PRAYER OF ST. BENEDICT

O GRACIOUS AND HOLY FATHER,
GIVE US WISDOM TO PERCEIVE YOU,
INTELLIGENCE TO UNDERSTAND YOU,
DILIGENCE TO SEEK YOU,
PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR YOU,
EYES TO BEHOLD YOU,
A HEART TO MEDITATE UPON YOU,
AND A LIFE TO PROCLAIM YOU;
THROUGH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT
OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

AMEN

INTRODUCTION

THE PRAYER

The *Prayer of St. Benedict*[1], conceived in clarity of thought, meticulously constructed, and devoid of a pious sentimentality or a pretentious posturing, echoes the inmost desire of the Human spirit, expressing the yearning for a deeper experience and knowledge of Ultimate Reality. Its direct and simple appeals penetrate to the very centre of the human person's desire for a revelation of a transcendent reality, vaguely suspected and dimly perceived. The supplicant asks God to reveal himself in a deeper and more profound way than hitherto experienced. That the author does indeed have a relationship with God is evident; however, the appeal for a more intimate experience of God is powerfully conveyed, resonating with the longing within the depths of each person, for a relationship with a transcendent reality sustained by some degree of credibility. The *Prayer* is universal in every sense, transcending the boundaries of Christian confession and in essence, reflecting the desire for an experience of God inherent within all spiritual traditions. It is the cry of the agnostic, the everyday Christian, the theologian and the mystic – the appeal of any sincere seeker, who find in its direct simplicity resonance, affirmations and analogies corresponding with their search for ultimate meaning and an understanding of the faith journey.

An attentive and reflective reading of the *Prayer of St. Benedict* (*PSB*) brings about a consciousness of the simple yet profound theology contained in its supplications. It becomes more than a simple prayer of supplication to God, but a paradigm of the process one needs to go through in order to come to a deeper awareness of God. It is at once precise, in that it shows a consciousness of the dynamics of epistemology; and open ended, in that it leaves to God the manner and the *loci* of his self-manifestation to the supplicant. The structure of the *Prayer* contains an inner logic that reveals a methodical mind and a questing spirit. Each word, phrase and coupling of phrases, is dense with theological meaning.

Though the origin and provenance of the *Prayer*[2] is uncertain, its authorship is popularly attributed to St. Benedict of Nursia (*c*480 – 550 A.D.), the Father of Western Monasticism. According to Gregory the Great (540-604), monk, pope, and author of **Dialogues** (cf. Atwell 2003: 247); Benedict composed **The Rule**, a work remarkable for its discernment and practical insight into Christian community living. **The Rule** provides a realistic structure for those who seek God through a life of *Ora et Labora* (prayer and work), in a vowed monastic context[3]. This may be the reason that Benedict is presumed to be the composer of this prayer; men who seek admittance into the monastery are asked the reason why they wish to live as a monk. Their reply is, 'To seek God'. Cardinal Basil Hume, Benedictine Abbot and former Archbishop of Westminster, speaking on the 1500th anniversary of the birth of St. Benedict, recalls what **The Rule** requires of the novice monk, "he is to be examined as to 'whether he truly seeks God . . .' [Ch. 58]" (Hume 1981: 25). That is the universal quest of humankind: A striving after ultimate reality and truth. This prayer has significance beyond its sacred value – it expresses the desire for a deeper knowing of God through a process at once systematic in consonance with human **cognition** and subject to the **mystery** of the self-communication of God.

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

The faith discussion is the foundation of fundamental theology, and so has been dealt with repeatedly and comprehensively by some of the most eminent theological minds throughout the history of Christian Theology. From St. Paul and the Epistles of the New Testament, to the Patristic theologians, through to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and the Scholastics of the late medieval period, the fact and the nature of faith have been of central importance in the theology of the Church. The Reformation not only produced divergent and differing understandings of the nature of faith, but also contributed to a more critical and refined presentation of the theology of faith. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) consolidated the Catholic Church's dogmatic teaching, placing an emphasis on the intellectual aspect of faith in reaction to the scepticism of the Reformers with regard to the use of philosophy in theology (cf. Fries 1996: 124). Martin Luther (1483-1546) sought to free the faith discussion from the philosophical encrustations of the Scholastics and summoned a return to the biblical understanding of faith without subordinating its theological assertions to the analytical scrutiny of human reason. Through this basic conflict between the Church and the Reformers about methodology, the faith discussion lapsed into a justification of the precise nature of faith in the positions of one confession over another's.

The rise of the natural sciences, and in particular the ecclesiastical trials of Galileo and Kepler in the 17th century were both cause and symptom respectively, of the separation, that was to become more intense in later centuries, between Church and World, Faith and Knowledge. Knowledge and science

eventually entered into opposition to faith and more particularly to the understanding of and presentation of Christian faith by the Church. The Enlightenment further intensified this movement from **alienation** to **opposition** in the faith-knowledge relationship, with its acclamation of the power and autonomy of the subjective principle of human reason. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the principal figure of the enlightenment, described the movement from an inarticulate and immature understanding of faith in the preceding era to an enlightened and rational understanding of faith as the course from faith in the bible, through faith in the Church, to faith in reason; in which the contents of faith receive their true moral significance and find their true fulfilment (ibid p.125). In ***Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*** (1793), Kant asserts that the moral principle of the understanding of faith was turned into the hermeneutical principle of this understanding (cf. Kant [1960]: 142-155). Kant's philosophical framework did not **exclude** faith, but redefined it as belief no longer acceptable on external authority, but rather as belief resting on motives that are **subjectively sufficient** and **objectively insufficient** (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 70). In the aforementioned work, Kant proposes that only a rational faith, grounded on the postulates of pure practical reason[4], can serve the purpose of a universal religion (cf. ibid). With this ambivalent understanding of faith, where it is not explicitly excluded, neither positively affirmed, the subsequent theological landscape degenerated into two broadly defined streams: a theology that rejected the rational presuppositions inherent in the theology of the modern age, and one that sought a compromise through absorption of these principles into its understanding of faith. This inevitably led to extreme positions on both sides that further impeded the development of an integral and balanced theology of faith.

The 19th century saw the Church respond to these extreme positions with a retreat into a theological fortress mentality, as it opposed the Modernism engendered by the Enlightenment; a defensive attitude maintained by the Church well into the 20th century. Christianity sought a more secure foundation for faith in Revelation itself, rejecting the rational justification of faith. Furthermore, in attempting to balance the extreme positions of Rationalism and Fideism, the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) asserted the capability of human reason to reach knowledge of God unaided by Revelation or supernatural grace; and insisting on the strictly supernatural character of Revelation along with the nature of the commitment of faith as being essentially different from an intellectual assent based on rational evidence (cf. Neuner and Dupuis 1983: 32).

The 20th century introduced new and controversial insights into the discussion that both found acceptance, and fuelled controversy within, and among the division of particular Christian confession. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) went beyond the epistemological problems which the faith discussion had become mired in, by placing Revelation and faith within the universal context of

Christian life, thus opening the possibility of demonstrating their concrete significance for the whole person and human society (cf. ibid). In the words of Avery Dulles, the Council

> sought to supplement and correct Scholasticism, and especially modern Scholasticism, by introducing a theology of faith that was more experiential, more biblical, more historically conscious, and more ecumenical. While calling for a retrieval of earlier biblical and patristic models, Vatican II also sought to reach out to what was sound in the teaching of other Christian traditions, including the Protestant Reformation, for which faith had been a crucial theme. It recognised the need for the theology of faith to take account of the aspirations, expectations, and anxieties of the time in which we live (1994*a*: 4).

Because of the radical shift in consciousness that gave birth to the Council, and as an outcome of it, theology began to present systematic reflections on the theology of faith that sought to incorporate and present as comprehensive and complete as possible a theology cognisant of **all** aspects of the faith discussion. Prior to this, faith was treated as a component within the broader contexts of works on Systematic theology, Apologetics, and Dogma. The need to present a comprehensive theology of faith was the result not only of the development of theology, but the pressure brought to bear upon religion by elements of postmodernism. The atheism, agnosticism and deism generated by modernism, which was **critical** and **suspicious** of religious faith, led to the **ennui** and **indifference** of a postmodern world that was and is largely disinterested and dismissive of faith, particularly in its institutional manifestations and its perceived moralistic authoritarian elements. Where the modernist world evoked from theologians justification for religious faith, the postmodern world challenges theologians to explain faith and present it and its outcomes as relevant and compelling. The sceptical relativism of the present age, evident in this vague and undifferentiated opposition to the certainty claimed by Christian faith, calls not so much for rational epistemological demonstration as it does for an integral presentation of religious faith as an existentially compelling foundation of the symbiotic interaction between the human person and the increasingly anxiety provoking and perplexing world of contemporary experience.

STRUCTURE AND SCOPE

The *PSB* considered as a whole, operates as a dynamic meta-paradigm of faith; it focuses the faith discussion by including the central elements regarded as integral to a comprehensive discourse on faith through anchoring it in the **wisdom** dimension of faith. This dimension overarches all the others, as it is the first grace requested, and presumably therefore, is the condition for the fulfilment of the other graces necessary for an integrated and comprehensive faith. One can only conjecture about the philosophical and theological literateness of the author, and ask whether he or she deliberately and systematically set out to construct a prayer that reflected the integral elements of a coherent theology; or perhaps the *PSB* is simply the impulsive creative outcome of the life experience of a profound spiritual consciousness.

The first part of this discussion will examine the wisdom element and assert that it is upon this foundation that a meta-paradigm of faith may be constructed through discerning in the *PSB* the **experiential**, **critical,** and **transcendental** approaches or subsidiary and dependent paradigms that provide the possibility of a comprehensive and coherent discourse on faith. These paradigms or conceptual frameworks about faith constitute the meta-paradigm, distilled from an analysis of the structure, content, and intention of the *PSB* respectively. The second part deals with the foundations of faith understood as the affirmations of faith i.e. the object of faith, and the assumptions of faith i.e. the act of faith. These enfold the *PSB* as the necessary elements in any discussion of the theology of faith. The **affirmations** of faith (*O Gracious and Holy Father*) are the introductory address to the object of appeal of the *PSB*, while the **assumptions** (*Through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord*) are the concluding concepts assumed to make possible the granting of the graces requested in the *PSB*. The final part views the *PSB* through a lens that refracts the component elements into dimensions. The anthropological character of faith is emphasised through structuring these dimensions around a personalist approach. The **interpersonal, intrapersonal**, and **transpersonal** character of faith is the structuring principle guiding a complete discussion on all the dimensions considered as constitutive of faith.

To a large degree, the premise upon which this discussion grounds itself is a subjective interpretation of the *PSB* with an objective reference to the guiding principles of a postcritical theology. The discussion is not so much about what the author intended and specifically meant by each term and coupling of terms, but rather about how the prayer lends itself to a dynamic interpretation. Employing a personal, positive hermeneutic in this approach leads to an analysis governed by the principle of selectivity in its structure, and in the emphasis laid on certain elements in the prayer. The prayer, considered in its entirety is an ideal framework for bringing into focus in a unified discussion that which has so often been achieved through historical, doctrinal, or apologetical approaches. The *PSB*, by bringing into relief the central elements constituting the comprehensiveness of faith in its entirety dispenses of the digressions that tend to clutter the faith discussion. Most approaches that have dealt with faith have done so within a broader context where faith is dealt with as a component subject within an introduction to theology, in apologetic attempts to prove faith as justified true belief, or in a subsidiary manner where faith is one among many elements in a larger presentation of Christian doctrine. This attempt uses the *PSB* as a catalyst to discuss faith in a systematic and synthesising approach. The principle aim of this discussion is not to generate new insights into the fundamental nature of Christian faith, but rather to stimulate creative reflection on the approaches to an understanding of faith through a dynamic interpretation of the *PSB*. The Prayer provides an epistemological framework for an interpretation and understanding of the **presuppositions**,

dimensions, and **outcomes** of Christian faith. The intention is to present elements in the *PSB* as the foundation upon which a systematic and comprehensive theology of faith can be built. It is a reflection on faith seeking understanding of that most foundational of all theological themes, faith itself.

The **intention** of this discussion is primarily the presentation of an analysis of three paradigmatic approaches to the faith conversation and an expository discourse on the dimensions of authentic faith. There is no attempt to engage in the polemics and apologetics that characterise a certain section of the theological scene such as the Catholic Neo-apologists and the Reformed Evangelicals in the North American 'conservative' milieu. Many have provided well-argued and systematic foundations for justifying the act of faith as true belief along the lines of a defensive epistemology. Philosophy of religion in all its manifestations has found fertile ground for tilling arguments for the existence of God, for proving that faith is indeed justified true belief and presenting cogent reasons for faith by virtue of rational demonstrations employing methods and categories from classical and contemporary epistemology. The purpose of this discussion is to present a postcritical approach to Christian faith through a dynamic interpretation of the *Prayer of St. Benedict*.

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THE *PRAYER OF ST. BENEDICT* AS A DYNAMIC PARADIGM OF FAITH

"WISDOM TO PERCEIVE YOU"

Where is the life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

T S Eliot (*The Rock,* Chorus I)

The reflections that follow in the next three chapters have as their organising principle the **complementary** and **comparative** paradigms within a **meta-paradigm** of faith, discerned and manifest in the *Prayer of St. Benedict* (*PSB*). These three perspectives are **paradigms** that in their totality witness to the profundity and depth of the *PSB* as an integral and dynamic meta-paradigm of faith. A retrieval of <u>wisdom</u> as the guiding principle in the theological enterprise is the foundation upon which is made possible the *PSB* as a meta-paradigm of faith, insofar as perception of divine reality is attainable through the grace of a wisdom that enables an intuitive grasp of the whole, the meta-paradigm as being more than the sum of its parts; the paradigms. They do not pretend to be exhaustive and complete, but rather intend to distil the elements into three paradigms that correspond to most of the central elements in the theological meta-paradigm of faith revealed by an interpretive understanding of the *PSB*. A brief examination of the role and value of paradigms in the theological enterprise will be followed by an analysis of the **structure**, **content** and **intention** of the *PSB* to demonstrate how it functions as a paradigm of the faith discussion with the three elements of the experiential, the critical and the transcendental; constituting three contrasting, complementary and developmental paradigms within the broader meta-paradigmatic framework of the *Prayer*.

CHAPTER ONE
WISDOM AS A STRUCTURING PRINCIPLE IN THEOLOGY
1.1 RETRIEVING WISDOM IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY
The proliferation of information and the myriad varieties of its dissemination, while providing the contemporary intellectual milieu with original, creative, and stimulating data is nonetheless a retarding factor in enabling clarity of insight into what is essential and meaningful in the whole panoply of competing knowledge in the academic world. Theology is itself subject to this bewildering array of new insights, creative perspectives, and fluctuating points of reference. This fragmentation is experienced across the spectrum of theological thought, providing a necessary pluralism that is an incentive to creative integrative thinking, but may also create fractures inhibiting clarity of understanding, and deny theologians the broad consensus of meaning so vital for the systematic

development of theology. Grenz and Franke address this fragmentation in the opening chapter of *Beyond Foundationalism* (2001) entitled "Beyond Fragmentation: Theology and the Contemporary Setting". Their opening remarks reflect a concern shared by other prominent theologians in the Catholic and Reformed Traditions:

> Theology is in a time of transition and ferment, partly as a result of the collapse of the categories and paradigms of the modern world spawned by the Enlightenment . . . We are living in the midst of a widespread fragmentation and perhaps even disintegration that appears to be affecting all dimensions of Western culture, including the theological enterprise. Consequently, fragmentation has become perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the theological landscape today (pp. 3-4).

Paul Lakeland, J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, and Avery Dulles among others have keenly felt the debilitating effects of this fragmentation and have sought to address its causes, accept that it is an undeniable element in contemporary theology, and respond constructively to it[5]. They and others sincerely seek ways that are not a return to the security of a bygone theological age and system, as so many have who find comfort in the familiar categories and language of a 'pre-postmodern era'. They realistically acknowledge the reality and assumptions of the contemporary scene, and construct theologies that transcend the disintegrative and deconstructionist uncertainty of many theologies designated critical and post-liberal.

'Wisdom to perceive you' is identified as the overarching concept that holds the supplications of the *PSB* together. It serves as the key to open the full *sensus* of the *Prayer*. A steady and intuitive gazing at the *Prayer* reveals the hidden depths and layers behind the words themselves. 'Wisdom to perceive you', properly understood by a person of faith, one who is open to the depths of God being revealed in a process that emerges through ones experiences and encounter with self, others and the world; comes to a realisation that to perceive God is not to know God through possession of God, but **to perceive God means to be graced by an insight rooted in the experience of being possessed by God**. Wisdom is not attained, but granted by grace entering into human consciousness through the contemplation of the mysteries of faith. It is only by entering contemplatively into the mystery of faith that the mysteries of faith are properly perceived. This wisdom penetrates in a unified and simple act of insight, ultimate reality. This reality is now no longer an external phenomenon, an objective principle, or set of propositions; but rather exists as the depths, which echo and resonate within the perceiving subject. The contemplative subject through wisdom begins to identify with the object so completely that becoming immersed within the mystery of faith, no longer perceives an external object, but the inner reality, the very identity of the perceived object, wherein is grasped the identity of the perceiving subject of faith. Thus the movement from perception as exteroception (the extraction and use of information about reality external to the self) to interoception (perception of the self) and

finally to proprioception (where the apprehension of a reality beyond the self is united in a single act with the possession of this reality in the mind in a non-material mode), is accomplished through the gift of wisdom (cf. Dretske 1999: 654). This is precisely the **connaturality** that functions as an aspect of wisdom bringing the person of faith to a deepened faith through identification and natural affinity with God.

As will be discussed, the wisdom element, especially with reference to connaturality is ultimately the final cause of authentic faith in that it grasps with an inner certainty, intuitively and independent of the **active** performance of reason, the object of faith by virtue of an elevated interior perception which leads to a faith filled commitment to God. Wisdom is the essential grace needed to do theology systematically; ". . . systematic theology must look for coherence, without, however, reducing the Christian faith to its manifest elements, lest the mystery be lost" (Beeck 1989: 35). Wisdom is a gift of grace enabling a unified vision of reality. Mere knowledge is often only a superficial awareness of the many facets of the whole, and lacks the comprehending capability of understanding. Understanding, while able to comprehend and reason logically to conclusions, grants only a limited vision of reality; viewing refracted elements, disparate entities and separated components, as dimensions of a larger reality. Wisdom is the gift of penetrative insight into the fundamental inter-connectedness of all of reality. It sees connections and makes connections, unifying the seemingly disparateness of reality. Wisdom gives an integral and holistic *sensus* of ultimate reality as the foundation of all reality. Wisdom grants an experience and understanding that includes and transcends the conceptual and analytical modes of knowing. It is through connaturality and identification with God, the foundation of reality; that the person enters into authentic faith, experiencing and perceiving its inner dynamics. The love of God cannot be 'grasped' (using a technical term in Greek philosophy) but can be 'known' by spiritual awareness of it through love. This awareness is something deeper than scientific knowledge and is less a matter of knowledge than an awareness of being loved. Even awareness of this sort, however, can never 'grasp' this sort of love (cf. footnote *k* to Ep 3:19 in NJB).

1.1.1 Wisdom Integrating the Faith Discussion

The authors of the Old Testament ***Wisdom*** literature reflect the deep psychological and philosophical insights of the act of perception with an understanding that is as epistemologically accurate as it is aesthetically pleasing. Unschooled as they are in the formal principles of epistemology and metaphysics, the unerring accuracy of their reflections on the nature and quality of a reasonable and affective relationship with God form the foundations of any serious consideration of the wisdom element of faith. An example of this is the reflection of the author of the following text (presumed to be King Solomon), where s/he in retrospect, is able to consider the insight granted by God through the

words, "And so I prayed, and understanding was given me; I entreated, and the spirit of wisdom came to me" (Ws 7: 7). It is a verse striking for its consciousness of a distinction between wisdom and understanding, and the subsidiary, yet complementary relationship between these two cognitional concepts and processes.

The Pauline Epistles, while often critical of Philosophy (probably a reaction to the scepticism prevalent in Greek philosophy of the time) in passages such as I Co 1: 17 & 2: 1-16, reflect a grasp of the Judaic wisdom tradition in some passages that simply and powerfully convey a deep, though informal understanding of epistemological principles. One need only read passages such as the canticles in the first chapters of Ephesians and Colossians (1:3-14 and 1: 15-20 respectively), Ep 1: 15-19[6], 3: 17-19, Col 2: 1-2, 6-16, and Ph 1: 9 to see a mastery of the depth of understanding into a psychology of faith and a philosophy of mind.

The Ephesians canticle deserves some attention because of its use of, and juxtaposition of the terms 'wisdom' and 'insight'. "Such is the richness of his grace which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight" (Ep 1: 8). This is the wisdom that is a gift of God enhancing the inherent capacity within the human for such wisdom. It is the wisdom that grants a vision of the whole and not fragmented elements. An insight that enables the connection between the constitutive elements to be recognised as elements that are not discrete, but rather facets, which may seemingly be disparate and conflicting, yet ultimately making up a whole unified vision of reality and ultimate reality. **Insight** enables a penetrative understanding into the fundamental interconnectedness of the fragments and **wisdom** is the vision that grasps in a single intuitive moment of perception, the whole.

Wisdom concerns itself not so much with the individual truths of faith but more with the inter-relatedness of these mysteries **perceived** as a whole. Insight is the **understanding** of this whole picture as constitutive of its component parts. Insight is an act of the intelligence that comprehends through perceiving the necessary relationships between the various propositions, facts, and mysteries of faith – the *nexus mysteriorum*. This designates the inner connectedness of the mysteries of faith, such as those central truths of the faith, which ultimately defy complete rational penetration, yet together provide a *sensus plenior* of the larger mystery of Salvation. Thus, understanding comes not through the amassing of a number of ideas, but rather through grasping the relationships that exist between them and the underlying principles of unity, which make them parts of the whole, itself grasped through wisdom. Wisdom is an insight that goes further than mere comprehension but sees in a single act of the intellect, the whole.

1.1.2 Wisdom and Connaturality

For Aquinas, wisdom is the capacity to exercise right judgement. Right judgement is achieved through the perfect use of **reason** coupled with **connaturality**.

> Wisdom denotes a certain rectitude of judgment according to the Eternal Law. Now rectitude of judgment is twofold: first, on account of perfect use of reason, secondly, on account of a certain connaturality with the matter about which one has to judge. Thus, about matters of chastity, a man after inquiring with his reason forms a right judgment, if he has learnt the science of morals, while he who has the habit of chastity judges of such matters by a kind of connaturality (*ST* II-II, q.45, a.2 in Snell 2003: 1).

Thus, wisdom as an intellectual capacity discerns right judgment about matters of faith after reason has made its inquiry; however, it belongs to wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit to judge correctly about faith matters on account of connaturality with the content of faith, God.

Where the intellect and the action of reason give knowledge of God and about God (of value and not dispensable), the wisdom element, which has its first movement in the rational mind, transcends its limitations to enter into knowing God through apprehending him immediately in an act of identification known in classical terminology as connaturality. Reason can and does show evidence for the reality of God and thus moves one to the initial stages of faith. However, because it discerns in a manner *a posteriori* (from cause to effect in a process of intellectual reasoning) and not *a priori* (immediately evident as a self explanatory truth) it reveals the fact of God, where connaturality, as a second, but higher order of wisdom is able to transcend reason, knowing God as a reality without need of epistemic demonstration, thus knowing in a partial sense the **essence** of God. Thus where reason, unaided by connaturality is able to demonstrate God, connaturality knows God by immediate identification, and is therefore the *sine qua non* for a relationship with God in faith. Connaturality, as a gift of the Spirit is indispensable in coming to faith. It is however, in the movement of these two qualities of wisdom, right judgement by use of perfect reason, and connaturality, that authentic faith comes about.

R. J. Snell in *Connaturality in Aquinas: The Ground of Wisdom* (2003) discussing these qualities of wisdom as defined by Aquinas, gives as a final summation of the role of reason and connaturality in wisdom, the primacy to connaturality as definitive of wisdom:

> Connaturality is seen to be the transcendental condition necessary to explain the dynamic structure of cognition, and thus wisdom taken as right use of reason depends upon connaturality. Not only that, but connaturality is seen to be wisdom in a second and higher sense, not merely intellectual but a gift that actualises our nature and potential to be united with God. Connaturality is the ground of wisdom, hardly jaded, and still perennial (p. 7).

Snell identifies three clues as to the definition of connaturality in Aquinas: habit, an uncreated potency within the human actualised by grace and the result of charity (cf. ibid p. 2). Habit, as in the pattern of

living the virtuous life (often in an unreflective manner), the life intended for us by God, identifying with his will and so entering into a common purpose with God; thus one's intentions are connatural with the intentions of God. The gift of grace through the Holy Spirit actualises a capacity for knowledge of and identification with God into a capability[7]. As an act of charity, connaturality has its cause not in the intellect but in the will. If God is indeed love, the source and the grounding of all love, then a life of loving action is a reflection of one's connaturality with the motivating causes of ones loving actions. These three attributes of the person, actualised by grace, are intentions and acts of the faculty of the will, in contrast to the other faculties of the human such as reason and affection. "While the essence of wisdom is intellectual, as it is an operation of judging, connaturality has its cause in the will" (ibid). There is however, a more significant attribute of connaturality that does not have its genesis in the will but is a natural inclination towards the object of connaturality - sympathy.

It is clear that sympathy is not an attribute of the will, but of the affections, neither caused nor intended by the person. Affections, like connaturality bear a remarkable similarity to each other, in that both are occurrences that happen to the human subject (cf. ibid); the person is in a sense the passive recipient of these attributes. "Thus, if we are to understand connaturality, and thereby wisdom, we cannot be content with Aquinas's description of connaturality as caused by the will and having its essence in cognition" (ibid p. 2). Aquinas' banishment of the affective conditions for connaturality, and hence an understanding of wisdom, while the result of a desire to maintain the intellectual rigour of his thought system, nevertheless does implicitly accord a necessary role to the affective dimension of human cognition in his reflections on wisdom. Affection is not to be reduced to the emotions; affectivity cannot be understood as merely the emotional feelings. Snell turns to Heidegger for a term more fully expressive of connaturality considered as having its source in affection not entirely identified with the vague and nebulous qualities associated with feelings. For Heidegger, the term mood or attunement (*Befindlichkeit* or *Stimmung*), as the condition for the *existentiell* and particular feelings, are more descriptive of connaturality than is any overidentification with affection understood solely with reference to the emotions (cf. ibid p. 3). Thus, wisdom as necessary for a true perception of God is dependent on the affective dimension of the cognitive process. A fuller understanding of affectivity as an integral dimension of the total cognitive process of knowing by faith is to be discussed in chapter eight of this discussion.

What precisely is connaturality? If connaturality is a path to the wisdom that performs right judgement about the Divine and hence is a necessary condition for authentic faith, how is it to be properly understood with reference to its affective quality and its role as a condition for an experience of the transcendental existential? Snell describes it as "an attunement towards the Divine, a tendency

towards, a resonance with, a sympathy or conformity to the Divine. In short, connaturality is a co-nature, i.e., is a shared nature or familiarity with the Divine" (ibid).

Jacques Maritain a Catholic philosopher in the Thomistic tradition speaks of a non-conceptual knowledge through connaturality by which one instinctively orients ones intentions and actions towards the Good (cf. Arraj 1988: 92). Maritain, faithful to Thomism, argues for connaturality from its first movement in the will and subsequently in the intellect. The connatural knowledge of God

> in which 'the will, hidden, secretly, obscurely moving . . .' carries the intellect to that point beyond which is the Good and 'which at this point no longer enjoys the use of its regular instruments, and, as a result, is only actualised below the threshold of reflective consciousness, in a night without concept and without utterable knowledge' [1952: 70] (ibid).

Karl Rahner takes up this non-conceptual, non-conscious knowledge of God again in his supernatural existential explanation of an unthematic knowledge of God as he appropriates the categories and methodology of Aquinas. Maritain speaks of this connatural knowledge of God as neither implicit nor explicit, and though inexpressible, is actual and formal knowledge nonetheless, as the intellect knows in a practical manner the end of the movement of the will. This knowledge moves one to an explicit act of faith under the action of grace, which enables the Good as the end of the movement of the will to be recognised and identified as God (cf. ibid p. 93).

Both Snell and Maritain turn to Heidegger to explain more completely the nature of connaturality. Snell, in order to explicate the affective dimension of connaturality because he finds in Aquinas a deficient explanation grounded excessively in the intellect; Maritain, to explicate the 'intuition of being'. This intuition of being, which is the other side of the question of the existence of God, should be the final outcome of an attentive reflection on experience. Maritain suggests that Bergson's 'duration', Marcel's 'fidelity' and Heidegger's 'anguish', could all be ways of leading one to a perception of God if the strict phenomenological method[8] be left behind and the decisive step be taken into a genuine metaphysical perception (cf. ibid).

An understanding of connaturality as an attunement to, and *sensus* of the transcendent metaphysical dimension of being, and thus of ultimate being, God, is indispensable for a fuller understanding of wisdom, as practical reason capable of making right judgement about the 'things' of God. 'Wisdom to perceive you' takes on a more complete meaning when wisdom is understood as being more than that indefinable quality by which the illuminated are given *gnosis* about mysterious realities. Wisdom is indeed a gift of grace, whereby each person open to the depths of being, attains a vision of ultimate reality and the nature of the relationship between the realities that speak of, and point to ultimate reality as the ground of all reality. This is indispensable in the faith act understood as making a right

judgement concerning commitment to God. The role of judgement will be taken up again in chapter three in the section dealing with the relationship between the three paradigms of faith in the *PSB*. Attention is now directed at how wisdom enables a discerning understanding of the nature of faith through the use of paradigms.

1.1.3 Wisdom and Paradigms in Contemporary Theology

The wisdom element in the *PSB* creates the possibility of introducing a paradigm approach within which to situate the faith discussion. Fritjof Capra and David Steindl-Rast (1992) recognise that the new paradigm thinking in both science and theology came about as a result of an approach that could no longer sustain the incorporation of new insights and theories within the framework of a paradigm characterised by excessive rationalism, fragmentation, and preoccupation with isolated truths. The new paradigm identified by them is holistic, ecumenical, and transcendental-Thomistic. The foundations of this paradigm shift in theology are grounded in a renewed understanding of reality as God's Self-revelation in revelation as possessing an intrinsic dynamism that unfolded as a process within history. Theology could no longer sustain itself as meaningful discourse about ultimate reality mired as it was in a static view of revelation being primarily about God imparting immutable dogmatic truths with no real regard for the historical process within which this revelation unfolded. The elements of a wisdom approach became predominant as the relationship between the parts and the whole were reversed. The meaning of individual doctrines as distilled from revelation in the new paradigm can only properly be understood from the dynamics of the whole process of revelation. The truths of faith are a focus on particular moments in God's self-manifestation in nature, history, and human experience.

As a consequence of this new paradigm with its foundations in a dynamic process of gradual unfolding revelation, three further shifts occur. (1) The shift from theology as an objective science to theology as a process of knowing, where nonconceptual modes of knowing (affective, intuitive and mystical) are seen as valuable and integral to the theological process. They are not to be dismissed as extraneous because of their resistance to objective articulation and rational verification. (2) A shift from 'building' (as a monolithic intellectual edifice) to 'network' (as relationships and interconnected perspectives) as a metaphor for theological knowledge; and (3) the shift in focus from theological statements to divine mysteries where theological formulations are recognised for what they really are: approximate and imperfect statements about ultimate reality and the mysteries of faith, open to reformulation and revision as the unfolding mystery continues throughout the historical process of human experience of divine self-communication. Theology can never provide a perfect and definitive understanding of the divine mystery in a complete formulation. The truths expressed in these doctrinal

formulations are indeed true, but not the complete picture, rather pointing to the deeper reality of the mystery of God, which they signify and give conceptual articulation to.

The value of these insights succinctly expressed by Capra and Steindl-Rast for this discussion is evident; however, two significant observations germane to the wisdom element of the *PSB* require particular attention. The first is the re-emergence of wisdom as the integrating and synthesising function in mainstream systematic theology. The vagueness and the mystical connotations associated with wisdom and all it implied gave it a secondary consideration or banished it entirely to the domain of spiritual theology. A second point that will be dealt with in more detail in the following section is a demonstration of the power and flexibility of paradigms to preserve simultaneously what is of perennial value, while allowing the shift in theological consciousness to take place without radical fracturing; an unfortunate historical fact that was so common in the past when new theological insights were the cause of so much division and alienation among and within the Christian confessions.

1.2 THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF PARADIGMS IN THEOLOGY

The foundations upon which an epistemology of faith are discerned, constructed and refined need to be solid enough to sustain the assertion that faith is indeed a valid way of knowing, and flexible enough to incorporate the myriad inconsistencies and variables that are a feature of contemporary theological pluralism. In proposing a foundational structure of method and approach, the attempt is not to create an unassailable fortress of thought that establishes itself as the only basis upon which further reflections on faith may be introduced, nor as the principal method determining any enquiry into an epistemology of faith. The foundation, presented as a dynamic paradigm here, is primarily analytical in nature, in that the paradigms as constitutive of the meta-paradigm are discerned as the underlying methodology present in the *PSB*, and are interpreted through the lens of a personal hermeneutical construction. The value of interpreting them according to particular paradigms of theological method and other recognisable models of thought lies in their capacity to establish certain identifiable parameters within which the faith discussion may constructively progress. Another achievement of this approach is in the latitudinal paradigmatic nature, which is resilient enough to absorb and incorporate into the broader faith discussion most of the traditional elements, including, and especially emergent approaches, conflicting methodologies and apparently irreconcilable theological assertions derived from divergent theological positions.

1.2.1 Paradigms

In contemporary philosophy, a paradigm is "a centre of analysis and criticism" (Reese 1996: 549). Thomas Kuhn's use of the word paradigm as "standard examples of scientific work that embody a set of conceptual and methodological and metaphysical assumptions" (in Barbour 1974: 93) is a development of its philosophical understanding. A further interpretation of Kuhn's use of the term paradigm, central to this discussion is "a set of scientific and metaphysical beliefs that make up a theoretical framework within which scientific theories can be tested, evaluated, and if necessary revised" (Enç 1999: 641-2). A 'Paradigm shift' is the term Kuhn uses to speak of the necessary movement in consciousness from one paradigm to another in order for science to absorb new discoveries into existing frameworks of understanding. Barbour identifies similarities between paradigms in the scientific case and in religion: "A religious tradition transmits a broad set of metaphysical and methodological assumptions that we can call a paradigm" (1990: 54). Barbour's appropriation of the scientific concept and use of paradigms for religious tradition enables the subject matter of theology to be clarified and organised in a manner that assists in greater analysis and synthesis, thereby contributing to the systematic ordering and development of the principles and methodologies of theology. The application of a paradigm as a framework of analysis, criticism, construction, and reconstruction is immensely valuable as it enables the systematic ordering of traditional, innovative, and indeed paradoxical theories and models to be absorbed and evaluated within a broadly identifiable and accepted configuration.

New and controversial insights need not necessarily threaten established principles and theories. Perennial truths that form foundations for the development of creative theories and insights may be preserved and appreciated even as they are reassessed and revaluated within a broad conceptual structure where they are not immune from a valid and necessary questioning and criticism that has as its purpose an increase in understanding and an expansion of insight.

1.2.2 Meta-paradigms

The use of meta-paradigms as conceptual frameworks that underpins existing paradigms, and as a 'Transcendental method' to go behind the clustering of paradigms that share an affinity with each other, is an aid to moving toward a greater synthesis in contemporary theological thought. The fragmentation of theological approaches and methods as indicated above is symptomatic of a deeper scepticism of an underlying principle of unity in contemporary human thought.

> Today, as always, a violent struggle is raging between antagonistic views of the world, and it is possibly more violent in our own time than it was during the past century. Rarely has it been of such intensity, with such a wealth of opposing viewpoints or expressed in such elaborate and refined conceptual frameworks (Bochenski, in Macquarrie 2001: 477).

These refined conceptual frameworks by their very ability to gather and articulate varying strands of thought into overarching principles of method, while preserving inherent truths, is one of the accomplishments of a meta-paradigmatic approach. The negativity ascribed to these approaches, while justified from Bochenski's viewpoint, seems to be a positive method of reconciling much that would invariably remain in static opposition. Different approaches to an understanding of Christian faith need not be statically irreconcilable because we lack an appropriate methodology to negotiate our way between apparently conflicting faith 'ideologies'. We know that different and differing understandings and approaches to the faith discussion have and still possess the capacity to paralyse any meaningful progress, as they invest in each of us a partisan perspective potentially confrontational toward all other viewpoints. To negotiate our way amongst such diversity we must avail ourselves of the methodological tools of paradigms and meta-paradigms, rather than declare the subject impenetrable. So for some, while the term, meta-paradigm may be overstating the usefulness of the paradigm approach, for the purposes of this discussion it provides a sound methodological tool for incorporating into one overarching construct the paradigms present in the *PSB*[9].

Herman J. Pietersen has employed with success this approach in his article, **Meta-Paradigms in Theological Thought** (2001), where he describes archetypal frameworks of 'knowing' and 'being', in an analysis that places the science of God in meta-theological perspective[10]. Pietersen explains his methodology as an " . . . 'intra-scientific' analysis of phenomena, by taking an approach known as 'meta-theory' or 'meta-science'; namely, a concern with identifying basic conceptual patterns, and with trying to pull together and juxtapose diverse views and strands of thought – in this case with theology itself" (p.1). This is precisely the approach adopted here as it serves the function of enabling the *PSB* as a whole to be designated the meta-paradigm, and the three approaches to faith discerned in it to be described as paradigms within this larger overarching conceptual framework.

The value of the employment of a paradigm for furthering our understanding of the nature of faith lies in its capacity to provide a coherent and intelligible structure within which unified elements more logically cluster. This gathering or clustering of related elements into a perspective that enables a unified vision and understanding of interrelatedness furthers the wisdom approach towards a penetrative gazing into the inner nature and dynamics of faith. As a paradigm by its very nature, is tentative, so too is this meta-paradigm, with its three contrasting and complementary paradigms of understanding faith as explicated in the *PSB*. The meta-paradigm is open to restructuring and indeed reconstruction, renewal and development, as are the constitutive paradigms within the overarching meta-paradigm. Nevertheless, it serves the purposes of gathering elements and dimensions of the faith discussion as opened up by the *PSB*. The *PSB* itself provides the basis upon which this meta-paradigm with its constitutive paradigms is constructed.

The three paradigms, approaches, or patterns of thought about faith discerned in the *PSB* and through which it can be interpreted, have emerged throughout the history of theological attempts to grapple with the precise nature of faith. Each has an underlying conceptual assumption that determines its particular interpretation of religion, Christianity, and more specifically, faith. The historical factors that have determined these frameworks have themselves been subjected to underlying principles of reality and truth. The three paradigms (experiential, critical, and transcendental) are both historical developments within the Catholic theological tradition and are complementary methodologies that continue to stimulate and enrich the diversity and plurality of contemporary theology. Though there may be in the minds of some, a competing mentality between these three paradigms, mature theologians recognise and encourage shared and mutually enriching presuppositions and streams of thought. There is both an overlapping and interpenetration between the elements within each paradigm. They are nevertheless recognisably distinct, and are from the more enlarged perspective unique, valuable, and autonomous in their assumptions, interpretations, and methodologies.

Underlying the specific paradigms presented here are certain conceptual and metaphysical assumptions about the nature and structure of faith. Thus for our purposes, we understand a **meta-paradigm to operate as a conceptual framework within which the faith discussion is situated, in order to provide paradigms of intelligibility, and a recognised vision of the elements that constitute faith, in the diverse and integral dimensions specific to the parameters of a particular approach**.

1.3 THREE PARADIGMS OF FAITH IN THE *PSB* – FORMING A META-PARADIGM

The three paradigms within the dynamic meta-paradigm of faith of the *PSB* are **experiential**, **critical,** and **transcendental**. We situate the faith discussion within the perspectives of these paradigms. The *PSB* provides the framework for delineating and identifying these three paradigms as explicatory of faith. The *PSB* in its **Structure** (experiential), **Content** (critical), and **Intention** (transcendental); embraces all three paradigms. The *PSB* can be interpreted and understood solely in terms of each individual paradigm, as a progression from one phase to the next, continually refining itself through an ongoing dialectic, or as a synchronic moment that grasps intuitively the three paradigms as a unity in which there is an interpenetration of all three moments; and as such the meta-paradigm is considered <u>dynamic</u>. The individual whose presuppositions and horizon of intelligibility predispose him/her to predominantly understand faith as being primarily (though not exclusively) experiential or critical or transcendental, will understand the *PSB* as reflecting his/her predominant perspective. However, it is through the complete dynamic present in the *PSB* that a comprehensive explication of faith with its assumptions, affirmations, dimensions and the implications of this for the person and the

community of faith, functions as a foundation for an epistemology of faith. The three perspectives presented by the meta-paradigm present an integral analysis and synthesis of the basic foundational elements of Christian faith.

1.3.1 The Formal Structural Element as Experiential

The **formal structural** element of the *PSB* reveals **experience** as the predominant mode through which one comes to consciousness of God. The desire for an experience of God in the mode indicated by the verb is the structural feature that manifests itself as the primary element through which God is known. The tight and methodical structure of the request for an increased capacity of a faculty (noun) of the human, followed by the manner in which it is granted through the mode of an active operation (verb), is the distinctive feature that marks **experience** as the definitive grace requested. The parallelism of this structure repeated throughout the prayer stresses the primacy of experience as being the predominant mode through which God is revealed to the human person, inasmuch as an experience of God is deemed as the principal way of coming to knowledge and a relational awareness of God. The graces requested for an intensification of a particular faculty, innate, yet not completely actualised, is not in and for itself, but for a specific end – the increase of faith through the honing of the particular human faculties of wisdom, intelligence and so on, that one may more perfectly experience God.

The theoretical framework upon which the view of the necessity of an initial experience of the transcendent is predicated is the *a priori* preconceptual understanding of metaphysical encounter. It is the interpretation of human experience with reference to the transcendental dimension of the human person. It presumes the presence of God and grace in every human experience, whether recognised, acknowledged, and responded to as such, or not. This unthematic conception of graced human experience is a fundamental theme in the theology of Karl Rahner (1904-1984), where the transcendent God is radically immanent in every human experience:

> The historical, categorical experiences at the conscious level are to be distinguished from the transcendental, a priori dynamism that creates the possibility for any particular religious experience. Transcendental Thomism, in particular, as developed by Karl Rahner, has shown how in every specific experience we concurrently experience ourselves and our openness to absolute, unlimited being. In this sense all human experiences have an ultimate, religious dimension, which is the primordial form of God's revealing and saving self-communication (O'Collins 1994: 308).

The continual interpretation of the significance of experience within an understanding of Rahner's supernatural existential leads to a greater thematising of what is preconceptually present but not entirely manifest. This process does not take place mechanically as suggested by this cursory explanation, but may occur concurrently, simultaneously and synchronically. The subsequent

reflection upon experience and the interpretive meaning given to it are, together with the synchronic understanding of experience, the dynamic process within which the faith journey takes its course. From foundational unarticulated experiences to more conscious and conceptualised experiences, there is the acknowledgement of the fundamentally graced nature of all human experience.

1.3.2 Critical With Reference To the Content

The **contents** of the *Prayer*, the concepts embodied in it, and the actual words of supplication, emerge from a mind that seeks an experience of God through understanding in a critical and intellectually assured manner, the reality of God's identity and manifest presence to creation. The critical nature of the content indicates that an authentic relationship with God is predicated upon some degree of understanding of the nature of God's identity, and the nature of his relationship with his creation. The supplicant understands the human faculties of intellect and reason as being indispensable in the faith quest. The identification of this perspective of the *PSB* as being a critical paradigm of faith is to underscore the necessity for a rigorous investigative understanding of the nature of faith. Wisdom is the supreme faculty and gift of the cognitive act, without it, theology would be reduced to a mere collection of statements, propositions, and speculative ideas **about** God. This, while retaining the vestiges of theology would in fact be simply 'God talk', Natural theology, or Religious studies. The integrating and connaturality functions of wisdom are the indispensable foundations of a properly critical approach to any discourse on faith. It is the absolute condition for perception **of** God, a perception as indicated above, culminating in identification by affinity with the object of faith.

Nonetheless, recognised as indispensable to a holistic understanding of faith are the affective and spiritual ('a heart to meditate on you'), the imaginative ('eyes to behold you') and the performative ('a life to proclaim you') dimensions as integral to the complete cognitive grasp of faith. A true epistemic act of cognition includes as a vital element the rational-critical in conjunction with the other cognitive faculties such as the affective, the spiritual, the imaginative, and the performative as necessary in completing the cognitive process.

The designation, critical, used here to describe a paradigm within the *PSB* by virtue of its contents, is a broad utilisation of that term. It is indeed critical because it seeks some satisfaction about the fact of God and the nature of God by a rational epistemic process grounded in the faculties of the intellect. It recognises the value of the critical process in the spiritual-theological quest as a balancing and corrective influence on the subjectively experiential, one that seeks to satisfy the need for the preservation of reason and intellect in faith. The *PSB*, by placing 'intelligence to understand you' as the second grace requested, and prior to the imaginative, affective and spiritual; acknowledges that the

cognitive process of coming to knowledge of and about God is primarily guided by the intellect and its practical function, understanding. The critical function of the intellect enjoys primacy of place in coming to an understanding of God, but is considered barren without the parallel employment of the other vital functions of human cognition that are needed not only as a balancing influence on an unbridled rationalism, but are indispensable in the **total** cognitive process.

In attempting to define the nature of theology, the words 'a critical reflection on faith', form the basis of most definitions. This identifies theology as a scientific discipline alongside the other domains of human intellectual endeavour that require critical reflection on all aspects of reality. Theology, as the science of faith, exercises the critical function employed by all scientific endeavour, without, however, reducing itself to a mere science among the empirical sciences. As all science operates within paradigms that accept the foundational presuppositions within their particular field, which guide theories and influence empirical verification, so too does theology, with its foundations rooted in the transcendental experiences of metaphysical reality. The *PSB*, operating within the horizon of faith, affirming the object of faith in its opening address and recognising the possibility of faith in its closing line, is thus properly critical. It situates itself in a position where it is neither precritical, nor cynically critical by virtue of its appeal for the gracing of all the human faculties responsible for arriving at proper knowledge.

1.3.3 Transcendental In Its Intention

What is the purpose of the *PSB*? Why did the author conceptualise and articulate the deepest aspirations of his/her heart in this *Prayer*? What is the desired and hoped for outcome of a deepened faith in God through the praying of the *PSB*? The final supplication is not a mere addendum to all the others, but is quite possibly the very reason why the supplicant desired a more profound, experience and understanding of God. A deepened consciousness of God is desired, not only for the intrinsic good of such consciousness, but ultimately that it will lead to a life of loving action. The supplicant's intention is not mere knowledge for knowledge's sake, but for the purposes of living in a manner reflective of an efficacious faith relationship with God through this deepened understanding.

Transcendence is the <u>purpose</u> of the *PSB* – To transcend the limitations of self, the limitations of human ignorance, the limitations of an unreflective life, and the limitations of a narrow and constricted understanding of God, the limitations of a passive introspective Christianity. In short, the transcendence of all that keeps us from entering into a creative and dynamic relationship with all of creation through the liberating power of the Spirit infusing into us the grace filled presence of God; this is the purpose of the *PSB*. Transcendence, with the full depth of meaning of the concept and word,

is the ultimate purpose of the *PSB*. In the most basic understanding of the word, transcendence is to be found the guiding principle of this third paradigm.

It is necessary to bring into focus the epistemic relevance of the transcendental nature of the *PSB* insofar as it completes the process of understanding. Chapter 3, which deals with the relationship between the three approaches, demands a thorough understanding of the term and concept 'transcendental', as it will demonstrate the integral unity between the three paradigms produced principally through the transcendental element of the *Prayer*. So in what sense then is it possible to describe the *PSB* as a transcendental paradigm of faith? In what precisely does an interpretative understanding of the *PSB*, particularly with attention to its purpose, constitute itself as being an approach to faith that may be identified as transcendental? Prior to examining a number of understandings of 'transcendental' and 'transcendence' and their applications in the thought systems of a few individuals renowned either for a consistent an explicit use of the terms and an implicit use of the methodology associated with transcendental (in 3.1.3), a brief listing of the reasons for the identification of the *PSB* as a paradigm of transcendental faith is in order.

Firstly, its transcendental nature lies in its **intention** i.e. the purpose of the *Prayer* is for the grace to actively live the imperatives of faith as experienced and reflected upon, by transcending the limitations of self, the limitations of unthematised experience, of unreflected and uncritical appropriation of the faith experience and its consequent requirements, and the limitations of a narrow understanding of faith. This is the primary reason for this identification. Secondly, the transcendental method understood as a progressive and continuous search for deepened knowledge of God and experience of God. Thirdly, the transcendental method as employed by Rahner in discovering the primary and intrinsic conditions for faith in the human person and in the transcendental presence of God in all experience. Closely allied to this is the 'transcendental argument' as providing an epistemic grounding of faith through its regressive movement towards the very conditions within the person, history and experience as making faith possible, reasonable and consonant with all that it means to be human in the world.

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CHAPTER TWO
DEFINING ELEMENTS OF THE PARADIGMS OF FAITH
There are certain elements that fit properly into each paradigm as distinctive and characteristic of the pattern of thinking about faith within a particular paradigm. The elements presented here are not

exhaustive but do provide the basis for an understanding of how these paradigms are broadly defined in this discussion. A number of correlates and comparisons are identified as helpful in understanding the elements that constitute each paradigm. While those selected for discussion here are to a degree more emblematic than others are, a table (Appendix C) provides how these paradigms may be interpreted and understood with reference to other modalities in philosophy and theology.

2.1 THEORIES OF TRUTH AND THE PARADIGMS OF FAITH

The motivation for identifying the three paradigms of faith with the three primary theories of truth is to provide a demonstration of the legitimacy of each with reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the others. The strengths of each paradigm correspond to the strengths and inherent value in each theory of truth and likewise for the weaknesses.

The four historically important theories of truth are **Correspondence**, which held sway from the genesis of Epistemology until the 18th century; **Pragmatist** and **Coherence** theories emerged as alternative contenders in the 19th century, and the Deflationary theories are a 20th century contribution consonant with critical theory and postmodern epistemologies. The focus here will be on the first three, each representing elements within a particular paradigm and the presumption of truth inherent within the conceptual assumptions underlying each paradigm. These theories share the basic assumption that truth possesses essential features that can be systematised in a formula. These theories propose necessary and sufficient conditions for a proposition, sentence, statement, belief and for our purposes, paradigms of faith to be true. The intention in formulating a theory to assert the validity of truth statements is to capture the meaning of the truth predicate 'is true'. The intention may also be to identify the property of being true with a specified property (cf. Schmitt 2004: 1).

The correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories offer differing criteria for determining what is true in actual practice. For correspondence theories, since agreement with reality is the benchmark, the criteria are obviously objective in nature. For coherence theories, with the coherence and comprehensiveness of beliefs and statements being critical, the criteria appear to be more subjective or inter-subjective in nature. For pragmatism, since success in practice is vital, the criterion is the historical evaluation of action prompted initially by a sense of their 'rightness' to establish if the intentions were achieved.

The limited discussion here on the elements in faith that correspond to the theories of truth will find a more developed exposition in part three where they are discussed as dimensions of Faith.

2.1.1 Correspondence and the Experiential Paradigm

Correspondence theories represent some of the oldest theories of truth, having numerous adherents from Aristotle, through Kant to the early Wittgenstein[11]. Essentially these theories rely upon the common-sense view that the primary function of language is to say something about the world, and that thought and language should naturally correspond, or agree with, the world. Under correspondence theories, facts exist in the world independently of thought and language, and statements and beliefs are considered true if they correspond or agree with the objective reality of facts (cf. Mercier 2000: 43-4). The principal strength of correspondence theories relate to their obviousness. They appear to be in accord with the most basic intuitions of the mind, and many philosophers e.g. Descartes and Kant were in fundamental agreement with this. Any statement of truth asserted from this position was considered synthetic i.e. its truth could be verified with reference to the external world of facts, reality and the experience of these. Despite this, there are a number of objections to the idea of truth as correspondence. For example, some critics of such theories have asked how beliefs could resemble anything else apart from other beliefs, and have questioned whether correspondence between thought and reality is achievable, since we are unable to step outside of our minds to compare our thoughts with objective reality. Reality external to the mind in the world comes into human consciousness through the experience of that reality mediated by an event or process itself capable of distorting the intrinsic nature of that reality. Furthermore, the cognising subject is him/herself subject to the variables of their own mind, which may alter the perception of the reality observed. Thus, unmediated experience of reality is, for the most part questionable[12]. A further questioning of the truth-value of correspondence theories was Popper's demolition of the Logical Positivist view, which had implicitly underpinned Newtonian Physics in the form the verification principle. Karl Popper (1902-94) argued that human reasoning, judgement is always capable of fallibility, and as a result, knowledge of any final or ultimate truth was unlikely. According to Popper's *falsificationist* view, there was always a chance of error in any correspondence that we might make between our statements and the world; therefore, the truth asserted was only provisional and is incapable of definitive provability (cf. Magee 1997: 57-59).

The sources of Christian faith are in the objective historical Revelation that has the Scriptures as their written record and Tradition as the lived expression of faith. Experience of divine interaction with the world is not confined to Revelation, which is the normative mode of God's self-communication, but to objective signs interpreted as the presence of the supernatural in the history of peoples and cultures throughout 2000 years of lived Christian tradition.

The truth of faith for the subject is predicated on the experience of God as it corresponds to the reality of 'theistic experience' as a verifiable objective phenomenon within a given and accepted theistic world view.

2.1.2 Coherence and the Critical Paradigm

An alternative idea to the correspondence theory is to be found in **Coherence theories** of truth. These theories evaluate the truth of a set of beliefs or statements in terms of the coherence that exists between them, and so remove the need for statements to correspond to objective external realities in the world. Statements are considered true if they support each other and provide evidence for each other, i.e. they are consistent and non-contradictory. For example, the basic validity of syllogistic reasoning where two related premises lead to an irrefutable conclusion can be viewed as coherent and true since they reinforce each other. A further criterion of coherence relates to the comprehensiveness of the system of beliefs and statements. The coherence theory requires that there should be coherence between as many beliefs as possible, thus creating an interconnecting network of coherent and mutually supporting truths (cf. Mercier op. cit. pp. 44-5).

The strength of Coherence theories is their ability to circumvent the above difficulties that affects correspondence theories. It is easier and more efficient to compare our beliefs and sentences with other beliefs and sentences than with objective facts. However, coherence theories too suffer from drawbacks in that people often hold beliefs that are contradictory and incoherent and may firmly believe at different times that both beliefs are true, thus implicitly engaging in the fallacy of the principle of non-contradiction. Moreover as the coherence theories require comprehensiveness as a criterion of truth; the more beliefs admitted into the set of beliefs under consideration, the more likely it will be that some of them will turn out to be incoherent with other beliefs in the set. Coherence perhaps only goes so far, within a paradigm or a particular school of thought.

The systematic syntheses of the beliefs that correspond to faith are the result of critical reflection on the experiences of faith. The coherent scientific presentation of the truths of faith form theological systems that possess an internal logical rigour consistent with the demands of human reason. In the *Analogia Fidei*, each proposition reflecting a facet of the comprehensive truths of Christian doctrine mutually support each other and reflect the homogenous nature of the doctrinal framework. Each proposition and mystery of faith sheds light on the others, creating an irrefutable system of theological thought with a consistency that sufficiently reflects the demands of the principles of Logic.

The truth of faith is to be found by the subject within a rational coherent framework of interconnected truths of faith as manifested in an interlocking matrix of a theological system.

2.1.3 Pragmatism and the Transcendental Paradigm

The third theory of truth is found within the philosophical school of **Pragmatism** To pragmatists, beliefs are true if they are a good basis for action i.e. they are useful and lead people to successful outcomes. For example, if one found that to act in a certain way produced positive results then the belief that a particular set of actions and their underlying principles would be true. However, while this theory might seem quite sensible and practical at first sight, further examination reveals some weaknesses. For example, success may have occurred through chance rather than through the operation of some actual, repeated cause and effect. The fallacy of false cause may be in operation in arriving at conclusions based on the Pragmatist theory. Pragmatic theories seem to lack the rigour of the correspondence and coherence theories, and seem to admit the view that truth is relative to a culture, since beliefs that may be a good basis for action in one culture e.g. ethical beliefs, may not necessarily be so in another (cf. ibid p. 46).

Christian faith has, and still has an undeniable impact on history and culture. The ethical principles and values that guide societies, if they do not have their roots in the Christian moral system, certainly reflect the values of Christian life. Notwithstanding the historical errors and atrocities that are an indelible part of the history of Christian faith, the impact of its life, institutions and values have had on the positive shaping of society over 2000 years. The practical effects of Christian faith are undeniably experienced at every level of western society. One need only look at the Christian influence on the establishment of schools, universities, hospitals and other institutions that have immeasurably contributed to the development of society. Christian faith and the values and principles that are an intrinsic element of it, if applied correctly, faithful to its founding vision, has and continues to exert a powerful force for good and the development of societies.

The truth of faith is validated by the positive personal, social, and therefore objectively verifiable results and outcomes that a life of committed faith causes.

In chapter one of *The Analogical Imagination* (1981), David Tracy identifies three publics or audiences to which theology is directed: **Society**, the **Academy,** and the **Church** (cf. McBrien 1994: 55). This categorisation of theology's audiences has largely become widely accepted by those engaged in doing theology. A word of caution here, these categories are not as strictly delineated as we suppose them to be, and in this work it is necessary that this be reaffirmed so as not to confine oneself to the narrow categorisation that invariably does violence to any genuine attempt at greater clarity through analysis.

2.2.1 Faith and the Church

The concept and language of experience has not always enjoyed the attention and acceptance in theology that it holds today. This is particularly true of Catholic theology, which tended to view with suspicion any assertion of faith based on the experience, either of the individual or of communities. Faith was primarily about assenting to divinely revealed truths, which required the obedience of faith, regardless of experiences and emotions. The will of the faithful directed in obedience to the divinely guaranteed truths taught by the Church was essential and sufficient for salvation. At best, experience was viewed as strengthening faith and confirming what was already believed in by virtue of obediential assent. Those who asserted the ontological priority of experience over theology and therefore the central role of experience found themselves censured by Rome, still suspicious of any traces of Modernism.

Leading up to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), interfaith dialogue with other Christian communities, and the release in pressure from Rome's 'witch hunt' for Modernists opened up the way for theologians to speak of reflecting on a personal and communal experience of a relationship with God. Leading Catholic scholars such as Jean Moroux, whose, *L'experience Chretienne* (*The Christian Experience*) published in 1952, dealt directly with the significance and value of experience in the life of the Christian, freeing it from its principal formative influences, in particular those brought about by the Modernist crisis. Moroux enabled theological reflection on experience to go beyond the initial task of legitimating its subject matter and so paving the way for a positive appropriation of the concept and language of experience by the Second Vatican Council (cf. Nichols 1991: 242-244). It was however, only after the Council that the impact of his work made itself felt on the Catholic theological scene. The documents of the Second Vatican Council employed both the word and the concept of experience, in particular *Guadium et Spes* and *Dei Verbum*. Such phrases as the people of Israel "experiencing" the ways of God (*DV* 14) and, "the intimate sense of spiritual realities" that believers "experience" (*DV* 8), while familiar and acceptable to contemporary Catholics,

were groundbreaking at the time of the Council. *Dei Verbum* was instrumental in rehabilitating the vital role of experience in Revelation and hence in the life of faith. Article 8 of this Constitution is a key text in the retrieval of the term and the concept of experience. Three factors: theology, experience and the Magisterium are indicated as important in the process and progress of tradition. That experience should rank alongside two traditionally indispensable sources in the handing on of faith is indeed significant for its 'redemption' by the Council. However, a reading of this text in the light of contemporary theology and the massive shifts of theological consciousness that have taken place since, and because of the Council, reveal that this ranking of experience alongside theology and the Magisterium is a controlling mechanism, intended to qualify it by placing it in the context of the Church's own understanding of it. Allesandro Maggiolini comments on the significance of this:

> True, they qualified this language of experience and secured it against possible misunderstandings, but they adopted and emphasised it all the same. A first, almost obvious, qualification results from the simple fact that *Dei Verbum* lists experience alongside the other factors in the progress of tradition, a safeguard against a possible absolutisation of experience. A second qualification has to do with the text's explicit reference to the intellectual dimension alongside the dimension of experience (1996: #III).

Maggiolini goes on to quote the observations of others on this momentous text who do not regard as negative the understanding of experience, but rather in reflecting on the operation of the intellectual and experiential in the theological modes of knowing, grant priority to the experiential, "concrete experience has, in a certain sense, priority with respect to theological investigation. The lived realities precede their formulation into doctrine, rather than being a proportionate application of the statement" (Betti in ibid). Thus, a positive reading of *DV* 8 sees it as an important vindication of the value of experience. These reflections on a positive interpretation of the Council's position on experience are significant for the discussion to follow in the next chapter on the relationship between experience and critical theological reflection on it.

Experience as a concept and category is no longer regarded with suspicion and is undoubtedly at the heart of any authentic discussion on faith. It is in fact one of the primary categories employed by contemporary theologians, finding its value in the lived faith of the Christian. The present Magisterium unqualifiedly uses the term as an accepted component of any meaningful statement or discussion on faith:

> Nowadays lingering fears that somehow experience and authority are opposed or even mutually exclusive seem to have practically disappeared. In his teaching, Pope John Paul II has frequently adopted the language of experience. His second encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), uses the noun thirteen times and the verb six times in referring to our religious experience, in both its communal and individual aspects (O'Collins 1994:307).

The *PSB* as an experiential paradigm of faith is addressed to the theological audience of the Church. This categorisation is not exclusive, nor meant to identify the Church as the only receptive audience of faith understood as being primarily experiential. It is however, the community of faith, the Church that lives and expresses the reality of faith in an explicit and recognisable manner. In addressing the Church, the theology of faith attends to the rich diversity of the faith community's pastoral needs: preaching, catechesis, liturgy and worship, teaching, spiritual formation, and moral action, both personal and social (cf. ibid).

2.2.1.1 Method – Experiential Theology

Experiential theology or the method of spiritual growth, aims at an understanding of the theological realities of faith through a personal experience or *sensus* of them. This experience is based on a certain likeness to God, or connaturality with God, as an outcome of a committed spiritual life and the practice of virtues, especially love. This method of doing theology is almost identical with the method of pursuing growth in the life of the spirit. The classical advocates of this method are the theologians of the Christian Neoplatonic tradition. This tradition flourished in the monasteries of the early middle ages, and dominated theology for almost a thousand years, reaching its decline in Western Christianity circa the 12th century.

The method of Christian Neoplatonism can be described as one of dialectical ascent from the world to God. This ascent occurs through the three stages of **action**, **contemplation**, and **ecstasy**. The classical method of spiritual growth uses the terms: *via Purgativa, via Illuminitiva, et via Unitiva* (the Purgative way, the Illuminative way, and the Unitive way). By **action** is meant the ascetical task of purifying the soul from disordered attachment to the world. It is attained primarily through the assiduous and sustained practice of the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. By **contemplation** is meant the mystical illumination of the soul with regard to the spiritual realities of God. It is achieved primarily through reading, reflection, meditation, and contemplative prayer. The material for these activities is found in both Divine Revelation and the realities of God's expression in the natural order i.e. discerning the imprint of God in creation and his image in the soul. By **ecstasy** is meant the state of perfect union with God, attained through the active grace of God himself in the soul. This is the culminating stage of spiritual growth. Through the first two stages, the human being prepares him/herself for this final stage; but it is only through the freely given gratuitous act of divine grace that this culminating phase is attained. This method may be described as one of ascent, insofar as it involves the passage from humanity to God through various phases and degrees. It is a dialectical form of ascent, as each stage of the way involves a process of affirmation and negation (cf. Rai 1988: 4-5).

Some of the **strengths** of this method are that it emphasises the experiential character of our understanding of Revelation, the value of this understanding for its own sake, and the necessary ascetical and mystical means for attaining it. This method unites faith, theology, and life. Its **weaknesses** are that it lacks an intrinsic objective verification, a balanced and integral view of the world and life, and a corresponding method for the descending dimension of Christian living in the world.

2.2.2 Faith and the Academy

The *PSB* as a critical paradigm of faith is addressed to the theological audience of the academy. This categorisation is not exclusive, nor meant to identify the academy as the only receptive audience of faith as being primarily critical. Academia, the universities, and the scholars are however, the principal figures that critically scrutinise the issues of faith in order to penetrate more perceptively the truths therein. A theology of faith directed to, and studied within the intellectual climate of the academy, needs to be both attentive to the rigorous demands required of the scientific character of a theology that claims to rank alongside other disciplines within the milieu, and be true to its essential nature as a study of things that ultimately escape the often rigid and reductionist specifications of the scientific mind.

2.2.2.1 Method – Scientific Theology

The method of objective verification, or Scientific theology gained increasing prominence in the theological life of the Church since the time of St. Anselm of Canterbury, whose succinct definition of theology has been the basis for any definition of theology since: 'Faith seeking understanding' (*Fides quarens intellectum*). Today this is still the predominant method of theology, not only in the academy, but also in the other two publics of Church and World. The principal exponent of this method is Scholasticism, which employed an Aristotelian logical structure with philosophical categories adopted from classical Greek thought, particularly, Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism.

Its two chief characteristics are its **logical structure** and its use of **philosophical categories** as subsidiary principles of explanation (i.e. principles occupying a position secondary to faith). The principles of Aristotelian logic are employed as tools to establish coherence between elements of faith. Philosophical analyses through logical inferences are used for bringing out the implications of faith and the related elements within faith. The justification for using philosophical categories in theological reasoning is that propositions of faith include terms that are common to Revelation, faith and human reason. Furthermore, the development of philosophy enables its use to contribute in new and creative ways of explicating and understanding faith and its cognates. Contemporary scientific

theology tends to have a looser logical structure, and to employ thought categories from most schools of philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political theory (cf. Rai 1988: 5-6).

A few of the **strengths** of this method are that it is capable of providing some kind of objective verification or test for the truth of our theological insights, and does not rely exclusively on our own subjective dispositions. It also attains an authentic though partial understanding of mysteries through the drawing out of implications and interconnections. This method with its employment of logical structure and philosophical thought forms assists in creating some system of coherence, intelligibility, and unity in our grasp of faith. Its main **weaknesses** are that, taken by itself, it lacks an inbuilt reference to experience and practice, and can quite possibly be pursued without real faith or commitment, thus degenerating into an overly rational and purely natural theology. When it becomes an end in itself, it is no longer theology proper, retaining only the mechanical externals of theology. However when it is the sincere expression of faith seeking understanding, it produces results that are profoundly insightful for all of theology.

2.2.3 Faith and Society

The *PSB* as a transcendental paradigm of faith is addressed to the theological audience of Society. This categorisation is not exclusive, nor meant to identify Society as the only receptive audience of faith as being primarily Transcendental. Faith by its very nature demands that its imperatives be lived out in the world and that it be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. Thus, society is brought willingly or unwillingly into the consequences and outcomes of faith. A theology of faith that seeks to be heard and understood as meaningful by society must attend to the three broad categories that constitute society the techno-economic, the political, and the cultural:

> It must be concerned about the issues of public policy and their relationship to the Christian message. In accordance with the method of 'critical correlation,' a theology addressed to society must demonstrate a critical understanding of the Christian message, and then bring both to bear on one another in a dialogical, mutually corrective, and enriching way (McBrien 1994: 55).

2.2.3.1 Method – Practical Theology

The theological method of Praxis or practical theology aims at a deeper understanding of faith through a **dialectic of theory and praxis**. **Praxis** being a set of actions unified and directed by theory. **Theory** for its part being a set of ideas formulated to unify and direct praxis. **Dialectic** is the circular interplay between the two, in which praxis stimulates theory, and theory refines praxis. This method aims at a theological understanding of faith and its implications that unifies the theoretical and practical components of human understanding. It is a synthesis of what is most valuable in experiential and scientific theology.

Its method comprises of two movements that may be graphically represented as the two halves of a circle. The first half is an ascending movement from Christian praxis through social analysis to theological reflection; the second half, a descending movement from theological reflection through pastoral vision and mission back to Christian praxis. The process is repeated indefinitely, each time at hopefully a more refined stage (cf. Rai 1988: 6-7).

Historically, practical theology emerges from a theological reflection and response to specific and contextual situations of poverty, marginilisation, repression, and disempowerment. Its importance and value for theology, the Church, and the world goes beyond these situations, as it provides a consciousness and methodology for responding in faith and reflection on all areas of human life.
The main **strengths** of this method of theology are that it is capable of combining the qualities of experiential and scientific theology and overcoming the defects of both; and that it is able to bring about a much needed and mutually enriching dialogue between theology and life, so that life influences theology and theology influences life in a dynamic interplay of a constantly refining dialectic. It would be presumptuous and premature to assess with confidence the inherent **weaknesses** of this relatively new way of doing theology, as it has not as yet reached its mature expression. Provisionally it is possible to highlight existing trends that may need to be reviewed.[13]

One such trend is the use of political categories (such as Marxism) and questionable sociological perspectives in a manner that is not sufficiently critical. This leads to the possible distortion of faith rather than its explication and elaboration. The response to this difficulty is not the rejection of these categories and perspectives, but their submission to the criteria of faith. Another trend, which has a direct bearing on the active dimension of faith, is the restriction of the notion of praxis to the socio-political sphere, and to the transitive modes of action, to the implicit exclusion of its immanent modes. The solution to this problem is not the rejection of these emphases (since they arise from urgent historical situations) but their integration into a more comprehensive Christian praxis, where both contemplation and action are understood as forms of praxis, and where action is not confined to its transitive modes.

2.3 THEOLOGIANS REPRESENTATIVE OF PARADIGM OF FAITH

Barbour (1974), commenting on Kuhn's groundbreaking expansion of models into paradigms indicates an essential feature of paradigms as key historical figures that exemplify the assumptions and methodologies peculiar to a particular paradigm:

> In the second edition (1970) of Kuhn's book and in subsequent essays, he distinguished several features which he had previously lumped together: a research tradition, the key historical examples ('exemplars') through which the tradition is transmitted, and the

metaphysical assumptions implicit in its fundamental conceptual categories. Adopting these distinctions, I will use the term paradigm to refer to *a tradition transmitted through historical exemplars* (pp. 8-9, my italics).

For the purpose of explicating essential features peculiar to each paradigm, the approach of highlighting key exemplars representative of contrasting theologies of faith and Gospel personalities of faith, the primary characteristics of each paradigm is more clearly presented.

2.3.1 Experiential Paradigm and Karl Barth

Identifying Karl Barth (1886-1968) as a paradigmatic theologian of experiential faith may seem an incorrect categorisation considering his emphasis on the primacy of God's self-revelation as opposed to the subjective human experience of faith. This apparent contradiction highlights the methodology attempted here in presenting certain theologians as paradigmatic of one of the three interpretations of the *PSB*. It is more an attempt at highlighting the distinctive elements of a particular approach to faith than it is a systematic analysis of faith within the boundaries of established theological perspectives. Thus by presenting Barth and certain distinctive elements of his theology as providing a clearer understanding of an experiential model of faith, is not to wilfully disregard a more complete presentation of his theology in order that he merely serves the function of a narrow categorisation to suit our purposes. The same methodology applies to Newman as paradigmatic of a critical faith and Tillich as paradigmatic of a transcendental faith. We do not aim to present a complete presentation and analysis of the theology of faith as found in the works of these three leading figures of the theology of faith, nor the socio-historical circumstances under which it developed; but rather to draw out distinctive characteristics of their approach and central elements of their theology.

What then are the elements in Barth's theology of faith that provide a more precise understanding of the *PSB* as an experiential model of faith with regard to its structure? We keep in mind the preceding reflections on the spiritual and ecclesial characteristics predominant in this model.

For Barth faith is not primarily about logical critical theorising on the human experience of faith, but an insistence on faith as a response to the prior initiative of God. Therefore, the method of theology employed in understanding faith must be appropriate to this primacy of the self-communication of God through which faith comes about as a result of revelation. "In Barth's theology, God is the subject and faith exists within the context of God's approach to us" (Rees 1989: 43). This insight determined Barth's theological approach to faith; it is not a subjective human phenomenon as such, but is **the activity and creation of God** (cf. ibid p. 45). Following on this is the centrality of Christ in revelation that gave a defining Christocentric character to his theology of faith. Barth's reaction to the

prevailing Liberal Protestant theology of his day with its emphasis on natural theology was to return to the theological principles of the two great reformers: Martin Luther and John Calvin. In rejecting the implicit principles of natural phenomenology in the theologies of his contemporaries, Barth emphasised the primacy of scripture and the gratuitous action of God in the faith act. The absolute freedom of God to act on behalf of humanity in the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ, which human beings need to receive with gratitude, places the emphasis on the freedom of a sovereign God. For Barth the gift of grace is completely unmerited and wholly free of the need for human cooperation in order to bring about faith in the human person (cf. Higgins 2000: 76). Barth's reaction to the liberal natural theology of theologians, in particular Emil Brunner (1889-1966), led him to reject human freedom and the *Imago Dei* as being conditions for revelation and the consequent response of faith. Faith emerges as a "miracle" performed on the human person, which signifies the sovereign freedom of God and not a freedom of the human person (cf. ibid). In rejecting an anthropological basis for an understanding of faith, the necessity for freedom in the human person to respond to revelation as invitation to faith and his emphasis on faith's supernatural origin, Barth places himself firmly in the school of thought that which perceives faith in terms of a **descending**, **spiritual** and **divine centred** phenomenon. In interpreting Anselm's dictum of theology as 'faith seeking understanding', Barth qualifies it by turning the focus to God's revelation and not humanity's need for a deeper understanding through theologising. Faith does not require confirmation of what is already believed in order to strengthen this belief; therefore, theological answers have no bearing on the existence of faith (cf. Rees p. 48). Understanding faith takes place within the context and limits of the Church's confession, which is and must be focused directly on Christ. The faith of the Church as received from Christ in the scriptures is the centre and basis of theological reflection. Human understanding is limited; therefore, theological statements can never adequately express truths of the divine Word. Understanding of the divine and the meaning of God's revelation in Christ is not fully achieved through theological reflection and theologians need constantly to be wary of their own limitations. God is not known through human reason; therefore, the theologian must seek God and the understanding of faith in prayer (cf. ibid pp. 48-9). Prayer is the *sine qua non* of theological method and the means through which knowledge of God is attained.

Barth rejected the Enlightenment paradigm, with its focus on human subjectivity as the central datum of all knowledge (cf. ibid). With a renewed understanding of experience not being limited to its merely subjective character, but as possessing a broad consensus of meaning beyond the purely subjective encounter with an objective phenomenon, Barth's rejection of the enlightenment paradigm of the turn to the subject is not as radically dismissive of subjectivity in experience as it would apparently appear. The assertion of the phenomenological hypothesis of the polarisation between

object and subject being neutralised, if not eliminated, through a dynamic encounter between the two, where knowledge is attained through this intentionality of encounter[14] provides the basis for a retrieval of the experiential in the theology of faith as traditionally understood in Barth. Phenomenology reconciles the opposing theories of knowledge proposed by Idealism and Realism, where knowledge (of the phenomenon of Revelation) is achieved through the inextricable relationship between subject and object (Humanity and Revelation) in a moment of encounter that dissolves the apparent polarisation (cf. Mercier 1998: 57-8). A theology of Revelation founded on the idealism of Kantian epistemology tends to emphasise the subjective influence of revelation, giving a primacy to the interpreting subject. Conversely, a theology of revelation tending toward a naïve Realism grants undue emphasis to the interpretive resistant objectivity of revelation, as in Fundamentalism and Revelational Positivism.

Catholic theologian, Karl Adam (1876-1966) whose theology of faith also attempted to conceive of faith less as an intellectual assent to revealed truths than as a total self-commitment to God as he turns to his creatures in gratuitous love (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 130). Adam (along with others such as Romano Guardini) introduced the Barthian understanding of faith into the milieu of Catholic theology of the mid-twentieth century through the concepts and insights of Phenomenology in contrast to the overly rational approach of the Neo-Thomists. Adam sought to emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit and of the Church in the genesis of faith finding a foundation for this in the phenomenological hypothesis "that every cognitional act requires an inner relatedness to the object apprehended"(ibid). Adam position was similar to Barth's in that for him faith did not rest on the motive of credibility, but on the certitude inspired by God, which is perceived by the soul intuitively as the witness of God. He stressed the role of the will and love in the act of faith (cf. Arraj 1988: 37).

This cursory examination of the central elements in Barths understanding of faith reveal how he is a key figure for a spiritual theology, a faith that comes through the unilateral action of God, and a church (confessional) as the basis and context for theologising about faith. "As Barth once observed, Christian revelation and faith are elliptical in nature: the theocentric focus is Jesus Christ and the anthropocentric focus is the believer, both of whom are held in a dynamic harmony by the action of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in the Church" (Rosato 1994: 76).

These are the elements of the paradigm that primarily understands faith as a spiritual experience, centred wholly on God as revealed in Christ and influenced by the action of the Holy Spirit. Faith comes primarily through an experience of God at work in the heart of the human person through spiritual activity such as prayer, reading scripture and commitment to a faith community.

2.3.2 Theologian of Critical Faith – John Henry Newman

Newman is presented as the paradigmatic theologian of a critical faith because it is in his thought that we find a sustained philosophical and theological exploration of the relationship between faith and belief (cf. Rees 2001: 15). For Newman faith is understood as unconditional assent (both notional and real), an action of the human mind, and epistemological in character. Newman is a highly regarded theologian of faith because of his systematic attempt to explain how faith is rational, leading to notional assent; yet at the same time a positive and vital commitment of the whole person to faith, leading to personal (real) assent. Thus, he overcame both the deficiencies and errors in Rationalism and Fideism. "Newman did not support the view that faith is independent of the rational processes of our minds. Faith does arise from a process of reasoning, but reason alone is not sufficient to bring us to active faith" (ibid p. 16).

Newman identifies three central factors as important for faith. These are gleaned from his writings, particularly *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) and *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) – however, our reflections rely heavily on Frank D. Rees's *Wrestling with Doubt* (2001). The first central factor is Newman's insistence on a <u>dogmatic structure</u> and a system of doctrine. Not only was this essential for a logical formulation of faith, but it also prevented a lapse into 'liberalism' that he defined in *Apologia* as "the anti-dogmatic principle and its developments" (ibid p. 17).

The second factor is that religious commitment is <u>rational</u>. One does not abdicate reason by adhering to and believing in dogmatic creeds; assenting to the truths of creeds of faith demands a rational and critical appropriation of their tenets. Newman's Anglican days at Oxford provided him with a firm commitment to and a great respect for philosophical reasoning. The creeds of faith cannot be held with indubitable certainty, but there could be a "moral certainty" arising from the accumulation of evidence, a "convergence of probabilities" (ibid p. 18). Thus, rational philosophical reasoning assisted one in formulating and developing cogent arguments and evidences in support of Christian faith. Credibility, as the grounding of the faith act in human reason is important in Newman's theology of faith.

This brings us to the third factor essential for faith in Newman's thought – <u>certainty</u> in matters of faith. Ultimately one must assert that if a person possesses indubitable certainty in matters of religious belief then faith becomes redundant. Thus, faith and certainty are incompatible. However, Newman asserts against the prevailing Liberalism which rejected a faith that was not the result of demonstrable, empirical verification that "there are many truths in concrete matters which no one can demonstrate, yet everyone unconditionally accepts" (*Grammar of Assent* p. 136 in Rees p. 19). Newman

subsequently spoke of <u>assent</u>, which he believed was a more inclusive and accurate term to describe certainty in its broader interpretation within the faith discussion.

The method and tenor of Newman's theology is clearly paradigmatic of a critical approach to faith. His inner journey, his search for truth, and his struggle for intellectual certainty in matters of religious faith produced a theologian that is indeed representative of all who strive for logic, structure and a degree of certitude in their own faith journey. In **Grammar of Assent**, we see the clear outline of a fundamental theology designed to provide a rational exposition of faith for the ordinary person. While being an example of a critical paradigm of faith, Newman's theology is more than just about epistemological apprehension and logical inferences, but an exposition of faith as a reality that prompts moral responsibility and calls for a total life commitment. The problems inherent in a critical reflection of faith, as confronted by Newman are ultimately for the benefit of the development of truth in order that people may embrace it more willingly and so live lives that are more Christian. For Newman "Faith is regarded as an all-embracing act, an *ensemble* of feeling, reason, and practice . . . The ordinary person, just like the specialist, can grasp the meaning of this act expressing the force of reason and the greatness of love" (Fisichella 1994*a*: 737).

2.3.3 Theologian of Transcendental Faith – Paul Tillich

Faith, as it relates directly to the human person in his/her subjective life context is the most important aspect of the whole faith discussion. The coming to faith, its difficulties and demands, and the consequences of faith for the individual in his/her relationship with all reality is the fundamental concern for a meaningful theology of faith. While Paul Tillich (1886-1965), is not a contextual theologian in the strict sense, his meditations, reflections and theological system are profoundly concerned with the human subject and the complexity of religious faith in the inner and outer dimensions of human life. The practical implications of Tillich's contribution to philosophy, life and the existential questions people pose are of great relevance to our age where doubt in its moral, pragmatic and epistemological manifestations are of increasing interest and concern.

Tillich's theology of faith is developed within a broader philosophical framework in which he sought to understand the relationship between the human person immersed in culture, history, and a transcendent ultimate that is the ground of all being. Tillich attempted to reconcile the coexistence of doubt and faith in the human person through an anthropology that is developed in the form of an ontology of existence that goes in search of the foundation or ground of being and meaning (cf. Pastor 1994: 1109). The recurring theme in Tillich's works is a constant search for the absolute, the infinite, and the definitive, as present in relative and contradictory contingent reality, in a dialectical

confrontation between philosophical doubt and religious wisdom (cf. ibid p. 1110). His search for a theonomous philosophy that reconciled contradictory philosophical understandings of human freedom and his theological understanding of ultimate reality as the ground of all being is the basis of his ethical view of the human person confronted with the complexities of doubt and choice in the equally complex socio-historical context in which s/he is situated. This is achieved through his distinguishing between three forms of reasoning: heteronymous, autonomous and theonomous. Theonomous reason is the most adequate being more deeply based, since it is founded on 'being' itself and not extrinsic principles nor entirely subjective ones. Theonomous reason transcends the artificiality imposed by heteronomy and the vacuous tautology present in autonomous reasoning (cf. Reese 1996: 771).

Tillich's theology of faith is presented primarily in his two great works: his *Systematic Theology* (1951-1963), a monumental work, and *Dynamics of Faith* (1957) in which he develops his theology of faith and doubt. It is within this context that we are able to appreciate Tillich's understanding of faith. Certain key points emerge from this and are relevant for our discussion: Tillich understands of faith as the <u>state of being ultimately concerned</u>. Though there are subjective and objective aspects of this state, both are centred in the immediate experience of the believing person (cf. Rees 2001: 83). The genuinely ultimate object of faith is God – in immediate experience people conceive and experience God in a variety of ways; this is the subjective aspect of faith. "So the subjective aspect of the state of being ultimately concerned refers to what people believe to be the primary focus, purpose, and source of their existence. This is what functions for them as God" (ibid). Therefore, faith understood as ultimate concern is the human person being possessed by the ultimate and holy reality of God, and the subjective state in which the believer is 'concerned'. People commit themselves in an act of faith to what they perceive as ultimate reality, to that which gives meaning to their existence. For Tillich the criteria for true faith is that if subjectively it adequately expresses ultimate concern (the act of faith); and objectively faith is true if object of faith is indeed ultimate (the content of faith). These two aspects are for analytical purposes discussed separately as the objective and subjective poles of faith, but are united in the one experience of the centred act of faith. "The subject-object distinction is overcome through what Tillich calls the 'ecstatic union' of faith. In this centred act all aspects of the human personality are involved" (ibid p. 84). Faith includes cognitive apprehension as well as the emotions and the will. Tillich transcends both the subjectivity of the extreme elements of an experiential approach, and the detached objective approach characterised by extreme elements in the critical approach. Faith is primarily a transcendental act in which the subject goes beyond her/his immediate experience of God in an act of faith that **centres** the believing subject on an ultimate reality, which is God as transcendent, ultimate ground of all being.

Doubt is a central issue in the theology of faith of Tillich. He distinguishes between the different forms that doubt takes. The doubt that is implicit in faith is an existential doubt that is an awareness of the 'insecurity' of all concrete knowledge (cf. ibid p. 86). "It is not the permanent doubt of the scientist, and it is not the transitory doubt of the sceptic, but it is the doubt of him who is ultimately concerned about a concrete content. One could call it . . . existential doubt" (Tillich 1957: p. 20 in ibid). Rees identifies two aspects of this existential doubt; the first is the uncertainty about the precise nature of the object of ultimate concern, while the second is uncertainty about the adequacy of our apprehension of that reality. "Both aspects of uncertainty are inherent in the 'existential' character of faith as the state of being ultimately concerned and must, if raised to consciousness, be accepted by an act of courage" (op. cit. p. 86). This is another indication of Tillich's approach to faith that marks it as being transcendental. Doubt is an inevitable aspect of faith; we transcend these doubts not through reason, evidence, or the authority of the God who reveals, but through an act of courage. In spite of doubt, we commit ourselves to the object of ultimate concern through a courage that while recognising the possibility of error, nevertheless transcends the natural inclination to hesitancy by courageously surrendering. Tillich not only sees doubt as an integral element in faith, but regards serious doubt as a confirmation of faith; an indication of the seriousness of the person concern for the ultimate.

Tillich's **Dynamics of Faith** express the existential dimension of faith and its relatedness to the socio-historical climate of our day. In confronting the serious issues about the epistemological foundations for faith, he not only presents a deep philosophical reflection on faith as an expression of the infinite character of the human person, but also goes beyond the cognitive elements of faith to the crux of faith in the modern age. People's basic objections to faith present themselves in the form of rational arguments concerning epistemology and contemporary cosmology, whereas in truth it is in the heart of the human person where s/he struggles with issues of faith. Faith in that which grasps us as being truly of ultimate concern personally and objectively requires a reciprocal commitment that demands an act of courage. This act of courage brings us to a point where our faith, incomplete though it may be, grants us graces and insights to penetrate more deeply with the heart and mind the truth by which we live. Tillich's emphasis on courage is what furthers his identification as a paradigmatic figure of a transcendental approach to faith. Through courage, we transcend the various obstacles to a fully expressed life of committed faith. He speaks variously of how courage enables us to live more fully the life of faith: the "courage to be as a part", overcoming individuality. The "courage to be oneself", the "courage of despair", as the world turns meaningless; and finally, beyond all traditional formulations, the "courage to accept acceptance" (cf. Reese 1996: 772).

2.4 GOSPEL FIGURES REPRESENTATIVE OF PARADIGM OF FAITH

2.4.1 Gospel Personality of Experiential Faith – Simon Peter

An exegetical analysis of Simon Peter's profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16: 13-20) in response to Jesus' question of who the disciples say he is, will not necessarily reveal the insights we present here. Our reading of the text is more homiletical than exegetical. Peter's profession of faith in the identity of Jesus is one of a number that occur in the Gospels. Each of them take place within a specific context and are responses to a particular encounter with Christ where he evokes faith through a question, an event, or a didactic process. After asking the disciples who the people say the Son of man is, and receiving a number of replies, Jesus then poses the question "But you, who do you say I am?" Jesus identifies himself as the Son of man by furthering the discussion about his identity. Simon Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." his reply must have surprised even him, coming as it does spontaneously, accurately and with conviction. Not only does Peter acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah (the Hebrew *masiah* is translated as *Christos* in the Greek; both mean 'anointed' [cf. Harrington 1989: 614]) but continues by acknowledging him as the Son of God (this second identification does not occur in the parallel texts in Mark and Luke). Furthermore, Peter's reply identifies the Messiah as the Son of God. This is significant as he attributes both Judaic titles to Christ, and through this makes a profession of religious faith. He is not merely making a statement of fact, because as a believing Jew his faith is directed to Yahweh; and here he identifies Christ as being the promised one, the Messiah, the Christ, and the son of God. In acknowledging Jesus as being the one to whom both these titles apply he professes faith in he who is indeed the object of faith.

Jesus replies, "Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven." Jesus' intimate knowledge of Peter leads him to conclude accurately that the simple fisherman who is no scholar of Judaism has just received an infused wisdom coming directly from God. In fact, not even a brilliant and devout scholar of the law would have replied with such accuracy, or with such faith. Jesus indicates by his reply that 'flesh and blood' is limited in its ability to perceive the truth of spiritual realities unaided by divine assistance. It is not through reason that Peter is able to make this profession of faith, neither wholly through evidential witness but through an experience of divine wisdom being infused into him from the spiritual realm. However, this is not sufficient in granting Peter a faith that is fiducial or transcendental in character. He is still limited by his own fears and doubts as is evidenced most clearly by his denial of Christ prior to the crucifixion. Peter is indeed a simple man, but a complex character in his relationship with Jesus.

Thus, the profession of faith made by Peter in this situation exemplifies the experiential/spiritual paradigm of faith. It is a faith that comes not through reason and demonstrable proof, but rather through an experience of grace given by God.

2.4.2 Gospel Personality of Critical Faith – Thomas

Thomas unfortunately bears the enduring epithet of 'the doubter' for demanding demonstrable and empirical verification of the resurrection of Jesus. The incident of Thomas' doubting the claim of the other disciples needs to be read in conjunction with other pericopes where he appears as courageous and questioning. In Jn 11: 16 Thomas ignores the fears of the other disciples and says, "let us also go to die with him". Jesus has just heard of the death of Lazarus and now intends travelling to Bethany on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The other disciples now fear for Jesus as they have just witnessed an attempt by the Jews to stone him (Jn 10: 31-39) and realise that the present state of relations between Jesus and the religious authorities is volatile and any foray near the citadel of religious power where the Priests and Pharisees hold sway is unwise. Thomas' statement can be understood in two ways. Thomas is aware of the nearness of Jesus' death and wishes that all shared it with him, a resignation to their common fate. This is Bultmann's view in his commentary on the gospel of John (cf. 1971: 400 in Rees op. cit. p. 195). Raymond Brown on the other hand draws this into the later incident in the upper room and considers it as indicative of Thomas' obstinacy (cf. Brown 1970: 1045 in ibid).

In Jn 14: 5 Thomas almost with exasperation at the cryptic words of Jesus concerning his final destiny blurts out "Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Thomas demands deeper understanding and clearer explication of what Jesus is saying, further giving the impression that he is a practical man who needs to know with assurance and in detail precisely what Jesus is saying. Brown sees in this questioning the overall theme in John's gospel of blindness as a lack of a vision of faith, and seeing on a different level as indicative of faith (cf. ibid). By his question concerning the way, Thomas (as spokesperson for the others) is like the Jews, blind to the true reality of Christ. Jesus does not rebuke Thomas but further clarifies his preceding statement. John does not seek to present Thomas as recalcitrant and obstructive, but rather as a typical example of those who need to be drawn from a human way of seeing into the light of God (cf. Rees op. cit. p. 196). Thomas acknowledges his ignorance and his need for enlightenment through this question.

In Jn 20, Thomas is absent when Christ appears in his resurrected form to the other disciples. They are privileged to not only witness the presence of the resurrected Christ but also receive from him the gift of peace, the Spirit, and a mandate to forgive sins. Thomas is naturally incredulous when on his return the others overwhelm him with this impossible story. Unfortunately Thomas' refusal to believe unless

he experiences for himself these incredible claims has led to his being branded a doubter and obstinate in refusing to believe on the testimony of others who have come to faith through personal encounter. Thomas legitimately withholds assent until he has incontrovertible evidence of the claims made by the others. He does not express **outright lack of belief** but rather demands **proof** before he is willing to **believe**. Thomas represents the critical paradigm of faith because he is like so many of us who withhold complete assent prior to critical and rational enquiry resulting in demonstrable proof of the claims put to us by others.

For eight days, Thomas endures this suspension of belief in the midst of the believing disciples. Finally, Christ appears again and responds to Thomas' demand for proof by inviting him to place his hands in the wounds inflicted during the crucifixion. Jesus invites Thomas to belief "Do not be unbelieving anymore but believe" (v.27). John does not indicate whether Thomas does indeed touch Christ, instead, we have this profound proclamation of faith – "My Lord and my God" (v.28). not only does Thomas' demand for proof lead to a faith in Christ as Lord, but to a **personally appropriated faith** by declaring that Christ is "**My** God."

The critical demands of Thomas end with both an exclamation of faith and a profession of personal faith. Doubt, scepticism and the need for rational confidence in the act of faith are through this incident raised to the level of a **committed** faith once there is reasonable credibility for faith. The value of a critical rational approach to faith is presented here as opening up the possibility for a further development of faith. Thomas who goes on to evangelise with the other disciples no doubt recounted to those "who have not seen" (v. 29) his own journey of faith. He could say to the sceptics who demanded reasonable proof for the claims made by the disciples concerning the resurrection of Christ that he was himself just like them; he too demanded empirical verification for the claims made by the other disciples, so he is in a position to understand their reasonable doubts and identify with their critical enquiry. The faith of those "who have not seen yet believe" comes through the testimony of one who was drawn to faith through rational enquiry. The testimony of one who has come to faith through the arduous demands of reason is perhaps more compelling because of the critical nature of their faith.

A further insight germane to our discussion is that Thomas remains part of the community of faith despite his hesitancy and uncertainty in believing. Doubt and questioning have a legitimate place in the believing community. Through doubt we are led to questioning, which in turn yields responses and so growth in our faith journey.

2.4.3 Gospel Personality of Transcendental Faith - Martha

Martha the figure of practical faith in Jesus is first introduced to us as the one who welcomes him into her home (Lk. 10: 38-42) and sets about preparing a meal for him while her sister Mary sits at his feet and listens to him speaking. Jesus gently rebukes Martha when she insists that Jesus tell Mary to assist in the serving. We next encounter her on the occasion of her brother, Lazarus' death when she runs out to meet Jesus while Mary stays at home (Jn 11: 20-28). An active and involved personality, Martha both rebukes and pleads with Jesus "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him" (vv. 21-22). Martha has faith in Jesus' power and special relationship with God, but does not see his true identity or the specific nature of his relationship with God. On being told by Jesus that her brother will rise again, she confesses to the general belief of most Jews that there will be a resurrection on the last day. Jesus then tells her that he is the resurrection and the life. He now personally addresses her and asks her if she believes this. Her doubt and questioning is the condition, which dispose her to a receptivity of Christ's question, a question of profound significance that summonses from the depths of her being a transcendental moment in which she is compelled to answer the very foundations of her own questioning. It is this being confronted with a demand to reply and give assent not only to the words of Jesus but to come to a deeper personal faith in him and to recognise that he is indeed God, as only God has power over life and death; that Martha is confronted with the challenge of transcending doubt, grief and her limited understanding of the true reality of Jesus. At that very moment she overcomes all that inhibits her understanding and comes to a profound faith by uttering with conviction "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world" (v. 27).

The depths of meaning in this acclamation of faith penetrate the very identity of Christ and the significance of his entire ministry. Jesus' direct and unequivocal question evokes from the depths of Martha's being one of the most profound professions of faith in the Gospels. Immediately she returns to the house to summons Mary to Jesus. It is now Martha who brings Mary to Jesus. Having professed her recognition of the true reality of Christ she takes the active role of evangelising and bringing her sister to Christ, the one who listened contemplatively in the Luke narrative. What is inchoate in Mary is now fully conscious in Martha who was earlier rebuked for not caring for the one thing necessary as Mary did. Martha now reveals Christ to Mary, having transcended her doubt, grief, and preoccupation with self. One could say that it was her very personality with all the characteristics that supposedly do not apparently dispose one to faith that is in fact the cause of this illuminated and evangelising faith.

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CHAPTER THREE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARADIGMS

The relationship and dynamic between the paradigms centres itself around the *PSB* in its totality. As the interpretation of the *Prayer* is itself subject to a multilevel interpretation, so does the dynamic of the interrelatedness between each of the three paradigms reveal itself, through wisdom as open to meanings reflective of the theological presuppositions of the interpreting subject. A predisposition to regard faith as primarily interpreted and expressed by a defining paradigm with its constituent themes is entirely consonant with an understanding of this paradigmatic approach as revealing distinctive features of faith. This is reflected in the <u>first</u> model of relationship. Adopting the conversion theme as a hermeneutical tool for interpreting the interconnectedness of the paradigms, one finds a more than adequate model for discussing the dynamics and process of conversion. This conversion process understood as stages along the path to a genuine faith commitment finds meaning in the <u>second</u> model of relationship. Straddling the phases of an initial conversion and a deepening of the primary conversion 'event' is the <u>third</u> model of relatedness. While conversion is a process marked by defining stages, it is never entirely subject to the neat categories and prior theories that tend to predominate in the popular imagination. For the initiate and the neophyte the third model of relationship is explanatory and guiding. For the person of committed faith the third model is both descriptive and prescriptive in interpreting the ongoing conversion, which ensures that faith is nourished and strengthened by the movement defined as dialectical in this model. The <u>fourth</u> model describing the nature of the relationship between the three paradigms is characterised by the wisdom element granting a unified vision of faith. Here it is no longer understood as movement along phases or stages, but an intense inner dynamic where all three paradigms are of equal importance in describing and expressing the quality of the faith of the person possessed by God in a manner that may be described as mystical and contemplative. This mystical, contemplative faith is not devoid of a practical element as it is the true contemplative who in action finds the source and expression of a commitment to God. One need only recall here two modern classics on this description of the authentic contemplative as one who is deeply committed to the active transformation of society and the world, finding the cause and impetus of this in Christian faith: Rahner's ***Christian in the Marketplace*** (*Mission and Grace,* vol. 3 1966) and Merton's ***Contemplation in a World of Action*** (1973).

In a broad imitation of Barbour's schemata for describing the historical and the possible relationship between Science and Religion in chapter four of ***Religion in an Age of Science*** (1998), the paradigms of faith are here similarly related. Barbour's four phases or ways of relating Science and Religion are *Conflict*, *Independence*, *Dialogue,* and *Integration*. The four sections that comprise this chapter will relate the paradigms of faith under the headings *Independence*, *Dialogue*, *Integration,* and *Synthesis.*

The consideration of the paradigms will show how they are in **fact** related and how this relationship may **possibly** develop with reference to the *PSB* as a guiding instrument. The value of adopting this style is that it clarifies with precision the nature of each paradigm by way of <u>comparison</u>, <u>contrast</u>, and <u>complementarity</u>.

As each model of relationship between the paradigms is a development on the preceding one, it will not be necessary to repeat what has been said before as it will be assumed that each model actualises all the elements in those prior to it.

3.1 DISTINCT UNITS – INDEPENDENCE

EXPERIENTIAL   CRITICAL   TRANSCENDENTAL

Each is a discrete self-contained unit that is sufficient in itself to provide a valid justification of faith within a particular context, from a specific perspective or because the individual or community implicitly accepts this as the fundamental criterion for validating faith. It would be unwise to assert the strict independence of each paradigm as sufficient within itself to assure faith understood in its complete articulated and expressed form. However, we have seen how emphasis laid on each approach by individual theologians and schools of theological thought grant priority, albeit implicitly to a particular paradigm. This historical trend and contemporary fact as evidenced in the myriad faith confessions within modern Christian movements and ecclesial communions indicate the soundness of identifying each paradigm as to some degree valid and sufficient in guaranteeing faith as generally understood, up to a point.

Nevertheless, regarded as distinct individual and self-contained units each paradigm is deficient in providing a comprehensive analysis of the act of faith and the contents of faith. An authentic exposition of faith demands that the whole of the faith reality is demonstrated as actualised in every paradigm. The elements that definitively characterise a particular paradigm may not be explicit in the others, but are implicit in the complete meaning of each paradigm. The individuals who operate out of a particular paradigm would admit the inadequacy of an approach that stresses or gives primacy to one

or two aspects of faith excluding the complementary value of the other paradigms. Rather there would be the assertion that the foundational vision, which leads to a theology of faith representative of a particular approach, is in itself valid and reflects the concerns out of which these paradigms emerge. No serious theologian who operates predominantly out of the experiential paradigm would maintain the irrelevance of propositions coherently structured emerging out of experience as necessary for giving meaning to their fundamental position. Likewise, the school of thought, which emphasises the necessity for providing systematic and cogent underpinnings to the propositions of faith would realise that the data they are dealing with primarily emerges from sources that are profoundly determined by experience. Furthermore, the proponents of faith understood primarily as experiential and propositional, would not deny the transforming influence of faith that leads to an active engagement with society in order to introduce there the transformative effects of faith. Thus, paradigms in dialogue are the contemporary response to what may appear on the surface to be mutually exclusive and competing approaches. The purpose in presenting the paradigms as individual units is not to maintain that they are regarded as such, but more for the purposes of an analysis of the fundamental vision which is the guiding principle behind them. The discussion that follows would prove to be helpful when discussing the more realistic relationship that exists between each.

3.1.1 Experiential

At the outset it is vital to distinguish between religious experiences understood as the extraordinarily mystical and charismatic from its understanding in the more common and muted experience of the divine presence in the mundane and ordinary daily life of the person of authentic faith. This distinction does not imply the inauthentic nature of the former, but rather recognises it as extra ordinary and in no way indicative of, nor the sole criterion for identifying the presence of, nor the justification for faith as understood in this discussion. The mystical and charismatic experiences of the divine are part of the richness and depth of the Christian faith story, but are not to be considered as the legitimisation of Christian faith or the ultimate criterion of the validity of mature faith; they may well be, but their presence does not secure the affirmation nor does it indicate the normative mode of Christian experience. Whilst acknowledging mystical and charismatic experiences as signs of faith, aids to faith and legitimate elements within the larger experiential paradigm of faith, the focus here will be on transcendental disclosure situations within the existential context of the ordinary.

Barbour identifies six typical forms of religious experiences (1998: 111-2) which are essentially depth experiences or situations of disclosure in which a reality or power beyond the world of spatio-temporal reality may be discerned as the origin. Dulles (1994*a*: 217) provides seven, which he takes from Barbour's earlier work (***Myths, Models and Paradigms*** 1974: 53-56). There is an overlapping

and one instance where Barbour seems to have omitted in his later work ('key historical events'). These and their implications for faith will be discussed in detail in chapter four where they will be dealt with in reference to the transcendent and immanent attributes of God.

- <u>Numinous experiences of the Holy,</u> where the person is in thrall with awe and reverence in the presence of a transcendental other.

- <u>Mystical experiences of union</u> found in the depths of the human soul and nature. These experiences are characterised by a deep sense of the ultimate oneness of all reality accompanied by an ineffable peace, harmony and joy.

- <u>The experience of moral obligation</u> that transcends the baser inclinations. The desire to do that which is deemed as good and to avoid evil in consonance with the natural law and the demands of 'conscience'. There is in the person a compelling inclination for outrage at acts of cruelty, violence, and injustice and condemnation of their perpetrators. History has countless examples of those who were prepared to face death in their opposition to these evils.

- <u>Transformative experiences of reorientation and reconciliation</u> that have a marked impact upon individuals and communities. Disclosure experiences of brokenness and alienation that lead to remorse, forgiveness, self-acceptance, and an acceptance of others, culminating in healing and a change of attitude and lifestyle.

- <u>The experience of love and fulfilment in interpersonal relationships</u>, interpreted by some as an imperfect reflection of the divine love relationship in the Trinity (St. Augustine) and as an encounter with the 'eternal thou' (Martin Buber).

- <u>An experience of key historical events</u> that are repeated in literature and oral tradition, relived, and re-enacted in ritual and drama because of their momentous impact upon communities or societies. These are viewed by some as the breaking into the human world of the divine presence and action creating nodal points in the communal history of a people.

- <u>A sense of awe and wonder in response to the order and creativity present in the world</u>. From this are inferred interpretations on the intellectual and experiential levels. At the intellectual level, this has served as the basis for inferring a transcendent creator of the intricate and clockwork efficiency of the cosmos and nature. At the experiential level, there is the response of reverence and appreciation at the beneficence of a bountiful and beautiful world giving physical sustenance and aesthetic joy. The rational order of the world intelligible to the human mind is in the numinous tradition expressed as a sense of dependence on a creator who is the ground of this order and creativity. In the mystical tradition, it is often expressed as a dependence on the creative forces immanent within the world and nature itself.

A number of common points emerge from these 'transcendental' experiences. They are transcendental because they are experienced beyond the boundaries of culture and religion and are thus universal; though their conception, articulation, and interpretation may differ. They are transcendental in that their origin is deemed to be beyond that which is capable of being produced by the human mind and will alone – their source is inferred to be from beyond the realm of finite and limited sensory perception. Their existence is an objectively verifiable fact in that the evidence of their presence in human experience is largely irrefutable. It is however, in the **interpretation** of these experiences that a personal, critical, or suspicious hermeneutics operates to produce inferences that range across the whole spectrum of human thought. The Theist would infer from all the above a convergence of probabilities that irrefutably points to the existence of God. The reductive materialist sees merely the confirmation of his/her belief that all is explainable in terms of the bio-chemical responses on the part of the neurological senses to stimuli that do not need belief in a god to provide reasons for their presence and manifestation.

Our concern in enumerating these experiences of transcendent reality is to affirm, without entering into the array of arguments about rational grounds for belief in God, that these form part of 'theistic experiences'. These are considered as the range of experiences accepted by the person of faith as immediate or derived experiences of God's self-manifestation in and to the world. The phenomenal quality of these experiences are a matter of categorical interpretation and the meanings attached to these and any experience considered by the believer to be of God, is granted a significance and meaning within the presuppositions and assumptions of faith that form the religious horizon of the person of faith. The significance attached to religious experience, the degree of importance granted to the interpretation of these experiences is the heuristic operation of interpreting, understanding, and systematising in doctrinal formulations; in a word, the critical function of the theology of faith.

3.1.2 Critical

A more specific designation of this paradigm, within the context of the *PSB* as the meta-paradigm, would be a **postcritical** paradigm of faith. Yet the designation, critical is retained with the assumption that it is a critical paradigm that is properly so, and embraces the 'spirit' of a postcritical methodology. The current theological milieu divides itself into what may be described as three broad streams. Although these are to be found across the denominational divide, a description of these streams in the Catholic theological tradition is examined here.

Avery Dulles rightfully regards some of the designations, such as 'postmodern', 'postliberal' and 'postcritical' as being open to manipulation (1995: 3) as they are so often subject to a variety of

interpretations conditioned by what the user of the term would like it to mean in a particular context. This cursory description of 'precritical', 'critical', and 'postcritical' is conscious of the inherent manipulative quality of these terms and thus uses them in a manner that attempts to be as objective as possible.

The shift in consciousness from a classical worldview to a dynamic view characterised by a historical consciousness in the mid-twentieth century (cf. Lonergan in Rausch 2000: 12), brought about a parting of the ways between what may be described as a precritical theology and a critical one. Where the role of the theologian was that of elucidating and expounding doctrine and the divine truth as presented by the Magisterium in a neoscholastic approach (characterised by a speculative and deductive theology) in the precritical phase prior to the middle years of the twentieth century, the new theology adopted an investigative and critical approach inspired by a number of factors. These include the critical-historical exegetical method in the interpretation of Scripture, a greater openness on the part of theologians to the methods and insights of Protestant theology, and a relaxing of the strictures and disciplines placed on theologians by the Magisterium. These and other conditions paved the way for a more daring and critical study of theological themes. The new critical theology that emerged adopted research methodologies that derived from the secular academic domain, "re-examining the sources of Catholic theology, investigating historical developments, reinterpreting traditional formulas, and turning increasingly towards experience" (Rausch op.cit. p. 14). This critical theology is an interpretive and constructive discipline that became the dominant way of doing theology, particularly in the universities and the broader academic domain. This critical approach is seen in the varied specialities that theology finds itself studying. There is the interpretive approach to discover and recover the historical meaning of the biblical texts in a critical hermeneutics. A fundamental theology analyses the hidden assumptions, traditional practices, and unexamined positions in order to clarify with greater precision the nature of faith. Still more is the systematic approach that engages in constructive efforts to re-express the faith and its formulation in doctrine into a more contemporary language and idiom that it is given greater meaning and relevance for the Christian in the modern world (cf. ibid).

The postcritical phase or stream in Catholic theology is not so much a radical departure from the critical in the manner that the critical was from the precritical. It is rather the attitude and consciousness of the critical approach without what in the latter half of the twentieth century became a destructive, inbred, and severely introspective theology. The overly critical method began to distance itself from the Church and the issues and concerns of the Christian faithful. In Academia, while fruitfully opening up new areas of scrutiny and speculation, it too often concerns itself with a radical

questioning of the very foundations of Christian faith in a manner that undermines the wisdom-spiritual dimension that is the fundamental grounding of all responsible and creative theological research. Under the heading, *The Critique of Criticism*, Dulles identifies this postcritical theological approach as being in consonance with a certain spirit of the contemporary age, manifested in the philosophies of Polanyi, Gadamer, and Ricoeur; and the sociological approaches of Berger and Bellah. Theologians such as George Lindbeck and Hans Urs von Balthasar are also regarded in some respects as expressing in their thought a certain postcritical approach (cf. 1995: 5). In fact, the term postcritical is not so much descriptive of a clearly identifiable movement, methodology, or approach, as it is a certain spirit that is positively eclectic, innovative, and resistant to stereotypical characterisation. "Postcritical thinking does not reject criticism but carries it to new lengths, scrutinising the presuppositions and methods of the critical program itself" (ibid). Dulles outlines five flaws that postcritical thinking draws attention to in the critical method (cf. pp. 5-7).

(1) Its approach is animated by a bias toward doubt, with the implied assumption that truth is discovered through the uprooting of all voluntary commitments. Convictions must give way to suspicion in the face of any possible doubt, an assumption that is understandable in a context where fanatical and passionate commitment is destructive and/or is an obstacle to the advancement of truth. The present religious and moral milieu is and can be responsible in judgement and therefore need not subject every religious commitment to doubt. (2) The critical program often fails to recognise that doubt, and by extension, criticism bases itself on faith in its own methodological assumptions, and is therefore subject to the same criticism it levels at that which does not provide the necessary evidence to qualify as truth. It approaches its subject matter with faith in a particular methodology that rests on assumptions linked to a particular conceptual framework that is itself susceptible to critical enquiry. (3) The critical program cannot possibly be applied consistently to all matters all the time. Universal doubt is as untenable as an uncritical acceptance of every unproven proposition. If applied consistently there would be a breakdown in the possibility of all certain knowledge, as has been demonstrated by the arguments against Logical Positivism. Proponents of the critical program rarely apply the principle of universal doubt in all subjects, but wittingly or unwittingly undermine the foundations of religious belief systems by selectively applying systematic doubt to the revealed character of religion. (4) The critical program neglects the social dimension of knowledge, forgetting or ignoring the reality of the cumulative and consensual nature of arriving at truth. A self-sufficient mentality prevails in a manner that is non-referential and assumes the possession of all the evidence under scrutiny by the investigative individual or likeminded group. (5) The fundamental flaw in the critical program is the neglect of the tacit dimension of knowledge. No cognitive value is granted to the intuitive and inner sense that forms an indispensable role in all modes of attaining a degree of

certainty and consequent commitment. Tacit presuppositions are present in all modes of knowing and in many instances one commits to that which so often defies rational and evidentiary demonstration. These modes of knowing are indispensable in the whole process of coming to knowledge of the world around us, and all it implies and demands of us. This point has been made in 1.3.2 where the *PSB*, while recognising the pre-eminent role of intellectual understanding in coming to an authentic faith, affirms the necessity of the 'reasons of the heart' (Pascal) and the affective dimension of faith.

It is necessary to affirm that the postcritical spirit is not to be identified with the counter-critical reaction exhibited by neo-conservative theologians and those who engage in uncritical polemical justifications of religious beliefs. An unbridled critical methodology is untenable, especially in any discourse on the nature of faith. The critical designation of this paradigm is thus perhaps closer to a postcritical approach to faith. Yet an awareness of the ambiguous and manipulative nature of these terms impels the retention of the term critical for this paradigm, within the horizon of understanding that it is properly and responsibly critical.

3.1.3 Transcendental

The meanings of the concept and word, <u>transcendence</u> are diverse and multiform, largely dependent upon the context in which it is used. The word <u>transcendental</u> refers more specifically to the idea, thought system and action coming about as an independent conceptual phenomenon of the act and process of transcendence; having found its way into the philosophical and theological lexicon as an independent cognate of its root word. Broadly defined, transcendence is 'going beyond' and/or 'rising above'. That which is transcendent is an existent, a phenomenon and a concept that is not only above, not only beyond but also most commonly superior to that which it transcends or is a transcendent of. A clearer explication of the concept of transcendence is achieved with the identification in a specific context of that particular reality which it transcends. Kant's use of the word 'transcendental' has very little to do with the concept of transcendence as a going beyond or as a rising above, but more the influential introduction of the word to describe a particular mode of knowledge which is rather about that which is prior to, or prepredicative of the content of knowledge. Transcendental "is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*" (***Critique of Pure Reason*** in Kilby 2004: 32). Thus, the term has more to do with the subject of inquiry rather than the object; the conditions within the knowing subject as constituted by his/her prior disposition insofar as this is a determining element in the process of knowing (cf. ibid). Similarly, though in a secondary sense, Kant transfers the term as applying to the things which arise as a result of an enquiry done in the mode indicated in the first sense (i.e. the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience), which Kant's transcendental method brings to light.

These are in turn referred to as the transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience. "So in a transcendental investigation one looks to determine the transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience – what it is about us that makes us able to have experience, to know anything, in the first place" (Ibid pp. 32-33). Thus through an explication of the Kantian use of the transcendental concept we see how closely connected are the three approaches to an understanding of faith as a real and valid way of entering into an experiential encounter with God through the distinctive capacities of cognition in its broadest sense as an indispensable attribute for coming to faith.

The ambiguity of the term 'transcendental' as found in the Catholic philosophical stream of Transcendental Thomism, with its principle figures being Joseph Marechal (1878-1944) and Bernard Lonergan (1903-1985), is indicative of its versatility, and the appropriation of nuanced meanings attributed to it determined by the philosophical premises out of which one operates. John Macquarrie expresses dissatisfaction with this ambiguity and with the self-conscious effort of the Transcendental Thomists to "carefully distinguish between 'transcendental' (having to do with the conditions for knowing) and 'transcendent' (going beyond the phenomenal object of knowledge)" (2001: 379). Where Macquarrie finds a problem in this careful specification of the distinction, this distinction and the malleable nature of the concepts of transcendence and transcendental are the precise reasons why this discussion chooses to identify the third paradigm; the purpose of the *PSB*, as a transcendental paradigm of faith. In developing the concept of a transcendental paradigm for understanding and explicating faith it is necessary to further define the meaning of transcendental for both Lonergan and Rahner (as a Transcendental Thomist in the theological tradition) who use the word and apply the concept in contrasting and intersecting ways.

Lonergan understands transcendence as the active nature of knowing and its impelling intensity to strive constantly for intellectual advancement. "There is an intellectual desire, an eros of the mind. Without it there would arise no questioning, no inquiry, no wonder" (*Insight* p. 74 in Macquarrie op.cit. p. 380). The drive of the human mind to go beyond present knowledge and understanding is not a mere increase in knowledge or a further accumulation of data, but rather the deepened perception, leaps of insight and variegated modes of understanding that are constitutive of transcendence as a genuine 'going beyond'. A further development of transcendence arises when the path and methodology of the process of knowing is undertaken and questions arise concerning the limits of human knowing; is it confined to the world of proportionate being, or does it in fact begin to enter into and penetrate the realm of transcendent being? The transcendent realm may itself be subject to judgement as being either relative or absolute i.e. either as merely beyond the human person or as the ultimate in the entire process of transcending (cf. ibid). Lonergan's use of the concepts

'transcendence' and 'transcendental', and the interpretation of his method as being transcendental, are of value to the designation of the intention of the *PSB* as being a transcendental paradigm. This is precisely because of the specific method of constantly searching, impelled by an inner drive to perceive and understand God, and the human experience and critical reflection of the faith relationship with this reality.

Kilby, in her study devoted to the philosophical underpinning of Rahner's theology (**Karl Rahner: *Philosophy and Theology*** 2004) takes issue with the facile lumping together of Lonergan and Rahner as Transcendental Thomists; a designation she finds unjustified with view to the differing understandings and applications of the transcendental concept (cf. p. 14). "Similarities between Rahner and Lonergan, for instance, though real, are limited, and they are offset by considerably greater dissimilarities" (ibid p. 134). Having examined the reasons why Lonergan is described as a Transcendental Thomist of the philosophical tradition by virtue of his method and his particular use of the term, the rest of this discussion will explore the use of 'transcendent' and 'transcendental' by Rahner.

Rahner employs the term 'Transcendental' in two different ways, not identified by him as being different, as the one is an extension of the other. The first, and most obvious way is in the sense commonly understood; where an experience or a phenomenon is not categorically or particularly limited, but is a universal reality transcending the boundaries of subject, history and culture. As Haight points out, for Rahner, all human experience has both a categorical and a transcendental dimension. The categorical determined by the particular socio-historical circumstances in which an individual responds to his/her subjective experience; yet within this categorical dimension of experience there are factors that go beyond the individual and are shared in common with all human beings (cf. 1990: 7). The second sense is a broadly Kantian one when he refers to a particular kind of investigation, its methodology, and the outcome of this enquiry. Kilby, provides pertinent examples from Rahner's ***Theological Investigations*** volumes 9 and 11 respectively, highlighting two instances where this sense is manifest: "a *transcendental investigation* examines an issue according to the necessary conditions given by the possibility of knowledge and action on the part of the subject himself"; and "A transcendental line of enquiry, regardless of the particular area or subject-matter in which it is applied, is present when and to the extent that it raises the question of the conditions in which knowledge of a specific object is possible in the knowing subject himself" (op.cit. p. 33). In Rahner's methodology, the interlinking of the two understandings and applications of 'transcendental' form a unit when applied in the theological process. Thus, if one undertakes a transcendental investigation in the broad[15] Kantian sense, then the resultant discovery will be that we are

transcendental beings (cf. ibid). Thus, Rahner employs the term transcendental in a formal sense i.e. to refer to the conditions that make possible the cognitive processes involved in investigation and the types of enquiry that reveal these conditions. He also uses it in the material sense i.e. referring to the movement within the individual, and the possibility of this situated in the transcendent character of the human spirit, which enables this reaching out beyond the finite toward the infinite (cf. ibid p. 34).

One of the clearest articulations of this is to be found in Rahner's introduction to *Foundations of Christian Faith*, where he succinctly speaks of the graced quality of human experience and its foundations in God's salvific will for all and the transcendental horizon of the human spirit:
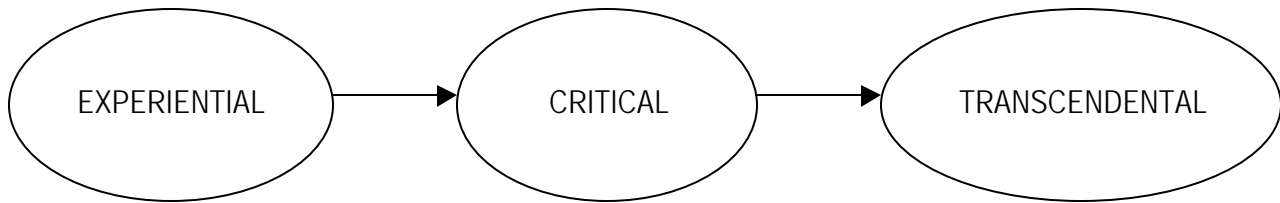
> We shall call *transcendental experience* the subjective, unthematic, necessary, and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality. It is an *experience* because this knowledge, unthematic but ever-present, is a moment within and a condition of possibility for every concrete experience of any and every object. This experience is called *transcendental* experience because it belongs to the necessary and inalienable structures of the knowing subject itself, and because it consists precisely in the transcendence beyond any particular group of possible categories (Rahner 1978: 20).

This passage demonstrates the results that emerge when the transcendental method is **combined** with an **insight** into the transcendental character of the human spirit and the **acceptance** that the horizon of human experience is transcendental i.e. open to the infinite – oriented toward God where grace forms the *a priori* horizon of the human spirit[16]. It also indicates the creative imagination at work in uniting theological propositions through a method of inquiry, a commitment to truth and the desire for a synthesised and coherent presentation of the fundamentals of Christian faith.

Rahner's use of the transcendental method comes across practically in his use of transcendental arguments. The transcendental argument is a regressive argument that moves backward, seeking foundations prior to established consensus to examine the conditions and underlying factors that make possible the acceptance of a particular truth. The transcendental method argues backward, logically speaking, "from an unquestionable feature of experience to a stronger thesis as the condition of its possibility" (Taylor in Di Noia 1997: 122). The motivating factor behind this method is the principle of the inner coherence present within revealed truth. While many of the central elements of the Christian faith are known by divine revelation, they are not necessarily unintelligible or without logical foundations, and are therefore capable of being understood rationally, leading to a firmer grounding of their truth value by virtue of the logical consistency present as an internal structure and capable of discernment by the human mind. The task of theology is the unearthing of this logical consistency and rational structure within truth propositions accepted in faith, grounded on the

authority of the revealing God, yet open to investigation, analysis, and systematisation within a theological synthesis.

3.2 PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT – DIALOGUE

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  ┌─────────────┐        ┌──────────┐        ┌────────────────┐
  │ EXPERIENTIAL │ ────▶ │ CRITICAL │ ────▶ │ TRANSCENDENTAL │
  └─────────────┘        └──────────┘        └────────────────┘
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This relationship is the most obvious in terms of how it is consonant with faith development theories. It is also (as are the faith development theories) consonant with the process of knowing, the moments that correspond to broadly accepted theories of how one comes to knowledge of reality. That faith does indeed develop and is in need of nurturing lest it weaken, is attested to in Scripture and is consonant with faith development theories. As the discussion on the development of faith will be dealt with in some detail in chapter five, the present discussion will confine itself to a broad description of coming to faith in the conversion process understood primarily as a cognitive progression.

To speak of conversion is already to assume a set of presuppositions that have their cause in a preliminary experience. The nature of this experience is determined by the individual's life context; the quality of the experience is determined by the nature of this experience; and the impact and influence is determined by the above conditions in conjunction with the internal structure of human consciousness, coupled with the individual's unique predispositions. That some experience has led a person to a fundamental review of prior concepts and values, leading to a reorientation of life is antecedent to the conversion process. The experience may be implicit or explicit, open to varying degrees of interpretation and explanation, or meaning giving by itself or in need of sustained reflection in order to grasp a significance that hides just below the surface of consciousness. These and a number of determined and undetermined factors all play a role in the nature and quality of the conversion process. The above considerations apply to any type of conversion, be it from an old way of thinking and behaving to a new way, through the various commitments people make to ideals, political and ideological systems, to the conversion from an *a*spiritual to a spiritual commitment. The concern here is with the latter as experienced and expressed within a religious system, in particular Christianity.

"In theological usage, conversion usually means a spiritual movement toward God as he communicates himself in Christ and the Holy Spirit" (Dulles 1994*b*: 191). The process of conversion takes place within a framework of experiences that either occur as an intense peak experience, or in the more mundane and gradual manifestation of the divine breaking into human consciousness through the ordinary experiences of life. In either event, there is the radical shift of one's mental and emotional horizons (cf. ibid). Dulles, in the article in ***The Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*** on *Conversion*, distinguishes between types of conversion in terms of the objectives envisaged. These, for the purposes of this discussion on the movement from experience to critical reflection on that experience, and the transcendental as an inevitable outcome, though often co-incidental, form stages in the larger movement of the conversion process. These types of conversion are <u>theistic</u> (to God as transcendent reality, <u>Christian</u> (to Jesus Christ as the supreme self-communication of God), <u>ecclesial</u> (to the Church as the community of faith, and <u>personal</u> (to a way of life which reflect the commitments made to the above) (cf. ibid). Bernard Lonergan describes religious conversion as a dynamic state of otherworldly falling in love in response to the love of God made present in the human heart through the grace of the Holy Spirit. For Lonergan the term conversion signifies no mere change or development but a radical transformation, involving a transvaluation of all values. The convert apprehends differently because s/he has become different (cf. Dulles 1995: 57). This dynamic state of radical transformation produces new degrees of cognitional, moral, and affective self-transcendence (cf. Dulles 1994*b*: 191). As moments within the faith experience, these dimensions form part of this discussion in Part three where the dimensions of faith, revealed by the *PSB* are dealt with in detail. This dynamic state is a renewal on these levels, and occurs as moments within the conversion process.

In Lonergan's transcendental method is found the phases of the cognitional process of coming to insights that radically alter one's subsequent orientation, perceptions, and commitments. A concise presentation of the conscious intentional operations of the knowing subject in this method, and coinciding with the stages of conversion as presented by the three paradigms of faith are: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding (cf. Grace 1996: 3). Conversion, as the movement from one state of being to another must necessarily embrace all these stages, whether they occur as distinct steps that are consciously intended or as movements within the total conversion process. If conversion is the radical orientation of being and action then in the Lonerganian cognitional process, the transcendental method, understood as examining the very conditions for the possibility of knowing, involve the whole subject. This method is ". . . a heightening of consciousness that brings to light our conscious intentional operations and thereby leads to the answers to three basic questions . . . what am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know when I do it?"

(ibid p. 5). These three questions are those asked by cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics. The value of Lonergan's cognitional process as a conceptual framework for understanding conversion lies in its consonance with the moments of faith expressed by the three paradigms. Furthermore, it provides a secure epistemological foundation for asserting the conversion to Christian faith as being consonant with cognitional theory and so an integral part of the human process of coming to deepened knowledge, and not a mere leap into the darkness of rational suicide.

As the above identification of the three paradigms as reflecting, the cognitional process as presented by Lonergan leaves some confusion as to where judgement lies, it is necessary to clarify the precise location of judgement in the process of conversion understood as a new way of thinking and a reorientation of being. Does it fall into the critical phase as a dimension or element within the interpretive and understanding process, or does it find itself in the transcendental phase, where this is understood as a methodology of understanding the cognition process? A response to these questions is given by Snell (2003) who reflects on this with regard to connaturality as the definitive understanding of wisdom, considered as right judgement:

> Lonergan's cognitional structure works from experience to understanding, from understanding to judgment, and from judgment to decision, and it is at judgment that Aquinas places wisdom. Connaturality allows a leap over levels of this structure; a person might bypass understanding with its questions and insights and move directly to judgment. This is fine enough, but we must recall that connaturality is a matter of affection and ought not to be forced into the intellect. Connaturality, then, is not a matter of 3rd level judgments but 4th level actions and modes of being, particularly if connaturality is not merely cognitive. Consequently, wisdom in the second sense (connaturality with the Divine) is not knowledge, but is beyond knowledge, and is in the 4th level of action (op. cit: p. 6).

Snell's perspective, where his concern is to find a place for wisdom (considered as judgement) with reference to affectivity as necessary for a better understanding and explication of connaturality within Aquinas' thought system, enables a clearer understanding of why judgement must fall into the transcendental paradigm. Not only does it provide for this discussion a deeper and broader understanding of the intention of the *PSB* as transcendental in its intention, it also enables an understanding of Lonergan's method as reflective of the conversion process. If judgement is considered with reference to action and as a constituent of the transcendental paradigm, it is clear that it is conflated into this paradigm, and so Lonergan's cognitional process is in accord with the three paradigms understood as stages within the conversion process. This will find further affirmation in the following model of relationship between the paradigms considered as integration through the dialectical method.
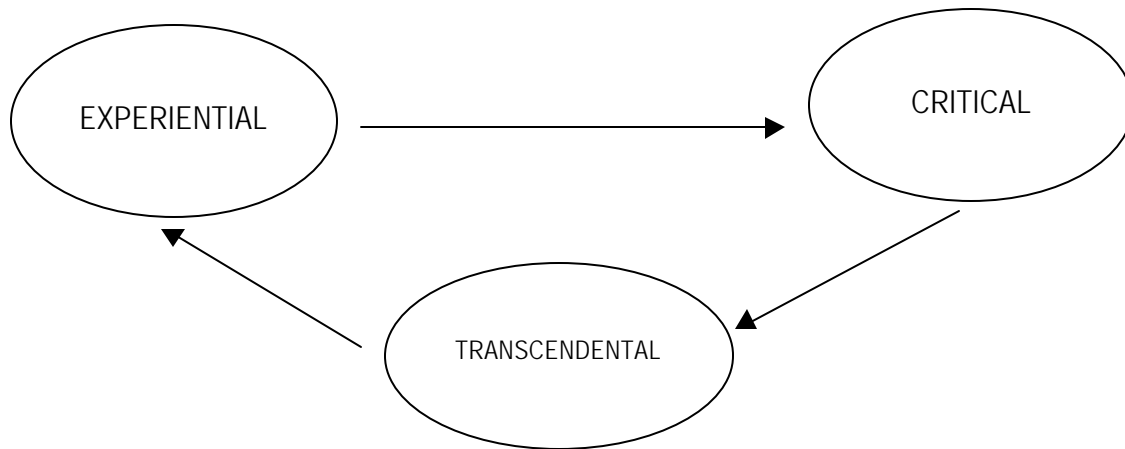
A focus on the structural and formal elements of the *PSB* indicates a mind keenly aware that faith is primarily about experiencing God. It is the experience of God, preconceptually, unthematised and tentative that is the foundation upon which the faith journey begins and from whence it progresses toward more conceptual and cognitive levels. The conceptual nature of faith is always a secondary phenomenon, a reflection on the experience of God in order to discern the meaning and significance of the faith experience. The personally appropriated meaning finds expression and fulfilment in the active living out of this in the life of the person of faith. This in turn leads to an intensification of the more complete experience of God in different and changing contexts determined by the level of faith commitment. This ongoing dialectic of experience, reflection, and practice is a process that continually refines itself, as each level is a stage toward a greater conceptualisation of faith in the heart, mind, and will of the subject.

The core notion of a dialectic process of a continual refinement of previously held positions or understandings derives from its Hegelian designation as a process that brings forth an opposition, between a thesis and an antithesis, having within it an urge to be resolved by a synthesis; a combination in which the conflicting elements are preserved and somehow reconciled (cf. Mautner 1996: 141). While Hegel transformed the original notion of Fichte and Schilling from a logical to a metaphysical one, the triadic dialectical structure in essence is applied here without the strict connotations of opposition but rather as a movement of refinement through articulation, deeper clarification, and application of the preceding positions.

Experience remains the most consistently compelling mode of knowing. However, when assertions of truth concerning metaphysical and transcendent data are predicated upon experience, then the valid objection of the subjective interpretive character of understanding the precise nature of the phenomena experienced is a necessary function of the epistemic principles governing knowledge and truth. The

interpretation of experience in order to assert certain knowledge needs to be subjected to the rigorous methodologies of classic and contemporary epistemology. Experience is always subjective at the level of a personal encounter with phenomena, be it empirical, mental or transcendental. This subjectivity does not necessarily render invalid any and all claims to verifiable truth because of the subjective nature of experience and the subjective criteria governing the interpretive process. If this were indeed the case, then no certainty of knowledge could be claimed based on experience, leading to an acquiescent solipsism and a resigned scepticism.

The broad consensus of meaning in experience is a guarantor of the objectively verifiable nature of the phenomena under discussion. While subjectivity may incline one to a particular interpretation of an objectively verifiable phenomenon, this does not exclude the possibility, and the reality of other subjects sharing a broad agreement about the fundamental fact and nature of the phenomenon experienced. Where disagreement emerges is in the **meaning** given to the phenomenon, and yet this may be a disagreement of opinion rather than of fact, and recognised as such by critical and mature subjects involved in the experience. Certain elements in the phenomenon experienced will be regarded as universally indisputable, however it is in the interpreting of these elements that the critical function of an epistemology of faith operates as a verification instrument reflecting, discerning and critically ordering the knowledge gained through experience.

The degree of rigorous objectivity claimed and indeed exercised by a critical theological method ensures the integrity of the hermeneutics employed in the process of discerning the validity, within a given theological framework, of the interpretive understanding being as free as possible from intrusive elements of an entirely subjective nature distorting knowledge of the objective reality strived for. It is precisely the method and criteria of a scientific theological system that ensures the validity of the faith experience as being grounded in objective reality, thus ensuring a broad consensus of meaning and understanding. The critical function operates not only as a model for interpreting the nature of the faith experience, but also introduces ordering principles that organise an interpretive understanding into a coherent framework of faith propositions that are subject to epistemological scrutiny. Thus, the structure and content of theological propositions ensure a systematic ordered foundation for a coherent and explicable presentation of the faith experience. The necessity for a continuous referral back to experience ensures the relevance and meaning of the critical scientific method in theology. This constant inter-referencing between the subjective and objective poles of faith performs a mutually self-correcting function. Where the authentic elements in religious experience find their expression in theology distorted, misconstrued, and/or reduced to mere abstraction, the consistently verifiable nature of the faith experience will challenge theology to be faithful to its subject matter as the content of its

objective methodological system. Reciprocally, the excesses, misapprehensions and particularity of the faith experience will be subjected to the critical scrutiny of a theological method that employs epistemological categories that exclude the entirely subjective and psychologically distorted assumptions of the faith experience; ensuring the integrity not only of method, but more specifically the continuation of theology as a critical and systematic reflection upon the experience of faith.

However, the circle of understanding is completed when a coherent and systematic position based on experience finds its complete meaning in its fruitful application in action. Theological systems predicated on prior experiences are themselves verified through their practical implementation in the world of action. Once again, action is qualified as being genuine action motivated by faith when it is considered in both its transitive and immanent modes[17]. The dialectic finds completion when the active implementation of a system itself creates new experiences. These experiences are of a different order from those that led to reflective scrutiny in the first instance and are of necessity themselves in need of further critical analysis by the tools of the systematic theologian. Thus, the hermeneutical dialectic continually refines itself at each stage of its actualisation in the full circle of experience demanding critical reflection, the resultant conceptualised system finding meaning, and indeed verification in its testing in active application.

Lonergan's theories of cognition again provide assistance in describing with greater insight the dialectical process, with particular attention to how the movements follow logically from one stage to the next. Tekippe (2003: 63-66) in an invaluable introductory guide to Lonergan's *Insight* (1957) provides a concise exposition on the cognitional process described as the structure of human knowing. The element of experience is regarded by Lonergan as the level of presentations, the first level of knowing. Experience is not only of the world around us but also of the inner world to which each knowing subject has personal and privileged access. Experience includes that which is not personally experienced, but which can be imagined. The question for understanding what has been presented to the first level of presentation is the movement to the second level of intelligence. The desire to give meaning to experience is the motivating cause for a search for insight. The tension created by not understanding leads to a heuristic process that resolves the tension by attaining insight. Insight finds itself expressed in the universal concept because it must of necessity, to make itself coherently intelligible, be articulated in a meaningful idea. In his famous summary statement, Kant says, "thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concept are blind" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, in Tekippe p. 60-1). Yet the concept itself demands analysis: is it indeed so? Is it really true? As a propositional formulation, it requires scrutiny as to its truth-value. At this point, the transcendental method comes into play as the verification instrument in the first instance. Reflection on the validity

of the concept leads to a judgement. "But between the question for reflection and the issuance of the judgement intervenes a process that Lonergan calls reflection proper, whereby evidence for the proposed judgement is produced and weighed" (ibid p. 65). Lonergan gives sustained treatment to the judgement process, as it is the vital juncture between thought and action, between *theoria* and *praxis*:

> . . . without the prior presentations of sense, there is nothing for a man to understand . . . Moreover, the combination of the operations of sense and understanding does not suffice for human knowing. There must be added judging. To omit judging is quite literally silly: it is only by judging that there emerges a distinction between fact and fiction . . . Nor can one place human knowing in judging to the exclusion of experiencing and understanding. To pass judgement on what one does not understand is, not human knowing, but human arrogance. To pass judgement independently of all experience is to set fact aside (Lonergan 1967: 222-223 in Snell 2003: 3).

From this unambiguous affirmation of the necessary relationship between experience, understanding and judgement, understood in its transcendental sense, is the basis for validly asserting the *PSB* considered with reference to its structure (experiential), content (critical), and Intention (transcendental) as providing the foundation for an epistemology of faith. A conflation of the three levels of Lonergan's analysis of the human knowing process, adapted from Tekippe's presentation (2003: 65) for a comparative and complementary clarification appears as:

| **Experiential**	**Critical**	**Transcendental**
(1) *Level of Presentations*	(2) *Level of Intelligence*	(3) *Level of Reflection*
Sense data	Question for information	Question for reflection
(*Inner & Outer)*	Insight	Reflection
Imagination	Concept	Judgement
		Decision & Commitment

The fourth stage (My insertion) within the third level of reflection is an addition that follows logically from judgement. Judgement is never rash in the proper structure of the cognitional process as it implies a personal commitment to what has been judged as the right outcome of the cognition process. There is a certain finality about judgement regarded in this light, as it presupposes that all available evidence has been weighed and the logical outcome is the decision to commit based on judgement. It is at this point that the dialectical process begins anew at the first level of presentation:

> Judgement, then, has a certain finality about it. It puts paid to one episode of knowing, it is the 'total increment in human knowing'. That does not mean, of course, that human knowing comes to an end, but only that *it must strike out on a new course, with new data, or new insight, to arrive at a further judgement* (ibid p. 63, my italics).

The decision to commit to an attitude and a way of life presents the possibility of a completely new set of sense data. With a new lifestyle and its appropriated values, a new vision of reality emerges, influencing one's perception and presenting to the intellect a new set of data to be analysed. This in turn leads to new insights, the formulation of new concepts to embrace these insights and so on to further questing, questioning and reflection, judgement of the results of this and a renewed decision to a deepened commitment.

Transcendental, considered in its active sense is the second instance of verifying the validity of, for our purposes, theological systems. It is here too that the theories of truth and their corresponding relationship to the three paradigms of faith emerge as significant. The correct judgement of concepts arrived at through reflection on experience must lead to their practical application in the living of one's faith commitment. The truth of faith finds final justification as a valid cognitional act and process through its lived application in transformative action.

3.4 INTERSECTING SYNTHESIS – UNITY IN PLURALITY
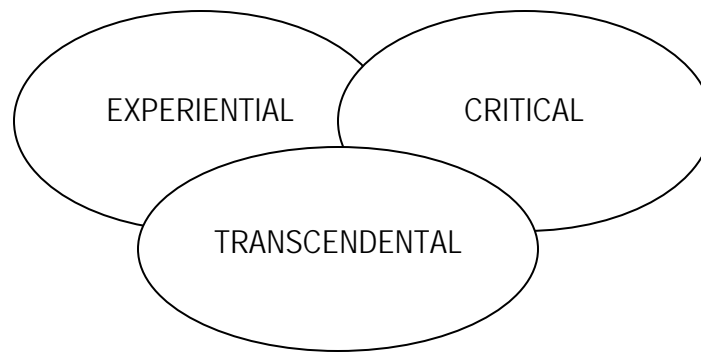
The fourth phase or moment of relating the three paradigms is a deepening of the dialectical method, without in actual fact departing from it. It is essentially a unified moment in which faith is deepened in the individual and the community through the above dialectic without the conscious, semi-mechanical method of reflection, conceptualisation, and resultant judgement and commitment. These are all gathered into one intersecting synthesis that through the transcendental method finds its movement not so much in a dialectical circle, but in an **ever-tightening spiral** where faith is no longer a conscious decision, a dimension of life, but an **integral constituent of being**. The person of faith is caught up, immersed in and possessed by faith and all it involves and implies in such a way that the reality of faith is the determining identity of that person. Faith is now an instinctive reality that influences, orients being, and action in a moment that defies precise intellectual conception and verbal articulation (though the person of faith is capable to do so within the horizon of the understanding of
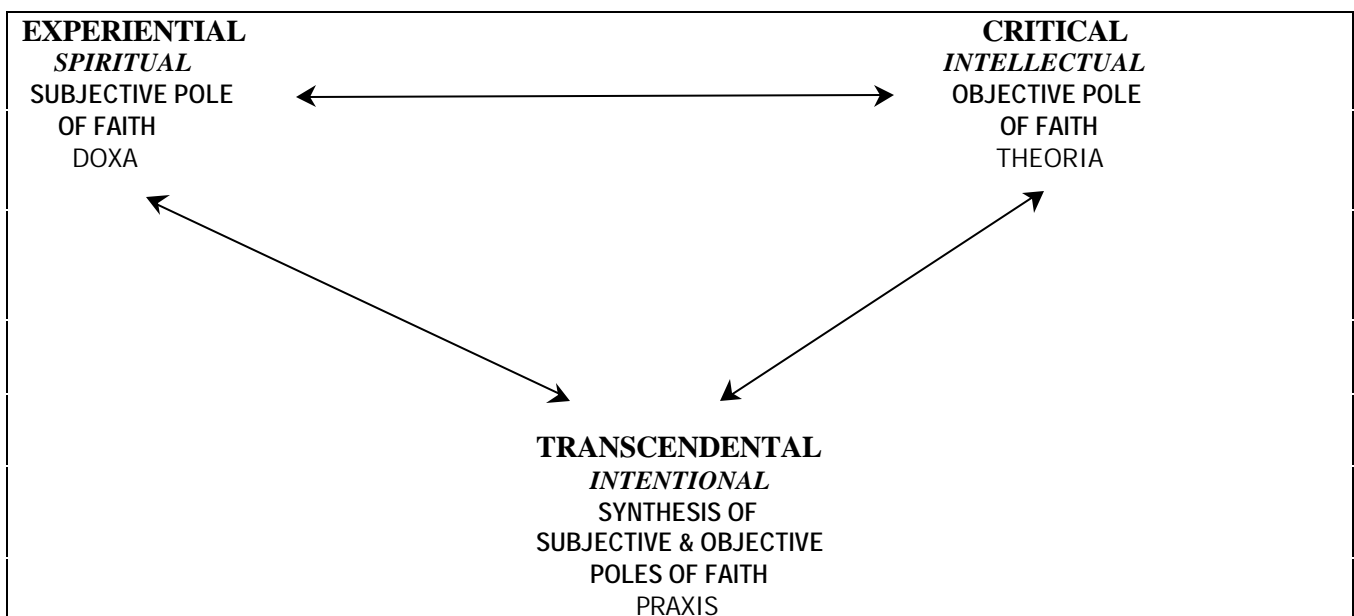
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faith), as it becomes a dynamic inner experience that is continually lived as an internal and external commitment. It is at this level of faith that the subjective element of faith is reconciled with the objective element of critical reflection through transcendence in the intellectual sense and in the sense of passing into action. The tension between subject and object is dissolved through conscious intentionality where the experiencing and knowing subject of faith finds in action the affirmation of ultimate reality as the ground of personal being.

These rather abstruse considerations call for some validation within a philosophical framework. While acknowledging fundamental disagreements in philosophy concerning the issues to be discussed, their relevance as underpinning the assertions that form the conceptual basis for an understanding of this model of relationship require that they be brought into the discussion. For Kant, the real is to be found in action, a theme later taken up by Blondel (cf. Macquarrie 2001: 379). As mentioned in the introduction of this discussion where a brief overview of the intellectual understanding of faith presented Kant's conclusion that any metaphysical speculation was fruitless, as only that which presented itself to the human mind as perceptible phenomena in the sensory realm and processed by the internal structure of the human minds cognitional capacity, is real. Kant asserts that to speak of faith is meaningful only in the practical moral results it produces. Marechal sought through the method and categories of transcendental Thomism to break the impasse into which Kant's transcendental method had led the faith discussion. In Marechal's transcendental analysis, to know phenomenal reality is simultaneously to know in and through it the absolute reality that transcends the level of mere phenomenal presentations (cf. ibid). Marechal's understanding of the dynamism of the human intellect as going beyond the mere passive role given it by Kantian epistemology, reconciles this artificial acceptance of faith as real only insofar as it corresponds to the external realm of action through an expansion of the capabilities of human knowing through intellection. Thus, faith finds epistemic acceptance through a broader interpretation of the dynamics of the human cognitional act and process. Marechal ascribes to the process of intellection the same dynamic value that Kant and Blondel ascribe to action (cf. ibid). <u>It is this understanding of the intellect as dynamic, combined with faith achieving the fulfilment of its true reality in action that the intersecting synthesis of the fourth model of relationship is understood and vindicated as a unity of thought and action</u>.

As will be conceded in the following chapters, faith does not know in the ordinary sense, in which it achieves certainty of knowledge through rational deduction and induction. However, its method of defending the facticity of the metaphysical, and its philosophic proponents' ability to argue for its reality as a fundamental constituent of the whole person and therefore of human intellection, means

that it is not a suspension of the critical faculty of cognition, nor an evasion of the fundamental principles of epistemology.

Phenomenology, as an *a priori* transcendental method of pure consciousness has much to say to the nature of the relationship between the paradigms in this fourth model. The fundamental achievement of the phenomenological method is in "its attempt to provide a vigorous defence of the fundamental and inextricable role of subjectivity and consciousness in all knowledge and in descriptions of the world" (Moran 2000: 15). The phenomenological movement (in its broad sense) maintains that we cannot create an artificial divide between the subjective domain of consciousness and the objective domain of transpersonal reality. "Subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity" (ibid). Though Husserl and Heidegger differed in their conception of how objectivity becomes constituted in and for consciousness,[18] their radical differences in this regard fundamentally demonstrates how they struggled to understand and express the mode in which the world comes to appearance in and through the human consciousness. For the person of authentic faith, the process through which God, as an objective phenomenon comes to consciousness in the human is through grace, but also through the unique capacity of human consciousness to dispose itself in an act of self-transcendence. This self-transcendence is not a denial of what it means to be human, but the fulfilment of the innate potential to make present to subjective consciousness, the reality of the divine presence as an integral part of being. This is achieved through transcending mere presence to sensible reality, and seeking perception of that which is through faith, understood as the meaning giving principle of all reality. In the genuine act of faith, transcendence includes the implementation of the values that become a constituent of being through the faith commitment. In both these acts of transcendence God, as an objective other, becomes one with the very being of the faithful subject.

EXPERIENTIAL		**CRITICAL**
SPIRITUAL		*INTELLECTUAL*
SUBJECTIVE POLE	⟵⟶	OBJECTIVE POLE
OF FAITH		OF FAITH
DOXA		THEORIA

TRANSCENDENTAL
INTENTIONAL
SYNTHESIS OF
SUBJECTIVE & OBJECTIVE
POLES OF FAITH
PRAXIS

The above diagrammatic representation of this dialectic demonstrates visually, the tight interconnection between the three paradigms in this model of relationship. True objectivity is authentic subjectivity as paradoxically, objectivity is sought and found in the knowing subject rather than in the object, as objectivity does not inhere in objects; it is an achievement of the knower (cf. Tekippe 2003: 105).

It is in this model of relationship between the three paradigms where the meaning and value of each is caught up and actualised in the others. There is very little, if any distinct separation of the three paradigms in the life of the faithful person, yet neither is the full reality of each diluted into an eclectic miscellany. The vigour and intensity of faith as the experience of God in every thought and action is realised through a connatural affinity that sees neither division nor discreteness, but the truth that all is indeed one in the unity of God's love.

3.4.1 Jesus - Exemplar of this Model

In the First chapter of Mark's Gospel (1: 21-39), we find the movement of Jesus depicting the cyclical nature of this process. Jesus' movements in this pericope are both physical and metaphorical, each finding in the other a deeper meaning and an explication of the exterior movement reflecting the interior deepening process. Jesus has just begun his active ministry, one that find its impetus in the identification of him by John the Baptist and his baptism by John as the foundational event of his ministry. The Baptism of Jesus establishes both his **identity** and **ministry** where the voice from heaven proclaims, "You are my Son, the beloved; my favour rests on you" (Mk 1: 11). At once, the Spirit descends on him and drives him into the desert to reflect on his identity, to clarify in his own mind his ministry, and to empower him to fulfil this mission (cf. 1:12-13). Having had a transcendental experience in his baptism, Jesus is driven to reflect on it in the solitude of the wilderness aided by the guiding wisdom of the Spirit. He is now ready for action and begins his ministry, not as a personal enterprise, but with the support of a community of disciples (vv. 16-20). He begins his ministry in the formal setting of the synagogue, the place of instruction, reflection, and worship (vv. 21-22). In the very environment of the context of prayer and reflection, the synagogue, he reaches out in an act of transformative healing. The witnesses in the synagogue are impressed by both his wisdom in teaching and the authority of acting with confident power to bring about that which he teaches (vv. 23-28). "At once" (indicating the simultaneity of his movement in prayer, reflection and action), he leaves the place of public worship to be in community with his new found friends and is confronted by a situation demanding another act of transformative healing; Simon's mother-in-law. She is healed of a physical ailment, but is transformed inwardly in such a manner that she too reaches out in an act of loving service to the community of the disciples (vv. 29-31). Jesus

continues to reach out in action, transforming the lives of the afflicted (vv. 32-34), in acts of healing that we must presume transcend the merely physical to reach into the hearts and minds of those he heals. Early in the morning, long before dawn, he gets up, leaves the house, and goes to a lonely place where he prays. His prayer may well consist of experiencing the reenergizing power of his father, the worship of his father, and a meditative reflection on the experiences he has been through in the past 24 hours. His prayer is disturbed by his newfound companions, who urge him to continue in his ministry of teaching and healing. He moves on and away from this place to new areas of ministry, instructing and performing acts of healing transformation (vv. 35-39). In this dense passage we find the movement from transcendental experience, to reflection, to action repeated in a manner where each naturally leads on to the next, where each is expressed and refined by the others, and repeated in an ongoing cycle that reflects the whole process of an authentic faith journey.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The *Prayer of St. Benedict* provides an understanding of faith as primarily a graced gift of God consonant with the cognitive faculties of human consciousness. Wisdom, understood as right judgement is native to the human intellect but deficient in fulfilling its final end as perception of ultimate reality without the necessary quality of connaturality. Connaturality as an affinity with the 'mind' and 'will' of God is itself a gracing of the human capacity for an intuitive perception of the metaphysical. The perception granted by wisdom enables the subject of faith to be 'grasped' and possessed by God in a manner whereby God is recognised as the ground of being and the cause of a furthered understanding of his presence and action in the person.

Wisdom becomes the source of an ability perceive God in a manner that enables a rational intuition of the internal structure of faith. The *PSB* is understood as providing the meta-basis or the meta-paradigm for a construction of paradigms that reflect and explicate the experiential, critical, and transcendental elements of faith. These paradigms are discerned in the structure, content, and intention of the *PSB*. Defining characteristics of each approach affirm the validity of their designation as paradigms, confirm their epistemic relevance, and clarify elements within each as specific to that approach, by way of contrast.

Furthering the wisdom character as essential to genuine faith is its function as the foundation for discerning the complementary nature of the paradigms in their relatedness to each other. The four models of relationship discover further elements that provide epistemic foundations through their consonance with the human cognition process. Each model takes up the nature and quality of the preceding model, where these are actualised at a further stage of development, finding completion in

the final model. The final model of relationship is not the conclusion of the process, but a model describing the continuing development of faith as it becomes increasingly intensified in a contemplative-active appropriation of faith.

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PART TWO
THE FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

The *PSB* is now considered in its component elements for a more complete analysis of faith. The grounding of faith is in its material object, God and in its formal object, the act of faith, correlative, and inseparable (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 189). These are designated as the affirmations of faith in which the *PSB* is directed to God, who is experienced as transcending finite reality and immanent to and in it, precisely because such an experience is possible. The act of faith is designated as the assumptions of faith by virtue of faith being possible through the Trinitarian missions considered historically and personally, transcendentally and categorically. That faith is at all possible rests on the assumption that the human person has an inner orientation to the supernatural as a constituent element of his/her creature condition. This in itself is deficient for a full act of faith, which is granted through the power of the Spirit who enters fully into history and human consciousness through the Christ event.

CHAPTER FOUR
4. THE AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH IN THE *PSB*
O GRACIOUS AND HOLY FATHER

Faith in God is affirmed in this address, faith in the existence and in the reality of God, but more importantly, faith in the **nature** of God. By predicating **graciousness** and **holiness** of the object of faith, an awareness of the primary characteristics of the nature and action of God is revealed. This assertion of the intrinsic relationship between identity and function, essence and action, in the opening address sets the backdrop for an analysis of the *Prayer* that integrates the dynamic character inherent in the prayer. Predicating graciousness of God is the affirmation of his immanence, while predicating holiness of God is an affirmation of his transcendence.

4.1 THE OBJECT OF FAITH (*FIDES QUAE*)

The ***Fides Quae*** is the faith that is believed, in contrast to the ***Fides Qua***, the faith by which we believe. This distinction is important in the faith discussion as it enables a clear and analytical consideration to proceed from a secure foundation in the precise nature of faith. The *Fides Quae* is faith in the objective sense; that which is believed in, a reality beyond the self to which an act of faith, the *Fides Qua*, is directed in a subjective sense (cf. McBrien 1994: 39). A further clarification of this distinction between these two distinct, but interrelated points of view considers the grammatical function of the word, faith. Faith can be looked at as a **noun** insofar as it refers to the objective truths that are believed, the *fides quae creditur*. Faith can be viewed as a **verb** insofar as it refers to the subjective act of believing; the *fides qua creditur* (cf. Collins 1998: 26). This distinction designates the two forms of faith, the former being primarily propositional, doctrinal, and objective; and the latter

being primarily relational, trusting, and subjective. This distinction between the two forms of faith was clarified early in the life and teaching of the Church. In the 4th century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in one of his catechetical sermons averred that faith "First of all is concerned with doctrine and it denotes the assent of the soul to some truth." He continues, "The word 'faith' has a second meaning: it is a particular gift and grace of Christ." Cyril goes on to explain that this gift of grace is a form of trust (Jurgens 1970:352).

All who believe in a Transcendent Being acknowledge the totally otherness, supernatural and metaphysical nature of this ontic reality. That this being or supreme force is distinct from, and not to be completely identified or contained within the reality of space and time is central to their belief system. Believing Monotheists, in particular Christians, go further and acknowledge either a personal experience of this transcendent spiritual reality, or the possibility of such an experience. Thus the object of faith, God, is recognised and experienced almost paradoxically as the one who is holy and other, as distinct from creation, and yet also as at one with creation and accessible to human beings in a direct and personal manner. God is a reality that is at once experienced as immanent, and acknowledged as transcendent.

4.2 THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD – MAKING FAITH MEANINGFUL

The appellation, *Holy*, recognises and affirms the transcendent nature of God. God is not to be identified with his creation; he is holy, beyond and perfect – omnipotent and omniscient. Our sense of finitude and limitedness in the face of the infinite and limitless, leads us to the recognition and affirmation of the one who perfects and completes us, the one who is whole – the one who is the object of all human desiring and the end of our striving. The act of faith directed towards, and invested in this object of holy plenitude makes this act intensely meaningful and existentially compelling.

Christians proclaim that the unknown, mysterious creator God and primordial principle of Greek philosophical culture, is the God of Abraham and the father of Jesus Christ. To identify the god of the Philosophers, the Prime mover of Aquinas, and the ontological necessity of Anselm with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the personal God of the covenant, is an identification made in countless self-references by this God himself in many Old Testament Texts, most notably in Exodus 3: 13-14, culminating in that pregnant phrase "I am he who is". He is the one God, true and living, revealed in the covenants, the Lord of universal history and the transcendent object of religious faith. He is acknowledged as the eternal, immutable, all-seeing, and all-powerful creator who is to be both worshipped and served. He is the unique and holy God of Israel who transcends his creation, defying any attempts at definitive and absolute understanding.

In the history of Christian theology and spirituality, the fundamentally transcendent nature of God has predominated, stressing always the ineffable and unknowable absoluteness of God. While it is vital to hold in tension the two primary attributes of God, his transcendence and his immanence, any attempt to explain God within a coherent system of thought invariably leads to an overall impression of God as being ultimately incomprehensible. St. Augustine held that there is an inward path within the human person, through the depths of the self to knowledge of God; yet also taught that God's infinite being is so richly endowed that apparently contradictory statements can be true of him (cf. Reese 1996: 261-2). This conceptualisation of the transcendence and immanence of God has been the fundamental starting point for any discussion of God in Christian theology since. Taken to its extreme, Augustine's assertion would imply that we remain silent before this reality known as God, yet human experience of the presence of the revealed God as the object of human questioning leads us to acknowledging certain fundamentals about his transcendent reality. Philosophical reasoning can lead us to the fact that God **is**, whereas it is through faith grounded in God's self-revelation, the primary mode of his immanence that we come to knowledge of **who** God is. Who and what God is, is given to us through Revelation and the *lumen fidei* (light of faith), which is an affirmation of his immanence. Thus, our affirmation of the essential transcendence of God arises out of our experience of his immanence. Through his immanence, we come to knowledge of the nature of God, and the primary characteristic revealed to us is that God is essentially transcendent; he is wholly other, absolute, and beyond any attempt to define and categorically denote anything further than this. Our **experience** of God can reveal further essential characteristics, but these are always provisional and are always a verisimilitude of the truth of God.

More recently, Thomas Merton, monk and mystic affirms Augustine's contention that the path to knowledge of God is possible through his immanence as the ground of our being, and yet this is possible too because of his essential transcendence; which itself escapes any attempt to define beyond the symbolic and the metaphorical:

> Since God cannot be imagined, anything our imagination tells us about Him is ultimately misleading. And therefore we cannot know Him as He really is unless we pass beyond everything that can be imagined and enter into an obscurity without images and without the likeness of any created thing (1962: 131).

Because the mystery of God transcends all we say about him, our human language always falls short of this mystery; our language about him while continually in need of refinement, nevertheless always remains a representation in human terms of the nature of God. Human thought and language about God is necessarily limited, hence everything we think and say of God is always analogous and representational and never captures the true reality of God, who is beyond any attempt to define within the limitations of human conceptualisation and expression. Scholasticism employed the

typology of *via analogia* in attempting to indicate anything of God. By way of affirmation and negation of any defining characteristic and attribute of God, we arrive at a connotation that transcends both descriptions, which are always anthropomorphic. Consequently "between creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude" (Lateran Council IV *DS* 806) and that "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him" (Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* I, 30 in *CCC* 43). As God is absolute mystery, any attributes applied to him are invariably more disproportionate than they are proportionate. This very incomprehensibility of the mystery of God stands at the centre of his primary attribute of transcendence. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) unequivocally asserts this when stating, "We firmly believe . . . that there is only one, true, eternal, incommensurable and unchangeable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, and ineffable God" (*DS* 428). Yet to predicate incomprehensibility of God is already to affirm some knowledge of him, a knowledge that arises from his action and presence discernible in creation and ultimately communicated personally in Revelation, thus also affirming his immanence.

4.2.1 The Nature of God's Transcendence

Our awareness of God, predicated as it is on Revelation, is in reality the experience and understanding of God within the bounds of our human limitations and context; therefore anything we assert about God is to be understood as conditioned by the matrix of human experience and consciousness, and all that this implies. Our understanding of God is determined by our finiteness and conditioned by our self-consciousness. To assert that God is totally unlike his creatures is to assert that this difference extends to every aspect of the human condition, presuming, as we are that everything we predicate of God is an anthropomorphic projection. The awareness of our intellectual, spiritual, and moral limitations causes us to not only claim that God is not thus limited, but that his transcendence and superiority to us in these attributes is unlimited and therefore perfect. Our transcendent God is therefore, perfectly holy, infinitely intelligent and unsurpassable in goodness. These affirmations arise not only as a consequence of the human experience of deficiency in these attributes, and therefore absolutised when attributed to God; nor do they arise as the result of human experience of God in Revelation and personal relationship with him, but are inherent in any meaningful assertion about the nature of God. If God is indeed the supreme being that is in essence non-contingent and infinite beyond human imagining, then strict logic impels one to assert these attributes as not only experienced by human contingency, but as necessary characteristics by virtue of his perfection.

4.2.2 The Human Experience of God's Transcendence

'Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinosum'

To postulate that humanity is open to an experience of the transcendent God is at the same time to affirm the immanence of God. If God were totally beyond, we would be unable to experience him, but only speculate as to the existence of a supreme other reality that is the prime mover, the first cause – the tentative and unknown god of the philosophers. It is the sense of the numinous, the awareness within the depths of the human spirit and theistic experiences that there is a reality beyond the determined and rationalistic universe that the philosophers describe for us. The sense of the numinous, the transcendent, and the reality that escapes scientific reductionism in the human consciousness is what is described by Rudolf Otto as the *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinosum* (*fascinans*). It is the experience of one who is at once awe-inspiring and attractive (cf. Otto 1970: pp. 12-40). It is a suspicion of transcendence, an awareness of the overwhelming mystery, which is the ultimate source of energy and life. It is awe before something objective and real, yet defies description and rational explanation. Faith gives a name, an identity, and a 'personality' to this tremendous and overwhelming mysterious presence and power. The experience of God's presence is often one of proximity, from inkling and suspicion to immediate and personal encounter. Thus while God exceeds the boundaries of the universe and is unimaginably superior to all of reality, he is encountered in relationship as personal and present.

A phenomenological analysis of the transcendence of God affirms that faith, by its very nature as a transcendental act of the human person, demands that the object of faith be unlimited, absolute, infinite, ultimate, and transcendent. If faith is to be a meaningful act on the part of the human person then the object of faith must satisfy the experience of infinite longing and restlessness within the human heart. The human experience of ultimately never finding fulfilment and absolute meaning in created reality, demands that the nature of that to which s/he commits him/herself to utterly, must possess the power to satisfy the eternal and infinite craving for meaning. The nature and depth of faith is gauged by measuring it against the transcendence of the object of that faith which is its inner stimulus and its cause. Employing elements of Paul Tillich's theology of faith, which describes faith as "ultimate concern" (Tillich 1957); Roger Haight in *Dynamics of Theology*, dealing with the object of faith and the subjective character of faith explains:

> Subjectively faith is an ultimate concern. To be such coherently faith must attach itself to an object that is itself unlimited, absolute, infinite, transcendent, and ultimate, beyond everything in the world that is by contrast limited, relative, finite, and not ultimate. The correspondence between faith and its object, between value-response and value, within the dynamics of faith itself provides a criterion for its own authenticity. Faith reaches out for and clings to something that is transcendent, beyond the finitude of this world and everything in it taken together (1990: 21-22).

If this is the criterion of faith, then a faith that is truly religious cannot be reduced to faith in anything that is less than an absolute transcendent. While we may have faith in an ideal, an ideology, a person or a nation, a commitment to something greater than ourselves and our immediate concerns, while being faith nevertheless, it is not truly faith as 'ultimate concern'. Christian faith, or religious faith has as a criterion the absolute transcendence of the object of faith; thus ensuring its power to grant absolute and transcendent meaning and fulfilment to the deepest longings of the human person. That which does not ultimately satisfy the infinite craving for meaning and absolute value is not properly an object of faith, as we understand it. Obversely, for faith to be existentially meaningful and captivating, it must be faith in a transcendent reality that is in itself absolutely meaningful and uncontingent. That reality is God who is infinitely filled with absolute meaning, meaning giving and the ground of all meaning.

4.3 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD – MAKING FAITH POSSIBLE

The appellation, *Gracious*, as applied in this context is expressive of a personal and direct experience of God. God's action as one who is gracious, affirms that he is not simply the God of the philosophers, one who is above and beyond his creation and his creatures, but God who is accessible, present, within, and open to relationship; in a word, **immanent**. The **grace** of God is the definitive identity and action that denotes God's immanence, God's immediate presence, and power available to all creation.

Poetic phrases such as 'The world is charged with the grandeur of God', 'Creation bears traces of the divine', and 'the discernible trace of God's footprint upon the earth'; witness not only to the poetic imagination of the authors and their spiritual sensitivity, but to the felt, seen, experienced and perceptible nature of God's presence to and in creation. The numinous experiences of people and their sense of something greater than themselves stirring within them, speak to us of the presence of the creator God of the universe in the spirit and consciousness of his creation. *Numen est*, 'This place is haunted', haunted not necessarily with ghosts, but rather with a presence beyond the ordinary. For that reason, the Roman poet Ovid captures this sense, thus giving to it the name numinous. The occurrence of ecstasy (*ekstasis* – 'to stand outside') associated with the sense of awe and wonder are hints to us of the transcendent God present and immanent to and within human experience (cf. O'Malley 2000: 42-44).

These rather aesthetic descriptions of the immanence of God lead to a more theological consideration of the reality and possibility of the divine **presence** and **activity** within creation and the human person. How is it possible and what are the modes of God's presence and action in the world and in

human experience? Faith is only possible if the God of faith manifests himself to his creation and if that creation possesses a capacity for the reception and understanding of that self-manifestation. If faith is a response to God, then an experience of God that calls forth faith and an invitation to faith is indispensable to the nature of faith.

The very real problem of the transcendence and immanence of God is a perennial issue in any theology that attempts to hold in creative tension these seemingly incongruent attributes of God, leading to the insight that immanence and transcendence can only be fully understood in their intrinsic relationship to each other. The *PSB* itself acknowledges this in its address to God by an immediate juxtaposition of the one with the other, "O Gracious **and** Holy Father". An analytical consideration of one pole of this dialectic inevitably needs to be understood in relation to the other. Thus, it is through a dialectical process that our understanding of the reality of one is enhanced by a reciprocal affirmation of the other. Our discussion on the immanence of God can only be properly proceed with a due consideration of how this is intrinsically related to his transcendence in a dialectical process that at once affirms the distinction of either attribute, while seeking a deeper understanding of the unity that exists between them.

Felix-Alejandro Pastor (1994: 352-3) proposes a number of axioms that draw together the logical relationship between the transcendence and immanence of God. His purpose is to ground systematically the experience of the God of Revelation and the transcendent God in a framework of basic postulates discerned in theologies of these dialectic concepts. The <u>Fundamental axiom</u> is 'the revealed God is the hidden God.' This posits an equation of the divergent terms of theology into complementary terms that unite the tension between the God who reveals himself and the God who is mysterious, hidden, and veiled. The <u>Gnoseological axiom</u> posits an equation on the theoretical level of the tension between the knowability of God and the divine incomprehensibility, inasmuch as God is affirmed as incomprehensible mystery: 'The known God is the incomprehensible God.' "This means that the infinite God is affirmed by human beings in transcendence of the limits of their own finitude" (ibid), thus verifying the concept that the infinite can, in a limited manner, be comprehended by the finite. The <u>Ontological axiom</u> – 'The immanent God is the transcendent God' affirms the experience of the human person of both the **nearness** and the **distance** of God. "Far from denying the divine transcendence, the divine immanence in reality and history precisely demands it" (ibid). This axiom brings to the fore the complexity of human language concerning God by enunciating the logic of equivalency between immanence and transcendence. Pastor's <u>Conclusive axiom</u> asserts identification between the God encountered in sacred theophany, sacramental experience, and mystical ecstasy, and the God of Biblical Revelation – "The holy, eternal God is revealed as Lord of the covenant and

Father of faithfulness and goodness". A notable feature of this axiom is its ecumenical significance: the God sought after in the eminent world religions or in personal spirituality is the same God as is found in Judaeo-Christian Revelation, which is at the origins of Christian faith.

The relevance of Pastor's axioms for our discussions lie in their significance as prefatory foundational statements that give coherence to our assertion that the transcendence of God is the condition for the human experience of a personal God, and the experience of God's immanence reveals his fundamental transcendence. Furthermore, faith in God is possible because of his immanence, and meaningful, if not compelling, by virtue of his transcendence and all that this implies.

4.3.1 The Predisposition for an Experience of Immanence

The immanence of God cannot be properly understood without reference to the person's inherent capacity for the infinite, and by extension an anthropological analysis of how humanity understands and expresses this experience of God's immediacy and distinguishable presence. The neo-Thomism of Catholic theology, particularly the transcendental Thomism of the Jesuits Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, opened up the way for an anthropological foundation for discussing faith. The ontological dynamism inherent in creation towards the supernatural, or God, forms the point of departure for the human person's possibility of experiencing God as immanent, in the understanding of the neo-Thomists (cf. Beeck 1993: 232-233). Rahner in *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978) affirms our fundamental orientation to God which is the basis for our coming to knowledge of God, "because man's basic and original orientation towards absolute mystery, which constitutes his fundamental experience of God, is a permanent existential of man as a spiritual subject" (p. 52). As spiritual subject with an inherent dynamism towards absolute transcendent mystery, the human person finds within him/herself the preconditions for recognition of the divine when it is manifested both within and without, in the myriad expressions of its presence and activity. The immanence of God should not be understood solely in mechanical terms, where God, with loving intent (or with capriciousness) chooses to manifest himself in various theophanies through 'breaking into' the world of space and time, and appears through his presence or activity as an extraordinary, non-worldly phenomenon. God's presence is inscribed intrinsically on the human person as a condition of the Human[19]. In describing this orientation to Holy Mystery, Rahner calls it a unity of essence and existence. If it were existence only, then we would experience it in the same way we do any other reality of the world. If it were essence only, without any concrete existence, then we would be unable to have any experience of it. However, as the unity of **essence** and **existence**, Holy Mystery has a reality that is grounded for the human person in the experience of transcendence – an experience that is a necessary constituent of the human being, who is created for this openness to the God who reveals (cf. p. 66). Furthermore,

this Holy mystery is always manifested within the world and within the experience of human relationship with the world, life and others. This manifestation of God, while experienced within the world, is also experienced as not being of, or identical with the normative dynamics and processes of the world and life. It is the very immanence of God encountered by human experience within the depths of selfhood and the processes of the world and life that lead the person to the recognition of this reality, named God, as not being an ordinary existent of spatio-temporal reality.

John Polkinghorne in **Science and Providence** (1989), discussing God's interaction with the world, presents as the premise of this relationship, the divine presence as a constitutive element within the scientific principles governing the complex dynamics of cosmology; yet does not limit this interaction to this only: "If there is a divine purpose at work in the world, **part** of its expression will certainly lie in the given created circumstances of that world" (p. 37, my emphasis). Polkinghorne goes beyond theories of God's interaction with the world as limited to the original creative act, and beyond understandings of God's presence as a passive energy within the dynamic unfolding of immutable cosmological principles. While affirming these modes of God's presence and action in the world, Polkinghorne goes further by asserting that if God has given the human person some measure of freedom in acting upon and influencing the processes and outcomes of consistently structured scientific principles; would he deny himself this same freedom, being as he is the great architect of both the world and the human person?

> . . . [W]e have contended that the scientific world-view, carefully considered, is not in fact hostile to the notion of a divine action bearing some analogous relation to the freedom enjoyed by human beings to execute their intentions. There is flexibility within the open process of the universe which encourages us to think that this is a coherent possibility (ibid).

Having proved within the bounds of his divine/cosmological framework, the possibility of the immanence of God as extending beyond the given principles of a Christian scientific world-view, Polkinghorne goes on to explain the modes and the limits of this divine interaction in the world. He is very clear in maintaining the distinction between the transcendence of God and his immanence, by denying that through this interaction, God is in any way embodied within the world (cf. p. 34).

Modern depth psychology offers us further indications of the myriad ways in which human beings experience the immanence of God in the mysterious processes of the human mind. This attempt at an integral understanding of the whole human psyche, initiated by Carl Jung and developed by his successors, finds its Christian appropriation in the writings of Morton Kelsey and John Sanford. Their premise is that the symbolic psychic energies to be found in the unconscious mind open up the possibility for a description of the mode of God's interaction and communication with the human person. In the words of Jung, "I simply believe that part of the human Self or Soul is not subject to the

laws of space and time" (Davies 1983: 72). The depths of the unconscious mind extend into the spiritual realm, thus the presence and energies of the divine find a gateway into the full consciousness of the human person. God, understood as the ground of our being finds in the archetypal world of the unconscious his point of individual interaction within the human person. Jung's notion of the Self as the fundamental integrating archetype is appropriated by Kelsey as the power of the Risen Christ, mediated by the creative energy of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1976: 36-38). The interesting and somewhat mystical insights of depth psychology provide a psychological basis for an understanding of the immanence of God as an integrating and healing presence within the depths of the human psyche. The testimony of Christopher Bryant (1983) provides a unity between the concept of a transcendent God, and the experience of the immanence of God at work in the unconscious, as a power for psychic integration:

> It was Jung's idea of the self, the whole personality, acting as a constant influence on my conscious aims and intentions that brought home to me the inescapable reality of God's rule over my life. So long as I thought of God's providence as an abstract truth, part of theistic belief, it made no powerful impact on me. But it was quite another matter if God's guiding hand was within my own being, within the fluctuations of mood and the ups and downs of health (pp. 40-41).

John Sanford in *The Kingdom Within* (1987) relates Jesus' sayings about the Kingdom of God to the inner psychological processes of the human mind. Utilising the insights of Jungian depth psychology he demonstrates that there is a dimension of Jesus' conception of the kingdom that relates specifically to, and is to be found particularly within the inner world of human consciousness. While identifying the kingdom of God with much that is already present within the depths of the human person, he does caution against a reduction of the kingdom, and therefore God, to a purely personal and experiential actuality, with little, if any reference to an objective existent beyond the human person:

> The kingdom of God . . . always has a transcendental character as well as an immediate character. The kingdom does not belong to us; we belong to the kingdom. In seeking for the establishment of the kingdom within our personalities, we do not reduce the kingdom to a narrow, personal dimension. Rather, we come to belong to a broad, transcendental dimension. What the kingdom is in itself can never be contained by rational consciousness but can be expressed only in symbols (p. 173).

The implication of this qualification is that by recognising the transcendental character of the inner, subjective experience of the kingdom (God), Sanford gives a greater significance to this inner experience as being of and from the transcendent God of Revelation. It is not merely subjective, therefore reducible to explanation within a humanistic psychological framework; but rather an inner reality and experience that has ultimate reference to a reality external and beyond the merely personal, thus giving greater credence to this inner reality as being a manifestation of the transcendent God.

4.3.2 Revelation as the Normative Experience of Immanence

Revelation broadly understood, as the self-communication of God to humanity across the whole spectrum of human consciousness and in the given circumstances of human history, is the normative experience of the immanence of God. The *locus* of the encounter between the divine and the human is in the receiving subject of God's self-revelation, the human person in the full experience of his/her humanity in the world and in his/her intrinsic connectedness to all of reality. The very mystery of God which the human person aspires to **know** and **love** as the ultimate end of her/his being, and which cannot be bestowed upon her/himself by natural powers, poses the ultimate existential question. Christian faith is response to this infinite yearning within the very condition of humanity, yet perfected by the divine self-communication in Revelation, which finds receptivity in the inherent condition of humanity's longing, and transcendental predisposition. The possibility and actuality of faith resides in the above two understandings of the nature of immanence i.e. the anthropological and revelational appearance of God within the human person as autonomous subject and as subject within the historical process of Revelation.

Revelation is the pre-eminent mode of God's immanence; it is an explicit immanence, in that the reality that is revealed in Revelation identifies itself unambiguously as the universal creator God of heaven and earth. A distillation of Nichols' discussion on the possibility and historicity of Revelation in *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (1991: 74-76) allows us to centre our reflections on two poles. The first is a **theocentric** perspective of Revelation in relation to the transcendence of God. Revelation, understood, as God's self-communication to the human subject within God's creation is possible because of the transcendent nature of God, taken that person communicating to person properly constitutes communication. God has necessarily to be distinct from that to which he reveals himself. An **anthropocentric** perspective of Revelation centres the possibility of Revelation on the immanence of God as the grace bestowed in creation of the human subject to a fundamental openness to divine revelation. The human person must necessarily possess an inherent capacity to receive, understand, and respond to Revelation if it is to function as it is intended to. Thus, the immanence of God, understood as his presence in the human subject creating the capacity for transcendental openness to the self-communication of God assures the possibility of Revelation in its complete sense.

It will be noted that a distinct analysis of either of the natures of God i.e. immanence and transcendence is very difficult without reference to the other. To reduce the understanding of one of these natures for the sake of a more perfect analysis is invariably to do violence to the full truth of the other and consequently to threaten the integral unity of both as essential qualities of God. Analogously, modern physics is faced with a similar dilemma in its attempt to explain

comprehensively the nature of quantum theory; uncertainty is an essential feature. To have a precise knowledge of the location of sub-atomic particles one must forego precise knowledge of its motion and activity. Likewise, if one seeks to ascertain with precision the movement of the particle, knowledge of its spatial location becomes difficult. The uncertainty principle of Heisenberg leads to the conclusion that location and momentum form two mutually incompatible aspects of reality for a subjective perception of the sub-atomic particle. This analogy is not intended to call into question the certainty of scientific theories and thus demonstrate that a similar uncertainty in our understanding of God somehow makes belief in God a form of knowledge governed by the same principles that describe knowledge of matter and energy, thus attempting to posit faith in the existence of God as being meaningful on these grounds alone. The point is to draw an analogy on an epistemological level, equating the attempt to define precisely specific characteristics of one without reference to the other as being difficult in discussing the transcendent/immanent quality of God, and location/momentum as attributes of sub-atomic particles impossible in quantum theory. The Danish physicist, Neils Bohr said, "Anyone who is not shocked by quantum theory has not understood it" (Davies 1983: 100). Similarly, one could say of the immanence/transcendence discussion, 'Anyone who is not confused by the paradoxical duality of God's transcendence and immanence has not fully explored it'.

4.4 FAITH AS SOCIO-HISTORICALLY CONDITIONED

The appellation, *Father*, connotes not only a personal and fiducial relationship between the human child and a divine parent, but that this relationship between creature and creator is understood and experienced in anthropological terms. A personal relationship of dependence and trust is expressed in terms of a particular human familial category. The nature and quality of this relationship precludes its expression in merely conceptual or abstract categories. Furthermore, the address to God as *Father* reveals the determining elements of history and culture on this relationship and on the mode of its experience and expression. The use of the masculine paternal form of address **connotes** the quality and sense of the relationship in the personal and socio-historical milieu of the supplicant, rather than **denoting** a fact about the ontological characteristics of God. The reality being affirmed here is not a theological statement about the gender of God, but rather the nature and quality of the relationship between God and the supplicant.

An experience of God is largely determined by the historical and cultural milieu and the prevailing categories it employs to conceptualise and articulate the nature of this relationship. Faith is not a phenomenon isolated from the socio-historical situation of the person of faith. The transmission and reception of faith is determined by the social and human context in which this mediation occurs.

4.4.1 The Distinction between Faith and Beliefs

The transmission of faith is the practical passing on of the beliefs that correspond to faith. Though this transmission of faith from one generation to the next, from one person to another may be clear, creative, and communicated with conviction, it remains that what are being passed on are the beliefs that derive from the understanding and experience of faith. In the popular imagination, faith and belief are often confused with each other and the one is identified with the other. An unambiguous conceptualisation of faith requires that its essential character be defined as accurately as possible. Beliefs **flow** from faith, are **derivative** of faith and as expressions of faith, often do not do justice to the complete mystery of faith. As a subjective human response, faith and believing tend to have a parallel meaning. Our discussion of faith thus far helps us to clarify faith as being a complete surrender of the whole person in an act of trust and loyalty to an object that transcends the self and indeed the world. Believing is the act of accepting either as true a belief or body of beliefs, on the evidence of the authority that communicates it, or because demonstrable proof that attests to its truth is in evidence.

Belief does not necessarily require an existential commitment of the self, but rather a notional assent that may or may not influence the believing subject's life. Faith, as we understand it is radical and complete by virtue of its object and final end, and by the ultimately transforming effect on the life of the person of faith. A belief has an objective meaning, whereas faith is a subjective experience rooted in an objective reality encountered within the depths of selfhood and in the processes of life and the world:

> A belief thus consists in an objective characterisation in language and concept of the object of believing and the object of faith. The thesis here maintains that faith in the transcendent object of faith and the characterisation, interpretation, and definition of that object of faith as a belief is distinct or different (Haight 1990: 26).

The corollary to this statement of the distinction between faith and beliefs is the affirmation that faith and beliefs are interdependent, and to some degree interpenetrate each other. Faith needs an expressive objectification in a belief system for a clear understanding of itself and for an articulation of its truths. While faith itself as a genuine act of the depths of a person directed towards an immutable object, it remains largely untouched by the vagaries of history and society; it is rather the **beliefs of faith** that are essentially socio-historically conditioned. Beliefs as the embodiment of faith in the language and concepts of a particular social and historical milieu are open to revision, refinement and a clearer articulation in the language of a new and changed situation.

We must then admit to the relativity of beliefs and the doctrinal framework in which they find coalescence and become normative for believers. The term relative is not understood here in an

unqualified sense as being without objective truth and vulnerable to the vagaries of a changing interpretive context. The fundamental indefectibility of faith is preserved, whereas the beliefs that give it conceptual form and articulate expression remain susceptible to prevailing thought patterns, worldviews and contextual formulations and interpretations (cf. the document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium Ecclesiae,* 1973 cited in McBrien 1994: 765).

These considerations are founded on the premise of a **historical consciousness** that derives from an insight into history. This is the awareness that humanity is immersed in the ebb and flow of time and history, and is inevitably influenced and formed by the changes wrought by time. An understanding of history is crucial to an understanding of humanity in any given age, especially insofar as present beliefs and norms are both influenced and formed by those of preceding eras, and is continuously revised and refined with reference to an insight into their historical vulnerability. What is true and acceptable in one age, is not necessarily so in another. This extends to the social context of humanity too. A proper understanding of humanity requires an insight into the prevailing rationale and wisdom of a particular era and social context in which it is situated.

The relativity to which beliefs and doctrines as derivative of faith are subject is twofold. The double relativity of beliefs and doctrines as articulated by Haight (1990: 38) are: (1) Relative to the transcendent object of faith, which they interpret and seek to express. This relativity extends to a permanent inadequacy of conceptualisation and articulation. Anything we postulate of God is inevitably limited. (2) Relative to the socio-historical circumstances in which they are experienced. Thus while faith as a transcendental phenomenon is absolute, the expressions of faith in beliefs, dogma, doctrine and ritual are never absolute and remain open to constant revision and refinement.

This affirmation of the historicity and therefore relativity of the expressions of faith is important for a number of reasons. Chief among these is an understanding of the tension between science and religion. So often this arises from an overidentification of faiths attempt to understand cosmology and human existence in terms of prevailing thought patterns which become outmoded with the scientific advancements in these areas. Beliefs and doctrine surrounding these and other broader areas of science remain encrusted with the categories and forms of expression of earlier pre-scientific ages. Faith is identified with these outdated and discredited beliefs and consequently is itself brought into question. Beliefs are largely determined by the socio-historical context of the faith community, and are thus subject to the prevailing thought patterns and worldview of the community and its vulnerability to the world in which it finds itself. Dermot lane reflects this idea in a passage from ***The Experience of God*** (1981) that deserves to be quoted at length:

Faith needs beliefs, but is not identifiable with beliefs. Beliefs mediate faith, conceptualise faith and communicate faith. . . . Beliefs are the human expressions of our understanding of the mystery of God and are, to that extent, subjective – that is, they come from the side of man and are not given objectively from above. In contrast, faith can be said to be objective in the sense that it is directed to the transcendent reality of God. Beliefs are historical; they reflect the cultural circumstances of their original definition. As historical, beliefs are also plural and diverse, whereas faith, which perceives truth in the midst of plurality, is one and unifying (pp. 59-60).

The community of faith objectifies its faith in its belief system that finds expression in the life and worship of that community. It is important to note however, that beliefs, while being subject to the changing situations in which they are formulated and expressed are not of themselves, as objectification of faith, dispensable in changing situations. Beliefs, understood as objective formulations of the contents of faith while vulnerable in terms of conceptualisation, formulation, and articulation according to prevailing thought patterns and language, cannot be reduced to mere transitory expressions of faith. The truth that dogma and doctrine articulate is immutable and requires the assent of the person of faith (cf. *LG* 25); despite the limitations of linguistic expression that inadequately and imperfectly convey the fundamental truth behind the specific form used to explicate this truth. Having made this distinction, we continue our discussion aware that at times this work will use the terms interchangeably, and at others, sharply define them; the context of the discussion will determine this.

4.4.2 The Categorical and Transcendental Character of Faith

The experience of faith and its directedness toward an object of belief is personal and ultimately an act of freedom made by the individual within the context of their life circumstances. While the mediation of faith and its expressive beliefs occur within a community of faith, the individual must necessarily make a personal act of faith that guarantees its authenticity and meaningfulness for him/her. It is at this level and stage that faith takes on a categorical character. It is personal and subjective and in its completeness can only be profoundly understood within the depths of the person of faith and the degree of commitment undertaken and expressed by that person.

While being an intensely personal act and experience at one level, faith is not merely personal and subjective. Faith is a universal phenomenon and so constitutes a dimension of all human beings and all cultures in every age of human history. The experience and the characteristics of the faith act transcend the individual, the group, and the particular culture and are found not only to be a phenomenon of all cultures and historical traditions, but is itself a constitutive element in the nature of

the human person. An understanding of the histories and the determining influences in the shaping of societies and cultures reveals the central role of faith and religion in the traditions of all peoples:

> Societies inculcate a variety of objects of faith that provide a unity, comprehensive order, and intelligibility to life. These are objects of faith, because faith is the clinging commitment to those objects, truths, and values which give meaning to human existence at its most fundamental level . . . historical consciousness has instructed us on the extent to which faith pervades human life. The sheer pluralism of such fundamental values shows that they are transcendent objects of faith (Haight 1990: 17-18).

While Religion and faith are universal phenomena, at the communal and individual level God is fundamentally experienced as personal. The universality of a God consciousness is largely incontestable, yet the experience of, and relationship with God, particularly in Christianity, is personal and takes place within the depths of consciousness of the human spirit. This finds articulation and expression in communal beliefs and worship attested to by a consciousness of historical processes.

4.4.3 Transcendental and Categorical Within the Supernatural Existential

As a response to the question of the necessity of faith for salvation, a variety of theological theories have emerged that attempt to understand and explain the consistently challenging dilemma of the possibility of salvation for those who do not make an explicit act of faith in God, and the consequences of this in the life of that individual. Rahner and other transcendental theologians present the proposal of "a supernatural existential" (cf. Rahner 1978: 126-133 and 151-2) which holds, in consonance with the premises of transcendental theology, that God's grace is present as a constitutive element of the human, and is offered to all people at every moment of their lives. The mere acceptance on the part of the individual that s/he is limited and needs to look beyond the self for truth and meaning is already a response to the presence of divine grace ordering the human person toward a reality beyond the limitations of a finite world. For Rahner this natural orientation toward God and its recognition, albeit implicit, is an acceptance of grace and consequently is an act of faith in its cognitive dimension (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 267). Within the framework of this theory of a supernatural existential as accounting for the possibility of salvation for those who do not make an explicit act of faith, is the recognition of the transcendental and categorical characteristics of faith being separate, but interrelated concepts within the broader faith discussion.

Rahner describes **categorical** knowledge of God as "the objective, conceptual, and articulated interpretation of what we know of God in a subjective and unreflective way" (ibid). This is the experience of all who make an explicit act of faith in the revealed God to be found within ecclesial communities and their corresponding belief systems. However, can the human person experience transcendence in an encounter only when it is thematised specifically and categorically? Do we only

encounter God when we name him as such, and do we follow the will of God only as it is encountered in specific belief systems that present it as a moral imperative within their broader ethical code? For Rahner the answer is no, "It is not the case that we have nothing to do with God until we make God conceptual and thematic to some extent" (op.cit. p. 151). On the contrary, there is an original experience of God that is not specifically religious, is not thematic and not an object of reflection. This **transcendental** character of faith assures the universality of faith in that the person experiences it whenever s/he becomes a free subject, free to respond to the innumerable possibilities that God offers. It happens when we experience ourselves before the holy mystery that transcends us. This is the experience of 'supernatural transcendentality' and because of it, the person can be said to experience God not only in religious structures, but everywhere. For the Christian there is no specifically sacred space where alone God is to be found. Every act or response that is made in freedom, motivated by the naturally good, is supernaturally elevated. The observance of the natural moral law is "supernaturally elevated and salvific in itself" (ibid p. 152). For Rahner, the obedient acceptance of man's supernaturally elevated self-transcendence is itself an act of faith, albeit implicit and unthematised. Thus, whenever the person accepts his/her basic orientation toward God, an experience of divine revelation and communication occurs.

As Christians, our experience of God is as a personal and loving being (for most this is conceptualised as a gracious and holy father), yet any experience the human person has of extending beyond the self, responding to the inherent movement towards freedom and that which is good, is itself an experience of this loving father God, even if not expressed explicitly as such.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5. THE ASSUMPTIONS OF FAITH IN THE *PSB*

THROUGH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

Enfolding the supplications of the *Prayer of St. Benedict* is acknowledgement of the Trinity as the object of faith and as the cause and guarantor of the graces desired for a deeper faith. That faith can be possible at all, is acknowledged by appeal to the action of the object of faith to ensure this. Recognition of the power of the object of faith to grant the capability of faith through the action of the Trinity acting in the distinctive modes of each of the divine Persons is the assumption of the final appeal in the *PSB*. It is the Son, Jesus Christ, sent by the Father into the world in order to bring about the fulfilment of creation's purpose, who is recognised, along with the Spirit, who is integral to this mission, as creating the possibility of faith in the human person. More specifically the *PSB* acknowledges the act of faith as being dependent on the particular power of the Holy Spirit.

5.1 THE ACT OF FAITH (*FIDES QUA*)

The discussion of the act of faith, will limit itself to the primary conditions for the possibility of faith. The nature of the object of faith as transcendent means that it is not an ordinary datum of human knowing, and must therefore be given or revealed to the human subject. Knowledge of the object of faith is not attained through the normal human processes of cognition, such as immediate apprehension or logical inference. However, faith "is not a deficient mode of knowledge, no mere opinion, or surmise, no unenlightened, naïve and uncritical, gullible acceptance. It is, instead, the fundamental act and the fundamental accomplishment of human existence" (Kasper 1989: 45).

The act of faith is experienced primarily as revealed, given to the subject from above or beyond the ordinary experience of the human. While knowledge of God is possible with reference to pure reason, the type of knowledge required for faith is unattainable by the use of unaided reason. The **transcendent** quality of the human spirit and the **grace** of God are the two conditions that create the possibility of an act of faith being made by the human person, who by his/her very nature, possesses an innate capacity for transcendence, and consequently for an act of faith in a transcendent reality. This capacity is established in the very identity and freedom to act of the individual.

5.1.1 Human Transcendence as the Condition for the Act of Faith

The infinite character of the human spirit, as asserted by Christian theology is the foundation upon which an anthropological consideration of the act of faith is posited. The human person is not merely a closed system locked into the narrow confines that his/her physical body inhabits in the finite world of space and time. The human spirit, including its faculties of mind and will, possesses a freedom to not only escape the limitations imposed upon it by the physical world through acts of the memory and

imagination, but to reach out into a transcendent spiritual realm not bounded by physicality. The human spirit is imprinted with the mark of infinity, and it is this character that predisposes him/her to openness to God. This capacity for the transcendent is native to the human person. While the human person is created by God with all his/her potentialities, and thus by extension God creates the possibility for divine encounter, the human person possesses a freedom in the utilising of these capacities.

The transcendental anthropology of Karl Rahner refined and coalesced the traditional Catholic understanding of humanity's innate capacity for an experience of God's self-manifestation. The idea and reality of God is constituted in the spirit and consciousness of the human person. For Rahner, the foundation for any discussion of God must begin with an understanding of the human person in his/her totality (cf. 1978: 26). Conversely, a philosophical analysis of human nature is inextricably interwoven with theological reflection and an implicit acknowledgement of the transcendent character of humanity i.e. the fundamental openness of the human person to God.

Rahner centres the conditions for the act of faith in the human person. As subjects to whom the word of God is addressed as invitation to faith, they are capable of self-reflecting, through the distinctive human power of reflexive thought, and thus become aware of their limits; but in this very recognition of limitedness, they begin transcending their limits by imagining new horizons of being. Being thus capable of a fundamental orientation to God, the person is determined by this and therefore possesses an intrinsic openness to the Absolute as the source and final perfection of their existence (cf. ibid p. 33). The *a priori* condition for the possibility of faith is grace – which in this context is the life and presence of God in the human subject. "In other words, *the human person is capable of transcending himself or herself in the knowledge of God, to whom his or her whole life is oriented, because God is already present in the person as the transcendent force or condition which makes such knowledge possible*" (McBrien 1994: 146).

The human capacity for God is understood in two ways: the distinctively human **capacities** of knowing and loving are open to modification in such a manner that they are capable of operating under the influence of divine power. With this capacity inherent to human nature now actualised into a **capability**, the human person is able to enter into a relationship with God i.e. s/he is now able to know and love God as he is in himself. The first is the **subjective** meaning of humanity's capacity for God; the second is the **objective** meaning (cf. Rai 1988: 3).

The immanence of the object of faith is the underlying foundation for the human experience of the transcendence of the faith object. The omnipresence of God understood as his immanent presence within his creation, specifically in the spirit of humans, as the foundation of their very being, establishes a platform for his furthered presence through self-disclosure[20]. Receptivity to God's self-communication through Revelation, in all its diverse and complex attributes, is a dimension of the human, established there through the *Imago Dei*, at the moment of the creation of the human spirit.

Maurice Blondel in ***The Letter on Apologetics*** affirms the contention of modern thought[21] that "nothing can enter into a person that does not come out of that person". And continues to state the Christian position that the "properly supernatural; that is to say, what human persons cannot produce out of themselves, yet what they will profess has a claim on their minds and their wills" (Beeck 1993: 231); succinctly identifies the human person as the decisive locus of encounter between the 'authentic' immanence of God and the supernatural faith of the Christian. For Blondel the theme of an innate human integrity dynamically understood ('immanence', in his idiom), is a product of the historical consciousness of modern theology. From its very creation, the human spirit is constituted in such a way that the possibility for faith; to know and love God through the human faculties of the mind and the will, is innate and is the presence of grace in an unreflected form. This innate capacity is transformed into actuality through divine grace, understood here as the effects of the Incarnation, the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the heart and mind of the individual, and indeed of the whole Christian community (cf. *LG* 4).

5.2 THE PRIMACY OF GRACE IN THE ACT OF FAITH

It is difficult to assert the grounds for the possibility of faith without encountering what amounts to a paradox: the transcendent character of faith and the necessary conditions for its appearance in the nature of the human person. While faith is necessarily a human act, its original source is in God. However, equally true is that the very conditions necessary for an act of faith to occur reside in the human subject; if this were not so, the initiative of God would appear as an alien phenomenon and have no impact on the human person. Resolving this paradox on an analytic level is the consideration of these two necessary conditions as occurring synchronically[22]. For the purposes of a clear analysis, this discussion will be considered in its component parts here and synthesised by the reflections that follow on the faith act as the complete expression of human freedom.

Some preliminary considerations of a foundational nature are necessary for a clearer analysis of the act of faith and its consonance with the faculties of the person. The *Analysis Fidei* is the term used to describe the balancing of the understanding of the act of faith as an act consonant with the integral

characteristics of the Human, yet involving grace given to the human subject in order to complete the faith act as one that itself necessitates divine intervention in order to raise it to knowledge of the mystery of the transcendental God. On the one hand, we have the act of faith as absolutely requiring the presence of grace – the **supernatural** element of the faith act (grace). On the other is the free assent of the will of the believing subject that guarantees the salvific purpose of faith as a chosen movement toward God without any degree of compulsion – the **natural** element of the faith act (will). Finally, the human intellect must be certain that the act of faith is reasonably secure according to the demands of reason – the **motive of credibility** intrinsic to the completion of the act of faith (intellect).

The First Vatican Council declared unequivocally on all these three elements as being essential to the act of faith in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* on the Catholic Faith (1870). This was necessary, as an overemphasis on one is invariably detrimental to the integrity of the others. **Fideism** is an undue accentuation on the role of grace and the supernatural element of the faith act. It has two subtle elements, two sides of the same coin. The one is the overwhelming presence of grace that while not robbing the act of faith of the necessary freedom it requires on the part of the human subject, invariably limits the full expression of human freedom required. The other is the presence of grace illuminating beyond all doubt the credibility of the mysteries of faith with a power that would almost of necessity drive the subject into an act of belief. The act of faith would then not be a fully human one because the incontrovertible evidence of Revelation would bind the freedom of the person. The human person would then possess certainty and therefore not require faith. In contrast to this is the stress placed on the intellectual capacity of the believer. **Rationalism** is an undue emphasis on the powers of the human intellect to penetrate by its own unaided efforts the mysteries of faith leading to a clarity and certitude which while being free, no longer has reference to the divine authority as that which guarantees the authenticity of belief.

The creative dialectic required in balancing these elements of the act of faith revolves around the three poles that make up the act of faith – grace, intellect and will. An accentuation of one of these to the neglect of the others will invariably lead to an unjustifiable Pelagianism or a capitulation to supernaturalism (cf. Fisichella 1994*b*: 196).

The divine initiative considered in its totality is more than the initial revelatory action of God to creation, but includes the necessary preconditions in the human subject for an understanding of and responsivity to God's self-revelation. This perspective adds a new dimension to the preambles of faith (*Preambula Fidei*)[23]. These are the preparatory conditions within the subject that predispose her/him towards faith before and excluding Revelation, which are present as an intrinsic element of

humanness. Such an understanding may seem to stand in opposition to the first explicit teaching of the Church on the necessity of grace for faith as taught by the Second Council of Orange (529) and ratified by pope Boniface II in 531. In response to the continuing crisis of semi-Pelagianism,[24] the Council decreed that the desire for faith, its beginnings, and its increase do not proceed from human nature but from a gift of grace, namely the Holy Spirit (*DS* 375). However, our contention is that grace is more radically present and does not operate only as an extrinsic influence upon the individual. The initiative of God in the faith act through grace cannot be limited to explicit manifestations of grace viewed from a mechanical perspective of the operation of grace. The presence and action of grace penetrate the very depths of human consciousness in the very creation of the spirit. Our understanding of grace includes a broader, more radical dimension opened up to us by modern theologies of immanence and transcendence. While grace is essential and indispensable in the coming to faith of the human person, its presence and operation is broadened to include all within the human subject that constitutes the unity of the faith act. It is God who creates the possibility for encounter, and who initiates the divine–human dialogue that takes place in Revelation and reaches its completeness in the act of faith of the human person.

Thus, the divine initiative is the created capacity for transcendence, the infusion of grace into the human spirit, and God's self-communication in Revelation; all of this understood as a unity, asserting the primary conditions for faith as initiated by God.

Understood in this way, we can then claim that the divine initiative is both creative and restructuring. By virtue of being made in the Image of God and the infusion of the Spirit (*Ruach* – the breath of life) of God in the human soul (cf. Gn 2:7), the basic condition for an apprehension of God was created in the human person. The restructuring influence on the human spirit by God is the gift of grace poured into the soul by the Holy Spirit; and so a modification of the innate capacity to apprehend God in himself and to respond to this divine initiative is made possible. Revelation, and its outcome, faith is not intrusive upon the human person as her/his capacity for God is founded upon the very nature of personhood. However, since this innate capacity can only be actualised by grace, faith is not merely a subjective phenomenon that evolves unaided in the spirit of the human person. Grace is thus a free gift of the life and love of God, given to the person by God based on a predisposition, a propensity to that gift created by God in the first place.

Grace is given primarily through the action of the Holy Spirit, infusing into the person the life, love, and power of God in order that a complete act of faith be made possible. Grace is not intrusive or foreign to human nature, as it requires for its full expression the very conditions of fundamental

openness to God that reside in the human person. Thus, we say that grace builds on nature. Grace infuses into the natural capacity of the person a divine quality, thereby actualising this capacity for knowledge and love of God. Human nature by itself, while possessing the qualities necessary for faith, is not in itself sufficient for the actuality of faith. Through grace, the human person is granted the power to participate in the life of God. This power of participation in the divine by the human person is possible only through the action of the Holy Spirit imparting the necessary grace. The innate **capacity** for relating to God, for entering into a relationship with the divine, while necessary for faith, is in itself insufficient; thus, it is actualised into a **capability** through **grace**. This is what is understood by the term **connaturality**; the relationship established between the divine and the human, creating the possibility of theandric [25] communication.

5.3 THE POSSIBILITY OF FAITH AND THE TRINITARIAN MISSIONS

The Trinitarian missions refer to the sending of the Son into creation by the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit into the spirit of humanity by the Father and the Son. The assertion here is that **the human capacity for knowledge of God, and a relationship with God, is actualised into a capability through the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit**. It is the capacity for knowledge of God that is brought into a relationship of correlation by God through the Trinitarian missions, and thus this capacity is transformed into a capability. A degree of connaturality now exists between God and the human person. The distinction between capacity and capability is best understood in terms of **proportionality**. We have already established the innate capacity for God in the human person by virtue of the transcendent character of the human spirit. This possibility finds concrete expression in the self-communication of God to the human person in Revelation. The possibility of Revelation occurring within the consciousness of the human person and ultimately in human history is precisely what a capability of proportionality between God and humanity is about.

Proportionality is a relation of equality between two connected realities. In categorical proportions the realities are related by the same category or class e.g. the sides of a square by the category of surface area i.e. length and breadth. In correlative proportions they are connected by the same correlation e.g. the knowing subject and the known object by the correlation of intentionality. When we speak of a proportionality being established between God and Humanity through the Trinitarian missions, we are speaking of a correlative proportionality. For this reason, this relationship is described as a certain proportion i.e. real but imperfect. This certain or tentative proportionality in relationship is so because the proportion is not categorical but correlative, and the equality it creates is not absolute but participated (cf. Rai 1988: 2-3).

Revelation is the process through which the capacity of the knowing subject (humanity) is brought into a relationship of proportionality that correlates to the degree of the revealed and known object (God). For this relationship to be established through communication between God and the full consciousness of humanity, Revelation, this actualising of a potential into a capability, is necessary. The Trinitarian Missions are the structuring principles of the process of Revelation (cf. ibid). The order of the Trinitarian missions explain the order in which the process of Revelation is accomplished both in the history of salvation and in the life of the Christian. Revelation comes to humanity **from** the Father (source) **through** the Son (the object of Revelation) **in** the Holy Spirit (the subjective influence). Furthermore the Trinitarian missions are a comprehensive structuring principle for humanity's response to Revelation: the history of Revelation can be understood in the Mission of the Son (who is the fullness of Revelation); the human person's response to this is under the influence of the Holy Spirit (who through grace predisposes the person to an acceptance of Revelation); while the entire origin and purpose of Revelation is brought together in the Person of the Father (who communicates his very self in order that a relationship be established between him and his creation). We now turn to this goal of Revelation and thus the Trinitarian missions, by discussing in broader terms the Incarnation of God in Jesus and the elevation of the human person through this, and the participation in the divine life through the distinctive action of the Holy Spirit.

5.3.1 The Incarnation of the Divine and the Divinisation of the Human

The incarnation of the divine is the enfleshment of the Eternal Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is known by Christians as the Christ and experienced as the plenitude of God's self-revelation. Through the Incarnation, a relationship of proportionality is established between God and Humankind, thus actualising the human capacity to know God in a more profound manner than previously experienced. This realised capability of dialogue and relationship is deepened through the mission of the Holy Spirit, through whom the Human person participates in the divine life of the Trinity. Thus, a capacity is transformed into an actual capability and therefore possibility, through the incarnation of the divine and the divinisation of the human.

Through the incarnation of the divine in the person of Jesus Christ, God becomes human, thus not only taking on the fullness of humanity, but by this very act elevating humanity and its essential dignity into the fulfilment of all its possibilities. God in the person of Jesus demonstrates the full potential and reality of the human person. Through the Incarnation the human person is shown how to be fully human, how to become the very person that s/he is capable of becoming and intended to become by God. The Incarnation evocatively demonstrates the full range of possibilities within the human person in a manner that calls forth all the unique and creative potentialities inherent within the

human condition. Yet these remain potentialities until the sending, or procession of the Holy Spirit enables their actualisation through grace. Grace, as the imparting of the divine life into the human person, extends qualities of divinity to human nature. The human person participates in the divine life through the power of the Holy Spirit and is, in this, divinised. As explained, this divinisation while actual is only participatory. Nevertheless, the divinisation of the human through the Holy Spirit brings about and sustains faith in that the mystery of God is perceived in itself, even if imperfectly.

The disproportion between God and Humanity is overcome by means of the Trinitarian missions. Through the mission of the Son (the Incarnation), God is humanised; through the mission of the Spirit (the Procession of the Holy Spirit), humanity is divinised. Both are thus brought into the same theandric (divine-human) order of reality and to that extent, a relationship of limited equality is established. This equality is limited because the divinisation of humanity occurs through participation and not possession.

5.4 FAITH AS ACT AND PROCESS

The act of faith understood as a dynamic unity of event and process in a continual movement toward God is best understood in terms of a relationship. Relationships between persons are established through some form of commonality and/or attraction. This 'event' is carried further by a continuing interaction and dialogue where the depths of selfhood are communicated, furthering the intensity of the relationship. The elements of trust and commitment are necessary if the relationship is to be sustained. Understanding, sacrifice, joy, and fulfilment are all elements of genuine human relationships. This too is the nature of the relationship between the person of faith and the object of faith, God. The dynamics of human relationships are, from a human perspective a model of the relationship between God and Humankind; but are theologically a reflection of the dynamics of the relationship within the Trinity, which is itself the source of love and fulfilment that characterise human relationships. Faith as a dynamic relationship offers rich insights into the structure of faith as not being confined to minimalist elements of authority, obedience, necessity for salvation, and passivity; but rather a joy-filled experience of growth and discovery within a relationship that has as its purpose the fulfilment of humanity's deepest longing.

A further clarification of the act of faith considered in its passive and active natures is useful for a more insightful penetration into the precise nature of this specifically human, yet divinely initiated and completed process. Faith consists in being acted upon by a reality beyond oneself; a reality that possesses the power to influence the person in such a manner that s/he is totally caught up in this moment of direct contact with a reality that grasps the self in a necessarily transforming experience. It

is assumed that because the act of faith is under discussion, the essentially active nature of it can easily be subsumed into the general discussion, which largely confines itself to dealing with the passive nature of the faith act. Faith involves a commitment and loyalty to the object of faith, which goes beyond the mere acceptance of being acted upon. This calls for the loyal and positive commitment of all that one is and has, to the demands of the object of faith, given in total freedom and with a degree of consciousness that compels one to live by the values that this entails. This dual experience and reality of faith occurs as a moment in the life of the individual where being acted upon by a transcendent reality which influences the person in such a manner that it is followed by submission to the values of this reality. Along this axis of receiving, and as active response to being acted upon, faith also intuitively demands fidelity and commitment to the object of faith (cf. Haight 1990: 20). This loyalty involves the freedom of the individual who willingly submits to the transforming process of growth assisted by the grace given as antecedent to and attendant to faith. Faith is thus nurtured and strengthened through the active participation of the person with the grace received from God that the act of faith may reach its final purpose.

5.4.1 Biblical Understandings of the Act of Faith

Faith understood and designated, as describing a relationship of confidence, trust and surrender on the part of the human person to God who reveals himself through self-communication within history as presented in Revelation, is an integrated act and process. The act of faith is not only distinct from the contents of faith believed in, but is itself also understood as having a variety of meanings that are at times specific and at times nuanced. A brief consideration of the Biblical understanding of faith as revealed by the words used to describe faith, often with meanings determined by the context, is necessary as a foundational outline in which our discussion on faith and the act of faith can continue.

In *Two Types of faith: A Study of the Interpretation of Judaism and Christianity* (1961), Martin Buber explores the distinction between the two types of faith as evidenced in the underlying themes of the Scriptures. He maintains that trust in God was the predominant Jewish form of faith in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels, whereas assent to revealed truth, was the principal Christian form of faith in the Epistles and early Church writings. In the foreword, he states:

> There are many contents of faith, but we only know faith in its two basic forms. Both can be understood from the fact that I trust someone, without being able to give sufficient reasons for my trust in him, the other from the fact that, likewise without being able to give a sufficient reason, I acknowledge a thing to be true. . . The acceptance of the truth acknowledged by me can lead to contact with the one whom it proclaims. But in the former instance it is the existent contact which is primary; in the latter the acceptance is accomplished (pp. 7-8).

While Buber has been criticised by modern Biblical Scholars for incorrectly asserting too sharp a distinction and assigning too great an emphasis on the contrasting Testamental approaches, his distinctions are nevertheless helpful for our consideration of types of faith. The meanings of the words used for faith in the two Testaments in their differences indicate differing but not necessarily opposing views of what primarily constitutes an act of faith.

In the Old Testament, the chosen people experienced God as the one who is faithful to them in the events of their history. God revealed himself as such, "Yahweh your God is the true God, the faithful God who . . . is true to his covenant, and his faithful love for a thousand generations as regards those who love him and keep his commandments" (Deut 7:9). In Hebrew, the verb for being 'faithful' is *amen*. Its literal meaning is "to be firm; to endure; to be true; to stand fast" (Unger and White 1980: 24-27). The noun that describes faithfulness is *emunah*, deriving from the root *mn*, meaning to be stable. Thus, the reciprocal attitude to the God who is faithful is faithfulness in return. *Emunah* is the graced attitude of trust in God evoked by the experience of God's faithful and trustworthy reliability. The Hebrew word for the act of trusting is also *amen*, which can mean to have belief – to believe. These overlapping words with their root in *mn* reveal that for the people of the Old Testament faith in God is a basic attitude of **trust** in God because he is trustworthy (cf. Collins 1998: 29).

In the New Testament three interrelated Greek words describe faith: *pisteuo* a verb meaning 'I believe'; *pistos* an adjective meaning 'faithful' or 'believing'; and *pistis*, a noun which refers to 'the act of giving one's trust' (cf. ibid p. 31). These words are used to describe trust, belief, faith, and the obedience of faith, the context determining their precise meaning. Throughout the New Testament the concepts faith describe as being 'believing in' and 'believing that', are distinct but inseparable; the former referring to the contents of faith, and the latter, to the act of faith itself. While at times they are used interchangeably, at other times they retain their specific meanings. They are two sides of the same coin referring to trusting faith and doctrinal faith, though not necessarily the strictly understood obediential assent to doctrinal propositions as evolved by the Church.

> The act of faith in the New Testament is a highly personal and existential act addressed to God. It also includes a cognitive component, not in terms of propositions but in terms of recognising and perceiving the truth as well as appropriating that truth (Lane 1981: 55).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) endorses this distinction between faith as trust and as assent to revealed truth: "Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*" (*CCC #*150). This is a significant departure from earlier emphases in the teaching of the Church concerning what primarily constitutes an act of faith. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) gave primary emphasis to the

assenting element of faith to revealed truth, arising from an acceptance of the authority of the God who reveals (cf. *DS* 3008). The renewed understanding of faith under the impetus of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) as taught in the new Catechism understands faith as personal adherence to God (as primacy of act) and assent to his truth (as a unity with the primary act), thus re-establishing in the Catholic Church the personal and fiducial character of faith in consonance with the full sense of faith as presented and understood in Scripture.

5.4.2 The Development of Faith

A faith not nurtured inevitably diminishes, thus the active cooperation of the person with grace is required for its nourishment and development. The gospel accounts of Jesus rebuking those of "little faith" (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31 and Lk 12:28) indicate that there can be a nascent faith that is not reflected upon nor exercised sufficiently enough for its effects to be experienced by the immature believer. We also find those who are praised for their faith (Mt. 8:10; 15:28 and Lk 7: 9). These while not demonstrating adherence to a properly reflected upon and developed faith in the theological sense, nevertheless exercise that most essential element of faith – fiducial faith in Christ and the power of God in the face of circumstances that offer little or no hope. The disciples plead to Christ for an increase in their faith (cf. Lk 17:5), expressing awareness not only that a strong faith imparts certain gifts, but also a consciousness of the poverty of their own faith. The letters of Paul demonstrate the necessity for an increased faith (1Co 3:1-2), the insufficiency of faith unless accompanied by practical love (1Co 13:2), that faith may be weak in certain individuals (Rm 12:6; 14:1), and that certain factors cause an increase and progress in faith (1Th 3:10 & Ph 1:25).

The biblical evidence for the notion of faith development leads us to reflect on the practical implications of this. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes three aspects of growth in faith: faith increases through a more explicit knowledge of the material object of faith (the beliefs of faith); it may increase in the steadfastness of assent; and it may increase in the sense that one believes with greater devotion and trust (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 243). These three aspects correspond to the **mind**, **will,** and **heart** as the human faculties responsible for faith and the increase of faith. Furthermore, they correspond respectively to the **cognitive**, **intentional,** and **affective** dimensions of faith relevant to the third part of this discussion (chaps. 7, 8, & 9). Of paramount is their correlation to the **critical**, **transcendental**, and **experiential** paradigms, respectively, thus demonstrating the essential unity of faith and the necessity for complementarity of all the dimensions in being equally considered as integral to the whole act of faith. In its subjective aspects and correlating to the three paradigms is Dulles' assertion that "faith is more perfect to the extent that the **intellectual assent** is prompt and firm, to the extent

that the believer has **confidence** in God and his word, and to the extent that the believer is **committed to live** up to the requirements of faith" (Ibid p. 244, my emphases).

That faith grows and develops is a given. The initial act of faith may be inchoate and therefore implies a process of development in all the aspects indicated. The actual processes of growth in faith have given rise to varied models of development, with their foundations in equally varied theories of human psychological development. Chief among these are developmental models of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Erik Erikson. Of particular note is the attempt by James Fowler in his *Stages of Faith* (1981) who equates the stages of faith development to those of human development throughout the progressive phases of human life. His six stages of faith development correspond to human development from early childhood to adolescence, and to adulthood.

Fowler's theory of faith development has been of great value for psychologists and theologians alike, yet has come under critical scrutiny from differing viewpoints, each expressing a dissatisfaction arising from particular perspectives in these fields. It is inevitable that Fowler, who posits his theory from his own particular psychological and theological assumptions, will encounter resistance from those whose presuppositions are in contrast to his. Nevertheless his and other efforts to define and schematise faith development, affirms the basic proposition that faith is open to growth at various levels, and that this is to some degree determined by psycho-social factors as well as the action of the Holy Spirit through grace. Fowler's affirmation that "Human development toward wholeness is, I believe, always the product of a certain *synergy* between human potentials, given in creation, and the presence and activity of Spirit as mediated through many channels" (1984: 74) is a fairly accurate summation of faith development and its causal factors.

The presence of grace in the act and process of faith is regarded as the unconditional prime causal factor. The relationship between grace, human response and cooperation, and the fundamental autonomy of the human person in the faith discussion has itself been the subject of much conversation in theology; it is to this that these reflections are now directed.

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CHAPTER SIX

6. HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIVINE GRACE IN THE *PSB*

GIVE US

In asking for the gifts needed for knowledge of God, the author does not imply that that these faculties are alien to the nature of the human person, but employs a creative literary device in order to emphasise the necessity of human co-operation with divine grace to deepen and intensify these faculties of the spirit. The faculties requested of God are native to human nature, but often through a number of varied determined and undetermined factors, these characteristics are not actualised or realised to their optimum. From a theological perspective, the full powers of these faculties are diminished through sin. Their rehabilitation takes place under the influence of divine grace. A conscious awareness of these faculties and their fulfilment in the particular individual is being requested through the action of divine grace. With this understanding, it becomes clear that while grace is freely granted by God to all creation, the individual person needs, by a recognition of dependence on divine grace, and a free act of the will, to enter into a relationship with God, however dimly perceived, and allow the action of grace to actualise and enhance his/her innate faculties.

The *Collect* (Opening Prayer) of the Eucharistic celebration for the 22nd Sunday of the year, cycle C, speaks directly to this concept of an increase in faith and a perfection through grace of the gifts necessary for faith inherent in the human person:

> Let us pray
> > [That God will increase our faith and bring to perfection the gifts he has given us]
> Almighty God, every good thing comes from you.
> Fill our hearts with love for you,
> Increase our faith,
> And by your constant care
> Protect the good you have given us (***The Sunday Missal*** 1984: 870).

Given the theological principle of *Lex Orandi – Lex Credendi*[26] (the law of prayer is the law of belief); the affirmation of the theological principle in this prayer is in consonance with that expressed in the *PSB*.

The word '*Give*', in the *PSB* is central to the comprehensive understanding of faith, particularly concerning the freedom necessary for an authentic act of faith. By asking God for the necessary enhancement of the human faculties by which faith comes about in the human person, the *PSB* recognises the centrality of the human response to the invitation to faith, and to the graces given by God that make faith possible. The *PSB* does not simply ask for the gift of faith, or a deeper faith, or even a deepened commitment to the requirements of faith, but for God's grace in enhancing those human faculties that are necessary for faith to occur and to be intensified. The *Prayer* reveals a heart

and mind keenly aware of the nature of faith as being ultimately granted by God, but also with the free response of the person through the utilisation of all the human faculties that the act of faith, to be truly authentic, demands.

6.1 FREEDOM AS DEFINITIVE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

The powers of the Human spirit are the essential basis of what separates the human person in a substantive sense from all other beings. The Human person is distinct from other sentient beings in that s/he possesses a power of self-consciousness and self-directedness that defines the human spirit. Freedom is the defining characteristic of the Human. In freedom of being and freedom of action, the human person exercises a power that defines the faculties of the spirit.

The philosophical understanding of freedom enters into this discourse if we are to discuss faith as a freely given response to God's invitation to relationship, a concept that presupposes free will. The questioning of human freedom, the grounding of freedom and the degree of freedom possessed by the person as a given are concerns that provide the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of human freedom. A primary understanding of the person as intentional being presents free will as a given attribute of the human considering the observable phenomena of the varied choices available to him/her within most situations where decision and action is demanded. At a base level the person is to a degree governed by instinct and is reactive to the manifold impulses that exert themselves upon the person, both from within and from without.

However, the person is observed to be more than instinctive and reactive, but purposeful, self-directed and intentional in the choices and courses of action presented to him/her throughout life. These choices are perceived as extending across the range of possibilities within a given context. While the context within which freedom may be exercised determines the options available and limits the extent of freedom, this does not essentially negate or call into question the fact of personal freedom. The boundaries imposed upon the exercise of free will where inhibiting factors determine the degree of freedom, in fact serve to define the fact and nature of freedom. An additional consideration that deserves mention in this regard is the inherent power of choice to extend the possibilities of freedom. The choices made and acted upon intentionally and in freedom enable the possibility of expanding the context within which this choice and course of action is undertaken in freedom, albeit a limited exercise of freedom. Through this choice for or against a given course of action or value, the scope of possibilities within a particular context is extended (or reduced for that matter). Thus, a person creates for her/himself the future possibility of greater scope within a given context to exercise free will with

a greater variety of options available to one based on the choice made at this given moment in this given context.

To exercise one's freedom is more than just to choose for or against a course of action, an ideal, a value or a person, but is the exercise of one's judgement in weighing up and evaluating the options available in a given situation and then to direct oneself consciously along a determined course. The intellect as determinant of the will is regarded by some as being a factor that affirms that the will is not free, as it is necessarily the obedient servant of reason as determined by the intellect. Jean Mercier in *Being Human* (1998) calls attention to Leibniz's "psychological determinism", a theory implied in the positions of many philosophers who regarded ignorance and the misguidance of the intellect over the will as being explanatory of disordered action taken by the will (cf. pp. 63-64). Experience, however, indicates that there are many instances where the reasons of the intellect are not sufficiently compelling to sway the choice of the will, which then acts independently of the intellect. Faith, a universal phenomenon, not only regarded in its religious aspects, is evidence of the will, lacking the requisite rational grounding for exercising an informed decision is precisely the act of bestowing trust in a person, pledging oneself to an ideal or freely committing to a transcendental reality that lacks sufficient credibility as a basis for belief to definitively influence the will.

Freedom as a function of the will and intentionality is in Phenomenological thought always about a reality that is an object of its conscious movement. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), drawing from Franz Brentano's (1838-1917) retrieval of the Scholastic conception of the intentional inexistence of the object of consciousness in order to characterise the essential nature of psychic acts, stripped it of its metaphysical encumbrances and presented it as the basic thesis that all conscious experiences are characterised by 'aboutness' (cf. Moran 2000:16). Freedom is not considered as a value in itself, but rather a conscious intentional act directed toward a correlate designated by the intellect as worthy of this intentionality. Mercier, faithful to the phenomenological method identifies freedom as neutral (cf. p.68), the condition for the pursuit of values, non-values or anti-values.

A concept that well illustrates this and simultaneously clarifies the distinction between what are considered cognates of each other is that freedom is the condition for liberty. Liberty is a value strived after by the person and is an enhancement of humanness, wherever it is pursued or to be found. Freedom is at the service or disservice of liberty – in this freedom is a double-edged sword; it can be applied for the further humanisation of the human, or the de-humanising of the human. Freedom is the power of choice to achieve liberty that is the state of the person becoming increasingly self-possessed and self-directed. Freedom is the means, where liberty is the end. Thus, liberty achieved not through

freedom, but through means that militate against all that is truly human, is in fact not a value; "Liberty is a value but only if it is preceded by and rooted in freedom . . . Freedom must aim at liberty and liberty must be rooted in freedom" (ibid p. 70).

Freedom as foundational in the spirit of humanity is what defines the human person **ontologically**; freedom to choose and to act defines the human person **existentially**:

> The human spirit manifests itself as freedom foundationally: the freedom of the mind from concrete sensible data to form abstract and general ideas constituted by language; the freedom not only to know but the reflective ability to know the self as knowing; the freedom to think, weigh alternatives, decide, dedicate the self, and act purposefully. This deep level of freedom, this substantive freedom, is synonymous with the human spirit and characterises the human as distinct from other kinds of beings (Haight, 1990: 16).

Flowing from this compact description of human freedom, Haight says that freedom is not really freedom unless it passes into act. A mere potential for freedom is insufficient in defining it as being synonymous with the human spirit. This ontic freedom must pass into a freedom that can be described as existential if it is to be the full manifestation of human existence. A possibility for freedom does not fulfil the inherent characteristics of genuine freedom unless it becomes freedom in action. We do not limit ourselves here to a narrow definition of action as pertaining only to physical action, but an action of the spirit in choosing and committing internally to the manifold possibilities of being[27].

In what precisely does the freedom of the human person reside? The mere fact that we are aware of ourselves, our possibilities and limitations, our desires and strivings after so much more than what seems to be available, is itself a foundational experience of freedom. Karl Rahner (1978: 35-37) defines freedom not as a psychological phenomenon, but a "transcendental experience". We "know" it as the underlying presupposition of our thinking and the choices we make. We experience freedom whenever we choose to act responsibly, reflecting on the ability to recognise and make choices, and intentionally opting for one course over another. Rahner goes beyond the psychology of the Scholastics who maintained that one discovers freedom as a given; this is a contradiction of the essence of freedom. It is not one among many of the psychological phenomena of the human; but is rather a transcendental experience that grounds concrete expressions of freedom in the many activities of human life. Freedom is not discovered by us as a given, but rather as a presupposition. Rahner explains the limits of human freedom by balancing it with responsibility (cf. p. 37). **Responsibility** and **freedom** are the realities of transcendental experience; and in this context, freedom is limited. However, this limitedness does not detract from freedom; one can act within those limits, and is therefore still free. The recognition of freedom within the limits posed by the realities of life is itself the recognition of transcendental experience. I experience myself as one who assumes responsibility

and can act freely, that is, as a subject within the horizon of being. To claim that one is merely a product of external forces is to avoid responsibility. The human person is able to decide about him/herself and so to actualise oneself. Deciding and actualising, rather than the actual ability to transform this into practically doing this or that, are the exercise of true freedom.

A hasty comparison between Rahner's and Haight's views on the role of action may give the impression that they are at variance in defining action as integral to the experience of true freedom. This is not so, as both do not define action by its transitive modes alone, but in this regard would be speaking of the immanent modes of action. These immanent modes are those that do not consist in merely physical acting out in the material world, but are also the actions of interior disposition and attitude.

Human freedom is not absolute, not only in the external conditions of a person's life, or in freedom from psychological and social forces that influence choice and action. At a more foundational level of being, neither is freedom absolute. Freedom is defined by the limits of the possible within the constitution of the being and the boundaries that circumscribe the essential nature of the human spirit. Bernard Lonergan makes the distinction between 'essential freedom' and 'effective freedom' (cf. Hill *et al* 1997: 20) in describing the limits to human freedom. **Essential** freedom is the radical ability of the person to choose among many courses or actions. **Effective** freedom is that freedom which can only be exercised within the limited and given circumstance of one's life. A further distinction made between the forms of freedom is a metaphysical-psychological freedom (the freedom to choose between objects) and eschatological freedom (the freedom of the children of God). The former is present in the individual who is able to choose for good or bad, and the notions of sin and responsibility, reward and punishment presuppose this. This distinction is important for our understanding of the role that freedom plays in the faith act and the ability to respond to the divine initiative.

6.2 THE PARADOX OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN AUTONOMY

A paradox is a statement or idea that appears to be self-contradictory or ridiculous, yet is essentially true. Resolving a paradox consists in a deeper analysis and recognition of the essential unity that exists between the two seemingly contradictory juxtaposed propositions. There exists in the popular imagination the notion that humanity is not truly free if the existence of an all-powerful God is asserted. The contention is that if one were to declare that the human person is autonomous, and that God is sovereign, this is to involve oneself in a contradiction. This is not a contradiction but rather one of many paradoxes that initiate a quest for deeper understanding and further explication. We have

affirmed and described the boundedness of the human spirit to that which is possible within the framework of her/his full humanity. While freedom is an essential and a defining characteristic of what it is to be human, this freedom is never and can never be absolute in a sense often lamented by Sartrean existentialism. When theology affirms the total sovereignty of God in all things and over all created by God, it does not deny the essential autonomy and self-direction of the human person. The exercise of divine sovereignty in no way encroaches on the freedom of being and action that essentially characterises humanity. The notion of autonomy and its relationship to freedom needs to be clearly understood as a freedom to be and act within the limits and parameters of the possible. It does not mean that because God, acting out of sovereignty, created the possible and endowed humanity with the freedom to exercise autonomy within those parameters; that the sovereignty of God detracts from the autonomy of the human.

The sovereignty of God is the **condition** for the autonomy of the human person. Divine sovereignty is the very condition of the autonomy possessed and exercised by the human person. Properly understood, the relationship between divine sovereignty and human autonomy becomes an expression of God's love for humanity. Within the horizon of his/her experience of full consciousness, the human person possesses the boundaries sufficient for the exercise of the autonomy inherent to him/her. Where human freedom finds itself limited ultimately is in the capacity to satisfy the longing for the infinite. While experienced as negative limits to freedom existentially, these limits are **the very condition which impel the person to seek a more complete freedom in the transcendent**, the unlimited and eternal – God, whose sovereignty is the basis and cause of all freedom.

Freedom is true when it is self-conscious and directed consciously to attitudes and acts that enhance the dignity, and therefore freedom of self and others. In the attainment of a greater degree of self-possession does the person come to a fuller expression and experience of the freedom innate to him/her. To be in possession of oneself is to be conscious of the many and divergent forces that impel and compel one, both from within, and without; and through this awareness remain free to direct oneself intentionally and without an inordinate dependence on factors extrinsic to the essential dignity and autonomy of the self. This is an end to which the person strives continuously and yet, admittedly is limited often in its attainment by unalterable external forces and unconscious inner drives. Nevertheless, it remains a possibility innate to the very condition of humanity as the essence of human autonomy. It is an autonomy that finds its foundation in the power and love of the sovereign God.

6.3 FAITH AND HUMAN AUTONOMY

A purely mechanical understanding of faith allows itself to be seduced by the possibilities of a philosophical rationalism that reduces faith to an imposed response on the part of the human subject to an overwhelming invasion of the self. Thus understood, faith becomes a response that is made not in freedom, but is the capitulation of the human spirit to the extrinsic and unilateral action of a manipulative and domineering deity. The freedom that characterises the act of faith is an indispensable element of the whole faith act. Its necessity completes the faith act as having its origins in God, yet only becoming true religious faith if given as free response of the human will and intellect. If faith is to be a truly human act, authenticated by free response, it must be rooted in the human person and actuated by the intrinsic powers of the human subject.

6.3.1 Historical Considerations

The debate over the essential freedom of faith and the degree of freedom involved emerged as controversial at the time of the Reformation. The Lutheran position stated unequivocally in summary form in the ***Formula of Concord***: "The Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and everything that belongs to its real beginning and completion in no way to the human powers of the natural free will, be it entirely or one-half or the least and tiniest part, but altogether and alone to the divine operation and the Holy Spirit." ('Solid Declaration,' 2: 25, Tappert 1959: 526). This declaration arose out of the assertion by Martin Luther, in reaction to the semi-Pelagian tendencies in later Scholasticism, that the human freedom that enabled the person to turn to God was extinguished by the Fall (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 227).

John Calvin who restricted faith to the elect stated that faith was merely passive, involving nothing of the human person, but receiving all from Christ who in himself makes up what is lacking in the person (cf. ibid). The human person is merely a passive recipient under the influence of the Holy Spirit. These radical attacks on the integrity of the act of faith, denying the necessary role of human choice and freedom, as perceived by the Catholic Church led to the affirmations of the necessity of free will in the faith act.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) sought to clarify the Church's teaching on doctrinal issues contested by the Reformers. While declaring definitively on a number of concerns surrounding faith, it unfortunately also created a theology that negatively influenced the Church's self-understanding, its relationship to other Christian denominations and world religions in many profound ways that still subtly assert themselves in the present age. The tone of its statements, while theologically accurate, led to a mechanical understanding of faith, in effect reducing the act of faith to the assent of the mind

and the will to a set of revealed and defined propositions. The pan-Pelagianism that insidiously crept into much of the Church's life and teaching subsequent to the Council, persisted until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) attempted to redirect an understanding of faith to a more integral approach that takes into account the fullness of Revelation and the unity of the human person in all his/her diverse and rich dimensions and contexts.

Trent affirmed that, while faith is impossible without the assistance of divine grace, this in itself does not ensure the salvific character of the act of faith without the free consent of the individual. Human freedom, while impaired by the Fall, is not extinguished (*DS* 1521). Although the grace of God is necessary for any beneficial act of faith (canon 3 *DS* 1553), it is anathema to state "that a person's free will, when moved and aroused by God, gives no cooperation by responding to God's summons and invitation . . . and that it cannot, if it so wishes, dissent but, like something inanimate, can do nothing at all and remains purely passive" (canon 4, *DS* 1554). Trent affirmed that God influences the human will in coming to faith, but this is not an influence that overwhelms the integrity of the subject of faith, so allowing free cooperation on the part of the person.

The first Vatican Council (1869-1870) reaffirmed this position on the role of human freedom in the faith act, stating that it is always a free submission of the self to divine grace, which is not irresistible (*Dei Filius,* ch. 3, *DS* 3010). Furthermore in opposition to the rationalists (those who claimed that a person is able to come to faith with the unaided powers of human reason) who asserted the overwhelming force of truth displayed by demonstrative reasoning on faith, the human subject was overcome by the mere force of evidence and thus could not withhold faith; Vatican I stated that even after appreciating the evidentiary force of rational proof, the intellect still remains free to give or withhold assent (*DS* 3035). Thus while the motive for credibility was strong, the decision for faith is still truly free and is a personal response (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 227-228).

Vatican I **synthesised** the wealth of patristic, medieval, and Tridentine teaching by a definitive declaration of faith as humankind's free response to God's revelation, as a consequence of the intervention of grace that enlightens the intellect and disposes it to accept the contents of Revelation (*DS* 3008).

The Councils of Trent and Vatican I declared unambiguously on the role of freedom in the faith act, in reaction to theologies that either denied it or gave it no substantial role in the act of faith. In doing so, these Councils, while affirming doctrine on this important aspect of the theology of faith, did not do full justice to the integrity of the act of faith. In circumscribing negatively, they did not produce a

coherent and integral treatment of the role played by freedom in the act of faith. The expanding horizons in all the domains of human thought, and advancement in so many other areas of human life, and in particular the great strides made by a deeper appreciation of the individual and social freedom of the human person in the first half of the 20th century, enabled a more thorough and dynamic understanding of the act of faith to emerge from the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II dealt extensively with the freedom of the act of faith. The *Declaration on Religious Freedom* (*Dignitatis Humanae*), with its opening words affirms the dignity of the human person; a dignity that derives not from any human source or authority, but which is constituted in the very being of the individual. The *Declaration*, with a number of other documents, notably the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* (*Ad Gentes*), defends the right of the individual from coercion of any kind in coming to faith; thus underpinning its fundamental stance on the indisputable function played by the free assent of the human person in the faith act.

It is in the Constitutions (*Dei Verbum* and *Gaudium et Spes*), that the Council explicates clearly and positively on the freedom of the human person in relation to faith. The *Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei Verbum*) attributes freedom to faith in **submission** and **assent**. This is remarkable in that the Church not only asserts the freedom with which the act of faith is made, but also emphasises the personal and fiducial characteristics of faith, which were not given sufficient emphasis in previous teachings in this regard. The Constitution describes faith as "an obedience by which one entrusts one's self freely (*libere*) to God . . . willingly (*voluntarie*) assenting to the truth revealed by him" (DV 5). It is in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Guadium et Spes*), in which the Church reflects positively and courageously on its relationship with modern society; that the Council's perception of human freedom is clearly and decisively affirmed:

> It is only in freedom, however, that human beings can turn to what is good . . . Genuine freedom is an outstanding sign of the divine image in human beings. For God has will to leave man 'in the hand of his own counsel' (Sir 15:14), so that he can seek his creator spontaneously and freely arrive at full and blessed perfection by adhering to God. Hence human dignity demands that the individual act according to a knowing and free choice, as motivated and prompted from within, and not through blind internal impulse or merely external pressure (# 17).

The Constitution further explains that human freedom has been impaired by sin and that it is only with the assistance of divine grace that one can fully realise one's innate orientation towards the divine (cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 228). Faith in God is thus affirmed as ultimately being a free response to the gratuitous offer and invitation of a loving God.

6.3.2 Grace as Complementary to Human Nature

Classical theology uses the expression Obediential Potency (*potentia oboedientialis*) to describe the nexus that concerns the possibility of a relationship between God and the human person. This is precisely the crux of the problem of the relationship between nature and grace. It is in Thomas of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* that we encounter the crystallisation of the term and concept of obediential potency to describe this relationship (*ST* 3, q. 11, a. 1). In a general sense it means the capacity of the human person to obediently accept its essential fulfilment and the possibility of this through the unconditional gift of grace; obediently accepting the disposition and action of God, to receive a determination for which the person is not 'in potency' in such a manner that this determination is 'due' to it (cf. Rahner 1968: 65). The human person while being autonomous does not possess independently the possibility of achieving absolute fulfilment without divine assistance. Attempts to resolve this apparent contradiction on a purely analytical level result in frustration. Attempting to resolve it by stressing the total sovereignty of the creator and the utter dependence of the creature is unsatisfactory. According to Thomas Aquinas, the essential fulfilment of the human person and the unconditional gift of our fulfilment cannot be regarded as contradictory concepts (cf. ibid). He asserts this by giving the highest value to the unity of the human person beyond any dualism of spirit/body, infinite/finite, and transcendence/immanence. Neo-Thomism continues this in the transcendental theology of Karl Rahner and others who posit the essential unity of the human person as being the grounds for understanding the acceptance of the gift of grace as a natural outcome of the awareness of the human subject as being fundamentally oriented towards transcendence as an innate capacity and potential in the Humanum. In other words, there exists an availability (*potentia*) for accepting grace and hence for entering into possession (*oboedientia*) of a quality and characteristic that we do not possess of ourselves, nor can we, because of our dependent nature, expect to possess. This awareness of dependence together with the awareness of what has already been given to us as an integral part of our created reality is also grace: a call to the obediential acceptance that is due to God (cf. Fisichella 1994*c*: 741-2). Thus, even though in and of itself, human nature could never merit supernatural grace or bring about unaided the effects of grace, God has constituted human nature in such a manner that grace is available at every moment, in every experience as a possibility for the human person. This gratuitous gracing of human nature and human experience is the foundation upon which all further decisions and acts on the part of the person is made possible.

Having absorbed this notion of obediential potency into our reflections on the relationship between divine sovereignty and human autonomy, we further the discussion of both these themes by developing our understanding of the precise nature of the relationship between grace and human nature.

With an understanding of grace as being the life of God in the depths of the human spirit, as being the invitation to faith through Revelation, and the movement of the Holy Spirit directing the mind and will toward an act of faith that is both assent and commitment, we can assert with confidence, that it is neither alien nor intrusive upon the essential freedom which is an inviolable constituent of the human person. While the grace of God is beneficially influential, intellectually illuminating, and lovingly directive, it remains for the individual to either give or withhold the final act of faith. Grace is thus an aid to faith, enhancing the capacity and capability of the person to choose freely a commitment to divine truth and divine love. Grace complements and perfects the human response through operating **within** the human faculties, and granting an influence that is not contrary, nor in opposition to the fundamental autonomy of humanity. Divine grace does not force or coerce, but summonses and stimulates the individual to make a choice. The metaphysical-psychological freedom, impaired, but not extinguished by the Fall, is active in the choice the person makes in allowing him/herself to be grasped by divine grace. The eschatological freedom lost through sin is regained through the complete faith act and its consequences. Thus, God does not alone effect the faith act. The inherent freedom of the person in choosing to respond to the divine initiative, stimulated by divine grace is at once an act of God and an act of the human person. The goal and end of the divine initiative is only achieved in the free assent given by the human person. The cooperation that is required by the human person in responding to divine grace cannot however be reduced to a joint effort between equals. The freedom innate to the person is already the original grace granted the person by God. The capacity to choose for faith is stimulated by divine grace. The continuing efficacy of an ever deepening of the life of faith is through the continual outpouring of grace into the cooperative consciousness of the person of faith.

6.4 THE FAITH ACT AS THE IDEAL EXPRESSION OF HUMAN FREEDOM

Our anthropological deliberations on the nature of the relationship between grace and freedom enables a perspective of faith that reveals it to be the central, radical, and comprehensive commitment of human freedom. If the human person does indeed possess the essential freedom to make choices within the parameters of the possible and the given, and is granted the ability to exercise this self-determination for the ultimate good, then the choices made and the degree of commitment to the chosen object or course of action, determines the value of freedom within a given situation. Christianity maintains that the true and full use of human freedom is the committed act of faith in God as revealed completely in and through Jesus Christ. Because Christian faith makes demands on the whole person in every aspect of his/her being for the best possible good, then the utilisation of human freedom to choose for God as the ultimate reality and truth, is the ideal expression of that freedom. It is the very nature of faith and the demands it makes on the person that define it as the ideal expression

of human freedom. It is possible then to assert that the value of human freedom may be measured by the end to which it commits itself. For the person of faith, this end is God.

With a foundational understanding that freedom manifests itself in action, and remains merely a potential characteristic of the human spirit, unless it directs itself in action, then the object of its directedness determines the quality of freedoms actuality. Both the object of its commitment and the act of that commitment, determine the full potential quality of the act of freedom. The worth attached to the object of commitment in freedom and the depth of freedom required of this commitment, are what give to freedom its ultimate value as the defining characteristic of human dignity. Thus, the act of faith in a transcendent reality, the nature of that transcendent reality, and the quality of that relationship is the supreme expression of human freedom.

A choice for anything less than that, which enhances the human qualities of the individual, is a limited, if not corrupt expression of human freedom. The effects of the choice made on the life of the individual, in actualising her/his many noble potentialities, determines the quality of the act of freedom. The ideal and most complete expression of human freedom is the choice for faith and all its consequences and outcomes that ennoble and elevate the human spirit. This process of elevation is the movement towards the fulfilment of the human essence and existence.

An illustration of the paradoxical nature of the exercise of human freedom towards an end that exalts freedom in its commitment to an object of highest value is to be found in the words playwright Robert Bolt places in the mouth of Thomas Becket in the drama, *Becket*. Thomas Becket (1118-1170), who has lived the uncommitted life of the aesthete, is suddenly appointed archbishop of Canterbury and thus guardian and promoter of the interests of God's church throughout England. In a moment filled with dramatic intensity, Thomas in a side chapel of the cathedral accepts into his heart this awesome and challenging task and identity. He proclaims these astonishing words; "I thank you, Lord, for giving me an object worthy of my freedom" (Haight 1990: 19).These words addressed to God may be considered blasphemous by one who does not understand the nature of human freedom and its relationship to grace. However, they are a fitting and correct symbolic expression of the understanding of freedom and grace, and the nature of this relationship in the person of faith. Thomas' life of austerity and defence of the faith, particularly the right of the Church to be free from political interference, throughout his time as England's leading primate, inevitably results in his murder at the hands of King Henry II' knights in his own cathedral. The ironic poignancy of this dramatic moment in the life of a person who commits to freedom absolutely, illustrates the ultimate sacrifice that is the expression of true freedom in the life of the person of committed faith.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

As a medium which operates as the basis for an understanding of God as the proper object of faith, the *PSB*'s opening affirmations provide firm ground upon which can be asserted the fundamental nature and action of God. In one precise phrase is the fundamental nature of God as Ultimate reality, transcendent holy one and immanent God of history affirmed. Furthermore, the designation of God as Father reveals the mode of relationship that exists between him and his creatures. This further opens up the possibility of discussing the precise nature of this relationship as fundamentally conditioned by socio-cultural history and an individual's personal experience of God.

The personal experience of God for the person of faith is at once an experience of an awesome and holy transcendental reality and a gracious and ever-present father of indescribable love. The *PSB* opens up for us a way not only of expressing this reality, but also an indication of the basic attitudes and internal dispositions required for an ever deeper experience of the holy mystery which is named as God our Father.

The God we encounter in the many experiences of our daily life; in the beauty and awe inspiring intricacy of a finely tuned universe, in our sacramental communal worship, in moments of quiet prayer, and ultimately in his self-communication in Scripture, is revealed to us as also present in the depths and lives of those who may not explicitly acknowledge him as the Father God of historical Revelation.

The *PSB* reflects a wisdom that has insight into both the divine Spirit and the human spirit. It balances the relationship between these two in a manner reflective of a deep understanding of the ontological and existential characteristics of both. It recognises that the act of faith is at once an activity of God and of the human person, with primacy of action in this unity as belonging to God. The precise nature of God's activity in the act of faith is recognised more specifically as the whole mystery of salvation centred on the relationship between the Trinity and the human person. The Trinitarian structure of Revelation and its consequence, faith is primarily a relationship where the dynamics of any creative and sustained relationship are dependent upon certain indispensable elements. The gift offered by God, asked for explicitly, and received graciously by the believing person constitute a unity of act that is in its inner dimensions subject to a process of mutual and reciprocal gift and response. The gift offered by God is not something extrinsic to the human person. It is the gift of himself and an invitation to the human person to actualise the inherent qualities that are formally directed towards the complete authenticity of human life. The supplicant affirms the inherent faculties in the believing subject as necessary for a complete act of faith, yet also realises that they are often present only in

potency and thus require a continuing openness to divine grace in order for them to fulfil their intended end. These faculties while already an indication of the presence of grace require a further response on the part of the person to the intensifying and sustaining grace always offered by God who holds them out as free gift available, not as an imposition, but as gift asked for and received in freedom by the human person. This truth is succinctly affirmed in the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* of Vatican II:

> One of the key truths in Catholic teaching, a truth that is contained in the word of God and constantly preached by the Fathers, is that man's response to God by faith ought to be free . . . faith is of its very nature a free act. Man, redeemed by Christ . . . cannot give his adherence to God when he reveals himself unless, drawn by the Father, he submits to God with a faith that is reasonable and free (*DH* 10).

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THE DIMENSIONS OF FAITH DISCERNED IN THE PSB

One of the tasks of theology is to synthesise the elements of faith in order to create an intelligible and coherent framework for presenting the truths of faith systematically. Analysis is the indispensable foundation of good synthesis[28]. In analysing Christian faith and examining it in its constituent elements, the goal is a deeper understanding that leads to a greater synthesis. What we identify here, as dimensions are the essential characteristics of a comprehensive faith. Dimension, aspect or facet, is the description of a particular discernible characteristic through which the whole is integrally constituted. The investigation into the dimensions of faith is an analysis of the supplications of the *Prayer of St. Benedict*. The discussion on the dimensions of faith will attempt to be as comprehensive as possible within the established parameters of this discussion. There is no claim to deal systematically with all the aspects and components of Christian faith, or to discuss exhaustively the dimensions presented here. The claim is that an analysis of the *PSB* reveals the essential dimensions of faith as understood and accepted by most theologians. **The interpersonal dimensions of faith** acknowledge that faith while at depth being a personal act is undeniably communal and relational. A personally appropriated faith is **derived** from the community's faith experience, and finds its complete **expression** in relationship with, and in the life of the community – the Church.

A PERSONALIST APPROACH

Employing the anthropological category of **person** situates our discussion in the essentially human character of faith. This personalist approach behaves as an integrating principle for faith as discerned in the *PSB*, stressing the relational quality of Christian faith. Faith, as understood and expressed in our discussions is situated in the relational nature of the person, an intrinsic element in any genuine faith that is constituted primarily between God and the person. This is experienced in its fullest meaning in human community and having as its end the realisation of the full potential of the person as faith leads one to transcend the bounds of a mere secular humanist personalism. The integrating principle of Christian personalism as employed here also serves to emphasise the personalism that has come to be the primary method through which the theology of faith has been rightly identified since the *Nouvelle theologie*[29] of the middle of the twentieth century inspired the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

> A theology of faith can be built upon two different points of view. The first is analytic and abstract: it treats of the genesis of the structure of faith, usually making a particular study of elements such as subjective factors (intelligence, will, grace), or objective data (credibility, natural object, formal reason). This is the customary viewpoint of theology. The second is synthetic and concrete: it looks at faith above all as a *concrete whole* and attempts to explain its existential nature. It is the customary viewpoint of Scripture and the fathers. On this level, it

seems to us that faith explains itself as an *organic whole of personal relations*. We consider it useful for theology to bring this point of view into evidence (Moroux 1949 in *DFT*: 196).

As person, the human subject is more than just a product of the forces that form and shape him/her; but a free being capable of reflecting not only exteriorly but interiorly, and is therefore able to make a free response, largely unhindered by the blind and deterministic condition of being mere subject. Acknowledgement of this is essential to any comprehensive understanding of the human person as one who freely responds to the divine initiatives of grace and Revelation in an act of faith.

A personalist perspective acknowledges that faith in all its dimensions and expressions is fundamentally about **encounter**. Faith is an encounter with God, with self, with others, and indeed with the whole of creation. Not only is faith an encounter, but its effects creating the possibility for a deepened and more life giving encounter with all these realities. To encounter is to relate and to enter into the depths of the reality of the other, which further stimulates the transforming effects of an ongoing relationship. The imbalance that this personalist approach seeks to resolve is the reduction of the faith discussion into mere 'pistology', where the primary focus is to understand faith solely in terms of a doctrine about faith, and into an existential interpretation of the human person (cf. Scheffczyk 1968: 385). A doctrine of the human person's concern with faith as a phenomenon implies an introspective obsession with the functions and dynamics of faith, and doesn't lay the correct emphasis on the need of the human subject for a **relationship** with the object of faith, and indeed whether it ever reaches the point of acknowledging God as a personal being and not merely as the object of faith.

An intriguing etymological understanding of the word 'person', as interpreted by Tom Stella in **The God Instinct** (2001) is that it is formed from two Latin words, *per* and *sonare*, which means 'to sound through' (p. 27). Our being, primarily identified as person in this sense opens up the concept of person to further dimensions of understanding. God, life and other persons resonate through us; relationship is the fundamental action of the human person. To the degree that we are connected to our personal identity, to that degree do we enter more fully into relationship with God, life and others. God, life and other persons sound through us, resonate, and therefore connect ever more deeply with us, the more we are true to our personal identity. Our true identity is discovered through our relationship with God, with life and with other persons. Faith is at heart a relationship with all these realities; a deeper relationship enables for a deeper faith; reciprocally, the depth of our faith enables us to enter more deeply into relationships. We come to a deepened awareness of the truth of our identities through our relationships and so come to experience a more profound connectedness with self, God, others, and all creation. By centring our life and our relationships on the pole of our personhood, we both come to a

discovery of the deeper dimensions of our person and begin resonating truth in all its manifestations through the depths of our person.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE INTERPERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF FAITH
7.1 THE COMMUNAL DIMENSION OF FAITH

GIVE US

The degree of specificity in all the elements that constitute the *PSB* reveals a deep consciousness of the nature of faith. The choice of the plural personal pronoun, as opposed to the use of the singular personal pronoun is not an arbitrary choice, but rather an emphasis and an affirmation of the communal dimension of faith. The graces asked for as a condition for an increase in faith, are received by the community, take concrete manifestation in members of the community for the purpose of growth of the whole community. It would be naïve to believe that an entire community could be graced with all the gifts asked for in the *PSB* as individuals equally competent and capable in the specific dimensions mentioned; however, the granting of these gifts to individuals is for the benefit of the entire community. Thus while certain members of the community of faith experience an increase in a variety of gifts; the purpose is always for the growth in faith of the whole community. Not all can be wise, intelligent, diligent, and patient, but all in the community benefit from those who use these gifts for the good of the whole community of the faithful. The final supplication in the *PSB* is for a 'life to proclaim you', centring the whole purpose of the request for these graces upon the growth in faith of the community of faith, and indeed the whole human community.

In his First letter to the Christian community at Corinth, Paul warns them, "While knowledge puffs up, love is what builds up" (ch. 8: 3). Knowledge by itself is of no value, in fact is detrimental to the life of the community, if it is not exercised in love for the building up of the community. Paul develops this idea in a passage (1Cr 12) celebrated for its recognition of diversity and plurality within the Christian community; but a diversity of gifts and graces, given ultimately for the growth in unity and faith of the whole body of believers. True community cannot exist unless each member of that community commits him/herself to the life and growth of the whole community. To the degree that one commits to the community, to that degree does that individual receive from the Spirit, through the community, capabilities that are for the further building up of the community. Consequently, a further truth is affirmed: the gifts requested for an increase in faith in the *PSB* come not only directly from the Spirit to the life and consciousness of the individual, but come from the Spirit **through** the community. Sharing in the life of the community disposes the person to a greater openness to the gifts of the Spirit, not only as a personal infusion of grace, but as a drawing from the graces given to the whole community, and in fact through the very commitment to the life of the community. More

succinctly, full, conscious, and active participation in the life of the community is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful derive the true Christian spirit (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14).

Faith is at once an intensely personal phenomenon for the individual, and yet inescapably communal and public. There is a dimension of one's faith that is uniquely individual and must necessarily be so, as the act of faith demands for its authenticity that the individual freely and personally makes this commitment from the deepest part of the self. However, by its very nature, faith inevitably has a communal character that shares in the public life of the individual who is possessed by faith.

7.1.1 The Community as a Determining Element of Faith

The social and communal reality of the human being is undisputed, and for this reason, the faith received, experienced, and expressed has an undeniable dimension in the public life of every individual believer. The faith of the individual is determined largely by the socio-cultural milieu in which s/he is situated. Within a given social context, the elements that shape and form the values and norms of a particular people, perform the same function for the faith of that community and determine its character and its expression in **beliefs**, **worship** and **moral principles**.

At this point it is necessary to revisit the distinction between faith and its concrete human expression in beliefs, as beliefs are largely the embodiment of faith as determined by the community context in which faith is received and expressed. The transmission of faith is the handing on of the beliefs that correspond to faith in a process that is evangelical and catechetical. Though this transmission of faith from one generation to the next, from one person to another may be clear, creative, and communicated with conviction, it remains that what are being passed on are the beliefs that derive from the understanding and experience of faith.

In the popular imagination, faith and belief are often confused with each other and the one is identified with the other. An unambiguous conceptualisation of faith requires that its essential character be defined as accurately as possible. The discussion on this distinction in 4.4.1 is to be understood as relevant and applicable to the determining influence of the community on faith and its conceptual expression in formulas of belief.

H. Richard Niebuhr, one of the 20th centuries' leading theologians to have dealt with a theology of faith, outlines the variety of socio-historical influences that give a sense of self-identity to the community of faith (cf. Niebuhr 1970: 78-98). He speaks not only of the doctrinal beliefs that are a

unifying factor, but also of the socio-cultural milieu that forms the ethics and the practical living principles of the community. Culture, language and the shared worldview that flow from these, are considered defining elements of a church community and its expression of faith. The social context of a faith community is to a large degree a determining element of the self-identity of that community, and as such, plays an important part in the way in which faith takes on a unique form and expression within a given context.

7.1.2 The Faith Community's Expressive and Mediating Function

Faith is a universal phenomenon, experienced and practised by people of every period and culture. All people live by some faith, whether vague and undefined or sophisticated and well structured in institutions of faith and accompanying belief systems. If this is indeed the case, then we must ask ourselves how people come to faith. Alternatively, perhaps more specifically, what is the primary condition for coming to some faith, even a rudimentary faith? Incorporating and going beyond anthropological and existential discussions on this question brings us to a sociological consideration of the universal fact of faith.

We are all conditioned and informed by the community within which we come to life, growth, and individuation. The traditions and principles of our communities become largely imprinted on our consciousness through the process of socialisation that is an inevitable part of development. The religious faith of our communities has a particular impact on the individual, because its norms and values reach more deeply and formatively into the inner consciousness of a person. Thus, our primary experience of faith is within the interlocking matrix of family, church, culture, and society. Human socialisation is complex and manifold, its influences reach to the very depths within the person, and are formative at levels deeper than consciousness. While individuals may at some stage of their lives shrug off the *Historica Fides*[30] of their formative years through indifference, antagonism, aspirations towards individualism, or because they seek a new faith or value system to live by, the profound influence of their earlier faith formation is still present and operative in unconscious and often conscious manifestations. This reality attests to not only the power of socialisation, but to the phenomenon of faith as being irresistibly a community experience.

Faith is expressed and experienced through the medium of a common language, a commonly inherited cultural and social structure of symbols, and a common worldview. More specifically, the community of faith is the Church. The Church as institution and constituent of the larger community and society as a whole has an impact on the life of the individual beyond its spiritual and moral influences. Church as religion exerts a powerful and formative influence on the individual and society. On both

levels, religion is, and is seen as the primary force for good and moral responsibility. Religion provides a view of reality that is not confined to the merely physical and temporal, and as such operates as a mechanism for the individual and community to transcend the limitations of human life understood in terms of spatio-temporal reality. People tend to accept a point of reference that will balance the weights of the various values in their lives – the church and religion are the most immediate social constituents that enable a practical means for this:

> Without insertion into a particular community of believers, it is becoming increasingly difficult to be a Christian and to maintain one's Christian faith in today's world. The handing on of the faith to the next generation is also absolutely dependent on such faith communities (Kasper 1989: 122-3).

In the life of a person of faith, the demands of faith determine the extent and intensity of the commitment to, and living out of that faith. Individuated faith is an appropriated faith that seeks personal meaning within the broader parameters of the Church (though this is not necessarily true in the life of some mature people of faith) and it's lived expression of faith in worship, creed, and moral code. Nevertheless, an **individuated faith, while being differentiated is still determined by the community**. We never entirely free ourselves from the bond of community, and this is even more so for the bond between us and the community of faith that brought us to faith, nurtured it and continues to sustain it in ways that often escape conscious reflection. The community of faith, while being the social expression of those bonded by belief is not the end of the act of faith; that is divinely revealed truth. However, one believes what the church believes, and does this within the church. Our human dependency upon community is reflected in our dependency on the church and the structures within the church that enable us to give expression to our faith.

God reaches out to the community through Revelation. He speaks his Word to individuals within the complex structures of their social and communal network. His purpose is to draw to him a people of faith; gathering into a bond of love and unity, humankind in all its rich diversity. His call to faith is to bring together a humanity that is fragmented and alienated, creating a community that reflects the dynamic love and unity that exists within the Trinitarian structure of the Godhead. The history of God's relationship with humankind is the story of his reaching out to, and into the social networks of humanity. From Abraham and his tribe, throughout the story of his relationship with the people of Israel, the gathering of disciples as a band of followers, the establishment of the community of the resurrection, and the intense community life of the early Church as reflected in the Acts of the apostles; is a story of God relating to the human person within the reality of society and community.

On a purely human and social level the necessity for a communal experience and expression of faith is explicated by any persons need to interact socially. By committing oneself to a church, the Christian is

enabled to share beliefs and experiences of God's presence in his/her life. Values and moral beliefs are not only learnt but also reinforced in communion with others who share a similar faith. Common worship and prayer strengthens and nourishes the life of faith in the individual. The church community provides the person of faith with an environment where faith can be shared and nurtured, where emotional and spiritual support can be experienced, where we are called and challenged to witness to the authenticity of our faith by becoming aware of the needs of others, and reaching out to them with the love demanded of a faith filled people. An authentic community of faith provides the possibility for fellowship, instruction, service, spiritual direction and a communion of the faithful who read and pray the Scriptures together and receive grace and healing through the celebration of the sacraments.

Christianity, by definition is communal. Those who follow Christ are called to be intimately bonded with him and his disciples. They call each other 'brother' and 'sister' in recognition of their common kinship with Christ, and as children of God and thus a family united in love. **A faith that is not communal is not complete**. Faith and community are inseparable, and as such, give life and meaning to one another in a synergy that enables each to complement one another in a mutually sustaining bond of love and unity (cf. Hill *et al* 1997: 61).

The very nature of faith gives it an inner tendency to communicate itself. This proclamation and mediation of faith is intrinsic to its inner dynamic. The community of faith, the Church is the primary mediator of faith to the individual and to the world. The relationship between God and his people in the history of salvation is one that has as its primary purpose the handing on of the Word of life received to successive generations and to those who have yet to be brought into this relationship. No person comes to an **explicit** faith in God unaided by the community of faith. The Church's life of Word and Sacrament is the primary mode of transmission of faith. Its institutional character, structures, traditions are the vehicles through which faith is mediated and nurtured in the life of the individual and the community. The mediation of faith occurs through all the modes of transmission i.e. through the methods of human communication as recognised media of all human knowledge and experience. For the faith community the role of public rites and sacraments in mediating faith is psycho-socially intrinsic to this process of mediation. This serves to emphasise the value of ritual as a means of relating and expressing faith, and indeed much that is of a spiritual nature.

7.2 THE FAITH COMMUNITY AS STRUCTURE

Our reflections on the communal dimension of faith must incorporate the intrinsic element of the structural nature of the faith community and the underlying assumption of the necessity for structure

and institution if the community of faith is to function as an expression of faith and as mediator of faith. While there exists in the contemporary mind an aversion to the very notion of structures as necessary for the living out of human life in a postmodernist world that refuses to be interpreted and categorised, the very aversion as expressed in many ways is itself structured and relies on unreflected assumptions that form the basis of any position taken for or against any system, ideology, trend or institution. Because the human mind itself can only apprehend, interpret and evaluate the multiplicity of ideas and experiences through the structure that is a foundational and necessary basis for cognition exercised by the human mind, all directed intentionality by the human person in action, behaviour and relationships is predicated upon the very notion of being and essence as structured. In the section that follows, we will discuss the relationship between the community of faith and the world, which has as an underlying assumption, the structural nature of these two realities. Interaction and relatedness at every level of existence is possible because there is an internal and underlying structure to all of reality that makes this possible.

This brief apologia for the necessity and validity of structure enables us to understand further elements and dimensions of the structure inherent in the community of faith and its life and expressions as dependent on a reflected and conscious self-identity. Our understanding of structures is broad and recognises structures as the necessary media through which the human community comes to an awareness of a transcendental reality and the condition that provides the possibility for divine Revelation to be communicated to humankind in nature is not to be identified with Structuralism[31]. Structures in our discussion place the human person at the centre and understand structures as liberating for the person, thus are not to be identified with a reductionist Structuralism[32].

7.2.1 The Primary Nature of Structures and the Community of Faith

Frans Jozef van Beeck in the first volume (***Understanding the Christian Faith*** [1989]) of his vast work on *A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology* entitled ***God Encountered***, affirms the necessity of a study of the subject of structure in the course of any systematic theology (cf. p. 29). He presents a brief discussion on the necessity of structures and their nature as an exposition of the dynamic between faith and culture, recognising the need for an understanding of faith and the community to be situated within a broader discussion of how the structures of these two realities need first to be grasped in order that their interrelatedness may be better understood. The general nature of his assertions allows them to be applied universally in any discussion on structures. We recognise the value of Beeck's identification of the chief features (pp. 29-33) in this regard and apply them generally to develop our understanding of the structural nature of the community of faith, and the necessity for structure as the matrix in which faith is received, understood, expressed, and mediated.

The considerations on the community of faith, the Church, that follow the identification of the nature of structures will be based on the Church's own understanding of herself as presented and developed in documents of the Magisterium, particularly the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*) of the Second Vatican Council, and the subsequent reflections on this document by the Church and theologians.

The first three points of understanding presented by Beeck are primarily of an explanatory nature. They identify structures and explain the necessary dialectic that characterises the inherent tensions within an understanding of structures. They provide an insight into the balancing elements within structures that enable us to recognise the necessity of affirming structures as given necessities.

> ➢ **The Community of Faith as Structure of Freedom and Encounter**
> Human life that is meaningful cannot exist apart from relatively stable structures of shared life and communication such as language, family, and ritual. The world in which we live is structured and in the continuous process of being restructured at every level. Structures are an ontological given for the person who interacts with the world and everything in it. Contrary to the existentialist contention that structures are alienating and diminish our freedom, they provide the possibility for **meaningful encounter** and are thus **liberating**. Structures therefore call for both commitment and for conscious restructuring in order that they enable the person to face challenges and grow through this process. "Human life is meant to be organic, not shapeless; structure is not the enemy of freedom and personalness, but their matrix" (cf. Beeck p. 30).

This positive appreciation of structures is essential if we are to understand the Church as a structured reality that exists for the purpose of liberating people from much in life that is alienating, dehumanising and divisive (cf. *LG* 8); an institution that is necessarily structured around the will of God for his people. *Lumen Gentium* situates the very existence of the Church in the divine plan of God for humankind that they may share in the divine life through the establishment of the Church under the influence of an outpouring of the Spirit. This is prefigured in the history of the people of Israel with God calling together a people to him and making them his own (*LG* 2). Through the forming of a bond between himself and his chosen people in the structures of the covenant (cf. covenantal texts in Gn. 15 and Ex. 19 -20) , which is a preparation for the eternal covenant of Christ (cf. Jr. 31; 31-34), God creates the possibility for a meaningful and liberating encounter with him. Firstly, God encounters and reveals himself to humankind in the structures of family and tribal life of the ancient Israelites (cf. the call of Abram Gn. 12: 1-9), secondly he forms new structures based on

the covenantal bond between him and his people for the purpose of sharing his life and love in a personal encounter facilitated by the covenant. The Kingdom of God (Heaven) announced by Christ (Mk. 1:15 & Mt. 4:17) is understood to be the beginnings of the inauguration of the Church as promised throughout Scripture (*LG* 5). This is actualised at Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-13) and continually realised through the Spirit in the life of the Church, who is the Spirit of life, freedom and truth; "Guiding the Church in the way of all truth (cf. Jn. 16:13) and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her" (*LG* 4). These structures of order are a principle of unity within the Church and exist for the Church's primary mission of proclaiming Christ to all people for their salvation from all that enslaves them; of proclaiming the truth of Christ which sets people free (cf. Jn. 1: 14 & 14: 6, 17).

The Church as structure exists in order that people may experience a liberating and personal encounter with Christ (cf. Jn. 14: 6). *Lumen Gentium* definitively addresses the communal nature of the bond of the covenant: "[God] has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness" (#9). The Council reiterates this stress on the universal and communal nature of God's will of liberating encounter for humankind in the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*, "It pleased God to call men to share in his life and not merely singly, without any bond between them, but he formed them into a people, in which his children who had been scattered were gathered together (cf. Jn. 11: 52)" (*Ad Gentes* 2).

> ➢ **The Community of Faith as Embracing Stability and Change**
> Structures are not absolute or permanent. In fact, they have an innate demand and capacity for change, thus we are challenged to test, renew, and even change structures if they no longer work for us as means of providing encounter and freedom. Structures are intrinsically capable of providing both **stability** and **change**; understood as dialectic, the one cannot function without the other and each provides a balancing and modifying influence on the other. Structure becomes rigid if it is not open to change, where stability protects against formless change that is not organically rooted in that which has gone before. Structures are only sound if they incorporate both elements of change and stability (cf. Beeck p. 30).

John XXIII, shortly after been elected pope issued a call for a renewal of the Church with the setting in motion of a convocation of all the bishops of the world in what was to be the twenty first Ecumenical Council of the Church, making one of the most radical moves by a pope ever. The Second Vatican Council was to be one of the momentous events in the long history of the Church, instituting

and inspiring renewal of every aspect of the Church. John XXIII spoke of an *aggiornamento* (updating, reforming and renewing) of the Church's life and doctrinal formulations, that was to allow the windows of the Church to be opened up in order that the Holy Spirit could sweep through the whole Church (cf. Sullivan 2004: 24-5). He wanted the Council to renew the Church according to the gospel, an assumption that earlier Christianity was more pure than that of the modern era; no one challenged this assumption (cf. Kung 1963: 75). The Church itself felt the need for change, reform, and renewal according to the light of the gospel truths, the model of Church presented in the Acts of the Apostles and through responding to the signs of the times.

In his ***Opening Address*** to the Council Fathers of Vatican Two on 11th October 1962, John XXIII said that they were to take "a leap forward" by making the gospel relevant to the people living on the planet today. He then made what is considered by commentators to be one of the most important uttered by him, "For the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another" (Sullivan op cit. p. 29). With these words he signalled an end to the fortress mentality that had dominated the stance of the Church before the world, brought it down from the ramparts to be among the people, and instituted what Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban in an interview in October 2000 described as "the biggest, most famous, historic adult education project ever held" (ibid p. 16).

The Church recognises not only the reality of change as an integral element in the life of the Church, but also the necessity of such change, "The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (*LG* 8). The sharp distinction drawn between the content of faith and the form it takes as pointed out by John XXIII was to become the underlying principle of change and renewal in the Council, and is reflected in many of the documents that emerged after much debate, theological arm wrestling, and indeed acrimony between the 'conservative' factions and those committed to renewal. The former saw any tampering with the form, the expression of the Church's traditional doctrine as an attack on the very foundation of the Church's life and power; where those who genuinely sought renewal had a deep understanding of the need for a reformulation and presentation of the Church's teachings in modes of expression that reflected the spirit of the gospel and of the contemporary situation. This tension continues to display itself in the Church in the present day. Change and renewal are a constant necessity that should not be held back by fear and outdated conceptions of the Church's structure; nevertheless, this change needs to be in continuity with what has gone before and is consensually accepted as of perennial value.

John Thiel in *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (2000) examines four senses in which tradition can be understood: the "literal sense", the sense of tradition as "development-in-continuity", the sense of tradition as a reversal of past beliefs and practices i.e. "discontinuity", and the sense of tradition as "novel" (cf. pp. 31-60). The literal sense provides insight into that which is stable in beliefs and practices, core teachings and principles that may be expressed in revised formulations, but are nevertheless preserved through an enduring insight into their foundational truth as normative for all Christians. The second sense highlights those elements of tradition that give significant evidence of growth and development. This sense was explicitly affirmed by a document of the Magisterium in Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*: "The tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the church, with the help of the holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on" (#8). The third sense is one that acknowledges a sense of dramatic discontinuity and reversal of past beliefs and practices. This is exemplified specifically in Vatican II's reversal of the denial of religious liberties to non-believers and its claim that salvation was only to be found in the Catholic Church. The Council's documents on Ecumenism, on Non-Christian Religions, on its Missionary activity and on Religious freedom, while argued by some that they were simply a renewed understanding of what had been taught before, are patently new positions on these issues, exhibit a radical departure in point of view and understanding, and are more than just a reformulation of past beliefs. The Council did indeed acknowledge implicitly an error in past teaching on these issues through the acceptance and promulgation of these documents – one that has to be humbly accepted as such. The fourth sense of tradition, as "novel", while inherently unstable by virtue of it not arising organically from what is inherent and essential in Church teaching and practice, does recognise that there may legitimately be prophetic minorities that rightly challenge prevailing norms. These can be new theories or insights into aspects of Christian belief that have been universally accepted without question since the birth of the Church, but new situations and the development of consciousness force us to re-examine the unquestioned assumptions they rest on. The modern call to radical non-violence is a case in point; it challenges the Church to reflect anew on its teachings regarding the legitimacy of the just war theory and the right of the State to exercise capital punishment.

These four senses of tradition are not in competition with one another, but complement each other as integral to an understanding of tradition, and its function in the life of the Church. Without the literal sense, there would be no unity of Christian belief; without the sense of tradition as continuity in development the Church would be unable to recognise insights and practices whose 'traditional' character only emerged over time; and without the senses of tradition as reversal and novelty, there would be no possibility for authentic change as both are dynamisms that serve to expand, renew and

revise the shared consciousness of faith (cf. Gaillardetz 2003: 51). To recognise the integral and complementary nature of these four senses is to affirm the words of Blessed John XXIII that "the Church is not an archaeological museum, but is alive, tireless, and life-giving; and it makes its way forward, often in unexpected ways" (Alberigo 1995: 53).

> ➤ **The Community of Faith as Partial and Multiple**
> Structures are **innately partial** as well as **essentially multiple** : being finite, they presuppose the existence of other structures, structures that coexist both internally and externally, both temporally and spatially. Structures are not immutably locked into themselves, but possess clusters of interlocking internal structures. A structure consists of internally differentiated structures. Thus, the changes within any of these internal structures affect not only the others, but the whole structure of which they are part. Furthermore, there exist other structures with their matrix of internal structures, which in turn relate to and influence other structures. Hence, structures are to be understood as con-structured (cf. Beeck p. 31).

The Church, churches and ecclesial communions are essentially multiple by virtue of their being innately partial. No one faith can claim perfection of truth, authority, and possession of the Holy Spirit (though some do); thus, the fact of multiplicity is inevitable in order that the multi-dimensional and many-faceted reality of God's presence in the world is somehow completed. Beeck comments on how this insight into the nature of structures has consequences for the Church's self-understanding. If structures are as he describes them, then the structures of "the Church Community and Church tradition are bound to be, respectively, a 'communion of communions,' and a 'tradition of traditions' " (ibid). This is an acknowledgement of the Church as being essentially multiple and thus has consequences for a renewed insight into ecclesiology. For the Catholic Church this has an *ad intra* and an *ad extra* implication.

The first (*ad intra*) speaks to the diversity of Churches within the larger Communion of those who recognise the bishop of Rome as being the first among equals and holding the Petrine chair enjoys through apostolic succession the titles Supreme Pontiff and Vicar of Christ. We will not delve into the intricacies of argumentation concerning the validity of this, but rather accept it as the basis for our understanding of the relationship between bishops as successors of the apostles and their communions as participating in the larger communion of all communions who acknowledge Rome as the head and the axis of unity for all communions.

These communions can be understood in a variety of ways: as the 'particular church' or **diocese** who with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession hold to be true all that is definitively taught as belonging to the sacred deposit of faith, and are bonded in a union of faith and sacraments. These particular Churches "are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists" (*LG* 23). A further distinction is that of communions who are Eastern-rite Catholics, are in union with Rome, and possess ecclesial traditions other than Latin or Roman[33], "Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions" (*LG* 13). Furthermore is to be considered the rich and diverse expressions of Catholicism that emerge as valid and enriching dimensions of the Church according to culture and nationality, spirituality and theology, and other unique expressions of Catholicism rooted in the local churches throughout the world. Consequently, to speak of the Catholic Church, as a monolithic entity is incorrect as the Church is constituted **through** the diverse and plural forms that are unique and possess varying degrees of autonomy:

> From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great *diversity* that comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together (*CCC* #814).

The *ad extra* dimension of the Catholic Church in acknowledging this principle of structure is to be found in the Council's documents on itself, other Christian churches and non-Christian Religions[34]. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council makes an explicit reference to the notes[35] (or marks) of the church: "This is the unique Church of Christ which in the Creed we avow as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." Immediately specifying that "this Church, constituted and organised in the world as a society, subsists in [*subsistit in*] the Catholic Church" (#8, my insertion). The implications of the wording of this for the Church's self-understanding and ecumenism cannot be overemphasised. The original draft brought before the Council and rejected by the bishops contained instead of the verb *subsistit* the indicative *est*, which would have been open to interpretation as the Church of Christ being wholly identified with the Catholic Church. "Thus, the *subsistit* has the intention and discharges the function of avoiding an uncontrolled identification of the church of Christ with the Roman Catholic church, maintaining an openness to the ecclesial reality present in the other Christian confessions" (Pie-Ninot 1994*a*: 144). This is a radical departure from past understandings where the Catholic Church was understood by itself to be the one, true Church of Christ in full possession of the Holy Spirit. The Church now understands itself rather as being possessed by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that leads all churches and faiths toward the truth. The Catholic Church holds a particular bond with the Orthodox Churches that came about through the schism of 1054, a bond so profound that pope Paul VI exclaimed in a discourse in 1975 "that it lacks little to attain the fullness that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist" (in *CCC* #838).

While the above reflections are largely incomplete, selective, and imperfect in their presenting the full discussion on the identity of the Catholic Church and its understanding and relationship with other Christian churches, it nevertheless serves to highlight key elements of the Church as structure being innately partial and essentially multiple.

7.2.2 Structures and Their Implications for the Community of Faith

The following three points of understanding concerning structures evolve from the above affirmations of the nature of structures. The very nature of structures provides the human person with possibilities of self-understanding, of being, of aspiring and acting. The fact that structures are as described above, enable the person, the faith community and the human community to use this understanding to develop and go beyond that which may be passively accepted as a given. The above three insights into the nature of structures are largely **descriptive**, whereas the following three can be described as being primarily **prescriptive**. Beeck's following three points concerning the nature of structures are:

➢ Structures are the **matrix of encounter and dialogue** (pp. 31-2).

➢ Structures provide the possibility for an **interpretation** of the realities within them, the reality of them, and the possibility of reality beyond them (pp. 32-3).

➢ Understanding – the ongoing interpretation of self and the structures of existence is at depth a **liberating encounter**. This interpretive understanding is both remedial and constructive (p. 33).

The insights they offer are of value for the community of faith's understanding into how it may provide an environment that creates the possibility for encounter and dialogue, both within itself and among its members, groups, and movements within its structures, and with other communities of faith. The community of faith is challenged to openness and self-criticism and a continual inner renewal that enables people of faith to understand more deeply the structures of the Church that call them to reflection on their own identity, and to a greater consciousness of the value of other valid communities of faith beyond their own. The Church and churches are challenged through a greater awareness of the resources and inherent power they have to act for the common good and to prioritise values that are of lasting value for themselves and all humankind. They are challenged to create constructively a better world through common action and the application of eternal gospel values that the Spirit may indeed renew the hearts of the faithful that they may in turn renew the face of the earth.

7.3 THE FAITH COMMUNITY BEFORE SOCIETY AND THE WORLD

Because faith is the total commitment of the person to an object deemed as ultimate truth, faith is necessarily a social act. Truth is inevitably in the public domain, and even more so ultimate truth. The community of faith regarded as being before the world is a concept that does not necessarily seek to

identify this relationship as one of conflict and opposition, but is a notion that is acutely aware of the historical relationship of these two ideological domains and their social systems as having once been characterised by tension and conflict. An historical consciousness makes us acutely aware of the long and difficult relationship between the community of faith, its beliefs and institutions, and the world understood as the secular community. The community of faith stands before and in the world; it is and is perceived as a constituent of society which challenges the world and attempts to imbue it with its belief system; and who oftentimes feels the need to justify its presence and beliefs to a society that is often critical and dismissive of it. The conflict that so often characterised this relationship in the past is more one of dialogue today. This dialogue occurs as an imperative to **explain** rather than condemn or justify. The transcendental character of faith, if recognised and allowed to develop, is what strengthens its relationship to the non-believing community. Through a deeper appreciation of the transcendental character of faith, conflict and independence gives way to mutual understanding and dialogue, dialogue develops into acceptance and a mutual assimilation of insights and praxis

7.3.1 The Imperative of Explanation

An onus that lies heavily upon the faith community is that of explaining itself to the world. It is impelled from within, for the sake of its own integrity, and compelled from without by reason of validation, to explain the very fact of its foundations and existence, the reasonableness of its positions and presuppositions, the rationality of its belief systems and the rationale behind its engagement with the world both past and present. This is primarily an imperative of explanation rather than a defensive justification.

A helpful model of the relationship between the community of faith and the world may be that of Ian Barbour in ***Religion in an Age of Science*** (1990: 3-28). Barbour's fourfold typology of the relationship between Science and Religion applied in chapter three to describe the relationship between the paradigms of faith discerned in the *PSB*, is both helpful and insightful here in not only describing, but also proposing a direction for this relationship. Depending on one's perspective and general worldview, one can variously perceive religious faith and the world as being in fundamental conflict, as indifferent to each other, as in continuous and mutually clarifying dialogue, or as essentially and radically integrated.

An undeniable reality is that the community of faith is established within the fabric and matrix of human life in the world. From its foundations to the present, this inescapable reality defines and determines the relationship between the two. One cannot divorce faith and human life and their interrelationship. On both sides, there are those who seek to separate the two into distinct and

mutually irreconcilable domains. There are those who deny the necessity for a mutual self-understanding from a historical and a social perspective. Nevertheless, the reality is that the community of faith is integrated into the very fabric of human life in the world and that its influence has and still affects considerably, the concerns and issues of modern social life. In turn, the community of faith is itself challenged to understand and present itself to a society that may at once be both indifferent and antipathetic. The nature of this relationship throughout history has caused the faith community to examine, define, and redefine its very existence and nature. Its life and expression has been influenced by this relationship, and while at times this has been painful, it has nonetheless been a process of maturation and renewal.

Perhaps the principle mode of presenting itself to the larger human community is the Church's calling to **interpret** the world. The faith community is by its very identity as one committed to truth in all its forms and manifestations, called to interpret society. This interpretation is not only for the benefit of itself, but also for that of the whole human community. In the light of the truth of Jesus Christ and the perspective of the essentially divine orientation of human history, the faith community attempts to understand the manifold and rich expressions of human life in the world. It interprets through the lens of its own presuppositions and praxis in order to give meaning to what may superficially be comprehended as confusing and without meaning. That the world is at times indifferent and/or resistant to interpretation is itself one of the many data that is interpreted and reflected upon, giving rise to self-critical appraisal and internal transformation that redefines the engagement of the faith community with society.

The Second Vatican Council's defining document, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*), which speaks to the Church's relationship with the modern world, sets the fundamental attitude and stance of the faith community before and in society. The striking departure from the Church's historical attitude towards the world, whence the world is understood purely in terms of faith, is the documents proceeding from the description of the human person in the modern world. This phenomenological starting point is significant for the Church's understanding of itself and its relationship with the world. It no longer sets itself up as the unquestionable and unassailable dispenser of truth and salvation to a fundamentally sinful world. With the contributions of sensitivity and depth of insight displayed by the theologians and religious commentators of the mid-twentieth century, the document proceeds first empirically and then reflects theologically on the relationship of the faith community with contemporary humankind. It affirms the Church's desire to remain in contact with the world and to speak to its problems and concerns. It states the nature of this relationship as one of service and the fostering of a community of persons in the modern world. It

addresses the whole human person in the concrete context of the modern world, the person individually and in society, the person in search of meaning within the circumstances of the human condition (cf. *GS* 1-3).

The document addresses the dramatic and transforming developments and events of the times, and the effect of this on the human person, individually and collectively. In describing its contribution toward the fostering of a better world, the document acknowledges that the **Church must itself become more human in order to be more Christian**. The human person is at the centre of religion, politics, and indeed all historical accomplishments. In thus placing the human condition as the point of departure for its reflections, the Church underscores its primary concern as being for the human person in his/her entirety. If the Church seeks to understand "the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings," it does so that, "in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come and about the relationship of the one to the other" (# 4).

By addressing the totality of the human person in the complex matrix of the modern condition, *Gaudium et Spes* reflects the basic attitude of the Church towards the world. The community of faith is neither dismissive of, nor indifferent to the concerns of the world; on the contrary, she is sensitive and responsive. Being true to its self-identity, the Church seeks to impart meaning and significance to all aspects of human life. Jesus Christ is the truth upon which the community of faith is founded and sustained; and it is the light of this truth that the Church endeavours to bring to the world. "In the light of Christ . . . the Council wishes to speak to all men in order to illuminate the mystery of man and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time" (# 10). The faith community's interpretation and understanding of the complexity of human life in the world is not an end in itself, however valuable, but is for the purposes of bringing to human society the practical implications of this understanding and its outcome in a world transformed and ultimately redeemed by the truths of faith. The faith community is challenged not only to present itself to society, but also to transform society. This is the mandate given it by Christ in the Gospels where he speaks directly to the role of the believer in the world, the identity and function of the believer, the moral example expected by one who is a follower and the primary stance of praxis in and for the world, arising out of one's commitment to God (cf. Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5-7 and related texts in Lk 6: 20-49).

The Church's mission to the world has undergone a major shift that is a response to the shifting dynamics of human society in the rapidly evolving contemporary era. Having outlined above the shift in attitude toward the world that the Church has undergone, we examine the accompanying shift in

methodology that determines the Church in and before the world. Philip Land quoted in **Catholic Social Teaching** (Henriot *et al* 1987: 18-19) identifies five significant methodological shifts of the Church's social teaching adapted here to more inclusively relate it to all aspects of the Church's interaction with the world.

The description of the Church as the '**People of God**' in *Lumen Gentium* is the appropriation of a biblical image that holds important implications not only for ecclesiology, but also for the Church's approach to the social order. This renewed self-understanding lifts the lay faithful from a passive to an active role in defining and shaping their history in the contemporary world. This active role in effecting positive social transformation is done in cooperation with others who share the same goals and who possess greater competence and specialised techniques more suitably directed toward this task. In his Apostolic Letter celebrating the Eightieth Anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (*Octagesima Adveniens* [1971]), Paul VI challenges local Christian communities to join others of good will in seeking solutions to pressing social questions (cf. *OA* 4).

God communicates his presence and will through human history and consequently the Church has "the duty of scrutinising **the signs of the times** and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel" (*GS* 4, my emphasis). A new method of doing theology emerged from this statement of the Council. The Church looks to the world and discovers there the signs that reveal God's presence and manifest his loving plan for humanity. Theology must go beyond the purely deductive and speculative to seeing, interpreting and formulating renewed understandings of God's ongoing self-revelation.

As the relationship between the Church and the world has shifted from the deductive to the inductive and historical, the defined absolutes of an earlier classicist approach, characterised by **a rigidly interpreted natural law ethic, has given way** to the search for the objectively true; which is seen as objectively human insofar as that can be disclosed. The search for the objectively human is rooted in experience and embraces a holistic approach to interpretation and application. External truths need to be filtered through personal experiences, observation and the insights afforded by an historical consciousness. This process of interpretation and praxis necessarily involves the struggle to understand the full human reality and to discern the will of God in that reality.

Reason was the principle behind much of the Church's earlier formulation of social teaching, which is gradually giving way to **the primacy of love** in this process and relationship between Church and world. In this context, the primacy of love has three meanings: love is at the core of the virtue of justice and so brings the praxis of justice, and indeed all praxis, to their fullest potential, meaning, and

creativity. Love is the primary motive of action on behalf of social transformation. The fundamental option of love coming as it does from the ground of our being, which is love, produces moral action. While reason is not entirely discarded, it is rather given its proper place in the process of discernment and the consequent response of active engagement with the world. The earlier methodology of Catholic social teaching and engagement with the world led to social idealism: "It isolated reason from a relationship of dialogue with experience, commitment, and action" (Henriot *et al* p. 20). However, where praxis is given its correct priority, the starting point of **social and pastoral refection, planning, and action**, are people in their everyday struggles, needs, and hopes. "Praxis thus becomes a true force for understanding and developing all authentic social teaching" (ibid).

The faith community no longer isolates, nor sees itself as isolated from the world. Its very identity defines its mission to the world, which in turn determines its primary stance of active engagement in all the pressing issues and concerns of the human person in the world. Its attitude, relationship, and action in the world, flows from its fundamental identity as 'the light of the world'; which is not only as exemplar, but also as active participant in the ongoing transformation that is continually experienced by all people. The Church inserts itself into the world in order that it may respond with the Christian message of faith, hope and love to the needs of the contemporary person. Furthermore it does this in order to be a 'leaven' that challenges and calls humanity to its truest inner identity and purpose, which can only be understood in terms of its origin and meaning in that which is transcendent, ultimate and eternal.

The *PSB* through the simple use of the word *us*, situates faith within its proper context as a communal and social reality. The community asks for the graces and dispositions necessary for a deepened faith in order that she might more truly be faithful to the identity as the people of God given her by the Father; the mission of witness, service and community entrusted to her by Christ; and the eschatological purpose toward which she strives under the influence of the Holy Spirit by living and proclaiming the values of the kingdom of God on earth, in anticipation of its full realisation at the end of time. The spirit and words of *Lumen Gentium*, with its strong biblical, pastoral, and ecumenical character strikes the high notes of the essence and implications of the faith community as the People of God. The community of faith is a living organism whose dynamism is rooted in the Holy Spirit, centred on Christ and directed with hope toward the fulfilment of the kingdom of God through manifesting in teaching and living, those values which shine out as a light to all peoples and nations.

7.4 THE INTENTIONAL DIMENSION OF FAITH

DILIGENCE TO SEEK YOU

The quest for ultimate truth is an innate compulsion within the heart of the human person. "All human beings desire to know" ([Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1.] in Hume 1981:24) and truth is the proper object of this desire insofar as it is perceptible to human consciousness. This quest takes many forms and is directed toward many sources or objects perceived as truth. The human person is characterised by two basic drives: the search for **meaning** and the desire for **happiness**. Benedictine scholar and abbot, Basil Hume identifies these drives as specifically the search for truth and for good (cf. 1981: 24). "In the search for meaning, the mind is seeking its object, which is truth; in the search for happiness, the will desires its object, which is the good" (ibid). The restless enquiry of the mind compels it towards knowledge and understanding, while the greatest moments of human happiness are those of love, when the relentless drive towards fulfilment gives way to possession of that which is desired. "**To know** and **to love**, these are pre-eminently and specifically human activities" (ibid, my emphases).

What is discerned as a common thread throughout the history of humankind is the search for this truth, its correlate, meaning; and happiness and its correlate, love, in realities beyond the perceptible world that are deemed as objects worthy of one's personal commitment. For the sincere seeker, this quest is a lifelong one, always embarked upon assiduously as the truths of transcendent reality unfold, and whose depths are never completely fathomed in this life. The final purpose of the human person determines his/her priorities on this journey; namely to know God, and knowing him, to love him. Hume, speaking of the monk, speaks also for all people when he says, "This explains the task of the monk. His function is to seek God, and in no way to flinch from the difficulties which the search will entail" (ibid pp. 25-26). This quest, more often than not, occurs within the community of faith and the sources of that community's faith.

7.4.1 Revelation as the Source of Faith

The term **source of faith**, is not meant to imply that faith can be generated or produced through the sourcing of an historical tradition or body of received writings; but rather that these provide the foundation for a faith that is experienced within a community of faith that has recorded the nature of this journey of faith, and its lived expression throughout its history. However, faith does occur as the result of an initial experience or encounter with the historical record of the faith of the community that points to an ultimate reality beyond the self, the world, and indeed all of created reality. This may be an experience of transcendence, disclosure, awakening, or a gradual coming to faith. The foundation upon which this coming to faith rests is what is referred to as a source of faith. Seeking understanding and explanation, one is led to the sources that ground and sustain this faith.

It is difficult to delineate with absolute clarity what is a purely natural source of faith, and what is solely a transcendent and supernatural source. The complexity of the world and of the human person, does not allow for a too rigid distinction between natural and supernatural sources of faith. The revelation of God is manifold, complex in its occurrence and structure, at once immanent and innate in the created order, transcendent, and extrinsic to the dynamics within nature and human experience. The Judaeo-Christian religious tradition is founded on the fundamental experience of God's self-communication to humankind within a particular socio-historical context.

The nature and structure of Revelation indicates more clearly how precisely it is the source of faith. The foundational experience of God reaching out to humankind is the story of Abram of Haran being called by Yahweh (cf. Gn 12) who manifests himself freely in order that a covenantal relationship is established between this man and his people in a particular concrete historical context. From this initial encounter develops the drama of God's relationship with humankind throughout the history of salvation. Beyond (and oftentimes within) the recorded history of salvation in the Scriptures, humankind comes to an awareness of the existence and presence to the world of a power that is greater than and beyond the world. The sources of this consciousness of a reality or existent that transcends the physical limitations (and yet is also found to be within them) are varied and complex. Each culture has its story of faith and religion, creed and cult, code and conduct; all grounded in a source that, while manifesting itself within the structures of the world and human consciousness, is nevertheless not to be identified entirely with them. There are events and circumstances, experiences and manifestations that defy natural explanation within a given cosmology, and are thus regarded as numinous and transcendent. For many the mere beauty, intricacy and synchronicity of the natural order are sufficient proof for claiming the existence of a creating and sustaining power that may or may not possess an ontic existence, yet who nevertheless is the underlying principle behind the natural order.

These are the sources properly regarded as giving rise to faith. They occur within the natural order of the world or of human experience, and may be understood purely in terms of the sciences. Nevertheless, they provide in themselves the possibilities of encounter with a transcendent reality. They are regarded by theologians as the preambles of faith (*Preambula Fidei*).

It is a longstanding belief within Christian theology that the human person can come to knowledge of God through the independent powers of the human faculties. The created world and the many and varied workings and wonders of its processes are for many not only proof of a divine origin, but also the *loci* of an experiential encounter with the divine reality. An explicit acknowledgement of the truths

of faith is not necessarily a precondition for coming to faith. The powers of human reason applied to the natural order are sufficient in themselves to give rise to a belief that there exists an intelligent and superior reality that is the ultimate cause of all that is. This is considered a notional assent to a divine reality that while predisposing a person to a real assent of faith, is in itself not faith proper. An encounter with the God of Revelation in a graced experience is the beginning of real faith[36].

The formal structure of Revelation is a consideration of the possibility of the Word of God as 'audible' to human consciousness. Faith by its very nature directs and intends itself toward an object that is transcendent and ultimate. "Faith, insofar as it is genuinely religious and attaches itself to an object that is transcendently ultimate, must have its object revealed to it" (Haight 1990: 51). The fact of its transcendence necessitates that some form of communication take place for faith to be possible. What the object of faith reveals is more than just fundamental truths; it reveals the fact of its existence and the nature of its very self. The object of faith communicates the reality of itself to humankind in order that a relationship of faith is established. The nature of this self-communication in Revelation is sufficient for both an objective and personal understanding and grasp of the object of faith by the human subject. Accordingly, Revelation is understood through an etymological consideration of its Latin origins, meaning, "Taking away the veil" (O'Collins & Farrugia 1991: 206). Thus, faith is faith in what is revealed; and what is revealed is not only the object of faith, but also the ultimate purpose of human existence, which makes Revelation meaningful for the human person who seeks after that which will complete him/her. Truth, which the mind seeks to complete its quest for meaning, and love, which is offered in the process of Revelation as the outcome of the response of faith to what is revealed, provides the end for the human quest for meaning and happiness. Revelation draws the human person out of her/himself into a relationship with truth and love, compelling a response of faith in that which is offered as the final end of existential striving for a commitment to that which completes the fundamental restlessness within the human spirit.

The existential anthropological foundation of our understanding and discussion of faith demands that Revelation be similarly understood if we assert that it is the intentional dimension of faith. Hence, an understanding of Revelation as both immanent and transcendent is necessary for faith and Revelation to be considered as correlatives, as fundamentally ordered to each other and inextricably linked in a manner whereby each clarifies the deeper meaning of the other. Our further reflection on the mutually dependent nature of faith and Revelation will therefore have as its tone the existential anthropological foundation of both these realities.

Heinrich Fries in **Fundamental Theology** (1996) clarifies the concept of Revelation as necessarily being a revelation and encountering of God and not the mere revelation of human beings and their own possibility and reality (cf. p. 180). This clarification while seemingly superfluous is necessary if we are to assert the fundamentally transcendent nature of Revelation. He further specifies that Revelation as a concept describing the ways and means in which God self-communicates and makes himself perceptible is, that which encompasses absolutely everything, that enters into the ambit of faith and theology (cf. ibid). Thus, a consideration of the formal structure of Revelation is essential prior to any further discussion on Revelation as the intentional dimension of faith. That which the human person directs him/herself towards as offering meaning and fulfilment is a revealed reality that transcends the human person and is the primary subject matter of what concerns the person ultimately as the personal ground of being and the transcendent ground of all reality (cf. Rees 2001: 79).

Revelation is the process of the manifestation of the object of faith to human consciousness within the context of human history and concrete socio-cultural experience, and the reciprocal response of the human person in faith. Through and in Revelation, a mutual dialogue of communication and response is established between God and Humanity. Revelation considered in its totality includes the human response to the self-communication of God throughout the history of salvation as recorded in Scripture. While it is essentially a dynamic human process in that Revelation occurs within the consciousness and life of the person and community, a primacy of action is given to the object of faith who is the initiator, origin, and subject of Revelation.

Revelation is for the community of humankind, and is transmitted to the community by the recipient. The oral transmission of this becomes tradition; its written record becomes Scripture. More precisely, according to MacKenzie, in his prefatory commentary (1966) on Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, Scripture *contains* revelation in the form of a written record; however not all Scripture *is* revelation in the sense of an unveiling of the mystery of God, because much of it is the record of revelations effects and of human response through faith or lack of faith. All of Scripture is inspired i.e. written under the inspiration of the Spirit, but not all is revealed (cf. p. 108). This suggests the necessity of the interpretation of scripture, its understanding throughout history, and the lived expression of this interpretive understanding in the life of the community of faith – Tradition.

7.4.2 Revelation as the Unity between Scripture and Tradition

The history of salvation is more than just the recorded events to be found in the Scriptures, however the record of God's relationship with the community of faith in the Bible, is crucial to the life of that community. It is this unity of **recorded experience** and **lived experience** that is the primary source of

faith for the individual and the community. The unity of **Sacred Scripture** and **Tradition** is the vital source of Christian faith. While the words of Scripture are indeed, the constitutive and normative source of faith, their genesis, and development in the lived experience of the community of faith is the foundation of their authority and efficacy. The foundation and pillar of truth is the community of faith (cf. 1Tm 3:15). An inescapable reality is that we are imbued and influenced at every level of consciousness by the norms and values of the cultural and religious milieu we are born into. We all stand within a cultural tradition that forms our presuppositions and shapes our ideas about the world, self, and others. Tradition gives us concepts, ideals, and values with which we are able to construct for ourselves a meaningful life. Tradition is the appropriation in each generation of the practices and insights of the past into the present in a way that dynamically preserves all that is best, yet continues to contemplate new and relevant ways of making this tradition meaningful to contemporary life. This appropriation takes a variety of forms: the teaching and life of the apostles and the early Christians, the insights and interpretations of successive generations of the deposit of faith in the development of doctrine, the abiding and corrective influence of the *sensus fidei*[37] of the people of God, their intimate sense of the spiritual realities which they experience – all of this under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus as time moves forward, the community of faith advances towards the plenitude of truth guaranteed by the Word of God in Sacred Scripture (cf. *DV* 8).

> Faith . . . is not something that comes from a book. Faith is a personal experience, an attitude toward life, and a way of living that is rooted in a communal experience and expressed in a statement of faith or belief, a creed that is both personal and communal (McSweeney 1998: 80).

Scripture and Tradition are not two separate sources of revelation, but two components of the same source. It is important that this is stated, as too often an overt stress on one or the other, does injustice to the validity and function of the other in the life of the faith community.

Tradition transmits the entirety of the Word of God, so that enlightened by the Holy Spirit of truth the successors of the apostles preserve, expound, and proclaim this truth to all generations. The *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei Verbum*) states unequivocally that there are not two sources of Revelation but one source transmitted through two modes which are inseparably linked: "Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church" (#10). Yet Sacred Scripture contains the word of God that has been spoken to human beings in the course of the history of salvation. This communication of God to humankind is experienced in both word and deed. Sacred Scriptures is not merely a record of events, experiences, and religious history of the early communities of faith; it contains within itself the transmitted utterances of God that initiated and determined the history of salvation as reflected in the Scriptures.

The importance of the Scriptures revealing the words, life, and action of God in and to the human community can never be overstressed. The Second Vatican Council gives due and appropriate recognition of this when it states in *Dei Verbum*:

> The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures . . . She has always regarded, and continues to regard the Scriptures, taken together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of her faith. For, since they are inspired by God and committed to writing once and for all time, they present God's own Word in an unalterable form, and they make the voice of the Holy Spirit sound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles (# 21).

Having discussed in a fairly limited way the nature of this revelation, we move on to what is revealed, the material nature of Revelation; and ultimately the intention of Revelation[38] – that we may have faith, and through faith enter into the life of God who reveals his very self.

7.5 REVELATION AS INVITATION TO FAITH

Faith presupposes Revelation; therefore faith is faith ultimately in what is revealed:

> It is basic to Christian belief (as to the tenets of Judaism) that God is a personal God who has spoken to men. He has initiated a dialogue with them, in which they are invited to listen to his words, and to respond. His words are revelation, and man's response is faith (MacKenzie 1966: 108).

The intrinsic unity and mutual dependence that characterises the relationship between faith and Revelation demands a consistency and correspondence in understanding. The interconnectedness between the human response in faith and the object of Revelation can never be entirely separated. In attempting to understand the dynamics of one or the other, the vital unity of their mutual relationship is to be respected.

7.5.1 Self-Communication of the Object of Faith

Revelation is essentially the self-communication of God for the purposes of inviting humankind to faith. It is an invitation to faith in what is revealed, and invitation to faith in God himself, the one who reveals, and is himself the object of Revelation and therefore of faith. Revelation is therefore not only propositional but also personal. In fact, contemporary Catholic biblical theology emphasises the personal character of Revelation as being crucial for a proper understanding of the **truths** of faith that are revealed. An insightful study of the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* reveals that the Church has moved away from a one sided propositional understanding of Revelation, as evident in the decree on Scripture and Apostolic Tradition of the Council of Trent; "these **truths** and **rules** are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us" (*DS* 1501, my emphasis), to a more personalist approach. Vatican II views Revelation as God's self-communication in history that reaches its fullness in the person of Jesus, and through life in the Spirit offers

humankind a share in God's own divine nature (cf. *DV* 2). Revelation is not merely the communication of truths expressed in dogmatic propositions or creedal formulas but rather the deeds and words of God, which reach their personal fulfilment in the enfleshment of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Article 5 of *Dei Verbum*, through its ordering of what is revealed indicates the priority given to the self-communication of God over the intention and will of God for humankind:

> 'The obedience of faith' (Rm. 16:26) must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making 'the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals,' (*DS* 3008) and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him. Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth' (*DS* 3010). The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood.

This theologically dense article further places the first priority of faith to be given to God who reveals, and secondly to the propositions or statements of faith. Admittedly, in the unity of the act of faith the two cannot and should not be too sharply defined, as the God who invites to faith is not only the source of truth and truth itself, but also reveals his will and intention for humankind. It further indicates that faith is a commitment of the whole person: **intellect** illuminated by truth, the **will** moved by grace, and the **heart** perfected in faith under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Council fathers was to de-emphasise the intellectualist character of faith and situate it as an act of the entire person who engages in a relationship of loyalty and self-commitment to God, who invites the freely given offer of obedience as a response to his self-communication and salvific plan for the human person, and all creation.

The community of faith under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit understands that God primarily communicates himself in Revelation, not merely truths about himself, humankind, and moral principles to live by. It understands that this self-revelation is Trinitarian in form, Christological in realisation, and historical in mediation. Biblical faith is thus more than an intellectual assent to the propositional contents of Revelation; it is a loyal adherence to a personal God. The general tenor of *Dei Verbum* lends credence to these statements, in that it understands Revelation as principally ordered toward the human person, is more Christocentric in character than previous ecclesial pronouncements on the subject matter, and presents Revelation as a dynamic process involving the human response in faith to the depths of a personal God who communicates these depths through a progressive interpersonal encounter.

God, in communicating himself to humanity, is not only revealing something about himself, he is actually communicating his very presence. In the act and process of self-communication, God makes himself known to the innermost constitutive element of the human person. Rahner calls this, **ontological self-communication** (1978: 116). The significance of this concept of ontological self-communication touches the very depths of the faith discussion. Faith in God is not just faith in the fact of his existence and his attributes; faith is about being absorbed into the very life of God who through his self-communication infuses himself into the depths of our being. Central to our reflections on faith are the thoughts of Rahner's concepts on divine self-communication: The gift of the divine life that God shares with us is both an historical event and a transcendental experience. The historical Christ event invites us to respond, and our response enables us to transcend who we were prior to this event. It enables us to transcend the imperfect and limited ways in which we sought the divine before his self- communication to us. God communicates with us by becoming **immediate** to us. In our own experience, that of self-reflection, self-knowledge, and self-transcendence, we recognise God as the one who calls and sustains us. In recognising our incompleteness, we also recognise God as the one who completes us; and thus a relationship is formed between God and humanity. Rahner states that God's gift of self occurs in a mode described as **supernatural existential**. It is existential because it is offered to every human being; supernatural because communion with God is possible through the capacity for the divine with which he has graced us (cf. ibid ch. 4).

The incarnation of the divine in human form in the person of Jesus Christ is the fullest expression of ontological divine self-communication, and its consequences are ultimately the full sharing in the life of God by humanity through the power of the Holy Spirit. Revelation is therefore not just the story of this reality in the faith history of Israel, its fulfilment in the early Christian communities of the New Testament, but it is the very actuality of what is described. Thus, Revelation is both **descriptive** and **efficacious**.

7.5.2 Jesus Christ: Plenitude of God's Self-Communication

The experience of the Christ-event is the definitive moment in the history of Revelation. Juan Alfaro speaks of the Christ-event as unparalleled, unique, and nonrepeatable, because in it God has spoken his final word as a word of salvation; the total unity of the event includes the incarnation of God into the world, his action and message, his death and resurrection is therefore both immanent and transcendent in relation to history, upon which it bestows an ultimate significance for salvation (cf. 1982: 342-3). Jesus Christ was born into, and lived among the people singled out by God as the recipients of his Word, considered as the transmission through revelation of his historical entering into the world and humanity. Christ is the climax of the personal revelation of God to his people. In Christ,

the **Word** of God takes on a dual meaning: that of <u>word</u> as medium of communication, and <u>Word</u> as the meaning giving, ordering principle, and definitive manifestation of the presence of God to humanity. Christ is the Logos of God in the fullest sense of the meaning of this term. In Greek philosophy, the word *Logos* is the reason that permeates and rules the cosmos. The OT wisdom literature spoke of the Logos as the personified wisdom that God showed in forming the universe. The Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 B.C. – ca. A.D. 50) linked Greek philosophy and OT wisdom literature to represent the Logos as the divine pattern and purpose active in creation. In Johannine thought the Logos is the pre-existent divine Word through whom "all things were made" and "who became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:1-14). The verbal character of this Christological title suggests how divine self-revelation reached its climax with the historical incarnation of the Logos (cf. O'Collins & Farrugia 1991: 128-9).

Dei Verbum recognises in the incarnation the full manifestation of the power of God, a power that is available and efficacious through faith:

> For when the time had fully come (cf. Ga. 4:4), the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth (cf. Jn. 1:14). Christ established on earth the kingdom of God, revealed his Father and himself by deeds and words; and by his death, resurrection and glorious ascension, as well as by sending the Holy Spirit, completed his work (#17).

The totality of the Christ-event includes the procession of the Spirit who confirms the faith of the disciples in the truth of Christ as the fullness of God's Revelation. Jesus Christ gives a *sensus plenior*[39] (fuller sense) to all of God's self-revelation prior to the Christ event, completes the process of the self-communication of God, and through Christ's enduring presence in the life of the community of faith, extends, and sustains the indwelling of God in human history.

Christ is at once **mediator** and **plenary object** of Christian faith. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of revelation and incarnate manifestation of God is the mediator and source of faith *par excellence* for the Christian community:

> Identifying revelation with the person of Jesus of Nazareth as final and definitive expression of God's self-manifestation is what constitutes the distinctive feature of the Christian religion. . . . The figure of Jesus of Nazareth is therefore God's final and definitive communication to the human race, after which no further revelation is to be expected (*DV* 4) (Fisichella 1994*d*: 645).

The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus, the Christ is a definitive moment in the dialectic of faith and Revelation. Faith grounded in Revelation is a dynamic that while constantly developing and interrelating, finds its point of constancy and reference in Jesus Christ, who is both full subject and full content of the Revelation that gives rise to, and sustains faith. Jesus of Nazareth, the one who

reveals the Father, is the true and explicit centre of the Christian faith and is the ultimate purpose to which the profession of faith is directed. Christ as the centre of divine Revelation defines the Christological and Soteriological foundation of faith. Redemption of all creation is realised through the complete process of Revelation; Christ as the fullness of Revelation, reveals divine self-communication as the final cause of Christian faith.

7.5.3 The Resurrection as the Foundation of the Faith Community

From the perspective of faith, the Resurrection of Christ is not only the central point of Christological focus, but also the beginning of the Christ story. Everything we know about Jesus begins with the resurrection, as it comes to us through the lens of the disciples and evangelists experience of Christ's resurrection (cf. Wessels 2003: 85). The incarnation in the infancy narratives, his public ministry, his attitude toward and relationship with people, his teaching and miracles, his outrageous claims about his identity, and his suffering and death; all are refracted through the powerful lens of the resurrection experience. For Alfaro (cf. 1982: 343) the resurrection (and the incarnation) definitively indicates the absolutely free intervention of God in human history and his self-grounding in that it carries with it the ground of its reality and truth. The experiential certitude of Christ's resurrection gives rise to faith in the hearts of the disciples through his risen manifestation and thus gives meaning to and completes the significance of his words and deeds.

The Resurrection experience is the definitive condition for faith; for faith in all that has been revealed, and for the possibility of God's indwelling in humanity through faith. From our perspective, the Resurrection is **the** faith story. For the witnesses of the resurrection it was essentially about finally coming to full faith:

> In the resurrection event, God acts; men and women respond. This response of the disciples was not primarily that they could 'see' Jesus; that they could 'hear' Jesus; that they could 'touch' Jesus; that they could 'see him eat'; or any other physical, sensate response. The major response of these men and women was a response of faith. This cannot be stressed enough . . . For the men and women disciples who eventually believed, this faith element was *a religious experience* (Osborne 1997: 117).

The witness to the resurrected Christ is the basis for Christian faith. The disciples' experience of the resurrection is the first moment of an explicit faith in the totality of the mystery of Christ. The faith of the disciples prior to the death and resurrection of Christ remained at the level of faith in another human person based on his life and testimony. They recognised the truth of his utterances as resonating with the rational intuition common to all; they were confirmed in this by witnessing the marvels he performed; they swore an undying allegiance to him based on these experiences, and yet when the definitive moment of the test of real faith as radical, total surrender arrived, they abandoned

him. A genuine faith with all the necessary elements that constitute it as a complete act was achieved through the resurrection appearances and their witnessing of all the promises of Jesus realised in this. One cannot artificially separate the resurrection experiences of the disciples from their experience of Christ as master, miracle worker, and friend. However, primacy of the resurrection experienced within the totality of the mystery of Christ is to be maintained as the defining moment within the faith experience of the disciples. The **unity of experience** in the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ is the basis for the faith of the post-Easter disciples. The resurrection completes and confirms the initial faith of the Disciples of Christ. Thus, the total mystery of the Christ event is the **catalyst** and **guarantor** of Christian faith.

Furthermore, the unity of the resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the event of establishment of the church as the community of faith. The procession of the Holy Spirit was the final confirmation of faith in the hearts and lives of the first Christian community. It granted power to preach and witness the kerygma, which has as its focal point the death and resurrection of Christ, thus calling to faith others who had not the experiential certitude of those who personally witnessed the resurrection appearances, but who nevertheless, through the power of the Holy Spirit experienced a faith equal to those who had. The power conferred by the Spirit was enlightenment to view with the eyes of faith the totality of the Incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ. As the first gift of those who believe, it was the power to perfect the act of faith by enabling a trustful surrender evidenced by the martyrdom of these first people of Christian faith.

7.6 REVELATION AND THE FAITH COMMUNITY

PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR YOU

Having sought with diligence and discovered the invitation to faith in Revelation, the Human subject now waits patiently for a deeper explication of the structure and content of this Word. It is a patient waiting because a penetrative consciousness of the revealed Word is achieved not solely by human effort, but by a continuing openness to the unravelling depths of this Word. This waiting is not passive, but active in that it recognises the necessity of a continual process of discernment and refinement, ready always to self-correct and re-adjust. This is a process that allows the truth of the Word to unfold within the historical horizon of humanity's gradual maturation into a deeper consciousness and appropriation of its depths. The guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit is the Church's guarantor of an authentic interpretation and application of the truth of the Word. John Paul II in his address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the occasion of the promulgation of its document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (23 April 1993), asserted the necessity of a valid interpretation of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

> Indeed to arrive at a completely valid interpretation of words inspired by the Holy Spirit, one must first be guided by the Holy Spirit and it is necessary to pray for that, to pray much, to ask in prayer for the interior light of the Spirit and docilely accept that light, to ask for the love that alone enables one to understand the language of God, who 'is love' (1 Jn. 4: 8, 16). While engaged in the very work of interpretation, one must remain in the presence of God as much as possible (#9 p. 11).

This dwelling in the presence of God and open to the guidance of the Spirit in docility speaks of a patience that recognises and accepts that the Church is under the Word of God in all things, especially in its interpretive understanding of Revelation.

7.6.1 The Church under the Word of God

The history of the Church reveals that the words of John Paul II quoted above are not superfluous, but a necessary reminder of a vital truth that constantly needs to be revisited. Walter Kasper points out that the Church can obscure, and in fact has, obscured Christ and his word at times in its history. Against the backdrop of the conditions in the Church at the time of the Reformation, Kasper regards as understandable the reaction of Luther and the other Reformers in declaring that *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) was the norm for all the Church's discourse and activity. "For them the Church under the word of God was a Church that was always in need of reform from the Gospel (*ecclesia semper reformanda*)" (1989: 113-4). While the Church is convinced that God's word and his truth were given to her in a permanent way, and that a valid interpretation of this is possible only within the life of the faith community through which it came into being, this does not place the Church above Revelation, but under its authority as the supreme rule of faith, "Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant" (*DV* 10 also cf. # 12).

We have asserted in accord with Conciliar teaching the indissoluble unity between Scripture and tradition; Scripture is not isolated from tradition but is itself the product of the faith life of the early Christian community. Since Scripture is itself a part of the 'traditioning' process, its authentic interpretation is possible most authoritatively within the context of the faith community that gave birth to it:

> It is clear, therefore, that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others (*DV* 10).

Furthermore, the role of service to the community of faith and of subservience to the Word of God that is granted to the Magisterium is clearly spelled out in *Dei Verbum* #10 in a passage that deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

> The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living Magisterium of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This Magisterium is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully, by divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit; it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

This interpretation of Scripture within and by the Church is subject to the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, presuming that there exists in the Magisterium receptiveness to the power of the Spirit, a humble and sincere stance characterised by the recognition that the Church is always in the service of the truth.

The Magisterium understood as the teaching office of the Church is not above Revelation, but stands under it and in service of it for the continued development of its truth in the faith community. The seismic shift in consciousness within the Church during the Second Vatican Council opened up the way for a more dynamic understanding of the relationship between the Church as Magisterium, and Revelation. No longer was the Magisterium perceived primarily as defending the sacred deposit of faith, preserving the Scriptures from erroneous interpretation, and teaching with authority the truths of faith; she came to be understood as the Church who both **listens** and teaches. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*) summoned a renewal to an understanding of the Church as a community of equals, a spiritual communion of persons in which all are called, by virtue of their baptism, to submit themselves to hear God's Word and discern God's will in the practical circumstances of the community:

> Although by Christ's will some are appointed teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors for the other, yet all the faithful enjoy a true equality with regard to the dignity and the activity which they share in the building up of the body of Christ. . . . And so, amid their variety all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the body of Christ: this very diversity of graces, of ministries and of works gathers the children of God into one, for 'all these things are the work of the one and the same Spirit (*LG* 32).

Therefore, while there is indeed a distinct office of authority for teaching within the Church, this derives from the mandate given by Christ to the apostles (Mt. 28: 18-20); it is an authority of service to the community, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and submissive always to the Word of God. Thus the one source of faith is scripture and tradition interpreted by the Magisterium; properly understood as Revelation in its most complete sense.

7.6.2 The *Sensus Fidei* of the Faith Community

The *Sensus Fidei* is the believer's sense of faith. This concept has taken on a fuller meaning in the post-Conciliar Church as a result of the paradigmatic text of *Lumen Gentium* #12[40], and in various

related notions presented throughout the Conciliar Documents. The Council speaks variously of the instinct for faith, the Catholic sense, the Christian sense, the sense of Christ and the Church, the instinct for belief, and the religious sense of all the people of God (cf. Pie-Ninot 1994*b*: 992). Vatican II consecrated the *Sensus Fidei* not only through explicit approval of it as an essential function of the Holy Spirit at work among all the Faithful, but in the spirit of the Council which for the first time in history consulted widely among many and diverse categories of people, lay Catholics, Ecclesial communions, Orthodox Churches, and other Christian Churches, in its deliberations.

The *Sensus Fidei* relates to two realities: the *Sensus Fidei* proper, which is a quality of the believing **subject** upon whom the grace of the Holy Spirit confers a capacity to perceive the truth and what is contrary to it; and the *Sensus Fidelium*, the **objective** element of belief, which can be discerned and grasped as an external reality. The s*ensus fidelium* is also that which is accepted and believed by the whole faithful. This would be that which is embodied in the creeds, doctrines, and worship of the church throughout history. We make a further distinction between that which is held by the whole church as being divinely revealed and therefore accepted without qualification, and new interpretations in changed contexts that may also consist in discerning the development of doctrine. It is these situations that often evade the consensus of the faithful. When the faithful are united in their belief concerning reinterpretations in altered contexts, manifesting a true consensus, we speak of a *consensus fidelium* (cf. Gaillardetz 2003: 109).

The underlying impetus for this renewed appreciation of the role and power of the **whole** church in sensing and discerning the truth in the life of the faith community is the emphasis given to pneumatology (the theology of the Holy Spirit) prior to and during the Council. The renewed sense of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (often unduly neglected in the Church in favour of a theology that perceived the Church primarily in its relation to Christ) emerged as a deepened ecclesiology saw Christ as laying the foundation for the Christian community, and the Holy Spirit as the one who sustains, animates and guides it on its journey of faith. *Lumen Gentium* expresses this in an inspired way:

> The Spirit dwells in the church and in the hearts of the faithful . . . He guides the church in the way of all truth and, uniting it in fellowship and ministry . . . By the power of the Gospel he rejuvenates the church, constantly renewing it and leading it . . . (#4)

Thus, the authority of the Church and the charisms bestowed upon the faithful are not in opposition to each other but are complementary, flowing as they do from the same Spirit guiding the Church into the fullness of truth. These were indeed landmark words and concepts from a Church that for centuries viewed the faithful as mere passive recipients of the truth given to them from a dogmatic hierarchy

that implicitly understood itself as the sole discerner and teacher of the truths of faith. For the contemporary Catholic who has a certain historical consciousness, the Council indeed was a response to, and occasioned a very real seismic shift in the 'tectonic plates' that were the foundation of Catholic life and teaching. Though notable strides have been made since the Council with regard to authority in the Church, there exists a valid unease concerning the sometimes arbitrary and unilateral exercise of hierarchical power emanating from the Curia[41] of John Paul II. There is among even 'responsible' theologians a call for a renewed study and application of the principles of the Council as evidenced in the great documents – *Dei Verbum*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium* and others. Giancarlo Zizola, in an article in ***The Tablet*** (a British Catholic periodical) quotes the renowned French theologian Yves Congar in this regard:

> The Pope indeed has the primacy . . . but within the Church, not above it. He is not outside the bishops, but with them. First and last, he is the Bishop of Rome; if he were not the Bishop of Rome, he would be nothing. The primacy is to be situated within the communion of the bishops (24/10/1998: 1384).

Zizola adds that warnings of this nature reflect a perceived need to recover a vision of the Church as communion, derived from Vatican II (cf. ibid). The pontificate of John Paul II marked by a desire for a Catholic Restoration, has seen the gradual erosion of the competence and autonomy of the local Churches, an autonomy rooted in history and clearly envisioned by the Council. These remarks will become clearer as we progress in discussing the historical foundations and Conciliar teaching in this regard.

Indispensable to an understanding of the sense of the faithful is a proper understanding of the Magisterium, particularly a renewed self-understanding on the part of the Magisterium in light of the Second Vatican Council's unambiguous intention to define and clarify the specific quality of the authority possessed by the teaching office of the Church in preserving and mediating with integrity the Word of God. In fact, a brief description of the Magisterium and the precise parameters of its teaching authority will contribute to our understanding of what has been discussed concerning the sense of the faithful, and the Church as **teacher** and **listener** of God's Word.

The abrupt suspension of the First Vatican Council by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 meant that the Church between the two Councils (Vatican I and Vatican II) was left with a partial and inadequate teaching on the role of the Magisterium in the Church. Vatican I succeeded in defining the authority and limits of Papal primacy and infallibility. The definitions clarified important limits to papal authority, which were little understood at the time and subsequent to the Council. Combined with the Council's inability to address the role of the bishops in relation to the pope and the

collegial character of this relationship concerning the teaching authority of the Magisterium, the result was a church dominated by a strong papo-centric vision which continued until balanced by Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* (cf. Gaillardetz 2003: 57-8). The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* presented a vision of Church that was remarkably different to that of Vatican I and recovered the properly **theological** foundations of the nature of the Church (cf. ibid p. 58). Out of this renewed vision of Church emerged a more clear and balanced understanding and presentation of the teaching authority of the Church as embodied in the Magisterium. Consequently, the dynamic and pastoral vision of the Church enabled a secure foundation for a less hierarchical and authoritarian understanding of the Magisterium and one that was more sensitive, discerning, and responsive to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the faithful.

Papal infallibility as defined by Vatican I's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ* (*Pastor Aeternus*) is based on its understanding of papal primacy. The universal and infallible teaching office of the supreme Pontiff is exercised under certain precise conditions:

> It is a divinely revealed dogma that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when acting in the office of shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he defines, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, possesses through divine assistance promised to him in the person of Blessed Peter, the infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals; and that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are therefore irreformable of themselves, not because of the consent of the Church (*ex sese, non autem ex consensus ecclesiae*) (*DS* 3074).

Despite its authoritarian tone and seemingly presumptuous assertions, this declaration on the infallibility of the Pope is defined in terms of four precise and unambiguous conditions (cf. McBrien 1994: 764-5):

> ➢ Office: statements that are **binding on the conscience** of the faithful must come directly from the pope in his capacity as universal pastor i.e. *ex cathedra* ("from the seat" of Peter). Thus excluding any and all other pronouncements made by him in his other offices i.e. as a private theologian or as bishop of the diocese of Rome.
>
> ➢ Mode: the statement must clearly be one that pronounces **solemnly and definitively a point of doctrine** to be held as definitive truth, stating in unequivocal terms that this is indeed the case. Thus excluding exhortation, explication, and any other mode of speech associated with papal authority. "No doctrine is understood to be infallibly defined unless it is clearly established as such" (**Code of Canon Law**, can. 749, 3).
>
> ➢ Content: that which is pronounced as infallible is restricted to matters of **faith** or **morals**. Thus, infallibility is limited to these and these matters only e.g. he cannot alter, add or subtract

from what is already divinely revealed in Revelation, nor pronounce on issues extraneous to faith, understood as objectively thematised doctrine, or fundamental issues of morality.

➢ Recipient : it must be directed and addressed to the **whole Church** and not merely to a segment of it or a particular audience within the Church.

Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* affirms these conditions, subsuming the fourth into the first as they necessarily imply each other:

> The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful – who confirms his brethren in the faith (cf. Lk 22: 32) – he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals (#25).

It is clear that Vatican II corrects the statement of Vatican I by uniting the pope with the bishops by describing him as "head of the college of bishops" (ibid). Further on in this article, the Council Fathers add, "The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme teaching office" (ibid).

Accordingly, collegiality is affirmed and the role of the bishops is restored as co-teachers with the pope. Thus, the Magisterium is today understood as the teaching authority of the college of bishops under the headship of the bishop of Rome.

Some further points of clarification concerning infallibility are necessary to avoid confusion regarding the term. It is **incorrect** to state that the pope is infallible, as this may wittingly or unwittingly be misconstrued as the pope being infallible at all times and that this infallibility derives from his person. A more accurate way of designating infallibility as decreed by the two Councils is to say that <u>at certain times and under specific conditions, the pope pronounces infallibly on matters concerning faith and morals</u>. A doctrine is not by itself infallible in that it becomes true because the pope says it is. A doctrine understood as a propositional statement of Christian faith is either true or false. Revelation and human reason assist us in discerning and teaching this. Thus, **infallibility** is a term that strictly belongs to a person who makes certain propositional statements, by extension, the term infallible is applied to the doctrines enunciated by the person who enjoys infallibility under specified conditions. The Magisterium cannot add, alter, or deduct from revealed truth. It simply possesses authority to guard and defend revealed truth, expound it, explain it in terminology that is more accurate and define in certain matters the degree of adherence and belief required by certain doctrines[42]. Truth is not created but revealed and discerned; it is more clearly explicated in order that its value as a truth may be seen and adhered to by the faithful. The truths of faith are always superior to the person or office that proclaims it and enunciates it in terms more suitable to a particular audience and generation.

The Magisterium is at the service of Revelation and of the whole Church. The infallibility of the Magisterium must be related to the faith and the *sensus fidei* of the whole believing community. The pilgrim Church is continually on a journey of discovery; to the degree that she listens and discerns reflectively under the guidance of the Spirit, to that degree does she progress in faith.

7.6.3 The Church Listening, Discerning, and Teaching

As a community of faith the Church is called to be attentive to the Word of God as a source of faith, to discern the truths of faith in Revelation which "is the supreme rule of faith" (*DV* 21), and to hold and teach the doctrines that are derived from Revelation in order to protect, preserve and nourish the faith of the whole community. In the history of the Church the order of these principles has not only been forgotten at times, but the priorities inverted into maintaining hegemony over truth and the subsequent diminishing of genuine faith in the life of the Church. Various socio-historical factors largely influenced the hierarchy into indefensible positions that were maintained at the expense of a humble attentiveness (*ausculta*) to the Spirit of truth dwelling in the hearts of the faithful. Historically a *de facto* occurrence of the Magisterium (considered in the narrow sense as consisting of pope and curia) as the *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church) and the rest of the church as the *ecclesia discens* (the listening [and obedient] church) were maintained as the norm of ecclesial life and function. A juridical notion of teaching and obedience by the laity became the norm for the process of handing on the faith. The dynamic understanding of the Christian faith as that which must be proclaimed and received within the life of the Church was replaced by a juridical conception of command-obedience wherein the faithful contributed nothing in the act of receiving the faith (cf. Gaillardetz 2003: 114). A renewed understanding of the Church as a community of believers all attentive to the Word of God prevailed at the Council which affirmed that "the assent of the Church can never be wanting, on account of the activity of that same Spirit, whereby the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith" (*LG* 25).

The *ecclesia docens* is indeed the objective pole of ecclesial life as the *ecclesia discens* is the subjective pole of ecclesial life; yet these poles do not express hard and fast distinctions between the hierarchy and the lay faithful. We have affirmed that the bishops as successors of the apostles alone possess supreme authority and are the authoritative guardians and teachers of the faith. We have also affirmed that in union with the bishop of Rome, they do not teach new revelation, but only that which has been passed on. The mutual relationship between Revelation and the teaching authority of the Church is characterised by reciprocity, which requires a continuous inter-referencing.

In his essay *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (1859) John Henry Newman developed the notion of the *conspiratio fidelium et pastorum* (the 'breathing together of the faithful and the pastors'), which presaged the concept of the whole Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit affirmed by Vatican II. Newman broke from the classical perception identifying the abovementioned poles of ecclesial life with the teaching hierarchy and the obedient laity. For Newman the whole church participated in the process of discerning and handing on the faith. Newman recalls the strife-ridden fourth century when it was the lay faithful who frequently preserved the doctrine of the divinity of Christ over the prevarication of bishops and episcopal synods (cf. Kasper 1989: 112). The sharing of the roles of teacher and listener within the whole communion of the church not only has historical precedents, but is also an expression of the Spirit at work within and among the entire community of faith. Newman did not argue that the bishops abdicate their unique role as authoritative teachers, but rather that along with their careful and prayerful study of scripture and tradition, they might profitably inquire after the insights of the faithful as part of their preparation for teaching. Richard Gaillardetz (2003: 112) in discussing Newman's essay recalls St. Cyprian's words in his *Epistle* "It is thus a bishop's duty not only to teach but also to learn. For he becomes a better teacher if he makes daily progress and advancement in learning what is better" (*Epistle*, 74, 10).

Thus historical precedent, tradition and scripture, and Conciliar teaching not only recognises the validity of the whole church as one that listens, discerns and teaches; but positively endorses this as an integral part of the ecclesial Community's progression in faith under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

A further principle concerning the relationship between the Magisterium and the church is that of '**Reception**'. By this is meant the historical and contemporary validation of teaching by its being received into the life and worship of the church. "Reception refers to the process through which doctrines, liturgical practices, and decisions of authority are 'received' by local churches so that they become effective in the life of the Church as a whole" (Rausch 2000: 63). This is a renewed understanding of a principle that governed the teaching of the church up until the late Middle Ages and the counter-reformation with its more negative aspects of consolidating a pyramidal view of church structure (cf. ibid). Since the Second Vatican Council, theologians have examined the importance of reception in the continuous dynamic that exists within the church as a community that teaches and listens to beliefs that derive from faith. The instinct for faith and the faith within the whole community of believers is corroborated by the degree to which episcopal teaching is received into the hearts and minds of the faithful and its subsequent expression in worship and witness. Many examples of this abound in the history of the Church. It took decades for Christian communities to fully 'receive' and accept into their life and worship the creeds of the Councils of Nicaea and

Constantinople. The Church did not receive the claim of Pope Boniface VIII in the bull *Unam sanctam* (1302) 'that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of all men that they submit to the Roman pontiff' (*DS* 875). Thomas Rausch (2000: 63) cites some contemporary examples that give witness to this principle of reception as validating papal and episcopal teaching: has Pope Paul VI's encyclical on contraception (*Humanae Vitae* 1968) been 'received' by the Catholic faithful? The more recent controversy over the Vatican's attempts to not only declare the exclusion of women from ordination an infallible teaching, but also to forbid any discussion and further theological enquiry into the issue is a current example worth noting.

Faith is dynamic in its unfolding, progression, and acceptance into the life of the community of believers, and as such is never the possession of a few, but rather the being possessed by faith of the whole community of faith. What the Magisterium teaches is in essence that which has already implanted itself in the life of the faithful under the guidance of the Spirit. It articulates in doctrinal statements and creeds that which is held to be true by the people of faith. This conceptualisation and articulation, while giving concrete objective reference to faith, is nevertheless always an incomplete and inadequate expression of the faith of the whole people of God. Faith transcends the categories of doctrinal articulation not only by virtue of its being essentially impervious to the full penetration of the limited human mind, but also by its dynamic presence within the heart and life of the community of faith.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The innate tendency of the human mind towards ultimate meaning in a truth that is intelligible, coherent and corresponds to reality as perceived through the lens of the experience of human history, is drawn inexorably to the truth revealed in the word of God. The desire of the human heart for love in a relationship with that which is absolutely good, experiences fulfilment through an encounter with God who reveals the very depths of himself to the depths of the human person in Revelation. Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the fullness of God's self-communication draws humankind to himself through the truth that he is and the infinite love that he offers. In order that all may find truth and love through a personal encounter with Christ, he establishes his followers into a community of faith, which offers to humankind the possibility of an encounter with divine truth and love. Christian Revelation invites the human person into a journey of discovery and a growth in faith inspired by the Holy Spirit and made manifest in the community of faith who guides and nourishes the faith received through Revelation. The Christian believes with the Church, that which has been revealed by God, is sustained and confirmed in the faith called for by Revelation through the faith community, itself guided by the Spirit of truth and love, providing a vital structure enabling an experience of this truth

and love through its ongoing service to the Word of God and the needs of its members. The Church is mandated and provided with the authority and means of preserving and expounding the truths of Revelation in order to bring to humankind the knowledge of truth and the experience of love that is willed for it by God. To seek diligently and to wait patiently upon the self-communication of the divine absolute in communion with the community of faith is a constant process of being present to the truth and love of God, which is present to the person of faith in Revelation.

The *PSB* and article 5[43] of *Dei Verbum* have much in common and an analysis of both reveals their essential unity of purpose and content; thus providing an appropriate conclusion to this section of our reflections. The elements in the *PSB* and article 5 of the ***Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*** both identify the essential character of the human person as one who searches for truth and meaning; that the God who communicates himself in Revelation is the proper object of this quest; that faith in him is a freely given response to this revelation in all its aspects; that faith is possible through divine assistance and is a response of the whole person; and that this seeking never ends as the truth of God and the truths of Revelation constantly provide new and more profound insights into God and his unfolding will for humankind, generated and guided under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

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CHAPTER EIGHT
THE INTRAPERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF FAITH
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In identifying the cognitive and affective dimensions of faith as **intrapersonal**, the categorisation is not meant to exclude the obviously communal characteristic of these dimensions, but rather to emphasise their nature as being essentially about a **personal appropriation** of the faith received from the community. Through exploring the intellectual and rational elements of Christian faith in study, prayer, and reflection, the individual is disposed with greater conviction to make an effective individuated and personal commitment of loyalty, trust and surrender to God. The supplicant asks God for intelligence to understand him and for a heart to meditate upon him, revealing a consciousness of the cognitive and affective dimensions that characterise genuine faith. Faith that is genuine must be personally appropriated and to some degree be differentiated from the faith of the Christian community if it claims to arise out of a personal experience of the object of faith. The conscious intentionality of the human person in committing to an authentic act of faith is only possible through an appropriation at a level that **transcends the communal, even while it is lived and expressed in the context of the community of faith**. The individual is invited and challenged by the object of faith and the nature of faith to make a mature and personal commitment that is at depth possible only through reflecting deeply and experiencing personally the faith of the community. Thus, each person reaches a point where faith must become personally meaningful and lived as a unique expression of the faith that characterises the Christian community. Intelligently discerning and reflectively meditating on faith in all its dimensions, becomes an indispensable requirement for a mature, individuated and personally appropriated faith.

8.1 THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OF FAITH
INTELLIGENCE TO UNDERSTAND YOU

The inescapable demands of human reason do not allow for an incoherent and irrational acceptance of anything that does violence to the integrity of the intellect. The ability to apply an intelligence that is native to the person is the grace being sought for in this plea. Each person is endowed with a basic intelligence sufficient to grasp truth. The quality of this intelligence may differ from person to person, the causes of which are beyond the parameters of this discussion. However, what is within the grasp of anyone endowed with a basic capacity for understanding is the will to employ this capacity to the best of his/her ability, given the unique circumstances of the individual. This supplication expresses a desire for an awareness of the indispensable need for a cognitive dimension to a comprehensive faith.

8.1.1 A Critical Approach as Integral to an Epistemology of Faith

Because philosophy asks the basic questions that give meaning to the underlying principles of reality, it is inevitable that it will enter into a relationship with theology. Theology, for its part, must take into account and build on the principles of philosophical enquiry and methodology. The assumptions of philosophy are essential for a meaningful theological understanding and articulation of faith

For the committed theologian, philosophy is not superfluous on the grounds that Christian Revelation has the answers to all the vital questions, but rather draws from the wisdom and rich history of philosophical reflection in order to better do theology. In his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), Pope John Paul II reiterates the necessity and relevance of philosophy in the theological quest to understand faith;

> Theology in fact has always needed and still needs philosophy's contribution. As a work of critical reason in the light of faith, theology presupposes and requires in all its research a reason formed and educated to concept and argument. Moreover, theology needs philosophy as a partner in dialogue in order to confirm the intelligibility and universal truth of its claims (*FR* 77).

The essential requirements of a philosophical analysis of faith give meaning and credence to the assumptions and affirmations that theological statements claim as being grounded in reality. Theology as 'faith seeking understanding' requires that it draw on the human sciences for an understanding of its own contents, methods, and approaches. In this regard, the particular contribution of the philosophical sciences is indispensable. Scientific theology in particular employs the categories and methodology of philosophy to explicate the inner truths of faith.

What Christians believe, what they believe in, and why they believe it, is subject to rational and scientific enquiry, not only by reason of justification, but more importantly because a genuine faith, a faith that demands the commitment of the whole person can only be authentic if it is consonant with the innate human compulsion for a truth that is resonant with reality. By reason of justification, the Christian must be prepared and able to "give an account of the hope we have" (1 P 3:15). Karl Rahner presents the rationale for his seminal work, ***Foundations of Christian Faith***: "Ultimately what we want to do is merely reflect upon the simple question: 'What is a Christian, and why can one live this Christian existence today with intellectual honesty?' . . . we want to justify it before the demands of conscience and of truth . . ." (Rahner 1978: 2).

By reason of committing oneself to an enterprise that apparently has no rational foundation in reality as perceived by the senses, the Christian who is prepared to give him/herself to a jealous God who demands nothing less than ones entire being and life, inevitably must satisfy the minds need for

rational sanction. If the faith of Christians is to be regarded as more than mere wish fulfilment and self-delusion born of an existential anxiety, it must correspond to the criteria of an epistemology that is rigorous and demanding. Fulfilling these criteria has been the task of theologians and Christian philosophers throughout the history of Christianity, particularly in the enlightenment period and in the face of criticism from modernism, scientific reductionism, and religious deconstructionist theorists.

Knowing through faith, while not reducible to the precise mathematical and scientific categories of an extreme rationalistic epistemology is nevertheless a genuine knowing by virtue of its fulfilment of certain essential prerequisites. In Catholic theology, **Fundamental Theology** is that subdivision of theology understood as reflecting on the basic epistemological questions raised by the subject matter of faith. In presenting the case for being a genuine epistemology, fundamental theology must have the answers to at least three essential questions with regard to theological knowledge (theology understood as critical reflection on faith): the source of theology, the determination of its content, and its self-justification as critical knowledge of the faith (cf. Fisichella 1994*e*: 1062).

➢ The Source of Theology

The grounding of theology as the systematic reflection on faith in the consciousness of the human subject is that basic epistemological question, 'why do I believe?' Wondering is the first act of self-consciousness and as such is the origin of the epistemological quest. The subject who experiences being grasped by faith in a transcendent reality, wonders not only about the nature of that reality called God, but also wonders at the act of faith made in God. How is such an act possible? What are its processes and the operation of its inner nature? Is it knowing and understanding in the proper sense of these epistemological cognates? These questions are not entirely subjective nor the outcome of the emotions, but are the proper attributes of human wonder in the face of an undeniable reality; the overwhelming experience of faith, and so instigate a critical enquiry into knowledge of this same faith. While the act and experience of faith are the preconditions for this enquiry, the epistemological characteristics of this are sought in a critical and methodical enquiry into its many characteristics. Thus, theology as critical enquiry on faith is founded upon the rational intellects demand for a degree of certainty in the face of mystery and wonder. The human experience of mystery and wonder is the starting point for scientific enquiry. Faith actuates theology, faith itself demands why faith needs to be understood comprehensively.

➢ The Content of Theology

Faith and Revelation are correlates and are structurally ordered one to the other. Theology understood as a critical reflection on faith must of necessity examine and scrutinise the basis of

faith which is founded on Revelation. Thus, the proper content of theology is Revelation. Revelation constitutes both the **basis** and the **centre** of theology. Revelation, understood as the **basis** of theological content is that which is examined with a view to understanding the origin, the possibility, the principles, and the structures of Revelation. Revelation considered as the **centre** of theology refers more specifically to the system of enquiry that is adopted in the theological enterprise. All theological knowledge must structure itself around Revelation. Thus, all theological methodology must operate from the same principles, and must demonstrate that from the point of view of scientific methodology there is a complementarity in the lines of research employed.

➢ Critical Knowledge of the Faith

The final criterion identified as being a justification for theology as a scientific discipline is that it be critical knowledge of faith. Theology employs all the categories of a classical epistemology in its critical enquiry into the totality of faith. The knowledge acquired by theological research and investigation is thus critical in the formal sense. Being possessed by faith does not dispense one from a rational and critical enquiry into all the aspects of faith. One can never escape subjectivity entirely in all fields of scientific research. The dictum 'all data are theory laden and all theory is data laden' (cf. Butts 1999: 913) manifests the subjective character of scientific enquiry, as does the influence of the perceiving subject upon sub-atomic particles in quantum physics. The subjective character of faith does not necessarily imply a lack of critical objectivity in the research, enquiry, and methodology of theology. Faith as act on the part of the subject is scrutinised critically, as is the nature of the object of faith and so too the elements that make up the totality of faith.

Heinrich Fries in ***Fundamental theology***, in the discussion on theology as a science and the objections raised by the epistemologists' rejection of this assertion, puts forward the claims of Wolfhart Pannenberg who asks that the following be considered:

> The fact that theology as science of faith can prescind neither from the faith whether considered subjectively or objectively, nor from the community of faith – in other words, the fact that theology has its own specific presuppositions – says nothing against theology as a possible science. For every science has its presuppositions, also and particularly those sciences which deny having them. But theology lays its cards on the table, so to speak. For it is in the presuppositions of faith and in revelation, that we encounter material which is about how it does its work in its specific way: historical-critically, hermeneutically, and systematically (Fries 1996: 157-8).

This constitutes a compact review of the three criteria offered by Fisichella in justifying the scientific character of theology, and by extension the rational and cognitive character of faith.

The cognitive dimension of faith is not an adjunct to the whole of faith, neither is it the mere setting forth of epistemological principles as employed by theology as giving justification to the faith act as being rational and therefore credible. The cognitive dimension is an intrinsic element within faith that emerges from an anthropological basis for understanding faith. The human person as the centre of faith is a cognitive and rational being. The subjectivity of the act of faith and its directedness toward an object that defies empirical objectification, are all the more reason why the person of faith assiduously seeks to understand with all the powers of human reasoning, the reality of the whole mystery of faith. To be integral and to be a full act of the human person, faith needs to satisfy the innate demands of human reason for comprehensive understanding, definition, and credibility. A faith that does not question itself, that does not seek motives for believing and grounding in reason, cannot be considered faith in the proper sense. Furthermore, we can assert unambiguously that the cognitive implications of being possessed by faith are not detrimental to a truly scientific understanding of faith.

8.1.2 Faith and Reason (*Fides et Ratio*)

The dramatic tension between faith and reason in the history of theology and philosophy is well known, as is the basis for this in the conflict between demonstrable proof and rational intuition in epistemology. A discussion of the history of this relationship and the dynamics at work behind the assumptions and presuppositions of the divergent schools of thought is beyond the scope of this dissertation; suffice it to acknowledge the fact and present a broad description of the relationship between faith and reason.

The act of faith and the contents of the faith believed in are not extrinsic to the human person. Revelation as the foundation of faith is essentially supernatural, yet finds the conditions for its possibility and actuality in the structure of human consciousness. The belief in and the existential adherence to the truths of Revelation are not only consonant with human reason and the fundamental orientation of the human spirit, but are the very fulfilment of all that is human. This is the assertion of Christian theology. And yet such a simple yet dense understanding of Christian faith finds itself not only having to defend the claim to truth in the face of philosophical reasoning, but to preserve its distortion from extreme views in Christianity itself that threaten both the critical and rational character of human faith, and the authenticity of the divine supernatural character of faith. Theologians are bound by integrity in the explication of Christian truth demanded by a complete understanding of the human person as innately autonomous and possessed of a dignity that is inalienable, in asserting that faith is an act of the whole person, freely chosen and freely given. They are bound too by an equally valid proposition of the Christian faith that the act of faith is ultimately grounded in the supernatural grace of God given gratuitously to the human person.

Steering a balanced course between the two extreme poles of fideism and rationalism, is probably the principal task of the systematic theologian in the task of illuminating and clarifying the rational and supernatural characteristics of faith. Holding these two poles of faith and reason in a creative tension requires a clear and insightful mind dedicated to truth, and a will that is receptive to the presence and action of divine grace in the whole consciousness of the human person, and indeed in the whole of creation. Verifying an intrinsic coherence between the truth of faith and the truth sought for by the critical mind is perhaps the definitive project for the systematic theologian. One of the primary concerns of theology, as an exposition of the *Intellectus Fidei*[44], is to deepen the understanding of faith through philosophical reasoning.

8.1.2.1 Faith Informed by Reason

Credo ut intellegam – I believe in order to understand. This is the title of chapter II of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998), an appropriation of St. Augustine's dictum. It situates the act of faith firmly within the context of reason, affirming that faith is not blind but seeks reasons for believing even while it does believe. It also indicates that to understand, a prior act of faith is indispensable, giving the necessary conditions for a more informed understanding of the reasons for believing. As a transcendental phenomenon, faith seeks interiorly a foundation in the truths of the mind and exteriorly in the truths innate in the structure of reality. The preambles of faith (*Preambula Fidei*)[45] considered primarily in their rational elements dispose the mind towards faith. Before faith and independently of faith the human mind recognises a substantial number of basic truths about the human person, the world, and God. This is through the use of the human capacity to reason and reflect on reality and its desire to penetrate and understand ultimate reality. These truths arrived at by reason, taken as a whole, constitute the condition for faith itself. These truths, in themselves accessible to natural reason, are truths logically presupposed by faith. Through the use of reason, one can come to knowledge of the truths concerning God and a reality that transcends the truths of physical reality. The act of faith is not a blind leap into the unknown, or an irrational impulse. Reason unaided can penetrate the truths of faith, yet in itself is not sufficient to assure a complete act of faith. Human reason can demonstrate the rationality of faith and as such is not intrinsically opposed to it. However, a faith that does not question itself or seek motives for the reasonableness of its claims does an injustice to the very truths of faith it asserts.

Human reason, as gift from God is designed to seek and to penetrate truth in all aspects of reality. The gifts of reason and freedom bestowed upon the person are for the purpose of understanding and explicating the truths of God. These truths are not limited to 'religion' only but manifest themselves in all of reality. Faith is served by the full use of human reason, even when reason itself appears to

threaten revealed truth. Faith is not served by a reason that accepts for scrutiny only those realities arbitrarily chosen as supporting the claims of faith. Faith is ultimately enriched by an open disposition to all claims of truth, whether these are opposed to faith or apparently, beyond the scope of the questions that faith poses. Not only is faith called to define and articulate itself through rational enquiry, but it is also enriched by the creative dialectic opened up by opposition to its propositions. Faith is deepened through articulating itself in new modes of expression and through addressing new and challenging contexts. In articulating and addressing itself to stimulating challenges, faith opens up the possibilities for more creative and imaginative modes of expression. Furthermore these challenges to faith, both on the conceptual level and the level of continuously changing human circumstances, provides new avenues of research for faith in order that it may more deeply penetrate the whole fabric of human existence, and indeed the structure of all reality itself.

Kasper, in ***Transcending All Understanding*** (1989), describes the challenges posed to Christian faith, not only in its sociological and political relevance, but also in its religious substance (cf. p. 37). He describes well the need for faith not only to be relevant to modern society in the abovementioned arenas, but the need that contemporary society has for a faith that is reasonable:

> It goes without saying that social responsibility and action-oriented love belong to true religion and to true faith. But Christian faith must also give its answer in a rational way to the new situation, while objectively taking into consideration the questions and objections. That alone is consonant with Christian tradition and with human dignity (ibid).

8.1.2.2 Reason Enlightened by Faith

Intellego ut credam – I understand in order that I may believe – a modification of St. Augustine's dictum. Chapter III of *Fides et Ratio* speaks of the human quest for truth. This quest for truth is situated within the broader horizon of faith as the ultimate end of the journey towards truth. The inexorable compulsion of the human mind to seek and attach itself to truth cannot limit itself to truth as evidenced solely by empirical realism. A critically enquiring mind will examine all the evidence in support of the truths relating to the internal structure of reality. These of necessity include the claims of faith in an ultimate reality, God. In this sense, reason opens itself up to an illumination that transcends the limits of natural reason. In accepting the principle that the truths of the mind and of reality are based on certain presuppositions that determine not only methodology but also outcome, the reasonable critic will admit to the possibility of differing points of departure for arriving at truth. What constitutes the point of departure for the faith position and the position of critical reason, bear a similarity in that they are accepted and appropriated as valid bases for the quest after ultimate truth. The radical positivist will undoubtedly rely only upon convincing empirical data as the basis for any further truth claims. The Fideist and Christian Fundamentalist will no doubt assert that any truth must

have its basis in Revelation and the grace of God alone. An authentic search for truth is characterised by a radical openness to all data available. The attitude of contempt prior to critical investigation has no place in the mind of one who ultimately seeks after truth. The search for truth is itself motivated by an inchoate experience of truth.

Thus, in a dialectic process of faith seeking reasons to believe in the truths of human reason on the one hand, and on the other, reason critically disposed to examining the evidences for belief; the dilemma of faith and reason reaches a clearer level of explication. The tension between faith and reason is largely an apparent one. The extreme proponents on either side seek to preserve the autonomy of their unique domains, and in this often succumb to epistemological and linguistic errors. They are not speaking the same language in their communication to one another across the divide of their jealously guarded hegemonies.

8.2 FAITH AND CREDIBILITY

Is it reasonable to believe in God? Is it possible? Is there the possibility of self-delusion in the whole faith enterprise? Can I know God directly and if I can, can I be sure that it is God I am encountering or merely my own mind? What evidences point to faith in God as being a real act? If God reveals himself through human consciousness and human history, is it possible that this revelation is a product of the human mind and the desire to interpret the signs mediated through consciousness and history as being evidences for faith? These and questions similar to them are the ones asked by the human person reflecting critically on faith and the reasons for faith.

The issue of credibility and more specifically, the motive of credibility is the central concern of the cognitive dimension of faith. While recognising that at some point an act of faith, as in trustful surrender will be made without the evidence of complete certainty, the human person desires to have at least some understanding, some rational ground for committing him/herself to faith. Faith has to be at least reasonable up to a point, and it is this desire for at least some degree of credibility that motivates the act of faith. The **motive of faith** is the authority of God, this is undeniable (Cf. *DS* 3008). However, the **motive of credibility** relates to the discernment of God's revelation as being directly perceptible as the uncreated testimony of God, or the possibility that the divine authority is apprehended in the created signs that point to him (Cf. Dulles 1994*a*: 213). Credibility viewed through this perspective is valuable in that it raises the issue of human perception and the broader epistemological methodologies that are imperative in the faith discussion.

The discussion on credibility requires a certain precision with regard to terminology in order to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding and confusion. Credibility can and has been dealt with in terms of the credibility of testimony, of the act of faith, of the Church, and of Revelation. For our purposes, we will situate our discussion within the broader framework of the act of faith as being a graced response to Revelation. Following Rino Fisichella's article *Credibility*, in the **Dictionary of Fundamental Theology** (Latourelle and Fisichella 1994*b*: 193-208), our discussion will more specifically deal with Revelation as it is seen in the light of **'significativity'**. Before explaining credibility as presented by Fisichella, it is important to note that he situates the discussion of credibility within the broader theological categories of Christology and Soteriology. Departing from the traditional emphasis on the philosophical aspects of credibility, which were largely a reaction to Positivism and other modernist critiques of the credibility of faith, this approach does not seek to justify itself by appeal to pure reason, but rather has as its point of reference the human person's search for meaning. This anthropological perspective not only restores the 'soul' to theology in the manner of the early Church fathers, but from its basis in Christian Humanism,[46] appeals to the human search for salvation, understood integrally as the complete fulfilment of the deepest longings within the human spirit.

Revelation as the historical experience of God's self-communication reaching its fullest expression in the event of Jesus of Nazareth is a central datum in the consideration of the credibility of faith. Christian faith is not an isolated phenomenon lacking reference to an objective reality; but is the response to this historically attested reality. "Credibility thus presents itself as an act that does not originate in mere human subjectivity; rather, it arises from the objectivity of the event of revelation" (ibid p. 200). It is acknowledged that as an epistemological process, credibility is not equivalent to the certitude that results from strict logical inference and demonstrable proof, but does present itself as the origin of an act that is presented to the knowing subject as the fulfilment of his/her humanity.

As a universal phenomenon, faith possesses a coherence that is founded on an objective reality that completes the human person. Revelation is the offer to humanity of the possibility for its own fulfilment, and as such cannot be regarded as mere subjective experience lacking an objectively real point of departure. The historical evidence of Revelation, the response of faith to it, and the transcendental character of this phenomenon presents itself as not only worthy of serious consideration on epistemological grounds, but as a factor, that completes any attempt at a comprehensive understanding of the human person.

8.2.1 Credibility Considered as a Search for Meaning – "Significativity"

'Significativity' is the term Fisichella uses to describe from an anthropological and personalist perspective, the relationship between the human person and Revelation (ibid p. 201). It is a process that relates the events of Revelation to the human subject. We can say that Fisichella identifies Revelation and the responding person as correlates of each other. Although Revelation has an objective reality, in that it comes to the person as from without, it nevertheless find in the person a response that corresponds intrinsically to the intent of Revelation and the depths within the human subject. The depths of the human person are absorbed by the constant search for meaning; meaning in life, self, the world, and ultimate reality. Not only has Revelation appeared to satisfy the depths of longing for meaning throughout history, but also the individual subject finds in Revelation a worthy and final end for his/her search for meaning. The human person finds in Revelation the place where the deepest and perennial questions concerning **meaning**, are to be found.

Three elements in 'significativity' provide a basis for a fuller understanding of itself and its relation to credibility: <u>sense</u>, <u>meaning,</u> and <u>significance</u> (cf. ibid p. 201). 'Significativity' as a category that seeks to expound credibility from a sound theological perspective, requires the unity and reciprocal interrelatedness of these three elements.

Sense, strictly interpreted for our purposes, refers to the coherence to be found in Jesus Christ as plenitude of God's self-communication. The very person of Christ as manifestation of God in history requires no other reference; the being of Christ is not contingent upon any other reality because he is the disclosure of the greater mystery that gives sense to all reality. In Jesus, the full mystery of reality is both communicated and attained, to and by the human person who quests ultimately for sense in ultimate reality. "Consequently, what we have here is the concentration of the two most fundamental expectations: that of God, who sends the Son for the salvation of the human race, and that of men and women who, holding fast to Christ, at last attain to knowledge of God" (ibid).

Meaning is here expressed by the full significance of the mystery of the Incarnation. Meaning is given to the mystery of life by the incarnate presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In Christ is to be found the purpose and full meaning of human existence. "The incarnation of God constitutes the definitive way by means of which, in human history and beginning with human nature itself, meaning is given, a meaning that gives direction and final purpose" (ibid p. 202).

Significance is the precise point at which the relationship between sense and meaning is perceived in the life of the person. The evidence of sense requires that it be seen in relation to the personal life of

the subject; without a personal understanding and appropriation of sense and meaning, Revelation and faith have no significance in the life of the person. Significance completes credibility by attaching a personal dimension to sense and meaning. Revelation evokes the response of faith precisely because the believing subject finds in it sense and meaning for him/herself in the depths of their own person and life context.

It is in Jesus that each person discovers the meaning and significance of life with all its contradictions, complexities, and mystery. Jesus, as revelation of ultimate reality is the one to whom we cling in order to perceive and experience the deeper unity that is at the centre of all reality. "These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name" (Jn 20:31). The Christological and Soteriological significance of John's testimony is the basis for the credibility of Christian faith not only for the person of faith, but also as invitation to the person who seeks greater meaning in their life and a more complete experience of what it means to be human.

In consonance with his Christian anthropology that defines his presentation of credibility, Fisichella (p. 208) concludes that it is love alone; as taught, lived and expressed in its most complete form by Jesus Christ, which remains as the last word that renders Revelation worthy of belief. Love understood and expressed as the truest path to self-discovery, and discovery of what is of ultimate value in life.

8.3 SYMBOLS CONNOTING THE CONTENTS OF FAITH

EYES TO BEHOLD YOU

This phrase is metaphorical, and is itself symbolic in nature. It expresses a yearning for an immediate and direct experience of God. It also refers to the vision of the heart and/or mind by which we perceive spiritual realities. In various texts of Scripture we read phrases such as 'spiritual insight' (Co 1:9), 'innermost vision' (Lit., 'enlightened eyes of the heart', Ep 1:18; cf. Jn 14:17; 16:13; Ph 1:9; etc.). Based on this, patristic and theological tradition often speaks of the 'eyes of the heart,' 'the eyes of the spirit,' or the 'eyes of faith.' We also recall Augustine's expression: *Habet namque fides oculos suos* ('After all, faith has its eyes.' Epist. 120.2.8 [*PL* 33:458]); also the words of Thomas Aquinas: *Per lumen Fidei vident esse credenda* ('through the light of faith, they see that these are to be believed' *ST* 2-2, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1). Aquinas also uses the words *oculata fide* ('by a faith endowed with eyes' *ST* 3, q. 55, a. 2, ad 1) with reference to the resurrection of Christ. Bernard Lonergan captures the essence of Aquinas' theological vision of searching with the eyes of the mind in **Verbum** (1972), "For Augustine, our hearts are restless till they find rest in God. For Aquinas, not our hearts but our minds are restless till they rest in seeing him" (in Macquarrie 2001: 380).

A symbol is the natural or conventional representation of a reality dimly perceived through the use of a reality that is more readily perceptible. "By making other things present, symbols enter our imagination, affect our feelings, and influence our behaviour. Rational explanations will always fall short of the potential range of meanings expressed by given symbols" (O'Collins and Farrugia 1991: 232). The numinous experience of the mystery of God is not the everyday vehicle of manifestation of divine reality; this is mediated through the symbols that reveal the untouchable and incomprehensible. Symbols have an inner connectedness to the reality they mediate and are the normative and more common experience for an encounter with God. Through the use of symbols, the person is able to understand more explicitly the contents of revealed truth. Religious symbols prove to be inexhaustible in their potential to represent ultimate and transcendent realities.

8.3.1 Theology as a Symbolic Discipline

Statements of faith are symbolic statements, thus the use of symbols to mediate a more profound understanding of theology is the appropriate mechanism for a deeper penetration of the contents of faith. Consequently, theology as 'faith seeking understanding' is ultimately a symbolic discipline. Mythologist Joseph Campbell has stated that theological language does not denote, but rather connotes (cf. Stella 2001; 20). Karl Rahner states unequivocally, "Theology could not be understood at all, were it not essentially a theology of symbols" (Rahner 1966: 221-52). The principal source of theology; Revelation is itself symbolic, not only in its broadest sense, but also in the wealth of symbols employed in Scripture and in the patrimony of Christian tradition. The predominance of analogy as a medium for explicating faith in the patristic and classic medieval tradition is the equivalent of symbolism. Theology as God-talk is a discipline that studies realities that are mostly inaccessible to empirical observation, so in order to meaningfully discuss its subject matter it must of necessity employ the symbols that reveal and manifest the non-physical data that is essentially its subject matter. Haight succinctly defines theology as a symbolic discipline:

> From beginning to end, it [theology] deals with symbols. Theology is the systematic effort to understand reality, God, the world, human existence, and history through and on the basis of symbols that express Christian faith (1990: 142-3).

8.3.2 Symbol as a Medium for Describing the Epistemology of Beliefs

Consciousness presupposes both a subject and an object within a unified human experience; it is the subject's consciousness of an object, a reality beyond the self. The object of human consciousness is a reality that is neither of itself, nor a product of its own activity. Human consciousness is capable of openness to reality in all its forms, especially the reality of other persons, and indeed to ultimate reality: the divine person of God. The awareness of transcendence, the self-communication of God to humanity is through the symbolic structure that is meaningful to human consciousness. The nature of

transcendent reality and its revelation to the human mind is mediated and rendered intelligible through symbols. The religious symbol acts as the point of contact between God and human consciousness.

Beliefs as derivatives of faith are the concrete expressions in language and concepts of the contents of faith. Based on our aforementioned reflections on the manifestation of transcendent reality to human consciousness through the vehicle of symbols; beliefs can then be understood as symbols of faith. The capacity for human apprehension of transcendent reality, affirmed as God, is through symbols functioning as the vehicle that makes these realities concrete in the beliefs that express faith. The inner reality of the contents of faith, as transcendent are made manifest to the human consciousness via symbols. The concepts of faith or beliefs are primarily understood as symbols.

One of Paul Tillich's many contributions to a greater clarity of thought in contemporary theology is the characteristic of religious symbols as a necessity for understanding faith. This arises out of his formal analysis of faith as the state of ultimate concern. This state is expressed or mediated, as we have claimed, through the specific content of belief. Tillich's explanation of the characteristics of religious symbols enables the connection between the structure and operation of symbols and the concepts of faith as embodied in beliefs to be made.

For Tillich, religious concepts and doctrines must be seen as symbols through which we participate in, and are related to faith as ultimate concern. The six key characteristics of religious symbols as outlined in Rees' **Wrestling with Doubt:** *Theological Reflections on the Journey of Faith* (2001) are a clear explication of how symbols make intelligible the relationship between faith and its expression in beliefs and doctrine:

➢ In common with signs, they point beyond themselves.
➢ In contrast to signs, symbols participate in the reality to which they point.
➢ Symbols open up levels of reality that are otherwise closed for us.
➢ Symbols also unlock dimensions and elements of our soul that correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality; and thus open up hidden depths of our being.
➢ Symbols grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being.
➢ Symbols cannot be invented. Like living beings, they grow and die. They grow when the situation is ripe for them, and they die when they no longer evoke response.

These are distilled from a range of Tillich's works (cf. Rees 2001: 80).

Though there has been much critical discussion on Tillich's concept of religious symbols, they serve to demonstrate the dynamics and value of symbols for explicating beliefs and by extension, faith. Indicating the belief in revelation that was central to Tillich's theology, Langdon Gilkey's exposition of Tillich's view of symbols and their function reveals the phenomenological approach that marked his theology in distinction to the purely analytical-philosophical approach of others (cf. ibid p. 81).

Tillich's approach sought to explain the nature of faith by describing how religious concepts, as living symbols, enable people to participate in the divine reality. To the degree that faith has meaning for people, to that degree, do the symbols that reveal the divine reality prove their function as being effective in mediating God. From the phenomenological approach of Tillich's theology one is reminded that faith, as constituent of the human, cannot be reduced to scientific and analytical terms. Faith as an all-encompassing reality of human existence seeks understanding and interpretation beyond the reductionist terms of a too narrowly defined philosophical analysis. Theology enriches not only itself but also the very faith it attempts to analyse when it incorporates the full range of human reality as a phenomenon intrinsic to its rationale and methodology. "Symbol is the way of self-knowledge and general rediscovery of itself" is the observation made by Rahner (cf. op. cit) with regard to the relationship of the function of symbols and their relatedness to the faith that gives meaning to human existence.

8.4 THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF FAITH
A HEART TO MEDITATE ON YOU

The heart is considered the affective and intuitive dimension of the person, and as such is the ideal symbol for the capacity to understand beyond the merely cerebral level. To meditate is to reflect and sense with the mind and the heart complementing each other with their unique capacities. The heart is the metaphorical seat of love, and the deepest centre of the human person. St. Augustine's comment in the first book of his *Confessions* is well known: "Our Hearts were made for thee O God, and are restless, until they find their rest in thee" (*PL* 32, 659-661). The inclusion of this supplication reveals that a true understanding of God is achieved through a personal and committed relationship with him. This is nurtured and developed through a constant disposition of directedness toward God, and receptivity to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit nurturing and strengthening faith.

In *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* (1994), Dulles presents various models of faith that are clusters of identifiable groups representational of the different approaches to a theology of faith (pp. 170-179). These models are extrapolated from a survey of the historical and contemporary approaches to a theology of faith. While no one particular model is in its entirety identified with a particular theologian, general approaches and movements within the field can be ascribed to a particular

theologian or theologians. This is a helpful identification of predominant trends that view faith within a framework that tends to emphasise one dimension over another.

In our discussion of the dimensions of faith, the affective dimension described in this chapter is a telescoping of the Fiducial and Affective-Experiential as described by Dulles (p. 174-5) into the one contracted dimension that appears to include the elements in these two models proposed by Dulles. Furthermore, the Personalist model treated as a separate category by Dulles (p. 179) is, as mentioned, the overarching organising principle behind all the dimensions of faith as described in our discussion.

The concept of faith arrives at fulfilment of its complete meaning in our considerations of the affective dimension of faith. Faith is not faith in the complete sense of the word, but belief, albeit a belief that may be rational intuition – *gnosis*, until and unless belief about and in God leads to a relational commitment of trustful abandonment. Faith is then faith understood as *pistis*, a faith that involves the loyalty of the whole person in a radical surrender to the God believed in. Faith in its complete sense exerts a transforming power over the person of faith. This personal transformation leads to an existential transformation that encompasses the whole person in her/his vision, life orientation, and relationships. Furthermore, this transformation, as a consequence of the complete act of faith, manifests itself in the process of integration of the personality. In turn, transformation and its chief outcome, the integration of the human spirit and consciousness, leads to the performative character of faith.

8.4.1 The Centrality of the Fiducial Character of Faith

Trust and belief **in** God is at the centre of a genuine faith commitment **to** God. This however requires some knowledge of God and reasonable confidence in his trustworthiness as the constant and worthy object of absolute commitment. Thus, while the fiducial character of faith is what constitutes true faith, this cannot come about without a prior assent to the truths of faith. Wolfhart Pannenberg holds this view from a diachronic perspective in asserting that faith is grounded in a sure knowledge of the action of God in history, but that this is not yet real faith. Real faith is when the individual has satisfied him/herself by rational investigation of the evidence that God has revealed himself in Christ, and then takes a further step of surrender into the hands of God (cf. 1967: 273). This may conceivably occur synchronically within the heart and mind of the individual, nevertheless the meaningfulness of the object of faith committed to, must hold for the individual the characteristics that evoke trust, loyalty, and commitment. This can only come about through a direct and immediate experience of God, which is rare, or through an authority that is deemed by the recipient of faith to be an ultimate

and infallible authority. For the Catholic, this is the Magisterium, or teaching authority of the Church; For the Evangelical Protestant, this is the Word of God as Contained in the Bible.

In traditional Catholic Theology, faith means

> . . . Mental assent to divinely revealed truth, that is, to 'the faith' of which the Church is the custodian and interpreter. The mind is prepared for such assent by a rational perception of the intrinsic credibility and the sufficient attestation of the articles of faith, and is then moved to give its assent to them by an act of the will in voluntary submission to the authority of God (Watson 1969: 127).

Watson in the same article juxtaposes this definition of the Catholic position with what he calls the 'Classical Protestant Theology' approach:

> . . . Means obedient trust or trustful obedience towards God as he is revealed in his Word. It is a response to the divine grace revealed in that Word . . . and is addressed to us now by the Holy Spirit through the word and sacraments of the gospel (ibid p. 128).

Watson continues to contrast the Traditional Catholic and Classical Protestant approaches to faith by stating that for Protestant theology, the object of faith is not a set of doctrinal propositions, but that faith itself is essentially understood in terms of personal relationship. The two issues central to a partial resolution of this apparent conflict in precisely defining what faith is, are, the authority which guarantees the meaningfulness (and necessity of faith for salvation), and the required response from the Christian.

The Protestant reaction to the Popes claim to supreme spiritual authority was that the only and final arbiter of spiritual authority rested in the Scriptures – hence Luther's famous dictum *sola scriptura*, followed by, *sola fides* and *sola gratia*. These were all that were necessary for salvation. The Scriptures were the supreme rule of faith, not a human person, institution, or dogmatic and doctrinal assertions. Contemporary Catholic theology, while still averring the necessity for obediential assent to revealed truth in both Scripture and tradition, with the Magisterium of the Church guaranteeing authenticity of interpretation, nevertheless, understands that the appropriate response is not mere intellectual or notional assent, but the commitment of the entire person, mind, heart and will to the God who reveals himself in order that a saving relationship be established between God and the human person. The disagreement seems to be one of emphasis, understanding, and interpretation rather than one of a substantive nature. An extreme emphasis on the fiducial character of faith tends to downplay the cognitive and rational dimensions of faith, which not only does violence to the **integrity** of the whole human person's response, but also denies the innate necessity within the human person to find rational reasons for committing in loyalty and trust to an ultimate object that does not run counter to what is perceived as truth.

John Calvin sought a mediating position, by attempting to preserve the intellectual and fiducial character when he described faith as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (McNeil 1960: 551).

To be an integral act of the whole person, faith requires both intellectual assent and personal assent. However, one does not need to be satisfied intellectually about all aspects of belief and credibility in order to grant personal assent, understood as trusting surrender to God. Certitude can never be absolute and as such is not a precondition for the full surrender of the person to the God of faith. Personal surrender in the face of natural human doubt furthers the **value** of the commitment of the faith act. However, the **quality** of the act of faith is enhanced by the rational qualifications of faith. Thus, the complete act of faith is a moment that draws together the varied yet complementary dimensions of faith.

The intellectual acceptance of the beliefs of faith occurs as secondary considerations when placed beside the most profound elements of human experience. The power of experience in human life consistently enjoys priority of place in a formative and transformative influence on the human person. A truth accepted by the mind need not necessarily lead to an existential transformation in an individual, whereas the experience of love, trust, and fidelity profoundly influence the life of the person.

The renewed emphasis on the relational and personalist constituents of faith since the Second Vatican Council have brought to the fore the poverty of mere cognitive assent to the doctrinal contents of faith. This in turn has had an impact on the life of faith in the Church, as expressed by a greater emphasis on a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ. The shift in emphasis has occasioned much of the renewal in the individual and communal expressions of faith in the Church.

8.4.2 Faith as a Relational Commitment of Trust

A complete act of faith is a loving submission, trustful surrender arising out of an experience of God as being the ground of one's being, and the fulfilment of one's deepest desires. Trustful surrender of the whole person is most commonly the consequence of an experience of the power and love of God in the life of the individual, leading to confidence in God and confidence in the act of giving oneself to God. The basis for this trustful abandonment is the experience of trust in the interrelationship with others in whom we have given and been given love. This is why the love relationship that the human person experiences with God is expressed in the categories of human love relationships. In the

Scriptures and the writings of the Mystics this relationship with God is not only expressed in human categories of love, but also the emphasis is on how the love relationship with God goes beyond even the deepest experiences of love between human beings. The centrality of trust in this relationship emerges clearly as also the foundation of the relationship. One needs to understand the importance of trust in the life of the human person in order to come to a fuller understanding of how trust is a necessary condition for faith, especially faith understood as a total self-giving to God.

A story illustrates succinctly the distinction between belief considered as intellectual certitude, and faith as trust filled commitment. Many years ago, a famous tightrope walker stretched a cable across the Niagara Falls in North America. An excited crowd gathered to witness his display of walking on the cable across the deep chasm that separated the two rocky banks. At one stage of his performance, he pushed a wheelbarrow while blindfolded across the length from one side to the other. The enthralled crowd demanded more feats of his daring prowess. He turned to a man in the crowd and asked him if he believed that he could again complete the twenty minute walk blindfolded pushing the wheelbarrow. The enthusiastic man indicated that he certainly believed the daredevil could repeat the performance. At this, the tightrope walker said to the man "if you believe I can do it again show me your faith in my ability by climbing into the wheelbarrow and allow me to push you across". Apparently, the onlooker courageously responded to the challenge and lived to repeat the story. Faith is thus not mere belief in the existence, love, and power of God, but the trustful commitment of one's entire life to that belief, frightening and uncertain as it may be. Jesus Christ both teaches us this and demonstrates his faith in the power and love of his Father by the total commitment of his whole being in trustful surrender.

8.4.2.1 Jesus as Exemplar of Fiducial Faith

An aspect of the Incarnation that touches on the fiducial and trust element of the faith discussion is the humanity of Jesus Christ. As human, Christ is subject to the same temptations to doubt, to the existential dilemma of personal autonomy and dependence on God, to choose for himself what direction his life should take, and to trust in his own powers rather than the wisdom of God. Jesus is not only the object to which human faith is directed in his divinity, but in his humanity is subject to which the call to obedience of faith by God is also posed. Jesus is the definitive exemplar of faith in both his preaching as summons to faith and his life as total response to God.

Jesus challenges others to faith through calling them to a deeper faith, where faith as trust in God's wisdom and power, is the only possible and meaningful response in a situation that challenges human limitations and reveals human contingency. Jesus as a person of faith is best exemplified by his agony

in the garden before his death (cf. Mk 14: 32-36). Jesus struggles with the will and promise of his father in the face of his impending and violent death. "This becomes a real test of the fidelity of God toward him, just as much as it is a test of his obedient response of faith" (Lennan 1998: 67). Jesus is himself called to give an account of his hope (cf. 1 Pt. 3: 15) in a concrete and radical surrender to the will and the promise of His father. Jesus undergoes an agony of faith that consumes his whole being, standing in solidarity with those who too are called to a radical commitment to the mystery of God's will. Finally, in an act of total surrender, still hoping that a more reasonable outcome may be possible, he nevertheless entrusts himself entirely to the providence of God, whom he addresses in that most intimate of terms, "Abba". Jesus exemplifies the truth of his own preaching, confirms the faithfulness of God's promise, and attests to the hope that is a constituent element of fiducial faith. "The follower of Jesus, then, is one who not only takes Jesus as the model of faith but also accepts Jesus as the catalyst for faith. As such, Jesus is recognised as the definitive revelation of God and the model of the obedient response of faith" (ibid p. 68). In this moment of intense relationship with his father, Jesus shows how the apparently contrasting understandings of faith as obediential assent, and fiducial commitment are reconciled. Jesus thus opens up for all those who encounter him, the horizons of possibility for becoming faith filled and faithful.

8.4.3 Personal Transformation as an Outcome of Faith

An inclusive definition of Christian spirituality is the basis for it being understood as a response to God arising out of an experience of faith. George Aschenbrenner in his development of a Spirituality distinctively for the Diocesan Priest (2002) prefaces his discussion on this topic with a succinct definition of Christian spirituality pertinent to our reflections on the affective dimension of faith:

> Our belief in and response to God's love in Jesus as experienced across the whole spectrum of our human lives so that we may live and serve more and more united with one another and with God in the Holy Spirit (p. 3).

This definition encapsulates in a compact and comprehensive manner many of the elements that constitute the act of faith considered in its entirety. A lived expression of faith arises out of belief and congruently is a response to both a **propositional** and **experiential** encounter with truth manifested in Revelation. The experience of faith is not limited to any particular dimension of the human, but is 'registered' across all aspects of the human person's faculties. Furthermore, this is still not a complete act of faith unless its grasp on the person leads to a transformation that impels the person of faith to a total expression of this experience in a life that is no longer self-centred, but other-centred and indeed God-centred. When an awareness of divine power present and active in the life of the person becomes a centring experience, this has an impact on every aspect of the life of that person. All human functions, abilities, and decisions are informed by the experience of God's power at work in one's life.

Faith as an experience of the transforming influence of a sacred transcendent reality is at its centre not a way of thinking, but rather a way of being and living. The initial experience of being grasped by a reality beyond the self is profoundly influential in the life of the human person. The transformation that occurs, understood as a **process** rather than a momentous event in the lives of the majority of people, exerts an influence on the attitude, lifestyle, behaviour, and relationships of the person. The personal transformation experienced by the person of faith can be considered on two levels. The first is the level of **moral adjustment** in accord with the ethical principles of belief. To a large degree this is an intentional behavioural adjustment that while not entirely reducible to a mere external obedience to the demands of faith, is nevertheless an act of the will. The second level of personal transformation is more a moment in the life of the individual, where an inner experience of the love and power of God initiates a **process of integration** and wholeness. This gradual allowing of oneself to be possessed by the Spirit of God leads to the inner renewal of the human spirit. From this flows an instinctive adjustment of attitude, way of being and living.

More often than not, the mature person of faith experiences these two levels as occurring simultaneously and complementary in a life committed sincerely to spiritual growth. One is influenced by grace, which exerts a transforming power on all aspects of being, yet is also prompted by grace to strive for a manner of living that is at once congruent with Christian morality and true to the inner movement toward wholeness. In its complete experience and expression, faith involves the simultaneous operation of both these levels. An emphasis on the propositional dimension of faith leads to the possibility of a mere external obedience to the moral precepts that accompany a system of beliefs. Conversely, an overt stress on the experiential/affective dimension of faith leads not only to a subjectivity that lacks an external objective reference to a community and tradition of beliefs, but to an individualism that seeks 'religious experiences' as a confirmation of faith. St. Augustine, in his refutation of Pelagius, speaks to this unity of the action of grace and the decision of the will in the transformation of the person of faith:

> It is not by the external proclamation of law and doctrine, but by a powerful action which is interior and hidden, wonderful and indescribable, that God becomes the author in human hearts not only of genuine revelations but also of decisions of the will that are in conformity with the good (*CSEL* 42: 145).

The experience of faith affects the spirit and mind of the person in numerous ways that enable the possibility for a greater healing and wholeness in the life of individuals and communities. We acknowledge too that a distorted faith can also cause significant damage on the minds and lives of many, as countless examples throughout history and contemporary social studies attest. A religion that is controlling and manipulative has the power to destabilise the personalities of people, creating

neurotic dependencies and a severely harsh rigidity that induces destructive guilt and consequent emotional disturbances. Nevertheless, faith enables a renewed vision of self, others, life, and the world, which in turn creates a constructive attitude toward these realities. Faith lived in a community of faith, hope and love is supportive, healing and integrating both spiritually and psychologically. Life with its numerous tensions, violence, suffering, and some many other negative and destructive influences damages the human mind and spirit. The influence of faith considered simply in its psychological aspects provides meaning and healing for spirits damaged by the manifold negative forces in life. Modern society with its individualistic and success oriented ethos fragments and dislocates the individual and communities. Michael Downey, a professor of systematic theology addresses these negative influences and their impact on modern living in *Understanding Christian Spirituality*:

> Today there is a dawning realisation that the culture spawned in the Enlightenment has sold us a bill of goods. The culture that breeds narcissism, pragmatism, and unbridled restlessness is a dead end, and this is being learned at great personal cost to individuals, communities, and nations. It has failed to satisfy the deepest desires of the human heart, and it has resulted in fragmentation and depersonalisation of a magnitude previously unimagined (1997: 19).

While we are looking for another way of being, these very influences have numbed us to the spiritual dimension within ourselves. The effects of fragmentation, alienation, and depersonalisation are all so pervasive that the person feels locked into a life and way of being that threatens the capacity to enter into the spiritual depths of oneself. The experience of faith provides the power of personal integration in the face of forces of fragmentation and depersonalisation. Related as it is to an objective reality rooted in a tradition of living and an experience of God as the sustaining centre of one's being, Christian faith provides a power for discovering one's true identity in God who dwells within the depths of the human person. Christian faith draws the person out of the all-consuming narcissism of self-centred living, into a reality beyond, but not alien to the self. It offers a way of living that transcends the limits of the self and the negative forces of society, providing a new centre of personal focus and a selfless reaching out to God and others in a profoundly healing and integrating relationship.

The relationship into which the human person is brought into with God through faith opens the human mind and spirit to the healing powers of divine grace. The basic elements of trustful surrender and dependence upon a power beyond the limited capacities of the self provide the foundation for a renewed strength in the complicated process of living. Grace enters into every aspect of the person of faith's life, influencing and transforming values, relationships, goals, aspirations, and behaviour.

8.4.4 The Experience of Faith as a Psychological Phenomenon

Considered as a human act with its attendant dynamics, faith is indeed a psychological phenomenon. Psychology, defined as a science of forms of behaviour, comprises the study of behaviours and their meanings within the totality of human life and experience. Faith as a phenomenon that commands the human person in a central and centring manner necessarily falls within the ambit of psychological study. A materialist reductionist psychology that views human emotions, inner experiences, and behaviour as explainable by the biological-chemical mechanics of the human psyche, invariably regards faith as arising purely from within human consciousness. It neither admits of nor seeks supernatural causes for the experience of faith, explaining it solely in terms of conscious and unconscious instincts, motives, and compulsions. Religious faith fulfils needs within the human person in the face of insecurities, anxieties, dependencies, and ultimately the fear of death. Faith has a practical value in that it provides the basis for an ethic within society, ordering and governing human interaction by providing a system of moral codes and the regulating principle of punishment and reward.

Faith as a transcendent phenomenon having its origin in supernatural causes is beyond the scope of secular-humanist psychologies as providing explanatory motives for its genesis, processes and influences. Any science that attempts to understand and describe human behaviour is confronted with the difficulty of explaining the changeable, often unpredictable aspects of the human personality, a personality heavily influenced by a myriad of diverse variables that defy easy identification or control (cf. Ferder 1986: 14). However, to the degree that the phenomenon of faith causes and influences elements of the human psyche and behaviour it can be subjected to the methodologies and interpretations of the psychosocial sciences. Furthermore, the benefits of applying psychological insights to the dynamics of faith as a human experience have proved of value to both psychology and religion. Faith experienced as a phenomenon of the human psyche remains a valid assertion if qualified by its origins as not being determined by merely natural causes. Within the broader context of Revelation understood as occurring within human consciousness yet having its genesis in God's self-communication through the medium of faculties of the mind, a psychological explanation of faith is of value. An integral approach from psychology can only be of benefit to itself and religion in an age where there is a noticeable shift in modern urbanised society towards the spiritual. The phenomenon of a quantifiable increase in adherence to Pentecostal/Charismatic/Evangelical Christianity and the diverse spiritual movements, generically labelled 'New Age', is an indication that people are seeking for meaning, value and healing beyond that which is offered by the human sciences and traditional religion. If our discussion on the many dimensions of faith is to be value for all people seeking a spiritual grounding in their lives, it will address and concern itself not only to those who

adhere to traditional Christian confessions, but to all who desire meaning and wholeness, itself a confirmation of the transcendent character of the human spirit.

As in so many other areas of the historically fractious relationship between faith and the modern world, psychology and faith have also circumscribed domains to themselves that perpetuated a separation that has been of benefit to neither. Extreme forms of popular religion and reductionist psychology tend toward an exclusivity, each claiming human fulfilment as its private domain, and each antagonistic to the other. The desire for God and the concomitant striving for wholeness in the search for one's true identity in the approaches offered by inclusive psychologies are not mutually exclusive as claimed by extremists on both sides. Christian faith tells us that they belong together; being a person of faith does not preclude one from deepening a relationship with God through the accessing of what is of value in the human sciences.

Fran Ferder, clinical psychologist and pastoral minister believes along with mature people of faith, that the search for human intimacy is deeply rooted in the search for the divine, and that spiritual hunger is intertwined with all other aspirations in the human person. We becomes trapped at the extreme edges of life when we attempt to separate the psychological from the spiritual, and when we claim that we can know God without knowing ourselves and others more deeply. If we view spiritual life as distinct from full humanness, or misplace our search for integration in psychology only, then we do violence to the very desire that consumes us in these strivings, our personal wholeness (cf. 1986: 13). There is an undeniable spiritual dimension to the search for psychological wellness, as there is a psychological basis for the personal integration that faith leads and challenges us to. Genuine faith deepens self-awareness, encourages a healthy intimacy with others, and calls for a commitment to a life involved in and responsive to the human community with all its joys, struggles, and hopes.

The necessity for an appreciation of the mutuality between faith and psychology does not attempt to ignore the differences inherent in each domain. Psychology is not simply a scientific description of the principles and effects of faith on the human person; neither are the beliefs and dynamics of Christian faith a spiritualised view of the principles and dynamics of the human person that psychology attempts to interpret. Psychology does not derive its founding principles from Christian Revelation, nor does faith seek to confirm its conclusions by appealing to the human sciences; "The two rest on different premises, develop in distinctive contexts, and offer unique guides for human beings" (ibid p. 14).

Faith as an integral and integrating phenomenon of the human person, and psychology, as a science that seeks to understand human motives, attitudes, behaviour and interaction with others and life, share common ground. Advocating integral human wholeness, deeper self-awareness and loving relationships – faith and psychology invite and challenge people to enter into a continuous process of growth and personal transformation.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE TRANSPERSONAL DIMENSION OF FAITH

The **purpose** of faith is to transcend the Self. This transcendence is a unity of going beyond the self to God, to others and to all creation. God as the object of faith and indeed the very ground of the self, is the cause and end of human existence. Human existence is in community and for community. The human community finds its truest identity and rootedness in the symbiotic relationship that exists between itself and the world, between itself and all of creation. This truth needs to be continually rediscovered, nurtured, and sustained in the continuous interplay between the energies of each of these fundamentally unified constituents of reality. Faith finds its deepest fulfilment in the active expression of the truths it professes and in the practical living out of the implications of the personal relationship with God, which defines an authentic faith.

9.1 THE ACTIVE DIMENSION OF FAITH

A LIFE TO PROCLAIM YOU

Finally, the outcome and logical end of a deepened knowledge of God and personal encounter with him, sustained and deepened by an intimate relationship of trustful surrender, is the fundamental ordering of ones life to living out this reality. Not only is it existentially compelling to **live** ones life according to the measure of commitment to God, but also there is an urgent inner compulsion to **proclaim** this to others. This proclamation of faith is an integral act and process that incorporates all the faculties of Human personhood. This phrase, *a life to proclaim you*, indicates the essential unity that exists between **praxis** and **evangelisation** in the proclamation of faith.

9.1.1 THE EXISTENTIAL IMPERATIVE OF FAITH

Faith by the very nature of its commanding of the human person in his/her totality must fundamentally reorder and redirect the life of the person of faith. As faith penetrates the very centre of the person, the outcome is to centre ones attitudes, communication and pattern of living on the existential reality that entirely pervades ones being. An authentic faith is constituted by its expression in interacting with the world, others and creation in a manner that is an instinctive and compelling response to these realities. The intention, purpose and outcome of the *PSB* is discerned in the final supplication which in contradistinction to the aforementioned supplications, is not the request for an attitude, disposition or particular grace, but rather a recognition of these graces as ultimately being for the purpose of an active life of committed and performative faith. The author of the *PSB* may well have constructed the Prayer in the following way: 'O Gracious and Holy Father, that my life may become a proclamation of you, give me wisdom to perceive you etc . . . ', and still have preserved the identical intention and rationale behind the *Prayer.*

9.1.2 Praxis as the Definitive Expression of Faith

If faith is indeed the acceptance of and commitment to a reality that commands the whole of the human person in a manner that is central and centring, then the existential outcome of this is praxis determined by the experience of faith. Faith consists in the dynamic commitment of the entire person in action. Action is integral to faith, an integral constitutive element, and not merely a response to the experience of faith. "The actuality of faith is constituted by human response which, insofar as it is conscious, thematised, and intentionally directed, can be called praxis. Ultimately faith defines its object by action" (Haight 1990: 29). Faith is only properly regarded as faith if it ultimately directs ones life to action. Faith is primarily constituted by and therefore manifested in action.

Faith must prove its truth in action; action must be informed by faith and give rise to further reflection on faith. The accepted dialectic of philosophy that governs theory and practice is that they mutually direct, redirect and refine each other in a dynamic that ensures the authenticity of each, and their unity as meaningful for humanity. Theory arises from praxis, and is in turn modified by praxis. In this context, we understand praxis integrally as not being unreflective activity but rather action infused and made conscious of itself by theory. The performative character of faith calls for an understanding of praxis as any human activity that has the power to transform reality, make it more human, and therefore more Christian, where human activity is understood as co-creative with God in the unfolding process of the development of all reality.

> Christianity is a style of life, a way of being in the world. It is not an idea but a process of humanisation and liberation. Believing in Christ is a mode of being and action in the world that is a participation in the movement of history itself. By such participation the outcome of the movement is already transformed (O'Donnell 1994: 1089).

Within an understanding of faith as being directed ultimately to the integral proclamation of God and his active presence in the world, both immanently and through the presence and activity of the community of faith, the Church; faith is primarily understood as praxis and secondarily, but not subordinately, as theory. The consistent inter-referencing of praxis to theory, and theory to praxis in a mutually process of further levels of refinement, ensures the distinct identity of each one and creates the awareness of their integral unity as making up the complete act of faith, as being both personally and socially transformative. As faith develops under the influence of the Holy Spirit, it acquires a joyful serenity, a liberating power bestowed by the gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. This insight allows believers to "penetrate more deeply into the true meaning of revelation, view the world from the point of view of faith, and gain right judgement in applying the principles of faith to their conduct" (Dulles 1994*a*: 253).

The aforementioned reflections make it clear that faith consists in the unity of **being** and **action**. One does violence to the unity of faith when an over analytical epistemology reduces the faith act to a mere extrinsic consideration of its component elements, to the implicit exclusion of its fundamental and inescapable unity. Often the desire for a simple, coherent, and unified understanding of faith results in this implicit and unwitting reductionism. Genuine faith resists the temptation to limit itself to pithy definitions that do not reflect its comprehensiveness and integral unity in the life of the human person. A growth in the cognitive dimension of faith corresponds to a deeper commitment to the experiential/affective dimension, which in turn gives a greater impetus to the performative character of faith. Each dimension, carefully nurtured in the initial stages of faith, instinctively responded to as faith develops, provides a foundation for the integration of faith into every aspect of one's life, and to a life integrated by faith. To be person of faith is to be a person who fundamentally orders his/her life around the implications of that faith. Yet mere action for good, for justice and social transformation without the correlative impetus of a faith deeply rooted in a commitment to God is just that – good works, devoid of an internal structuring vision that ensures an integrated and organic relationship between the self, behaviour, and the external outcome. Once again, it is an emphasis on the unity of faith; a unity that respects the integral dimensions that make up the entire act of faith that consciously fosters the growth of each dimension in unity with the others.

9.2 THE IMMANENT AND TRANSITIVE MODES OF ACTION

An integral understanding of action recognises that the transitive and immanent modes are both valid and necessary for action to be authentic. Too often, the dynamic and integral nature of action is reduced to those elements that appear to be overt, external, and productive in an almost physical sense. Action manifests itself primarily in two distinctive modes, the immanent, and the transitive. By the immanent mode of action, we understand **expressions** of being and conviction that are innate and oftentimes subtly indistinguishable from being and conviction themselves. The very concept of existence denotes action, *agere sequela esse.* Haight, borrowing from the philosophy of action in Maurice Blondel, states unequivocally that human existence is action:

> But action denotes a human existence always in act; it is a dynamic existing. Like the term existence itself, action is analogous; existence takes many forms, and the action that is human existence unfolds at a variety of levels. Beyond the sheer act of existing, the human person acts biologically and psychologically; knowing is action; willing is action; doing this or that is action. When action is fully human, when it is mediated by conscious intelligence, action is scarcely distinct from freedom in act (1990: 8).

While not excluding the acknowledged fact that there is a passive dimension to being human, such as the human person being acted upon by faith in an existential manner, Haight's distillation of Blondel's intricate transcendental analysis of human action, provides the basis for a clear demarcation between immanent (inherent and intrinsic) and transitive (directed and external) modes of action.

9.2.1 Immanent Modes of Action.

The immanent (or intransitive) modes of action in expressing and living out the implications of faith, and the practical outcomes of loyal commitment to the God of faith are the fundamentals of Christian discipleship. **Personal transformation,** as required not only by the teachings of Christ, but as an instinctive and spontaneous response to the experience of Christ present and active in one's heart and life through faith. **Communal worship**, understood as ritual expression in the sacramental life of the faith community. The Council Fathers at Vatican II, in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) encouraged an active and conscious participation in the liturgy, "for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian Spirit" (*SC* 14). The ancient dictum, *Lex orandi – Lex credendi* (the law of prayer guides the law of faith) springs to mind here as drawing into a unity faith and its expression in the immanent modes of action. Adhering in heart and mind to the **beliefs** and the **belief system**, engendered by faith, entails more than mere notional assent and public and private proclamation of the **creeds of faith**; it requires a deep inner commitment to their tenets through personally appropriating them as the life of the spirit and the guiding impetus for a way of being, living and interacting. This leads to the underlying principle of true discipleship and its sustaining energy; a life of **prayerful union with God**. Communion with the God of faith in a life devoted to conscious contact with him in regular and disciplined prayer is the essential condition for nurturing the life of faith.

The development of faith requires the constant nurturing of prayerful expression in personal and communal prayer and worship. The act of faith is not a once off event, but a continuous process of growth in the spiritual life, commitment to meditative reflection and participation in the life of the community of believers. A willingness to be receptive to the grace of the Holy Spirit and the manifold gifts granted to the believer is a constant disposition required for the development of faith. The believer, drawn to faith by the Spirit, finds in the religious expressions of faith, such as prayer, meditation, reflective study, attentive reading of Scripture and liturgical worship in the sacramental life, a deeper rooting in their hearts of the elements of faith. Grounding themselves in the interior life of the spirit, the faithful grow in knowledge of the love of Jesus Christ and the hope that his promises hold for them (cf. Ep 3: 14-21).

These times of quiet and creative dwelling with God in prayer energise and motivate the person of faith to make the necessary movement from **communion** to **mission**[47]. Every person of faith appropriates for themselves the very mission of Christ, "I must proclaim the Good news of the kingdom of God" (Lk 4: 43), which in turn becomes the mission of the whole community of believers: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelising all peoples constitutes the essential

mission of the Church . . . Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (*EN* 14).

9.2.2 Transitive Modes of Action.

When one speaks of action, the type of action popularly understood is that of the directed intentional activity towards an object or course undertaken with a specific outcome in view. The comprehensiveness of faith is demonstrated in the will to act in a manner congruent with what is believed in and the demands entailed in a life of faith. This includes, but does not confine itself to ethical praxis and the living out of the moral principles of Christian faith. It goes beyond a mere external juridical adherence to the injunctions enjoined upon the person of faith, to positively living the values of the kingdom of God; justice, peace, forgiveness and so on. In keeping with the Christological focus that has guided much of our reflections on faith, the guiding principles of 'a life to proclaim you' are the values of the gospels, values lived by Christ and enjoined upon his disciples. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5 – 7) is the constitution of the new people of God, a composite rendering of the proclamation of the Kingdom in five principles of Christian life (cf. NJB footnote 5*a*):

1. The spirit in which the children of the Kingdom should live.
2. The way in which they should 'fulfil' the laws and practices of faith.
3. Detachment from wealth.
4. Attitudes towards neighbours, and
5. Entry to the kingdom by means of a firm decision expressed in action.

Christ is emphatic in the injunction upon his followers to confirm their unity with him through love of others (the greatest commandment in Mt 22: 34-40), demonstrating this in concrete actions (the last judgement in Mt 25: 31-46 and the parable of the good Samaritan in Lk 10: 29-37) and practical imitation of his own actions of service to others (the washing of feet in Jn 13: 1-15). Jesus affirms that it is not mere faith in his identity as Lord, that ensures entry into the kingdom, but the disciple who does the will of the Father (Mt 7: 21). More forthrightly he admonishes the crowd "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I say?" urging them to listen to his words and act on them (Lk 6: 46-49). Furthermore Jesus identifies his true family as those who hear the word of God and put it into practice (Lk 8: 19-21).

Gilles Langevin (1994: 313) speaks of the assent of the heart and spirit in faith finding its completion in the *sequela Christi* – the following of Christ as a total commitment of a lifestyle informed by the example and values of the Gospel. The Word that believers receive is the Truth, is act; "it is a word

that brings into being that which it says, and therefore a word that wills to transform any life that opens itself to it" (ibid). According to James (2:14-26), faith without the works that are a constitutive embodiment of faith is "dead". Paul, while rejecting that the works of "the law" possess an innate power to merit salvation, maintains that authentic faith is necessarily accompanied by works that the Spirit produces in us (Rm 8: 4; Ep 2: 8-10). The requirement to nurture the growth in faith is not reserved to the immanent modes of private prayer and public worship. Faith is strengthened through the practical living out of one's faith through attitudes and behaviour that not only reflect faith but also create signs of the active presence in the world of the God of Christian faith through applying its values of performative love, active justice, healing forgiveness, and creative peace.

9.3 PROCLAMATION OF FAITH – *Euntes docete omnes gentes!*

"A life to proclaim you" implies two interrelated activities that are both an expression of an appropriated faith, and the desire to bring this experience of faith to others. The first is the direct proclamation of faith through evangelisation and its cognates (kerygma, catechesis and parenesis), which also involves a way of living that gives credibility to the message proclaimed. The second flows directly from the first, action for and on behalf of social transformation. We will examine the first in this section, and the second, under the distinctive heading of 'a faith that does justice', in the next.

9.3.1 The Faith Community as Primary Evangelist

The proclamation of faith is the primary mission of the ecclesial community of faith given to it by Christ: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you" (Mt 28: 19-20a). This sending involves the **proclamation of the message of salvation**, the **sacramental administration of baptism** through the Trinitarian formula; which attaches the person to Jesus the Saviour whose work of salvation proceeds from the Father's love and reaches its completion in the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. footnote *i* to above text in NJB); and the ongoing task of **deepening primary evangelisation**. This threefold task is a unity of practice with three distinct levels of development. These levels correspond to the three elements that constitute evangelisation: **kerygma** [the basic proclamation of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Christ], **catechesis** [instruction in the doctrines of Christian faith which prepare one for the sacraments], and **Parenesis** [deepening of the life of faith through moral exhortation] (cf. Latourelle 1994: 585-6).

An exegesis of this same commission enjoined upon the disciples in the other Gospel texts (Mk 16: 15; Lk 24: 47-48 and Jn 20: 21) and in the Acts of the Apostles (Ac 1: 8) enables a broader

understanding of the concept of evangelisation. It cannot be reduced to any of its integral components i.e. kerygmatic proclamation, witnessing to the truth of Jesus Christ, converting 'non-believers', moral exhortation, deepening of faith and so on. In his Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum* (1992) on the publication of the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, John Paul II speaks in broad terms of "the Church's apostolic and pastoral mission . . . by making the truth of the Gospel shine forth to lead all people to seek and receive Christ's love" (*CCC* p.23).

It is noteworthy that the structure of the *CCC* takes as its underlying principle catechesis understood as the handing on of the faith: (1) The profession of <u>faith</u>, (2) The sacraments of <u>faith</u>, (3) The life of <u>faith</u>, and (4) Prayer in the life of <u>faith</u>. The *CCC* also has an anthropological point of reference, grounding its opening remarks in the dignity of the human person as expressed in *Gaudium et Spes* (#19) and the universal desire for self transcendence rooted in the heart of the human person (cf. *CCC* # 27-49).

The proclamation of faith i.e. of Jesus Christ as the light of the nations and the end of every human desiring is the summit of the Church's mission of evangelisation. The manner and means of this have undergone a variety of interpretations throughout the history of Christianity. The socio-historical milieu often determined the Church's mode of evangelisation; this not only reflected a disregard for the inherent dignity of the human person and the integrity of cultures, but for the very real need for a continuous inner evangelisation of the Church itself. The precondition for any authentic evangelisation requires a sound ecclesiology that underpins the Church's self-understanding, its fundamental mission and how this relates to other faith traditions and cultures.

The concept of the Church as **sacrament of communion** as developed in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*) which centres the church on Christ has a twofold value for our discussion on faith: firstly it posits the Church as a primary sacrament of faith *ad intra*; secondly, *ad extra* it visualises the mission and 'significative' mediation of the Church for the world; with both values united in "one interlocked reality" (*LG* 8) (cf. Pie-Ninot 1994*a*: 144). This is a significant departure from earlier ecclesiologies developed by the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, arising as they did out of situations of conflict and division with other Christian religions and the modern world respectively. Vatican II, drawing so much as it did from a study of the signs of the modern age, was able to **respond**, rather than react to the issues it dealt with. The documents that came out of the Council, varied as they are in the issues they direct themselves to, express a renewed understanding of faith, the Church and its relationship with faith, and the Church and other religious faiths, demonstrate a clearer sense of historical consciousness, a shift away from the classical worldview, an appropriation

of new methods of theologising such as a greater recognition of the validity of an inductive approach, and an implicit use of the method of correlation for understanding the faith in relation to new emerging ideas, situations and contexts. The perspective and tone of the Council had and has a far-reaching impact on the way the Church understands, and therefore implements evangelisation.

The Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI on *The Evangelisation of the Men of our Time* (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1975) arising out of the spirit of Vatican II and the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Evangelisation in 1974 (the regular meeting of the bishops of the world in Synods is itself a fruit of the Council), remains a landmark document for the Church's apostolic and pastoral mission of proclaiming the faith. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* deals comprehensively with all aspects of an integral evangelisation: an evangelising community that itself is in need of continuous evangelisation, evangelisation as the essential task and identity of the Church, it is the task of **all** members of the faith community, it requires a primary witness of an evangelised lifestyle, the evangelisation of culture and cultures (with a dependence on an updated anthropology), the need for an explicit proclamation, and the ongoing process of evangelisation throughout all Christian communities. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* recognises the complexity of the evangelisation process and its reliance on modern means of communication in the task of 'handing on the faith'. It recalls the wisdom of the decree on the *Missionary Activity of the Church* (*Ad Gentes*), and the right to religious freedom and freedom from coercion in the evangelisation process of *Dignitatis Humanae*, respecting the fact that "the truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth" (*DH* 1). The liberating dimension of salvation is recognised as integral to evangelisation. Paul VI admits to the link between human liberation and salvation, but cautions that they are not to be identified with each other insofar as purely human attempts at political and economic liberation are not sufficient in themselves, without the emphasis of the eschatological element of human liberation and salvation (#34-5).

9.3.2 The 'New Evangelisation'

Pope John Paul II has marked his pontificate with a call to a 'New Evangelisation' that directs itself to a renewal of faith in the contemporary age where faith has been lost or obscured by a radical spirit of indifference, vagueness and agnosticism which has particularly permeated the North Atlantic cultures i.e. North America and Western Europe. The term 're-evangelisation' has been rejected as restorationist notion that suggests a return to the *status quo ante*, which has itself come under criticism for its mechanical understanding and presentation of faith and salvation, severely lacking in emphasising the central notion of faith as a personal relationship of trustful surrender to a personal God. This 'new evangelisation' directs itself to a contemporary mass culture that induces a spiritual poverty through an overt emphasis on wealth, social status, and material possessions. It seeks to

deepen the faith in those who have strayed from it through lack of a proper initial implantation, which lacks the essential element of a personal relationship with Christ under the influence of the Spirit. Primary evangelisation and the history of the Christian religions have caused many to reject any form of religion completely, or have substituted it in favour of a vague and diffuse spirituality that lacks a personal and eschatological dimension.

Many nominal Christians who live a life of indifference and ambiguous commitments,

> have rejected a religion that in their psychic development has remained in an infantile stage and seems to them morally oppressive, for popular culture often confuses religion with moralism. Religion as they experience it evokes fear and stirs unconscious anxieties (Carrier 1994: 288).

Religion is rejected as being alienating and as contrary to human freedom. It is necessary to examine and identify the causes of this perception of Christianity and to deal with it if evangelisation is to have effect on the people of our times.

The new evangelisation urges those who proclaim faith to pay careful attention to the psychological and spiritual needs of our age, where people are prey to sects who exploit the anxieties and gullibility by so many who feel detached from themselves and isolated in myriad personal difficulties which are not being attended to by the Church (cf. ibid). Every human heart feels the need for hope in an age where there is a loss of any moral or spiritual structure in society. A general distrust in ideologies, beliefs, and causes that urge people to go beyond their narrow selfish consciences is a new and disturbing phenomenon that challenges the new evangelisers to touch and stir the latent morality that is present in the hearts of even the most ardent rejectionists. The new search for meaning, authenticity and a hope and reason for living demand that Christians acquaint themselves with a deep understanding of the movements of consciousness in our age. The answer of faith must present itself as impelling and responsive to the deep spiritual hunger in many who have lost hope in the face of a contemporary culture marked by so much that is contrary to what is truly human. The challenge of the new evangelisation requires a new fervour, an understanding of the psychological and spiritual needs of our age, new methods, and new expressions of faith (cf. ibid 291, John Paul II's address to CELAM 1983).

9.3.3 An Evangelisation New in Fervour, Method, and Expression

Shorter and Onyancha in *Secularism in Africa* (1997: 131-133) discuss the implications for evangelisers of this call to an evangelisation new in fervour, method and expression. In the context of the impact of secularism and its relativist morality on African societies, using Nairobi as a case study,

they examine the crisis in which Christianity finds itself in providing an authentic alternative to the neo-liberal, global culture of economism. "Whatever the future holds, the fact remains that at the present time old methods of evangelisation are discredited and unworkable. Secularism demands a new evangelisation, if the Kingdom or reign of God – 'God's project for humanity' – is to be promoted on earth" (p. 131).

An evangelisation possessed of a new **fervour** is one that rests on a conviction that generates enthusiasm. Those who evangelise need to exhibit zeal and passion that is grounded in a faith vision given scope by human imagination. They must themselves be possessed of a vision that impels them to draw others into a new way of seeing, understanding, and experiencing God present and active in the world and in the lives of his people. This vision is the outcome of a profound spiritual life rooted in prayer and inspired by the active presence of God in their lives. The precondition of a faith-filled vision is a life inspired by daily communion with God in prayer and a realistic appreciation of the relationship between the sacred and the secular. The Christian realist understands that these two realities as not in fundamental opposition to each other and in their evangelisation preserve the balance between them.

The rejection of the authoritarian domineering of peoples and cultures in the evangelisation process of bygone ages is not only ineffective; as evidenced by the rejection of the extraneous forms of a Euro-centric Christianity in 'evangelised' cultures in Third World contexts, but the underlying vision that inspired some of its more negative elements, to be recognised as profoundly unchristian and therefore to be rejected. The accompanying elements of a European Christianity that led to the destruction of local cultures and identities, the acceptance and complicity of the domination of minorities and women, and the economic exploitation of land and resources, are the result of an evangelisation methodology severely flawed in outlook and practise. Furthermore modern methods of evangelisation by some evangelical fundamentalist groups not only cheapen the Gospel and misrepresent its true meaning, but are emotionally exploitative, largely motivated by an admixture of financial gain and personal aggrandisement. All these factors have given rise to suspicion of the fundamental basis of Christianity and indeed the wholesale rejection of it and its values.

The **Methods** demanded by the new evangelisation are participatory, personal, and respectful of the inherent values of all cultures. The persuasiveness of the Christian message no longer rests on the didactic indoctrination of propositions and rules, but by a fundamental witness of transformed lives and communities. Speaking of the necessary and constitutive dimension of evangelisation; the Church's social teaching, John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation arising out of the 1994 Synod of

the bishops of Africa affirms the primacy of living witness of faith over the systematic teaching of the truths of faith, "Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social doctrine will gain credibility more immediately from *witness of action* than as a result of its internal logic and consistency" (*Ecclesia in Africa* 28).

The new evangelisation is new in its **expression** through what it proclaims as being relevant for the lives of peoples and that the implementation of the values of faith is for the common good. The authentic message of the Gospel is an inspiring and life-giving word that speaks to the socio-economic realities of people's lives as much as it does to their spiritual and communal realities. The faith mediated through this new expression inspires hope, and realistically proclaims the concrete manifestation of the kingdom of God in transformed social and economic structures. Thus, the eschatological dimension of the kingdom is given meaning through the experience of its values as an integral element of the new life proclaimed by the Gospel message. Christian faith becomes relevant, meaningful, and authentic through its proclamation of a renewed and reconstructed social order brought about by people of active faith who engage the world with the values of their faith, realise the imperatives of their faith, and experience the new life it promises now as a foretaste of its eschatological fulfilment.

Primary concepts employed by the new evangelisation are collaboration, participation and cooperation; implying the restructuring of pastoral ministries to include all the Christian faithful in this mission. Transformations of social and communal structures contrary to the values of the Gospel, as goals of an authentic faith derive their impetus from personal transformation, which is itself the outcome of a genuine evangelisation.

A further element identified by Shorter and Onyancha in the new evangelisation is the effective use of communication (cf. ibid p. 133). Indispensable in this is interpersonal dialogue and the use of the electronic media. Both are essential if the Gospel is to be placed in the arena of public truth and the domain dominated by entertainment. Christian witness via the media is central to both reversing the negative effects on communities, especially the youth, of the music and video culture, and of bringing the Gospel to the attention and interest of mass culture.

The new evangelisation advocates the transmission and mediation of a Christian faith that implies personal and social transformation through the implantation of the Gospel and the practical implementation of the values of the kingdom of God. It promotes solidarity with the excluded and

marginalised, encourages social responsibility, and proclaims a person and a message that liberates and empowers the human person at every level of being, identity, and communal relationships.

9.3.4 Inculturation as Integral Evangelisation

Paul VI makes the crucial point of an integral evangelisation that is effective insofar as it considers the actual people to whom it is addressed, using their language, their signs and symbols, answering the questions they ask, and through this having an impact on the concrete circumstances of their life (cf. *EN* 63). However, in speaking of the evangelisation of cultures he insists that this process is not merely decorative, applying a thin veneer in an external manner, but one that is vital, reaches the depths of cultures and extends to their very roots (cf. ibid #20).

The seminal remarks of Paul VI on the evangelisation of culture based on the tentative approaches to this theme enunciated by Vatican II in a number of documents most notably *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #37-40[48], in regard to the Liturgy and *Ad Gentes* # 22, concerning the norms governing the process of the implantation of the Gospel in cultures, brought into public discussion in the Church the concept of **Inculturation** as a term identified with evangelisation. Though in use among Catholics since the 1930's, the word, Inculturation was given definition by the International Theological Commission's publication *Faith and Inculturation* in 1988 (#11) as a process

> [That] can be defined as the effort by the Church to bring the message of Christ into a particular socio-cultural setting, while calling upon the latter to grow in accordance with all its own values, provided these are reconcilable with the gospel. The term Inculturation includes the idea of the growth and mutual enrichment of persons and groups as a result of the meeting of the gospel with a social milieu. 'Inculturation is the incarnation of the gospel in native cultures and, at the same time, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church' [*Slavorum Apostoli* 1985, 21] (Carrier 1994: 511).

The abovementioned Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *The Church in Africa* (*Ecclesia in Africa* 1995) offers a more direct definition of Inculturation as "the process by which 'catechesis takes flesh' in the various cultures. [It] includes two dimensions: on the one hand, the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and, on the other, the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (#59). It speaks directly to the necessity and significance of Inculturation as "an urgent priority in the life of the particular Churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa". It stresses that Inculturation "is a requirement for evangelisation, a path towards full evangelisation, and one of the greatest challenges for the Church on the Continent" (*EA* 59). It continues by providing theological foundations for Inculturation (cf. #60-61), and outlining the criteria and areas of application of Inculturation (cf. #62-67). It emphasises the integral development of the human person as being at the very heart of evangelisation; where the person evangelised is not an

abstract being, but one who exists within the complexities of social and economic contexts, which are themselves in need of evangelisation as structures anomalous with the values of the Gospel (cf. #68).

While valid foundations for Inculturation, the **Incarnation** and **historical precedent** should not be proposed as justification for the process of Inculturation, but rather as explanation of the fact and necessity of Inculturation[49], which stands by itself as an integral element within the broader process of evangelisation: "Inculturation is not a theological, missiological, or pastoral fad; it is an essential quality of **revelation**, **evangelisation**, and **theological reflection**" (Azevedo 1994: 501 my emphases).

Revelation is understood as taking place within the context of a people, within the evolutionary framework of the socio-cultural formation of that people. **Evangelisation**, to be authentic, and to include the elements of the 'New Evangelisation', must be acutely aware of the diversified socio-cultural reality of those it seeks to evangelise. **Theological reflection** develops within, and in terms of, an identifiable socio-cultural context in order that this context becomes important for an interpretive understanding and evaluation of any product of the theological process (cf. ibid). Thus, Inculturation as a theological term connoting cultural anthropological elements is not compelled to offer justification on theological grounds for its validity, as it is a concept by itself sufficient for inclusion into any theological lexicon. Nevertheless, it does find in theological foundations and historical processes the necessary impetus for its continued effectiveness, and an explanation of its vital necessity for an evangelisation that is integral, meaningful, and authentic.

The Incarnation of The Divine in the person of Jesus of Nazareth presents a sound theological basis for **understanding** the concept and the reality of Inculturation. The Incarnation, understood as the fulfilment of the process of Revelation, is paradigmatic of the mode of Revelation that occurred prior to it. The reality, presence, and word of God are made manifest to humanity through the culture, language, and history of a particular people in a particular place within the unfolding of their historical circumstances. Revelation as the ongoing process of this self-communication of God reaches its climactic moment in the Christ event. "The incarnation constitutes the primordial and most radical of inculturations" (ibid p. 503), occurring not in an abstract and universal sense with no relation to the process of Revelation that went before it, and which is the preparation for it. God incarnates his divinity into a particular person situated within a socio-cultural matrix that gives to this definitive moment in the history of Revelation a concrete reality far surpassing the modes preceding it; making it intensely **meaningful** and therefore **effectual** in its **intended purpose**.

The purpose of the Incarnation is that all peoples and nations be brought to the light of truth, enter into the divine life of God and ultimately be saved (cf. the Prologue of John's Gospel; Jn. 3: 16; Ep 2: 18 & 2 P 1: 4). This is the intention of the evangelisation process, mandated by Christ and given to the Church as its primary mission (cf. Mt. 28: 19-20 & *LG* 1). Thus the mode of the Incarnation understood in all its aspects, particularly the cultural anthropological, is what guides the Church in its manner and mode of evangelisation, that the purpose of both be fulfilled, achieve their common goal and be effectual in this process. The Incarnation therefore represents the primary model for evangelisation, "the Inculturation occurring today in the evangelisation process is a replica, as it were, of the Inculturation in which Jesus realised himself existentially" (ibid).

Jesus, radically committed to his mission within a particular socio-historical context, ensuring the end of this mission through the thought forms, language, cultural concepts, and pattern of living of his cultural heritage, is nevertheless existentially and essentially free from the realities of this culture. His mission is at once controversial and effective through his critical presence, deeds, and words of that within his culture, which is not radically oriented toward God. His mission, as an expression of his divinity, is to transform, redirect, and 'divinise' this culture, challenging it to become that which it was intended to be. Through a process of adopting and endorsing that, which is valid in relation to the kingdom of God, correcting and transforming that which is anomalous and distorted, Christ implements the salvific will of God (cf. ibid). The Incarnation, with all its theological implications and the life and ministry of Christ, culminating in his death and resurrection, had a profoundly transforming effect on those within his socio-cultural milieu who responded to the totality of the Christ event. These effects reverberated throughout the neighbouring cultures and societies as attested to in the writings of the early Church and those of secular history. The complex historical ramifications of the Christ event read as a continuous interplay between faith, culture and society through which the mystery of God's salvific will for humankind gradually accomplishes its intended purpose. Thus, we can affirm that the Incarnation operates as first principle underpinning the necessity of Inculturation as a **model** for evangelisation, and the life and mission of Christ operate as guiding principles for the **process** of Inculturation.

This model and process of evangelisation has been the mode (often unreflected upon as such) of the insertion of the Christian faith in the various human cultures, and in the transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration into the Christian faith (cf. *EA* 59). Historical precedent creates a continual dynamic process through which a local expression of Christian faith, evolved into universally accepted expressions in the whole life of the Church. What begins as a local phenomenon within a particular socio-cultural expression of Christian faith is validated as universal through its

gradual acceptance into other Christian environments. The dynamic interplay between faith and culture lends to the first a concrete expression, while the first transforms the second through its divine inner dynamism in a manner reflecting the deeper and enduring elements of faith, and in consonance with the inherently divine values present in culture. Through this ongoing dynamic, the local Church enriches the universal Church, and the local Church becomes a microcosm of the universal.

Stuart Bate offers examples of this dynamic in an article entitled *Inculturation in South Africa* published in **Grace and Truth** (1998 15,3: 26-43), describing how various expressions of Christianity which began as local phenomena came to have universal significance: "Monasticism, the Celtic forms of penance, as well as Greek and Latin ritual processes" (#1) to name a few. He also speaks of saints "who reflect their time and context such as Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola and even Paul of Tarsus, [who] are saints for us precisely because what they did and said locally has universal significance" (ibid). Devotions, such as the Rosary, The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Corpus Christi processions and Pentecostalism; have begun in one place and have become the popular norm throughout Catholicism. "All of these represent part of the Inculturation process emerging in one part of the Church's history and in different cultural contexts. All have spread and affected the Church elsewhere. Inculturation, whilst it happens locally, is never just a local affair" (ibid).

Faith as the complete existential response of trustful surrender of a person and/or socio-cultural group to Jesus Christ (as the complete expression of God's loving purpose for that person/socio-cultural group), and culture (understood as the collective expression of values, communication modalities and meanings of a particular human group), enter through the process of Inculturation into a dynamic synergy where the former fulfils the latter's deepest aspirations through the insertion of the divine; and the latter gives concrete expression to its assimilation of Christian faith as the best possible way of being divinised humanity within a particular socio-cultural context.

9.4 A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE

Jacques Dupuis in discussing the need for a broader and more comprehensive concept of evangelisation indicates that this signifies not only the entire lives of those who evangelise (their words and works and the testimony of their lives), not only that evangelisation looks to everything that is human and therefore tends to the transformation of culture and cultures by gospel values, but also the full ecclesial activities by which the gospel is spread. Authentic forms of evangelisation include the furthering of justice and inter-religious dialogue (cf. 1994: 281-82). These while up until Vatican II were either ignored or enjoyed secondary status to proclamation of the faith and sacramental administration within the Church, while not explicit in the command of Christ to go and

teach all nations, are nevertheless integral to the complete Gospel message and the whole Christ event. Christians cannot divorce faith and the vision it brings, from the human, cultural, and political dimension of life. The vision of faith creates a unity of perception in all the issues, difficulties, and challenges presented by political and social situations of oppression and alienation. Faith demands an opposition to and transformation of any social structure or situation that does violence to the dignity and freedom of the human person.

The 1971 Synod of Bishops produced a document entitled *Justice in the World* (*De Iustitia in Mundo*) which stated unequivocally:

> Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation (*ND* 2159).

Following a long tradition of the social doctrine of the Church, this oft-quoted excerpt gave the impetus for a renewed commitment to proclaim the faith in both word and deed. "One of the effects of the document was to stimulate further theological reflection on the relationships between the struggle against injustice, liberation, and evangelisation" (Marist Brothers Commission for Poverty and Justice 1986: 55). The aforementioned 1974 Synod of Bishops returned to this theme and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* further developed and refined the relationship between evangelisation and justice.

Beginning with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 on the rights of workers, to John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) on the social concern of the Church, and celebrating 100 years of Papal Encyclicals devoted to issues of Justice, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), the Church has made it clear that social justice is a priority in its universal mission and concern for humankind. An inescapable dimension and demand of Christian faith is action on and behalf of social transformation and justice. Personal transformation as an outcome of faith leading as it does to moral development and enriched personal and communal relationships inevitably challenges the person of faith to an awareness of the great suffering endured by many in society. A personally appropriated faith then finds itself confronted with the demand to act and work for social transformation as a *sine qua non* of a complete act of faith.

Edmond J. Dunn in offering an integral definition of Christian faith says

> Clearly as disciples of Jesus Christ the life of faith must lead us to praxis on behalf of justice. . from the Old Testament prophets through Jesus' preaching and example to the social teaching of the church, justice is an integral part of the Word of God we are invited to accept; a preferential option for the poor is clearly an essential definition of faith (1998: 52-53).

Faith is thus an integral and transforming act and process in the life of the individual and the community of believers. Consciously fostering action for social transformation unites itself with a spirit of compassion that emerges as an internal disposition in the person of faith. The vision of the human community granted by faith is imbued with a deeper understanding of the underlying forces and perceptions that are an injustice to the love of God poured out on his creation. Faith not only creates the impetus for a renewal of society, but also requires a spirit that reflects in a disciplined and compassionate manner the causes of poverty, oppression, corruption and all the attendant social evils that do violence to the freedom of the human person created in the image of God and therefore endowed with an inalienable dignity. For the person of faith it is not enough to merely **act** on behalf of justice, but to employ the immanent modes of action in **discerning** the causal factors in persons and social structures that give rise to injustice in its many and diverse manifestations.

9.4.1 Performative Faith in Theologies of Praxis

Practical theology emerged as a distinct and identifiable theology in the 1960's. Under the impetus of theologians who recognised the need for theology in its diverse areas of concern to not only address issues affecting practical living within the broader framework of existing theologies, but that a separate theological discipline, reflecting upon and responding to the techno-economic, political and cultural dimensions of human life, emerged the theology of praxis. Karl Rahner was instrumental in developing an innovative pastoral theology that went beyond the traditional boundaries of spiritual theology, moral theology and pastoral theology. For Rahner, practical theology was specifically concerned with the structures of the Church and its response to the contemporary needs of the world. Rahner emphasised that the Church must continually be alert to the present moment, hence practical theology is the theological perception of the present moment in relation to the Church's whole mission (cf. Lynch 1998: 172). Practical theology in its specifically ecclesial form attempts "to be of service in continually overcoming the Church's given deficient self-realisation and transcending it in the next new form to which the Church is being called" (Rahner 1972: 104).

The principal exponents of the method of practical theology are **Political theology** and **Liberation theology**; the former being largely practiced in the North Atlantic cultural milieu and the latter in situations of oppression and exploitation in largely Third world countries. The tributaries of these theologies are the **Contextual theologies**, which emerge as a theological response and pastoral praxis to situations of specific human societies or conditions e.g. African theology, Black theology, Feminist theology, Ecology theology etc.

9.4.2 Two Instances of Practical Theology

First World theologians such as Johann Baptist Metz and Jurgen Moltmann reflected on the particularly political dimension of Christian faith in the European context. Metz criticised the individualistic approach of Rahner's transcendental theology, wanting to understand the human person as a thoroughly social and historical being oriented toward the fulfilment of history in the eschatological horizon of the absolute future. Key concepts in Metz's **political theology** emerging from a dialogue with Marxism are memory, narrative, and solidarity. He called the Church to a prophetic ministry of keeping alive the political dimension of Jesus' life and ministry by adopting a critical stance toward institutions and structures of society that were in direct contravention of the implications of the kingdom that Christ ushered in; and toward which human history was inexorably moving towards as the fulfilment of its destiny. He further challenged the Church to critically examine its own unjust structures, and become credible through keeping alive the memory of Jesus and implementing his vision of ministry that should determine its own praxis and life-style (cf. O'Donnell 1994: 1090-1).

Similarly, Jurgen Moltmann in the Protestant theological milieu, called for the politicisation of theology in light of the indubitable political dimensions and consequences of the life and death of Christ. With his political theology of the Crucified, Moltmann emphasised the political dimensions and implications of the death of Christ. The political dimension of theology was always present, even if unrecognised; what was needed was a return to the political implications of the Christ event, particularly the political significance of the cross. Moltmann calls for a new model of political theology which he calls the model of correspondence, in which the immediate concerns of present realities are transformed in anticipation of the eschatological realisation of the kingdom of God (cf. ibid 1089).

On the other side of the globe, in the Third World context of situations of extreme political repression and economic exploitation of people by unjust and corrupt political and economic systems, emerged the **Liberation theology** of Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff and others, in South America. The first task liberation theology sets out to do, before even theologising, is the liberation of theology itself. In order that liberation theology may critically engage in a hermeneutical process at a specific socio-historical conjunction, it is necessary that it be dethroned from its elitist position in the academy. Liberation theology is to be understood as an original and "**new original way of doing theology**" [Gutierrez], representing a new "horizon" [L. Boff] and an "attitude of mind or a special way of thinking the faith" [C. Boff] (ibid 1092). In this sense then, it does not seek a new subject matter as an object of theological focus, but rather does theology in an entirely different way. It brings into its

ambit of reflection and praxis the whole of Christian living, and interprets this from a particular angle, that of Jesus the liberator, the socio-economic implications of his life and teaching and the consequences of Christian faith in situations of profound suffering and injustice.

In *Introducing Liberation Theology* (1987), Leonardo and Clodovis Boff outline key themes of liberation theology (cf. pp. 43-46). It espouses a radical **option for the poor** in light of biblical evidence of this being the fundamental stance of God in the history of salvation; Christ undeniably made a conscious option for the poor and regarded them as the principal recipients of his message and inheritors of the kingdom he ushered in, which is not understood to be an eschatological reality alone, but an immediate one that required the active engagement of all to make it an immanent reality. From the standpoint of the last judgement (cf. Mt. 25:31-46) it is clear that one's attitude towards and action on behalf of the poor and marginalised will be the criterion of salvation. The Apostolic motivation for an option for the poor is witnessed in a critical reading of the life of the early Christian community in the New Testament where the poor are held to be a part of the community, where all is to be held in common that there be no poor among them (cf. Ac 2 & 4). The option for the poor is endorsed and mandated by the teaching of the Church, particularly the Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979) conferences of the Latin American bishops, who affirmed "the need for conversion on the part of the whole church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation" (ibid p. 46).

The fundamental underpinning of all the other principal themes of liberation theology is that a **living and true faith includes the practice of liberation** (cf. ibid p. 49). Being the original standpoint of all theology, faith particularly in liberation theology, casts a light upon the fact and the manner of the divine's penetration of every level of history and the world. The faith necessary for salvation, to be true, must enable us to discern the presence or the negation of God in all human activity; it is not sufficient that faith be expressed in correct terminology (orthodoxy), it must be verified through being informed by love, solidarity with the excluded and oppressed, and be marked by a thirst for justice. It is liberation theology's task to recover the inherently practical dimension of biblical and hence Christian faith, in order that orthodoxy may flow necessarily into orthopraxis (cf. p. 50).

Concluding Summary

A Life to Proclaim You is therefore not only an existential outcome of faith, but is itself the reason for faith. The necessity of faith for salvation is thus viewed not merely as a condition but as the very identity and end of the whole human person. Contemporary theology recognises that the validity of a specific theology cannot be based solely on the intellectual rigour and logical consistency of its

internal structuring, but must have significance, a meaning for the practical situation in which it is developed and practised. Intellectual rigour and logical consistency make their greatest contribution when they remain united to, rather than placed above, the imperative that theology must connect faith and life (cf. Lynch 1998: 165).

The personalist orientation of our discussions makes it clear that faith does and must have an impact on the human person at every level of her/his being: the **interpersonal**, the **intrapersonal**, and the **transpersonal**. These interrelated dimensions coalesce into an integral understanding of the person of faith as one whose religious commitment leads to a practical orientation where faith and action in the world are inseparable. Rosemary Radford Ruether, theologian and teacher understands faith as making a conscious choice to live authentically:

> Faith is a way of living justly and lovingly. It's a total life style. That essentially is the way I want to perform everything I do. If I'm engaged in teaching, I'm trying to give the most authentic account of what this truth is about and really encourage students to recognise the difference between theory and practice (in Patterson 1990: 41).

The nature of faith is such that it is an acceptance of (passive) and loyal commitment (active) to an ultimate reality that commands the whole human personality in a central and centring way.

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CONCLUSION

The uncluttered clarity and precision of the *Prayer of St. Benedict* deserves an analysis similarly clear and precise. As a model upon which an epistemology of Christian faith can be constructed, the *PSB* provides the possibility for a reflection on faith that includes all the necessary elements and excludes extraneous digressions. The profound spiritual consciousness found in the prayer will not allow too simplistic an understanding of faith; neither will its simplicity of structure allow a complex and imprecise exposition of faith. We hope this discussion has achieved this while being faithful to the intention and methodology proposed at the outset.

The decision to commit to faith is not a complete leap into the dark as it anchors itself in the light given by experience, whatever the nature of that transcendental experience might be. John Macquarrie in *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* (2001: 479-480) provides four criteria for assessing the reasonableness of one's decision to commit to faith based on the critical evaluation of these experiences. These criteria act as a benchmark for assessing the quality of this discussion on faith, and provide vital guidelines for any theological discussion on the intelligibility and meaningfulness of faith for contemporary humanity. These criteria, set by Macquarrie for the intelligent decision to take a position on religion, are adapted to refer to an understanding of faith.

1) Our understanding of faith should be one that is **reasonable**. The nature of faith is such that it defies absolute certitude of the quality declared by the natural sciences, but is an act of the human intellect that is consonant with the demands of reason. This discussion has asserted the fundamentally rational character of the faith act and that is essentially not in opposition to scientific knowledge or philosophical enquiry, and is no sacrifice of the intellect. It is beyond the capacity of the human intellect to penetrate in a certain manner the depth of the mysteries of faith, yet an acceptance of the finitude of the human mind to achieve this is also a reasonable assertion.

2) Our understanding of faith must be **contemporary**; i.e. it must be relevant to the present circumstances, having something meaningful to say to the myriad concerns and problems that affect and challenge modern humanity. This does not mean that the perennial truths of faith should be adapted and modified in order that they more suitably conform to fluctuating vogues and constantly shifting intellectual positions. Rather faith, understood as the rational reflection on the experience of God's unique self-communication throughout history should address itself to the concerns of the contemporary world, while at the same time challenging the world in every age to accept the revolutionary vision of faith proclaimed and demonstrated by the life, teaching, and salvific mystery of Jesus Christ.

3) Our understanding of faith must be **comprehensive** in that its self-presentation touches on every aspect of the human person. It is not to be reduced to the affective, the intellectual, or the social dimension of the human personality alone. Neither should it claim that one facet of the whole human person and condition enjoys priority over the others, and that the truth of faith lies in its power to speak directly to that facet. The personalist approach of this discussion demonstrates that genuine faith is, and should be constitutive of the whole human person.

4) Our understanding of faith should allow for **development**. This asserts that faith is dynamic and that our understanding of it should include the fact that we never possess in a completely conceptualised and articulated manner the fullness of faith. An understanding of faith that places a full stop at the end of the discussion and claims to have exhaustively dealt with it closes itself off to the essentially dynamic nature of truth. This does not compromise our commitment to faith; on the contrary, it demonstrates a faith that is authentic, a faith that is continually open to the unfolding mystery of truth. This discussion on faith has attempted to be faithful to this criterion of the continual unfolding of the mysteries of faith to people in new and changing contexts without however, reducing Christian faith to a one truth among the many competing for recognition as absolute or as a matter of personal preference in the marketplace of spiritualities that is emblematic of the current collective psyche of our age.

Macquarrie's criteria are invaluable for providing the fundamental characteristics that should guide any discussion on faith; however, I would add one more indispensable characteristic necessary for an intelligent discussion on issues of faith, religion, and spirituality. This has been the guiding principle of this discussion that incorporates into one overarching criterion **inclusive** of, and **transcending** those suggested by Macquarrie – **wisdom**.

This discussion has concerned itself with an analysis of the methodology and insights provided by an interpretation of the *Prayer of St. Benedict*. Wisdom is affirmed as the indispensable guiding element in any discourse that seeks to do justice to a comprehensive treatment of Christian faith. Wisdom, as a graced faculty of the human cognitional process safeguards the fundamentally supernatural character of theology's subject matter. The necessity for the integrating power of wisdom in the faith discussion is even more pressing in an age where diverse and pluralistic thinking prevails. Diversity and pluralism are not only welcomed, but are regarded as stimulants to contemporary theological thought, opening up new pathways of exploration and creative insights of meaning. There is however a twofold temptation to theological thinking if wisdom is not placed in its rightful place as the *sine qua non* of a theology that has meaning for the people and the concerns that preoccupy them in the present age

while at the same time faithful to its origin in transcendental experiences of God's self-communication through Revelation. On the one hand, the neo-apologists in the Catholic tradition and the Revelational Positivists in Reformed Evangelical Protestantism are tempted by historical consciousness and pluralism to either argue themselves into complicated and abstruse philosophically defensive positions, or seek the comforting assurances of a precritical dogmatism. On the other hand are the relativist deconstructionist theologies that seek a compromise with conflicting points of reference through a relatavisation that degenerates into a wholly secular study of theological themes. Needless to say, these are broad characterisations, yet qualifiedly descriptive of the present condition in the theological setting. The challenge of the *PSB* to those who discuss and present the enduring and the contemporary elements of faith to the world is the placing of wisdom, as right judgement, at the heart of their reflections to give a unifying dynamism to theology.

> Christian theology is the human activity of bringing a religious tradition into conversation with our contemporary situation in a mutually critical way so as to deepen our understanding of, and commitment to, living out our faith in this situation as well as to transforming the world for the better (Hill *et al.* 1997: 293).

The human person as conscious being in the world, to the world, and for the world must bring the transforming power of faith to bear on all aspects of interaction with the world. It needs in order to remain consistently attentive to and meaningful to a world increasingly cynical of the institutional manifestations of faith, the full meaning of Christian faith to be a means of responding creatively and effectively to the concerns and issues that confront the contemporary world situation. These include the churches and their ecumenical endeavours, societal transformation, and global socio-economic and environmental concerns. Authentic faith needs to see and make connections between these realities and bring into dialogue these domains and their institutional structures with the concerns and issues confronting a postmodern world that while developing in so many areas, is still confused by the bewildering array and complexity of current world problems. The Church is challenged at three levels: to create communities that are conducive to, and encouraging of genuine religious experience. Bring Christians into an awareness of the need for a mature and critical reflection of their faith that it may be a personally appropriated experience while attentive to church teaching. The integration of faith into the total life experience should be regarded as an indispensable feature of authentic Christian faith.

An integrated outcome of living an authentic life of faith guided by the wisdom that is an integral and indispensable foundation of reflecting on faith experiences, is demonstrated clearly in the 'Transcendental Imperatives' formulated by Bernard Lonergan (cf. **Method in Theology** 1972) and adapted by Wil Derkse in his **The Rule of Benedict for Beginners** (2003: 18-19) in which he seeks to apply the practical principles of Benedictine Spirituality for the committed Lay Christian. These are

certain vital and spiritual conditions that pertain to every authentic life of faith. They are transcendental because they are universally valid, imperatives because they are the necessary conditions for authentic living and as such require constant reflection, praxis, and refinement of praxis through further reflection on the outcomes of their application in life. They are charges – that is why each one is followed by an exclamation mark:

> ➢ **Be attentive!** Pay attention, be alert, and listen carefully to what is happening. Listen to what the situation and the other person demands of you. In the opening words of the introduction to *The Rule of St. Benedict,* the command is to **listen** (*Ausculta,* or variously *obsculta*). What are the needs in this particular situation?

> ➢ **Be intelligent!** Attempt to reflect and discern with care on the results of your paying attention (*intellectus* is sometimes related with *intus legere*: reading toward the inside), introduce order and structure to what has been apprehended and perceived. Attempt to grasp with the full depth of your understanding.

> ➢ **Be reasonable!** Be sensible. Asses the insights you arrive at and strive toward a sound judgement of the situation. Being reasonable is in contrast to understanding in that it goes beyond what has been assimilated to a critical judgement of the issues under consideration. Being reasonable means going beyond the immediate understanding to a well thought out and balanced reflection in conjunction with all the faculties of the mind.

> ➢ **Be responsible!** Be responsible, realise the gradations in the moral quality of your thoughts and actions and allow for a reassessment of this. Respond in a practical and conscientious manner called for by each situation or human encounter.

> ➢ **Be in love!** Put your heart into it with a commitment arising from an interior attitude of total assent. Affirm with complete dedication that which you commit to in order that your whole being is involved in the situation or the person that you are present to.

These functions are simultaneous in their application and not mere steps that one follows. They are an instinctive response from one who is committed to an authentic way of being and living in a conscious orientation of all of one's humanity.

These imperatives, naturally and quite clearly imply a vision, a faith-filled vision. The human person is endowed with the capacity for continued growth, and is always capable of transcending prior cognitive and moral limits (cf. ibid p. 19). Thus, the meta-paradigmatic nature of the *PSB* understands faith to be continuously developing through its application in attempting to live authentically the values of a faith-filled vision. This vision is the illumination of the spirit of the person, with its faculties of heart, mind, and will whereby reality is given a meaning beyond the immediately

apprehended. Faith is not the end in itself, but the illuminating power through which all reality is given meaning and where ultimate reality, God whom we encounter in faith, is the light by which all that is, becomes invested with a profound significance; finding completion in the eschaton, where faith will give way to the full certainty and experience of that which is now dimly perceived, but the hope which all creation is moving toward.

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ENDNOTES

[1] I first came across this prayer at St. Benedict's College in Bedfordview, Johannesburg. It appears beneath a statue of St. Benedict in the foyer of the school's administration centre. It is also to be found on a number of websites. A particularly interesting analysis of the *PSB* is to be found at http://www. So-strong.com/archives/prose/alien/10 education by george.htm (accessed on 4/3/2004).

[2] The *Prayer* seems to be peculiar to the English Congregation of Benedictines. The Benedictine Order consists of 21 distinct congregations throughout the world, united under the International Confederation of Benedictines centred in Rome. Each congregation has its own tradition and history, though are united in name, observance of *The Rule*, and other common features specific to Benedictine Monasticism (cf. Lynch 2004: 5 & 13). Buckfast Abbey in SW England has a slightly different version of the Prayer, to be found on their website: http//www.buckfast.org.uk.

[3] Patrick Barry in his Introduction to *St. Benedict's Rule*, comments on the nature of St. Benedict's writing, that he speaks not as a spiritual master, but as a fellow companion on the faith journey: "He achieves this through reflections of great depth on our relationships with our creator, our redeemer, on our use of the world we live in, on our interaction with each other, on our considered assessment of ourselves and our place in the universe, on freedom from vice and egomania, on our search for a peace and a fulfilment which is free from arrogance, greed, anger and all that disturbs the inner tranquillity of that love of God which in its fullness casts out all fear" (2003: 5). This brief yet insightful commentary on Benedict's intention and focus in *The Rule* will be reflected in this discussion as it examines how the search for God is not performed in isolation, but is necessarily and intimately linked to every aspect of human living; thus the anthropological and personalist perspective of the discussions that follow.

[4] For Kant practical reason is that faculty of the intellect that is the source of moral conduct. Practical reason reflects on the possibilities provided the person by freedom of the will. This is an operation of the intellect distinct from theoretical reason that constructs intellectual knowledge (cf. Angeles 1981:238-9). Thus faith is related not to theoretical reason, but practical reason, and therefore is not sustainable in terms of pure reason and the first operation of the intellect, but arises as a consequence of this in relation to the will.

[5] These, as they appear to be at the forefront of a constructive and positive response to this fragmentation in theological thinking. Lakeland analyses this proliferation of streams of theological thought in the context of the impact of postmodernity on the Christian identity in the contemporary age (cf. Grenz and Franke 2001. J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, South African professor at Princeton theology school, in a collection of essays examines the complex issues facing philosophical theology in a fragmented postmodern age (1997). Huyssteen's qualifications as a serious and committed commentator and constructor of methodologies in philosophical theology demand a serious attentiveness. Avery Dulles struggles valiantly to reconcile the rich tradition of the Christian theological heritage with the diverse and complex insights and methodologies prevalent in a postcritical theology that is positive and constructive without lapsing into an untenable precritical orthodoxy (1995).

[6] The rich insight compacted into this passage asks for it to be quoted in full: "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of Glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people, and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers" (vv. 17-19). The affinity of this passage to the PSB leads one to wonder whether it may have been a guiding influence on the author of the Prayer.

8 This 'eidetic' intuition of Husserl's phenomenology is the quest for the universal essence in order to achieve certainty and precision that are unattainable in the realm of empirical data. This is achieved through method distinctive to phenomenology, *epoche* – the suspension of judgement. This phenomenological reduction, whereby an object which is present to consciousness is reduced to the pure phenomenon by 'putting in brackets' or excluding from further interest those elements which do not belong to the universal essence (cf. Macquarrie 2001: 219). Through a continual process of bracketing, one arrives at pure phenomena 'the thing in itself', which may then be described in its essence as free from factors that distort true perception.

9 This discussion prefers the designation paradigm to that of model for each of the three identifiable approaches discerned in the *PSB*, as it finds the term model too constrictive for the purposes of this work. The term model in Barbour's understanding of it is limited to a metaphorical image necessary for describing what escapes precise conceptualisation and subsequent articulation (cf. 1998: 119). Avery Dulles describes a model as "a schematic construction that enables one to make statements potentially applicable to an indefinite number of individuals . . . the theologian's models can be helpful for speaking about classes of theologians, even though every individual will have distinguishing characteristics" (1992: 47). Though of value, and perhaps more latitudinal than Barbour's designation and application, Dulles' Models seem to limit the use of a model to identify representative Personalities and key figures, rather than the broader paradigm which includes this and goes beyond to describe like patterns of thinking into paradigms that broadly define a particular approach, thus, avoiding a narrow categorisation and conscious of those elements within a particular school of thought or key figure representative of an approach which defy inclusion by virtue of their being secondary elements.

10 Pietersen identifies four basic types of knowledge orientation, each of which represents a different way of understanding and making sense of God and Creation. They are the *rationalist-transcendent* (e.g. Augustine); *rationalist-immanent* (e.g. Aquinas); *subjectivist-immanent* (e.g. Luther), and *subjectivist-transcendent* (e.g. Calvin). Together, these ways of understanding provides a basic set of different, and often also conflicting but complementary knowledge approaches or meta-paradigms in theology.

11 Wittgenstein's first and only publication in his lifetime **Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus** (1921) was in later years rejected by him. It is thus the turnabout in his philosophy which validates talk of an 'early' and a 'later' Wittgenstein. His second book published posthumously was **Philosophical Investigations** (1953) (cf. Magee 1997: 72-3).

12 Mediated does not imply the impossibility of experience being immediate. This distinction is crucial, as all experience is mediated to some degree or another. The type or degree of influence may differ, but the mere fact that experience is an interaction of the body-mind-spirit being with the world and the metaphysical world of ideas, values and indeed the spiritual, necessitates that their be a medium between these two interacting realities. Most experiences are correctly described as immediate, but this does not mean that they are unmediated.

13 The Boff brothers outline in the abovementioned work the temptations facing liberation theology i.e. the tendencies towards a disregard for mystical roots, for ecumenical dialogue and certain extreme elements that overtly stress certain dimensions of Christian faith to the detriment of other equally valid dimensions; which practical theologians are aware of (cf. op cit pp. 64-65) and which are germane to a critical analysis of practical theology as a broad category.

[14] This hypothesis forms one of the foundational pillars of Husserl's Phenomenology where the conception that objectivity-for-subjectivity describes the intentional nature of human consciousness in understanding how an objective reality, in our discussion on Barth this objective reality is God and the primary mode of His manifestation is through revelation, comes to appearance in and through the human mind (cf. Moran 2000: 14).

[15] This is described as 'broad' because it would not necessarily reveal in the strict Kantian methodology what Rahner himself does with his combination of the (1) transcendental method with the (2) transcendent horizon of the human spirit, which is an *a priori* Christian truth, and the (3) transcendental character of God's grace i.e. present in every human experience and available to all, whether recognised as such or not. "In Rahner's philosophical theology, the Kantian cognitional a priori is transformed into a metaphysical a priori" (Di Noia 1997: 123).

[16] The acceptance of Rahner's proposition that grace is indirectly experienced is what brings about this innovative application of the transcendental method and what is described above. If one were to reject the unthematic and indirect character of grace present in human experience, the transcendental method applied as a means to enquire about the transcendental horizon of the human spirit, the result would merely be an insight into human nature. Rahner's theology of the supernatural existential opens up new and revealing insights in that if the transcendental method has been applied in conjunction with it, the result is the groundbreaking theology that itself transcended the arid and narrow confines of Catholic theology in the first half of the 20th century.

[17] This distinction between the immanent and transitive modes has been mentioned in passing reference without any explanation offered. This distinction will become clear when it is discussed at length in Chap. 9.

[18] Heidegger's personal contribution and development of phenomenology arises from his dissatisfaction with the disturbingly Cartesian dualist assumptions in Husserl's approach, where the split between objectivity and subjectivity is a given that needs reconciliation through the eidetic method. For Heidegger, the human person is the locus of the manifestation of Being, where the union between object and subject is understood in a more sophisticated and appealing manner. Heidegger's *Dasein* ('there-being'), is the term he uses to describe how objective being is instantiated in personal being in the life of each person (cf. Moran 2000: 15).

[19] This innate openness and orientation of the human being to the transcendental is a central feature of Rahner's theology and provides the basis for much of his valuable insights into the relationship between God and Humanity in a broad understanding of religious faith. He points out that the transcendental point of departure of his theology, far from being mired in a static Thomism, is predicated on the acknowledgement of an historic development: humanity's entering upon a new phase of consciousness of self. Like his fellow "transcendental neo-Thomists", from Pierre Rousselot onwards, Rahner reread and reinterpreted Aquinas in the light of this modern consciousness for his transcendental method (cf. Beeck 1993: 208-9).

[20] A pithy way of explaining this is to say that 'God is nowhere, in order that he may be 'now here'. I have attempted to source the origin of this quote, but have been unsuccessful. I include it as a note for this reason.

[21] Blondel recognises that the modern turn to the subject (*die Wende zum Subjekt*) is a cultural given in the theological milieu that emerged out of the Enlightenment with its theme of 'human authenticity' (cf. Beeck 1993: 208).

[22] This is understood as constant elements existing together within a phenomenon that may itself be subject to historical processes.

[23] *Preambles of Faith* – those presuppositions of Christian faith that can be made explicit to show how the act of faith is also a reasonable human act.

[24] A modified version of Pelagianism (a rejection of the necessity of grace for salvation), which was a reaction to the implicit elements of an extreme version of predestination advanced by St. Augustine in his reaction to Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism while accepting that grace is indispensable for salvation claims that human beings can make their first step toward God without the help of divine grace.

[25] While this term has traditionally been applied specifically to describe the acts of the God-man Jesus Christ, it is used here in the broader sense to describe the elevated dignity of the human person and his/her relationship with God brought about by the full mystery of the Christ event.

[26] This axiom in its fuller form is: *Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (Let the law of prayer establish the law of belief). Prayer, especially liturgical prayer, plays an essential role in the interpretation of Christian faith (cf. O'Collins and Farrugia 1991: 123).

[27] The distinction referred to here is between the transitive and immanent modes of action. Freedom to act is not defined in terms only of physical externally directed intentionality, but also freedom to choose internal dispositions and attitudes; freedom to feel and respond internally not impeded by external factors.

[28] Synthesis, the operation through which the unity of the multiple is noted, is neither a direct perception nor a reasoning derived from induction or deduction. The structure of the whole is grasped through an **intuition** that is indeed an objective cognition, which comes to maturity with great effort. One arrives at an awareness of the unity within a structure through a process of gathering, observing and comparing the individual parts; intuitively recognised at the end of a process of research. Thus, we can say that synthesis is the intuitive discovery of structural unity in the multiple (cf. Alszeghy & Flick 1983: 89). That synthesis is affirmed, as a supra-rational process is valuable for our discussion as it implies 'the wisdom to perceive' that is the overarching concept of the *PSB*.

[29] The 'New Theology' emerged as a response to the Church's suppression of Modernism and its staunch advocacy of the more conservative elements of neo-Scholasticism. The manualistic theology that prevailed at the beginning of the 20th Century came under challenge by theologians seeking a greater openness to the issues raised by modern living, advances in all fields of human knowledge and the existential questions raised by two catastrophic world wars that caused massive upheaval in structures of thought and monolithic theological systems that inadequately responded to the rapid changes and advances of the Century. The new theologians advocated and practised a return to the sources (*ressourcement*), a respect for historico-critical exegesis, a renewal of liturgy, ecclesiology, and a receptivity to modern thinking and a more positive ecumenism. Theologians brought under censure during the middle years of the century were to serve as experts (*Periti*) at the Council and saw their theologies of Liturgy, Revelation, and Ecclesiology vindicated by the great documents of the Council. Indeed some were created cardinals in the latter years of the century such as Jean Danielou, Henri de Lubac, and Yves Congar.

[30] This expression denotes the conventional or inherited ideas of one's social group, family, etc., as distinct from a living and personally appropriated faith. This is historically inherited faith is not faith in the true sense as understood by our discussion (cf. Richardson 1969: 129). A point of interest here

is that the decline of religious faith as reported by the media and evidenced by the empty pews of the mainline churches is really the gradual disappearance of *fides historica*, the inherited religious-ideological baggage of the nominally Christian masses, and not necessarily, faith understood as an undeniably intrinsic dimension of the human.

[31] This is identified by the ***Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*** as an interdisciplinary point of view, philosophy, or movement, achieving prominence in the 1960's. Its central tenet is that all societies and cultures possess a common and invariant structure. The thrust of Structuralism is away from origins and towards specification of the unchanging structure of relations that all people hold unconsciously and pre-reflectively (cf. Reese 1996: 736).

[32] Such as that of Jacques Lacan, founder of the Freudian school of Paris, who insisted on the 'de-centring' of the human person and spoke of the person as a 'fading subject' who should no longer be regarded as central but as one element in the analysis among others (cf. ibid p. 737).

[33] These are the *Uniate* churches who throughout the course of history accepted the bishop of Rome as holding primacy of office and authority. They broke with the Eastern Orthodox churches (which separated from Rome in 1054) and form a rich diversity within Catholicism. Parallel to the Assyrian Church of the East there are the Chaldean (East Syrian) and the Malabar Catholic churches. Parallel to the Oriental Orthodox churches there are the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian and Malankara Catholic churches. Parallel to the Eastern Orthodox churches there are the Melkite, Ukranian, Ruthenian, Romanian, Greek, Bulgarian, Slovak and Hungarian Catholic churches. There are the Byzantine Catholics in Yugoslavia, the Maronite Catholics in Lebanon and the Italo-Albanian Catholics (cf. O'Collins and Farrugia 1991: 61).

[34] Respectively, *Lumen Gentium*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and *Nostra Aetate.*

[35] Many Christian churches and some Christian ecclesial communions other than Roman Catholic profess this Nicene-Constantinople creed and thus see themselves as possessing these notes too.

[36] *Assent of Faith* - The confession of God's self-revelation in the full mystery of Christ that involves a personal commitment to Christ as Lord and the hope of eternal life. This free and reasonable act, made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, enables one to be baptised and enter the Church.
Notional Assent - A merely abstract assent to some truth without fully grasping or being grasped by the reality of that truth.
Real Assent - A full assent to truth, especially concrete rather than abstract truths. John Henry Newman popularised the distinction between real and merely notional assent.

[37] The *sensus fidei* refers to the instinctive <u>sensitivity</u> and <u>discrimination</u> which all the members of the Church possess in matters of faith.

[38] It will have been noted that at times Revelation is capitalised and at others not. The former is used when referring to revelation as a **term** designating the complete sense of it as found in the unity of Scripture and tradition. The latter is used for the **word** that designates at times the act of revealing or the content of Scripture, or simply Scripture considered as the bible.

[39] This term describes the manner in which the scriptures can have meanings that go beyond the literal sense (the meaning explicitly intended by the original human author). The 'fuller sense', intended by the principal author (God), has emerged in the light of later events in the divinely guided history of salvation (Cf. O'Collins & Farrugia 1991: 219-20).

[40] "The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office . . . The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole people, when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' (cf. St. Augustine in *PL* 44, 980) they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God. . . The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgement, and applies it more fully in daily life."

[41] The Curia is the 'government' or 'administration' of the Church. It consists of various consistories and departments within the Vatican that govern and oversee the life of the Church throughout the world.

[42] The hierarchy of truths in the Christian deposit of faith determine the degree of adherence required by believers. The hierarchy of truths is a principle for interpreting (not selecting!) truths of faith by their nearness to the central mystery of faith, the revelation of the Trinity that Christ brought and through which we are saved. While all truths should be believed, classifying and interpreting these truths according to their relative importance can eliminate false emphases and facilitate ecumenical dialogue (cf. O'Collins & Farrugia 1991: 92).

[43] "'The obedience of faith' (Rm. 16:26) must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making 'the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals,' (*DS* 3008) and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him. Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth' (*DS* 3010). The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood."

[44] The intellectual basis for faith. The critical enquiry into the reasonableness of the act of faith as being consonant with the demands of philosophical reasoning.

[45] *Preambles of Faith* – those presuppositions of Christian faith that can be made explicit to show how the act of faith is also a reasonable human act.

[46] Similar to humanism broadly understood as a movement that values the intellect, freedom and dignity of human persons and their capacity to learn and improve their whole socio-cultural situation. A contemporary humanism is emerging that responsibly seeks to build a better world based on truth and justice (cf. O'Collins & Farrugia 1991; 97). Christian Humanism values all aspects of the human person from the basis of faith and the inalienable dignity of each person as created in the image of God, and destined by God for the fulfilment of all his/her innate potentialities.

[47] Thomas Merton, in **Contemplation in a World of Action** (1973) speaks of how this is an essential element not only in the Monastic context but for all Christians: "When I speak of the contemplative life I do not mean the institutional cloistered life . . . I am talking about a special dimension of inner discipline and experience, a certain integrity and fullness of personal development, which are not compatible with a purely external, alienated, busy-busy existence. This does not mean that they are incompatible with action, with creative work, with dedicated love. On the contrary, these all go together. A certain depth of disciplined experience is a necessary ground for fruitful action. Without a more profound human understanding derived from exploration of the inner ground of human existence, love will tend to be superficial and deceptive. Traditionally, the ideas of prayer, meditation,

and contemplation have been associated with this deepening of one's personal life and this expansion of the capacity to understand and serve others" (p. 172).

[48] This section of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* entitled ***Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples*** represents a break from the rigid uniformity that was imposed upon liturgical celebration throughout the world. Since the Council of Trent (1545-63) and its subsequent liturgical reforms (meaning the canonisation of the immutable rites of liturgical celebration), the Tridentine mass was the norm for the Catholic Church throughout the world, irrespective of cultural diversities such as vernacular, specific expressions of worshipping God and liturgical vestments.

[49] It is necessary at this stage of the Inculturation discussion to assert this point. Extreme critics of Inculturation base their objections on the methods and the practical implementation issues around it. These are recognised as issues that need to be resolved on a practical level in an ongoing process of refinement, but do not present a substantive position against the fact and necessity of Inculturation. Those who seek to promote and implement Inculturation often feel an unwarranted need to justify Inculturation, where in fact it should be presented as an unquestionable given; one that perhaps needs explanation of its foundations in a manner catechetical rather than polemical.