. See Cashen, *Sacred Heart*, 189; Maurice Ryan, 'Future Catholic Schools: Exclusive, Inclusive and Plural Options. *Journal of Religious Education*, 2008, 56(4), 21-28.

⁹⁹ *Catholic School Enrollment Dwindling*. Obtained on 9/4/2008 from http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-04-09-catholic-schools_N.html.

¹⁰⁰ James T. Mulligan, *Catholic Education: Ensuring a Future*. (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005), 108-113. Feehan argues that in order to survive, Catholic schools in Canada need to maintain, at all costs, a distinctive identity. This idea of

them for a variety of reasons, which are not primarily religious. This places them in direct competition with other schools. If parents are greatly concerned with the religious aspect of Catholic schools, then this is a relatively stable clientele. Other schools cannot provide this educational dimension. They can, however, provide other educational experiences and if these are placed ahead of the religious dimension of the school in the eyes of most parents then enrolment in Catholic schools could fluctuate according to shifts in demand.

One of the challenges that all Catholic Churches face is how best to provide the necessary catechesis for young adults and adolescents to move them toward discipleship. There is a distinction, recognized in the discussion of the new evangelization in *Redemptoris Missio*, that catechesis is a distinct process from evangelization. Nonetheless, they remain complementary.¹⁰¹ Catechesis and evangelization, therefore, often occur in tandem in the Church's missionary outreach, and certainly as it is expressed in Catholic schools. A key insight of Catholic educational philosophy is that knowing more about faith can lead to the strengthening of faith. Schools, therefore, have a role to play in catechesis, but it is a complementary one. Catechesis must be situated within a faith community. The family, in particular, is the seat of catechesis.

Concluding Comments

Beyer has commented that much of how Catholics see themselves and live out their faith could be described as cultural Catholicism, which is typified by “a diffuse spiritual quest,

distinctiveness will be elaborated on in Chapter 10 as one of the principles of the New Evangelization. Kevin Feehan, ‘The Canadian Constitution and the Catholic Community’. Keynote address, *Canadian Confederation of School Trustees Association Conference*, Ottawa, 26 September 2008.

¹⁰¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*. (Sydney: St. Paul Publications, 1988).

emotional and largely unorganized or even haphazard practice.”¹⁰² Leaving aside the issue of its longevity, there is little chance that cultural Catholicism in countries such as Australia will provide the energy needed for revitalization and growth. The new evangelization, however, is a proposal that responds directly to this critical issue of how to re-engage Catholics and encourage high levels of commitment amongst more than a relative few of its members.

This chapter has argued that significant social factors posed by postmodernity make strong and lasting allegiance to any group problematic. Most Catholics can choose a religious niche for themselves which maximizes benefits but precludes cost. From this position they are unlikely to move to more demanding levels of commitment. The insights of vicarious religion suggest that most are satisfied with an understated Christian presence in society that gives them options and provides a safety net in times of crisis, and also allows for the religious chains of memory to be maintained, however tenuously. This discussion has led to six features of contemporary culture in countries like Australia, which make the task of the new evangelization challenging. If we take these factors together, a reasonable conclusion is that the Church in the future will be numerically smaller than it is today. This decline could be precipitous once the pre-conciliar generation passes away. In many ways, the cultural forces at work cultivate loose religious affiliation. In the light of decreasing numbers and a non-supportive culture, the new evangelization can be seen as an appropriate and timely reading of the signs of the times and a critical engagement with the wider culture.

If the social conditions are right for low levels of religious commitment, a critical issue becomes: How is strong commitment, over what can be termed conventional levels, encouraged

¹⁰² Peter Beyer, ‘Roman Catholicism in Contemporary Quebec: The Ghosts of Religion Past?’ in W.E. Hewitt, (Ed), *The Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Focus*. (Toronto: Butterworths, 1993), 133-156, at 153.

and nurtured? Following from this, at least in a theoretical sense, what are the factors that are most likely to make the task of the new evangelization easier? These questions will be the departure point for the next chapter. They mark a change in the discussion away from understanding the concept of the new evangelization and the cultural conditions in which it arose toward some of the issues surrounding its actualization.

Chapter 7: Nurturing Disciples

Introduction

This chapter is the first of three, which directly addresses the third question spelled out in the introduction, namely: "How can the new evangelization be conceptualized and implemented?" It builds on earlier chapters, which have provided a theoretical base for this discussion. A key issue in implementing the new evangelization is an examination of how best to nurture disciples, that is, individuals who display a high level of religious commitment. This chapter examines a number of factors that are associated with nurturing commitment. The overriding framework for this discussion is that if individuals see religious beliefs and practices as plausible then they are more likely to become committed to them. No single factor is more important in encouraging and sustaining high levels of religious commitment than the support of a social network or community, or to use ecclesiological language, the communion of faith. Special mention will be made here of the family as a key community of faith. The second half of the chapter will draw attention to other factors that enhance plausibility and to some of the features of Christian communities which, in a contemporary Western milieu, seem to be relatively successful in evangelization.

The content of this chapter is presented under five headings: a) Plausibility Structures; b) The Primacy of Community; c) The Family: A Special Case of Community; d) Other Factors that Enhance Plausibility; and, e) Evidence from Other Traditions.

7.1 Plausibility Structures

Legitimization

Berger and Luckman argued that for religious beliefs to be sustained they must be supported by plausibility structures.¹ These structures are essentially a social base where the beliefs of the group are made subjectively real. In modern Western cultures, pluralization has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of explanations or ways of living available to people.² This diversification is expressed in terms of a pluralization of consciousnesses where individuals develop many senses of self. No one position, therefore, can claim the unquestioned status of objective reality. This is especially true of religions. Berger's famous analogy of the demise of the "sacred canopy" has meant that the worldview of all religions must take into account at least the possibility of other positions.³ Once this occurs, particular religions must have some means of legitimizing their beliefs against those of others. These competitors can be other religious positions, but, increasingly, in countries such as Australia, key agents in the religious market are indifferentism, and views which seek to minimize or privatize (as opposed to eliminate) religious commitment. The level of such competition has led to what Mannion called, "a crisis amongst Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular."⁴ To counteract these competing worldviews, religious groups need to develop and maintain plausibility structures, which provide members with a means of legitimizing their beliefs and practices.⁵ Legitimization occurs when

¹ Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction*, 73.

² Whilst pluralization is seen as a phenomenon that affects Western countries, a number of regional variations exist. Monsma and Soper, for example, describe the Australian version as "pragmatic pluralism." Stephen V. Monsma and J. Christopher Soper, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies*. (New York: Lanham, 1997), 87-120, at 87.

³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 151-152.

⁴ Mannion, *Ecclesiology*, 20.

⁵ MacLaren argues that a more appropriate term for these is not structures but plausibility shelters. MacLaren, *Mission Implausible*, esp.107-132.

strong plausibility structures, rooted in supportive communities, are present and sustained. As Berger and Luckman pointed out:

Subjective reality is thus always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance. One can maintain one's self-identification as a man of importance only in a milieu that confirms this identity; one can maintain one's Catholic faith only if one retains one's significant relationships with the Catholic community.⁶

Social capital

Key plausibility structures are family, schools, workplaces, and community groups. It is within these structures that religion becomes plausible.⁷ If a religious community is to survive then it must be able to provide an ongoing explanation of the world, not just on a cognitive level, to those who are within the faith community. In other words, the plausibility structures need to be maintained. There are two elements that are of pivotal importance. First, plausibility structures must be able to provide a mechanism for socializing the next generation. Second, there must be many opportunities for conversation within the faith community. Conversation here means occasions when the members of the community can rehearse over and over again what it means to be a member of that community. This involves a range of actions over a prolonged period of time. For an evangelical community, for example, this could involve attending Bible study, giving witness, taking part in regular prayer evenings, and going away together on Summer camp. The important feature in this scenario is the capacity to live out what it means to be a member of that community.⁸ The idea of conversation as a way of sustaining

⁶ Berger and Luckman, *Construction*, 154-155.

⁷ Berger and Luckman, *Construction*, 34.

⁸ Bruce has observed that there is a strong connection between the frequency and intensity of religious conversation and religiosity. He observes, "Evangelicals are in the main produced by evangelical parents, Sunday schools, youth fellowships, seaside missions and camps, Christian Unions in universities and colleges, and membership in one or more of the many inter-denominational evangelical organizations." Steven Bruce, *Firm in Faith: The Survival and Revival of Conservative Protestantism*. (Aldershot: Gower, 1984), 402. There is a similar sense of the importance of

commitment has some overlap with the concept of social capital. If conversation is particularly rich, that is, if a person has had a good deal of experience rehearsing what it means to be a member of that community, they have almost certainly invested a large amount of time and emotional energy into this enterprise. This can be seen as an investment, accumulating bonding social capital.⁹ If they leave the group or lessen their involvement, this investment is lost or devalued. For Catholics, many of the opportunities for conversation, to practice what it means to be a Catholic, and to develop social capital, have disappeared in recent times.¹⁰ Many Catholics have few ways to express their Catholic identity.¹¹ For identity to remain strong and to be correlated with high levels of commitment, it must be actualized with behaviors that mark group affiliation.¹² These could include prohibition of certain activities which do not accord with the beliefs of the group, and encouragement of ritualistic behaviors such as participation in religious services or what Deal and Kennedy called “expressive events.” They note:

Without expressive events, any culture will die. In the absence of ceremony or ritual, important values have no impact. Ceremonies are to culture what the movie is to the script.¹³

If such behaviors and events do not exist or are rarely seen, then the members of the faith community, especially those new to the group or relatively loosely affiliated, have little way of developing a sense of belonging. Dean pointed out that religious identity formation is dependent

action and activity in Lonergan when he writes, “What counts in a person’s life is what he does, and says and thinks.” Bernard Lonergan, ‘Revolution in Catholic Theology’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 235.

⁹ Stephen Baron, John Field, J., and Tom Schuller, *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Stark and Finke also see a strong incentive to preserve social capital: “Proposition 29, in making religious choices, people will attempt to conserve their social capital.” Stark and Finke, *Acts*, 119.

¹⁰ Breda Phillips, *More Prophetic Than We Knew*. (St. Therese Parish: Bendigo, 1999).

¹¹ Rymarz has argued that one of the reasons for the success of World Youth Day is that it gives young Catholic adults a chance to express their religious identity. Richard Rymarz, ‘Who Goes to World Youth Day: Some Data on Under 18 Australian Pilgrims’, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 2007, 28(1), 33-43.

¹² Merton P. Strommen and Richard Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*. (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), esp., 12-45.

¹³ Terence Deal and Allan Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1982).

on what she called a range of spiritual practices that provide scaffolding for faith to develop.¹⁴ They, at the very least, allow for an entrée into a world of deep symbolic meaning wherein religious communities often express their deepest values and teachings. Without this scaffolding it is unlikely that any significant demands placed on the individual will be met, and a growing disassociation between the person and the faith tradition is likely to be set in motion. Placing emphasis on external religious practice runs counter to a widespread cultural perception that external practice and internal belief can be disconnected with no consequence for religious commitment. Smith and Snell challenged this view and in doing so reiterated the importance of external religious participation:

Little evidence supports the idea that emerging adults who decline in regular external religious practice nonetheless retain over time high levels of subjectively important, privately committed, internal religious faith. Quite the contrary...the emerging adults who do sustain strong subjective religion in their lives, it turns out, are those who also maintain strong external expressions of faith, including religious service attendance.¹⁵

Need for continuity and responsiveness

Plausibility structures must be able to provide a clear and cogent explanation of the faith to those within the community, especially at times when individuals are challenged. As Weber pointed out, humans have a need to see both the world and their place in it as meaningful.¹⁶ Religions in general are well placed to provide what Bouma identified as one core driver of society, namely, “hope and meaning grounded in a connection with that which is more than passing, partial and broken.”¹⁷ One factor that assists in building up cognitive plausibility is a

¹⁴ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practicing Passion*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), esp. Chapter 6. See also Robert Wuthnow, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 189-197. Wuthnow has a memorable phrase which underlines the importance of practices to religious traditions: “Spiritual practices have always been recognized in religious traditions as the core around which any life of faith must be built.” Wuthnow, *Growing*, 192.

¹⁵ Smith and Snell, *Transition*, 252.

¹⁶ Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 23-49.

¹⁷ Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 205

sense that the tradition not only has well-grounded reasons for existence, but also that these reasons have some historical *gravitas*.¹⁸ This is one of the advantages of seeing the new evangelization in terms of a hermeneutic of continuity. If beliefs and teaching change precipitously it always leaves the question, especially to the uninitiated, of whether what they are being told now is in fact reliable and durable.¹⁹ Smith speaks of religion as a “super-empirical moral order” but one that must be secure and not in a state of flux, much less reversal or dramatic lineal change.²⁰ Often there is emphasis on discontinuity in order to stress a new, superior approach as if some fresh, novel insight has been discovered. Kolvenbach pointed out the problem with this view from a Catholic perspective when he commented: “The newness of the Lord is not found in the hermeneutics of discontinuity, a breaking with the past, but, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, in the hermeneutic of continuity.”²¹ If the “new” Jesus is not inextricably linked to the Jesus of the Christian heritage and encountered in the historic community of faith then the Church will struggle to make its case convincing. So much of the Church’s self understanding is tied up in its sense of being a historic community of faith, where the community today has clear and tangible links with the past. The ecclesiology of communion describes well a theological reality that transcends time but which is intimately associated with the past.

¹⁸ Daniel Donovan, *Distinctively Catholic: An Exploration of Catholic Identity*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 33-36.

¹⁹ MacIntyre points out how the history of individuals is inextricably linked with the “larger and longer histories of a number of traditions.” The more credible these larger histories are the more embedded the individuals becomes. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 221-222.

²⁰ Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 103-106.

²¹ Jim McDermott, ‘Let Us Look Together to Christ – An Interview with Peter-Hans Kolvenbach’, *America*, Nov 26, 2007, 12-16.

A society such as Australia today is highly integrated and most members of religious communities are likely to interact on a daily basis with others who do not share their beliefs.²² It is difficult in this milieu to quarantine one aspect of life from others, so the standards of, say, the working environment, are transferred to other dimensions of life. Younger Catholics, especially those who are searching for a more authentic faith, need to feel that the tradition follows the highest ethical and professional standards in its interface with wider world. This is one consequence of the collapse of the Catholic subculture in the post-conciliar era, namely, that the Church can no longer be seen to be operating under its own rules.²³ To be plausible the Church must be accountable.

Popular culture also confronts religious belief in many ways, not least of which are messages contained in mass media. Religious groups today cannot claim a blind and unquestioning loyalty. At the very least this unswerving obedience is something into which most in Generations X and Y have never been socialized. To be plausible the Church needs to be receptive to the needs of younger Catholics and to recognize that they expect creditable responses to issues that arise both on a personal level and in the public domain. Younger Catholics will have questions that arise from their engagement with wider culture that are, at once, both rudimentary and profound. At its most basic level, plausibility involves being able to respond well to legitimate questions.

²² In modern Western culture, it is very difficult to live entirely amongst only one's own people. Kraybill has shown, for example, that even Anabaptist communities such as the Amish, famous for their horse drawn carriages and refusal to use mains electricity, actually have very carefully controlled and evolved mechanisms for dealing with the outside world. Donald Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 80-111. Even ultra-orthodox Jews, such as those described by Heilman in his study of the *haerdim* in Jerusalem, have some strategies to deal with the exchange between the group and the wider culture. Samuel Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1-27.

²³ A strong example of how the Church can no longer exempt itself from governance standards is the clerical sexual abuse crisis. This is a severe challenge to the Church's credibility, and hence its plausibility. Podles has pointed out that the manner in which abusive priests were dealt with by Church authorities is different to how these matters would have been dealt with in the secular sphere. This "double standard" corrodes trust and confidence in the whole institution. Leon J. Podles, *Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church*. (Baltimore: Crosslands Press, 2008).

7.2 The Primacy of Community

...the ideal basis of society is community. Without a large measure of community, human society and sovereign states cannot function.²⁴

In the words quoted above, Lonergan identified the centrality of community to all human endeavors. Community, following Bender, is understood as the small, intimate, and personal group where people are brought together by shared understandings and where they obtain affective and emotional support.²⁵ At its most basic level, being part of a supportive religious group gives people, especially younger ones, a sense that they are not alone, that others share their views and support them.²⁶ As Lonergan pointed out, the support of others can be of critical importance in establishing the basis for belief: “When everyone believes except the village atheist, doubting is almost impossible. When few believe, doubting is spontaneous, and believing is difficult.”²⁷ If individuals are on the periphery of a group or thinking of becoming more involved and committed, the existence of a vibrant, sustainable community of believers makes such a decision seem more plausible.²⁸ Furthermore, very few individuals can maintain a religious belief system when they do not have the support of others. The more personal and

²⁴ Lonergan, *Methods*, 361.

²⁵ Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 7.

²⁶ Elaine Donelson, ‘Psychology of Religion and Adolescents in the United States: Past and Present’, *Journal of Adolescence*, 1999, 22, 187-204. Gaillardetz notes that one of the imperatives of contemporary Catholic ministry is that it highlights the communal aspect of belief as an antidote, amongst other things, to excessive individualism. Richard Gaillardetz, ‘Apologetics, Evangelization and Ecumenism Today’, *Origins*, 2005, 35(1), 11-15.

²⁷ Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Response of the Jesuit’ in Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 185.

²⁸ There are innumerable accounts of individuals’ conversion on the basis of encounter with a strong faith community. Dulles, for example, makes the point that a key moment in his journey into Catholicism was going into a packed Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts on a Sunday evening and hearing the congregation of working class men and women singing Latin hymns such as *O Salutaris Hostia* and the *Tantum ergo* which he recognized, as a classical scholar, as coming from Thomas Aquinas. He commented, “... [I realized] the culture handed down from medieval Europe was still a living reality in the Catholic Church.” Avery Dulles, ‘The Impact of the Catholic Church on American Culture’, in Thomas P. Rausch, (Ed), *Evangelizing America*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 11-28 at 18.

localized these support structures the more likely they are to sustain individuals.²⁹ The group does not need to be overwhelmingly large. There is a difference between being part of a tiny minority battling against a hostile and indifferent culture and being part of a group that at least has critical mass, that is, where there are enough members of the group to provide a credible alternative to the dominant view. This may be seen as the difference between being counter-cultural and totally embattled.³⁰

The social network of younger Catholics

Many Catholic teenagers and young adults today lack networked peer support that is likely to enhance their connection with the faith community. For those people who are expressing an emerging religious commitment, the lack of ongoing support is especially acute.³¹ Rymarz and Graham have shown in their work with active Catholic teenagers that one of the characteristic features of this group was that, on the whole, they were not well integrated with others religious teenagers.³² For many, the only time they came together with others who could offer peer support was at weekly Mass, and this was only a fleeting contact. In their typical daily routines, they did not associate, either formally or informally, with other religiously active Catholic teenagers.³³ Even when they go to Mass, many younger Catholics are aware of the lack of people like them who are attending. In these circumstances, it is rational for the young person

²⁹ As Neitz pointed out, "Local communities provide the necessary social supports for value commitments." Mary Jo Neitz, *Charisma and Community: A Study of Religious Commitment within the Charismatic Renewal*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), 260. Mark McCrindle and Mark Beard, *Seriously Cool, Marketing and Communicating with Diverse Generations*. (Baulkham Hills: McCrindle Research), 2006.

³⁰ Arthur Jones, 'Campus Ministry Fills Need as Funds Shrink', *National Catholic Reporter*, 1996, 32(20), March 15, 10-11.

³¹ Joseph A. Erickson, 'Adolescent Religious Development: A Structural Equation Model of the Role of the Family, Peer Group and Educational Influences', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1992, 31(2) 131-152.

³² Mason and his colleagues report a relatively high figure for association with religious groups amongst Gen Y Catholics. They also acknowledge the problem of over reporting. Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 121.

³³ Jones, *Campus*, 10-11.

to at least explore the other religious community that if they attend a Catholic school, surrounds them. This is the community of more loosely affiliated Catholics. This group does not eschew religious affiliation entirely and is made up of many people with relatable experiences. It is unlikely, however, that integration with this group will lead to a deeper discipleship in Christ, which lies at the heart of the new evangelization.

Four consequences of the lack of supportive communities

In terms of the new evangelization, it is extremely difficult to invite someone to reanimate their faith in the absence of strong, welcoming communities. If a person expresses an interest in becoming a more involved Catholic this must be mediated through a community of faith. If these communities do not exist in sufficient numbers, then it is hard to see how any re-evangelization could occur. If younger Catholics' social contacts are largely secular, then they have little opportunity to develop a sense of Catholic identity amongst their peers. At least four consequences flow from this.

First, strong supportive social networks assist in establishing plausibility, by providing a strong affective experience of faith. There is an increasing body of research evidence linking the emotions with religious experience.³⁴ If people associate religious practice with strong positive feelings such as joy and anticipation then this makes them much more likely to become strongly committed.³⁵ These affective experiences are social, they are expressed as part of a community. Individuals with such experiences are likely to be satisfied with the Tradition and, perhaps more importantly, want to reach out to others to include them in these activities. The group has

³⁴ Jeff Goodwin, James J. Jasper, and Francesca Poleeta, *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Jonathon Turner and Jan Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Adrain Walker, 'Rejoice Always. How Everyday Joy Responds to the Problem of Evil', *Communio* 31, Summer, 2004.

³⁵ Frank Mercadante, *Growing Teen Disciples*. (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's Publications, 1998).

something to offer, which is especially important in a culture where competing options abound. People are much more likely to want to join and remain part of a community if their experience of it is consistently affirming. Ideally, these experiences should be immediate. The experience of being part of an affirming and welcoming community is a very powerful one that transcends the individualization of postmodernity. Indeed, many young adults today are seeking integration into an affirming group, one that offers fellowship and support. Being one of Bauman's "strangers" is unpleasant. In his study of "Seeker Churches" – large non-denominational Churches that specifically seek to engage the unchurched – Sargeant pointed out that what most new Church members valued was "the environment.... [T]hey don't single out one thing like the music or drama or anything else in particular."³⁶ If new members do take the chance to become involved then they need to feel a sense of community and support from the first instance.³⁷

Second, a strong supportive community provides a place where questions about the tradition and about being religious can be faced. As Smith pointed out, religious doubt is not a purely postmodern condition.³⁸ This has existed since time immemorial and has taken on many facades. If a person feels that they cannot understand part of the teachings of a group or that these do not speak to their particular situation, then special assistance is needed.³⁹ In Berger and Luckman's terminology, this is "plausibility structure maintenance." There is ample evidence

³⁶ Kimon H. Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 114.

³⁷ A characteristic of modern societies is that membership in voluntary organizations has fallen quite sharply. People are more reluctant to take part in a group if they are not required to do so. This is not just a manifestation of anti-social behaviour, but a reflection of the pressures of modern life. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2000).

³⁸ Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 172. Smith sees most of these challenges in largely perennial, non-cognitive terms: "suffering, tragedies, moral hypocrisy, ordinary life struggles and troubles, offensive Church actions and relational network disruptions – the apparent sources of most doubt and defections – are not realities peculiar to modern life." Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 172.

³⁹ Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 174.

that many religious groups have difficulties expressing their core beliefs.⁴⁰ As a result, members have a relatively poor understanding of what the tradition teaches, what it requires of members, and how the group makes sense of the great questions of life. If a person is in such a situation, they are unlikely to regard the faith Tradition as plausible, especially in times of trial and doubt. They have legitimate questions that need to be addressed.⁴¹ Having a group in which to discuss issues such as these makes the questioning process much more satisfactory because it brings the questioner out of isolation and confusion and into a world where their concerns matter. The group dynamic is critical. Surrounded by like-minded, caring friends a person is much more likely to open up and raise issues that are really troubling them. The group can also provide support in times of tragedy or misfortune. The presence of other like-minded believers also provides great reassurance in struggling with the existential universals that have confounded people since the dawn of time. One possibility in providing experiences of supportive communities, which may augment more ongoing structures, are intense, episodic experiences of community. These seem to be particularly well suited to groups who share a common interest or background. Gathering people together for a relatively short period of time, even on a yearly basis, seems to be a suitable response to the challenges of postmodernity; but, in fact, this type of Christian outreach is well established. For example one of the most significant aspects of Romano Guardini's ministry was the time he spent as a leading figure in the *Quickborn* (Wellsprings of Life) youth movement in pre-war Germany.⁴² A key part of this organization were summer camps held at Burg Rothenfels am Main. These attracted university students who

⁴⁰ Smith and Denton, *Searching*, 127-135.

⁴¹ Dulles has addressed this issue by arguing that the contemporary milieu amongst Catholics is suited to a revival of apologetics. See Avery R. Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005). Rymarz and Graham report that when asked about what issues troubled them, many active Catholics noted issues that had a decidedly classical apologetic flavour, such as issues about good and evil in the world and creation of the universe. Rymarz and Graham, *Drifting*, 378.

⁴² Krieg, *Precursor*, 21-23.

were interested in deepening their Christian commitment in the style offered.⁴³ As well as Guardini, other prominent mentors attended and the participants experienced excellent preaching, innovative liturgy, a variety of cultural and spiritual pursuits, and strong fellowship.⁴⁴ The camps ran in the summer beginning in early 1920's until they were closed by the Nazis in 1939. Rather than being seen as competing with conventional parish life, this focused ministry provided revitalization for the group who attended and who then returned to more conventional modes of faith expression.⁴⁵

Third, a supportive group exposes individuals to mentors, people who exemplify what the tradition holds, and shows others a way to achieve what is promised to them. To use Weberian language, groups facilitate contact with religious virtuosity.⁴⁶ In a religious group, there is a much stronger chance that people will be exposed to others who embody the teachings of the tradition, showing them how to live out a strong level of religious commitment. Dulles captured well the importance of strong religious mentors when he wrote:

For the successful transmission of Christian faith, it is highly important for the neophyte to find a welcoming community with responsible leaders who are mature disciples, formed in the ways of the Lord.⁴⁷

Exposure to high levels of authentic religious commitment makes individual commitment more plausible because it shows what can be done. There is substantial literature on the

⁴³ Karl Rahner was one of the many young adults deeply influenced by attendance at these intensive summer camps. Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*. (Malden, Ma: Blackwell, 2007), 87.

⁴⁴ The liturgical style at Burg Rothenfels is worth noting. Krieg describes this as, "informal Masses at which they sang hymns in German instead of Latin, discussed the scriptural readings for the day, and stood around an altar at which the priest faced the people." Krieg, *Precursor*, 23.

⁴⁵ Dulles offers the idea of "novitiates for life" as a basis for training lay leaders in the community of disciples. "Brief gatherings for spiritual renewal are a great help toward achieving authentic discipleship in the Church." Dulles, *Models*, 219.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of Weber's differentiation of religious types see, Wittburg, *Rise and Fall*, 14-22.

⁴⁷ Dulles, *Models*, 218.

importance of mentoring in developing religious commitment.⁴⁸ Peer mentors help ease the transition from parental expectations to developing personal faith commitment. The most powerful form of modeling is a transformational one where the influence of peer mentors works in collaboration with other factors in the young person's life, such as family of origin and socialization. This modeling is most likely to occur within a religious group, as members are likely to share a similar view on religious development. Without mentoring, individuals do not have a person with whom to strongly identify, and are left to their own resources. In this situation, they can model highly individualized and personal styles of behavior. This has strong overtones with the postmodern discussion, which sees contemporary society as one where the anti-hero has replaced the hero as a guide for life, the anti-hero being one who defines his or her own world and is almost obsessively individualistic.⁴⁹

Finally, a supportive group provides the boundaries that are necessary for religious affiliation to develop and become stronger.⁵⁰ Hoge and his colleagues pointed out how important clear boundaries are for religious groups and that many Churches today have a clear problem with vanishing boundaries making it difficult to distinguish between those inside and outside the group.⁵¹ With sufficient boundaries in place, however, the religious community becomes a place where one can practise expressing identity and rehearse what it means to be a member. Catholic identity in contemporary culture is often diffuse and generalized as indicated

⁴⁸ See for example, William H. Bukowski, Andrew F. Newcomb, and Willard W. Hartup, *The Company They Keep. Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Kelly D. Schwartz, William Bukowski, and Wayne T. Aoki, 'Friends, Mentors and Gurus: Peer and Non Parent Adult Influences on Spiritual Development' in Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Pamela Ebstyn King, Linda Wagener, and Peter. L. Benson, (Eds), *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006).

⁴⁹ Coupland, the populariser of the term Gen X in his novel, makes ample use of the anti-hero.

⁵⁰ Michael A. Hogg, *The Psychology of Group Cohesiveness*. (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

⁵¹ They go on to make the distinction between official and subjective boundaries. Dean R. Hoge, William D. Dinges, Mary Johnson, and Juan L. Gonzales, *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice*. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 205-207. Similar arguments are advanced in relation to Protestant congregations. See Dean Hoge, Benton Johnson, and Donald A. Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

by the absence of characteristic behaviors and beliefs. Douglas argued, for example, that the loss of practices such as fasting has had a significant impact of Catholic identity.⁵² If being a Catholic is not easily distinguishable from what many others in society do and believe, then it is very difficult to practice and rehearse what being a Catholic means. By definition this is not a distinctive reinforcing category.

7.3 The Family: A Special Case of Community

Youthful spirituality, in its traditional forms, derives its support principally from families who share it, and it seems rarely to thrive without support from this source, despite the best nurturing efforts of church schools.⁵³

A theological sense of family

One community that is of decisive importance in developing religious commitment is the family.⁵⁴ Describing the family in this way is one of the consequences of the renewed emphasis on the role of the laity signaled at the Second Vatican Council in documents such as *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.⁵⁵ Rather than seeing the religious and human formation of children as an activity that is delegated to others such as priests or religious, the Council encouraged the laity to see themselves as an irreplaceable part of the missionary nature of the Church. These ideas are developed in the 1988 Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, which spelled out the role of the laity as integral to the missionary intent of the Church.⁵⁶ Their involvement in “temporal affairs and earthly activities” is seen as essential if the Church is to fulfill its role as a leaven in

⁵² Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1970), 4–27. Greeley pointed out that some of the classic markers of Catholicity, even in the United States, have become normalized. Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Myth*. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990).

⁵³ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 174.

⁵⁴ Florence Bourg, *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Church*. (Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 2004). This was a constant theme of Pope John Paul. For example, in *Ecclesia in Europa*, he wrote: “The Church in Europe at every level must faithfully proclaim anew the truth about marriage and the family,” EE, 90.

⁵⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1-13. “For example, [lay persons should] exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders,” *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 5.

⁵⁶ CL, 41.

society.⁵⁷ There is, perhaps, no temporal activity that is of more concern to the typical layperson than the cultivation of his or her family.

This remains the case despite considerable cultural pressure, which seeks to undermine the importance of the family as a socializing agent, not just in the lives of children but also with adolescents and emerging adults. Smith and Snell have commented that most Americans have accepted the “parents of teenagers are irrelevant” myth. They argued that, “most adolescents in fact still very badly want the loving input and engagement of their parents – more, in fact, than most parents realize.”⁵⁸ Before commenting on how the family enhances religious plausibility, some further comment on the theological importance of the family, especially in the writings of Pope John Paul II, will help to contextualize the issue and acknowledge its privileged place in Catholic thinking.⁵⁹ The significance of the family in Pope John Paul II’s thought arises from the notion that the family is the basic cell of society. To strengthen the family is to reinforce the structure of all human community and this leads to an open and resilient culture. The family also models the social dimension of what it means to be human: “The first and basic expression of the social dimension of the person, then, is the married couple and the family.”⁶⁰ The family, as a community of persons, has particular significance because it parallels the divine economy of God.⁶¹ As well as being the basic cell of society, the family takes on ecclesiological significance

⁵⁷ CL, 15- 17. This document is also available at the Vatican website, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html. The basis for engaging in temporal affairs and then ordering them to the Kingdom of God is drawn from LG, 31.

⁵⁸ Smith and Snell, *Transition*, 284.

⁵⁹ Although it can only be noted here, it is in Judaism that the centrality of the family is, perhaps, most deeply rooted. Sacks, for example, comments: “The Jewish tradition saw the family as the greatest religious domain of all.” Jonathon Sacks, *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 48-58, at 57.

⁶⁰ CL, 40.

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of Vatican II*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 60-62.

when it is described as the “domestic Church.”⁶² The family deserves special mention and the comments here enrich the earlier discourse on familial religious socialization. The centrality of the family as, among other things, an agent of evangelisation and catechesis is well recognized in a variety of Church documents.⁶³ Pope John Paul II powerfully summarized this when he wrote, “The ministry of evangelization carried out by Christian parents is original and irreplaceable.”⁶⁴

There seems, however, to be some gap in many cases between the ideal of seeing the active Catholic family as a tangible expression of the domestic Church and the Body of Christ and how this is actually lived out. Families can find it difficult to build up spiritual capital and often experience themselves living out a day-to-day reality that is little different from other families in the culture. This is especially relevant in a surrounding culture, which creates a space for religion as a type of intermediary position between a stark and actual atheism and a strongly committed expression. The culture does not often directly counter strong religious commitment, but simply marginalizes it encouraging a type of practical atheism. In order to live in such a milieu, it may be necessary to conceptualize the role of the active Catholic parents as the primary builders of the domestic Church in a Church that is, itself, in a period of transition. Many active Catholic parents are somewhere caught in the middle as the Church changes from a national Church where membership was automatic (if unreflective), to one where individuals make a personal decision to be associated.⁶⁵ Part of this decision to become associated is the realization that the role of parents as mentors to their children is indispensable.

⁶² John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* (hereafter referred to as “FC”). (Collegeville, MN: Human Life Center, Saint John's University, 1984), 21.

⁶³ See GS, 8, 25-26; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 1656-1657. For a general overview see, Joseph C. Atkinson, ‘Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory, Legitimacy and Problems of Appropriation’, *Theological Studies*, 2005, 66, 592-604.

⁶⁴ FC, 53.

⁶⁵ Rahner, *Shape of the Church*, 50. Berger makes a similar point from a sociological perspective noting that Churches have moved from an imposition model to a marketing model. Berger, *Sacred*, 145.

The ideal of the family as domestic Church is often not being realized for a variety of reasons. One of the most significant of these is that on an institutional level the vocation of the active Catholic parents needs to be recognized as both critical and difficult. This is especially so for those parents who look to provide a religious formation that moves beyond moralism and sees religion not as vicarious but vital. These active Catholic parents are the ones who are going against a substantial cultural tide that is pushing them toward more conventional parenting, which does not reject the place of religion but which sees it as not influencing the pulse of everyday life.⁶⁶ For many active Catholic parents, the allure of a less demanding spiritual mentoring must be quite strong. To support parents who wish to avoid the practical atheism of surrounding culture in the way they form and interact with their children requires, at the very least, a reconception of the role of the Church in meeting the needs of specific groups rather than adopting a homogenized approach to family ministry.

The family and religious commitment

There are a number of ways of conceptualising how families impart religious beliefs, values, and practices. Vygotsky and others have proposed a sociocultural model of learning where authoritative parents, through participation in activities and reinforcement, provide scaffolding for higher learning.⁶⁷ As the child grows older the scaffolding becomes more extensive and supportive. This argument can be used to explain how the religiosity of parents is passed on to children. Boyatzis argued that in many families the parents assume the role of

⁶⁶ Sacks, *Persistence*, 87.

⁶⁷ Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). See also W. Bradford Wilcox, 'Religion, Convention and Parental Involvement', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 2002, 64, 780-792.

mentors and the children become like apprentices.⁶⁸ This division seems to be especially important in the development of religiosity and the spirituality that derives from it.

In their analysis of the place of religion in Australian society, Evans and Kelley noted that for most Australians, “the main influence on religious beliefs is the religious orientation of the family they grew up in.”⁶⁹ There is strong evidence to support this contention.⁷⁰ In order to explain this influence two lines of research have been developed. The first argues that the role of the family is decisive in establishing religious identity as it provides many examples of spiritual modelling.⁷¹ The child observes a range of religious behaviours performed by exemplars and through imitation acquires not just behaviours but beliefs and values. Children see as plausible what is occurring before their eyes on a daily basis. This theory holds true for parents who have strong religious beliefs and values, which underlines the importance of parental religious formation.

Another perspective on the importance of the family as a formative religious community utilizes the concept of spiritual capital. This is an elaboration of the notion of social capital. The family provides a range of important structures for the child, such as a series of interactions that takes place between the child and significant adults, almost always the parents. These include

⁶⁸ Chris J. Boyatzis, ‘Religious and Spiritual Development: An Introduction’, *Review of Religious Research*, 2003, 44, 213-219; Chris J. Boyatzis, David C. Dollahite, and Loren D. Marks, ‘The Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development in Children and Youth’, in Roehlkepartain et al, *Spiritual Development*, 297-309.

⁶⁹ Mariah D. Evans and John Kelley, *Australian Economy and Society 2002: Religion, Morality and Public Policy in International Perspective, 1984-2002*, (Sydney: Federation Press, 2004), 51.

⁷⁰ Roger Dudley and Margaret Dudley, ‘Transmission of Religious Values from Parents to Adolescents’, *Review of Religious Research*, 1986, 28, 3-15; Dean Hoge, Gregory H. Petrillo, and Ella I. Smith, ‘Transmission of Religious and Social Values from Parents to Teenage Children’, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1982, 44(3): 569-579. Thomas Groome, ‘Good Governance: The Domestic Church and Religious Education’, in Stephen J. Pope, (Ed), *Common Calling: The Laity and Governance of the Catholic Church*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 203-211.

⁷¹ Albert Bandura, ‘On the Psychosocial Impact and Mechanisms of Spiritual Modeling’, *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2003, 13(3), 167-173.

social networks, inter-personal relationships and guided initiation to the wider world.⁷² All these are something the child is likely to retain to some degree as they mature. If these interactions have a religious or spiritual basis, such as family prayer, they incline the child to this activity in the future.⁷³ These interactions form the basis of the child's social world, and as these are primary or formative experiences, they are foundational for how the child both sees the world and relates to others. Religious interaction from an early age is of pivotal importance in shaping the worldview of the child.

7.4 Other Factors that Enhance Plausibility

Emphasizing the transcendent

Religious communities need to be able to provide a clear and cogent account of what the tradition regards as important and why it does so. Madigan discussed the evangelization of what he calls intellectual culture and argued for: "A frank statement of the contents of Catholic belief and their presuppositions, together with arguments for the truth or at least reasonableness of these beliefs and suppositions."⁷⁴ This need is especially necessary in a pluralized society where any number of competing meta-narratives exist. These accounts should give an entrée into the metaphysical dimension of belief. Flanagan speaks of this in terms of a need for the Church to move beyond a passive engagement with culture and be conscious of the need to actively create a space where the discernment of the sacred can be undertaken.⁷⁵ The religious community has a

⁷² Pamela E. King and Ross A. Mueller, 'Parents influence on adolescent religiousness: Spiritual Modeling and Spiritual Capital', *Marriage and Family: A Christian Journal*, 2004, 6(3), 413-425.

⁷³ Kalevi Tamminen, 'Religious Experience in Childhood and Adolescence: A Viewpoint of Religious Development between the Ages of 7 and 20', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 1994, 4(2), 61-85.

⁷⁴ Arthur Madigan, 'The New Evangelization of American Intellectual Culture: Context, Resistance, and Strategies', in Joseph Koterski and John Conley, (Eds), *Creed and Culture: Jesuit Studies of Pope John Paul II*. (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2004), 93-116, at 104.

⁷⁵ Kieran Flanagan, *The Enhancement of Sociology: A Study of Theology and Culture*. (London: Macmillan, 1996), 17-20.

special responsibility to make its case for how the group is able to provide an interface with the divine. Dulles expressed this idea in Christian terms when he wrote, “[People] are desperate for a vivifying contact with the eternal Spirit in whom all things begin and end, the God who can bring life even to the dead.”⁷⁶ In contemporary culture, which is pressurized and where there are many competing voices, the metaphysical dimension of religion should be a prominent feature of religious groups. It is as if people only have a limited time to hear and see what is being offered. They are also under no compulsion to join or become more involved. If the metaphysical narrative is presented credibly, it can offer an attractive alternative.⁷⁷ This may never appeal to the majority of people but it does have some intrinsic value, especially to the religious consumer who is asking, “What does this group have to offer that will make me choose it over the other available options?”⁷⁸ A religious group, which attempts to answer this question in terms of merely a social or moral vision, or by emphasizing the horizontal dimensions of communion, will be faced with ferocious and relentless competition with other groups who provide a similar vision.⁷⁹ Frame encapsulated some of this thinking when he wrote:

Those churches that do not present an attractive and credible alternative to popular culture will disappear...churches that lack doctrinal rigor and are preoccupied with the promotion of social justice and cultural inclusion will be the first to go. Their place will be taken by secular advocacy groups with tightly defined constituencies and social policy expertise.⁸⁰

This is not an argument against a strongly social and moral expression of Catholicism. It is, however, an argument that points out that such a vision is not enough in contemporary culture

⁷⁶ Dulles, *Dilemma*, 550-551.

⁷⁷ The sacred and profane dichotomy is a key part of, for example, the thought of Durkheim. See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. (New York: Free Press, 1965).

⁷⁸ Martin, noting the work of Patricia Fortuny, comments that, “Liberal Catholicism, by invalidating the worship of saints, or even the efficacy of confessional absolution, precipitates a crisis of faith which is resolved by conversion to a non-Catholic group.” David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 107.

⁷⁹ As Dulles points out, “few people come to it [the Church] or remain in it simply because of its social ministry.” Avery Dulles, ‘Dilemmas Facing the Church in the World’, *Origins*, 4(35), 1975, 548-551 at 550.

⁸⁰ Tom Frame, *Losing Religion: Unbelief in Australia*. (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 299.

for Churches that wish to maintain a strong identity.⁸¹ This is, moreover, consistent with the sense of Church of the first Christians. As Moule points out: “At no point within the New Testament is there any evidence that the Christian stood for an original philosophy of life or an original ethic. Their sole function was to bear witness to what they claim as an event – the rising of Jesus from the dead.”⁸²

Articulation of beliefs and evangelization

There is ample evidence that Catholics, especially younger ones, have great difficulty articulating key aspects of the Tradition. This is a problem of worldwide proportions. In their extensive study of American teenagers, Smith and Denton expressed surprise at the inability of Catholic youth to articulate their religious beliefs.⁸³ Writing in 2001, Appleby put the problem in these terms: “No previous generation of American Catholics, it could be argued, inherited so little of the content and sensibility of the faith from their parents, as have today’s youth.”⁸⁴ Speaking from a European perspective, and not confining herself to Catholics, Davie is even starker: “An ignorance of even the basic understandings of Christian teachings is the norm in modern Europe, especially among young people; it is not a reassuring attribute.”⁸⁵ These findings are supported in Australian research, which also indicates a low level of knowledge and comprehension of core teachings amongst Catholic youth and young adults. In a telling

⁸¹ This point is also made by Ratzinger when he warned of the dangers of a new moralism sliding inevitably into party politics. Joseph Ratzinger, ‘The Subiaco Address’ (Appendix 1) in Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 156-165.

⁸² C.F.D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament*, (London, 1967), 14. Lonergan himself adds, “What distinguishes the Christian then is not God’s grace, which he shares with others, but mediation of God’s grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Ryan and Tyrell, *Second Collection*, 156.

⁸³ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 193-198.

⁸⁴ Scott Appleby, ‘Challenges Facing the American Catholic Community: Evangelizing Generation X’, in *Church Personnel Issues*. (Cincinnati: NACPA, 2001), September, 1.

⁸⁵ Grace Davie Europe, ‘The Exception That Proves the Rule’, in Peter Berger, (Ed), *The Desecularization of the World*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 83.

comment in his study, Flynn stopped asking students question about what he calls “knowledge of the Catholic faith” because they found them so hard to answer:

It quickly became apparent that Year 12 students were not familiar at all with the theological concepts and language used. (One student in a large high school, for example, asked the writer “who is this person Grace?”).⁸⁶

Flynn remarked that only one student out of the 5,932 surveyed correctly answered all the 24 basic religious knowledge questions.⁸⁷ While detailed reasons for this lack of understanding are not the focus here, what is relevant is that this lack of understanding affects religious plausibility.⁸⁸ In the first instance, it leads to cognitive dissonance, which is the process where a mismatch develops between a person’s understandings in one area when compared to another. If there are competing explanations, people are more likely to side with the stronger one, which is the one with which they are more familiar. If younger Catholics are not able to articulate the Tradition’s position, this invariably makes it weak, implausible, and likely to be pushed aside. Articulation is especially important in areas that mark the Tradition as distinctive.⁸⁹ If a person cannot explain to themselves and to others what makes their religious community different from others, it seems unlikely that they will have a strong commitment to it. This has both a dogmatic and moral consequence. Rymarz and Graham pointed out that active Catholic youth have a poor understanding of Eucharistic theology.⁹⁰ Thus, when they are under pressure not to attend weekly Mass, they are much less likely to resist this because they cannot articulate, in Catholic

⁸⁶ Marcellin Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*, (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul’s Publications, 1995), 237.

⁸⁷ Luke Saker, ‘A Study of 1st and 2nd Year Catholic University Students’ Perceptions of their Senior Religious Education Classes in Catholic Schools in Western Australia’ (unpublished PhD thesis). (Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia, 2004); Richard M. Rymarz, ‘Talking about Jesus’, *Journal of Religious Education*, 54(2), 79-84; Richard M. Rymarz and John D. Graham, ‘Australian Core Catholic Youth, Catholic Schools and Religious Education’, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2006, 28(1), 79-88.

⁸⁸ Diane L. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁸⁹ D’Antonio et al, *American Catholics Gender*, 151.

⁹⁰ Rymarz and Graham, *Core Catholic*, 183-184.

terms, what the Mass is and why it is important.⁹¹ In the moral sphere, why should young Catholic adults, for example, not enter into a cohabiting relationship when they do not have any cogent arguments against such relationship? If discounting the Catholic argument happens often enough, even if this is through ignorance, then the Tradition loses all substantial authority. At most, individuals may pay it some sentimental deference, but it has lost the power to shape and direct life.⁹²

7.5 Evidence from Other Traditions

An overt emphasis on outreach to youth and young adults

Smith and Denton have noted that some Churches are faring much better than others in attracting and retaining the allegiance of youth and young adults. Many of these Churches are Evangelical or what they term Conservative Protestant. A key characteristic of Evangelical Churches is that they have an emphasis on ministry and outreach, especially to the young and “unchurched.”⁹³ This is evidenced by the concentration of both human and physical resources on these efforts. Sargeant commented that a feature of many growing Christian Churches in the United States is their directional approach to ministry.⁹⁴ This recognizes that to attract those on the periphery of Churches, structures and strategies need to be in place to welcome people at a number of initial levels of faith commitment. One manifestation of this is Churches that have

⁹¹ Huels made exactly this point in relation to Mass attendance and conviction. “There must be convincing reasons for a law or teaching or there will be no compliance.... ‘The law requires mass attendance on Sundays’ in itself means little or nothing to persons who are not interiorly convinced that they should be going to Church on Sunday.” John M. Huels, ‘The Sunday Mass Obligation, Past and Present’, *Chicago Studies*, 1990, 29, 274.

⁹² D’Antonio suggested that one way of reanimating the Catholic identity is to retell to young people the stories of great saints and martyrs. D’Antonio, *American Catholics Gender*, 151-152.

⁹³ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 266.

⁹⁴ Kimon Howland Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 137-149.

groups set up to meet the needs of specific population cohorts.⁹⁵ These may include working mothers, single adults, and highly age-segmented youth groups, say 14-16, senior high schools, and school leavers. A feature of these Churches is that although there is a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of individuals, at whatever starting point they wish to join, there is a definite plan to move people to stronger and deeper levels of commitment.⁹⁶ This should not be coercive but a response to the legitimate and very scriptural desire of people who have first encountered Christ to then strengthen their commitment. This sense of deepening commitment is often lacking in Catholic Churches, which have a tendency to adapt a “one size fits all approach” to parish-based ministry and lack the intimacy of personal contact.⁹⁷

Many parishes have a twofold population distribution, represented by children and families associated through the parish school and much larger numbers of older people, those who have maintained religious practice. This diversity puts significant demands on those personnel whose job it is to evangelize in the broadest sense of the word. The needs and background of children and much older adults can be quite different. The groups who are not, however, being addressed are Generation X and Y, the cohorts in between and the most obvious targets for the new evangelization. This group is often neglected in ministerial outreach in the broadest sense. As the central thesis of his study into post-baby-boomer religion, Wuthnow argued that a group which has been systematically neglected by the wider culture were those between adolescence and late middle age.

We provide day care centers, schools, welfare programs, and even detentions centers as a kind of institutional training programs, and even detentions centers as a kind of

⁹⁵ Patricia Snell, Christian Smith, Charles Tavares, and Kari Christoffersen, ‘Denominational Differences in Congregation Youth Ministry Programs and Evidence of Non-Response Biases’, *Review of Religious Research*, 2009, 51(1), 21-38.

⁹⁶ The aim is captured by the following quote: “To help Churches turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.” Sargeant, *Seeker Churches*, 137-138.

⁹⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), esp. 50-54.

institutional surround-sound until young adults reach age 21, and then we provide nothing.⁹⁸

There is a clear parallel in this for religious groups. Certainly for the Catholic Church there has been a substantial and defining commitment to primary and secondary education in countries such as Australia. This now needs to be augmented with a more concentrated effort at outreach to those in the early adult years of life. For this to occur, the concept of who ministers needs to be broadened. The new evangelization as set out by Pope John Paul II clearly anticipated this expansion with its emphasis on lay ministry.

Empowering the laity as agents of evangelization

Empowering laity to undertake significant roles in the new evangelization not only broadens its scope but also increases the motivation of those involved as their desire to bring Christ to others is being met and not frustrated. In a discipleship model of Church, there is ample justification for lay people being involved in parish outreach ministry such as that seen in Evangelical Churches.⁹⁹ The challenge is how to best develop structures which allow for this to take place.¹⁰⁰ Burrows argued that Catholics have much to learn from the so-called horizontal networking used by Evangelicals to build and establish faith networks.¹⁰¹ These networks “flatten” bureaucratic structures and allow for local initiatives to arise to meet peculiar conditions.¹⁰² They also place emphasis on the ongoing connections that religious believers need

⁹⁸ Wuthnow, *Baby Boomers*, 216.

⁹⁹ Susan Blum-Gerding and Frank DeSiano, *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples: Evangelizing Power in the Parish*, (New York: Paulist Press).

¹⁰⁰ Nichols, quoting Ratzinger, suggests one method could involve an expansion of the permanent diaconate. Nichols, *Thought*, 63-64.

¹⁰¹ William R. Burrows, ‘What Catholics and Evangelicals can Learn from Each Other’ in Rausch, *Evangelizing America*, 11-128 at 124.

¹⁰² Martin would describe this type of structure as an example of the pragmatism of Pentecostal Churches which he contrasts with more contested, cerebral Catholicism: “Its [Catholicism’s] intellectual sector tends to be divided

to build and sustain in their daily lives. The groups that are fostered tend to be small enough to encourage intimacy and personal growth but are also associated with larger groups through multi-layered networking.

Addressing the needs of groups with special interests

As well as a focus on outreach to youth and young adults, Evangelical Churches have a clear strategy of addressing the needs of groups with special backgrounds and interests. Sargaent notes that in the typical new paradigm, Church's notice boards, both actual and virtual, evidence the extraordinary capacity of these Churches to address different groups.¹⁰³ One Church may offer support programs, which do not replace but supplement the main worship and catechesis of the group, based on linguistic, cultural, professional, and recreational interests. This is another manifestation of their segmented approach to ministry, realizing that no one approach is appropriate to all situations.

Transformative power of the Gospel

Another feature of Evangelical Churches is their emphasis on the transformative power of the Gospel. As a response to this, Martin, perhaps the most important sociologist of both secularization and the rise of Pentecostalism, pointed out that one of the reasons for the extraordinary growth in Evangelical and Pentecostal movements around the world, but especially in Latin America, is their focus on providing an experience of intense community and efficacious

between strong conservatives and strong radicals, lacking the untutored pragmatism of the Pentecostals.” Martin, *The World their Parish*, 173.

¹⁰³ Sargaent, *Seeker Churches*, esp. 177-179.

change that is, if not immediate, then certainly not delayed too long into the future.¹⁰⁴ The message that is proclaimed is one that immediately links the person with the divine. Giving people access to the sacred is something that tends to happen in an overwhelming outpouring of emotion rather than being regulated in an orderly way.¹⁰⁵ It can affect lives in profound and life-changing ways. Commenting on the success of Evangelical Churches in attracting nominal Christians, Miller pointed out that a key to better understanding this process is what is being offered by Evangelicals: “A structure for radical conversion and self-transformation.”¹⁰⁶ This *modus operandi* can at times be contrasted with a contemporary Catholic demeanor, which places much more emphasis on the life of faith as one of protracted journey and where the transformative power of the Gospel can be hard to discern.¹⁰⁷ These ways of looking at faith development are not mutually exclusive, but the Evangelical emphasis on an experience of community and of renewal that is not delayed may have some merit in a culture that is in overlaid with choice. Youth and young adults who do not have a strong pre-existing link to the faith community can be expected to be much more interested in a group that gives benefits without an overlong period of preparation. Describing a similar phenomenon, Miller explained the growth of what he calls “new paradigm Churches” in terms of the way they are “effective at

¹⁰⁴ This is often a direct response to the “vast immiseration and urban chaos in contemporary Latin America.” Martin, *The World their Parish*, 49. Jenkins makes a similar point in explaining what he calls. “The Next Christendom,” which will be driven largely from the global South. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. (New York: Oxford University Press), esp. 227-261. For a good discussion on maintaining the tension between good scholarship and accessibility from an Evangelical perspective see, Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Religious experiences of encounters with the divine are the subject of a substantial literature. Perhaps the foundational work in this area is William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Collier Books, 1961).

¹⁰⁶ Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 79.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of transformation is, as Dulles points out, an extremely effective tool of evangelization: “Christianity, then, propagates itself not only by explicit, or verbal testimony but even more importantly by implicit, or factual testimony – that is, by the testimony of transformed lives.” Dulles, *Craft*, 64.

projecting hope and joy” in areas where there is a hope deficit.¹⁰⁸ This is not to discount the important idea of the lifelong faith journey, which is so much a part of post-conciliar Catholicism.¹⁰⁹ Rather, it draws attention to the point that the Church needs to stress the conscious embarkation on a transformative journey, which makes a difference to how life is lived, if not from the first step then in the near future.

Targeting the message

In many Evangelical Churches, primacy in preaching is given to messages that have relevance for those attending. Leaving aside the greater emphasis on the mechanics of preaching in Evangelical Churches, the message is above all clear and free of theological jargon that would disenfranchise most of the congregation. The style of these presentations has been described as “postmodern primitive.”¹¹⁰ Many Evangelical Churches have, on occasion, targeted worship services, recognizing the different fields of interest. If the congregation contains a proportion of new attendees, the preaching will address their needs by giving a clear, unambiguous presentation of the core teaching of the group. It will allow those who are sampling, as it were, to see what is on offer and give them a chance to encounter what the congregation itself sees as its key message. This is often couched in salvific terms, highlighting the importance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is important to note, however, that academic theology does

¹⁰⁸ Dulles, *Craft*, 188. Miller noted that up to 28% of members of new paradigm Churches in his study were former Catholics, many of whom commented that what was “absent from their experience of Catholicism was the intimacy with God that they found in new paradigm Churches.” Miller, *Reinventing*, 69.

¹⁰⁹ This is well spelled out by John Paul II: “Nevertheless, the specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God’s help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.” John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesi Tradendae*, 1978. Obtained on 10/8/2008 from: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html.

¹¹⁰ Dulles, *Craft*, 125.

not take an ascendant role but is often seen more as bedrock from which the more experiential aspects of the Christian life are stressed.¹¹¹

Evangelical Churches are successful in giving members a sense that the underlying theology is sound and well thought out. Smith points out that one of the most important features in strong Evangelical Churches is their ability to pass on to their members a clear sense of basic evangelical beliefs.¹¹² Establishing this baseline allows for a primacy to be given to worship and experiences of community that create a strong, reinforcing affective expression of faith. Some have commented that this Evangelical ministry can be shallow as it does not arise from a profound reflection on either Tradition or the Scriptures.¹¹³ In the light of this criticism, Catholicism is well placed to acknowledge a message about preaching and proclamation that is age focused, clear, cogent, and jargon free and incorporate this into a well-founded and rich theological Tradition with a message that is transformative and not “an eclectic resource...but rather the unified vision of faith and hope the Church stands in need of.”¹¹⁴

Concluding Comments

One way of conceiving of the future for Churches is to use the analogy of a marketplace. The marketplace of the future will, in some ways, be an unforgiving place. In contemporary culture, in countries such as Australia, those religious groups that are most successful at presenting the best they have to offer to those on the periphery of Church affiliation are the ones that are most likely to prosper. Above all, religious groups must be able to offer something that is wanted and

¹¹¹ Sargeant notes that in seeker Churches, 36% of preaching is directed toward Scripture or theology, 32% on personal growth and 10% on family oriented messages. Sargeant, *Seeker*, 83.

¹¹² Smith, *American Evangelicism*.

¹¹³ Bruce Shelley and Marshall Shelley, *The Consumer Church*. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1992). John Seel, *The Evangelical Forfeit*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1993).

¹¹⁴ John Thornhill, ‘Understanding the Church’s Present Difficulties and the Reactions they are Producing’, *Australasian Catholic Record*, January 1999, 76:1, 3-13.

cannot be obtained in similar quality elsewhere. Many of the ideas described in this chapter, such as developing plausibility structures, the importance of building strong affirming faith communities, and providing a ready experience of the divine can also be adapted to help realize the new evangelization.

Some of the characteristic features of Evangelical Churches seem to have something to offer to those involved in the new evangelization as they seek out ways to reach out to those “unchurched ” or loosely affiliated. As the name suggests, the new evangelization requires a new approach to mission in countries such as Australia. The era where the Catholic community could rely on passive socialization and a supportive general culture to form its members has receded if not disappeared. In the immediate future, the Church is faced with a number of significant challenges if it is to form disciples who can respond to the demands of the new evangelisation and see the Church as a communion with others in and through Christ. The Church needs to think more in terms of how it can most effectively present itself to people who have a wide range of choices. One way of achieving this is for Catholicism to take a more evangelical turn. The contextualization of the new evangelization set out here is preparatory to the discussion that will take place in the next chapter, which provides a rationale for a more evangelical Catholicism.

Chapter 8: The Evangelical Turn of Catholicism

Introduction

In my judgment, the evangelical turn in the ecclesial vision of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II is one of the most surprising and important developments in the Catholic Church since Vatican II.... [T]oday we seem to be witnessing the birth of a new Catholicism which, without loss of its institutional, sacramental and social dimensions, is authentically evangelical.¹

This chapter addresses the possibility of conceptualizing the new evangelization in evangelical terms. By bringing together historical, theological and sociological themes it argues that the new evangelization can be seen within the framework of what Dulles, in the quote above, called the “evangelical turn” in Catholicism.² The genesis of the evangelical turn in Catholicism can be found in the Second Vatican Council’s call to mission and evangelization, which was seen not merely as an activity that the Church does but something of its very essence.³ This evangelical mission, therefore, is shared by all disciples of Christ. From this bedrock, a more evangelical Catholicism can be seen as both an appropriate analysis of and response to the current cultural reality in countries such as Australia.

In contemporary culture, those who do not have a strong pre-existing link to the Church need to know, in fairly plain terms, what is on offer. Moreover, they are not going to put in

¹ Dulles, *New Evangelization*, 58.

² For a discussion of the course of the Evangelical and Catholic dialogue from an Evangelical perspective see, Cecil M. Robeck, ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together’ in Thomas P. Rausch, (Ed), *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 13-37, esp. 25-28.

³ Dulles pointed out that one of the strongest illustrations of this change to an evangelical consciousness is a comparison of the language of the First and Second Vatican Councils. The First Vatican Council used the term *evangelium* (Gospel) only once and this was to refer to one of the four Gospels. It never used the terms ‘evangelize’ and ‘evangelization’. By contrast documents of the Second Vatican Council mention Gospel 157 times, evangelize 18 times and evangelization 31 times. Avery Dulles, ‘John Paul II and the New Evangelization’, in *Laurence J. McGinley Lectures*, 87-102 at 88.

much effort to find out. It is up to the Church to reconceptualize its stance and to come up with renewed strategies and practices that are reflective of the new social reality. Many of these responses, which will be raised in this chapter, such as a strong emphasis on discipleship in Christ, are characteristic of a more evangelical identity.⁴

The content of the chapter is presented under the following major headings: a) What is Evangelicalism? b) Five Points of Intersection; c) Five Contours of a More Evangelical Catholicism; d) The question of dialogue; and, e) A Renewed Catholic Institutional Identity.

8.1 What is Evangelicalism?

To the extent that a Catholic and a Protestant are orthodox, there is more by far that unites them than divides them, particularity against the monolithic secular culture of today.⁵

Dulles noted that the term “Evangelical” covers a range of ecclesial communities. To narrow the discussion, the definition that he used will also be followed here.⁶ Dulles based his comments on the evangelical turn of Catholicism on his knowledge of communities associated with the World Evangelical Fellowship who have established a dialogue with The Holy See. Many of these communities in the United States have been associated with the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” project.⁷ Some of the features of these Evangelical communities include the following: first, there is a clear emphasis on Scripture as the revealed Word of God, which is not

⁴ Deck puts this idea well: “What the ordinary are looking for is the preaching of the Word with conviction and power, with fire in the belly.” Allan Figueroa Deck, ‘Evangelization as Conceptual Framework for the Church’s Mission: The Case of U.S. Hispanics’ in Rausch, *Evangelizing America*, 105.

⁵ Harold O. Brown, *The Protest of a Troubled Protestant*. (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), 255.

⁶ Avery Dulles, Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue, in Rausch, *Common Future*, 101-122, at 101-102.

⁷ “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” began as an informal initiative of Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus. The group has served as a meeting place for those interested in greater collaboration and has produced a joint policy statement such as, ‘The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium’ and ‘The Gift of Salvation’. For an overview of the origins and goals of this group see, Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Towards a Common Mission*. (Dallas: Word, 1995).

uncritical or literalist in its interpretation, but is skeptical of the various movements to demythologize Scripture that have been prevalent over the past century or so; second, there is an acceptance of a common historical patrimony including the canons of the first four ecumenical councils; third, there is a great reliance on personal witness and internal conversion; and, fourth, there is a willingness to discuss moral issues in terms of the will of God and to take this understanding to the wider community.⁸

There are, of course, substantial doctrinal differences that separate Catholics and Evangelicals.⁹ These make the prospect of ecclesial union unlikely in the foreseeable future.¹⁰ As Greeley and Hout pointed out, the difference in attitudes, beliefs, and goals of Catholics and many who they term conservative Protestants remains large.¹¹ Yet, cooperation between Catholicism and Evangelicals is becoming more obvious on a range of issues.¹² Scott provided an early but prescient example of this. He recorded a Polish ecumenical youth evangelism campaign conducted under the auspices of a priest from Krakow and a Polish American

⁸ For an excellent overview of Evangelical beliefs see, Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2001), 56-67. In terms of distinguishing Evangelicals from mainline Protestants, Smith notes that Evangelicals have strong adherence to essential Christian beliefs, consider faith a salient aspect of their lives, have confidence in their beliefs, participate in Church activities, are committed to mission, and are eager to recruit new members. Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 51-63. Differences between Evangelicals and Fundamentalists are less striking in terms of religious vitality but centre more on the ritualization of belief and practice in Fundamentalist Churches. Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 63-66.

⁹ Norman Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books), 157-331.

¹⁰ For a discussion of some of the characteristic features of evangelicalism see, George M. Marsden, 'Fundamentalism and American Evangelicalism' in Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnson, (Eds), *The Varieties of American Evangelicalism*. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1991), esp. 31-57.

¹¹ So large is this gap that the authors argue that the groups are "too estranged for alliance." Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout, *The Truth about Conservative Christians: What They Think and What They Believe*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 72.

¹² McBride has quipped, "there are sometimes sharper divisions within the Roman Catholic Church than there are between certain Catholics and certain Protestants." Richard P. McBride, 'Roman Catholicism: *E Pluribus Unum*' in Mary Douglas and Stephen M. Tipton, (Eds), *Religion and America: Spirituality in a Secular Age*. (Boston: Beacon, 1983), 181.

Evangelical.¹³ Beginning in the 1970s, this campaign was supported by Karol Wojtyla, the local bishop.

8.2 Five Points of Intersection

Stressing commonalities

Five general factors have greatly facilitated the evangelical turn in Catholicism in recent times.¹⁴ The first is a change in the wider culture which has encouraged both Catholics and Evangelicals to focus more on their commonalities rather than differences, especially, at least, as they relate to engagement with the world. A much starker separation now typifies the relationship between both communities and the wider culture. This trend seems likely to continue. One instance where the overlap between Catholic and Evangelical positions is most readily seen in their social programs. Both communities would, for example, be united in their opposition to what many would describe as a positivist social agenda.¹⁵ A more substantial and deeper synergy exists, however, in a common philosophical orientation.¹⁶ This includes a worldview that is based on a personal God who is revealed in history and in Scripture and who has gifted people with an intellect that enables them to know God's will and to carry this out. A characteristic of this worldview is its sense of objectivism. Many Evangelicals would, therefore, share the concerns raised by Pope Benedict XVI about contemporary culture, and even

¹³ David Hill Scott, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Really Together in Poland, 1975-1982', *Fides et Historian*, 2002, 34(1), 89-109.

¹⁴ There is evidence already that increasing numbers of Catholics, certainly in North America, are already describing themselves as evangelical. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-17; Lyman Kellstedt, 'Simple Questions, Complex Answers: What do we Mean by Evangelicalism? What Difference Does it Make?' *Evangelical Studies Bulletin*, 1995, 12(2), 1-4; Noll, *Evangelical Christianity*, 34-36; Patti Gallagher Mansfield, *As by a New Pentecost: The Dramatic Beginnings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*. (Ohio: Franciscan University Press, 1992); Paul Josef Cordes, *Call to Holiness: Reflections on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1997).

¹⁵ A key plank of such an agenda is issues related to same sex marriage. William M. O'Shea, *The Lion and the Lamb: Evangelicals and Catholics in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 247-289.

¹⁶ James Turner, 'The Evangelical Intellectual Revival' in James Turner, (Ed), *Language, Religion, Knowledge: Past and Present*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 127-141.

Christians in these cultures, having forgotten about God and succumbing to the relativism of the day.¹⁷

Finding common ecclesiological ground

The second general factor is an ecclesiological convergence. George argued that for Evangelicals, ecclesiology has never been a discipline of fundamental importance.¹⁸ Brown went further and argued that contemporary Protestantism “tends to have a defective view of the fundamental significance of the Church.”¹⁹ The Gospel and its proclamation are seen as having primacy over any community. Evangelicals have classically seen the individual believer and his or her relationship with Christ as being at the heart of Christian life. On the basis of this relationship, a fellowship or communion between like-minded believers can develop.²⁰ This fellowship provides common support and witness. These views are now being elaborated on as Evangelical theology turns more to a closer consideration of the importance of the religious community, a strong theme in all Scripture.²¹ This has made them open to a reconsideration of the importance of Church, a term that has been regarded with some suspicion. Ecclesiology is, for Catholics, a much more important area of theological inquiry and a field they feel very comfortable in. Catholics regard the Church as more than a collection of members, even if the members share a common bond in Christ. Catholics see the Church as preceding them and

¹⁷ James I. Packer, ‘Foreword to George Carey’, *A Tale of Two Churches: Can Protestants and Catholics Get Together?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), ii.

¹⁸ Timothy George, ‘Towards an Evangelical Ecclesiology’ in Rausch, *Common Future*, 122-148.

¹⁹ Harold O. Brown, ‘Proclamation and Preservation: The Necessity and Temptations of Church Traditions’ in James S. Cutsinger, (Ed), *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Towards a Common Mission*. (Dallas: Word, 1995), 81.

²⁰ The Greek word *koinonia* appears 19 times in the New Testament. Catholics often translate this as ‘communion’ while Evangelicals prefer ‘fellowship’. No author cited, ‘Catholic Church, World Evangelical Alliance, Church, Evangelization and Koinonia’, *Origins*, 2003, 33(19), 311.

²¹ For a fuller discussion see, Cecil M. Robeck and Jerry L. Sandidge, ‘The Ecclesiology of Koinonia and Baptism: A Pentecostal Perspective,’ *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1990, 27(3), 514-523.

providing not just support but sustenance from God. God dwells in the Church and this presence makes it holy. Rausch put this well when he said, “the Church is holy because it is the locus of God’s abiding presence.”²² This type of theology has led to some disquiet amongst Evangelicals.

In recent times, however, Catholics have been much more willing to discuss the Church in terms of discipleship – a familiar concept to Evangelicals and discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Dulles also pointed out that Catholic ecclesiology has developed, especially since the Council, a more egalitarian aspect which again had created more common ground with Evangelicals.²³ Discipleship theology can be contrasted with medieval scholasticism: both approaches arise out of particular historical circumstances. Whilst scholastic approaches were highly technical and aimed at clergy and theologians, discipleship ecclesiology is directed to those who look toward the Holy Spirit to transform the power of the Gospel into a ready means of salvation to all believers. Seeing each other as disciples of Christ has led many Catholics and Evangelicals to a reconsideration of theological areas that have caused friction between them in the past.²⁴

Importance of the committed life

A third factor brought about by the Council was a conscious sense of Christian commitment and conversion being more than an external manifestation of belief and practices.²⁵

²² Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), 55.

²³ Avery R. Dulles, ‘Evangelizing Theology’, *First Things*, 1996, March, 27-32, at 28.

²⁴ Keith A. Fournier, *Evangelical Catholics: A Call for Christian Cooperation to Penetrate the Darkness with the Light of the Gospel*. (Nashville: Nelson, 1990), 24.

²⁵ Bloesch identifies three strands of post-conciliar Catholicism, the third of which, “the biblical-evangelical strand that stresses the necessity of personal faith in addition to sacramental grace, and the ruling authority of the Bible in addition to the teaching authority of the Church” as the most likely to “form an integral part of a new evangelical alliance.” Donald G. Bloesch, *Christianity Confronts Modernity*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1981), 205-224 at 218.

The conversion spoken about by Pope John Paul II and other Catholic scholars is an inner one, marked by a personal and ongoing relationship with Christ. Suenens commented: “It is not the truth about Jesus but the truth of Jesus which was at the basis of conversion.”²⁶ Pope Benedict XVI made a similar point quoting one of his favorite theologians: “Romano Guardini correctly said 70 years ago that the essence of Christianity is not an idea but a Person.”²⁷ This relationship with Christ is also at the heart of an ecclesiology of communion. The basis of this is communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to know about Christ in a purely cognitive sense. This knowledge must serve as a basis for an acceptance of the person of Christ as savior. This idea is not new in Catholicism. Aquinas pointed out that the object of faith is not in theological propositions but in accepting a known God in loving relationship. Newman made a similar point. When commenting on his early life, he observes that his conversion was distinct from his knowledge of Christian doctrine: “I was brought up from a child to take great delight in reading the Bible; but I had no formed religious convictions till I was fifteen. Of course I had perfect knowledge of my Catechism.”²⁸ The renewed emphasis that this understanding has had in Catholic circles in recent times has resonated with many Evangelicals as having some similarity to what could be termed conversion or baptism in the Spirit. One of the characteristic features of classical Protestantism from the Reformation, through Wesley and to modern Evangelicals, is a conviction that an inner conversion to Christ is the beginning of a genuinely

²⁶ Leon Joseph Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 59. Suenens, Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels, a leading “progressive” cardinal at the Second Vatican Council, frequently endorsed Catholic Charismatic groups. See obituary published in May-June 1996 issue of the ICCRS Newsletter.

²⁷ Benedict XVI, *Address to the Clergy of Rome*, Basilica of St. John Lateran, Friday, 13 May 2005. Obtained on 14/12/2007 from: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050513_roman-clergy_en.html. The strong influence that Guardini had on Ratzinger is spelled out in ‘The Master who Helped Shape Ratzinger’ which first appeared in the magazine of the Catholic University of Milan. Obtained reproduction on 2/10/2008 at: <http://www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aid=9284>.

²⁸ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, (New York: Image Books, 1956), 125. Newman also makes a distinction between notional and real assent. Real assent, which has some parallels to religious conversion, leads to action, involves the imagination, and is life-shaping. For a fuller discussion of this idea see, John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Christian life. Wesley, for example, despite being an Anglican minister, dated his conversion to true Christianity to the Aldersgate experience where he became aware of Christ as his personal saviour who would forgive his sins.²⁹

Centrality of Scripture

A fourth factor is the greater recent emphasis placed on Scripture both in the worship of the Church and in private devotion. Evangelicals see Scripture as being fundamental to Christian life. There is agreement amongst mainstream Catholic and Evangelical theologians about the nature of the Gospels and many of their substantial teachings such as the Virgin Birth, Christ's atonement, his physical resurrection, and his personal return.³⁰ There remain differences between how Catholics and Evangelicals interpret Scripture, but this will not be elaborated on here.³¹ Catholics are guided by the teachings of Roman agencies such as the Pontifical Biblical Commission, which encourages critical scholarship but, at the same time, assures them that, amongst other things, the Gospels contain a true and accurate record of the life of Christ.³² Certainly there is an indisputable increase in the prominence that Scripture has in Catholic life today. There are many manifestations of this. In worship, the Liturgy of the Word is an integral part of the Eucharistic celebration. Christ is indeed present when the Scriptures are proclaimed.

Authoritative Church documents from Encyclical letters to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

²⁹ R. P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People called Methodist*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 12-37.

³⁰ Basil Meeking and John Stott, (Eds.), *The Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977-84*, (Exeter, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 1984).

³¹ Keith A. Fournier and William D. Watkins, *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), 143.

³² For an account of difference in interpreting Scripture see, James J. Packer, 'The Bible in Use: Evangelicals Seeking Truth from Holy Scripture', and Francis Martin, 'Reading Scripture in the Catholic Tradition Sense' in Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, (Eds), *Your Word is Truth: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 59-78, 147-168.

are full of references to Scripture.³³ The Conciliar constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, places Scripture alongside Tradition as a mirror in which God can be contemplated.³⁴

A renewed Christological emphasis

Barron has commented that a key to developing a post-liberal Catholic theology is to make the person of Christ a priority, a notion well reflected in the conciliar documents.³⁵ This is, perhaps, nowhere better illustrated than in the famous opening sentence of *Lumen Gentium*, “Christ is the Light of nations.”³⁶ As well as having an individual emphasis, the call to conversion is also a challenge to take the teachings of Christ to all especially in the public sphere. There is a powerful reference here to the Pauline sense of mission, which was predicated on the message of a crucified, resurrected, and glorified Christ. A more Christocentric catechesis and evangelization is very amenable to the evangelical mindset.³⁷ There is ample evidence in the writings of Pope John Paul II of a similar Christocentric emphasis. His first Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, for example, began with, “The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history.”³⁸ This is not to discount other aspects of the Catholic theological and devotional heritage; but, by speaking so often and so strongly of Christ as both the redeemer of humanity and the clarion calling out to men and

³³ Although this is not a post-conciliar phenomenon. The Encyclicals, for example, of Leo XII, pope from 1878 to 1903, and Pius XI (1922-1939), make ample use of Scripture.

³⁴ “This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God,” Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, in Flannery, *Documents*, 7.

³⁵ Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 325-328. Dulles points out that “the radiant beauty of Christ” is the core of the apologetics of von Balthasar and a good number of contemporary Catholics. Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 366.

³⁶ LG, 1.

³⁷ One interesting manifestation of a more evangelical mindset amongst Catholics in recent times is the increased use of what have been traditionally seen as Protestant hymns in Catholic worship. See Felicia Piscitelli, ‘Appendix III: Hymns in Roman Catholic Hymnals’ in Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll, (Eds), *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 269-272.

³⁸ RH, 1.

women of all cultures, Catholicism has taken on a visible evangelical emphasis.³⁹ This was well encapsulated by Pope Benedict XVI during his concluding homily at World Youth Day 2005:

“Help people to discover the true star which points out the way to us: Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰

This sharp emphasis on Christ has not always been a feature of Catholic life or scholarship but is now increasingly seen as something that needs to be redressed. The urgency of this sentiment is well captured by the novelist Thomas Howard, a Catholic convert from Evangelicalism, who stressed the mutuality of both traditions:

The sheer decibel-level and speed and razzle-dazzle of the messages drowning out the Christian Gospel, and the melancholy efforts at shoring up catechesis in our parishes that will undertake anything in heaven and earth except to hail kids abruptly to Christ Jesus the Saviour – surely the message must be, at least this: Whatever else you are doing, tell your children, tell your parishioners, tell yuppies and the paupers and the dying and the disenfranchised and the complacent and the perplexed – tell them that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.⁴¹

8.3 Five Contours of a More Evangelical Catholicism

An orienting principle here is borrowed from subcultural theory of religious persistence and strength.⁴² This theory maintains that religion survives best if it uses all the tools at its disposal to create a distinctive subculture that provides meaning and belonging to its members but, at the same time, has significant engagement with other groups and the wider culture. By taking an evangelical turn, Catholicism is creating a community that has sufficient boundaries to give members a sense of identity but one that can engage with the wider society.⁴³ This is not a

³⁹ David O. Moberg, ‘Fundamentalists and Evangelicals in Society’ in David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge, (Eds), *The Evangelicals: What they Believe, Who They Are, Where They are Changing*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 140-145.

⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Eucharist: Setting Transformations in Motion’, *Origins*, 2005, 35, 202-204.

⁴¹ Thomas Howard, ‘Witness for the Faith: What Catholics Can Learn from Billy Graham’, *Crisis*, April 1991, 38-41, at 40.

⁴² Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 118-119.

⁴³ Prose argues what is required is a greater alignment of the Church as shepherd and Church as fisherman missionary paradigms. The fisherman paradigm is more centered on outreach and proclamation. Christopher

radical realignment or a comprehensive policy that closes the door on all other options. It is a response to changing conditions and is based on sound ecclesiological principles and an incorporation of the insights of the Second Vatican Council as understood by Pope John Paul II and others.⁴⁴

To say that the Church has taken an evangelical turn is best understood as a general approach, which is not universal or prescriptive and is mindful of other expressions of Catholic identity. It is, nonetheless, an approach that seems to offer great promise as a way of reaching those who have lost an active sense of the Gospel. At the same time, it is not aimed at proselytization but is based on a more anthropological principle of common witness where what is commended to others is what is seen and experienced as good.⁴⁵ A more evangelical Catholicism does not envisage all Catholics in the future being part of specific movements such as Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which has clear parallels with the style of ministry adopted by many Evangelical Churches. It does, however, see a number of more evangelical manifestations within Catholicism.

Orientation and expression

A useful distinction to be made when speaking about a more evangelical Catholicism is to separate a general orientation with a specific type of ministry and worship. A general orientation of Catholicism in the future could be evangelical in the sense that it places a higher priority on outreach and bringing the person of Christ to the forefront of all its activities. This is a consequence of both the missionary nature of the Church and the actualization of a communion

Prowse, *Current Perspectives on Evangelization in the Catholic Church*, paper given at Australian Catholic University Melbourne Campus, 1 November 2006.

⁴⁴ A similar point is made by Carroll, *New Faithful*, 118-119.

⁴⁵ John C. Haughey, 'The Ethics of Evangelization' in Rausch, *Evangelizing America*, 152-171.

ecclesiology that emphasizes discipleship. A more evangelical Catholic Church, in this sense, will have a focus on outreach to both individuals and to the wider culture. New movements may arise which have a much more evangelical focus and expression. A feature of Catholicism, nonetheless, is that it is accommodating of a variety of forms of ministry and communal life reflecting a number of diverse ways of living out the Christian vocation. Many of these could not be described as evangelical in style.⁴⁶ What may change is that these ministries will reemphasize their primary foundation in bringing about the inner conversion that is typical of both John Paul II's new evangelization and a communion model of Church marked by discipleship.

A more restricted sense of the term "evangelical" refers to how people worship and minister to each other. In the future, many more Catholic ministries and communities may also develop an evangelical expression of their substantive evangelical commitment. They may adopt some of the features of evangelical Churches that seem to be relatively effective in overcoming some of the barriers to strong Christian commitment. A valid question for the new evangelization is what pastoral approach speaks best to most youth and young adults. This evangelical style seems to be more likely than other approaches to attract young adults and to provide a pathway that leads to a strengthening of commitment.⁴⁷ This is, again, not to say that this is the only or exclusive way.⁴⁸ Many of the advocates of the wider use of the "classical

⁴⁶ St. Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897), a contemplative Carmelite, is one of the patrons of missions. For an interpretation of her life see, Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 298-315.

⁴⁷ An example of a Catholic group that does not have an evangelical style but may have restricted appeal is Opus Dei. Allen describes this group as, "the Guinness Extra Stout of the Catholic Church. It's a strong brew, definitely an acquired taste, and clearly not for everyone." John Allen, *Opus Dei: The Truth About its Rituals, Secrets and Power*. (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 1.

⁴⁸ A study of mainline Protestant Churches found that members wanted the following: meaningful worship, relevant preaching, informal music, flexible times of worship, and a wide range of ministries. Milton J. Coalter, John M. Miller and Louis B. Weeks, *Vital Signs: The Promise of Mainstream Protestantism*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996), 112-113. When Churches stop meeting human needs then allegiance to them falls away. This is a

Roman rite,” for example, argue that worship following the 1962 missal, which is almost the antithesis of evangelical styles of worship, will have some appeal to younger generations of Catholics.⁴⁹ Whether this is so is an empirical question that will be resolved in time.⁵⁰ In granting wider use of the Tridentine liturgy in his *motu proprio*, Pope Benedict XVI is allowing these claims to be tested, providing another way for greater religious commitment to be fostered.⁵¹ Many other forms of Catholic ministry and outreach are also not evangelical in style. They should not, however, be excluded as a manifestation of the new evangelization as long as they are evangelical in substance. There are, however, many groups, events, and movements in contemporary Catholicism that make full use of evangelical styles of ministry.⁵²

The place of the sacraments

Another evangelical expression of Catholicism and in keeping with a strong Christology is a renewed sacramental emphasis. For Catholics, the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, are integral parts of communal life and worship. They are, to borrow Maurin’s term, part of the Church’s “dynamite.”⁵³ They always represent special ways in which the presence of God is

major theme of Julia Diun’s recent book addressed largely at Evangelical Churches entitled, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful are Fleeing and What to Do About It*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008).

⁴⁹ Nicols makes a case for this as part of a three-tiered approach to evangelization. Aidan Nichols, *An Unfashionable Essay on the Conversion of England*. (London: Family Publications, 2008).

⁵⁰ The numbers of younger people attending what is now known as the extraordinary Roman rite is a moot point. Some have claimed wide interest. See, *New Hope for the Future*, Obtained on 21/12/2007 at: <http://www.latin-mass-society.org/lmshope.html>. These reports remain anecdotal and need to be supported by more analytical study.

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum, Apostolic Letter On the Celebration of the Roman Rite according to the Missal of 1962*, 7 July 2007, (original in Latin). Unofficial Vatican Information Service English Translation obtained on 10/12/2007 from: <http://www.fssp.org/en/sumpont.html>.

⁵² An example of a more evangelical expression of Catholicism is given by Rymarz in his extensive studies of World Youth Day (WYD). Richard M. Rymarz, ‘Who Goes to World Youth Day. Some Data on over 18 Australian Pilgrims’, *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 2008, 21(2), 127-144; Richard M. Rymarz, ‘Who goes to World Youth Day: Some Data on Under 18 Australian Pilgrims’, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 2007, 28(1), 33-43. The importance of World Youth Day as a means of evangelization is also spelled out in Pope John Paul II’s EO, 44. Another example of such a group in Australia who has a strong evangelical focus is the Disciples of Jesus Youth mission team. Their website contains a wealth of information about the group and its vision and programs. See, <http://www.ymt.com.au>.

⁵³ Peter Maurin, *Easy Essays*. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936), 14-16.

received and acknowledged and are linked inextricably to the mystery of the Church. Guardini underlined this point when he remarked:

The central mystery of the Church is the Eucharist. The two realities are so closely connected that for Augustine, to mention one instance, the ‘mystical body of Christ,’ the Church, is almost fused with the concept of the Sacrament and that of the unity of the faith.⁵⁴

A more evangelical Catholicism will, therefore, be no less sacramental because sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, are foundational to both the Church’s identity and mission. As Dulles remarked: “Unless there was a Church, there would be no one to celebrate the Eucharist, but unless there was a Eucharist, the Church would lack the supreme source of her vitality.”⁵⁵ On a sociological level, sacraments are the essential hierophany of Catholicism.⁵⁶ These manifestations of the holy and sacred are at the core of what Schoenherr called all “authentic religions.”⁵⁷ In theological terms, the fundamental expression of the Church as communion is the celebration of the Eucharist, which unites both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the Church. This action cannot be substituted or devalued. As Kasper noted: “It [the Eucharist] is the most precious of all the treasures that we – as Church – possess. It is the heart of our Church.”⁵⁸ All the sacraments are the visible link with the divine, the embodiment of God’s self-communication.⁵⁹ As the new evangelization seeks, among other things, to

⁵⁴ Guardini, *Church of the Lord*, 90. See also Benedict XVI Post-Synodal *Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007, 14-15. Obtained on/12/2007 from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html#The_Eucharist_and_the_Church.

⁵⁵ Avery Dulles, ‘A Eucharistic Church: The Vision of John Paul II’ in *Laurence J. McGinley Lectures*, 443-454 at 443-444.

⁵⁶ Richard A. Schoenherr, *Goodbye Father: The Celibate Male Priesthood and the Future of the Catholic Church*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. 51-66, 117-132.

⁵⁷ Schoenherr, *Goodbye*, 52.

⁵⁸ Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity*, 13.

⁵⁹ Smith sees as one of the reasons why Christianity can be successful is that it has the potential for “transcendent worship.” Christian Smith, ‘Why Christianity Works: An Emotions-Focused Phenomenological Account’, *Sociology of Religion*, 2007, 68(2). 165-178. A similar point was often made by Pope John Paul II. For example, in *Ecclesia in*

reinvigorate the links between believers and the Church through Christ, a deeply sacramental expression is indispensable. For Catholics, the Eucharist and the other sacraments are where Christ is encountered in the most profound and sublime way. The call to be closer to Christ, to be more evangelical is, at the same time, a call to be more focused on the Eucharist. Pope Benedict XVI captures this point when he writes: “Dear young people, the happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist.”⁶⁰

Furthermore, Pope John Paul II made a strong link between evangelization and liturgical worship. In an address to the Puerto Rican bishops he stressed this connection: “A total evangelization will naturally have its highest point in an intense liturgical life which will make the parishes living ecclesial communities.”⁶¹ Liturgy has an evangelical aspect in that it, too, is designed to be proclamatory and formative. It should give worshipers a chance to express the importance of the central mysteries of the faith to themselves and also to others.⁶² For most people their primary experience of evangelization and catechesis will be participation in some type of sacramental worship. Think, for example, of the many Catholics whose affiliation to the Church is defined primarily by their irregular attendance at sacramental celebrations such as baptisms, weddings, and taking the Eucharist on special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. Liturgy that is vibrant, sacred, and authentic can be a powerful mechanism of evangelization in these and other cases.⁶³

Europa he commented that “certain signs point to a weakening in the sense of mystery in the very liturgical celebrations which should be fostering that sense.”

⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, ‘Let Yourself Be Surprised by Christ: Apostolic Journey on the Occasion of the Twentieth World Youth Day’ in Elio Guerriero, (Ed), *John Paul II: My Beloved Predecessor*. (Boston: Pauline Books & Media), 73.

⁶¹ John Paul II, ‘Ad Limina Address to the Bishops of Puerto Rico’, December 5 1988, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 49, 14. See also, John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, chapter 4.

⁶² Regis Duffy, *An American Emmaus: Faith and Sacrament in the American Church*. (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 142.

⁶³ Ratzinger developed the idea that liturgy needs to be also seen as “sacred time,” Ratzinger, *Spirit*, esp. 92-111.

Building community and supporting younger Catholics

Anzilotti pointed out that the most successful model of the new evangelization is the one arising from the local Church.⁶⁴ Another feature of a more evangelical Catholicism will be a greater emphasis on building and sustaining strong, supportive local faith communities. For Catholics, the primary faith community is that of the parish.⁶⁵ A more evangelical Catholicism will seek ways to strengthen parish life. A number of characteristics mark the strong parish.⁶⁶ Rausch lists six: a) vital liturgy, b) shared ministry, c) adult faith development, d) RCIA/full communion programs, e) community outreach and f) welcoming the marginal.⁶⁷ Using this as a template, these six areas could become more prominent features of parish life. A more evangelical Catholicism may utilize the strategy common in many Evangelical Churches of having a variety of points of entry for newcomers and a strong emphasis on personal encounter.⁶⁸

There is a strong possibility that new forms of sustaining faith communities will take shape. These may include conventional parish structures as well as innovative communities and associations,⁶⁹ all of which will need to be integrated with the local Church through communion with ecclesial authority. A feature of the new evangelization is that it places the primary focus of

⁶⁴ Laura Nyman Anzoletti, 'Evangelization: Three Contemporary Approaches' in Rausch, *Evangelizing America*, 38-58.

⁶⁵ Historical examples of this type of fraternal support abound. McGivney, for instance, when founding the Knights of Columbus was actually aware of the need to provide younger Catholic males with peer support to help nurture their faith and to assist their sobriety. It was when he added the provision of low cost life insurance that he had a formula which has made the Knights the largest Catholic fraternal association in the world. For a discussion of the thinking of McGivney in this area see, Douglas Brinkley and Julie Fenster, *Parish Priest: McGivney and American Catholicism*. (New York: William Morrow, 2006), esp. 27-56.

⁶⁶ Paul Wilkes, *Excellent Catholic Parishes*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), esp. 191-207. Thomas P. Sweetser, *Successful Parishes: How They Meet the Challenge of Change*. (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983), esp. 181-201.

⁶⁷ Thomas P. Rausch, 'Evangelization and Liturgy', in Rausch, *Evangelizing America*, 60-82, at 75.

⁶⁸ The point about the importance on personal contact and recognizing the individual's faith journey is well made in Phillip Wilson, 'Shaping the Future of the Church', *Origins*, 2007, 78, 37-41.

⁶⁹ Greeley and Durkin point to a loss of cohesiveness in much community building in the Church. This calls for the need for new structures to replace old parish neighborhoods. Andrew M. Greeley and Mary Greeley Durkin, *How to Save the Catholic Church*, (New York: Viking, 1984), esp. 167-179.

evangelization on the local Church. A Catholic group that sits uneasily with the local Church cannot claim to be operating in the sense of the new evangelization as envisaged by Pope John Paul II. He explicitly saw the outreach envisaged by the new evangelization arising out of ecclesial communities.⁷⁰ Emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ and a strong sense of mission need to be integrated with an ecclesiology of communion. Here the believer is connected both with other believers and with the local *ecclesia*, the Body of Christ, which, in turn, is linked with the Church universal. These associations are not incidental or derivative but form the basis of the Church's mission and identity. The unmediated communication between God and believer is characteristic of Evangelical Churches.⁷¹ A more evangelical Catholicism, while not downplaying the importance of an intense and intimate relationship between the believer and God, sees this relationship in a broader context, not in opposition to, but along with communion with God through the mystical community of faith. The Catholic emphasis on evangelization through an ecclesial community would also guard against the fragmentation evident in some Evangelical movements where the charismatic leader takes the place of Episcopal authority.⁷² Catholic ecclesiology would also ensure that evangelical patterns of ministry within the Church would remain rooted in a context that encourages theological reflection and further enquiry.⁷³

⁷⁰ "Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world, But for this to come about what is needed is to remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself." John Paul II, *The Vocation and the Ministry of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 96.

⁷¹ Miller argues that one of the reasons for the growth of new Pentecostal and other Christian Churches is that they offer unmediated communication between the person and God. Donald Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 181-183. This is rediscovery and reinvigoration of a classical Reformation theme.

⁷² For a discussion of this fragmentation see, David Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical*. (London: SPCK, 1995).

⁷³ As Percy points out, "The future for an enthusiastic Christian movement without a real theology is potentially troublesome." Martyn Percy, 'A Place at High Table? Assessing the Future of Charismatic Christianity' in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, (Eds), *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 95-109 at 105.

A priority in this segmented approach to ministry is youth and young adults.⁷⁴

Increasingly, parishes cater to those who are well past middle age, fulfilling what some have characterized as a maintenance model of ministry.⁷⁵ But what of pastoral outreach to those in the critical middle years when lives are being shaped by great decisions? These groups are especially open and in need of supportive networking and focusing efforts here can be fruitful.⁷⁶

As Smith and Denton remarked:

Congregations that prioritize ministry to youth and support parents invest in trained and skilled youth group leaders, make serious efforts to engage and teach youth, seem much more likely to draw youth into their religious lives and to foster religious and spiritual maturity in their young members.⁷⁷

Being part of a supportive community is a vital part of sustaining religious plausibility for younger Catholics.⁷⁸ It also fulfils a very human need to be associated with others who share similar beliefs, goals, and with whom one feels comfortable.⁷⁹ The notion of grassroots supportive communities has long been associated with Catholic communal life. The more evangelical and committed Catholics are aware that they are a distinct minority which can lead to feelings of isolation. This can be countered by establishing supportive groups that provide encouragement but, at the same time, are a reminder that they are a part of a global community of believers where a range of views are considered valid. By encouraging supportive groups

⁷⁴ Wuthnow argues that one of the strategies for survival of Christian Churches is to focus more on small groups, which are already one of their major strengths. He notes that 60% of people involved in small groups in the United States are associated with ones sponsored by a Church. Robert Wuthnow, *The Crisis in the Churches: Spiritual Malaise, Fiscal Woe*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 225-242 at 233.

⁷⁵ Robert Rivers, *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Mission of the Church*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2003).

⁷⁶ Daniel V. Olson, 'Fellowship Ties and the Transmission of Religious Identity' in Jackson Carroll and Wade Clark Roof, (Eds), *Beyond Establishment: Protestant Identity in a Post-Protestant Age*. (Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 1993), 45-48.

⁷⁷ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 266.

⁷⁸ Kavanaugh, *Following Christ*, 147.

⁷⁹ Mark McCrindle and Mark Beard, *Seriously Cool, Marketing and Communicating with Diverse Generations*. (Baulkham Hills: McCrindle Research, 2006).

those who feel on the periphery of Church are assisted to think more in terms of their place in the wider community.

Walker pointed out that joy is the “fundamental trait of the Christian ethos.”⁸⁰ Any group, certainly a religious community, flourishes when its members are joyful and feel that their needs are being addressed.⁸¹ Pastoral supportive groups should aim to provide communal experiences that are affirming, positive, and joyful.⁸² This type of affective affirmation, which is apart from cognitive development, is critical in nurturing mature adult faith. Collins develops the idea of collectively generated emotional energy to explain why some social movements are more successful than others in encouraging members to become more deeply involved.⁸³ Put simply, groups that give members strong collective experiences of shared joy or strong reinforcing affective messages are more likely to attract new members and to retain existing ones. They do this by providing a chance for physical assembly, a focus of attention, and a shared experience of mutual concern.⁸⁴ In these circumstances, a feeling of group solidarity develops which has some similarities with what Durkheim called collective effervescence.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Walker, *Rejoice Always*, 201.

⁸¹ Milton J. Coalter, John M. Miller and Louis B. Weeks, *Vital Signs: The Promise of Mainstream Protestantism*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996), 112-113. Julia Diun, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful are Fleeing and What to Do About it*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008).

⁸² Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 213.

⁸³ Randall Collins, ‘Social Movements and the Focus of Emotional Attention’ in Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (Eds), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 27-44.

⁸⁴ Goodwin et al, *Passionate Politics*, 28.

⁸⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. (New York: The Free Press, 1995 [1912]), esp. 34-47.

Belief and practice

A more evangelical Catholicism will place greater emphasis on the distinctive features of Catholic belief and practice.⁸⁶ This is part of what Bouma saw as a general trend by religious groups to “reexamine their core beliefs and declaring their distinctiveness.”⁸⁷ The need for a greater emphasis on the distinctive features of Catholicism is primarily driven by a changed cultural landscape where Churches need to move away from a monopolistic stance where many adherents moved into faith communities as a result of socialization and other passive factors. Young people, in particular, have a number of options and will most likely be attracted to groups which, amongst other things, have a clear and coherent identity and can communicate this effectively. The transition to a more proclamatory and evangelistic consciousness is a positive response to a much more difficult cultural milieu for religious groups facilitated by the ecclesiology that underpins the new evangelization. One of the basic elements of a *communio* ecclesiology is that the Church describes itself as having a fundamental missionary identity. This leads to more focus on the distinctive features of its message. Groups that have this mentality almost inevitably develop a strong self-identity, and one way this is manifested is proclamation of its distinctive features as such activities are at the heart of its self-conception. In order to frame a theological context for outreach, more attention should be paid to a changed cultural context. What is needed now, in broad terms, are ways to strengthen and reinvigorate the view that belief and strong commitment are not untenable positions. The need for this

⁸⁶ One such distinctive practice is devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Prendergast argues that this should be revived as “the most complete expression of Christian religion.” Terence Prendergast, ‘The Sacred Heart Devotion’ in John M. McDermott and John Gavin (Eds), *Pope John Paul II on the Body: Human Eucharistic and Ecclesial, Festschrift Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J.* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 2007), 387-391. For a different view on its relevance see, Cashen, *Sacred Heart*, 215-219.

⁸⁷ Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 146. He goes on to note that “this can be done harshly like Sydney-side Anglicans...or simply firmly and confidently.”

reappraisal is one of the founding assumptions of what Dulles has called “postcritical theology.”⁸⁸

8.4 The Question of Dialogue

The evangelical turn in Catholicism places much more emphasis on proclamation.⁸⁹ This should not be seen as undermining the movement toward religious dialogue; rather, dialogue should be seen in a more robust sense that focuses on core beliefs in a culture where many disparate and competing voices are heard. Griffiths expressed this idea well when he wrote:

In sincere dialogue Christians necessarily present themselves as such, being explicit about what they believe and hope for. Dialogue can therefore properly be seen as part of witness-by-presentation.⁹⁰

One of the features of pre-conciliar Catholicism was reluctance to enter into purposeful exchanges with other religious groups. Dulles described this attitude in these terms: “Before the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church was polemically arrayed against other groups, including the non-Christian religions, non-Catholic Christianity, and the modern world.”⁹¹ The openness to dialogue, one of the positive and enduring legacies of the Council, was consolidated in the post-conciliar period by documents such as the first Encyclical of Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, published in 1964.⁹² Here Pope Paul VI rooted the idea of dialogue in the example of the loving God who calls men and women to respond freely to the gifts bestowed on them.⁹³ Similarly, the Church must be open to dialogue with the wider society, listening to others and

⁸⁸ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 3-17.

⁸⁹ Dulles, *New Evangelization*, 98.

⁹⁰ Griffiths, *Diversity*, 134. For a discussion of how interreligious dialogue is seen in the writings of John Paul II see, Joseph Bracken, ‘John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue’ in Koterski and Conley, *Jesuit Studies*, 135-146.

⁹¹ Avery Dulles, ‘The Travails of Dialogue’, in *Laurence J. McGinley Lectures*, 221-234, at 221.

⁹² Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI on the Church, *Ecclesiam Suam* (hereafter referred to as “ES”). Obtained on 3/6/2008 from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/Encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html.

⁹³ ES, 11-12.

humbly proclaiming its message, the core of which is not, in Catholic terms, opinion but revealed truth.⁹⁴ Others, both within and outside the Church, are free to respond to this message as they see fit. There is no sense here that a proclamation of the Gospel is linked with coercion. A characteristic feature of contemporary culture is that no meta-narrative is privileged above any other.

Pope Paul VI saw dialogue as taking place within four concentric circles: Mankind, Worshippers of One God, Christians, and, finally, Catholics.⁹⁵ The dialogue within the inner circle amongst Catholics needs to be seen as taking place under the “exercise of obedience” lest it degenerate into:

A spirit of independence, bitter criticism, defiance, and arrogance which is far removed from that charity which nourishes and preserves the spirit of fellowship, harmony, and peace in the Church. It completely vitiates dialogue, turning it into argument, disagreement and dissension – a sad state of affairs, but by no means uncommon. St. Paul warned us against this when he said: “Let there be no schisms among you.”⁹⁶

Dialogue must, therefore, always be conducted with an attitude that seeks to build up the Body of Christ and not to pull it down. In pre-conciliar times, the need to argue for dialogue, and to protect it to a certain extent, was a legitimate concern. In more recent times, however, the culture has shifted to where dialogue is not a contested notion. What needs to be stressed is the need of proclamation, not as a derivative notion but one that is totally integrated with a dialogic consciousness.⁹⁷ The sudden emergence of dialogue in the post-conciliar period as the pivotal hermeneutic for engagement both with the Church and with those in the wider culture, leads to a number of repercussions. In the wider culture, for example, many groups traditionally seen as

⁹⁴ ES, 40-41, 56.

⁹⁵ ES, 94-113.

⁹⁶ ES, 115.

⁹⁷ Quillinan, for example, commented on the future of Catholic schools and devoted much of his presentation to the need and importance of dialogue. Today, much of this is not contested. He does go on to recognize the importance of proclamation of Christ but this point is somewhat submerged. In my view what people are in danger of forgetting is not just the need for dialogue but also the need to present the Church’s message in clear and coherent terms. James Quillinan, ‘What Lies Ahead for Catholic Schools’, *Compass*, 2007, 41(1), 23-28.

adversaries sought a rapprochement.⁹⁸ As dialogue became a cultural norm, the need to refine its definition became clear.

Types of dialogue

Dulles discussed a number of different conceptions of dialogue. One powerful view substituted dialogue for authority. When this emerged within Catholic circles it did not “[have] due regard to the solidity of Catholic Tradition and the authority of the pastoral magisterium could have negative effects.”⁹⁹ A characteristic of this approach to dialogue is that it did not recognize the unique nature of Catholic claims, especially those that were concerned with revealed truth. Dialogue cannot be seen as an exchange of opinions each of which has equal validity; this leads to a relativization of belief. While the goal of this type of dialogue may be arrival at some type of consensus, it runs contrary to the notion of a teaching Church, a Church based on an intimate communion between believers and God. The Church cannot be reduced to one human agency among many, all of which proffer positions and views on a variety of topics. Ratzinger pointed out the dangers of this view of dialogue when he writes:

According to this concept dialogue must be an exchange between positions which have fundamentally the same rank and therefore are mutually relative. Only in this way will maximum cooperation and integration between different religions be achieved. The relativist dissolution of Christology and even more of ecclesiology thus becomes a critical commandment of religion.¹⁰⁰

Dialogue in the first instance is a good and worthy activity, but if is not conducted on a premise of truth and seeking a better understanding of truth then it runs the risk of becoming a relativist forum where views are aired but not in terms that recognize religious claims. However,

⁹⁸ For example, the attempt to initiate a dialogue between Marxism and Christianity. See Roger Garaudy, *From Anathema to Dialogue - The Challenge of Marxist-Christian Cooperation*. (London: Collins, 1967).

⁹⁹ Dulles, *Travails*, 223.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Relativism*, 312.

a dialogue, which recognizes differences in the fundamental identify of parties engaged in the process, leads to more fruitful outcomes as each group is being true to its basic principles. A clear and confident statement of Catholic teaching then does not run contrary to genuine dialogue, at least in the terms put forward by Pope Paul VI. Griffiths argued that a strong apologetic was a necessity for genuine dialogue between groups with differing religious and philosophical assumptions.¹⁰¹ The culture of many countries such as Australia where the new evangelization is focused is one where a variety of voices compete. Religious groups need to be heard in these cultures as well. The message that is delivered, however, must do justice to how the particular tradition sees itself. In Catholic terms, for example, this must certainly involve a proclamation of the unique nature and meaning of Christ.¹⁰² This is what the Church can offer to a genuine dialogue.¹⁰³

Dialogue and the Council

This short discussion on the place of dialogue within a more evangelical Catholicism is part of a much wider discussion on how Catholics and Catholic agencies deal with the wider culture. This discussion has gained urgency in the post-conciliar era. The impact of the Council was not limited to changes in missionary expression. Many Catholic institutions, for example, underwent profound structural and philosophical changes. To select one example, in the United States, Catholic universities and colleges took on the critique of John Tracy Ellis who posited that Catholic higher education had become somewhat of a backwater, and that the most urgent

¹⁰¹ Paul Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), esp. 1-19 where he sets out the NOIA principle – the Necessity of Interreligious Apologetics.

¹⁰² Or as Dulles puts it, “Christian proclamation, even when conducted within a context of dialogue, presupposes that there is a divine revelation, embodying the truth that leads to eternal life.” Dulles, *Travails*, 232.

¹⁰³ Dulles offered two points about intra-ecclesial dialogue that are worth noting here: “open discussion may be counterproductive if its purpose is to prolong debate on issues that are ripe for decision or to legitimize positions that the teaching authorities have decisively rejected.” Dulles, *Travails*, 231.

task facing colleges was to replicate the standards of secular institutions. One of the reasons for this was to enable Catholic educational institutions to enter into a proper dialogue with their secular peers on the basis of similar standards and professionalism. In a perceptive history of American Catholic institutes of higher learning, Gleason points out that the colleges that were the target of Ellis' comments have been largely successful in bringing themselves up to the standards of secular institutions. In theory then, the situation should be ripe for a greater dialogue between Catholic and secular universities.

There have been, however, other challenges in the era which have seriously compromised the ability of Catholics to engage in dialogue with the wider culture and with each other. In some ways, the new evangelization can be seen as a response to some of these challenges, many of which involve very profound questions about Catholic institutional identity. One challenge that draws attention is what Gleason called the "ideological crises" facing many Catholic institutions:

The identity problem that persists is...not institutional or organizational, but ideological. That is, it consists in a lack of consensus as to the substantive content of the ensemble of religious beliefs, moral commitments, and academic assumptions that supposedly constitute Catholic identity, and a consequent inability to specify what identity entails for the practical functioning of Catholic colleges and universities. More briefly put, the crisis is not that Catholic colleges and universities do not want their institutions to remain Catholic, but that they are no longer sure what remaining Catholic means.¹⁰⁴

If coherence and ideological unity, within acceptance parameters, cannot be maintained then dialogue becomes increasingly difficult to sustain.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 320.

8.5 A Renewed Catholic Institutional Identity

A separate question is what is to be done with communities that do not support or sustain faith but may appear as Catholic in a nominal sense. A more evangelical Catholicism will be likely to utilize the title ‘Catholic’ more assiduously and use it in a descriptive sense rather than just as a historical association.¹⁰⁵ The Church has always had a strong institutional presence in Australia and in many other places. An important part of this presence has been the existence of relatively large numbers of people who were prepared to identify strongly with the tradition, at some cost, and provide a living and ongoing witness to the Catholicity of these organizations.¹⁰⁶

Questions of Catholic identity are compounded if Catholic institutions do not have sufficient numbers of individuals who give concrete witness to the goals and aspirations of the institution.¹⁰⁷ Good illustrations of this dilemma are Catholic schools in contemporary Australian society.¹⁰⁸ The recent document by the bishops of NSW and the ACT, *Catholic Schools at the Crossroads*, attests that Catholic schools of the future will “embrace changing

¹⁰⁵ The question of Catholic institutional identity could become one of the dominant issues within Catholicism in the medium term. For a range of perspectives see, James H. Provost and Knut Walf, (Eds), *Catholic Identity*. (London: SCM Press, 1994); John Wilcox and Irene King, (Eds), *Enhancing Religious Identity: Best Practices from Catholic Campuses*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000). Hoge provided some empirical data in Dean R. Hoge, ‘Center of Catholic Identity’, *National Catholic Reporter*, September 30, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Kelley has argued that a characteristic feature of growing Churches is a willingness of members to make striking sacrifices for their religious communities. He adds that relatively few members of the general population are prepared to do this. Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 99-101.

¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the most important call for a quota of some sort is made in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, John Paul II’s Constitution on Catholic universities. This proposes that “in order not to endanger the Catholic identity of the University or Institute of Higher Studies, the number of non-Catholic teachers should not be allowed to constitute a majority within the Institution, which is and must remain Catholic.” Apostolic Constitution, on Catholic Universities, 1990, article 4, number 4. Obtained on 9/10/2008 from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae_en.html. Sullins argued that Catholic institutions of higher learning that have over 50% of Catholic faculty have a stronger Catholic identity than those with lower rates. D. Paul Sullins, ‘The Difference Catholic Makes: Catholic Faculty and Catholic Identity’ *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2004 43 (1) 83-101.

¹⁰⁸ Gleason, in an excellent historical survey of Catholic higher education in the United States, notes that the key issue is not whether Catholic universities wish to retain some type of Catholic allegiance but what does remaining Catholic mean. He argues that a new type of Neo-Scholasticism that can provide a theoretical rationale for distinctive Catholic educational institutions is needed. Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, esp. 318-322.

enrolment patterns.”¹⁰⁹ At the same time, it recognizes the need for a critical mass of Catholic students and, perhaps more importantly, Catholic leaders and staff if schools are to retain a distinctively Catholic identity.¹¹⁰ In their study of Catholic higher education, Morey and Piderit supported this notion when they contended:

Most people in Catholic higher education circles shy away from numerical quotas, even as they acknowledge that Catholic institutional identity requires a critical mass of people who are knowledgeable about the Catholic traditions and as James Provost terms them, ‘people who are in full communion’.¹¹¹

If a Catholic school cannot point to a sizeable, but by no means a majority of, staff and certainly leadership who are animated by the Gospel and see themselves as disciples of Christ, then the justification of its Catholic identity is not straightforward.¹¹² These disciples are aside and separate from those who support the ethos of the school and maintain some type of loose association with the Church. Catholics of this type exist in abundance. Much scarcer, and increasingly so in the future, are Catholics who display a high level of commitment and who “do the work of religious groups.”¹¹³ A disproportionate number of these people are over the age of 55.¹¹⁴ As Braniff pointed out, a critical problem facing Catholic schools in Australia is the serious lack of committed Catholic teachers on staff, who are now far outweighed by non-

¹⁰⁹ Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of NSW and the ACT, *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 2007. Obtained on 14/1/2008 from www.cso.brokenbay.catholic.edu.au, 1-28, at 10.

¹¹⁰ *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 12-18. The document also described schools as, among other things, centres of the new evangelization. *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 3. There is currently extensive discussion taking place on how to boost the Catholic enrolment in Catholic schools in Australia. White, for example, notes that the current Catholic enrolment in Catholic schools in Tasmania is 56% and the goal is to move towards a “critical mass” of 75%. Dan White, ‘Restoring Venice: A Call to the New Evangelization’, in Anne Benjamin and Dan Riley, (Eds), *Catholic Schools: Hope in Uncertain Times*. (Mulgrave, Vic.: John Garratt Publishing, 2008), 79-191 at 187.

¹¹¹ Melanie Morey and John Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 226. The article referred to in the quotation is James Provost, ‘The Sides of Catholic Identity’ in John Wilcox and Irene King, (Eds), *Enhancing Religious Identity*. (Washington.D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 23.

¹¹² This notion of needing committed Catholic staff to maintain institutional Catholic identity is sometimes called the, “critical mass theory.” For a discussion see, Richard H. Parsons, ‘Hiring for Mission: An Overview’, *Conversations*, 1997, 12, Fall, 9-14.

¹¹³ Bibby, *Restless*, 105.

¹¹⁴ Robert E. Dixon, *The Catholic Community in Australia*. (Adelaide; Open Book Publishers, 2005), 57-64.

Catholic and non-practicing Catholics.¹¹⁵ His conclusion is worth noting: “No matter how many coats of Marist or De La Salle varnish are applied to non-Catholic or non-practising Catholic staff, they are not, thereby, transformed into vibrant Marist or Catholic role-models for their students.”¹¹⁶ In the future, more institutions with historical Catholic association may need to closely examine their identity, especially if they are unable to point to a “critical mass” of individuals who are able to animate the identity of the institution.¹¹⁷ When he was the secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Miller noted one of the consequences of this re-evaluation when quoting Benedict XVI:

In the Holy Father's view, the measure of an institution can be judged by its Catholic integrity... [if the institution secularizes], it might be a matter of truth and justice that such an institution is no longer upheld...[if] a Catholic institution is no longer motivated by a Catholic identity, it is better to let it go.¹¹⁸

Concluding Comments

This chapter has argued that the new evangelization can be interpreted as the emergence of a more evangelical Catholicism. Following this argument, the Church of the future will be more evangelical in substance as well as, in many cases, expression. This is a result of theological developments during and since the Council and changes in the general cultural milieu. From a Catholic perspective, a more conscious evangelical tone was, as Dulles pointed out, one of the unexpected fruits of the Council. As a result, points of intersection with Evangelical Churches are now much easier to find.

¹¹⁵ John Braniff, ‘Charism and the Concept of a Catholic Education’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 84(1), 2007, 22-34.

¹¹⁶ Braniff, *Charism*, 34. Murphy makes a similar point about faculty at Catholic universities. See Terence Murphy, *A Catholic University: Vision and Opportunities*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), esp. 21-24.

¹¹⁷ Sullins, *Difference*, 100.

¹¹⁸ Michael Miller, *Terrence Keeley Vatican Lecture at Notre Dame University*, October 31 2005. Obtained on 15/11/2007 at <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/11/03/catholic>. In 2007 Archbishop Miller was named coadjutor of Vancouver. A similar sentiment is expressed by Benedict XVI on arrival in the USA in April of 2008 as he commented in ‘Good Priests are More Important Than Many Priests’ (ZE08041502 - 2008-04-15). Obtained 17/4/2008 from: <http://www.zenit.org/article-22298?l=english>.

It is important to emphasize that a more evangelical Catholicism is no less sacramental or ecclesial. Both these elements are intrinsic to the Tradition and also at the heart of what the Church has to offer those on its periphery. If we accept the analogy of the religious consumer, a strong attraction is what has been termed here ‘an encounter with the divine’. This is something powerful and life changing. The Church, as a communion of disciples through Christ in the Holy Spirit, offers this tangible union with God through its very nature and through the sacraments. This ecclesial and sacramental sense is not in opposition to strong human fellowship but is rather the source of it.

This chapter and the previous one explored how the new evangelization could take shape in countries such as Australia. It is now time to take a step back and reevaluate the new evangelization in terms of contemporary critique. The new evangelization, like any concept, much less a program of action, is subject to some critical reflection. Some of these challenges will be addressed in the next chapter. This discussion will also draw out some of the implications of the new evangelization as well as recapitulating some of its key features.

Chapter 9: Review: Three Perceived Difficulties with the New Evangelization

Introduction

This chapter draws to a close the discussion of the third research question, “How can the new evangelization be conceptualized and implemented?” It is also a prelude to the final chapter where the key principles of the new evangelization are stated. Before embarking on this, a review of some of the issues, both latent and manifest, that have been raised in the thesis so far is in order. This review takes the form of addressing some of the critiques of the new evangelization from a range of perspectives. In addressing these concerns, it is intended that some of the arguments presented earlier can be examined again, but this time in a new configuration.

The contents of this chapter are addressed under the following headings: a) Is the New Evangelization Necessary? b) Polarization of the Church? And, c) The New Evangelization and Church Reform.

9.1 Is a New Evangelization Really Necessary?

If I were a religious leader, I would be troubled by the facts and figures currently describing the lives of young Americans, their involvement in congregations, and their spiritual practices.¹

Throughout this thesis an assumption has been made that the Church, in Australia and elsewhere, is in need of revitalization.² Indeed, the whole basis of the new evangelization is that

¹ Wuthnow, *Baby Boomers*, 214.

significant numbers of Catholics have lost a Christian sense and need to be reconnected with the Church. From this position a number of implications follow. The Church, in places such as Australia, does not currently experience vigorous health – the new Pentecost anticipated at the Council has not yet arrived. The Church also needs to reach out to those on its periphery. These views are, however, misguided if the state of Catholic life is much stronger than assumed. This argument is, perhaps, best put by the prolific American sociologist, Andrew Greeley, whose works have been widely used in this thesis. He argued:

There is no evidence of a decline in American religious belief and practice or of the importance of religion for the rest of American life over the last half century with the exception of some severe jolts to Catholicism (caused by the birth control encyclical rather than the Vatican Council).³

Greeley speaks from an American perspective.⁴ Data indicates that the rate of religious belief and practice among Americans is far higher than for other Western countries and this may affect any analysis and strategic planning. To use Mass attendance rates among Catholic teenagers as one example, McCorquodale and her colleagues reported that 39% of U.S. teenagers (13 to 17 years old) attend Mass at least once a week.⁵ Dixon reported that for a comparable group of Australia teenagers aged 15-19 the weekly Mass attendance figure is around 12%.⁶ The

² Benedict XVI lends his weight to this assessment when he comments: “This is certainly a form of suffering which, I would say, fits into our time in history, and in which we generally see that the so-called ‘great’ Churches seem to be dying. This is true particularly in Australia, also in Europe, but not so much in the United States.” Benedict XVI, Address to Diocesan Clergy of Aosta: On Critical Issues in the Life of the Church (ZE05081620 - 2005-08-16). Obtained 9/12/2007 from: <http://zenit.org/article-13717?l=english>.

³ Andrew M. Greeley, ‘Religion After 2000’. Obtained on 8/5/2002 from www.agreeley.com/articles/re12000.html. For an Australian variant of this argument see Cashen, *Sacred Heart*, esp. 183-192, 215-219. He dismisses talk of a crisis as “doom and gloom”. As Greeley’s position is far better known, it is examined in detail here.

⁴ It can be noted here but Greeley has adopted a similar logic in his support of American Catholic schools arguing that they have a discernable impact on a range of measures. See Andrew Greeley, William McCreay and Ken McCourt, *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church*. (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward. 1986). Others disagree, especially those working outside the United States. See Leslie J. Francis, ‘Roman Catholic Secondary Schools: Falling Rolls and Pupil Attitudes’, *Educational Studies*, 1986, 12, 119-127.

⁵ Amongst U.S. Catholic teenagers 60% attend Mass at least once a month. Charlotte McCorquodale, Victoria Shepp and Leigh Sterten, *National Study of Youth and Religion: Analysis of the Population of Catholic Teenagers and Their Parents*, (Washington D.C.: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 2004), 15.

⁶ Dixon, *Community*, 96.

intention here is not to provide a lengthy comparison between the United States and other countries but to simply note the difference.⁷ A large number of studies have shown a decline in religious belief and practice over time in a range of countries.⁸ Nonetheless, even from an American perspective, Greeley's argument can be challenged.⁹

Australia appears to have much more in common with patterns of religious belief and practice in European countries such as England and Wales rather than the United States.¹⁰ Even if we concede that the immediate post-war period was something of an anomaly in terms of religious practice, there are still grounds for serious concern that justify an emphasis on evangelization. Admittedly, this is not to capitulate to an unfounded pessimism. Indeed, terms such as optimism and pessimism have a moral connotation and may not be helpful descriptors. A better term could be "realistic": Are these concerns based on a *realistic* assessment of all the information we have at our disposal? Some comparative data illustrates this point and also the challenge facing the Church. Horwood reported the following Mass attendance rates for

⁷ Mason and his colleagues, for example, provide some interesting comparisons between Australian and American Gen Y-ers on indicators such as religious individualization and moral relativism. Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 327, 319.

⁸ The following give an indication of the breadth of research confirming this point. Michael Hill and Richard Bowman, 'Religious Adherence and Religious Practice in Contemporary New Zealand', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 1985, 59, 91-112; Reginald W. Bibby, 'Religionless Christianity: A Profile of Religion and Convergence in the Canadian 80s', *Social Indicators Research*, 198, 2, 169-181; Eva M. Hamberg, 'On Stability and Change in Religious Beliefs, Practice and Attitudes: A Swedish Panel Study', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1991, 30, 63-80.

⁹ See, for example, Mark Chaves, 'Secularization and Religious Revival: Evidence from U.S. Church Attendance Rates', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1989, 28, 464-477. I wish to acknowledge here the discussion around so-called Type 1 and Type 2 Catholics. As envisaged by Kennedy these categories represent, amongst other things, a movement from an institutional based communal faith to a more private individual one. Part of this movement was decreased emphasis on religious practice and acceptance of Church teaching. Eugene Kennedy, *Tomorrow's Catholics, Yesterday's Church*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988). Kennedy takes a somewhat benign view of this movement, which has similarities to the views put forth by Greeley that are being critiqued here, and their implications for the future. A recent re-conceptualization of the differences between Type 1 and Type 2 Catholics in the United States, twenty years on, redefines Type 2 Catholics as affirming both the importance of belief, such as the foundational creeds, and also Catholic identity and participation in parish life. See, James D. Davidson, 'The Catholic Church in the United States: 1950 to the Present' in Tentler, *Catholicism since 1950*, 177-207, esp. 189-190.

¹⁰ See Bibby, *Unknown*, 103; Bellamy et al, *People*, 8. Martin groups Australia with Canada and New Zealand in having a similar religiosity. David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*. (Aldershot: Hants Ashgate, 2005), 94-97.

Catholics in England and Wales, the data representing a count figure for one weekend in autumn:¹¹

Table 3: Mass attendance rates in England and Wales 1961-2001

Year	Mass attendance	% of Catholic population
1961	1,941,900	53.1
1971	1,925,000	46.7
1981	1,644,224	38.6
1991	1,292,312	30.4
2001	994,181	24.0

In a similar vein, Horwood reported a decline of 55% in the yearly number of Catholic baptisms over the forty-year period. In the same period, the number of adult receptions into the Church fell from approximately 14,000 to 5,500.¹² During the same interval, the number of marriages conducted in a Catholic Church fell by more than half.¹³ In comparison, Dixon provided the following Australian data. In 2001, a national count of attendees revealed that 15.3% of Australia's Catholic population, or 765,000 people, attended Mass on a typical weekend.¹⁴ This represented a decline from the 1996 figure of 11.5% or just under 100,000, approximately 20,000 per year. The decline figure for those aged between 25 and 34, the cusp of

¹¹ Tom Horwood, *The Future of the Catholic Church in Britain*. (England: Laicos Press, 2006), 13.

¹² In a similar vein, contrasting eras, McDermott notes that in the period 1946-1964, the Catholic Church in the United States registered 2,368,795 converts. John M. McDermott, 'Introduction' in McDermott and Gavin, *Pope John Paul II*, 5.

¹³ Horwood, *Future*, 14-17.

¹⁴ Dixon, *Community*, 95. In 2006 the average Mass attendance rate for Australian Catholics had declined to 13.8%. This figure is a prelude to much lower figures in the future as the highest attendance was for the 75-79 age cohort, 35.6%, and the lowest for the 20-24 cohort 5.4%. This information derived from the 2006 count of Mass attendees was provided in a personal communication from Robert Dixon, Director Bishops Office for Pastoral Planning, November 20, 2007.

Generation X and Y, was more than twice the average.¹⁵ The number of baptisms has also fallen steadily from 71,000 in 1993 to 58,300 in 2002.¹⁶ In 2002, the number of marriages between two Catholics was 35% lower than in 1991, while the number of marriages involving one Catholic partner dropped by 37% in the same period.¹⁷

Markers of identity

These figures show a clear decline in the reception of key sacraments, a significant marker of Catholic identity. While these figures do not tell the full story of the state of the Church in Australia, and it would be a mistake to use them as the only guide, there is a point, when the rates of reception of the sacraments reaches a level where apprehension is justified. The Church, in the immediate post-conciliar era, was emerging from a time of unprecedented expansion and growth. In that time, indicators such as Mass attendance rates were unusually high. Some downward readjustment could have been anticipated, but this period appears to be over.

As there is no single statistical definition of what constitutes Catholic identity, it is not unreasonable to suggest that those things, which the Tradition itself sees as being of critical importance, give an accurate guide to the vitality of the community.¹⁸ There can be no question that the Church regards sacraments such as Eucharist and Baptism as foundational.¹⁹ If it is accepted that disassociation from the worshipping community leads to personalized and

¹⁵ Dixon, *Community*, 97

¹⁶ Dixon, *Community*, 111.

¹⁷ Dixon, *Community*, 113.

¹⁸ D'Antonio et al, *American*, 27, noted that 76% of American Catholics do not see weekly Mass attendance as an important indicator of what constitutes a good Catholic. This may be an indication of the desire of many to reduce religious costs. Indeed, in the table provided all indicators of Catholic identity which involved relatively high cost were largely discounted.

¹⁹ See, for example, *Code of Canon Law 1983*, 867, 868, 1247, obtained on 10/10/2007 from http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM,

somewhat benign religious views, then the figures for reception of the sacraments is suggestive of a trend that will see more and more Catholics move away from their origins. Mason and his colleagues have already noted such a clear trend among Generation Y. The alternative view – that religious belief remains reasonably stable in the absence of strong connection with the faith community – seems less plausible.

It can be argued that a truer indicator of Catholic identity is an interiorization of belief matched with living a moral life that is animated by Gospel or Kingdom values. Following this argument, whilst practices such as Mass attendance may be on the decline, this is not a measure of the vitality of religious life. Indeed, an over emphasis on external, visible behavior was one of the criticisms of Tridentine ecclesiology following Bellarmine. If externals are, however, too heavily discounted, concepts such as Gospel values are of pivotal importance because adherence to these becomes the key marker of Catholic identity, the boundary between the Church and the world. The problem here is how to distinguish Catholics marked by holding certain values from others in the wider community. This difficulty seems to be particularly acute when dealing with Catholic youth and young adults.²⁰ If a group has no or very low boundaries or distinguishing features, then it loses sociological validity. The author is unaware of any study that shows that Catholics, taken as an undifferentiated whole, display different values than other groups once factors such as socio-economic background have been controlled for.²¹ On a conceptual level, it

²⁰ For an excellent discussion of the issue of Catholic values and Catholic youth in schools see, Leslie J. Francis, 'Catholic Schools and Catholic Values? A Study of Moral and Religious Values Among 13-15 Year Old Pupils Attending Non-Denominational and Catholic Schools in England and Wales', *International Journal of Education and Religion*, 2002, 3(1), 69-81. Francis's conclusion is worth noting: "Practicing Catholic parents who wish their children's religious and moral formation to be shaped by a practicing Catholic environment may be frustrated to discover how fragile this assumption can be within some Catholic schools," 81.

²¹ There is evidence the other way that shows that Catholics are indistinguishable from others in the general Australian population. For example, Dixon quotes a divorce rate for Catholic men of 9 % and for Catholic women of 11%. The comparable figures for all Australians are 10.1% and 12.1%. Dixon, *Community*, 75. For the most up to date figures on a variety of indicators of Australian Catholic life see ACBC website at: <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/ppp/20080605608.htm>. This data is from the 2006 National Church Life Survey

is hard to see why they should. The search for a set of values that distinguishes Catholics from others is also based on an assumption that these values define all Catholics. As Greeley himself has remarked:

Every generalization about values that begins with the word Catholic is likely to be misleading, if not erroneous, precisely because the generalization will mask substantial differences in values that exist among Catholic subpopulations.²²

The Catholic imagination?

In his analysis of the Church in America, Greeley acknowledged the sharp declines in both Mass attendance and personal prayer.²³ He does not see these as relatively significant and places much value on what he terms the ongoing strength of the Catholic imagination, which he argued is qualitatively different from a Protestant imagination.²⁴ A detailed study of Catholic imagination will not be undertaken here; however, the key relevant question has to do with the durability of such imagination. Is this imagination somehow more resilient than Catholic beliefs and practices? Greeley stated that, “the uniquely Catholic heritage, views of God and their world, and the relationship between the two continue to be durable – unchanged and probably

(NCLS), based on a random sample of around 70,000 Mass attendees from 229 Catholic parishes from every Australian diocese.

²² Greeley, *Social Portrait*, 252.

²³ Greeley, *Religion*, 1. Greeley also places store in the fact that relatively few Catholics disaffiliate from the Church completely. This phenomenon has been addressed in some depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁴ Greeley, *Catholic Imagination*, esp. 1-77. See also Thomas P. Rausch, *Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 34. Greeley bases his concept of the Catholic imagination on the work of the theologian David Tacey. See, David Tacey, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. (New York: Crossroads, 1986). The author was present at a speech given by Greeley at the Religious Education Association Annual Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Chicago on 7/11/2008. Here, he commented on new research that he was conducting among the Catholics of Cook County and which provided further support for his thesis on the ongoing strength and distinctiveness of the Catholic imagination. Greeley anticipated this research being published in the summer (northern) of 2009. When leaving the conference, unfortunately, Greeley fell alighting from a cab and sustained serious head injuries.

unchangeable.”²⁵ Imagination, however, can only be passed on and cultivated if it is nurtured and exercised.²⁶

A number of American researchers have provided a different perspective on the vitality of the Church in the United States. Commenting on the generational differences amongst American Catholics, D’Antonio and his colleagues have noted much less commitment among the millennial generation. They comment: “If a sizeable number of young adults do not understand their faith well enough to explain it to their own children, they have a problem, and so does the Church.”²⁷ Concentrating on youth, Smith and Denton noted the religious laxity of American Catholic teenagers. They offered a variety of explanations for this but none of these are indicative of a community that is not facing significant challenges.²⁸ They concluded:

Compared both to official Church norms of faithfulness and to other types of Christian teens in the United States, contemporary U.S. Catholic teens are faring rather badly. On most measures of religious faith, belief, experience, and practice, Catholic teens as a whole show up as fairly weak.²⁹

In light of what has been presented here, the argument can be made that the new evangelization cannot be described as unnecessary. Views about the urgency of the task may vary but the basic premise is sound.

Nevertheless, some have argued that the new evangelization is not required because a general spiritual awareness is replacing religious belief and commitment.³⁰ In this view, the widespread mantra, “I’m spiritual but not religious!” may not be a cause for concern but of

²⁵ Greeley, *Imagination*, 186.

²⁶ Greeley does acknowledge the need for the cultivation of the Catholic imagination. See Greeley, *Catholic Imagination*, 131-137. This leaves open the question of whether the imagination is unchangeable.

²⁷ D’Antonio et al, *Americans Catholics Today*, 83.

²⁸ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 193-217.

²⁹ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 216.

³⁰ For example, Daniel Donovan states, “Spirituality rather than religious affiliation seems to be the defining characteristic for these young people who possess a ‘more individualized picture’ of the ultimate reality as benign and caring but reject the God of institutional religion.” Quoted in Linda Morris, ‘Welcome to God’s Mosh Pit’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 2008, 5.

reassurance. Spirituality can be conceived of in a number of ways. In an excellent discussion of this issue, Mason and his colleagues point out the need for clear definitions of spirituality so that dialogue can be purposeful.³¹ This is especially important in a discussion about the relationship between spirituality and religious commitment. If we take spirituality to mean a highly privatized, personal, and idiosyncratic set of beliefs that do not have a clear derivation from a faith tradition, are not expressed in a communal and ritualistic way, and do not have a strong impact of one's way of life, then the rise of this spirituality should pose a serious concern to Catholic leaders. Described in this way, spirituality seems to have a number of parallels with the loose affiliation of many Catholics today. To point out that large numbers of Catholics have this spirituality is merely to restate the problem of low commitment in a different manner. It leaves the question of how to respond unanswered.

If we take spirituality in its more classical sense of an intense personal encounter with the Divine leading to a transformation of life, and all of this being closely connected with a great Tradition, then spirituality is almost the natural ally of those who are trying to promote stronger religious commitment. However, Mason and his colleagues noted that it is the first, more diffuse type of spirituality that appears to be on the ascent amongst many young people today even though they themselves find it hard to articulate.³²

In summary, if large numbers of Catholics see themselves as spiritual in the first sense of the term, then the problems facing the Church are twofold. First, this kind of spirituality runs counter to the whole Catholic metaphysic, which sees the individual in communion with God through the Church. To suggest, as Tacey does, that a way forward for Catholics is a "personal

³¹ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 33-42.

³² They write: "We conclude that although our findings do show a very strong movement in the direction of a new kind of spirituality focused on the self, and remote from religious traditions, few young people are likely to think of themselves as 'spiritual rather than religious'." Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 38.

and mystical encounter” between the believer and God is to undermine not just the ecclesiology of communion but also any sense of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.³³ The basis of the Christian life is the ongoing fellowship with God and with others expressed most perfectly in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is communion ecclesiology in its essence. If a person claims to be a Catholic but rejects this communal understanding of faith in favor of a private, personal, and eclectic set of beliefs and practices, then there is a serious rupture between the views of the individual and the Tradition. Guardini noted one implication of this view:

The way to the truth then cannot be to “seek God” as we like to say merely through our own experiences and our own thought. For if the seeker pictures God in this way and establishes a relationship with him, he really remains with himself – only in a more subtle and more closed binding manner than if he declared openly, “I do not want anything to do with God; I am sufficient for myself.”³⁴

On a more sociological level, to recast many Catholics today as (diffusely) spiritual rather than having a low level of commitment does nothing to address the rationale for the new evangelization, namely, that any organization or group that does not have a critical mass of individuals who are able to participate fully in its life and work faces serious challenges.

Many Catholic agencies face a problematic future if their ranks are filled with those who express this diffuse spirituality. This kind of low level commitment has many similarities with the religious allegiance described previously as requiring very little of adherents, giving them a wide range of choices, allowing them to retain existing social networks, freeing them from an existential void, and giving some small degree of fellowship with many others like them. These adherents are allowed to be religious but in a very limited, secular, and privatized sense. In terms of vicarious religion, they have not removed the safety net from their lives. The question remains, however, how this group to be evangelized? If this spirituality becomes the

³³ Tacey, *Spirituality Revolution*, 169.

³⁴ Guardini, *Church of the Lord*, 60-61.

default position of many Catholics, it almost stands in the way of the conversion that Lonergan and Pope John Paul II envisaged, a profound re-orientation of life and an encounter with Christ. Griffin describes this type of conversion as “the discovery, made gradually or suddenly, that God is real. It is the perception that this real God loves us personally and acts mercifully and justly towards each of us. Conversion is the direct experience of the saving power of God.”³⁵ If spirituality is not rooted in this sense of searching for the Divine, it runs the risk of being an impediment to the new evangelization.

9.2 Polarization of the Church?

A brief typology

Gaillardetz remarked that in his experience of university students in the United States, it was possible to make a distinction between two groups of students.³⁶ On the one hand, the majority had a diminished sense of Catholic identity. On the other hand, there was a much smaller group that had a very strong interest in what it means to be a Catholic.³⁷ This phenomenon has been noted in the wider literature. Fulton and his colleagues described this committed group of young adult Catholics as “*Core Catholic*,” distinguished by their involvement in wider Catholic networks such as parishes, and their readiness to identify themselves as Catholic.³⁸ In their classification of young adult Catholics, Hoge and his colleagues used similar terminology to describe two kinds of religious expression: “*Church as*

³⁵ Emile Griffin, *Turning: Reflections on the Experience of Conversion*. (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 15.

³⁶ For a cautionary note about the use of labels see, Cathleen Kaveny, ‘Young Catholics: When Labels Don’t Fit’, *Commonweal*, 2004, 131, November 19, 19-21.

³⁷ Richard Gaillardetz, ‘Apologetics, Evangelization and Ecumenism Today’, *Origins* 35/1 (2005), 9.

³⁸ John Fulton, Anthony Abela, Irena Borowik, Teresa Dowling, Penny Marler and Luigi Tomasi, *Young Catholics at the New Millennium; The Religion and Morality of Young Adults in Western Countries*. (Dublin: University College Press, 2000), esp. 9-13.

Choice Catholic” and “*Core Catholic*.”³⁹ Core Catholic were described as the ten percent of their sample who had a less individualistic approach to religious belief and practice, took seriously papal teaching (even if they disagreed with it), prayed daily and regarded weekly Mass attendance as a key marker of Catholic identity. Smith and Denton reported a similar figure, ten percent, for young American Catholics who identified their religion as being extremely important in shaping their daily lives. By comparison the figure for mainline Protestants was 20% and 29% for conservative Protestants.⁴⁰ Carroll coined the term “*New Faithful*” to describe a tendency among some young adult Christians to identify strongly with traditional religious positions.⁴¹ Whalen used the term “contemporary traditionalists” to describe a similar group, although this group did not accept all Church teachings, a characteristic of the new faithful.⁴² Portier identified a group among university students which he called evangelical Catholics who sought to better understand their faith and desired to share it with others.⁴³ Rymarz and Graham found amongst some Catholic adolescents a strong familial pattern of religious belief and practice. This can be described as a tendency to closely identify with the beliefs of parents as opposed to more typical communitarian or less committed modes of religious expression.⁴⁴

³⁹ Hoge et al, *Young Adult Catholics*, esp. 47-54.

⁴⁰ Smith and Denton, *Soul*, 37-53.

⁴¹ Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Faithful are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004).

⁴² David M. Whalen, ‘The Emergence of the Contemporary Traditionalist’, *Review for Religious*, 61 November-December 2002, 585-593. For an overview of the attitudes of highly committed Catholic young adults see, Dean R. Hoge, ‘Attitudes of Catholics Highly Committed to the Church: NCR Survey of U.S. Catholics’, *National Catholic Reporter*, September 30, 2005 and John A. Coleman, ‘Young Adults: A Look at the Demographics’, *Commonweal*, September 14, 1990, 483-490.

⁴³ William L. Portier, ‘Here Come the Catholic Evangelicals’, *Communio*, 2004, 31, 50-59, at 52-53.

⁴⁴ Rymarz and Graham, *Drifting*.

Dealing with young Catholic adults

It would appear that some young Catholics have avoided what Kay and Francis call the “drift from the Churches.”⁴⁵ How then should this group be viewed against the broader template of contemporary Catholicism and the new evangelization? Speaking for many, Rausch articulated well a concern about the impact of this “significant minority” of young Catholics:

The energy and commitment of these young Catholics is an encouraging sign. Still their potential to advance the Church’s mission will be lost if they prove unable to move beyond an uncritical triumphalism or retreat into a new Catholic ghetto. A restoration of the pre Vatican II sub-culture is neither possible nor desirable. They need to find common ground with the larger group of young Catholics and with the mainstream Church if they are to realize an authentic catholicity and truly serve the Church.⁴⁶

In light of previous chapters, a number of points can be made which address the concerns articulated by Rausch. First, a characteristic of contemporary Catholicism is the lack of religious socialization of young Catholics. This can be contrasted with earlier eras where socialization was very evident and, perhaps, unreflective. There is no question that the Catholic world of the third millennium, in countries such as Australia, is very different from the cultural expressions that were dominant over fifty years ago. Indeed, many of the underlying attitudes that shaped pre-conciliar Catholicism are almost unimaginable to Catholics today. An appropriate metaphor for the impact of the Council is *revolution*.⁴⁷ One of the characteristics of revolutions is that they change underlying structures and cannot be undone – so there is no going back to earlier forms no matter how ardent the desire to do so. Those who wish to recreate a bygone world have no

⁴⁵ William Kay and Leslie Francis. *Drift from the Churches: Attitude toward Christianity during Childhood and Adolescence*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

⁴⁶ Rausch, *Culture of Choice*, 117. As a counterpoint, Dulles offers the following reflection on what could be a similar group: “The Council called upon every Christian, whether bishop, priest, religious, or lay, to evangelize by word, by personal example, and by helping to transform society according to the mind of Christ. An increasing group of young Catholics, I believe, is sensing the urgency of this project. In recent visits to colleges and seminaries I have been struck by the number of enthusiastic youthful believers who put evangelization at the top of their priorities. May their tribe increase?” Avery Dulles, ‘Vatican II and Evangelization’ in Steven Boguslawski and Ralph Martin, (Eds), *The New Evangelization: Overcoming the Obstacles*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 43-58, 1-12 at 12.

⁴⁷ Greeley, *Catholic Revolution*.

sense of the movement of history and cannot make much of a contribution to the discussion on the future of the Church. To disregard the past as if it has nothing to offer us is, however, an equally myopic position. A necessary but intellectually difficult debate is how to articulate an intermediate position.

In terms of the engagement with culture, the Church has not yet achieved the active discernment of cultural dispositions as posited by Gallagher. This is an intermediary position between innocent acceptance and hostility toward culture.⁴⁸ Those who express a concern about a return to pre-Vatican II mentality need to acknowledge that some young Catholics, in an environment where there is little opportunity to express Catholic identity, need to have their uncharacteristically strong religious beliefs and practices affirmed. This is not a return to a pre-conciliar worldview but, more aptly, a response to a very different social reality, one that is hardly comparable to the 1950's.⁴⁹ For some, participation in the Catholic subculture of the pre-conciliar era may have been an external, social phenomenon with little personal significance. In contemporary culture, however, a Catholic who wishes to participate more fully in, say, the sacramental life of the Church is most likely choosing to do so on the basis of conviction and belief. The fact that most other Catholics do not do this does not invalidate their choice.

This raises a deeper issue here about how the contemporary Church deals with those individuals who, to use the title of Rausch's book, choose to be "Catholic in a culture of choice."⁵⁰ Rymarz has argued that if we follow a communitarian model, characterized by low conflict with wider culture, low sociological boundaries, and high levels of inclusion, the Church

⁴⁸ Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 118-121.

⁴⁹ This is not to underestimate the difficulty of this task. Wittgenstein once likened the task of repairing an interrupted and broken tradition to trying to mend a spider's web with human hands.

⁵⁰ Writing in the early 1980s Dulles also raises this issue. "For some reason the Catholic Church seems unable to capitalize on the yearnings for religious commitment and spiritual experiences felt by so many of our contemporaries." Avery Dulles, *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom*. (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 3.

is relatively successful in dealing with youth and young adults. If, however, a commitment model is followed, typified by strong interest in the tradition, powerful affective experiences, and high boundaries, the Church is less successful.⁵¹ Those who fit into a communitarian sense of Church do not generally provide much challenge or conflict. They are, in the main, very content with their current position, which could be described as low cost with high benefit. The Church, by providing a range of services, such as educational institutions and an overarching but somewhat distant narrative, meets the needs of these Catholics very well. The situation of those who are committed, or seek to be, is more problematic. The commitment model has more in common with a discipleship sense of the Church as communion. It also has more overlap with the new evangelization as articulated by Pope John Paul II, in the key sense that those who are committed are much more likely to be involved in evangelization. What does the Church do to assist younger Catholics who wish to strengthen their faith commitment above conventional levels? Does the Church meet the needs of those who want to express their faith in a supportive environment, want to have contact with others who share their views, want, on occasion, to be in a place where they are not in the minority, who would like to have some of their questions answered, who want to take part in uplifting and dignified worship, or want help in rejecting cultural pressures and influences that envelops them? Labeling those individuals as outside the mainstream may not be helpful. The challenge for all Catholics, irrespective of sub-grouping or label, is to provide some type of formation and support program which addresses the needs and concerns of those who have chosen to be Catholic in the third millennium.⁵² To return to the analogy of the religious consumer, it is reasonable to assume that those individuals will be more

⁵¹ Rymarz, *Communitarian*, 57.

⁵² For attempts to try and classify some of the Catholic sub-groups see, Richard M. Rymarz, 'Reform, Conservative and Neo-Orthodox- Distinctions in Contemporary Judaism: A Useful Lexicon for Catholics?' *Australasian Catholic Record*, 2002, 79(1), 18-30.

demanding than their more typical Catholic peers and this may place some strain on existing structures. Bouma expressed both the challenge and potential of this new type of religious consumer when he wrote:

A cohort of religiously articulate young people ... have a much more developed sense of their spirituality than previous generations. They will be more demanding and sophisticated consumers in the religious marketplace. The religious organizations that rise to this challenge will grow; those that keep insulting their market – as is the case for much of what passes for mainstream Christianity – will not.⁵³

Many modern institutional structures took shape in an era when religious socialization of Catholics and the interconnection of home, parish, and family were strong. These conditions no longer exist and so new structures will form. In the future, the Catholic community will be smaller reflecting the movement from a Church of obligation to a Church of personal conviction. This will occur not as a matter of policy but as a consequence of the chains that bind many to the Catholic Tradition becoming weaker and weaker.⁵⁴ In the future, very few Catholics will be part of the Church groups because of religious socialization or societal pressure. One example of this is the composition of Catholic student groups at tertiary institutions. It is unlikely that anyone joining these groups now does so because it is something their parents did or because they are following the majority of their schoolmates. It can be assumed that those who approach these groups will be in a distinct minority but do so out of a serious interest in learning more about and strengthening their faith. This is not a mandate for these groups to become ideological or partisan but it does require the wider Church to have something positive to offer on the basis that those who express interest are genuine. Consideration could be given to providing specialized pastoral ministry to active Catholic youth. A “best possible” methodology could be

⁵³ Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 208.

⁵⁴ Another way to conceive of the movement is the classic position of Troeltsch, which saw religious groups move through a cycle of Church to sect to some type of mystical community. In these terms, the Church is moving from Church to sect. Ernest Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol 1. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931).

used when dealing with active Catholic youth. One example of this could be a regular, intensive program through which younger Catholics are exposed to the best the Tradition has to offer.⁵⁵

A helpful distinction can be made here between academic and pastoral responses. The guiding principle is to better engage evangelical Catholic students and to encourage them to see themselves not as tangential to the concerns of the university, but as having legitimate interests that are being addressed. This relationship needs to be seen as a reciprocal exchange. The educational institution has something specific to offer evangelical, highly committed Catholic students. They, in turn, respect this outreach and bring with them their experience, expectations, and, especially, their desire to deepen their Catholic faith.

The faithful remnant?

Some have noted that this type of argument is consistent with a “faithful remnant” view of the Church.⁵⁶ In this view, a few ‘hang on’ in spite of the overwhelmingly secular nature of the surrounding culture, exclude others, and turn their attention inwards, manifesting a type of Catholic quietism, focusing on personal piety rather than engagement with others.⁵⁷ However, the problem facing the Church in the short to medium term is not exclusion. Rather, there appear to be few compelling reasons for loosely affiliated people to strengthen their commitment and so many drift away.⁵⁸ The predicament the Church faces is a widespread and resolute lack of interest in strengthening religious commitment. The figures for reception of sacraments, for example, bear this out. As Dixon pointed out, the figures for reception of the sacrament of

⁵⁵ This idea has parallels with the notion of “centres of excellence” developed in Anthony Barratt, ‘Evangelization, Mission and Pastoral Strategies’, *The Heythrop Journal*, 2008, 49(5), 764-794, esp. 782-783.

⁵⁶ Jason Byassee, ‘Being Benedict; The Pope’s First Year’, *Christian Century*, 2006, April 18, 2-8. Douglas J. Hall, *The Future of the Church*. (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1989).

⁵⁷ Paul VI addresses this concern directly, see EN, 31. Religious youth tend to be the most socially committed. This finding should allay the fears of those who tend to see religious commitment as taking the place of social involvement. Mason et al *Generation Y*, esp. 137-151.

⁵⁸ Portier, *Catholic Evangelicals*, 62-63.

marriage amongst Catholics is falling quite dramatically and now appears to be the exception rather than the norm. Kavanaugh goes as far as to link Catholic marriage and celibacy as two radically countercultural choices.⁵⁹ Unlike the sacraments of initiation and confirmation, marriage typically occurs well after school years. Those who wish to marry in a Catholic service cannot be carried along by the crowd as often happens at, say, confirmation.⁶⁰ They need to make a deliberate, adult decision to be involved. The issue is not whether people are being excluded but, to reiterate and recast an earlier question, why should a couple choose to marry in a Catholic service? Given that the power of familial tradition is weakening and will continue to do so, what other reasons would make this decision plausible? Or, more starkly, what does the Church offer the religious consumer?

Most young adult Catholics are content with their current, relatively loose affiliation and see no reason to increase their level of commitment. The social networks that they move in largely eschew religious fellowship of any serious nature. Attempts to recruit them to faith based organization are often fruitless. D'Antonio and Pogorelic, for example, in their analysis of the *Voice of the Faithful* (VOTF) movement in the United States noted that the demographic profile of membership is heavily slanted to those well over the age of fifty.⁶¹ Few Generation X or Generation Y Catholics are members. They note that VOTF is a liberal, reform minded group. It would be a mistake to see the lack of interest of younger people in groups like VOTF as a reflection on that organization alone. It is indicative of a more general trend that underlines the

⁵⁹ Kavanaugh, *Following Christ*, 163-168. Taking these options leads to a kind of “revolutionary holiness” that Kavanaugh identified as the Christian antidote to living in an aggressively consumerist culture, *Following Christ*, 195.

⁶⁰ For many, religious rituals have lost religious meaning in contemporary Western culture. These actions now have symbolic meaning. I think this analysis can be applied to reception of sacraments for many Catholics, especially those associated with the primary school years. For a fuller discussion of this idea see, E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. 31-41, 60-77.

⁶¹ William D'Antonio and Anthony Pogorelic, *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change*. (New York: Crossroads, 2007), 67-90.

difficulty inherent in the new evangelization. Youth and young adults are scarce in many Catholic organizations. The fundamental question is how can this be rectified?

Maintaining a remnant is also not a position that is consistent with the new evangelization.⁶² In the first instance people are unlikely to join a group they see as surviving only as a historical rump of something that was once much greater. The whole thrust of the new evangelization is outward toward the wider culture, to try and bring Christ to people as well as to the society in which Catholics find themselves. Its aim is outreach not exclusion and changing not just individuals but also cultures. Finally, the idea that people, especially younger ones, who show high levels of religious commitment, are not interested in getting involved in wider issues such as social justice is mistaken. Mason and his colleagues have shown that while it is true that many of Generation Y are not interested in social outreach, those who are interested are much more likely to also report high levels of religious commitment of the traditional variety.⁶³

To summarize, having a clear message, the promise of involvement in loving communities, and forming lasting, significant human relationships may persuade those on the periphery to associate at a deeper level. This is especially so if they see the Church as having something to offer that they cannot get somewhere else. People who choose to remain or become members will be comfortable with a community where they can practice what it means to be a Catholic – to be part of this conversation. Being Catholic will become more counter cultural but also more descriptive as the label will bring with it more characteristic beliefs and practices which befits a group that has established sufficient boundaries around itself to distinguish itself from the wider culture. Part of this identity may involve criticism of the

⁶² Hunter has written extensively on religious groups that create a sheltered enclave as a survival mechanism. This is an increasingly difficult endeavor in pluralist cultures. James Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

⁶³ Mason et al, *Generation Y*, 127.

surrounding culture. This is not a retreat to a view which sees the wider society as hostile and always in opposition to the Church's mission, and it is much less a version of religious fundamentalism.⁶⁴ It is, however, a more balanced view of the interaction between culture in general and the culture of the Church. In recent history, perhaps no one has been more influential in establishing a positive and dynamic view on the intersection between culture and the Church than Guardini. Yet, he acknowledged that this exchange is not one sided and uncritical. Krieg noted, "Guardini was aware, too, that the Christian faith must at times be critical of a specific culture in which it exists."⁶⁵ What is needed is a sense of balance and strong self identity.

9.3 The New Evangelization and Church Reform

Reform before evangelization?

McBrien put well the view that any type of mission or evangelization is conditional on Church reform: "To be concerned about the renewal and reform of the Church is to be concerned about mission as well."⁶⁶ McBrien's approach, however, may also be seen as one which does not place the highest priority on evangelization, a view reflected in the new edition of his monumental work, *Catholicism*, published in 1994. In this there are few references to evangelization and none to the new evangelization.⁶⁷ In the earlier edition, published in 1980, McBrien sees a danger in narrowing the concept of evangelization and argues that a more diffuse sense is consistent with Pope Paul VI's thought:

⁶⁴ For a fuller discussion of so-called Catholic fundamentalism see, Richard M. Rymarz, 'Is Fundamentalism a Useful Descriptor of Trends in Contemporary Catholicism?' *Australasian Catholic Record*, 2007, 84(1), 56-67.

⁶⁵ Robert A. Krieg, 'A Precursor's Life and Work' in Robert A. Krieg (Ed), *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World*. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), 36.

⁶⁶ Richard P. McBrien, 'Some Say, 'Leave the Church Alone, Get Out There and Evangelize'', *National Catholic Reporter*, 1999, 36, November 12, 21.

⁶⁷ Dulles notes some factors that in recent times have inhibited Catholic theology from adopting a vigorous program of evangelization. Avery R. Dulles, 'Evangelizing Theology', *First Things*, 1996, March, 61.1, 27-32, at 29.

Some Christians assume a militant posture. They call for renewed efforts of “evangelization” understood not in the broad and comprehensive manner of Paul VI 1975 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, - the proclamation of the word, the celebration of the sacraments, the offering of corporate witness to Christ, and anticipation in the struggle for peace and justice – but in the narrow sense of ‘making converts’ or bringing ‘fallen-away’ Catholics back to the Church.⁶⁸

This view tends to downplay what Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* called, “true evangelization,” namely, its Christocentric core: “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teachings, the promise, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.”⁶⁹ It also associates conversion with militant Christianity.⁷⁰ This does not reflect the new evangelization of Pope John Paul II as recorded in the statements of various Episcopal conferences. In 1992 the United States bishops, for example, issued a document *Go Make Disciples*, Goal 2 of which reads:

To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.⁷¹

McBrien does not specify what changes are needed but criticized the view put forth by Cardinal Hume that, “a trick of the devil is to divert good people from the task of evangelization by embroiling them in endless controversial issues.”⁷² He sees this as creating a false dichotomy between the internal life of the Church and concern for mission. This critique is, however, predicated on an attitude that sees reform as critical or at least as important as evangelization. This view is hard to reconcile with the ecclesiological vision of the Church as being

⁶⁸Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism, Volume One*. (Oak Grove, MN: Winston Press. 1980), 268.

⁶⁹ EN, 22.

⁷⁰ For a statement on the legitimacy of conversion see, Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Doctrinal Note on some Aspects of Evangelization’. Obtained on 14/12/2007 from <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2007/07-204.shtml>.

⁷¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, ‘Go ad Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the U.S.’, *Origins*, 22, 1992, December 3, 423-432 at 429.

⁷² McBrien, *Leave*, 21.

fundamentally missionary in nature. A distinction, though, needs to be made here between various types of reform based largely on their impact and reform that has a theological basis.

Types of reform

In terms of Church life, there are many reforms that are local and organizational in nature. D'Antonio and Pogorelic, for example, noted that many American Catholics who are members of "Voice of the Faithful" are especially concerned with how bishops deal with cases of clerical sexual abuse and other accountability issues.⁷³ There is no question that if the Church is to be seen as plausible, then the scandal of sexual abuse must be addressed as a matter of the highest importance. As Robinson commented: "It's hard to imagine a more total contradiction of everything that Jesus Christ stood for, and it would be difficult to overestimate the pervasive and lasting harm it has done to the Church."⁷⁴ These concerns can be addressed within a framework that still prioritizes mission and evangelization. If we surmise, however, that proposed reforms involve major theological and juridical issues, this has clear implications for the progress of the new evangelization. Hodgens, for example, argued that the new evangelization would not be successful until a series of "roadblocks" are removed.⁷⁵ These include challenging much of what has been considered orthodox Catholic theology and moral

⁷³ D'Antonio and Pogorelic, *Voices of the Faithful*, 50-67.

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*. (Mulgrave, Victoria: John Garrett Publishing, 2007), 7. Sexual abuse is an example of a much-needed reform. Robinson, an auxiliary bishop of Sydney, also raises a number of theological issues, such as the permanence of dogma, which are of a much more fundamental nature. These cannot be explored in any detail here. It suffices to note the tension between some of Robinson's view and Church teaching. For reviews of the book see, Barry Brundell, 'Editorial: Bishop Robinson's Book', *Compass*, Summer 2007, 41(4) and Neil Ormerod, 'Book Review, Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 2008, 85(2), 253-254. See also, 'A Statement from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference'. Obtained on 30/5/2008 at www.acbc.catholic.org.au. This statement addresses Robinson's book and notes, "After correspondence and conversation with Bishop Robinson, it is clear that doctrinal difficulties remain. Central to these is a questioning of the authority of the Catholic Church to teach the truth definitively."

⁷⁵ Eric Hodgens, *New Evangelization in the 21st Century: Removing the Roadblocks*. (Mulgrave, Vic.: John Garratt Publishing, 2008).

teaching. The scope of these changes is well captured by his remark that, “the new knowledge demands that the Christian message be reformulated in a new catechesis.”⁷⁶ The new evangelization, in this view, is restricted until these issues are addressed.⁷⁷

Reform and evangelization

This view on the primacy of major reform can be further addressed in two ways. The first is historico-theological. The question of further reform of the Church is another manifestation of the wider debate about how the teaching of the Council should be received and implemented. The vision of the new evangelization provided by Pope John Paul II comes out of a particular understanding of the Church in the modern world. This thesis has traced its roots to *Lumen Gentium* and other conciliar and post-conciliar documents. This vision sees the teaching of the Second Vatican Council as providing a template for a new Pentecost of the Church. It does not see these teachings as being in need of completion or drastic supplementation. To argue for another vision of the Church based on a substantially different interpretation of the Council would lead to different conclusions. To give one example, Dillon saw the Council as, “affirming the equality of membership in the Church of the laity and the ordained as the one ‘People of God’ and providing Catholics with a rationale for lay emancipatory activism.”⁷⁸ This view seems to confirm the concerns, discussed in Chapter Three, of those who caution against an unqualified use of the term ‘People of God’. Given her interpretation, Dillon sees groups such

⁷⁶ Hodgins, *21st Century*, 53.

⁷⁷ For a detailed list of reforms that are seen, by some, as needed to complete Vatican II see, Blueprint for Vatican III, *National Catholic Reporter*, 2. Obtained on 7/5/2002 at: www.natcath.com/NCR_Online/archives/050302/050302a.htm. The article is based on responses to a survey which began with the phrase, “Which three issues do you believe a future general council of the Roman [sic] Catholic must address....” The editor notes, “the need to reform Church governance was the primary focus of the respondents.”

⁷⁸ Michelle Dillon, ‘Bringing Doctrine Back into Action: The Catholicity of VOTF Catholics and Its Imperative’ in William D’Antonio and Anthony Pogorelic, *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change*. (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2007), 105-120, at 107.

as “Catholics for a Free Choice,” who argue that the Church’s teaching on abortion needs to be reformed, as a legitimate example of contemporary Catholic pluralism.⁷⁹ This group should, therefore, be part of any evangelistic endeavor. On this premise, the new evangelization would need to be at least delayed until Church teaching on abortion was changed. Evangelization in a contemporary context is a difficult task and cannot be effective when attitudes within a tradition on important issues seem irreconcilably conflicted. The religious consumer of the third millennium is not well disposed to sifting through internecine disputes. They are very familiar with this type of scenario in other parts of their lives. Why should they be open to a message and an experience which seems partisan even within the home tradition? This thesis is not focused on analyzing different interpretations of the Council. What is being noted here is that different interpretations of the Council lead to different outcomes, especially as far as evangelization is concerned.⁸⁰

The second point is sociological. Many of the advocated reforms proceed on the assumptions that if these changes were made many Catholics are likely to become more strongly committed. This may not be the case. If, however, the conviction is that the reform is necessary on theological or philosophical grounds, it should argued for on this basis and not on the assumption that it will lead to a reinvigoration of the Church. Many of these proposed reforms can be seen as reducing the cost of religious belief, making being a Catholic easier in contemporary culture.⁸¹ An example that has already been raised is that now a majority of Catholics see the Sunday Mass obligation as not being of critical importance. Following this

⁷⁹ Dillon supports this view by arguing that a consensus of unnamed Catholic theologians that she interviewed “spoke of a Catholicism that was remarkably similar to that construed by Dignity, WOC [Women’s Ordination Conference, and CFFC [Catholics for Free Choice] respondents.” Michelle Dillon, *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith and Power*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 221-241 at 239.

⁸⁰ Hodgins, for example, dismisses John Paul II’s interpretation of Vatican II as “totally reactionary and restorationist.” Hodgins, *21st Century*, 20.

⁸¹ For a wider discussion of this point see, Thomas C. Reeves, *The Empty Church: Does Organized Religion Matter Anymore?* (New York, Simon & Shuster, 1998), esp. 166-190.

logic, then, it could be argued that a necessary reform would place less emphasis on weekend Eucharistic worship, despite the Council intending for the Eucharist to occupy an even more central place in the lives of Catholics.

Two comments can be made about this argumentation. First, it would be unwise to disregard any decision about the future of the Church just because it makes the life of Catholics easier.⁸² There is, however, substantial literature, discussed earlier, which points to the need for religious groups to retain some sense of tension with the wider culture in order to survive. This tension is often marked by obligations placed on believers that do not apply to those who are not members of the group. Some religious groups place significant demands on members and appear to be growing and showing other signs of vigorous internal life. In terms of time, many of these obligations are devoted to the community, and far exceed the hour or so it takes to attend Mass on the weekend. Amongst other things, making these demands gives members a chance to converse with others on what it means to be a part of that community. Finke and Stark have noted that in the recent history of Catholicism, a “worst of both worlds” situation has developed.⁸³ On the one hand, many of the relatively mild rituals and obligations that Catholics were expected to follow have disappeared or been downgraded. These, taken as a whole, gave the community a sense of identity and cohesion. On the other hand, the most difficult and costly teachings, such as that on use of contraceptives, have, at least in theory, remained.⁸⁴ They argue

⁸² Paul VI drew attention to misconstruing the Council as in some way removing burdens from Catholics. “Whoever would see in the Council a weakening of the interior commitments of the Church towards her faith, her traditions, her asceticism, her charity, her spirit of sacrifice, her adherence to the Word and to the cross of Christ, or even an indulgent concession to the fragile and changeable relativistic mentality of world principles and without a transcendent end, or a kind of Christianity that is more permissive and less demanding would be mistaken.” Speech to General Chapter of the Salesians, quoted in De Lubac, *Service of the Church*, 368.

⁸³ Finke and Stark, *Churching*, 172-181.

⁸⁴ The argument here is that many reforms of the Church that McBrien and others advocate may be unlikely to result in a more vigorous Church. Church teaching on the regulation of fertility, however, needs to be considered as a separate category that cannot be addressed in any detail in this thesis.

that the Church should re-evaluate its position and place greater stress on the importance of relatively minor obligatory practices.

In summary, it is not obvious how a reform such as placing less emphasis on participation in weekend Eucharistic worship would result in more committed Catholics. One of the features of high levels of commitment is elevated levels of participation. This thesis is not centred on the legitimacy of Church reform but it can note that many of these may not result in renewal, at least as this is understood in standard sociological terms.

Other reforms may be of more interest to religious professionals rather than more typical Catholics. Winning put this view well:

I do not believe that the structures of the Roman curia are a burning issue to the ordinary men and women trying to live out their catholic faith in the world. Of far greater impact on the lives of most Catholics are the strengths and weaknesses of the local church, both in terms of spiritual leadership and the faith commitment of the laity.⁸⁵

There seems to be some sense in this view. It could be argued that Winning, the Cardinal Archbishop of Glasgow, had an interest in taking attention away from internal Church debate. It could also be argued that this view reflects those of a person with sound pastoral experience and, to repeat the point, it is not obvious how an issue such as reform of the Roman curia would increase the fervour and commitment of Catholics in Scotland. Leaving aside whether or not it is necessary or urgent, the critical question seems to be: Should evangelization be deferred until curial reform takes place or to some other point in the future?⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Cardinal Thomas Winning quoted in Horwood, *Future*, 34.

⁸⁶ This view is powerfully put by Robinson: "Of what use is it to proclaim a 'new evangelization' to others if we are not seen to have confronted the suppurating ulcer on our body?" Geoffrey Robinson, 'Confront Abuse Don't Manage it', *Eureka Street*, October 2007. Obtained on 10/3/2008 at: <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=3413>.

Concluding Comments

Like any concept, the new evangelization can be placed under legitimate critical scrutiny. The points raised in this chapter help solidify the notion of the new evangelization. The need for the new evangelization arises out of a sense that the Church in countries such as Australia faces important challenges that call for a proportionate response. This is a realistic assessment. What is called for here is discernment and a vision for a way forward. Certainly not all proposals will be meritorious, but what the new evangelization allows for is a discussion of some new ways of engaging the world and also how the Church initiates pastoral outreach. This is an active program and, as such, will not always be fruitful or uncontentious. As an alternative, a more passive stance would probably lead to less reaction but runs the risk of not engaging the wider culture or recognizing the historic circumstances the Church finds itself in. The new evangelization is rooted in the Christian hope that the Church is incarnational, existing in time and space, and that it can respond to changing circumstances and be true to its calling to make Christ known throughout the world.

The new evangelization, like all emerging ideas, needs to be given some space in which to develop and mature. It may signal the emergence of the Church from the fluidity of the immediate post-conciliar era, where there was certain timidity in taking a strong position on a range of issues. In the tumult of the times this was an understandable response. Any enduring institution, however, cannot profitably remain in an inward looking state for an indefinite period of time. What is needed is a fair appraisal of what lies ahead and a commitment to a course of action. In countries such as Australia a critical issue is the absence of large numbers of committed younger Catholics. Addressing this needs to be seen as a priority. Other issues such as reform of Church structures are valid and can still be considered within the context of the new

evangelization. It is not proposed here that reform be sidelined. Indeed, a vigorous espousal of the new evangelization will inevitably lead to new structures emerging in the Church. To put reform ahead of evangelization, however, is to misread both the signs of the times and to misunderstand the fundamental evangelic identity of the Church.

We are now in a position to move to the final research question, namely, “What are the principles of the new evangelization?” The answer to this question is necessarily the fruit of our discursive analysis of the new evangelization up to this point.

Chapter 10: Principles of the New Evangelization

Introduction

This chapter responds to the fourth question set out in the introduction, and offers principles that inform and direct the new evangelization. Answers and suggestions at this point emerge from the foregoing analysis. They are intended to illuminate and direct what this thesis has proposed as the meaning of the term, “the new evangelization.” The three guiding factors and eleven principles presented are grounded in the discursive analysis that has taken place in all the preceding chapters.

As noted in *Redemptoris Missio*, a human metaphor for the methodology of the new evangelization is found in the story of St. Paul at the Athenian Areopagus.¹ There is an indelible Pauline dimension to the new evangelization. Paul exemplified the union with Christ, which is the goal of all evangelization, past and present.² It has become somewhat of a cliché for Christians to ask themselves in particular situations, “What would Jesus do?” Without wishing to belittle or devalue this sentiment, another way of looking at some of the pastoral dimensions of the new evangelization is to ask, “What would St. Paul do?” In this context, it is significant

¹ Fallon makes a similar point when he notes that Paul is a suitable model for facing the challenges of postmodernity. Michael Fallon, ‘Catholicism in a Postmodern World’, *Compass*, 2006 40(2).

² Kelly notes: “He (Paul) puts himself forward as the one who receives from the risen Jesus himself a special mission to the nations.” Anthony Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian Life and Thought*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 79.

that Pope Benedict XVI marked 2008/2009 as the Year of St. Paul, noting the relevance of his life for Christians today.³

The content of this chapter is presented under two headings: a) Three Guiding Factors and b) Eleven Principles of the New Evangelization.

10.1 Three Guiding Factors

The new evangelization as envisaged by Pope John Paul II is a bold strategy in as much as it sets a clear benchmark for success. Its goal is nothing less than the personal conversion of those who have lost an active sense of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. By focusing on such personal and challenging goals, the new evangelization signifies a shift from a more passive sense of the interaction between the Church and culture that was prevalent in the post-conciliar period. Disciples of Christ, in communion with others, are called by the new evangelization to engage in the prevailing culture in countries such as Australia in a critical fashion, and that places more emphasis on the distinct and counter-cultural aspects of the Christian message. The success of this, however, is not guaranteed. Weigel, noting the legacy of Pope John Paul II, commented that despite his best efforts, at least in its initial stages, the new evangelization of Europe has floundered: “No pope since the Middle Ages had tried harder to arouse Europe’s Christian spirit. The response, to be charitable, was tepid.”⁴ However, just as Paul’s endeavors at the Areopagus may not have been seen as an immediate success, Paul could not but preach about Christ, so inflamed was he by the desire to evangelize. The Church, too, understood as an agent of evangelization not by choice but by its very nature, must carry on its Pauline mission

³ Benedict XVI, ‘Celebration of First Vespers of the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul’. Obtained on 22/6/2008 from: http://www.vatican.va/holyfather/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hfben-xvi_hom_20070628_vespri_en.html.

⁴ George Weigel, *God’s Choice: Pope Benedict XVI and the Future of the Catholic Church*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 57.

with an eye to more long-term goals and not be discouraged by apparent failure. The commitment to the new evangelization needs to be consistent, realizing that the task ahead is difficult but can be mitigated by intelligence and resourcefulness. As Lonergan remarked: “Ours is a new age, and enormous tasks lie ahead. But we shall be all the more likely to surmount them, if we take the trouble to understand what is going forward and why.”⁵

The interaction between the Church and the wider culture must be viewed as a dynamic, but not discontinuous, process. In this view, it is legitimate to describe ebbs and flows in the vitality of the Church. In countries such as Australia, the Church is not at a historically strong or powerful moment, although by no means is it facing an unprecedented crisis or low point. It does not, however, have limitless resources and energy. It must, therefore, give much thought to how best to deploy its energies, bearing in mind that not all activities and new initiatives can be supported, nor can all historic ministry and policy be maintained. The first guiding factor then is that the Church must develop a strategic sense toward its pastoral ministry.

Related to this, the second guiding factor is a sense of continuity, which is not bound by the past. Expectations about the new evangelization should not be set too high. The *terrain* for the new evangelization in countries such as Australia is difficult and there is no strong prospect that this will change significantly in the foreseeable future. With this in mind, the Church in the third millennium must free itself from using the immediate pre-conciliar era as a constant reference point. This era was, in many ways, the result of the convergence of a series of unique circumstances. The pre-conciliar era should also not be regarded as a cultural prison from which Catholics emerged resolute never to return again. Any religious group, and certainly one with the ancient roots of Catholicism, needs to make its history a strong aspect of its claims for

⁵ Lonergan, *Future*, 163.

plausibility. The new evangelization rests on a hermeneutic of continuity, where all eras have something to offer the contemporary Catholic.

The third and perhaps most critical guiding factor on which the new evangelization stands or falls, is that of personnel, and the question of who are to be the human agents of evangelization? The new evangelization is not a program or seminar, but is addressed to human transformation in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The facilitators of this transformation are the courageous, persistent, and committed individuals who take up the Pauline challenge. All discussion of principles and factors need to be seen in the context of the human dimension, that is, those who will carry the new evangelization forward.

10.2 Eleven Principles of the New Evangelization

1. Be prepared to give an answer

The Church needs to be able to provide a rationale for why people should be religious in a manner that moves well beyond passive and weak association. The new evangelization implies that Catholics have something to offer in a religious marketplace that is competitive and highly diverse. If individuals in countries such as Australia can be described as religious consumers, they have abundant choices, including the popular choice of remaining resolutely loosely religiously affiliated. One way of persuading people and moving them beyond weak association, is to provide them with cogent, plausible, and efficacious answers to the great issues of life. The Church in the third millennium needs to recapture the sense that it has something profoundly meaningful to offer.

2. Celebrate the distinctiveness of Catholicism

The previous principle sets out, among other things, an answer to the question: “Why should I be religious?” The second principle addresses the question, “Why should I be Catholic?” The new evangelization sits well with an ecclesiology that acknowledges the continuity of belief and practice. This perspective realizes that at various times in the Church’s history the expression of Catholic identity has changed due to historical circumstances. In this era, Catholic identity needs to be strengthened, not in a triumphalistic way, but in the sense of being proud of a culture and heritage. This is one way of establishing the boundaries that give any group its cohesiveness and purpose. Reestablishing boundaries is, however, difficult. In recognition of this, a first step could be preserving those distinctive features of Catholicism that still exist. This would involve both core beliefs and finding new ways to animate Catholic culture. At every opportunity, the distinctiveness of Catholicism should be encouraged. An absolute necessity is to maintain the importance of Eucharistic worship.

3. Develop a Christological edge

Building on the previous principle, but needing special emphasis, what lays at the heart of the Church’s answer to modern culture and men and women is not an abstract concept but the person of Christ. The proclamation of Christ is at the heart of the evangelizing mission of the Church and also the essence of what it can offer to the world. Catholicism should be rooted in the wholeness and radical simplicity of the person of Christ, the Word made flesh, who brings salvation to all not just an erudite few. Christ calls people to a radical conversion, which is transformative and not superficial.

4. The value of personal witness

A small but significant action could be to encourage all Catholics to give witness to what they believe befits disciples of Christ. This point is well captured in the 2008 Pastoral Letter of the Australian Catholic Bishops, *You Will be My Witnesses*.⁶ This involves, of course, more than words, but in the appropriate time and circumstances, giving an account of what is believed and why this is important is a very powerful tool in bringing about the new evangelization.

5. Affirm the reality of God

One of the best challenges to pervasive contemporary practical atheism is a full and vigorous presentation of the Trinity. This argument reflects the need to bring God back into the centre of Catholic life and discourse. A separate principle of the new evangelization should be to engage with the transcendent at every opportunity. In many countries such as Australia, this will not occur spontaneously as many of the dominant cultural forces tend to accelerate the secularization of societies. This is not to neglect the “horizontal” dimension of faith but to acknowledge that what gives religious communities distinctiveness are their claims to have a special connection with divine.

6. Prioritize outreach and activities

Given the difficulties inherent in the new evangelization and the limited capacity of the Church to respond, much thought needs to be given to what groups and activities should be the

⁶ ‘You Will Be My Witnesses: A Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of Australia’, June 22, 2008. The letter concludes with the statement, “Let us boldly witness to our faith.”

focus of attention at least in the initial stages of the new evangelization. Commitment to expanding pastoral outreach to young adults is a crucial first step and needs to be seen in unison with plans to develop agents of the new evangelization who can best minister to young adults. Related to this is utilization of networks of people who already have some preexisting link to the Church.

In a similar way, a number of activities would seem to be a high priority in any program of the new evangelization. Ministry to younger adults in marriage preparation is an example of one such area. Those young adults who wish to explore the Catholic perspective on married life in more depth could be at a particularly graced moment of their lives. Consideration could also be given to providing specialized forms of pastoral ministry such as to active Catholic youth in a variety of educational settings.

7. Don't be discouraged and be prepared to try new strategies

The new evangelization is a difficult task. It is worthwhile to recall Ratzinger's quote here about success not being one of the names of God. Those engaged in it, therefore, must be prepared to try new strategies to help promote it and to be aware that some of these may fail. The new evangelization sets itself high goals and, as a result, can often lead to what seems to be disappointment. But with high goals comes the possibility of high returns and these are not always best measured in gross numbers.

The new strategies that are anticipated by the new evangelization may not all be successful. This is a reflection of the difficulty, not the futility, of the task. It is important to maintain a responsible consciousness in these endeavors. Implementers of the new

evangelization need to be convinced that by being attentive, intelligent, and rational that they can affect a course of action that will be fruitful at least on its own terms and in due course.

8. Be responsive and provide strong affective experiences

Ongoing fellowship groups should be established that provide abundant strong affective and joyful experiences. Any group, and certainly a religious community, flourishes when its members are joyful and where they feel that their needs are being addressed. The Church should look to ways to better provide communal experiences, which are affirming, positive, and joyful. People are likely to come to, and then to increase their commitment to, a body where they frequently have a good experience and which provides social and other networking opportunities. If this is coupled with effective mentoring and witnessing then a pathway to becoming more committed has been established even for those on the periphery of the group.

9. Link people with supportive communities

Being part of a supportive community is a vital aspect of sustaining religious plausibility in contemporary culture. It also speaks to a very human need to be part of a group who profess similar beliefs, goals, and with whom one feels comfortable. A feature of the post-conciliar landscape is a loss of a sense of community amongst many Catholics but most significantly amongst younger ones. The new evangelization is dependent on the existence or reanimation of active communities that can provide support to those already someway on their journey of faith and, more importantly, to those who are looking to become more committed. A community of faith, which offers many possibilities for developing supportive fellowship networks, is the parish. Parishes should move away from a maintenance-oriented model to ones that actively encourage evangelization.

10. Recognizing the family as a critical agent of the new evangelization

Anything that can be done to strengthen the family in its role as seedbed and nurturer of faith should be encouraged. This all-encompassing mandate is simply recognition of the unique and irreplaceable role the family plays in faith formation and the bedrock of society. As a means to reach out to parents who have lost a sense of faith or have even drifted a long way from the Church, ministry to families is an area of great potential. If we work from the general principle that most parents are very interested in activities that will help them get closer to their children and improve their lives, the challenge for the new evangelization is to convince parents that getting closer to Christ will help their relationships with their children and also make their children's lives better. In the initial stages, this type of ministry may not attract large numbers but it is a task worthy of perseverance.

11. The new evangelization is ecclesial

The most successful model of the new evangelization is the one that arises from the local Church. This model is linked to parishes and to local ecclesial institutions and provides a suitable human face to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. By making these links explicit, the new evangelization is less likely to lead to the fragmentation that is evident in other Christian communities when the urge to evangelize, often led by charismatic leadership, leads to a splintering of the faith community. Situating the new evangelization within an ecclesiology of communion is also recognition of the primary importance of the faith community to Catholics.

Concluding Comments

As noted at the beginning of this thesis, one of the indicators of decline in religious groups is registered when a wide-ranging institutional presence is not animated by a strong personal commitment on the part of individuals who work in these institutions. To use a Scriptural metaphor, vibrant religious institutions need a plentiful supply of those who are prepared to labour in the vineyard. In this thesis, this labour has been likened to having a high level of commitment to the Tradition that inspired these institutions. This commitment is undermined by the rise of a new mentality, which, while not eschewing association with the Tradition, does not readily result in high levels of commitment.

The dilemma though for those interested in maintaining or developing a strong religious identity is that many of these Catholics have found for themselves a comfortable niche which does not require of them high levels of commitment. Without sufficient numbers of individual with this type of strong motivation then the ability of the Church to adapt in a credible way to changing cultural patterns is heavily compromised. If this situation is to be at least halted then new ways of encouraging religious commitment must be initiated. In their absence then weak patterns of allegiance will continue with inevitable consequences. This is precisely the task the new evangelization sets itself and as such is an appropriate response to changing, and challenging pastoral circumstances.

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