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THE EMERGENCE OF A WORLD CHURCH: KARL RAHNER'S BASIC THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael's College and the Department of Theology of the Toronto School of Theology. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

Toronto 1998

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In Memoriam

To Mom whose love in time and in eternity continues to inspire
and sustain me
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To my mentor, Margaret O'Gara for agreeing to direct my dissertation, for her generous guidance, skill, encouragement along each step of the way; to my community, the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, in particular Sister Adele, who tutored me in French and Latin, for her support and encouragement and that of all the Sisters who prayed for me; to my German tutor, Janice Keil; to the Basilian Fathers for their on-going support, direction, friendship and encouragement; to the Jesuit Fathers of Regis College and Loyola House, Guelph; to the staff and students at St. Michael's College; to Richard Lennan for permission to avail myself of his research on the ecclesiology of Karl Rahner; to Karl Neufeld of Innsbruck for his interest in the project; to Harvey Egan for his assistance in clarifying aspects of Rahner's theology; to my dear friend, Father Spencer, (R.I.P.), who encouraged me to undertake doctoral studies, I offer my deepest thanks. Lastly, I wish to thank my family, in particular my brother, Pat who underwent life-saving transplant surgery in the course of this work and to my mother, who died while this dissertation was in process, each of whom encouraged the completion of this dissertation at great personal sacrifice.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA  Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)
AG  Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)
CD  Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church (Christus Dominus)
DH  Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae)
DV  Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)
GE  Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)
GS  Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)
IM  Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication (Inter Mirifica)
LG  Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)
NA  Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)
OE  Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches (Orientalium Ecclesiarum)
OT  Decree on Priestly Formation (Optatam Totius)
PC  Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis)
PO  Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis)
SC  Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)
UR  Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)
Rahner Abbreviations

DT  Dictionary of Theology
LTK  Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche
SM  Sacramentum Mundi
SZT  Schriften zur Theologie
TD  Theological Dictionary
TI  Theological Investigations

Other Abbreviations

ITQ  Irish Theological Quarterly
JES  Journal of Ecumenical Studies
LS  Louvain Studies
PCTSA  Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America
StdZ  Stimmen der Zeit
TD  Theology Digest
TT  Theology Today
TS  Theological Studies
INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose, Contribution and Method of the Dissertation

1. Purpose, Contribution and Method of the Dissertation

Karl Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council is expressed in his conviction that this Council marked the first tentative approach by the Roman Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church, a development that was to open a new epoch in the history of Catholicism.\(^1\) It was Rahner's contention that the Church's discovery of itself as a World Church is reflected in the major themes of the conciliar documents.\(^2\) Rahner's theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council deepened with the passage of time despite the fact that his judgement on the Council's impact caused him to characterize this post-conciliar time as a "wintry season"\(^3\) in which the full theological, ecclesiological and pastoral significance of Vatican II had yet to be realized in the Church.

The aim of this dissertation is twofold: first, to enunciate, trace and develop Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church.

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Church; second, to analyze further this understanding through six major themes Rahner identified in the conciliar documents that point to the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. This dissertation will argue in a clear, thematic and chronological manner that Rahner's theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council is verified by in the six major themes he found in the conciliar documents. Rahner's own reflection on these themes deepened with the passage of time as is evidenced by his writings, particularly after Vatican II. In his essay, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," Rahner identified six key elements in the conciliar documents that indicate a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church. The themes are: A Council of the World Church; The Optimism of Universal Salvation; The Local Church; The Ecumenical Change of Mind; The Church's Relationship to the World; The Theology of the Council.

It is as important to state clearly what this dissertation is not, as it is to give a clear definition of its aim and purpose. The purpose of this dissertation is not to trace the development of Rahner's ecclesiology. Neither is this dissertation an attempt to give an in-depth study of the Vatican II documents although there will be more of an attempt to draw out in greater detail exactly what was said there than there would be, for instance, in a dissertation which studied the development of Rahner's ecclesiology. Rahner's ecclesiology and his basic theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council are not the same thing. One can recognize many Rahnerian themes present in the documents of Vatican II, but not every theme developed or discussed by the Council was directly

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4 These themes are discussed in the essay "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," and are subtitled as such, in the English Theological Investigations as well as in the German Schriften vol.14, (303-318), with the exception of "The Abolition of Latin" which is subsumed under the title of "A Council of the World Church." Rather than call the second theme "The Abolition of Latin," I have chosen to call it, "The Local Church" since Rahner discusses the variety of regional liturgies and the formation of autonomous regional churches under that topic. See also James Joseph Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology For a World Church," Diss. The Catholic University of America, 1987, 13.

influenced by his theology. Nor is it within the scope of this dissertation to present and develop Rahner's thought regarding every theme set forth in the conciliar documents. If Rahner's basic theological interpretation of Vatican II is correct, then, it seems to me, this understanding ought to be reflected in the major themes of the Council, as these are set forth in the documents themselves and in Rahner's writings, particularly after Vatican II. It is Rahner's understanding of these major themes and their relationship to his concept of the World Church that is the concern of this dissertation.

Two images Rahner used in reference to the Council may be useful in considering the development of Rahner's basic theological understanding of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church. The first image is that of the refining of tons of uranium in order to obtain an ounce of radium. The tons of uranium refer to the decrees of the Council and the efforts of the Church. The radium is the increase in faith, hope and love in people's hearts. The second image is that of the Church "cleaning its own glasses." This refers to the decrees of the Council in which the Church reflects on itself in order to "see other things in a clearer, sharper, more colourful way." The first image, that of refining tons of uranium to obtain an ounce of radium, refers to the efforts of the Church needed in order that faith, hope, and love may increase in human hearts. The second image, that of the Church "cleaning its own glasses," refers to the decrees of the Council in which the Church reflects on itself so that it may "see other things in a clearer, sharper, more colourful way."

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9Rahner, "A 'Wintry' Church and the Opportunities for Christianity," Faith in a Wintry Season, 197.
the radium of faith, hope, and love, becomes useful when considering the purpose of conciliar endeavour in the light of the depth of spirituality needed to live in these "wintry" times. The second image, that of the Church "cleaning its own glasses," is an apt metaphor when considering Rahner's reflection on the Church's self-understanding and mission to the world as presented in the documents of Vatican II.

The question that gives rise to this dissertation is this: What is Rahner's basic theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council, and how is this understanding borne out in the major themes of the conciliar documents, and in Rahner's own writings on these themes, particularly after Vatican II? Chronology became increasingly important as I organized my material in answer to this two-part question.

2. Contribution of the Dissertation

Why write a dissertation on this topic at this time? There are those today who would question whether or not anything coming out of this Council was inspired by the Holy Spirit10; others feel that the direction the Church has taken since its close has abrogated the Council's intention by going beyond its teaching. Still others consider the pontificate of John Paul II to be a step backwards from the expansion of thought and forward-looking direction of Vatican II. Some are calling for another Council to repair the damage done by Vatican II and its misinterpreters and to put an end to the confusion and turmoil that has followed in its wake. Still others feel that Vatican II is already outdated and that what is needed is a new Council to address the questions and problems of a post-modern age. In this time of preparation for the year of Jubilee when Roman Catholic Christians are asked to reflect on the Church it seems appropriate that they take another

10I am thinking of various movements in the Church such as the Lefebvre Controversy about which Rahner has much to say, as well as other responses to Vatican II. See Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua, Joseph A. Komonchak, ed. The Reception of Vatican II, tr.J. O'Connell, Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1987. See also, Joseph Ratzinger, The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview On the State of the Church, translated by Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985). As critique, it will be interesting to compare the evaluation of Vatican II by Joseph Ratzinger with that of Karl Rahner, his earlier collaborator in the work of the Council.
look at Vatican II through the eyes of Karl Rahner who could see so much promise in the vision of a World Church.

It is important to note that no study has looked specifically and intentionally at the development of Rahner's basic theological understanding of Vatican II as a topic worth pursuing in its own right, and not just from its relationship to some other aspect of Rahner's theology or ecclesiology. This will be clear from a look at the state of the research.

Of all dissertations and books directly related to my topic, Richard Lennan's contribution comes closest to the aim and goal of my dissertation. In his dissertation, "The Dynamics of Change: A Study of Rahner's Ecclesiology," Lennan explores Rahner's ecclesiology from the perspective of change in the Church and in the world, an analysis which aims to show the development in Rahner's ecclesiology over a fifty year period. While my dissertation will certainly build on the Lennan contribution, it will do so by means of a different scope, aim, method, and general perspective. Since my dissertation focuses almost exclusively on the years during the Council and onwards, its focus is much narrower thereby allowing me to go into greater depth both on the Rahner side and on the side of the documents themselves. A second point of difference is that Lennan is discussing the development in Rahner's ecclesiology whereas I am developing Rahner's basic theological understanding of Vatican II; as mentioned earlier, this is not the same thing. In addition, Lennan articulates his thesis in terms of the dynamics of change, change in the world, as well as that change necessitated in the Church. The focus of one aspect of my dissertation is not change in terms of a response to an external movement, but rather conversion, that constant inner renewal which results in "seeing other things in a sharper, clearer, more colourful way."

A second thesis which was a major source of assistance in this dissertation was that of James Joseph Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's

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Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church. The Woolever dissertation examines the critical issues, both internal and external, confronting the post-Vatican II Church, and evaluates the suitability of Rahner's ecclesiology for a World Church by analyzing four topical areas: (1) the historical and theological roots of Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology; (2) the major stages in the development of Rahner's ecclesiology; (3) the three vital issues facing the post-conciliar Church: structural modernization, ecumenism and sociopolitical responsibilities; (4) the appropriateness of Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology as a strategic theology for a World Church. Many of the themes having to do with Vatican II are touched upon, and developed with a view to Rahner's ecclesiology. As in the Lennan dissertation, Rahner's assessment of Vatican II, and his reflection on the post-conciliar Church are secondary to an analysis of the development of Rahner's ecclesiology. In neither dissertation is it the express purpose of the writer to give Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as the emergence of a World Church and to develop his thesis. Woolever concludes that the ecumenical shortcomings of Rahner's ecclesiology prevent it from being regarded as the primary paradigm for a World Church. With regard to inter-religious dialogue, he is of the opinion that too many theologians, including Rahner, attempt to assimilate the religious traditions of the East under the Christian umbrella. Once again, Rahner's ecclesiology is the focus, not Rahner's theological interpretation of Vatican II.

Other books and theses are very helpful when it comes to specific areas of my dissertation.

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The dissertation proceeds as follows: in Chapter I, I trace the development of Rahner's basic interpretation of Vatican II from his first description of the Council as a "new beginning" (1965) to his later understanding of it as the emergence of a World Church; second, I give a clear statement and description of Rahner's thesis regarding Vatican II and the World Church as he articulated it by the late 1970's as the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church's discovery and actualization of itself as a World Church and the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Roman Catholicism; third, I provide an overview of the entire dissertation through the lens of the first theme: A Council of the World Church. The succeeding chapters flow out of Chapter I by demonstrating how Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council is reflected in the other five major themes of the Council and how this is also illustrated in Rahner's own writings, particularly after Vatican II.

The methodology of the dissertation is chronological, thematic, and developmental. The method of the dissertation is a chronological one in regard to the development of

Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as the emergence of a World Church, and in the development of this interpretation through Rahner's writings on each of the major conciliar themes. Consequently, careful attention is paid throughout the dissertation to the original date, place, and context of Rahner's remarks. It is seen that there is a progression in Rahner's thinking over time as a result of his ongoing theological reflection on Vatican II and its meaning in the Church's life.

Rahner insisted that the basic nature of Vatican II must be understood in the light of its *causa finalis*, that is, of the future of the Church to which the Council committed itself. The progression is always one of moving from the past, to the present, towards the future. For this reason, I reserve the theme, "The Theology of the Council" to the final chapter in which the future of the World Church is discussed. This is a forward-looking direction that gets its impulse and meaning from the view of the future.

The method of the dissertation is also a thematic one in that six major themes from the conciliar documents are stated and developed in terms of Rahner's thesis of a World Church. The themes are: A Council of the World Church; The Local Church; The Church's Responsibility for the World; The Ecumenical Change of Mind; The Optimism of Universal Salvation, and The Theology of the Council. Each one of these themes was suggested by Rahner himself as he reflected on the abiding significance of Vatican II as the first Council of a World Church.

The method of the dissertation is developmental in that: (a) there is both a thematic and a chronological development with respect to Rahner's thought regarding each of the six themes; and (b) a corresponding theological development of his thesis regarding Vatican II and the World Church.

One could also think in terms of the two Rahnerian images mentioned earlier. The efforts of the Council and the Church can be likened to the tons of uranium needed to obtain the pure ounce of radium, that is, the faith, hope, and love which form the main

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14Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," Ti 20, p.87.
ingredients of the ecclesial spirituality needed for the Church of the future (Chapter VI). The effort to see its mission in the world more clearly can be compared to the Church "cleaning its own glasses" (Chapters II-V).

(a) **Overview of the Dissertation**

The purpose of Chapter I, "A Council of the World Church," is to provide an overview of the entire dissertation by enunciating and developing Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and to actualize itself as a World Church, and so open a new epoch in the history of Catholicism. Four sections comprise this chapter: the development in Rahner's basic theological understanding of Vatican II as it evolved from his insight into the Council as a "new beginning" to his later reflection on it as an event of a World Church: the six key elements Rahner identified in the conciliar documents that point in the direction of a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church as outlined in his essay, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II:" Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as found in his essay, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council:" and an initial assessment and critique of Rahner's thesis regarding the World Church.

The purpose of Chapter II, "The Optimism of Universal Salvation," is to develop Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church through discussion of the theme, "The Optimism of Universal Salvation." This chapter unfolds in four sections: the development in the Church's teaching regarding the optimism of universal salvation; the teaching of Vatican II with regard to the optimism of universal salvation; the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation; and the missionary task of the Church.

The purpose of Chapter III, "The Local Church," is to develop further Rahner's thesis that Vatican II marked the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church, and so to open a new epoch in the history of Catholicism, through discussion of the theme, "The Local Church." This chapter
unfolds in four sections: Rahner's understanding of the teaching of the Council in the presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the local Church and in the community gathered together in worship; the development of a variety of regional liturgies; the formation of truly autonomous regional churches; the role of deacons, priests, religious and laity all seen in the light of the Council's teaching and in Rahner's growing understanding of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church.

The purpose of Chapter IV, "The Ecumenical Change of Mind," is to develop further Rahner's thesis that Vatican II marked the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church, and so open a new epoch in the history of Catholicism, through discussion of the theme, "The Ecumenical Change of Mind." This chapter unfolds in four sections: the teaching of Vatican II with respect to non-Catholics Christians and their churches; Rahner's understanding of the development of dogma that took place at Vatican II with regard to the ecumenical change of mind; the theological possibility of full visible unity of the Church; and the concrete possibility of a full institutional unity of the churches.

The purpose of Chapter V, "The Church's Relationship to The World," is to develop further Rahner's thesis that the Second Vatican Council marked the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church, and so open a new epoch in the history of Catholicism, through discussion of the theme, "The Church's Relationship to the World." The chapter unfolds in four sections: the teaching of Vatican II with respect to the Church's relationship to the world; openness and dialogue with the world; the Church's responsibility for the world and for the future history of humankind; the relationship of the Church toward a society that is pluralistic in nature all from the perspective of Vatican II and Rahner's growing appreciation of the Council as the emergence of a World Church.

The purpose Chapter VI, "The Theology of the Council," is to develop further Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as marking the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church, and so inaugurate a new epoch in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, through discussion of the theme, "The Theology of the Council." Rahner's reflection as
to how the Council’s theological significance is being grasped concretely in the life of the Church led him to describe this post-conciliar time as a "wintry season," which calls for a "wintry spirituality" on the part of Catholic Christians. This chapter unfolds in four sections: The Council’s Theology; A "World" Theology for a World Church; The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future;\textsuperscript{16} The Spirituality of the Church of the Future.

This dissertation which aims at demonstrating Rahner’s basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council represents a small slice of Rahnerian research that will enable me to do two things: first, make a significant original contribution to the scholarship; second, provide insight, at a critical time in the history of the Church, into the meaning and promise of Vatican II seen through the eyes of Karl Rahner—theologian, mystic, man of the Church.

B. Rahner’s Contribution as Theologian at Vatican II

This short section on Rahner’s actual contribution to the Second Vatican Council serves as background information for the dissertation.\textsuperscript{17} I examine the difficulties Rahner experienced before the Council that account for the reluctance with which he was welcomed into the inner circles where the actual discussions took place. This section also provides a glimpse into the close relationship of theologians and bishops, a relationship Rahner believed contributed greatly to the Council’s success and which he wished to see

\textsuperscript{16}Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," \textit{TI} 20, pp. 103-14.

continued. It is seen that Rahner's generous involvement in the Second Vatican Council was prompted by his love for the Church and desire to spend himself in its service.

1. Rahner's Difficulties before the Council

Rahner's unpopularity with certain high Church officials and with the Roman theologians was fuelled long before Vatican II by his controversial writings on the Church, the Mass, and on Mary. Vorgrimler explains that almost immediately after World War II, Rahner started to express himself in terms highly critical of the Church and Church officials. The background for this was the deafening silence and compromising attitude of the official Church to the Nazi regime. Rahner concluded that the Church was not only a "Church of Sinners" but also a "Sinful Church." As a result, certain bishops approached Rahner's superiors to express their displeasure so that Rahner could no longer speak openly on certain themes.

Similarly, Rahner's long article entitled "Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer" (1949) published as a pamphlet in 1951, which provided the theological basis for practice

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19 Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian's Contribution," 37f. Vorgrimler lists the following works: Rahner's essay on the Church of Sinners (1947) written in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Church's silence; his long article entitled "Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer" (1949) (The Many Masses and the One Sacrifice) having to do with the validity of concelebration; his writing on Mary's Assumption,(1950) and his article, "Extinguish not the Spirit." (1962)


21 Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 87. Vorgrimler observes that after the war Christians were seized by a serious concern for renewal, by a desire for "a new beginning." This renewal included "a reworking of the past, the will to face guilt, even the Church's share of guilt in the rise of barbarity."

of concelebration, elicited almost a public censure from Pius XII. Although the article destroyed the traditional arguments which held for a multiplication of the fruits of the Mass and thus for the largest possible number of masses, authorities of the Holy Office forbade Rahner to speak in future on the theme of concelebration.

Similarly, when Rahner attempted to expound the dogma of the Assumption in terms of the total consummation of the whole human person in death,23 and when he defined virginity as a theological concept rather than a biological fact,24 he met with great resistance from the Roman authorities and a renewed determination to exclude him from the preparations for the Council.25 Cardinal Döpfner, president of the German Bishops’ Conference, interceded for Rahner with John XXIII. In spite of increased hostility, this intervention proved successful, and on March 22, 1961, Rahner was named a consultor for the preparatory commission on the administration of the sacraments in the capacity as expert on questions touching the diaconate.

Without warning, however, on June 7, 1962 Rahner’s Jesuit superiors informed him that from now on everything he wrote had to be submitted to a preliminary censorship in Rome. Rahner himself remarked that this censorship was imposed to keep him quiet during the Council, and so prevent him from taking an effective part in its proceedings.26 A petition bearing Chancellor Adenauer’s own signature was started on Rahner’s behalf by the members and friends of the Society of St. Paul, a group devoted to

23Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian’s Contribution." 38. This would include, of course, a bodily consummation. Rahner’s large manuscript on “Problems of Contemporary Mariology (1951) was denied the imprimatur on account of his theories on the development of dogma, the theology of death and especially on the idea of “resurrection in death.” The Assumption, therefore, would have positive implications not only for Mary but for all those who have died and who await total consummation.

24Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 90f. Rahner’s article on virginitas in partu was published in 1960. In this deeper sense married people, too, can be virginal.


26Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 92. Neither Rahner nor the Jesuit General were given reasons for the preliminary censorship.
dialogue between Christianity and Marxism, and handed over to the Pope through
diplomatic channels. On 28 May 1963 the Jesuit General told Rahner that the Holy
Office had retreated completely over the matter of the preliminary censorship.

2. Rahner’s Gradual Acceptance at Vatican II and his Growing Influence

When John XXIII officially set up the preparatory organs of the Council—a central
commission, ten commissions and three secretariats—the restoration of the permanent
diaconate was high on the agenda. Rahner had great expectations for a restored diaconate,
looking to it for a new, effective mode of the presence of the Church in the world. Since
the commission needed a dogmatic theologian, Rahner was allowed to join in the
preparations for the Council over this limited question. Rahner and Vorgrimler
published a book on the diaconate in the summer of 1962 under the title Diaconia in
Christo which served as a foundation for the work of the theological commission. It
was also in this preparatory phase that Rahner became private advisor to Cardinal Franz
König, Archbishop of Vienna, who asked him to look over the dossiers which the
individual commissions had worked out for the central commission and to give his
opinion. When there was a move to have the Council define new dogmas regarding the
existence of limbo or the correctness of Monogenism, Rahner made the effort to show that
the necessary foundations for a dogmatic definition were in fact lacking.

27Rahner’s own emotional reaction to the preliminary censorship is well described in his
correspondence to Vorgrimler during the time of the council. See Vorgrimler, "A Brief
Correspondence from the Time of the Council" in Understanding Karl Rahner, 148ff.

28Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 95.

29Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian’s Contribution," 39. It produced the text
now found in LG no. 29.

30Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian’s Contribution," 40f. It was hoped that
these texts, which simply repeated what had been said before, would meet with the approval
of the Council and that the Council itself would dissolve in a very short time.

31Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian’s Contribution," 41. In this way, Rahner
tried to emphasize different themes of the Council and to steer them in a new direction.
During the first phase of the Council Rahner was nominated a Council theologian (peritus), a privilege which entitled him to attend the solemn sessions of the Council. He was excluded, however, from taking part in the sessions of the Commissions where the really decisive work was done. Rahner's real work during this time took place outside the official meetings in which he addressed the German-speaking bishops and the South American bishops, and took part in theological meetings of the French and German bishops. The most important effect of the gatherings was that bishops and theologians learned to know each other, and it was to this collaboration that Rahner attributed much of the success of the Council. It was during this phase of the Council's work that Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger composed a new draft on Divine Revelation.

Cardinal Frings sanctioned this new draft in the name of the German bishops and had it delivered to the other episcopal conferences. The prepared text by the Roman theologians on the sources of revelation De deposito fidei pure custodiendo, was contested strongly enough by the Council Fathers to move John XXIII to withdraw the prepared text and empower a commission to formulate a new one. According to Vorgrimler, this was the "breakthrough" since it meant that the official Roman drafts were not sacrosanct. Rahner had his own "breakthrough" on December 5, 1962 when Cardinal König simply


34Rahner, "Spirituality Requires a Certain Educated Ignorance," in Karl Rahner in Dialogue, interview with Louis Ter Steeg for Radio KRO, Hilversum, Holland, October 5, 1981, 301. Rahner often complained that no real vehicle was set up to ensure this continued exchange after the Council. This was the main reason why Rahner resigned from his position on the International Commission of theologians set up after the Council. Rahner remarks that the Holy Office and the Congregation or the Doctrine of the Faith never asked the Commission for advice on a single topic.

35Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian's Contribution," 43. "The sixteen conciliar documents which we possess today were all of them freshly minted during the Council."
escorted Rahner into a session of the commission that was working on the new text on divine revelation. Although Cardinal Ottaviani, prefect of the Holy Office and chair of the commission on Divine Revelation, had the power to evict Rahner, he did not do so. Rahner gained great respect from theologians as a result of his deep knowledge of the tradition, his sovereign command of Latin, and his logical sharpness in argument. He was assigned, together with seven other theologians, to work out a new text on the Church. In September of 1963 Rahner took part in the conference of a theological group in Belgium where work was done on a text on the Church in the modern world. Rahner's personal reminiscences of this first phase of the Council testify to the intense intellectual activity and energy with which he undertook this involvement.

During the second phase of the Council's work Rahner continued to occupy himself with the themes of revelation, the Church and Mary, and also with a new draft document on the Church in the world. Rahner looked on this period as the second phase of the Council's work. During this time those theologians intent on renewal now saw it as their duty to keep the newly forged texts "open" in such a way as to exclude further dogmatic determinations, as for example, in regard to the relation between Holy Scripture and oral tradition. Vorgrimler comments that Rahner's sincere desire to serve the pastoral needs of the Church was obvious to everyone. In this way, Rahner moved

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36 Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian's Contribution," 43. See also, idem, Understanding Karl Rahner, 156f.


38 Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 98. This commission was convened by Cardinal Suenens.

39 See Vorgrimler, "A Brief Correspondence from the Time of the Council," in Understanding Karl Rahner, 147. See also, idem, "New Theological Impulses since the Second World War," in Karl Rahner in Dialogue, 262. "I did work very hard; it was frightfully tiring work...."

Towards a resolution of his conflict with the Holy Office. During this second phase there were important consultations and votes in which Rahner played a major part. Vorgrimler relates that Rahner made a major contribution towards relaxing the mood during this second phase of the Council's work and that by this time, Rahner was regarded as "the most powerful man" at the Council.

The continuation of the Council under Paul VI opened what Rahner saw as the third phase of its work. At this stage it was possible to introduce some portions of a renewed theology into the conciliar texts. It was Rahner's hope that the Council would do something of real practical usefulness for the life of the Church. Such usefulness would be reflected in a renewed appreciation of the diaconate, a workable and concrete episcopal collegiality, and a reform of Church managerial offices such as the Curia. Rahner contributed greatly to the writing of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church with its emphasis on the sacramentality of the Church and its eschatological character, the collegiality of the bishops, the meaning of the local Church community, the ecclesial nature of the sacraments, the salvation of non-Christians, the diaconate and the role of

41 Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian's Contribution," 44. In February 1963 Rahner spoke with Cardinal Ottaviani about the censorship. He explained to Rahner that the measure had been taken out of friendship for him, that its purpose was to protect him, and that he ought to regard the censorship as a privilege. Rahner replied that he would willingly renounce such a privilege.

42 Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 98. On 30 September the discussion of the new text on the Church took place, and on 29 October the vote on whether the document on Mary should exist as a separate dogmatic text or be incorporated into the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. On the 30th of October there was a test vote on five questions relating to the schema on the Church, including one on the theme of the diaconate.


Mary. Rahner’s involvement in the writing of the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* was also considerable, particularly in regard to the relation of Scripture and Tradition, and the limits of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. He gave the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* its fundamental impulse even if later his enthusiasm for the document waned and he came to regard its theological foundation to be weak in places. Rahner was active at the Council to the point of exhaustion as his letters and interviews testify. Moreover, with the publication of commentaries Rahner’s work on the conciliar texts continued well after Vatican II.

3. A Theologian in Dialogue with His World

Rahner’s influence in the Church and on theological development in the time since the Council has been enormous. This contribution has been recognized by many festschrifts in his honour. Rahner remained convinced that the Church must continue

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46 Vorgrimler, “Karl Rahner: The Theologian’s Contribution,” 44.

47 Vorgrimler, “Karl Rahner: The Theologian’s Contribution,” 44. See also, idem. "A Brief Correspondence from the Time of the Council," in Understanding Karl Rahner, 183f. Rahner’s personal comment on some of the conciliar texts, as relayed in his correspondence with Vorgrimler, is worth noting.

48 Karl Neufeld, “Theologen und Konzil,” 164. "To summarize: The Schema misjudges the depths of sin and follows largely the ideology of a better world." Zusammengefaßt heißt das: Das Schema verkenne die Tiefe der Sünde und folge weithin der Ideologie einer besseren Welt." (Translation mine)

49 See Vorgrimler, "A Brief Correspondence from the Time of the Council," Understanding Karl Rahner, 191. The move to Munich in 1964 to fill the Chair left by Romano Guardini meant an extra burden of work added to his heavy load of full-time involvement in conciliar affairs.

50 The German-speaking bishops knew that Rahner and Vorgrimler wanted to publish the texts of Vatican II as an appendix to the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* with commentaries by experts. Rahner wrote the general introduction to the Second Vatican Council for the joint commentary, and Vorgrimler composed the introduction to the conciliar texts.

51 For a list of these festschrifts see Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 103f.
along the path which the Second Vatican Council opened so as to foster and propagate the Christian faith in the future. He was in deadly earnest about pursuing authentic dialogue between the Church and the world. At the same time, he was also quite unable to compromise anything in Christianity that he understood to be right or felt to have a real claim on conscience. Rahner was equally convinced that truth and morality are also found outside the Church and Christianity and that both Christianity and the Church can learn from those outside. For this reason, Rahner undertook serious dialogue with Scientists, Marxists, non-believers and non-Catholic Christians. Along with Vorgrimler and Metz, Rahner was one of the first group of experts in the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers directed by Cardinal König. Together with Vorgrimler he edited the international journal Dialogue which was designed to encourage dialogue between Christians and atheists. In the area of ecumenical dialogue Rahner made a constant effort to learn from Protestant theology, and to formulate his own theology and the dogma of the Church in such a way as to present as few difficulties as possible to Protestant Christians.

In his "Translator's Forward" to the book I Remember: An Interview with Meinold Krauss, Harvey Egan describes how Rahner's impact on the Second Vatican Council led him to be called "the quiet mover of the Roman Catholic Church" and "the Father of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century." And yet all Rahner really


53Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 111.

54Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 111-116. Out of his dialogue with Marxism, Rahner developed his important distinction between future and future within the world.

55Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, 118f. Rahner believed that Catholic theology must always look within for the cause of opposition of other Christians.

wanted to be, even in his theological work, was "a human being, a Christian, and... a priest of the Church." Egan capsulizes the secret of Rahner's appeal in the latter's ability to synthesize a critical respect for the Christian tradition with an unusual sensitivity to the questions and problems of contemporary life. His pastoral work in Europe during and after the Second World War gave him his spontaneous inclination toward the pastoral care of individuals and for the diaspora situation of the Church today. Many share the judgement of Herbert Vorgrimler that the influence of Rahner is not likely to diminish and that "he will have a determining influence on Catholic theology even in the 21st century."

With this background to Rahner's contribution at Vatican II we are ready to explore the first theme emerging from the conciliar decrees that indicates a movement to a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church, that of "A Council of the World Church."

58 Egan, "Translator's Foreword," 5.
59 Egan, "Translator's Foreword," 5.
60 Haughey, "Introduction to the Issue," 336f. In the judgement of George Lindbeck, in terms of comprehensiveness and sheer intelligence, Rahner can be ranked along with Barth and Tillich, and in terms of balance, as the greatest of the three. (337) See also, Boniface Meyer, "An Apostle of Aggiornamento," The Priest 21 (1965): 852-855.
CHAPTER I

A COUNCIL OF THE WORLD CHURCH

Introduction

Karl Rahner’s basic theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council deepened with the passage of time, and climaxed in his formulation of his thesis on Vatican II and the World Church as expressed in the critical essays and lectures of the late 1970's. The abiding significance of the Second Vatican Council is glimpsed within the processes of the Council itself rather than solely in its actual documentation and pronouncements. As the first truly world-wide Council, Vatican II signalled for Rahner the Catholic Church’s movement from a Church of European cultural confinement to a World Church. For the first time, the Church in its official teachings began to actualize itself as a World Church, an event that was to comprise a decisive turning point or "caesura" in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.¹ Although the Roman Catholic Church has always professed to be Catholic, it sometimes manifested itself as a European export rather than a Church with universal cultural roots. Only now, Rahner maintained, are Catholic Christians beginning to glimpse the full significance of Vatican II in the life of the Church.

The purpose of this chapter is to enunciate and to develop Rahner’s basic theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council as the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church, and so open a new epoch in the history of Roman Catholicism through the theme of A Council of the World Church.

This chapter unfolds in four main sections. The first section traces the

¹Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, TII 20, p. 78.
chronological development in Rahner's theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council as it evolved from his insight into the Council as a "new beginning" to his later reflection on it as an emergence of the World Church. Since Rahner observed that this concept of World Church could only be fully understood in the light of the Church of the future, this theme is developed further in Chapter Six dealing with the Council's theology, and future tasks of the Church.

The second section presents Rahner's initial thesis regarding Vatican II and the World Church as found in his essay, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," as well as the six key elements he identified in the conciliar decrees mentioned there that point in the direction of a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church. All the succeeding chapters flow from this first chapter in that they take each of these elements in turn, and develop them in terms of Rahner's argument for Vatican II and the World Church.

The third section presents Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second

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3 In his essay "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," Rahner stated that his thesis regarding the World Church was not to be proved or developed there. He explained that the thesis was only articulated as an aid to answering the question as to whether or not Vatican II had any lasting theological significance. (See p. 91 of the essay). This dissertation attempts to do what Rahner hesitated to undertake in his short essay; that is, to present his thesis and then give Rahner's possible argument for it in terms of these elements.
Vatican Council as the first tentative approach of the Catholic Church to the discovery and official realization of itself as a World Church, a development that was to open a new epoch in Church history.⁴

The fourth section offers a general assessment and initial critique of Rahner's thesis regarding the World Church.

A. The Development in Rahner's Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II

There is a development in Rahner's theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council from his earlier descriptions of the Council as a "beginning and service" (1964) to his later reflection on it as the beginning of a "World Church" (1979). This development becomes evident by a chronological study of Rahner's books, essays, conversations and interviews in the decade following the Council.⁵ All the previous understandings of the Council as a "beginning" and "service" (1964), as "event" (1965), as a "seed" (1965), as the "Beginning of the Beginning" (1966), as a moment of "Kairos" given by God (1966) leading to a more open attitude towards the world (1968-1970) are climaxed and carried forward in the critical essays of 1979⁶ in which Rahner articulated the full theological basis for his understanding of the Council as the beginning of a World Church, and the opening of a new epoch in the history of Catholicism.

The development in Rahner's basic theological understanding of Vatican II as the event of a World Church is even more remarkable given the fact that the expectations

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⁴See Rahner's essay, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council."

⁵Rahner, "The Universality of the Church" under "Church" in Sacramentum Mundi, vol.1, ed. K.Rahner et al. (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968), 330-332. Here Rahner refers to the "universal" Church, or the "world-wide" Church (330), or the "world-Church" (332). Although Rahner referred to the concept of a "universal Church," of a "world-wide Church," and even of a "World-church" well before 1979, it is my contention that the full theological interpretation of the Council as the beginning of a World Church was not fully articulated until that time.

Rahner expressed on the eve of the Council are marked by reserve and even a certain degree of pessimism. Arguing that not even a council could compensate for the impoverished state of theology which he believed existed at the time, Rahner deemed it highly unlikely that the Council would produce any new insights into the doctrines of the faith that would really make non-believers sit up and take notice. As sober as his expectations were, however, there never existed any doubt in his mind that the Council had great tasks before it, tasks it could and would fulfil.

In an article written in 1964 entitled, "Courage and Sobriety At the Council," Rahner maintained that a council is, before all else, merely a beginning and service. First, the Council is such because it can only give directions and pronounce truths, whereas everything depends on how these directives are being carried out and whether they fall into believing hearts. Secondly, the Council is a mere beginning because it

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8Rahner, "On the Theology of the Council," 259, 261f. See also, idem, "Do Not Extinguish the Spirit!" 7, tr. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1977), 72-87. (G. 1962) In this essay, Rahner expressed the conviction that the Spirit had been partially extinguished in the Church due to the impoverished state of theology at the time.

9Rahner, "The Theology of the Council," 266. In his realism, however, he reminded Catholic Christians not to expect a "heaven on earth" after the Council because even then, the Church would still remain the "Church of Sinners," of "pilgrims," of those possessed of the potential to obscure rather than reveal God's light.

10Rahner, "Mut und Nüchternheit auf dem Konzil," Orientierung 28 (1964): 41. "Ein Konzil ist mit allem, was es beschließt und lehrt, Anfang nur und Dienst....Und darum ist es nur Anfang." "A Council is with all that it prescribes and teaches, merely a beginning and service....And therefore, it is merely a beginning." (Translation mine)

11Rahner, "Mut und Nüchternheit auf dem Konzil," 41. "Und darum ist es nur Anfang. Denn danach hängt alles davon ab, wie diese Weisungen ausgeführt werden, und ob diese Wahrheiten in glaubende Herzen fallen und dort Geist und Leben zeugen. Das aber hängt nicht von Konzil selbst ab, sondern von der Gnade Gottes und von allen Menschen der Kirche und ihrem guten Willen." "For everything depends on how these directives are being carried out and whether these directives fall into believing hearts and from there point to spirit and life. (Translation mine)
delivers only the letter, *(Buchstaben)* and not the spirit *(Geist)* of the conciliar decrees.\(^\text{12}\)

Thirdly, this Council is a mere beginning in that the tasks and themes it has set itself are but a distant preparation for the challenges of the future.\(^\text{13}\)

In his writings immediately after the Second Vatican Council Rahner expanded upon the notion of the Council as a new beginning and went on to describe Vatican II as an "event" (1965), a "seed" (1965); a moment of "kairos" given by God to the Church (1966).\(^\text{14}\) In his essay, "The Changing Church" (1965), Rahner expressed the view that the Council was first and foremost an "event:" one that provoked, on the one hand, "profound astonishment, disquiet, and consternation," and on the other, enthusiasm and impatience for change.\(^\text{15}\) This event produced a shock of change whose reverberations were not limited to the Church’s external structures, but penetrated even to its innermost

\(^{12}\)Rahner, "On the Theology of the Council," 41. "Aber genau genommen kann ein Konzil nur den Buchstaben, nicht den Geist unmittelbar vermitteln." "However, a Council, strictly speaking, can take only the letter; it can not transmit directly the Spirit." (Translation mine)

\(^{13}\)Rahner, "On the Theology of the Council," 41. "Aber gemessen an der Aufgabe, der die Kirche in den nächsten Jahrhunderten entgegensieht, sind doch alle diese Aufgaben und Themen des gegenwärtigen Konzils nur ein Anfang und eine entfernte Vorbereitung und Zurüstung für diese Aufgabe der andrängenden Zukunft." "However, measured in terms of the task which the Church is going to face in the next centuries, all these tasks and themes of the present Council are still only a beginning and a distant preparation and structuring for this task of the approaching future." (Translation mine)


core. This prompted Rahner to conclude that the Council was an event in which the Church itself changed and was not merely subject to change.\(^\text{16}\)

In a second essay, also written in 1965 entitled, "The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life," Rahner likened the spirit and tendencies of the Council to a seed sown in the field of the Church, buried for a time but tended by God who provides the climate in which this new outlook will grow and mature.\(^\text{17}\) The climate provided by God for the growth of this seed is the concrete historical situation in which the Church finds itself, within which the Council's spirit and meaning are meant to take root, grow, and fructify.\(^\text{18}\)

In the important essays of 1966,\(^\text{19}\) these earlier insights into the Council as a "beginning and service" (1964), as "event" (1965), as "seed" (1965) are expanded and deepened. In the first of these essays, "The Council--A New Beginning," Rahner defined the Council as "A Council of the Liturgy and the Missions," and as the "Beginning of the Beginning."\(^\text{20}\)

As a Council of the "Liturgy and the Missions," Rahner declared that, first and foremost, Vatican II "was a Council of the Holy Roman Catholic Church."\(^\text{21}\) Every word

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\(^{16}\) Rahner, "The Changing Church," 21, 38. Consequently, trust in the very changes the Spirit gives to the Church by which it is led throughout history into the very truth and life of God, becomes the most basic requirement of the post-conciliar age.\(^\text{38}\)

\(^{17}\) Rahner, "The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life," 100f.

\(^{18}\) Rahner, "The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life," 100f.

\(^{19}\) The first three essays are found in the book The Church After the Council under the titles: "The Council--A New Beginning," "The Church--A New Image," "Theology--A New Challenge" respectively. Other essays of 1966 that refer the Council include, "Was wurde erreicht? in Sind die Erwartungen erfüllt?: Überlegungen nach dem Konzil; "Christians Living Formerly and Today," TI 7, 3-24. (G. 1966)


in this statement held theological significance for Rahner. First, that the Council was, that it ever came about, that the Church found the courage to come to grips with vital questions regarding its nature was nothing short of amazing. Second, that it was a true Council, a Council of the Holy Roman Catholic Church with the faith of the Church as its law and norm. Thirdly, that the Council was "Catholic," in every sense of the word, while being, in a way totally unprecedented, entirely ecumenical. Rahner also considered the Council to be an hour given by God (gottgegebenen Stunde) to the Church for which each individual member stands responsible. During this Council, the Church became a "constitutional community" (verfasste Gemeinschaft) that was not afraid to act on its own initiative, an initiative that was respected by the Pope who co-operated with it.

In Rahner's view, the Council marked the decisive beginning of the aggiornamento; it established the renewal and called Catholic Christians to repentance. In this essay, however, Rahner was not content to call the Council "a new beginning," as he had in 1964; instead, he referred to it as the "Beginning of the Beginning" (Anfang des Anfangs):

...the beginning of that which was, and is, and ever shall be, Jesus Christ,

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24Rahner, "The Council--A New Beginning" 15f. Rahner observed that this ecumenical spirit manifested itself not only in the effort to avoid what would alienate non-Catholic Christians, but also in the endeavour to express the Church's ancient faith in new ways so as to enter into a more effective dialogue with others.


who is the same yesterday, today, and forever; the beginning of his grace which alone redeems us...."

The Council is all this so that Jesus Christ, together with the Church, might truly encounter the spirit of this age, and of future ages.28

Finally, Rahner saw the Council and all postconciliar efforts as only service and preparation (Dienst und Vorbereitung) in order to further the reign of God, proclaim the immortality of human persons, and increase faith, hope, and love in the hearts of all Christians.29 Was it necessary to have a Council to achieve all this? Indeed, Rahner, concluded, it was necessary.30

In a second essay also written in 1966 entitled, "The New Image of the Church," Rahner observed that, unlike any council before it, Vatican II was concerned with the formal study of the Church, with ecclesiology. It was a Council of the Church about the Church.31 The Church was not only the subject, but also the object of the conciliar pronouncements. This is not to deny that the Council dealt with a great many other truths, which according to the hierarchy of truths are more important than the direct relationship of these truths to the Church.32 Secondly, Rahner drew attention to the fact

28 Rahner, "The Council--A New Beginning," 20; cf., idem, Das Konzil, 14; cf., idem, "A Theologian At Work," in Karl Rahner in Dialogue, 21. Here Rahner asserted that the Council was the "beginning, not the end; it was the inauguration of a tendency, not its completion."


32 Rahner, "The Church--A New Image," 38, 40f. Rahner proposed two reasons as to why he believed ecclesiology became the focus of Vatican II. First, just as the human person is always, in the final analysis, the "ultimate problem," so the Church, applying the analogy to itself, candidly admits that in any question or debate, it must always consider how it has contributed to the difficulty, and work from there towards a solution. (40) Secondly, as the Church grows in age, maturity and experience, its self-understanding may be expressed differently. (41)
that the Second Vatican Council was the hour of *Kairos* for the Church. Just as the human person can miss the hour of *Kairos*, so too, the Church can miss its hour of grace, of decision, of salvation.\(^{34}\)

In the late 1960's important articles began to appear in *Sacramentum Mundi* that bear a direct relationship to the theological interpretation of Vatican II Rahner was later to articulate in the critical essays of 1979.\(^{35}\) In the article, "Church and World," Rahner defined the two words he was later to combine in the explication of his thesis regarding Vatican II and the World Church.\(^{36}\) Rahner assigned three, interconnected meanings to the word "world:" the first, that of the good, created world; the second, that of the sinful world of perdition; the third, that of the redeemed world orientated supernaturally by grace as the place of salvation.\(^{37}\) As for the term "church," Rahner did not give an exhaustive definition but rather, chose one that speaks directly to the Church's relationship to the world. In this connection, "church," is the fundamental "sacrament," the efficacious manifestation or "sign" in redemptive history that the kingdom is present in the world.\(^{38}\) The Church, therefore, is not to be identified with the kingdom of God. Rather, the

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\(^{34}\)Rahner, "The Church--A New Image," 42. According to Rahner Catholic Christians must prepare now to recognize when the time of the Church's *Kairos* will arrive.

\(^{35}\)Rahner, "Church II: 'Ecclesiology'" in *Sacramentum Mundi* vol.I, tr. William J. O'Hara et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968-70), 313-337 (G. 1967-69); idem, "The Universality of the Church," *SM*, vol.I, 330-332; idem, "The Church and the World," *SM*, vol.I, 346-356. These articles are listed in this order because Rahner felt that the essay, "The Universality of the Church" should be read as supplementary to the other two articles and to be seen as occupying a certain mid-point between them.


\(^{37}\)Rahner, "Church and World," 348.

\(^{38}\)Rahner, "Church and World," 348.
Church is the "sacrament" of God's reign announcing the eschatological phase of salvation history.

These understandings of "church" and "world" are assumed in the last article in the group, "The Universality of the Church" in which Rahner stated that the Church has only now, with the Second Vatican Council, become in historical fact a "World-Church." The Church is universal from a dogmatic point of view as well as from an historical perspective since the Church exists for all people regardless of whether or not they belong to the Church's visible structure. The dogmatic basis for the universality of the Church implies first of all, that the Church is for all people the universal sacrament of salvation, and secondly, that no human person is exempt from the obligation of belonging to the visible unity of the Church. The Church can and must be called universal also in an historical sense since the Church has become in fact a Church for the whole world.

Rahner identified two important consequences of the Church's universality: first, the primacy of the mutual importance and interdependence of all the regional churches: second, the need of the universal church to manifest clearly its character as a World Church to all these regional churches who have equal rights in it. In these articles, Rahner recognized that the universality of the Church is not a fact but a process unfolding within the larger process of the unification of all humankind for which all are responsible. It is precisely this process that is the precondition for the emergence of a World Church.

It has been demonstrated that Rahner's theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council grew and deepened with the passage of time and that the previous


40Rahner, "The Universality of the Church," 330. Rahner continued to say that it is no longer possible to affirm that all people receive grace from God to belong to the visible structure of the Church since many people live their whole lives without ever doing so. However, the absence of an obligation for some persons who, in good conscience, never belong to the visible structure of the Church, does not negate the concrete possibility of a real obligation in the case of other persons who do recognize, within their lifetime, a call to join the Church's visible structure.

41Rahner, "The Universality of the Church," 332.
understandings of the Council are climaxed and carried forward in the critical essays of 1979 in which Rahner articulated the full theological basis for his understanding of the Council as the beginning of a World Church, and the opening of a new epoch in the history of Catholicism. It is to the first of these essays, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II" that we now turn.

B. The Abiding Significance of Vatican II

The abiding significance of Vatican II lies in the fact that it marked the first time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church that it began to function as a World Church. Rahner contended that at this Council, the Catholic Church, in its doctrine and laws, took the first positive steps towards actualizing itself as a World Church, a church with a polycentric cultural identity, and not merely a European Western Church with exports around the world.43

1. The Six Elements in the Conciliar Documents that Point to a New Global Consciousness in the Catholic Church

To support his thesis, Rahner identified six key themes in the conciliar decrees that indicate a change of direction in the Roman Catholic Church. They are: A Council of the World Church,44 The Local Church, The Church's Relationship to the World, The Theology of the Council, The Ecumenical Change of Mind, The Optimism of Universal

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42Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II." TI 20, pp. 90-102 (G. 1979); idem, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," TI 20, pp. 77-89. (G. 1979)


44This is the first observation mentioned by Rahner; that is, that Vatican II was a truly ecumenical or world-wide gathering. This quality of ecumenicity runs through all the documents. It is listed here not as a theme so much, but as one of the elements in the conciliar decrees that points in the direction of a World Church. Since this element is well covered by the present chapter which introduces Rahner's thesis on the World Church, the remaining chapters of the dissertation will begin starting with each of the remaining five elements.
Salvation.45

(a) **A Council of the World Church**

Rahner maintained that the Second Vatican Council was the first act in a history in which the World Church first began to exist as such.46 This took place as a result of a gradual transition from being a European and western Church with exports around the world to becoming a World Church able to be present in the whole world, and no longer as a European export. This World Church acted at Vatican II for the first time with unprecedented historical assurance in the dimensions of law and doctrine.47

Vatican II was truly a Council of a World Church. As proof of this, Rahner cited the unprecedented and unique fact that unlike previous councils there appeared at Vatican II a world episcopate.48 The native bishops present at Vatican II were not missionary bishops as had been the case at Vatican I. Neither were they there to act as an advisory body to the Pope or to represent the needs of their own dioceses. Rather, this native episcopacy was present to assume, with and under the pope, the supreme teaching and decision-making authority in the Church.49 Rahner emphasized that there really was

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45Rahner refers to the "Abolition of Latin." As mentioned earlier, I prefer to call this theme, "The Local Church" since it is here that Rahner speaks of a plurality of liturgies leading to the development of autonomous regional churches.


48Ibid. At Vatican II there were only 757 participating bishops as opposed to 2600 at Vatican II. The Council was not only the largest in numbers but also the most representative in terms of nations and cultures. Of the eligible bishops, 1089 were from Europe, 489 from South America, 404 from North America, 374 from Asia, 296 from Africa, 84 from Central America, and 75 from Oceania. This Council was also the most representative in terms of non-Catholics and laity with 63 non-Catholics by 1963, and 52 lay persons (29 men, 23 women) plus ten religious sisters by the last session. See Richard McBrien *Catholicism* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), 657f.

49Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," **II** 20, p. 80. (G. 1979)
present a world Council with a world episcopacy, one possessing a function all its own. The presence of a world episcopacy and the exercise of collegiality was a definite sign of the emerging World Church.

(b) The Local Church

The second movement in the direction of a World Church came with the abolition of Latin as the official language of worship in favour of a restoration of the vernacular. Rahner maintained that, were it not for the Second Vatican Council, Latin would still be the official language of the Church’s worship today. With the victory of the vernacular languages, the way was paved for the variety of regional liturgies, and the consequent development of autonomous regional churches. The theological reason for this is that the nature of the Church, and consequently, the nature of a regional church is derived from the liturgy in which it finds its supreme actualization. Just as Latin, being the language of a particular cultural sphere, could never be the language of a World Church, neither could Roman liturgy and law be imposed any longer as normative for everyone.

(c) Relationship to the World

The third element Rahner identified in the conciliar documents that points to this new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church is the Church’s relationship to the world. Two of the most significant documents of the Council to attempt to articulate the Church’s fundamental relationship to the world are the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and the Declaration on Religious Freedom. Both these documents stress that the Church’s relationship to the world arises from the Church’s

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50\text{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 92. Rahner did not contend that Vatican II abolished the Latin language. His main point of argument was that at this Council Latin ceased to be the official language of the Church’s worship, a change that, once made, was irreversible.}
51\text{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 92.}
inner nature, rather than being something imposed on it from outside.\textsuperscript{53}

The influence of the \textit{Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World} on the Church's future relationship with the secular world and its contribution towards the coming-to-be of a World Church can be summarized in the following way: First, it advocates that the Church as a whole become expressly aware of its responsibility for the future history of humankind. Second, it manifests the presence of the third world as part of the Church thus calling to mind the Church's responsibility for the poor. Third, it reminds Catholic Christians of the Church's responsibility for the world which can never be excluded from the consciousness of a World Church.\textsuperscript{54}

In the \textit{Declaration on Religious Freedom}, the Church renounced for all time the use of force in proclaiming Christianity, choosing instead to rely solely on the power of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{55} Despite opposition from conservative groups at the Council, this document declared as fundamentally Christian the renouncement of external means of power in matters religious, the respect due to an erroneous conscience, and the development of a legitimately secular world not subject to the Church's control.\textsuperscript{56} The task passed on by the Council in this regard, as Rahner envisioned it, was to observe that restraint spoken of at Vatican II in spite of the ever-present temptation to abandon that restraint in favour of worldly power. As a result of the Council, the Church can never again impose on non-Christians what it considers to be true and helpful to salvation, and do so with a clear

\textsuperscript{53}Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 92. Rahner deals mainly with \textit{Dignitatis Humanae} in this essay and not at all with \textit{Gaudium et Spes}. In his essay, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," the reverse is true; Rahner comments almost exclusively on \textit{The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World} and hardly at all on \textit{The Declaration Religious Freedom}. The ideas presented here will be expanded when we come to discuss this second essay.

\textsuperscript{54}Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 81.

\textsuperscript{55}Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 93.

\textsuperscript{56}Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 98f.
The significance of The Declaration on Religious Freedom for the World Church can be summed up in Rahner’s contention that by this document, in principle at least, the Church surrendered a great deal of power it had formerly assumed. At that juncture a frontier had been crossed behind which it would be impossible to return even in the slightest decree.\(^58\)

(d) Theology of the Council

The fourth element in the conciliar decrees that indicates the change of direction taking place in favour of a World Church is the Council’s theology as a whole. According to Rahner, the theology of the Council has two aspects: it is a transitional theology containing, on the one hand, elements of neoscholastic theology, and on the other, facets of a more biblical approach.\(^59\) The biblical influence steered the Council away from theological exuberance, especially in the area of mariology, showed a sensitivity to ecumenical concerns, and brought to the fore of the Church’s consciousness a series of doctrines that has always been part of the Church’s tradition but had come to mean little in the concrete piety of Catholic people.\(^60\)

Rahner’s hope, however, was that theology would continue to renew itself that, corresponding to the Council itself, it would become a world theology and cease to be a European export.\(^61\) As an example of this, Rahner cited the emergence of a liberation theology in Latin America with the promise of similar native theologies emerging out of

\(^{57}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 93.

\(^{58}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 94.

\(^{59}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 94.

\(^{60}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 95. Among these latent doctrines Rahner listed, the sacramentality of episcopal ordination, the doctrine of the episcopacy, the human authorship of the Scriptures as consonant with divine inspiration, and the careful formulation of the inerrancy of Scripture.

\(^{61}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 96.
Africa and Asia. Rahner was convinced that Western theology would continue to have a role in this world-theology but only if it had the courage to become a missionary theology.\(^\text{62}\) This would involve addressing those who feel alienated from Christianity and from the Church, and doing so in terms other than the assured ones of traditional theology. Such an approach that does not limit itself to those who feel at home in Christianity or the Church contains a positive impetus for the emergence of a World Church.

Another positive effect of the Council's theology on the coming-to-be of a World Church was that it made a new start in theology possible and legitimate. Rahner observed that on account of the Council, theology no longer presents the appearance of a "monotonous neoscholastism intended to be acceptable in the whole world."\(^\text{63}\) Theology will be everywhere in the World Church. As such, it will have to deal with urgent questions that arise locally, questions that require a specific answer not necessarily applicable to the whole world. Consequently, Rahner foresaw that different tasks will be required of the magisterium since it will have to develop modes of procedure that allow it to address the needs of several cultural groups at the same time.\(^\text{64}\) By refusing to allow itself to be locked into the categories of neoscholastic theology, the Council opened itself to a plurality of theologies, and in so doing announced the coming-to-be of a World Church.

(e) **Ecumenical Change of Mind**\(^\text{65}\)

The fifth essential element in the conciliar decrees that indicates the movement

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\(^\text{63}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 96.

\(^\text{64}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 96.

\(^\text{65}\)In this essay Rahner included discussion of non-Christians and non-Christian religions under the topic of ecumenism. I discuss these in chapter II, "The Optimism of Universal Salvation" under the missionary task of the Church. I reserve discussion of inter-Christian effort exclusively for Chapter IV, "The Ecumenical Change of Mind."
towards a World Church is the ecumenical change of mind that took place at Vatican II. In Rahner's view, the Second Vatican Council represents a "caesura," a turning point in the history of the relationship of the Catholic Church both with other Christian churches and communities and with non-Christian world religions. The doctrine of God's universal salvific will had little practical effect upon the Church's relationship with other Christian churches and with non-Christian religions. While the theological basis for this new attitude toward other Christian Churches and with the non-Christian religions always existed in the Church's sense of faith in the form of the assumption of God's universal salvific will in Christ, this doctrine had little practical bearing on this relationship. Until Vatican II, Rahner explained, non-Christians were regarded as living in the darkness of paganism with no hope of salvation except through the preaching of the Gospel. Non-Catholics were seen as a mass of heretics who needed to be converted to the true Catholic faith.

According to Rahner, two difficulties obscure the radical and irreversible change of mind with respect to ecumenism that began at Vatican II. On the one hand, there is the impression that nothing has changed since the theological reasons for the caesura were present at an earlier stage. On the other hand, there is the tendency of Catholic theologians to take the new ecumenical closeness to mean that there are no serious differences standing in the way of reunion. In response to these difficulties, Rahner answered that the ecumenical change of mind that took place at Vatican II is rooted in a real development of dogma. At Vatican II Catholic Christendom adopted expressly a new attitude toward all Christians and their Churches and toward the non-Christian world religions, and ratified it as truly Christian. This new attitude adopted at Vatican II definitely abandons an older mentality and remains as an irreversible obligation for the

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future of the Church. Neither, however, is the Roman Catholic Church to be viewed as just one more Church among others that came into being out of historical chance. Rahner was convinced that modern liberal relativism which seeks to equalize everything poses one of the greatest threats to real reunification.

(f) **Optimism of Universal Salvation**

The sixth element in the conciliar decrees that Rahner considered to be an important indicator in the direction of a World Church is the adoption of an optimistic view of universal salvation. With the Second Vatican Council, the Church gave official endorsement to this optimistic view of salvation thus repudiating years of Augustinian pessimism in which world history was viewed as that of the massa damnata out of which only a few were saved.  

Rahner pointed out that even before the Council a teaching had developed regarding the hope of universal salvation, but that until Vatican II, this teaching was never taught with absolute firmness.

Rahner summarized the Council's teaching in four points: First, even the atheist who follows his/her conscience is united to the Christ’s paschal mystery. Second, every human being in a way known only to God is in touch with God’s revelation, and can really possess faith in a theological and salutary sense. Third, even those who seek the unknown God in shadows and images are not far from God. Fourth, the Church is not so much the community only of those who are saved as the sacramental "primordial sign and germ-cell of salvation for the whole world."

Although no theory of universal restoration (apocatastasis), was endorsed at the Council, the doctrine of God’s universal salvific will, always present in the Church’s tradition, was given new emphasis and clarity. Previously, it was all too easy to impute personal guilt to unbelievers, and to those outside visible membership in the Church. As proof that this position can no longer be maintained, Rahner cited the Council’s quiet

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71 Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 100f.
relinquishment of Limbo, the belief that revelation can be in process even before the proclamation of the Christian message, and the conviction that not even the explicit profession of atheism is enough to guarantee damnation. The optimism of universal salvation proclaimed unambiguously by Vatican II epitomizes the mission of the emerging World Church which is to speak a message of hope to the world, hope that its pain, darkness, and its uncertain future are all embraced in God's salvific love and mercy.

By being a Council of the World Church, by its proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, by its belief in the local Church, by its ecumenical change of mind, by its new relationship to the world, and by its theology, Vatican II gave evidence of a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church. The question, as Rahner saw it, was whether or not Catholic Christians would seize and live here and now this new reality, and so be faithful to the task set by Vatican II.

C. Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican 
Vatican Council

Rahner introduced this topic with two cautionary notes. First, a basic theological interpretation of the Council must arise from the Council itself rather than being imposed on it from the outside. Secondly, it is irrelevant whether or not the organizers of the

72 Limbo was a theological construct used by theologians to explain the state of children dying before baptism.


74 The order of these elements listed here is the order in which they will be discussed in the dissertation. This differs from the order in which Rahner introduced them in this essay. The theme of The Optimism of Universal Salvation deals with some of the most difficult and most fundamental aspects of Rahner's theology. For this reason I thought it would be best discussed close to the beginning. Also, in his book The Church After The Council, Rahner suggested another ordering of the documents, one that seems well suited to the argument of this dissertation: 1. The fundamental Self-Understanding of the Church; 2. The Inner Life of the Church, 3. The Church's Mission to those Outside.

Council had this basic interpretation in mind. The fact that Pope John XXIII envisioned nothing more, perhaps, than a "pastoral Council" does not preclude the fact that something new and totally surprising took place.\(^76\)

1. Rahner's Thesis

Rahner's theological understanding of Vatican II may be summarized in his statement that the Second Vatican Council marked the beginning of a tentative approach by the Catholic Church to the discovery and official realization of itself as a World Church.\(^77\) Although the Catholic Church was always potentially a World Church, it was prevented from actualizing itself as such on account of its strong ties with European culture, and the tendency to impose this culture on the rest of the world.\(^78\) In Rahner's view, the Catholic Church functioned like a giant export firm delivering its superior European-Westernized culture and theology to countries it considered impoverished by comparison. Consequently, the Church never succeeded in penetrating deeply into different cultures, and in thus becoming a World Church. While there were precedents that prepared the way for the tentative beginning of a World Church, such as the consecration of native bishops, and improvements in missionary practice, none of these had repercussions on the European and North American Church until Vatican II.\(^79\)

In regard to his general thesis, Rahner made three qualifying statements. First, the actualization of the Church's nature as a World Church was only manifested at the Council in a very hesitant and rudimentary way. Second, this movement towards a World Church exists alongside contrary movements that point the Church in the opposite

\(^{76}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 77.

\(^{77}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 77.

\(^{78}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 78.

\(^{79}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 78.
Third, these non-western cultures themselves are undergoing a process of transformation making it difficult to predict exactly what contribution they will be able to make to a World Church.

2. Rahner’s Broad Demonstration of the Thesis

To illustrate his thesis Rahner again turned to the doctrine and decrees of the Second Vatican Council. In the victory of the vernacular languages in the Church’s liturgy with its consequent plurality of liturgies, Rahner saw “the clear and urgent signal of the coming-to-be of a World Church” with its particular churches each existing autonomously in their own cultural groups. Rahner observed that even the doctrinal decrees of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (though the content reveals a specifically European mentality), point in the direction of a World Church by the effort found there to produce statements that are more easily intelligible to modern persons.

In addition, the Council’s documents on Ecumenism and on the Church’s missionary task also indicate this direction of a new global consciousness. In the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions the way was

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80Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 79. In regard to this Rahner had questions concerning the following: whether the new code of Canon Law would emerge as a western canon to be imposed on the rest of the world, whether marital norms governing morality would continue to be imposed on the African Church, and whether grapewine would continue to be a requirement for the Eucharist in those countries where it is not readily available.

81Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 79.

82Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 81; cf., idem,"Theologische Grundinterpretation des II. Vatikanischen Konzils," Schriften 14 (Cologne: Herder, 1980), 291. The word Rahner uses in German is "autark" which becomes translated into English as "autarchically." An English equivalent might be the words "independently" or "autonomously" provided one understand that these independent regional churches remain united in a single World Church. I choose to use the word "autonomously" here because it is more familiar and is often used in this context in other works of Rahner.

83Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 81.
prepared for a positive appraisal of the great world religions (NA no.2). Also in the
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity,
and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World a salvific will of God,
even after the fall, is proclaimed as effective and universal for salvation (LG no.16; AG
no.3; GS no.1). Present, too, is the affirmation of the possibility of really salvific faith
existing outside the boundaries of explicit Christianity (AG no.7).84 All of these conciliar
statements, Rahner concluded, point to the fact that, at least in a rudimentary way, the
Church in its teaching began to act as a World Church. Moreover, Rahner affirmed that
all the ecumenical activities that the Council itself developed, approved or instigated must
be appreciated as contributing to the emergence of a World Church since these seek to
remove that divisiveness so detrimental to the spread of the good news.85

3. A New Epoch in Catholicism

In order to appreciate fully, however, the full significance of the "qualitative leap"
to a World Church begun at Vatican II, the Council's significance ought to be seen in the
light of the wider perspective of ecclesiastical historiography. From a theological
standpoint, Rahner proposed that there have been three great epochs in church history with
the third one being officially inaugurated at Vatican II. The first great epoch consists in
the short period of Judaeo-Christianity; the second is that of the period of the Church in a
particular cultural group, that of Hellenism and European culture and civilization; and the
third, in that of the period in which the Church's living space is the whole world.86

The first epoch of Judaeo-Christianity, though brief, derives its special character

84 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 82.

85 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 82.

86 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 83. See also, idem, "Church
History, Periodization and Survey," article by August Franzen SM vol.1, 365-372. Franzen
proposed four divisions upon which Rahner based his three great epochs: (i) the Church in the
world of Graeco-Roman civilization (1st-7th C); (ii) the Church as the dominant factor of the
western community of Christian nations (17th-12th C); (iii) the disintegration of Western
Christian unity (1300-1750); and (iv) the world Church in the industrial age (19th-20th C).
from the fact that during this time the Christian message was proclaimed to Israel alone. The second epoch, that of the transition from a Judaeo-Christianity to a Christianity of the Gentiles, introduced a radically new period of Church history. Paul's preaching of the Christian message sowed the seed of a Christianity that was not an export of Judaeo-Christianity to the Diaspora but, rather one that grew out of the soil of paganism. Rahner contended that the decision of the Council of Jerusalem not to impose circumcision and other practices of the Jewish religion on non-Jews as a precondition for their admittance to Christianity was the "theological moment" that proved to be the motivating factor in the transition from Judaeo-Christianity to Gentile Christianity.87

In presenting his thesis of the World Church, Rahner wished to assert that today, Catholic Christians are for the first time living again in a period of a caesura like that involved in the transition from Judaeo-Christianity to Gentile Christianity.88 In marking the transition from a Europeanized Western Church to a World Church, Vatican II heralded the beginning of a new historical epoch in the Roman Catholic Church. According to Rahner, this type of transition occurred only once before when the Church ceased to be the church of the Jews and became the Church of the Gentiles.

Although the two transitions are not alike in every respect, Rahner maintained that there are striking similarities between that last great epoch, and the one presently in process in the Roman Catholic Church. The same difficulties being experienced now, such as the controversies over the liturgical rites to be used, the export of Latin as the official language, the imposition of Roman law over alien cultures, the rejection of the religious experience of non-European cultures, all had precedents in that earlier period of Church history.89 To Rahner, the challenge facing the Church is clear: either the Church sees and accepts with Pauline boldness the necessary consequences of this recognition or it remains a western church, and in the last resort betrays the meaning of Vatican II.

87 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 83.
88 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 85.
89 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 86.
4. Challenges of the New Epoch

Rahner admitted that it is difficult to apply the theology of this transition to Vatican II for three reasons: First, the second caesura to the World Church has a material content different from that of the Gentile Christians and the middle Ages. Second, it is uncertain how far the Church still retained in the Post Apostolic Age the creative potential and power which it had in the period of its first coming-to-be, in apostolic times. Thirdly, it is difficult to explain exactly the importance of the claim that Vatican II marks the transition to the World Church because no one can predict the secular future accurately enough to enable the Church to do justice to its role in society as a World Church.\(^90\)

In the light of the movement toward a World Church begun at Vatican II, Rahner predicted three outstanding tasks of the Church of the future: first, Christian proclamation and the search for the basic substance of the Christian faith which will lead to a plurality of proclamations within the unity of the one faith; second, an exercise of the Petrine ministry suited to a World Church; third, the development of regional liturgies and autonomous regional churches.\(^91\)

Regarding Christian proclamation, the Church cannot continue to impose its own mode of transmission of the Christian message on other cultures. Rather, other cultures must discover the best language and cultural conditions suited to their own proclamation of the Christian message. To do this it will be necessary, Rahner maintained, to have recourse to the "hierarchy of truths" mentioned by Vatican II in order to arrive at the basic substance of the Christian message.\(^92\) As a result there will emerge a plurality of proclamations each mutually enriching and mutually critical with each retaining its historical uniqueness.

According to Rahner, the two-fold question facing the Church and Church

\(^{90}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 86f. Furthermore, Rahner added, the question remains open as to whether the Church can legitimately seize opportunities of which it never made use during its second great epoch.

\(^{91}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 87f.

\(^{92}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 87.
leadership in the future is how to maintain a unity of faith amid a plurality of proclamations. The answer to this question will involve a different exercise of Church authority, particularly papal authority, than that assumed in the past. The Pope can no longer exercise his ministry in the style of a Western Patriarch such that the non-European Church merely imparts and imitates the life-style, law, liturgy, and theology of European Churches.

Regarding the development of a variety of regional liturgies and autonomous local churches there will be a need for a greater plurality, one that goes beyond the mere diversity of languages used in the liturgy. This pluralism in liturgy must be accompanied by real pluralism in canon law and church practice.

Only time will be able to assess accurately whether Rahner's thesis regarding the World Church is a correct one. Rahner suggested two principles of action, however, by which Catholics could gauge the effective movement of the World Church in the future. First, the Church ought to continue the precedent set at Vatican II, and adopt the pastoral mode of expression found there in place of the language of unchangeable dogmatic truths or of canonical enactments valid for all time. Second, the successful emergence of a World Church depends upon the clarification, in theory and in practice, of the exact relationship between powers in the Church, the Pope and the bishops.

The ideas Rahner presented in this essay are among the most creative and original of all his contributions to modern ecclesiology. Before examining Rahner's thesis of the World Church through the major themes of the conciliar documents it seems appropriate to ask how credible this thesis appears to other scholars and theologians of Vatican II.

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94 Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," vol. 20, 110. (G. 1979)

95 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 88.

96 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 89.
It is only within the last ten years that Rahner’s thesis regarding the World Church has received critical attention in scholarly articles. Surprisingly enough there seem to be no scholars who refute Rahner’s thesis of the World Church though many fail to give specific reasons for supporting the validity of Rahner’s claim. Richard McBrien affirms, with Rahner, that Vatican II was a unique Council in the history of the Catholic Church. As the first really ecumenical council, it signalled the Catholic Church’s movement from a European-Westernized Church to a genuine World Church.

John O’Malley describes Vatican II as a true reformation involving a total paradigm shift, such as that which occurred in the Gregorian and Lutheran reformations. O’Malley contends that there is little doubt that the Roman Catholic Church has in the past twenty years entered a new era of its history. “The Council is more responsible than any other single agent for the formal inception of that era.”

Walbert Bühlmann, a European theologian whose work found critical acclaim by Rahner himself, speaks of the coming of the "Third Church." Bühlmann agrees with Rahner’s interpretation of Vatican II. He refers to his book, Wo der Glaube lebt: Einblicke in die Lage der Weltkirche (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), and states that Rahner appraised this book as the best Catholic book of the year. For a description of The First Church (The Oriental Church), The Second Church (The Western Church), and The Third Church (The World Church) see idem, The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and the Future of the Church, tr. Ralph Woodhall (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1975), 11-24.
Rahner that Vatican II was the first Council of a Church now become world-wide in fact. The Council signalled the start of a new era, a "third age," the age of the World Church.\textsuperscript{102}

Marcello Azervedo emphasises that by World Church is not meant the geographical, international, physical world-wide Catholic Church. Azervedo defines the Church as "the active presence of different local and regional churches which are rooted in various cultures within the one Catholic Church."\textsuperscript{103} Azervedo admits of a distinction between the terms inculturation, enculturation, and acculturation. Inculturation refers to a demand felt by the local churches to understand, express, and live the gospel message according to their own particular cultural context. Enculturation denotes the process by which the human person is introduced to and becomes inserted into her/his own culture. Acculturation means the encounter with a culture other than one’s own or the contact between cultures, and the change such a contact provokes.\textsuperscript{104}

William Reiser defines inculturation as "the process of a deep, sympathetic adaptation to and application of a local cultural setting in which the Church finds itself in a way that does not compromise its basic faith in Christ."\textsuperscript{105} This notion of inculturation represents a genuine development on our theology of the local Church. According to Reiser the process of inculturation is forcing the Church, not to develop new doctrines or to reformulate the old ones, but to recover the Gospel’s ancient meaning of the good news to the poor. In letting go of a predominantly Western cultural bias comes the possibility of discovering in freedom that security comes of being in the presence of the "poor and

\textsuperscript{102}Bühlmann, The Church of the Future, xii.


\textsuperscript{104}Marcello de C. Azervedo, "Inculturation and the World Church," 122.

powerless Christ." The theological model for interpreting inculturation is the mystery of the incarnation of which the rootedness of the Church in particular cultures and histories is a consequence. The Church can become incarnated in any culture and must do so, if narrow regionalism is not to destroy the Gospel.

Both scholars, Azervedo and Reiser, stress the link between the process of inculturation and the local church. If the World Church is to become a reality it must do so at the local level where people experience, celebrate, and live what they really believe.

James Woolever employs seven criteria taken from the fundamental principles set forth in the documents of Vatican II as critical standards with which to access the validity of Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology for a World Church. Woolever concludes that, while Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology manifests the necessary traits for a Church in transition, it cannot serve as the primary paradigm for a World Church on account of the ecumenical shortcomings within his ecclesiology.

In evaluating the validity of Rahner's thesis regarding the World Church as the basic theological interpretation of Vatican II, the question posed by John O'Malley appears to be an apt one: "Was Vatican II at least symptomatic of a huge change in perception and in ways of thinking, judging, and acting that marks modern culture and

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106 Reiser, "Inculturation and Doctrinal Development," 135f.

107 Reiser, "Inculturation and Doctrinal Development," 139f.

108 James J. Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," Diss. Syracuse University, 1987, especially pp. 370-434. The seven criteria are: compatibility with Scripture and Christian tradition, the need for on-going structural modernization, an appreciation of the value of collegiality and shared responsibility in the Church, recognition of the importance of regional and local variety, the importance of ecumenical activity in the Church, the importance of on-going dialogue with other religions, balanced approach to the Church's social mission. See also, Avery Dulles, "Vatican II Reform: The Basic Principles," Church 3 (1985): 3-10.

that therefore will inevitably continue to mark the course of theology and Church order?" Did something like a "qualitative leap" take place at Vatican II? If the answer is affirmative, then, I think it must be admitted that Rahner's claim has validity. Most scholars, despite the shortcomings they may perceive in Rahner's ecclesiology agree that his thesis on the World Church is apt to describe the transition that occurred at Vatican II.

Admittedly, the present juncture holds peril as well as promise for the Roman Catholic Church. As Avery Dulles has observed, the current crisis is more complex than that of the first century, for it involves not two cultures but many cultures. The question, as Dulles formulates it, is whether or not the Church can adjust to the new technological culture of the West and at the same time implant itself in the ancient traditional cultures of Asia and Africa. Can a Church that moves simultaneously in these different directions be homogenous enough to remain a single social body? Dulles concludes that if Rahner and Bühlmann are correct, the emergence of the World Church sets the main agenda for Catholicism in the decades to come, and points to the urgency of forming new structures and methodologies. Rahner predicted that this coming-to-be of a World Church will have major implications for the method and mode of evangelization, for variation in liturgical expression, and for a genuine plurality in Church law, practice, and theology.

Conclusion

Rahner's basic theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council expanded and deepened with the passage of time. According to Gallagher, Rahner rarely repudiates

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112 Avery Dulles, "The Emerging World Church: A Theological Reflection," 3. Dulles asks, "Can the Church adopt new symbols, languages, structures, and behaviour patterns on a massive scale without losing continuity with its origins and its own past?"
his previous insight or position. Rather, development, when it occurs, takes place through expansion of prior positions to deal with new questions and problems. Gallagher contends that in this development, Rahner may modify or nuance his position but, for the most part, his work is one of expansion through changing perspectives. In this sense there is an expansion of Rahner's earlier understanding of the Council (1965), to that of his basic theological interpretation of it as the event of a World Church (1979). In this fully articulated theological interpretation of Vatican II, all the former understandings of the Council find fulfillment and completion. Each of the main themes of the conciliar decrees points to a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church. The seriousness with which Rahner viewed this transition from a European-Westernized church to a World Church is glimpsed in his contextualization of it in terms of ecclesiastical historiography. By a World Church, Rahner meant a Roman Catholic Church that is not merely an extension of a Western-European centralized Church, but rather a culturally, liturgically, theologically diverse church, one that is appropriately independent in its local and regional expression, and whose diversity is acknowledged, accepted and celebrated as at Vatican II.

Having seen how for Rahner, Vatican II was indeed a Council of the World Church, it remains to be shown how he finds this new global consciousness reflected in the other five major themes beginning with the "The Optimism of Universal Salvation."

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CHAPTER II

THE OPTIMISM OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION

Introduction

By its definitive proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, Vatican II took seriously God's universal salvific will and, in so doing, adopted a new and irreversible world-view in which hope for the salvation of all persons of every time and place becomes an imperative for all Christians who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour of all and his Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. In the Council, a hope clearly emerged of a really universal salvation of the whole world and so of a new relationship to other Christian communities, as well as to non-Christian world religions.¹

This chapter unfolds in four sections. Section A presents Rahner's understanding of the development in the conciliar teaching with regard to the optimism of universal salvation from the long period of Augustinian pessimism, to the cautious pre-conciliar belief in the possibility of universal salvation, to the explicit proclamation of the Second Vatican Council on the universality of God's salvific will.

Section B gives Rahner's understanding of the anthropological, Trinitarian and Christological justification for the Council's proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation as reflected in the conciliar statements that stress the opportunity offered to all persons for grace, saving faith, salvation-revelation history and participation in Christ's paschal mystery, as well as the implications this grounding has for a World Church.

Section C presents Rahner's understanding of the ecclesiological basis for the Council's declaration of the optimism of universal salvation as evidenced by its

proclamation of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation for the world and the implications this teaching has for a World Church.

Section D presents Rahner's theological understanding of the Council's declaration of the optimism of universal salvation as it applies to non-Christians, non-Christian religions and the missionary task of the Church and how this conciliar view advances the emergence of a World Church.

A. The Teaching of Vatican II with regard to the Optimism of Universal Salvation

The optimism of universal salvation and, therefore, the basis for a new relationship to other Christian communities and to non-Christians had always been part of the Church's belief as attested to by Scripture\(^2\) and tradition. This doctrine however, underwent a long and arduous development before its full significance was appreciated in the actual faith-consciousness of Roman Catholics. It was Rahner's contention that Vatican II, with its unabashed proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, marked a pivotal point in this development such that hope for the salvation of the whole world became both the imperative of every Christian and the basis of a World Church.

1. Development in the Church's Teaching Regarding the Optimism of Universal Salvation

Rahner contended that it took more than a millennium of struggle before theology overcame Augustinian pessimism regarding salvation and reached the optimism of the Second Vatican Council. Before Augustine there was, in principle, no doubt about the universality of God's salvific will, though the concrete possibility of salvation outside the

Church was never clearly articulated. The later Augustine no longer recognized in theological theory a universal salvific will for the massa damnata of fallen human beings. The tragedy was that this pessimism regarding salvation found in the later Augustine was slowly reconstructed in the Church's existential awareness. Even so, the hope of universal salvation never disappeared entirely from the faith tradition of the Church. On the contrary, this belief continued throughout the history of the Church from the optimism of Ambrose concerning the salvation of unbaptised catechumens, through to the doctrine of the votum ecclesiae in the Middle Ages, down to Pius XII's encyclical "Mystici Corporis."

While Augustinian pessimism about salvation was a restriction that was largely overcome by theologians in the years before Vatican II, the application of the principle was so overloaded with "ifs" and "buts" as to render the doctrine scarcely recognizable as a formal Church teaching. Rahner contended that, until Vatican II these insights, acquired bit by bit leading to an optimistic view of salvation, were never ratified and

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taught with absolute firmness. This basic teaching regarding the optimism of universal salvation, which existed formerly, the Council was to ratify and teach absolutely with more courage and clarity than ever before in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Conciliar Teaching

A hope clearly emerged at the Second Vatican Council of a really universal salvation of the whole world, a hope that resulted in a new relationship to other Christian communities and to the non-Christian world. The Council taught the doctrine of God's universal will and the optimism of universal salvation most emphatically in The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no.16); the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (no.22); the Degree on the Church's Missionary Activity (no.7); the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (no.1). Rahner summarized the conciliar teaching found there in five points.

First, even non-Christians and atheists can live in a subjective state of freedom from serious sin and so possess the possibility of supernatural salvation (LG no.16, GS no.22). Second, every human being in a way known only to God is in touch with God's revelation and can really believe by an act that is salutary in the theological sense.

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9Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 100. The question is the possibility of salvation, not its actual realization. At no time before Vatican II or after it has the Church taught a general theory of apocatastasis. See also, cf., idem, "Salvific Will of God." Theological Dictionary, 420.

10Other references include: LG nos.1, 2, 9, 14, 5, 48; GS nos.1, 2, 26, 38, 41, 57; AG, nos.2, 1, 6: UR no.2; NA no.2.


12LG no.16 states that those also can attain salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Jesus Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do God's will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. GS no.22 states that for all people of good will grace works in an unseen way and that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every person the possibility of being associated with Christ's paschal mystery.
By this Rahner understood the Council to say that even a person whom the historical message of Christianity has not yet reached is touched by God’s redeeming grace and has the opportunity of encountering that salvific faith without which no one can be saved. Third, even those who seek God without knowing it are not far from God (LG no. 16). Fourth, the Church is not so much the community only of those who are saved as it is the sacramental “primordial sign and germ-cell of salvation for the whole world” (LG no. 1; AG no. 1). By this Rahner understood the Council to bring together two apparently contradictory statements of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, namely, that every person who acts in sincere accord with conscience attains the salvation of God in Christ (LG no. 16) and the truth that the Catholic Church is necessary for salvation (LG no. 14). Fifth, God’s grace is not only offered to human freedom, but is exercised through this very freedom. By this Rahner understood that salvation has to do with the whole person, mind, body, soul and spirit. These five points of the conciliar teaching regarding the optimism of universal salvation have immense significance for the emergence of a World Church.

3. The Significance of the Conciliar Teaching on the Optimism of Universal Salvation for a World Church

According to Rahner, the universal and effective salvific will of God, together with the admission of the possibility of really salvific faith in revelation even outside Christian verbal revelation, created basic assumptions for the World Church-mission which had not previously existed. First, God’s universal salvific will can no longer be restricted as it

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13 AG no.7 states that God in ways known only to God, can lead those inculpably ignorant of the gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to be saved.

14 Rahner, “The Church--A New image,” in The Church After The Council, 51, 54. “By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humankind.” (LG no.1) "The Church has been sent to all nations that she might be "the universal sacrament of salvation." (AG no.1)

15 Rahner, “The Abiding Significance of Vatican II,” 100f.

16 Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 82.
was in the past to those who accepted the explicit teaching of the Church and were baptised. As a result, the Church as a whole and Catholic Christians in particular are bound to adopt a new relationship to all of humankind who find themselves in one way or another outside the boundaries of explicit Christianity or the official Church. Consequently, the Christian can no longer consider him/her self to have the monopoly on good will, fidelity to conscience, or readiness to obey God's call.¹⁷

Secondly, although Vatican II stopped short of solemnly defining the possibility of universal salvation as a dogma, there is now no doubt that this theological truth possesses binding dogmatic force. Roman Catholic Christians are now bound in conscience to hold fast to the belief in God's universal salvific will.¹⁸ No longer can they hold the opinion that God denies the possibility of salvation to a wide section of humankind or withholds the offer of salvation from any individual who may appear morally blameworthy.¹⁹ Consequently, the Christian is bound to affirm the mysterious union in faith among all people who share in this common call to supernatural salvation through participation in Christ's paschal mystery.²⁰

Thirdly, by its clear and unabashed proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, Vatican II encouraged Catholic Christians to abandon their timidity with regard to salvation and to embrace instead the new and irreversible message of hope, a message that is both a solace and a summons to themselves and to the world.²¹ To refuse to carry


¹⁸Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 201f.


the "burden" of this hope is to betray the spirit of Vatican II. On account of the proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, Rahner concluded that the World Church, as such, has appeared on the scene with the message that the world and all that is within it is embraced by God's salvific will.

Rahner contended that this message of hope proclaimed by the Church finds a resonance in all people of every time and culture since it is grounded in each person's graced transcendentality, as well as in God's universal call to salvation expressed historically and culminating preeminently in the Christ-event.

B. The Theological Justification for the Council's Proclamation of the Optimism of Universal Salvation

Rahner maintained that implicit in the Council's proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation is the conviction that the human person and the world as a whole are already predisposed and dynamically oriented towards salvation by virtue of God's salvific will. This orientation is given categorical expression throughout the whole length and breadth of salvation-revelation history. Jesus Christ is the climax of God's Self-communication and of all history who, by his life, death and resurrection has become the Absolute Saviour.

1. The Anthropological Basis

Rahner was convinced that without the supernatural existential the possibility of salvation for all people as clearly taught by Vatican II would be unintelligible. This

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implies that in a World Church, Roman Catholic Christians come to realize that all people are oriented toward salvation by reason of their natural, as well as their supernaturally elevated transcendence.\textsuperscript{26}

(a) \textbf{Obediential Potency}\textsuperscript{27}

By the very fact of being human, all persons possess a positive dynamism towards God.\textsuperscript{28} In his book \textit{Spirit in the World}, Rahner demonstrated that, as dynamically orientated towards being rather than nothingness, the human person positively preapprehends God in a \textit{Vorgriff} that intends God as the silent horizon within every human act of knowing or free decision.\textsuperscript{29} In \textit{Hearers of the Word}, Rahner expanded his analysis of human existence by establishing that the human person is a \textit{potentia obedientialis} for the God of revelation encountered in the world and through history.\textsuperscript{30}


\textsuperscript{27}Rahner, "Potentia Obedientialis," \textit{Dictionary of Theology}, 399f. (G. 1976) "This potency (receptivity) is called 'obediential' because what it really is would still be meaningful if God did not communicate God's Self."


\textsuperscript{30}Rahner, \textit{Hearers of the Word}. See also, Roger Haight, \textit{The Experience and Language and of Grace}, 120.
Some years later, in his essay, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," Rahner described this potentia obedientialis as a positive "inner ordination" to the offer of God's Self-communication without thereby constituting of itself an unconditional demand for grace. Moreover, this capacity for receiving revelation is not one capacity among others. It is human nature itself in its directed openness towards God. Thus, even before justifying grace all human persons possess a positive dynamism towards the God of salvation. In another essay written the same year (1959), Rahner elaborated on these insights by stating that human persons can be known only in their "indefinable essence" when they are understood as potentia obedientialis for the divine life as part of their nature. As unrestricted openness towards being and hence towards God, the human person is posited a being of transcendence by every act of knowledge, freedom and love. Thus, even before justifying grace, all human beings are already oriented towards the possibility of salvation.

(b) Transcendental Experience

As transcendent beings, all human persons are capable of experiences of transcendence and so, of experiences of God, of grace, of the Holy Spirit even before receiving the gift of justifying grace. In his essay, "The Concept of Mystery in Roman


32Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace, 315f. Pure nature does not exist except as a "remainder concept" (Restbegriff) left over after the subtraction of the supernatural existential. 315. Idem, "Nature and Grace," TI 4, p.186.


35Rahner, Foundations, 20. "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."
Catholic Theology." Rahner argued that, by reason of their natural, as well as their supernaturally elevated, transcendence, human persons are radically and inescapably oriented towards the holy mystery as the ground and context of all reality. On the basis of human transcendence, Rahner was able to assert that all persons possess a transcendental knowledge of God from which all other thematic knowledge of God emerges. For this reason, Rahner insisted that all metaphysical analysis about God must return again and again to its source, that is, to the transcendental experience of the human person's orientation towards the Absolute Mystery and to the existential practice of accepting this orientation freely by fidelity to conscience and by acceptance of the uncontrollable in one's life.

Rahner took up the question of the consciousness of grace in three articles written in the 1950's and expanded his reflections there in three other essays published in the 1970's. In his essay, "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," Rahner argued against the view of Scholastic extrinsicism by asserting that the experience of

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37Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Roman Catholic Theology," 49f.

38Rahner, Foundations, 54f., 57; cf., idem, Hearers of the Word, 94. See LG no.16.


grace cannot be separated from the stirrings of human transcendence. Thus, the whole ontological composition of the human person is orientated towards the free acceptance of God’s Self-gift.

In his short essay, "Reflections on the Experience of Grace," Rahner explained that the consciousness of grace can be described still more concretely in "boundary" or "limit" experiences in which the supernatural impulse of grace is even more evident. Since all people have the possibility of such experiences, all people, not just Christians, have the potential to experience grace.

Rahner expanded these reflections considerably in three essays written in the 1970’s. In the first of these, "The Experience of God Today," Rahner emphasized that the experience of God must not be conceived of as though it were one particular experience among others at the same level. On the contrary, the experience of God constitutes "the ultimate depths and radical essence of every spiritual and personal experience" thereby constituting the ultimate unity and totality of experience.

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41Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," 300, 310. The possibility of experiencing grace, and the possibility of experiencing grace as grace are not the same thing. Scholastic extrinsicism held that since grace belongs only to the "ontic" structures of being, it plays no part in natural, human or psychological experience. Cf., idem, "Nature and Grace," 178, 183f.


experience of God is present in every person whether consciously or unconsciously, whether suppressed or accepted. Christianity, therefore, is nothing else but the objectification of this experience of God that exists everywhere by virtue of God’s salvific will.\(^7\)

In his essay, "The Experience of the Holy Spirit," Rahner identified experiences of transcendence, particularly those "limit" or "boundary" experiences, as experiences of the "chalice of the Holy Spirit" which is identical in this life with the "chalice of Christ," and so, of participation in his paschal mystery (\textit{GS} no.22). With Vatican II, Rahner affirmed that the experience of the Holy Spirit, the grace of Jesus Christ and the invitation to share in his paschal mystery exists even outside a verbalized and institutional Christianity by reason of God’s salvific will.\(^9\)

(c) The \textbf{Supernatural Existential}\(^5\)

Human persons are predisposed towards salvation since human nature itself has been radically modified by an offer of God’s Self-communication that sets the whole of human life within the ambience of God’s salvific will and renders the holy mystery as the

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\(^{184}\)Rahner. "The Experience of God Today," 164; cf., idem. "The Experience of Self and the Experience of God," 125. Although the experience of self and the experience of God are not identical, they nevertheless constitute a unity since the experience of God is the enabling condition and the intrinsic element in the experience of self. See \textit{LG} no.16; \textit{GS} no. 22.


gracious saving God. Rahner maintained that every human person comes into existence graced by a "supernatural existential" of radical openness to God as the ground and context of all reality. Even before justification, therefore, the human person has been radically and permanently changed by an offer of grace in which God has made God's Self the constitutive element of the human person by a kind of quasi-formal causality. Hence, the whole spiritual dynamism of the human person is ordered now to the beatific vision which constitutes the human person as embodied, spiritual hunger for God as the ground, source and fulfilment of being. This supernatural offer of grace is termed an "existential" because it represents a permanent condition within the human person as called to salvation. This "existential" is termed "supernatural" because God has truly taken the initiative in communicating God's Self by an offer of grace which truly elevates human nature and radically orientates it towards mystery as the ground and content of being. Consequently, God is always present as an a priori of every human person and as such, is mysteriously present, even though unacknowledged, in every aspect of human existence. This brief summary of what Rahner meant by the supernatural existential can be verified by a glance at the development of his thought in his major essays on grace.

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53 Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, 44.

54 Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, 129.

In his ground-breaking essay, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept on Uncreated Grace," Rahner argued that uncreated grace\textsuperscript{56} is logically prior to created grace. Since the beatific vision is a direct vision, a spiritual union in which God gives God's Self to the blessed through quasi-formal causality\textsuperscript{57} and since grace is a rudimentary participation in this final fulfilment, it too bears the character of quasi-formal causality.\textsuperscript{58} Hence, all human persons possess God as the constitutive element of their being.

In his second major essay on grace, "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," Rahner proposed his solution to the problem raised by the extrinsicist view of the relationship between nature and grace by arguing theologically from the universal salvific will of God as it is reflected in his doctrine of the supernatural existential.\textsuperscript{59} On account of the offer of God's Self-communication, the ontological constitution of the human being in this world is supernaturally elevated because it is constituted in grace by

\textsuperscript{56}Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," TI 1, pp. 319-345, esp. p. 334. (G. 1939) See also, idem, "Grace." SM vol.2, tr. William J.O'Hara et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968-70), 418. Grace as such is first and foremost God in God's Self communication (uncreated grace). See also, Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace, 122. Created grace refers to the effect of uncreated grace, the transformation in the souls of the justified. See also, John Galvin, "The Invitation of Grace," in A World of Grace, 66.

\textsuperscript{57}Rahner, Foundations, 121. In formal causality, a principle of being is a constitutive element in another subject by the fact that it communicates itself to this subject and does not just cause something different from itself. He termed it "quasi" because it is predicated of God only by analogy. For more on the original philosophical usage of the term see Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace, 123, fn.#10.

\textsuperscript{58}Rahner, "Some Implications of The Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," 325f.

\textsuperscript{59}Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," 297-317. (G.1950) For the background to this essay in terms of the clash between scholastic extrinsicism and the intrinsicist views of the "Nouvelle Théologie" see Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace, 124f.
the universal saving will of God. As graced by the offer of God's Self-communication all persons, not just Christians, are oriented towards salvation. Rahner expanded upon many of these points in his later essay, "Nature and Grace" and, in so doing, drew some important implications of his doctrine of the supernatural existential for a World Church. First, uncreated grace permeates the whole of human existence, even human nature, so that there are stirrings of grace which precede the act of accepting justification in faith and love. Supernatural transcendence can now be seen as the fundamental dynamism and capacity to dispose of oneself in a manner critical for salvation by providing the possibility of performing supernatural acts. Second, on account of the supernatural existential it follows that, even outside the process of official revelation, the history of religion is not merely a product of natural reason and sin but truly a product of grace. Rahner concluded that the entire moral life of a person belongs within the realm of supernatural activity. Clearly, without the supernatural existential, the possibility of salvation for all people as is clearly taught in the documents of Vatican II would be

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The supernatural existential, however, has a history both from the view of God's freedom and that of human persons and their freedom.\(^{67}\)

2. The Trinitarian Basis

The God whom human persons encounter as the holy Mystery is none other than the Trinitarian God who draws near in forgiving intimacy, gives human persons a share in the divine life and acts in history on behalf of their salvation.\(^{68}\) This revelation of the Self-communicating God reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, the Absolute Bringer of salvation who, by his life, death and resurrection becomes the source and mediator of salvation and the fulfilment of all history.

(a) The Universal History of Salvation

Rahner saw all of salvation history in its relation to the life of the Trinity, to profane history and to the general history of religions.\(^{69}\) The human person's response to

\(^{66}\)Rahner, "Nature and Grace." cf., idem, "Supernatural Existential." SM vol. 1, 306; cf., idem. Foundations, 152. Rahner referred to these passages in the documents: (LG no.16; GS no.22; AG no.7; NA no.1ff.

\(^{67}\)Rahner, Foundations 143. See also, Anne Carr, "Starting with the Human," in A World of Grace, 22-26.

\(^{68}\)All major documents of Vatican II contain some summary of God's loving plan of salvation as it has unfolded through history and is attested to by the Scriptures. See LG nos.2, 3, 4, 5; DV nos.2, 3, 4; SC nos.1, 5, 6; UR nos.2, 3; GS no.10; AG nos.2, 3; GS nos. 45; NA no.4. Scriptures references mentioned throughout these passages include: Eph. 1:1-14; Col.1:15; Rom.8:29. See Aloys Grillmeier, "The Mystery of the Church," in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol.1 of 5 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967-69), 140f. See also, Grillmeier, "The Mystery of the Church," 142. See also, Brechter, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," 115.

God's Self-communication is always mediated concretely and historically in such a way that salvation is either accepted or rejected through the existential exercise of human freedom.\(^70\) The unique and final culmination of revelation history has already occurred in the God-human who embodies and manifests in himself God's Self-communication and its acceptance for all humankind.\(^71\)

In his essay, "History of the World and Salvation History," Rahner presented three theses that describe how salvation can be encountered, experienced and accepted in faith, hope and love even apart from the Church's official proclamation.\(^72\) First, salvation takes place within the history of the world, a fact that has been driven even more forcefully into the Church's consciousness by Vatican II.\(^73\) This thesis implies that every person is given within his/her situation the genuine subjective possibility of reaching salvation.\(^74\) Second, salvation history is also distinct from profane history.\(^75\) God intervenes in history by the words of the prophets and above all through the Christ-event in order to interpret a particular part of the otherwise ambiguous history, thus giving it a definite saving or

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\(^{71}\) Rahner, *Revelation and Tradition*, 15. See *DV* no.4; *SC* nos.1, 6, 5; *NA* no.3; *GS* no.38.


\(^{75}\) Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation History," 100; cf., idem, *Revelation and Tradition*, 17.
damming character. Third, salvation history explains profane history because the Christ-event proclaimed in official salvation history manifests the ultimate character of all history. This manifestation is clearest in Jesus Christ to whom all of history belongs as his own pre-history.

(b) The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation

In his monograph, The Trinity, as well as in his earlier essay, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" Rahner argued that the Trinity is a mystery of salvation, otherwise it would never have been revealed. He demonstrated the truth of this statement by proposing the axiom that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa." Rahner's proof of the axiom revolved around the theological doctrines of grace and

76 Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation History," 106f. This is called the special, or official, or explicit salvation-revelation history. Cf., idem, Foundations, 155, 174; cf., idem, with Joseph Ratzinger, Revelation and Tradition, tr. W.J. O'Hara (Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1966), (G. 1965), 15. See also, Haight, The Experience and the Language of Grace, 165. See LG nos. 2, 3, 4; AG nos.2, 3; UR no.3.

77 Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation History," 110 cf., idem, "On the 'History of Revelation' According to the Second Vatican Council," 198, 195f. Instead of ascribing only a "saving providence of God" to the time before the prophets, Rahner felt that the writers of the text (DV no.3) ought to have acknowledged with courage, as do the other documents, the possibility of a real revelation history during this period. Rahner referred to these texts: LG nos.16, 17; AG nos.3, 8, 9, 14, 15, 17; GS nos.27, 26, 38, 41, 57. (196)


incarnation. With regards to the incarnation, Rahner pointed out that in this mystery there is a dogmatically certain case of a special relationship of a divine person to the world in the order of salvation. Consequently, there is the possibility of a real communication of the whole Trinity as such in the process of salvation. Secondly, since only the Logos could become human by virtue of the personal being which is proper to the Word alone, human nature is the "constitutive real symbol of the Logos." Consequently, the Logos of the immanent Trinity and the Logos of the economy is strictly one and the same.

The second step of Rahner's proof of the axiom touches upon the non-appropriated relations of the divine persons to those justified by grace. Rahner argued that each of the divine persons communicates, as such, to human persons according to the particular quality of being each divine person possesses. This three-fold relationship to human persons is not merely an image or analogy of the immanent Trinity; it is this Trinity itself. Consequently, the real divine communication which takes place in the dimension of salvation must also be a real communication in God's own divine life.

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80 Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise De Trinitate," 89ff.; cf., idem. The Trinity. 27. See also, LaCugna, "Re-Conceiving the Mystery of the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation." 6. See AG no.3.


84 Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise De Trinitate," 98; cf., idem. "Trinity" in SM, vol.6, 300. Rahner also pointed out that, on the same basis of God's real self-communication, it should be more clearly seen how the order of grace and the order of creation is dependent on Christ. See Rahner, "Nature and Grace," 176. See also, Riesenhuber,
Rahner pointed to three consequences that follow from his axiom that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice versa that I see have implications for Roman Catholics in a World Church. First, in considering the doctrine of the Trinity, Christians need not hesitate to appeal to their own experience of Jesus Christ and his Spirit in them as given in the history of salvation and faith as that is where the immanent Trinity itself is already present. Second, on the basis of the axiom, it is possible for Christians to trace the history of the revelation of this mystery even in the Old Testament and to regard it as an authentic "pre-history" of this revelation. Third, the axiom removes much of the difficulty surrounding the use of the word "person" in reference to the Trinity.

Roman Catholics Christians in a World Church recognize that all are called to salvation by the Triune God who acts throughout all of human and salvation-revelation history.

3. The Christological Basis

The revelation of the Self-communicating God reaches its irreversible climax in Jesus Christ, the Absolute Bringer of salvation who, by his whole life, death and resurrection becomes the source and mediator of salvation and the fulfilment of all history. Roman Catholic Christians in a World Church realize that all people of all times are related to Jesus Christ in his paschal mystery and that by reason of his mediatorship, 


Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" 98f; cf., The Trinity, 39. See LG no.4; AG nos.3, 4.

See DV no.3; NA no.4.

Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" 98f. For Rahner's comments on the difficulty of the notion of "person" when applied to the Trinity, see "Trinity" in SM, 302; cf., idem, The Trinity, 57; cf., idem, "The Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," 345; cf., idem, "Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam," 110-114.
all persons are dependent on one another in the work of salvation.  

(a) **The Absolute Bringer of Salvation and the Climax of all Revelation**

In his essay, "Christology Within an Evolutionary World-View," Rahner sought, by means of a transcendental or "essential" Christology, to attempt to relate historical faith in Jesus Christ to the transcendent ingredient in concrete human experience in an effort to demonstrate that the hypostatic union is the true goal of the world and the deep desire of all humankind. In the first stage of his argument, Rahner proposed that the human person is that being in whom the basic tendency of matter to find itself by becoming spirit through a process of active self-transcendence definitely reaches fulfillment. Secondly, he demonstrated that this self-transcendence of the cosmos as expressed in the human person is constantly moving towards the goal of God's Self-communication to it in grace and glory and to the free acceptance of this offer. Thirdly, he argued that the "first step," the "absolute guarantee" that this ultimate and basically unsurpassable self-

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88 See **DV** nos. 4, 17; **GS** nos. 22, 45; **AG** nos. 3, 4; **LG** nos. 8, 62.

89 For a clear presentation of the two contrasting approaches see Rahner, "Two Basic Types of Christology," **TI** 13, pp. 213-23. See also J. Peter Schineller, "Discovering Jesus Christ: A History we Share" in **A World of Grace**, 92-106, esp. p. 93f.

90 Rahner, "Christology Within an Evolutionary View of the World," **TI** 5, 158-192. (G. 1962)


92 Rahner, "Christology Within an Evolutionary View of the World," 171, 173f; See also, **GS** no. 45; **AG** no. 4; **DV** nos. 2, 4, 7, 17; **DH** no. 11; cf., idem, **Foundations**, 191-193. See also, Carmody, "Christology in Karl Rahner's Evolutionary World View," 201.
transcendence will succeed is to be found in the Hypostatic Union.\textsuperscript{93} The Saviour is that historical person in whom this process of God's absolute self-communication to the spiritual world is irrevocably present and reaches its climax. As the absolute pledge of God's self-communication to the human person and its acceptance, the saviour embodies hypostatically that perfect union with God and its consummation in beatitude that is the goal of all people.\textsuperscript{94}

(b) **The Saving Significance of the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth**

Like Vatican II, Rahner viewed the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as two aspects of one saving event:\textsuperscript{95} the death was the definitive act of his freedom that summed up his entire life: the resurrection was the manifestation of what transpired in that death, namely, the absolute surrender of Jesus Christ into the mystery of God and its acceptance by the Father.\textsuperscript{96}

In his essay, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," Rahner sought to discover how God's universal salvific will is connected to the Christ-event such that this event, occurring at a particular time and place, has a fundamental importance for the

\textsuperscript{93}Rahner, "Christology Within an Evolutionary View of the World," 17; cf., idem, Foundations, 195.


salvation of all.\textsuperscript{97} In so doing, he pointed out that death of Jesus Christ is the consequence and not simply the cause of universal salvation. It is because God wills salvation for all that Jesus Christ died and rose.\textsuperscript{98}

Since Jesus Christ is the primary sacrament (\textit{Ursakrament}), however, the cross and resurrection also has a primary sacramental causality for the salvation of all people in that it mediates salvation by means of salvific grace and its victorious and irreversible activity in the world.\textsuperscript{99} The significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, therefore, reaches into the future to become the basis for all future events of salvation, and back into the past to be the basis of all previous events of salvation.\textsuperscript{100}

The universal significance of the cross of Jesus Christ for salvation is present and intelligible, however, only if the relationship is a mutual one between Jesus Christ and humanity.\textsuperscript{101} But what of those who through no fault of their own have never really been touched by the explicit message of Christianity? Drawing upon the teaching of Vatican II, Rahner reasoned that, if one can speak of an unthematic presence of God in human persons, one can also say that this saving faith contains an implicit but still genuine presence of Jesus Christ even in so-called atheists.\textsuperscript{102} To demonstrate this.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[97]Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 199-224. See SC nos. 5, 6; GS no.18.
\item[98]Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 207, 211. See LG no.8; DV no.2; SC no.1; AG no.3.
\item[99]Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 212f, 215. The cross and resurrection mediate salvation in the sense of a \textit{Real symbol}. Rahner refers to LG nos.1, 8, 48, 59; UR no.2; AG no.1, GS no.45 which refer to the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation; from this he infers that Jesus Christ must be the primary sacrament. See idem, "The Theology of the Symbol," TI 4, pp. 221-52. (G. 1959)
\item[100]Rahner, "The Death of Jesus and the Closure of Revelation," TI 18, pp. 132-142. (G. 1976) Rahner prefers to say that revelation closed with the successful death of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. (139) See DV no.4.
\item[101]Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 216.
\item[102]Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 217. See AG no.7.
\end{footnotes}
Rahner proposed a searching Christology in which he distinguished three different claims arising from the relationship of eschatological hope to Jesus Christ as these are found in the actual fulfilment of graced human existence. In the demand for an absolute love of neighbour, in the demand of readiness for death and in the appeal for hope in the future a person seeks Jesus Christ, the source of all hope and guarantee of the future, even unknowingly.

(c) Jesus Christ, the One Unique Mediator

In his essay, "One Mediator and Many Mediations," Rahner argued that, on account of the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, everyone is significant and responsible for everyone else in the economy of salvation. The title "Mediatrix" is applicable above all to Mary whose function belongs to the plane of solidarity in salvation which is true of all the redeemed. The very condition required for the possibility of the saving

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104 Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 223. The true meaning of Mt. 25 is that, through radical and unconditional love of a particular neighbour, a person makes an implicit act of faith and love in Jesus Christ.

105 Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 223. To let go of this control and to embrace one's radical powerlessness is an act of hope.

106 Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 224. See GS nos.10, 45; AG no.4; DV nos.2. 4, 7, 17; DH no.1. In this there is experienced that hope that history, even now, embodies the definitive pledge of its final goal.


108 Rahner, "One Mediator and Many Mediations," 173f. It does not, therefore, apply to the plane of the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ which is "the eschatologically perfect," "highest," the "unique case" of human intercommunication before God. Cf., idem, Mary, Mother of the Lord: Theological Meditations (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963). (G. 1956); cf.,idem, "Le principe fondamental de la théologie mariale," RSR 42 (1954): 481-
mediatorship of Jesus Christ and its personal realization in faith, is the intercommunication of all people right down to the ultimate depths of their existence, even to their salvation.\textsuperscript{109} Since the act of love is the act of self-realization wherein there is given the concrete experience of salvation, it is the basic act which mediates salvation.\textsuperscript{110}

Having examined Rahner's understanding of the theological basis for Vatican II's optimism of universal salvation, we turn now to his analysis of the Council's proclamation of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation and its significance for a World Church.

C. The Church as the Universal Sacrament of Salvation

1. The Church as the Universal Sacrament of Salvation
   According to the Documents of Vatican II\textsuperscript{111}

Vatican II taught the following with regard to the Church: that the Church is "a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humankind"

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{109}Rahner, "One Mediator and Many Mediations," 174, 176.
\bibitem{111}See \textit{LG} nos. 1, 9, 48, 59, esp. nos. 1, 8, 48, 59; \textit{AG} nos. 1,2-5, esp. no.1; \textit{GS} nos. 45, 42, esp. no.45; \textit{SC} no.5; \textit{UR} no.2. See \textit{AG} no.6; \textit{GS} nos.3, 89; \textit{OE} no.26; \textit{IM} no.3. The above list of references is taken from Jerome Theisen, \textit{The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation}, foreword by Kilian McDonnell (Collegeville, Minnesota: St. John's University Press, 1976), 53. fn.#32. For the advantages and disadvantages of this model of the Church see Avery Dulles, \textit{Models of the Church} (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 132-34.
\end{thebibliography}
(LG nos.1, 9, 48; AG nos.1, 3);¹¹² that the Church is not only the reflection of this unity, but is an actual instrument for the achievement of this unity (GS no.45); that the Church is also the primordial sacrament of which the seven sacraments are concrete expressions (SC no.5); that while LG no.14 states unequivocally that the Church is necessary for salvation, it also states in no.16 that those also can reach salvation, who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church but sincerely strive to do God's will made known to them through the dictates of conscience;¹¹³ that the Spirit of God makes use of other Christian churches as a means of salvation (UR no.3).¹¹⁴

2. Rahner's Understanding of the Church as Sacrament of Salvation

Rahner's understanding of the sacramental nature of the Church grew immensely as he came to view the Second Vatican Council as the emergence of a World Church. While he had always viewed the Church as a sacrament of God's saving love for the world, he came to see more and more that the Church is also a sign of that salvation already at work in the world, and not only or even primarily within the boundaries of the institutional Church. As such, the members of a World Church are merely the "vanguard" heading the parade made up of countless women and men whose lives have already been touched by God's saving grace. Hence, the image of the Roman Catholic Church as a

¹¹²See Aloys Grillmeier, "The Mystery of the Church," in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol.1, 140. The salvific plan of God was known as the mysterion, a Greek word which translated into Latin is sacramentum. Besides this narrower meaning of sacramentum, the word was also used to refer to the scriptures, or to Jesus Christ, or finally to the Church itself as a mystery. See also Bonaventure Kloppenburg, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, tr. Matthew J. O’Connell, 11. See also, Theisen, The Ultimate Church, 47.

¹¹³See also, Theisen, The Ultimate Church, 42f. Theisen notes that the Council refrains here from repeating traditional teaching that the Church is the continuation of Jesus Christ.

World Church is one of the sacrament of a salvation already taking place in the world rather than being a special prerogative of those claiming explicit membership in the Church.

The seeds of Rahner’s understanding of the Church as the sacrament of universal salvation go back to his writings long before the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, there is a steady development in Rahner’s understanding of the sacramentality of the Church from his early essay in 1947\textsuperscript{115} to his writings after Vatican II\textsuperscript{116} in which he moved from an appreciation of the juridical Church as the proto-sacramental sign of God’s salvific will in Christ, to the Church as sign of salvation already taking place in the world.\textsuperscript{117} Gradually, Rahner came to see that the phrase "sacrament of the world" meant that the Church is primarily oriented to the world. Rahner’s writings after the Council expand upon the teaching of Vatican II on the Church as universal sacrament of salvation and attempt to give the theological justification for this teaching.

In his 1947 essay, "Membership in the Church According to the Encyclical of Pius XII ‘Mystici Corporis Christi.'" Rahner referred to the Church in its juridical structure as the Proto-Sacrament, that is, as the real sign and embodiment of the salvific grace of


\textsuperscript{117}See Edward Vacek, "Development Within Rahner’s Theology," 36-49, esp. p.45f. For an explanation of Rahner’s use of the terms \textit{Ursakrament} and \textit{Grundsakrament}, and the development this usage undergoes in Rahner’s work, see Jerry Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity: A Study of Karl Rahner’s Theology of the Church’s Ministerial Office (Amt) from the Perspective of his Sacramentality," \textit{II. Ecclesiology}, 170-177, esp. pp. 175-177; also fn.#167 of I: Notes, p. 348.
Christ. By drawing on the analogy of the sacraments, Rahner was able to explain how those who have never throughout their entire lives been explicit members of the Church, or even Christians, can, nevertheless, have real membership in the Church. In this way, Rahner anticipated the statements of LG nos.14 and 16 and already found a way to reconcile them by an appeal to the sacramental nature of the Church. The implication would seem to be that in a World Church, the Church is a sacrament of salvation for all people and not just for those who claim explicit membership in the Church.

In his book, The Church and the Sacraments, written immediately before the Council (1961), Rahner drew a distinction between the Church as the primal and fundamental sacrament (Grundsakrament), the contemporary presence in the world of God’s salvific will, and Jesus Christ, the primordial sacrament (Ursakrament), the efficacious, manifest sign of this self-communication and its acceptance by humankind. If the Church is the continuation of the presence of the task and function of Jesus Christ in the world, then salvation is offered and promised to the individual by entrance into positive relation to the Church. Rahner showed, however, that this positive relation admits of varying degrees.

In his essay, "Dogmatic Notes on Ecclesiological Piety," written also in 1961,

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118Rahner, "Membership in the Church," 73. Membership in the Church can be according to each of the notions of sacrament understood as sign and grace (res et sacramenti) or valid sacramental sign without an effect of grace (sacramentum tantum).


122Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments, 13; cf.,idem, Theology of Pastoral Action, 45.
Rahner considerably broadened his understanding of the sacramentality of the Church. He asserted that the Church is not so much the society of the heirs of salvation, but rather the historical and socio-tangible vanguard of the heirs of salvation. Today's Christian has a clearer understanding of God's salvific will and so, a better appreciation of the fact that the faith needed for salvation can come about in ways that appear to draw little from explicit divine revelation. Here, Rahner anticipated Vatican II with its clear assertion of the hope of universal salvation.

These insights found a resonance in Rahner's conciliar and post-conciliar writings in which he deepened and broadened his understanding of the Church as the sacrament of salvation in the light of his growing appreciation of this Council as the emergence of a World Church. In his book, Theology of Pastoral Action, written well before the conclusion of the Council (1964), Rahner argued that the Church is both the gift of salvation and the means of salvation. The Church is the gift of salvation in that it first receives God's love which constitutes it as the historically, socially organized community of those who accept and confess God's self-communication. The Church is also the means of salvation because in its solemn confession, God utters God's salvific word to the world and to each person. Rahner emphasized perhaps even more than Vatican II that, although the Church is both the eschatological gift of salvation and the means of salvation, the Church is primarily a gift of salvation and only consequently a means of

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124 Rahner, "Dogmatic Notes on Ecclesiological Piety," 353. See also, Theisen, The Ultimate Church, 108.

125 Rahner, "Dogmatic Notes on Ecclesiastical Piety," 353.


127 Rahner, Theology of Pastoral Action, 27. For references in the documents, see UR no.3; GS no.45; SC no. 5; LG no.2; AG no.3.
salvation. This implies that the World Church announces a salvation that it has itself received and of which it has continuing need.

In his essay, "The New Image of the Church," written immediately after Vatican II, Rahner contended that in order to understand the statement that the Church is the sacrament of the world's salvation (LG no.1) it is necessary to come to grips with the two apparently contradictory statements of LG nos.14 and 16 which state respectively: that the Church is necessary for salvation and that every person who acts in sincere accord with his/her conscience attains salvation. Rahner insisted that the resolution to these supposed opposites lay in a deeper appreciation of the diaspora situation of the Church in the world in which it is called to be the sacrament of salvation.

In an essay written more than ten years after the Council (1976), Rahner insisted more strongly that the Church is the sacrament of a salvation which belongs permanently to the world outside and not only to those within the visible structure of the Church. Through the Church, a grace is bestowed upon the world that predestines it as a

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128 Rahner, Theology of Pastoral Action, 34. Both giving and receiving are part of the Church's nature.


130 Rahner, "The New Image of the Church, 12. For a complete study on how these two statements are reconciled, see Helen V. Gallagher, "Church and Salvation: The Premise of Karl Rahner's Ecclesiology," 73. See also, Theisen, The Ultimate Church, 51-53. See also, Groot, "The Church as Sacrament of the World," Concilium 31 (1968): 53.

131 Rahner, "The New Image of the Church," 13, 12. To compound the difficulty, many other conciliar documents (AG, GS, UR, OE, DH, NA) point up the fact that the Council did not expect the Roman Catholic Church to be the Church for all people within any foreseeable length of time. Cf., idem, "The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life, in The Christian of the Future, 82.

whole to salvation and not to perdition. It is not that God's salvific will would fail to exist without the Church, but rather that through this sign, the salvific will of God to bestow grace manifests itself as irreversible. I believe that Rahner's point illustrates the fact that the role of the Church as a World Church is to be an effective sign of this grace in the world.

It is seen, therefore, that the image of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church is not only that of mediating salvation to the world but also that of a sign pointing to God's saving grace already at work in the world.

3. Other features of the New Image of the Church Found in the Documents of Vatican II

Rahner also pointed to other features of this new image of the Church found in the documents of Vatican II which also characterize the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. First, the Church is the people of God, a pilgrim Church (LG nos.5, 9, 49, 50). Secondly, within the context of the pilgrim people of God, the Church appears as the sinful Church and as the Church of sinners (LG nos.8, 65; GS no.44; UR nos.4, 6). Thirdly, the Church is described as the communion of faith, hope and love (LG nos.8, 64, 65); as a Church of the Trinity (LG no.4); as the Church not only of hierarchical authority

133Rahner, "What is a Sacrament"?, 143. See also Vacek, "Development Within Rahner's Theology." 43.

134Rahner, "What is a Sacrament"? 144; cf., idem, Foundations, 412f.

135Rahner, "The New Image of the Church," TI 10, pp. 3-29, 28f. In this essay, Rahner lists these other features of the new image of the Church.

and of the sacraments, but of the Church of the free charismata as well (LG no.12); as the Church of martyrdom (LG no.48); as the Church of the poor and oppressed (LG nos.8, 41). Unlike the nature of the Church as sacrament, it may not be immediately apparent how the image of the pilgrim church is related to the World Church. And yet it is obvious that a World Church by the very fact of being in the world is subject to all the provisionality, uncertainty and unfinishedness of human history and, as such, carries within itself its own share of sinfulness and imperfection.

4. Rahner's Understanding of the Pilgrim Church

Rahner noted that in the Council's presentation of the Church as the "seed" of the kingdom of God (LG nos.3, 5, 9), there is distance as well as continuity between the Church and the kingdom. The Church is already, in substance, the kingdom of God but in a state of pilgrimage, in the obscurity of faith. Rahner maintained that the tension between the kingdom and the Church can also be understood as a consequence of the divine plan of salvation. In refusing to make a simple equation between the Church and Jesus Christ, or between the Church and the reign of God, or between the official Church and the people of God, Rahner demonstrated that membership in the church is not limited to explicit membership and that the Church is a pilgrim Church, a sinful Church always in need of conversion (LG no.8; GS nos.43, 44; UR nos.4, 6).

(a) The Pilgrim Church

Long before Vatican II, Rahner had referred to the Church as the "people of God" (Volk Gottes) in his attempt to show how those who did not satisfy the criteria for juridical membership in the Church could, nevertheless, be said to belong to it in "lesser...

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138 Rahner, "Church" in SM, vol.1, 323.
139 Rahner, "Church," 323. See also Vacek, "Development Within Rahner's Theology," 62f.
and looser ways."  

He concluded that both the "people of God" (Volk Gottes), and the full extension of this visibleness in the Church are the expression of God's salvific will.

Rahner continued his reflection on the pilgrim Church in the light of Vatican II and his growing understanding of this Council as the emergence of a World Church. In his essay, "The Church and the Parousia of Christ," Rahner described the Church as "the eschatological salvation-community" of those who, in faith, hope and love, await the Parousia of Jesus Christ. He intimated, therefore, that the World Church must be fully aware of its provisionality so that it never mistakes its present form for the ultimate one. In this connection too, Rahner pointed out that there are limits to the Church's indefectibility. Those acts which are not part of the definitive and irreversible official act of the universal Church belong to the Church's pilgrim existence in faith and hope and

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141 Rahner, "Membership of the Church According to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical 'Mystici Corporis Christi,'" 83.

142 Rahner discussed the theme of the pilgrim Church particularly in three essays: "Why and How Can We Venerate the Saints?" TI 8, pp. 3-23 (G. 1964); "The New Image of the Church," TI 10, pp. 3-29 (G. 1966); "The Church and the Parousia of Christ;" TI 6, pp. 295-312. (G. 1963)

143 Rahner,"The Church and the Parousia of Christ," 296f.

144 Rahner,"The Church and the Parousia of Christ," 297f.

145 Rahner,"The Church and the Parousia of Christ," 302ff., 307. by "indefectibility" Rahner meant that the Church will never perish. On the contrary, it professes of itself an indefectibility of holiness and faith which also extends to the institutional aspect of the Church, particularly as seen in its official ministry. See also, Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 118.
therefore are only provisional.\textsuperscript{146} I believe Rahner's point illustrates that as a pilgrim travelling through time, the World Church needs courage to admit its mistakes and to trust in God alone.\textsuperscript{147}

Rahner summarized his earlier reflections on the pilgrim Church in his essay "The New Image of the Church" (1966), in which he asserted that the Church is conscious of itself as being in the eschatological phase of saving history in which faith perceives that the outcome of the dialogue between God and humanity has already been decided by God in favour of human salvation.\textsuperscript{148} The Church itself is a pilgrim who journeys through history to that eternity in which it will cease to be a salvation institution with an authoritative and sacramental system.\textsuperscript{149} The image of a World Church, therefore, is not one of untarnished perfection and completeness but rather one of constant striving for holiness, both personally and as a Church.

(b) The Church of Sinners and the Sinful Church

The theme of the sinful Church and the Church of sinners is one that undergoes considerable development in Rahner's pre-conciliar\textsuperscript{150} writings and post-conciliar

\textsuperscript{146}Rahner, "The Church and the Parousia of Christ," 308. See also Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 406, II: Notes fn. #245.

\textsuperscript{147}Rahner, "The Church and the Parousia of Christ," 310. See also, Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 120.


\textsuperscript{149}Rahner, "The New Image of the Church, 29. See also, idem, Theology of Pastoral Action, 52. Rahner stressed that although the Church will one day cease to exist as a sign, God will never become "all in all" in such a way that the Church in which God is all in all, will cease to be entirely. See LG no.48.

\textsuperscript{150}Rahner, "The Meaning of Frequent Confessions of Devotion," T\textsc{i} 3, tr. Karl-Heinz and Boniface Kruger (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 177-189 (G. 1934); idem, "Membership in the Church According to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical 'Mystici Corporis Christi', 1-88 (G.1947); idem, "The Church of Sinners," T\textsc{i} 6, pp. 253-69. (G. 1947); idem, "The Church of Saints," T\textsc{i} 3, pp. 91-104 (G.1955); idem, "Dogmatic Notes on Ecclesiastical Piety," T\textsc{i} 5, pp. 336-65. (G.1961). For a summary of the main lines of this development see, Richard
reflection. As early as 1934 Rahner acknowledged the membership of sinners in the Church and the effect of that membership on the Church. Over ten years later, in his essay, "The Church of Sinners," (1947) Rahner took the significant step of rejecting the view that, although the members of the Church were sinful, the Church itself was incorruptibly holy. Rahner argued that the Church was "indefectibly" holy on account of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and sinful because, as a concrete reality, it was bound to be affected by the sinfulness of its members both hierarchical and lay. According to Rahner, it is precisely this Church, the sinful Church and not an idealized Church, that is the means of salvation.

In his essay, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II" (G. 1966), Rahner continued to develop his understanding of the sinful Church by reflecting on the impetus given this subject by Vatican II and the importance it holds for the emerging World


154 Rahner, "The Church of Sinners," 253f., 260. Rahner gave numerous examples both from the history of dogma and in the faith history of individuals in which the Church has been rejected because it is not the "pure" Church, the idealized Church of the perfect. See also, Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 96.

Although he found elements in the documents of Vatican II which supported the reality of the sinful Church, he was disappointed that they were not expressed with greater "clarity, intensity, and detail." While admittedly, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church failed to give the topic of the Church's sinfulness the systematic treatment Rahner felt it deserved, nevertheless, in his view, the Council did acknowledge the sinfulness of the Church. Even though sinners are said to belong to the Church 'corpor' but not 'corde' (LG nos. 14, 8), Rahner surmised that this incorporation must be taken to mean a genuine incorporation which has a positive value for peoples' salvation. These sinners co-determine the quality of the Church itself making the Church itself a sinful Church and not just a holy institute of salvation in which there happen to be sinners. Rahner's position emphasizes that only if the World Church recognizes itself to be the Church of sinners will it be permanently convinced of its need for continual conversion.

It is seen that the World Church is a sacrament for salvation for the world while

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157 Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," 279f. His basic criticism was that the vision of the Church that seemed to prevail was that of a Church going from good to better, rather than from sin to pardoning grace. (280)

158 Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," 277, 282. Rahner pointed out that the framework of the pilgrim people of God makes it clear that the Church is somehow identified with the members who are the Church and therefore, cannot be understood only as a "saving institution" over and against its members. Rahner referred also to LG nos. 8, 14.


160 Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," 284, 285-292. Rahner cited a number of assertions which the conciliar documents make about the effect of sin upon the Church. See also the following passages: LG nos. 8, 9, 11, 31, 48, 65; UR nos. 4, 6, 7. See also, Congar, "Comment l'église sainte doit se renouveler sans cesse?" Unam Sanctam 41 (Paris 1963): 131-54, esp. p. 33f.

161 Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," 292. See also, Congar, "Comment l'église sainte doit se renouveler sans cesse?" 33f. See LG no. 8.
being at the same time a pilgrim Church, a sinful Church and a Church of sinners.

D. Non-Christians, Non-Christian Religions and the Missionary Task of the Church

1. The Teaching of Vatican II on Non-Christians, Non-Christian Religions and the Missionary Task of the Church

The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity and the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions teach the following with regard to evangelization: that the theological basis for mission is the mystery of the Trinity and God’s eternal plan of salvation (AG nos.2, 3, 4, 9); that the Church in mission is the means of salvation (AG nos.3, 4, 5, 6); that non-Christian religions guide people towards the true God and serve as a "preparation for the Gospel," even though they contain ideas and practices that need to be "enlightened and purified" (AG no.3); that the specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root (AG no.6); that on account of God’s universal salvific will, there is a necessity for all to be converted to Jesus Christ as he is made known by the Church’s preaching (AG no.7); that missionary activity is closely bound up with human nature and its aspirations (AG no.8); that it is the Holy Spirit who calls all people to Jesus Christ by the preaching of the Gospel, and stirs up in their hearts the obedience of faith (AG no.15); that in its task of fostering love among people and nations, the

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162 See Brechter, "Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity," 113f., 122. See also, Calvert Alexander, "Missions," in The Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter Abbott, 580f. See also, Theisen, The Ultimate Church, 49, 62.

163 See Brechter, "Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity," 114. See also, idem, fn #6, p. 114 in which these other references to the document are given: (AG nos.3, 8, 9, 14, 15, 17; GS nos.22, 26, 38, 41, 57; LG nos.16, 17).

164 See Brechter, "Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity," 120f. See also, Abbott, "Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, in Documents of Vatican II, p. 59, fn.#19.
Church gives primary consideration to what human beings have in common (NA no.1); the Church the Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in non-Christian religions, but on the contrary, looks with sincere respect upon them since they "often reflect a ray of that truth that enlightens all people" (NA no.2).

2. Rahner’s Theory of the Anonymous Christian, Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church

Rahner contended that by its positive appraisal of non-Christian religions and by its implicit endorsement of the nameless Christianity at work everywhere in the world and not just within the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican II entered into a new relationship with non-Christians and, in so doing, paved the way for the emergence of a World Church. Furthermore, in the Council’s clear proclamation of God’s universal salvific will, Rahner found an implicit affirmation of his theory of anonymous Christianity and the salvific value of non-Christian religions.

(a) Anonymous Christian and Anonymous Christianity

Rahner’s first use of the term "anonymous Christians" occurred in 1962 in his essay, "Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today." In keeping with Vatican II.

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166 See also, Brechter, "Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity," 122. Brechter adds that the Council gave no clear and certain decision on the value of non-Christian religions for salvation. See also, Theisen, The Ultimate Church, 62.


Rahner refused to dismiss the genuine goodness in non-believers as the evidence of merely natural virtue observing instead that patient fidelity to duty can also be a form of "anonymous Christianity" (AG nos.7, 8; LG no.16; GS no.22). In this case, the true substance of the Christian religion may well be grasped more surely by the non-Christian than by the explicit Christian who seeks to escape his/her responsibility. Rahner was not alarmed by the fact that Christianity can no longer be taken as a matter of course in Europe and in the world, nor was he upset by the vast number of non-Christian people and nations. This was because he saw everywhere a "nameless Christianity" for whom explicit Christianity was but the "homecoming" of everything in the way of truth and love that already exists anywhere. The implication would seem to be that as a World Church, therefore, the Roman Catholic Church ought to acknowledge, recognize and celebrate elements of Christianity found outside its visible structure, especially when these are present in the non-believer and the atheist.

In a second essay, "Dogmatic Notes on Ecclesiastical Piety," Rahner argued that the Church is the "vanguard," the historical tangibility of a saving grace which goes beyond the sociologically tangible visible Church. This is the grace of an anonymous Christianity that has not yet reached maturity inside the visible Church, but which is none the less real. Rahner's argument suggests that the Roman Catholic Christian in a World Church should not regard non-Christians as those who are "outside the stream of

Hebblethwaite article includes a brief summary of some of the key essays in the volume together with a short critique. See also, Röper, The Anonymous Christian.


salvation," but rather see such persons as "anonymous Christians" who have not yet come to full consciousness of their graced identity.⁷³ The object of missionary zeal, therefore, is to share a grace which the others still lack, namely, the grace of explicit membership in the Church.⁷⁴ The motive for doing this is a deep belief in God's universal saving will for all people, as well as the conviction born of this faith that possibly, the person to whom the message is preached has already accepted Jesus Christ and his Church.⁷⁵

A few years later, Rahner expanded and developed his theory of anonymous Christians and anonymous Christianity in what would become the beginning of a series of essays on this topic.⁷⁶ In his essay "Anonymous Christians" (1965), Rahner argued that the expressly Christian revelation is nothing but the explicit statement of the revelation of grace which the human person always experiences in the depths of his/her being.⁷⁷ He saw in the movement towards self-acceptance, the implicit acceptance of Jesus Christ as "the absolute perfection and guarantee" of the human person's anonymous movement towards God by grace, a grace which finds historical expression in the Church.⁷⁸

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⁷⁸Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," 394. See also, Paul Knitter, No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Towards the World Religions (New York: Maryknoll, 1990). The theory of "Anonymous Christianity" is to help Christians understand non-
Although Vatican II never used the exact term "Anonymous Christianity" or "Anonymous Christian," Rahner felt that the theory was affirmed by the documents thus making this concept totally compatible with conciliar teaching.\(^{179}\)

(b) **The Missionary Task of the Church**

In spite of the affirmation of the principle of anonymous Christianity by the Council, Rahner felt compelled, in the face of increasing opposition, particularly from missionaries,\(^{180}\) to demonstrate clearly how this theory could be reconciled with the missionary task of the Church.\(^{181}\) Rahner framed the following suggestions for a positive evaluation of the meaning of mission, each of which I feel has implications for a World Church. First, there is need of a freshly interpreted theology of mission, one that reflects Christians. It is not a tool to be used directly in dialogue with other religions.


the optimism of salvation proclaimed by Vatican II which is so widely accepted by Christians today.\footnote{Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," 175.} Secondly, since it is possible for all persons, including non-Christians, to arrive at a state of justification through the conferral of supernatural grace, one cannot deduce the meaning and necessity of the Church’s missionary task primarily from the salvation of the individual. According to the Second Vatican Council, mission is not directed exclusively to the individual but extends primarily to civilizations.\footnote{Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," 176; cf., idem, "Foreword," in The Church as Mission, 12f.} Rahner’s point speaks directly to a World Church which seeks to make Jesus Christ, his gospel and his grace, present among all peoples according to their own histories and cultures, thereby achieving a new incarnational presence of Christ in the world.\footnote{Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," 176; cf., idem, "The New Image of the Church," 27; cf., idem, "Foreword," in The Church as Mission, 13. See also, Hillman, The Church as Mission, 21, 41, 54, 56, 102. See also, J.Schütte, "Ce que la mission attendait du concile," 114, 120. See also, Michael Fahey, "The Mission of the Church: To Divinize or to Humanize?" CTPS 31 (1976): 51-69. Fahey suggests that the word "tasks" would be preferable to that of "mission."} The consequence of this renewed theology of mission, as Rahner has outlined it, is a more radical responsibility on the part of each Roman Catholic Christian in a World Church and a greater chance that the implicit Christianity which exists everywhere will be brought to its fullness in an explicit Christianity.\footnote{Rahner, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," 177. Rahner also addressed the problem of how it is possible to possess the faith necessary for salvation outside of an explicit encounter with revelation (AG no. 15) in two essays: "Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christian," and "Anonymous and Explicit Faith." See also, Klaus Risenhuber, "Afterword: The Anonymous Christian According to Karl Rahner," in The Anonymous Christian, 168f. See also, idem, "Rahner’s ‘Anonymous Christian’" TD 13 (1965): 163-171, esp. 170.(LG no.16)}
3. The Salvific Value of Non-Christian Religions

In a lecture given immediately prior to Vatican II, Rahner laid down the ground-work for some of his later ideas regarding the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions, ideas he was later to develop further in the light of his growing appreciation of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church. In this lecture, Rahner presented four theses as a basis upon which Christianity might view non-Christian religions and understand itself in relationship to them: first, Christianity is the absolute religion intended for all people beside which no other religion is of equal right; second, because non-Christian religions contain supernatural elements deriving from the grace of Jesus Christ, they ought to be recognized as lawful religions despite the fact that they contain elements of error and depravity; third, it follows from the second thesis that the member of a non-Christian religion can be regarded "in this or that respect" as an anonymous Christian; fourth, the Church is not the exclusive community of those who have a claim to salvation, but is rather the "historically tangible vanguard" of that

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salvation which occurs everywhere.¹⁹⁰

In three essays written after the Council, Rahner developed further these insights regarding the positive salvific function of non-Christian religions and in so doing made explicit what was only implicitly stated at Vatican II.¹⁹¹ In his essay, "Church, Churches, and Religions," written immediately after the Council, Rahner wrestled with the question of how it is possible to reconcile belief in the absoluteness of Christianity and the Church with the fact that even after 2,000 years of preaching the Christian message, the greater part of humankind is neither Catholic nor Christian.¹⁹² Without abandoning his conviction with regard to the absoluteness of Christianity and the Church,¹⁹³ Rahner reasoned that, on the basis of God's salvific will and the social nature of human persons, every individual must have some positive means of salvation available to him/her. This way of salvation usually finds concrete expression in some form of religion.¹⁹⁴ Rahner argued that, if the supernatural existential is present in every person in all ages, it stands


¹⁹³Rahner, "Church, Churches, and Religions," 39.

to reason that it is also at work in all these religions and in their objective forms. The religions themselves, therefore, although not in a pure or unadulterated sense, are objective expressions of God's Self-communication.

Two essays written almost a decade later, demonstrate an even more positive appraisal of world religions than Rahner had suggested thus far. In his essay, "Jesus Christ in Non-Christian Religions," Rahner asserted that, not only are non-Christian religions "legitimate" means of salvation for their members and expressions of God's Self-Communication, but Jesus Christ is present and active in them in a manner similar to the way he is present and active in the faith of the individual non-Christian. Now justifying faith always comes into being through the Spirit of Jesus Christ who is present and efficacious in all faith. This takes place by reason of the seeking memoria of every faith as it moves towards the Absolute Bringer of salvation and watches for him in history as the radical fulfilment of its hope. It would seem that Rahner's position emphasizes the obligation of a World Church to recognize that all religions, not only

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196Rahner, "Church, Churches, and Religions," 46, 48. For a discussion of why Rahner's theocentricism is a helpful approach to non-Christian religions, see Alan Race, "Christianity and Other Religions: Is Inclusiveness Enough"? Theology 89 (1986): 178-86. See AG no.3; NA no.2.


198Rahner, "Jesus Christ in Non-Christian Religions," 39,41 43. Rahner asserted that the whole tenor of Notra Aetate goes far beyond what is actually stated there regarding the positive salvific function of these world religions. See fn.#5, p.41.


200Rahner, "Jesus Christ in Non-Christian Religions," 46, 48f; cf., idem, Foundations, 318-20; cf., idem, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," 221-224. He added that it is up to the religious historian to go beyond this answer. (50)
Christianity, have the potential to be ways of salvation for their members since Jesus Christ is also present in them.

In a second essay written a year later, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation," Rahner emphasized the universal saving function these religions have in themselves for the salvation of all people, including Christians. It was significant, for Rahner, that the theme of the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, is not taken from the missionary mandate, but rather from the primary task of the Church to foster love and unity among people, and even among nations (NA no. 1). By seeing in the different religions the common quest of all humankind for the ultimate meaning of human life and death, the Council invited Roman Catholic Christians to "take seriously non-Christian religions." I consider that Rahner's point relates directly to the mission of a World Church which is to work for the unity of all humankind, particularly by co-operating with the action of God's unifying Spirit wherever it is manifested.

Rahner felt that the optimism of universal salvation proclaimed by Vatican II ought to be directed in a special way to the Jews and to Islam. In contrast to the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to on Non-Christian Religions Rahner did not consider the religions of Judaism and Islam to be non-Christian religions since the faith of each has its foundation in the Old Testament revelation. This emphasizes the


203 Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation," 288. See also, idem, "The New Image of the Church," 18. See also idem, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 86. See also, idem, Encountering Jesus: Encountering Judaism: A Dialogue, (with Pinchas Lapide) tr. by Davis Perkins (New York: Fortress Press, 1985.) See also, idem, "Die Zweite Konzilsperiode," 77; idem, "Oneness and
fact that Vatican II opened the way for the emergence of a World Church in which positive co-existence with other religions and a sincere to dialogue with them reveals the optimism of salvation.²⁰⁴

**Conclusion**

Rahner maintained that by its proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, Vatican II signalled the emergence of a World Church in that it made operative in the faith-consciousness of Roman Catholic Christians a truth that was always present in the Church's faith. He emphasized that on account of Vatican II, Roman Catholic Christians in a World Church are bound to hope for non-Christians, non-Catholic Christians, and even for atheists that which they hope for themselves; namely, that all humankind and indeed, all creation will reach that salvation for which they yearn, even if unknowingly. Rahner also contended that by its proclamation of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation, Vatican II pointed to the coming of a World Church, a Church that would witness to a salvation already taking place everywhere in the world and of which the Church also has continuing need. By its positive evaluation of non-Christian religions, Vatican II facilitated the emergence of a World Church, one which recognizes that non-Christian religions have a part to play in God's salvific plan, not only for their members and not only for the world, but also for the Church. Rahner concluded that in this way, the optimism of universal salvation proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council opened the way for a World Church, one that truly reflects God's salvific will as gracious mercy.

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CHAPTER III
THE LOCAL CHURCH

Introduction

By highlighting the presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the local church and in the community at worship, Vatican II paved the way for the World Church, one whose liturgy, government and ways of life reflect that unity in diversity that is the hallmark of a World Church. Rahner believed that by its recognition of the local church, the Council set in motion a movement of decentralization that would inaugurate and facilitate the emergence of a World Church.

This chapter unfolds in four sections. Section A explores Vatican II’s emphasis on the presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the local church and in the community at worship, and gives Karl Rahner’s understanding of the significance of this development in terms of the emergence of a World Church.

Section B discusses the provisions made by the Council to ensure that the Church’s cultural diversity is reflected in the variety of liturgies and in different expressions of the one Christian Proclamation, and gives Rahner’s understanding of the significance of this liturgical renewal in terms of its impact on the Coming-To-Be of a World Church.

Section C explores how the variety of liturgies leads to the formation of truly regional churches and so to the exercise of the collegial-synodal principle in the Church as articulated by Vatican II and gives Rahner’s understanding of the significance of this principle and its application for the emergence of a World Church.

Section D discusses the universal call to holiness and to service in the Church according to Vatican II and Rahner’s understanding of the significance of this call in terms of the need for a personal commitment of faith on the part of all who minister in a
World Church. It also highlights the need for variation, redefinition and adaptation in the form of the Church's ministries in response to the needs of a World Church.

When the liturgy is truly reflective of the genuine cultural diversity which marks a World Church, when these variety of liturgies and proclamations give way to truly autonomous regional churches that are more than European outposts, when the witness of the local Church comes from members who are genuinely holy, there will be an emergence of a World Church.

A. The Presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the Local Church and in the Worship-Community

1. The Presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the Local Church and in the Community at Worship According to Vatican II

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church states that "the Church of Christ is truly present [vere adest] in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament." Here the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the gospel and the sharing of the eucharistic meal which unites them into one body (LG no.26). Even though these communities may be small and poor, or living far from any other, Jesus Christ is present and therefore, also, the Church (LG no.26). The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, further affirms that Jesus Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations (SC no.7). It is from the liturgy, especially from the Eucharist, that grace is channelled into Christians, as from a fountain, thus making it the goal to which all other activities of the

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Church are directed (SC nos. 7, 10).

2. Rahner’s Understanding of the Presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the Local Community and the Community at Worship

Rahner regarded the statement of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no. 26) that Jesus Christ and his Church are truly present in all local churches and in the worshipping community, to herald the beginning of a World Church, a decentralized Church in which the whole exists in its parts and the parts, in the whole. Increasingly, Rahner came to view the Church’s liturgy as a reflection of that divine liturgy always occurring in the world.

(a) The Presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the Local Church and in the Community at Worship

The understanding found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no. 26) concerning the presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church in the local Church and in the community at worship was present in Rahner’s writings long before Vatican II. As early as 1948, in his essay, "Peaceful Reflections on the Parochial Principle," Rahner argued that the parish church is the representative of the diocese and the primary place for the pastoral care of Christians. Some years later, in his book The Parish, he established that the Church as "event" is necessarily a local community, a happening that occurs most


intensely in the celebration of the Eucharist. In his essay, "The Word and the Eucharist" (1960), Rahner argued that the Eucharist is the "supreme actualization of the Church" and as such, is the real origin of all the other sacraments. A year later, in his book, The Episcopacy and the Primacy, Rahner added that because the Eucharist is the highest realization of the Church in a given place and time, therefore the local Church is not merely an "agency" of the universal Church. Rather, it is the event itself of this universal Church.

These insights are taken up and developed further in Rahner’s post-conciliar writings in which he focused intensely on the Council’s recognition of the local Church as the presence of the Church and of Jesus Christ and, in so doing, pointed to the implications of this truth for a World Church. In his essay, "The New Image of the Church," Rahner noted that in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no.26), the highest truth that can be said of the Church as a whole is, in fact, asserted of the local community: namely, that in it, Jesus Christ himself, his gospel, his love and the unity of believers are present. For Rahner, it was highly significant that the Council Fathers were moved to insert a passage on the local church into this conciliar document that tended on the whole to view the Church primarily in terms of the universal Church.

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6Rahner, The Parish, 28ff. (G. 1956)
8Rahner, The Episcopacy and the Primacy, 27.

Council Fathers did this for fear that the church that celebrates the Eucharist, prays, loves and bears the cross of existence might be obscured. Consequently, the local church and community at worship are not merely sub-divisions of a "mega-organization" called the Church. They are the Church in its highest actualization. The challenge for Roman Catholic Christians is to make the ecclesiology of the local church as vibrant for them as it was for the early Christians, and to see in this local church, or worshipping community, the fullness of the Church.

In the second essay, "On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community According to the Teaching of Vatican II," Rahner explored in detail the three essential elements of the local church; namely, the preaching of the gospel, the sharing of the eucharistic meal and the love and unity that flow from the Eucharist with a view to


applying each to the local church as a diaspora community (LG nos.8, 39, 40).14 These three elements apply above all to the diaspora communities that are "small and poor" since these "too" constitute the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.15 In fact, in Rahner's view, these communities stand a better chance of fulfilling their function of making Jesus Christ present in the world through the word of preaching, through the sacraments and through love precisely because they must do so without reliance on power, prestige or earthly wisdom.16 Rahner maintained that the poverty and lowliness that characterize the diaspora community of the local church provide a model of the future Church.17 By this statement I believe Rahner implied that it is only in the local church that the Christian will encounter the World Church and recognize the presence of Jesus Christ.18

In the third essay, "On the Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at


17Rahner, "On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community According to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council," 96, 98. Rahner felt that, in making this connection between the true nature of the Church and poverty, the Council failed to give it the full scope and force desired. The reference is to LG nos.8, 41ff; PO no.17; GS no.42; CD no.13. Cf., idem, "The New Image of the Church," 11; cf., idem, The Church After the Council, 49; idem, "The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life," 78. See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 155.

Worship." Rahner took a systematic and synthetic approach to the topic.\textsuperscript{19} By applying what he knew to be true of the phenomenon of presence in general, to the special presence of Jesus Christ in the liturgy, and in particular the Eucharist, Rahner was able to arrive at a deeper understanding of the three constitutive elements; namely, the word of God, the sharing of the eucharistic meal and the love and unity that flow from the Eucharist (LG no.26). In doing so, he reached two conclusions. First, a mutual presence of Jesus Christ and of the faithful to one another is constituted at the highest level of actuality through the worship of the local church.\textsuperscript{20} Second, while Jesus Christ is present in many different ways in the cult of the Church, this presence, being both "single and active," is prior to all these diverse elements.\textsuperscript{21} This is why the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no.26) could say that Jesus Christ is truly present by the Word of the gospel, through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and through hope and faith.\textsuperscript{22} Rahner emphasized, however, that this presence of Jesus Christ is not restricted to a cultic presence. A person may, in the medium of the Holy Spirit, fulfil and make actual this presence of Jesus Christ through the mysticism of everyday life.\textsuperscript{23} This observation led

\textsuperscript{19}Rahner, "On the Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship," TI 10, pp.71-83. (G. 1967)


\textsuperscript{21}Rahner, "On the Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship," 77.

\textsuperscript{22}Rahner, "On the Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship," 79f. Also, in the Eucharist, two modes of the one presence are achieved in that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are made present and actual sacramentally, and the body and blood of Jesus Christ are present substantially.

Rahner to a different understanding as to how the Eucharist can be the "summit" and "source" of the Christian life from that enunciated in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (no.10).

Rahner maintained that the liturgy of the Church is reflective of that divine liturgy always taking place in the world and in the concrete life and death of every Christian. While the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy chose to speak of the cult of the Church, and in particular, the Eucharist, as the "summit," "source," and "fountain" of the Christian life (SC no.10), Rahner preferred to use the terms "Mass of Life" and "Liturgy of the World" of which the Church’s liturgy is a reflection. Even before Vatican II, Rahner insisted that no devotion, not even the Mass, could be the single organizing principle for the whole of the Christian life. Since the reception and increase of the grace received at the altar can happen and are meant to happen in Christian life itself, it is wrong to proclaim the Eucharist as the one and only source of Christian life and grace.

Rahner developed these insights in three essays written in the 1970’s in which he responded to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (no.10), and modified some of his earlier thinking on the sacraments. In the first essay, "How to Receive a Sacrament and Mean it"? Rahner proposed a "Copernican Revolution" in Catholic thinking about the sacraments. Instead of seeing in them a spiritual movement outward from the sacramental


25Rahner, Mission and Grace, vol.1, 207. The most Rahner would say is that the Mass is "a most central mystery of Christian existence."

26Rahner, Mission and Grace, 208, 210ff. He stressed, however, that there is a sense in which the Mass can and must be very central indeed in the life of a Christian. (212) Cf., idem, Opportunities for Faith: Elements of a Modern Spirituality, tr. by Edward Quinn (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 224. (G. 1971)

27Rahner, "How To Receive a Sacrament and Mean it?" (G. 1970); "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," TI 14, 161-165 (G. 1970); "On The Theology of Worship," TI 19, tr.E. Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 141-149 (G. 1979). This later essay is to be considered along with "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event."
action to an effect in the world, Christians should look instead for a spiritual movement of
the world toward the sacrament. The world and its history is "the terrifying, sublime
death-and immolation liturgy" which reaches its culmination on calvary. Since human
persons are blind to this "grand liturgy of the world," it must be brought into "reflex
awareness" in the liturgy. Since the Mass is only a "tiny sign" of the "Mass of the
world," one can regard it as "summit" and "source" (SC no.10) only in a very qualified
sense.

In the second essay, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the
Sacramental Event," Rahner assigned equal importance to both movements in the liturgy:
that is, there should be an intellectual and spiritual movement of the sacramental event
outwards to take effect in the world, as well as a spiritual movement backwards from the
world to the sacrament. However, in view of the fact that even "serious Christians"
have difficulty accepting SC no.10 as being truly reflective of their experience, Rahner
presented a second model of viewing the sacraments and grace. He maintained that the
problem of making the connection between life and the sacraments is greatly reduced by a
conceptual model in which saving history is viewed as taking place within world history,
and the recipient of the sacraments is seen as one drawn into this "cosmic history" of
grace. The implication is that such a model is also more conducive to the

29Rahner. "How to Receive a Sacrament and Mean it"? 227ff.
30Rahner, "How to Receive a Sacrament and Mean it"? 229f.
31Rahner, "How to Receive a Sacrament and Mean it"? 230.
33Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," 164f.
understanding of how the liturgy of a World Church can be a liturgy of the world.

In a second essay, entitled "On the Theology of Worship," Rahner again insisted that Christians need to be shown that worship is nothing but the explicit celebration of the divine depth of their ordinary life. He insisted that one has to have experience of this cosmic liturgy of the world which culminates in the cross of Jesus Christ, if one is to see the Church's liturgy as anything but the strange "sacrificial action of a Vedic priest." Rahner implies that the liturgy of the World Church is seen not as a divine liturgy taking place in the world, but as the divine liturgy of the world.

By its teaching on the local church, Vatican II pointed the way to the emergence of a World Church in which each local Church and each worshipping community is no mere sub-division of the Church but is this Church in all its fullness.

B. The Variety of Liturgies and Expressions of the One Christian Proclamation

1. The Need for a Variety of Liturgies and Proclamations of the Christian Message According to Vatican II

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy laid down the historical, theological, liturgical and cultural principles for the adaptation of the liturgy to various cultures (nos.37-40) by stipulating the following: that the liturgical elements subject to change must be changed if features have crept in which are out of harmony with the nature of the liturgy (no.21); that any new forms adopted should, in some way, grow out of existing

34Rahner, "On the Theology of Worship," 149. Here Rahner modified his earlier position.


forms (no.23);\textsuperscript{38} that there should be a return to the classical form of the Roman Rite (no.35);\textsuperscript{39} that the Roman liturgy be adapted to various cultures (nos.37-40);\textsuperscript{40} that new rites be created which correspond more faithfully to the genius and culture of various peoples (nos.37, 68, 69);\textsuperscript{41} that liturgical books be revised (nos.38, 39)\textsuperscript{42} and new translations produced which are more in keeping with the language and culture of the people (no.39);\textsuperscript{43} that Bishops’ conferences determine which elements from the various cultures might appropriately be admitted into divine worship (\textit{SC} nos.40, 7, 102-104; \textit{AG} nos.10, 22);\textsuperscript{44} that “full, conscious and active participation” in the liturgy is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy and is the right and duty of Christian people by reason of


\textsuperscript{39}See Chupungco, \textit{Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy}, 27, 29, 44, 43. The period in the 8th C. when the Roman rite adapted itself to the culture of the Franco-Germanic people, is a model in that it shows that the classical form of the Roman liturgy can be easily adapted to practically any culture and tradition. See also, Jungmann, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," 23.

\textsuperscript{40}Chupungco, \textit{Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy}, 75. Adaption is not primarily a missionary concern. The motive is to make the liturgy available and relevant to every culture.


\textsuperscript{43}Chupungco, \textit{Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy}, 49f. See also, Jungmann, "The Constitution on the Liturgy," 27f.

their baptism (no.14); that the use of the vernacular is permitted in the Mass and in the sacraments (nos.22, 36).

2. Rahner’s Understanding of the Need for a Variety of Liturgies and Proclamations of the Christian Message

In the victory of the vernacular languages, Rahner saw a clear and unmistakable signal of the emergence of a World Church in which there would be a variety of liturgies and proclamations of the Christian message.

(a) The Use of the Vernacular and the Need For a Variety of Liturgies

In his two important essays of 1979, Rahner expressed the view that when the Council abolished Latin as the official language of the Church’s liturgy, it set the Roman Catholic Church on the way to becoming a World Church. In his essay, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," Rahner observed that the “victory of the vernacular languages” in the Church’s liturgy permits individual churches to exist with a certain amount of independence and to be rooted in their respective cultures. Rahner saw clearly that, as the language of a small and particular cultural

45Chupungco, Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy, 62.


48Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 81; cf., idem, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 719, 724. Christianity as a western export did not succeed with the Eastern religions or with Islam precisely because of the imposition of Latin where it was never an historical reality. (724) See also, Geoffrey Wainwright, "Sacramental Theology and the World Church," 80.
sphere, Latin could never be the language of a World Church. To him, the victory of the vernacular languages makes it obvious that the non-European local churches, despite their unity with Rome, can no longer be governed by Europe and the European mentality. Rahner was convinced that without the development of a significant pluralism with respect to canon law, liturgies and other ecclesial praxis in the local churches there could never be an emergence of a World Church. He saw too, that this pluralism with respect to liturgy cannot be restricted to the different vernacular languages but must extend itself to the whole manner in which the Eucharist is celebrated. The question then becomes: Will the Church come to see and recognize these essential differences of other cultures and so become a World Church, or will it remain a Western Church and so betray the spirit of Vatican II?

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50 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 81, 79. Rahner noted, however, that the individual cultures are also undergoing rapid change, so that it is difficult to say what positive contribution the individual cultures might offer to the emerging World Church. (79)


(b) **The Need for a Plurality of Proclamations of the Christian Message**

Rahner maintained that with the variety of liturgies there would go hand in hand a pluralism of proclamations of the Christian message.\(^{54}\) He insisted that in order to find new expressions of the Christian message it is necessary to make use of the notion of the "hierarchy of truths" proclaimed by Vatican II (UR no.11). By returning to "the final and fundamental substance of the Christian message," the whole of ecclesial faith may be reformulated anew and applied creatively to the situation of Christianity today.\(^ {55}\) Rahner contended that in order to facilitate this process, it is necessary to discover "basic formulas of Christian faith" which contain the kernel of supernatural revelation.\(^ {56}\) He was convinced that if this task were properly fulfilled, there would emerge a pluralism of proclamations, or even better, a real pluralism which is much more than a pluralism of proclamations and theologies within the western Church.\(^ {57}\)

In his essay, "The Need for a ‘Short Formula’ of Christian Faith," Rahner stressed that the need for such a short formula is even more urgent today than in the past when Christianity was accepted as a legitimate religion by a homogenous society.\(^ {58}\) He observed that the history of these "short formulas" is as old as Christianity itself beginning with the New Testament Christological formulas and continuing on through the history of

\(^ {54}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, 87; cf., idem, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 725.


\(^ {56}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 88; cf., idem, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," 725.

\(^ {57}\)Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 92.

the Creeds.\textsuperscript{59} By providing an example of just such a modern short formula of faith, Vatican II set an example opening the way for other attempts to reformulate the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{60} He pointed out that to be successful, these short formulas ought to speak to Christians from within their own conceptual framework, and in a language they can understand.\textsuperscript{61} Of course, no one formula ought to attempt to be the formula for all countries and all different cultural and social groupings.\textsuperscript{62}

In his later essay, "Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith," Rahner warned that if the Church fails to create new formulas of Christian faith, it is doomed to repeat the same mistake made by Christianity when it emerged from the Greek and Roman civilizations and when it began to move from being a totally Western Church.\textsuperscript{63} In both cases, the traditional formulae of the faith were merely "exported" as they stood to other areas of the world instead of being reformulated


\textsuperscript{60}Rahner, "The Need For a ‘Short Formula’ of Christian Faith," 120ff. See AG no. 13. Cf., idem, "A Hierarchy of Truths." 164. Rahner regarded the Apostles’ Creed as the basic credal statement to which all the other Creeds (Nicene, Constantinople, Tridentine) added much that can no longer be considered part of the foundation itself. Cf., idem, "Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith," \textit{II} 11, 230. (G. 1970)

\textsuperscript{61}Rahner, "The Need For a ‘Short Formula’ of Christian Faith," 118, 117.

\textsuperscript{62}Rahner, "The Need For a ‘Short Formula’ of Christian Faith," 118; cf., idem, "Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of The Faith," 236. These formulas also ought to be self-explanatory and judge nothing to be self-evident that is not immediately seen to be obviously so by contemporary people. Cf., idem, "Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics," \textit{II} 9, pp. 127-144. (G.1966)

\textsuperscript{63}Rahner, "Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith," 230-244.
in the light of the peoples' inherent genius, culture and language. Rahner implied that such a situation can no longer be tolerated in a World Church in which western civilization is no longer homogenous, but consists rather in extreme intellectual and cultural pluralism. He foresaw that such basic formulas of Christian faith will reflect the pluralism in theology that will be everywhere in the World Church. Here too, Vatican II set the example since it did not attempt to produce any new official definitions of doctrine which would be binding on all people everywhere as this would be almost impossible given the pluralism of today's society and of the World Church.

The variety of liturgies and the plurality of proclamations of the Christian message lead to the formation of truly autonomous regional churches within the World Church.

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64 Rahner, "Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith," 234. Rahner saw this state of affairs to be the direct result of the "repellent sense of superiority characteristic of European colonialism and imperialism."


67 Rahner, "Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith," 235, 238-244. Rahner concluded by presenting three examples of brief formulae of the Christian faith in the form of an Theological Creed, a Christological Creed, and a Future-Oriented Creed; cf., idem, Foundations, 454, 456f., 460.
C. The Formation of Truly Autonomous Regional Churches

(a) **The Collegial-Synodal Principle in the Church According to Vatican II**

The *Dogmatische Constitution on the Church* and the *Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church* teaches the following with respect to the collegial-synodal principle and its exercise in the Church: that as successors of the Apostles, the bishops, together with the Pope, govern the Church (*LG* no.18; *CD* no.4); that just as the Apostles formed one apostolic college, so too, the Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter and the bishops as the successors of the Apostles, form a true college (*LG* nos.19, 22; *CD* no.4); that by the sacrament of episcopal ordination and the laying on of hands, the bishops receive all their offices of teaching, governing and sanctifying; that together with its head, the Roman Pontiff, and never without this head, the episcopal order is the

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68 Rahner, "The Hierarchical Structure of the Church with Special Reference to the Episcopate: Articles 1-27," p. 186f. See also, Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, fn.#65, p.37. The collegial-synodal principle in the Church is discussed chiefly in the third chapter of the *Dogmatische Constitution on the Church* and in the *Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church*.


subject of supreme and full power over the Church (CD no.4; LG no.18); that such supreme power is exercised not only when the college is united in an ecumenical council but also through other forms of "appropriate collegiate action" (LG nos.22, 25; CD no.4); that the bishop rules his flock by his own (not delegated) ordinary power, in the name of Jesus Christ and not that of the pope (LG no.27; CD no.8); that the bishop ought cultivate a collegial attitude towards his priests, cooperate with them and regard them as his friends (LG nos. 27, 28; CD no.16); that as members of the apostolic college, bishops are obliged, by the command of Jesus Christ, to be solicitous for the whole Church (CD nos.5-9); that this pastoral concern for the good of the whole Church expresses itself in the insistence on a reorganized, internationalized Roman Curia (CD

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72Rahner, "The Hierarchical Structure of the Church with Special Reference to the Episcopate," 195.


n.9), a Bishops' Synod (CD no.5), a communion of bishops in charity for the needs of a particular region (CD nos.6, 7) and in episcopal conferences (CD nos.5, 36-38); that in a diocese the nature of the Church must be clearly evident (CD nos.11, 22-24); that, while the parish priest also shares the dignity of being a shepherd, his pastoral office is only a share in that of the bishop's (CD no.30)." 

2. Rahner's Understanding of the Collegial-Synodal Principle in the Church According to Vatican II

From the development of a variety of liturgies Rahner predicted there would emerge the formation of truly autonomous regional churches. Within these regional churches would be exercised, both in theory and in practice, that collegial-synodal

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76See Abbott, "Degree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church." (CD no.10). These departments' members ought to be drawn more from various geographical areas of the Church. See also, Mörsdorf, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," 210f.

77See Abbott, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church." Fn.# 18, p. 399. The Synod of Bishops (Apostolic synod) was formally announced by Paul VI at the beginning of the fourth session in the Sept. 15, 1965. At least 85% of those taking part are to be elected by the episcopate. See also, Mörsdorf, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," 214-219, esp. 215. See also, Kloppenburg, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, 205-217.

78See Mörsdorf, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," 203.

79See Mörsdorf, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," 281f., 285.

80Mörsdorf, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," 239f.

81See Mörsdorf, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," 260.

82Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 92. The ET says "autonomous" regional churches. The German word used is "eigenständig" from the word "selbständig" meaning separate. See idem, "Die bleibende Bedeutung des II. Vatikanischen Konzils," Schriften zur Theologie 14 (Koln: Einsiedeln, 1980), 303-318, esp. p.305, "wirklich eigenständiger Regionalkirchen." See The Collins German Dictionary (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 190. Rahner did not mean "autonomous" in the sense that these churches would operate exclusively on their own with no relationship to the universal Church since elsewhere he stressed the need for these churches to be concerned about the unity of the whole Church. I retain the ET with this understanding.
principle articulated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and in the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church. At Vatican II, the Church really appeared for the first time as a World Church since there was present a world episcopacy, not acting as an advisory body to the Pope, but rather, as the supreme teaching and decision-making authority in the Church, with and under the Pope. In Rahner's view, Vatican II's affirmation of the episcopacy signalled a change in mentality, a change which expressed itself in a critical attitude toward a certain type of Roman centralization that had become falsely identified with the primacy and its exercise.

(a) The Relationship between the Pope and the Bishops

In many of his conciliar and post-conciliar writings, Rahner struggled with the question of what it means, in theory and in practice, to say that the whole college of bishops with and under the pope is the supreme collegial governing body of the Church. Even before Vatican II, Rahner maintained that the individual bishop is not just the pope's

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delegate but rather, exercises his office in a particular place as the representative of the whole Church.\(^{87}\) and of the "college of apostles."\(^{88}\) In his book, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, Rahner argued that the bishop is subject to the Pope not because the bishopric represents a small administrative sector of the universal Church which the bishop administers merely in the name of the whole Church, but because the universal Church is manifest in his diocese.\(^{89}\) The bishop has a responsibility for the whole Church, therefore, not in the sense that he directly governs it, but rather, in the sense that he remains at the disposal of the entire Church.\(^{90}\) It is fitting therefore, that a college should rule the Church because a college brings home the idea that the Church is a unity in multiplicity.\(^{91}\) Consequently, this pluralism ought to be reflected above all in a style of leadership that respects the rights of the episcopate as a whole, as well as those of the

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\(^{91}\)Rahner, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, 105; cf., idem, "On the Relationship between the Pope and the Bishops,"65f. See also, Henkey, "Episcopacy and Primacy," 196-198. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," 212. See also, *LG* nos.18, 19, 22; *CD* no.4.
diocesan bishop.\textsuperscript{92}

In an essay written the same year, "On the Theology of the Council" (1962), Rahner put forward the thesis that there is one supreme and highest bearer of the supreme and highest power in the Church,--the collegial body of bishops formed into a unity with and under the Pope (\textsc{LG no.18}).\textsuperscript{93} This one supreme holder of authority is capable, however, of adopting different ways of acting without thereby destroying the unity of the apostolic college.\textsuperscript{94} Consequently, when the episcopal body meets in a Council, it exercises in an extraordinary way those powers which it always possesses.\textsuperscript{95}

In his essay, "The Episcopal Office," written the following year (1963), Rahner made three observations with regard to the function of the episcopacy.\textsuperscript{96} First, he noted that the Church has the power to divide the one fullness of power of Orders into bishop, priest and deacon without destroying the sacramentality of Orders.\textsuperscript{97} Second, the college


\textsuperscript{95}Rahner, "On the Theology of the Council," 255, 251, 253f., 256f, 258, 260. In this, Rahner anticipated \textsc{LG} no.25. Cf., idem, "On the Relationship Between the Pope and the College of Bishops," 52f. See also, idem, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," \textsc{TI} 12, pp. 81-97. (G. 1969)

\textsuperscript{96}Rahner, "The Episcopal Office," \textsc{TI} 6, pp. 313-360. (G. 1963)

\textsuperscript{97}Rahner, "The Episcopal Office,", esp. pp. 313, 318. See also, Boissoneau, "The Bishops’ Pastoral Responsibility in the Church," 130. Boissoneau notes that the Council’s description of the sacramental nature of episcopal consecration represents a shift from universalist ecclesiology to a concept of the Church as a communion.
of cardinals can never replace the college of bishops since the later forms a "corpus collegium" with and under the pope.98 Third, there is a unity between the two powers of orders: power of orders (potestas ordinis) and power of jurisdiction (potestas jurisdictionis) in that these represent two elements of one and the same fundamental power.99 The fundamental -theological structure of the Church in terms of collegiality also serves as a guide for the relationship of the bishop and the presbyterium. Priests, therefore, do not primarily take the place of the bishop where he cannot be himself, but rather, support him as the presbyterium surrounding the bishop.100 Rahner noted that in the crises of neo-paganism facing today's Church, both parties are too dependent on one another to substitute the autocratic régime from Rome with an autocratic régime in the diocese.101

These reflections on the nature of the episcopacy also have implications for the structure of a diocese. With Vatican II, Rahner concurred that a diocese ought to be such that in size, life and character the totality of the Church can be visible in it.102 This implies that for a diocese today to really represent a World Church requires sociological, economic and cultural conditions which are simply impossible in a small diocese.103

After Vatican II, Rahner continued to make the relationship between the pope and


100Rahner, "The Episcopal Office," 340ff. See LG nos.16, 18, 19, 22, 25, 27, 28; CD nos.4-9, 16. The presbyterium constitutes a iure divino college for the bishop in a way similar to that in which the apostolic college forms a iure divino college for the pope. Cf., idem, Bishops: Their Status and Function, 44-49; cf., idem, "Das synodale Prinzip," 26-28.


102Rahner, "The Episcopal Office," 335. In ancient times every "true" and full community about an altar coincided with the community about a bishop. See also, Henkey, "Episcopacy and Primacy," 206-209. See CD nos.11, 22-24.

the bishops the subject of deeper study particularly in the light of the growing understanding of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church. In his essay, "On the Relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops" (1967), Rahner reiterated that the teaching of Vatican II with regard to the united episcopacy is simply a repetition of the classic doctrine concerning the power of a Council which has always been in force. The only difference is that Vatican II put the hitherto disputed question regarding the relationship between pope and Council in a better and more realistic form as the question of the precise relationship between the pope and the bishops.104

Rahner summarized the conciliar teaching in two points: first, the pope as head of the episcopal college has all the rights which precisely belong to this headship including the right to act seorsim, that is, by a separate act of his own as distinct from a collegiate one.105 second, since the pope enjoys his plenary powers precisely as head of the Church, it follows that he also enjoys them in virtue of being head of the united episcopate.106 Rahner implies that in a World Church, the pope will not take the active collaboration of the college of bishops as ipso facto a diminishment of his own authority. Neither will the episcopate feel that by recognizing to the full the pope's authority in cases in which he acts seorsim are they accepting a limitation imposed from outside their own body of the full scope of their own personal authority.107

104Rahner, "On the Relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops," TII 10, pp.50-70. (G.1967)

105Rahner, "On the Relationship Between the Pope and the Bishops," 56. The term "by himself" (seorsim") only serves to rule out any necessity for a collegiate act on the part of the united episcopate. See LG nos. 18, 22, 23; CD no.4. See also Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," 213.

106Rahner, "On the Relationship Between the Pope and the College of Bishops," 64. LG no. 25 states that in his decisions the pope is not bound by the (prior) agreement of the Church (for the juridical validity of his act), but that he and his decisions cannot fail to have this agreement "proper actionem euisdem Spiritus Sancti." 64.

107Rahner, "On the Relationship Between the Pope and the College of Bishops," 70.
The question of the relationship of the pope to the college of bishops is discussed from a more canonical and pastoral point of view in the recommendations having to do with bishops’ conferences, the Bishops’ Synod and priests synods.\textsuperscript{108} In his essay, “On Bishops’ Conferences,” Rahner stressed that the dogmatic, ecclesiological foundation for the Bishops’ conference is the responsibility every bishop has for the whole Church.\textsuperscript{109} He noted that although these juridical structures already existed and were put into effect in synods from the early days of the Church, their effectiveness had been constantly reduced in the West by a long and complicated process that went hand in hand with the emphasis on papal primacy with immediate jurisdiction over the whole Church, which reached its climax in Vatican I.\textsuperscript{110} According to Rahner, the relationship of the bishop to the college is the proper dogmatic ecclesiological foundation for the bishops’ conference.\textsuperscript{111} The responsibility of the individual bishop for the whole Church is expressed concretely by the shared concern all bishops have for the reign of God and the salvation of human persons.\textsuperscript{112} Bishops also express their concern for the whole Church by insisting on a reformed and internationalized Curia. In his book, \textit{Theology of Pastoral Action} (1964),

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\bibitem{Rahner3} Rahner, “On Bishops’ Conferences,” 372, 369, 371, 376. As a pre-history of bishops’ conferences Rahner mentioned the history of metropolitan unions and patriarchates, as well as provincial synods, plenary and national.


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Rahner stressed the need for a re-organization of the Roman Curia in order to express better that theological principle of unity in multiplicity that is found in the universal episcopate. He foresaw that only a truly international Curia would be capable and competent enough to address the complex problems of a World Church.

In an article written the same year (1964), Rahner again emphasized the importance of the extra-conciliar exercise of the authority of the general episcopacy. He maintained that the Church's missionary work, its involvement in aid to Third World countries, and the practise of priestly exchange between the continents is not only a "pious hobby" of many bishops and believers, but rather a "concrete indication of the sign of the times" and the mission of the Church. It is also clear that not every inspiration of the Spirit has to originate from Rome.

In his essay, "Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II" (1965), Rahner argued that the Bishops' Conference and the Bishops' Synod

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114Rahner, Theology of Pastoral Action, 123, 125f; cf., idem, "Structural Change in the Church of the Future." 120. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," 221f.


116Rahner, "Die Zweite Konzilsperiode," 73. "Es wird dann deutlich, daß der einzelne Bischof und die einzelne Diözese eine Verantwortung und eine Aufgabe für die Sendung der ganzen Kirche haben....nicht nur eine frommes Hobby mancher Bischöfe und Gläubigen, sondern die konkrete Zeitgestalt einer wirklichen Verpflichtung und Sendung sein können...." CD nos.5-9, 37, 38.

could further the actualization of genuinely multi-cultural Church provided they achieve the juridical form and spirit which the pastoral situation of the different countries demands.\textsuperscript{118} For example, with respect to the Bishops’ Synod,\textsuperscript{119} it would be essential for a World Church that these bishops be genuinely representative of the whole episcopacy and that they not reside in Rome.\textsuperscript{120} Rahner feared that otherwise, they would become only Roman curial officials or agents for bishops or bishops’ conferences without any initiative or responsibility.\textsuperscript{121}

In a televised broadcast a year later (1967), Rahner reiterated that the collegiality of the universal episcopacy is strongly extended in the collegiality of the priests of a diocese.\textsuperscript{122} He foresaw that in the pluralistic situation of a World Church, a bishop will need to get advice from a small or larger circle of colleagues.\textsuperscript{123} The priests of a diocese are not, therefore, "subordinate civil servants of their bishop," any more than the bishops are of the pope. Rather, they build with him as their leader a community of participation

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\item \textsuperscript{119}Rahner, "Was wurde erreicht"? in \textit{Sind die Erwartungen erfüllt?}, 7-34; esp. 11-15. (G.1966) See also. Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," 216.


\item \textsuperscript{121}Rahner, "Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II," cf., idem, \textit{Theology of Pastoral Action}, 131.

\item \textsuperscript{122}Rahner, "Das synodale Prinzip," in \textit{Reformation aus Rom}, 19-28, esp. p. 28. (G. 1967) The broadcast is written in three parts; Parts One and two by Rahner, Part Three by Mario von Galli 29-32. (Translation mine) See \textit{CD} nos.16, 11.

\item \textsuperscript{123}Rahner, "Das synodale Prinzip," 28.
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in the mission and authority of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{124}

It is seen that by its endorsement of the theory and practical application of collegial-synodal principle in the Church, Vatican II facilitated the emergence of a World Church.

D. The Universal Call to Holiness and to Service in the Church

1. The Universal Call to Holiness and to Service in the Church
   According to Vatican II

(a) **Priests**

The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* teach the following with respect to priestly life and service: that by the sacrament of Orders priests are consecrated in the image of Jesus Christ to preach the gospel, celebrate the liturgy and serve the people of God (LG no.28); that they do this as members of a *presbyterium* under the leadership of their bishop (LG no.28; PO nos.1, 2, 4, 8);\textsuperscript{125} that deacons belong to a lower level of the hierarchy and are called to the service of the liturgy, to the word and to charity; that the diaconate be restored and, with the consent of the Pope, be conferred upon older married men (LG no.29; AG no.16; OE


that priests have at heart the care of all the Churches (PO no.10; CD nos.33-35); that the tension priests experience between carrying out their duties and living a deeply interior life can only be resolved in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (PO no.14). The Decree on Priestly Formation teaches the following with respect to the education and formation of priests: that the spiritual formation of seminarians be closely linked with doctrinal and pastoral training (OT nos.5, 4, 8; LG no.28); that using every appropriate help, priests learn to integrate the renunciation of marriage into their life and activity (OT no.10; PO no.16); that the revision of ecclesiastical studies aim at a better integration of philosophy and theology (OT nos.13, 14); that ecclesiastical studies begin with an introductory course devoted to the mystery of Jesus Christ (OT nos.14, 19); that moral theology be restated, and canon law and Church history be taught in that context (OT no.16).


127Cordes, "Commentary on the Decree," 261-263.


133See Neuner, "Decree on Priestly Formation," 397f.
The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity teaches the following with regard to the life, mission and formation of the laity: that the laity share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Jesus Christ (LG nos.31, 34, 35; AA no.2); that the lay person's apostolate is a participation in the saving mission of the Church and that it derives from his/her Christian vocation (LG nos.31, 34, 35, 33; AA no.2);¹³⁵ that the laity have the right to receive in abundance the spiritual goods of the Church, especially Word and Sacraments (LG no.37); that the laity are strengthened and empowered in their mission by the sacraments and by charismatic gifts (AA no.3);¹³⁶ that lay women ought to participate more widely in the various fields of the Church's apostolate (AA no.9);¹³⁷ that the laity are permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on things which concern the good of the Church (LG no.37); that pastors promote the dignity and responsibility of laypersons in the Church (LG no.37; AA nos.24, 25);¹³⁸ that the laity accustom themselves to working in the parish and that they not limit this cooperation to the parochial or diocesan boundaries (AA no.10);¹³⁹ that the laity be given a suitable formation which respects the secular quality

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¹³⁶See Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 308-315.

¹³⁷Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 335.


of the lay state (AA no.28).140

(c) Religious

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life teach the following with regard to religious: that the religious state is not an intermediate one between the clerical and lay states but that the faithful are called by God from both these latter states of life (LG no.43);141 that this profession ought to appear as a sign to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfilment of the duties of their Christian vocation (LG no.44);142 that the religious state is inseparably bound to the Church’s life and holiness (LG no.44; PC no.1);143 that the hierarchy has the right to govern the practice of the Counsels (LG no.45); that the appropriate renewal of religious life involves first, a continuous return to the sources of Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community and secondly, adaptation of the community to the changed condition of the times (PC no.2);144 that the manner of living, praying and working should be suitably adapted to the physical and psychological conditions of today’s religious, to the needs of the

140Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” 395.

141See Friedrich Wulf, "Religious" in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol.1, 274f. Wulf notes that the word "layperson" is not used here in the same sense as in LG. There it is used in the sense of secular layperson rather than in terms of the Church’s hierarchy. (275)


apostolate and the requirements of a given culture (PC no.3); that the profession of the evangelical counsels is a response to a divine call, rooted in one's baptismal consecration (PC no.5); that religious be poor both in fact and spirit and give this poverty new expressions if necessary.

2. Rahner's Understanding of the Universal Call to Holiness and Service in the Church According to Vatican II

In his writings before the Council, and particularly after Vatican II, Rahner saw with increasing clarity that the diaspora situation of a World Church calls for a personal decision of faith on the part of every Christian. Long before Vatican II, Rahner predicted that, as a result of the diaspora condition of Christianity and the Church, Christianity would cease to exist as a "religion of numbers" and become instead a "religion of choice." Even then, he saw clearly that the diaspora Church would be a Church of actively committed members, a Church of the laity, conscious of being the


147 See Wulf, "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life," 360f.


Rahner’s preconciliar reflections in this regard took on added intensity after Vatican II when he began to reflect ever more deeply on the need for a profound faith on the part of each Christian in the light of the immense challenges facing a World Church. In the essay, "The Christian in his World" (1965), Rahner emphasized that Christians must come to see the diaspora condition of the Church as the "divinely ordained situation" of their Christianity, one which calls for a free and personal act of faith. In this extremely complex and heterogenous situation, the Church must change from being a Church of regional and national communities to being a Church of believers bound together by the free, personal act of faith of each person.

(a) **Laity**

Rahner saw clearly that the emergence of a World Church depends on an active and responsible laity, one whose mission and apostolate is given full scope in the Church. Even before Vatican II, Rahner stated that the layperson is "consecrated" for the work of salvation; that the lay person’s apostolate is directly founded on his/her situation in the world; and that every baptised Christian is authorized and empowered for the task

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154 Rahner, "The Consecration of the Layman to the Care of Souls," Ti 3, pp. 263-276. (G. 1936)

of actively co-operating in the work of the Church both "interiorly and exteriorly.\textsuperscript{156}

After Vatican II, Rahner's views on the role of the laity continued to develop and expand in view of his growing appreciation of this Council as heralding the emergence of a World Church.\textsuperscript{157} In his essay, "The Dynamic Element in the Church" (1962), Rahner demonstrated that there are no subordinates in the Church who simply carry out orders from the hierarchy; there are only charismatically gifted Christians through whom God directly governs the Church.\textsuperscript{158}

In his book, Theology of Pastoral Action, Rahner asserted that the condition of being taken into service for the salvation of others, of \textit{diakonia}, is a call found within every Christian and not only in the official life and work of the Church.\textsuperscript{159} Rahner seems to imply that the activity of a World Church is not based solely on the official ministry but requires completion by the free exercise of charismatic gifts on the part of

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\textsuperscript{159}Rahner, \textit{Theology of Pastoral Action}, 67. See \textit{LG} no.33; \textit{AA} no.2.
each member. That is to say, a fully inculturated World Church makes use of the gifts and charisms of every person since it is taken for granted that the Church consists in more than the hierarchy.

As the Council neared completion, Rahner began to define the role of the laity increasingly in terms of the new situation of the World Church. In his essay, "The Position of Woman in the New Situation in which the Church Finds Itself," Rahner argued that the new global consciousness in the world has immense consequences for the Church and for the role of women. Rahner seems to imply that one of the challenges facing a World Church is to make the equal status of women a concrete reality by recognizing without reserve the fact that women have equal value and equal rights with men. It ought also to take more into account the unmarried and professional woman in its preaching and pastoral care as well as to develop new and better kinds of relationships between clergy and women. The new global consciousness also challenges the Christian woman to bring solutions of her own to the world’s problems and

160Rahner. Theology of Pastoral Action, 76. See AA no.3.


162Rahner. "The Position of Woman in the New Situation in which the Church Finds Itself," 75-93, esp. p. 82. Here, Rahner felt that there was no point in discussing the issue of women’s ordination because the Church’s understanding of its own faith and practice was not sufficiently mature. Rahner later revised his stand saying that this discussion can and must continue if there is to come about a needed change in mentality. See idem, "Women and Priesthood," TI 20, 35-47, esp. p. 45f.

163Rahner, "The Position of Woman in the New Situation in which the Church Finds Itself," 83.

to discover and exemplify constructive patterns for contemporary women.165

Rahner was also convinced that in order for the mission and apostolate of the laity to be given full scope in the Church, a new relationship had to be established between the clergy and the laity. In his essay, "The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life," Rahner implies that in a World Church, clergy and laity will have a different relationship to one another, one based on solidarity, equality, and Christian community in Jesus Christ.166 This is so on account of the common sisterhood and brotherhood of all believers in Jesus Christ.

In a second essay entitled, "The Christian's Responsibility for the Church After the Council." Rahner urged all Christians to make part of bone and marrow two statements of Vatican II: first, that they are the Church - not only corporately but individually;167 second, that there is no "two-tier" theory of Church membership in which some travel along the common road to perfection while others follow along more "exalted paths."168 In addition, he identified three tasks for which the laity are responsible in the post-conciliar Church: first, an understanding of, and interest in, the decrees of the Council; second, a lay apostolate that is exercised in and through one's ordinary life169; third, a

165Rahner, "The Position of Woman in the New Situation in which the Church Finds Itself," 85f., 89f.


169See AA nos.2, 3.
commitment to fashion the Church at the level of the local worshipping community.\textsuperscript{170}

After Vatican II, Rahner also became increasingly convinced that the laity could achieve their mission only if their corresponding rights and duties were established by law and not left to the good pleasure of individual bishops and parish priests.\textsuperscript{171} In his essay "Democracy in the Church"\textsuperscript{?}, he argued that the Church ought to commit itself to a genuine process of democratization within the Church, one that corresponds to the actual state of the human person's historical development.\textsuperscript{172} He maintained that institutions and structures such as parish councils, lay advisory committees, synods would only be effective if the laity were truly represented and given a "genuine right of participation."\textsuperscript{173}

(b) Priests

After Vatican II, Rahner began to view the office of priest and deacon, the education and formation of priests and the ministry and spirituality of priests increasingly in terms of the situation of today's World Church with its call for a profound decision of faith and a wider variation in the outward form of the priestly office. In an essay written well after the Council, "The Point of Departure in Theology for Determining the Nature of the Priestly Office" (1969), Rahner emphasized that the Church ought to take the initiative in imparting new forms to the priestly commission in keeping with the changed situation


\textsuperscript{171}Rahner, "Present Tasks," 63-65, 46f.


\textsuperscript{173}Rahner, "Democracy in the Church"? 162, 164ff. Concretely, this could lead to the eventual election of pastors and bishops by the laity, and even to the choice of one of their own to be ordained as leader of the liturgical assembly. (164ff.) See AA nos.9, 10, 24, 25.
of the Church. The priest is not simply a "cult official." Rather, he is one sent by the Church to bear witness to the word of God as exhibitive and effective of salvation. Rahner implies that since the essence of the priesthood consists in proclaiming the word of God, the whole ministry of a priest has a missionary character and orientates him towards a community. Hence, the priest is amply suited for ministry in the community of a World Church whose mission it is to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

In his essay, "How the Priest Should View his Official Ministry" (1972), Rahner suggested several ways in which the outward form of the priesthood could be adapted in view of the changing needs of a World Church. These included the following: the election of official ministers by the laity; the possibility of having many more specialized priests and types of priests; the possibility of opening the priesthood to younger and


177 Rahner, "How the Priest Should View his Official Ministry," TJ 14, pp. 202-219, esp. pp 203f. Rahner regretted that the findings of modern biblical scholarship which led to a better understanding of the priesthood did not emerge more clearly at Vatican II.

178 Rahner, "Today's Priest and his Faith," 213. As examples of such new types of priests Rahner named priests who are artists, scholars of secular learning, psychotherapists, journalists, social workers.
especially to older Christians; specialized ministry for older priests; "teams" of priests responsible for a wider area; ordaining priests for a limited time.

In his essay, "Pastoral Ministries and Community Leadership" (1972), Rahner extended his notion of office to include pastoral assistants and asked whether it is theologically consistent to deny these persons the sacramental powers since they, together with the priest, share in the leadership of the Christian community. In this connection, Rahner insisted that the Church ought to give up the requirements of celibacy for the pastoral clergy if it becomes clear that this requirement means a considerable loss of vital pastoral resources.

Even before Vatican II, Rahner was convinced of the necessity for a renewed diaconate in the Church. It was in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, however, and the pressing needs of a World Church that Rahner really began to intensify his study of this question. In his essay, "The Theology of the Restoration of the Diaconate," Rahner argued that the legitimacy of the question regarding the restoration of the

179Rahner, "Today's Priest and his Faith," 213.

180Rahner, "Today's Priest and his Faith," 215-216. This would be compared to "temporary vows" in a religious community. A priest would then be free to leave at the end of this time.


182Rahner, "Pastoral Ministries and Community Leadership," 85f. This statement shows a development in Rahner compared to an earlier position in which he stated that he did not "wish or expect’ the Church to change the law of celibacy for the Western Church. See "The Celibacy of the Secular Priest," in Servants of the Lord, tr. Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 149-172, esp. 168-169.


diaconate rests on the fact that the diaconate is part of that office ("ordo") which Jesus Christ gave to the Church. Among the reasons Rahner gave for the restoration of the diaconate in the Church were the shortage of priests and the new pastoral needs of Christians arising out of today's cultural setting.

In his essay, "The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Diaconate" (1966), Rahner observed that the teaching found in the Decree on the Missions (no.16) and in the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (no.17) represents a significant development from that found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no.29) since it treats the question of a renewed diaconate from within the context of the actual practice of the Church, particularly in mission lands. He noted that these passages do not assume that restoration of the diaconate will take place everywhere in the world at the same time. He also pointed out that by making provision for the conferral of the diaconate upon young celibate men, as well as upon mature married men, the Council opened up the possibility of many classes of deacons. In so doing, Rahner hinted at the immense pastoral influence a restored diaconate could have for a World Church, particularly in the form of a married diaconate.

In a lecture given two years later (1968), Rahner again insisted that it is imperative for the Church to redefine the diaconate not only on a speculative level, but above all on a

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187Rahner, "The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Diaconate," 222-231, esp. pp. 223, 226f. The texts are: that the diaconate may be conferred upon older married men (LG no.29); that the opportuneness of the restoration of the diaconate in certain areas be left up to episcopal conferences (AG no.16); that the office of permanent deacon be restored in the Eastern Church in places where it has fallen into disuse (OE no.17).

practical level. He recognized that in order to fulfil its concrete obligation to form a Christian community in which every person can live out his/her Christian life, the Church has need of specialized ministers (deacons) who have a degree of knowledge and skill that may not be present in all priests. It seems to me that Rahner’s point speaks directly to the pastoral needs which are bound to emerge in the complex and pluralistic situation of a World Church.

Rahner maintained that the education and formation of priests ought to provide a substructure to support the threatened condition of a priest’s faith and to equip him to cope with changing needs and circumstances of the Church today. With Vatican II, Rahner agreed that the education and formation of priests ought first to be in accordance with contemporary and local needs; second, serve first and foremost the preaching of the gospel; third, lay great emphasis on the living unity of priestly existence and spiritual life; fourth, be changed to accommodate individual differences. It seems to me that the four points Rahner raised give insight as to the type of theological and spiritual formation needed by priests today if they are to serve effectively the needs of a World Church.

In his essay, "Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests" (1964), Rahner emphasized the importance of having a "basic course" which would provide a

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190Rahner, "On the Diaconate," 74, 75ff. See also, Gelpi, Light and Life, 195.


192Rahner, "Present Tasks," in Grace in Freedom, 40-68, esp. 52. See OT nos.5, 4, 8; LG no.28.
fundamental basis and strengthening of faith for the young seminarian. He emphasized that such a course ought to focus on the possibility of the concrete exercise of faith today and be geared to priests who must witness to this faith in a society indifferent to belief. Besides providing a bridge between philosophy and theology and between other branches of theology, this basic course could also provide the connection between the science of theology and the priest’s spiritual life.

In his book Foundations of Christian Faith (1976), Rahner attempted to outline a basic course and to offer, on a “first level of reflection,” an introduction into the mystery of Jesus Christ and of the Church. He contended that this justification of the faith presupposes the close unity between fundamental and dogmatic theology as well as the integration between philosophy and theology. Rahner’s emphasis on this approach implies that priests in a World Church need to be constantly aware of the meaning, interrelationship and pastoral intent of their theological formation.

Rahner saw clearly that the ministry and spirituality of priests ought to reflect a pattern of priestly life which is in tune with the social and intellectual situation of today’s Church. In a lecture to the clergy of the diocese of Münster in 1967, Rahner asserted

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194 Rahner, “Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests.” 132, 118, 137. This course is also intended for lay theologians and teachers. (137) See OT nos.14, 19.


that priests are asked more than ever to give an account of their own faith, not the faith which is a kind of echo of public opinion in society.\textsuperscript{199} To be capable of such a faith, the priest needs to be a man of prayer, a mystic, one who recognizes and loves the objective and subjective structure of faith that is present in the "hierarchy of truths" (UR no.11).\textsuperscript{200} Rahner’s comments illustrate the fact that a priest living within the pluralistic situation of a World Church cannot take his faith for granted.

In his essay, "The Spirituality of the Priest in the Light of his Office" (1972), Rahner contended that the spirituality of the secular priest in today’s Church ought to be characterized by the following: a genuine, religious experience of God; the courage to be poor, not only economically, but also culturally; a desire to serve and to support the faith of others;\textsuperscript{201} the courage to live a life in which he is no longer considered the "village pope."\textsuperscript{202} It seems to me that Rahner’s observations highlight the particular type of spirituality and leadership required of a priest in a World Church.

In his essay, "Theology and Spirituality of Pastoral Work in the Parish," also written in 1972, Rahner maintained that the spirituality of parochial pastoral work is that of a basic community\textsuperscript{203} and of the team directing it.\textsuperscript{204} Rahner envisioned that in the church of the future, the parish team would slowly becoming a spiritual team in which the members gradually try to acquire a spirituality lived together. His prediction has

\textsuperscript{199}Rahner, "Today’s Priest and his Faith," 47-70, esp. p. 67. See also, idem, "Theology and Spirituality of Pastoral Work in the Parish." See PO no.12.

\textsuperscript{200}Rahner, "Today’s Priest and his Faith," 63, 66.


\textsuperscript{202}Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Priest in the Light of his Office,"134ff.

\textsuperscript{203}See these essays by Rahner on his idea of a "basic Community." "Basic Communities," TI 20, pp. 159-165 (G. 1975); "South American Base Communities in a European Church," TI 22, pp. 148-154 (G. 1981); "The Future of Christian Communities," TI 22, pp. 120-133. (G. 1982)

\textsuperscript{204}Rahner, "Theology and Spirituality of Pastoral Work in the Parish," TI 19, pp.87-102, esp. pp. 96, 98, 101. (G. 1972)
implications for the style of ministry and the type of community that best expresses the reality and needs of a World Church.

In a later essay, "The Spirituality of the Secular Priest" (1979), Rahner noted that the office of priest materially determines his life as distinct from that of the Christian lay person. He stressed that it is important for the secular priest to cultivate, systematize and exercise his distinctly priestly spirituality. There are too many priests, in Rahner's opinion, who rely on traditional piety and help cultivate it instead of recognizing that the "people of the future" are settled somewhere else. Rahner's implies that while the priest in a World Church must develop his own distinct spirituality, he must also help his sisters and brothers to find and cultivate the spirituality that best suits their needs.

(c) Religious

Religious in a World Church need a profound faith if they are to give an authentic witness to the evangelical counsels and have the courage to risk an unknown future. Even before Vatican II, Rahner argued that the profession of the evangelical counsels makes explicit the eschatological and ecclesial dimension which is implicit in every Christian life. Also, in anticipation of Vatican II, he demonstrated that the profession of the evangelical counsels is an "inalienable" and "essential element" of the Church.

205Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Secular Priest," TI 19, pp.103-116. (G. 1979) He acknowledged that the thesis he announced formerly; namely, that the spirituality of the secular priest is materially the same as that of other Christians, evades the effort to show how priestly spirituality is distinct. (111)


209Rahner, "Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation," 55. See LG no.44; PC no.1. See also, Richard Hill, "The Community and the Option of Non-Canonical Status." Review
In his writings during and after the Council, Rahner continued to explore the question of the meaning and value of religious life and its relationship to other forms of Christian life. In his essay, "The Possibility of Institutional Regulation of a Gift of the Spirit," Rahner pointed out that although religious life is a free expression of the charismatic nature of the Church, the Church has the right, the duty and the "astonishing courage" to regulate this gift of the Spirit. He implies that even in a World Church this obligation remains because religious orders belong to the very being and mission of the Church.

In his essay, "On the Evangelical Counsels" (1964), Rahner explored the problem left open by the Council as to the precise way in which the life of the evangelical counsels differs from other forms of Christian life. He argued that the renunciation entailed in the profession of the evangelical counsels constitutes an "objectification and a manifestation" of faith in the grace of God which "precisely as such" do not appear in any other way of life. Rahner would seem to imply that the evangelical counsels are the

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211Rahner, "The Possibility of Institutional Regulation of a Gift of the Spirit," in The Spirit in the Church, 51f. See LG no.45; PC no.5.

212Rahner, "On the Evangelical Counsels," 138, 150. The Church upholds both doctrines; that is, that on the one hand, all Christians are called to the perfection of the Christian life (LG nos.40-42), and that on the other, the life of the evangelical counsels has a special value and function (LG nos.43, 43; PC no.1).

213Rahner, "On the Evangelical Counsels," 159f. See LG nos.44, 46; PC nos.5, 12. Rahner does not mean to imply that the one professing the evangelical counsels is "ipso facto" better or more perfect than other Christians. See also, Sister Helen James John, "Rahner on Roles
historical and sociological manifestation of the faith of the World Church in its ecclesiological, soteriological, and eschatological dimensions.\textsuperscript{214} Such a witness arises from a community of faith in which the Gospel message has really taken root. Rahner implied, however, that in order for the witness of the evangelical counsels to be effective in a World Church, religious ought to live the vows in a manner which shows that these objectify and manifest the Church's faith.\textsuperscript{215}

Even before the Council ended, Rahner expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which religious communities were taking up the challenge of radical renewal and adaptation.\textsuperscript{216} Two years later (1964), Rahner again posed the question as to whether or not religious communities were really putting the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal and Adaptation of Religious Life into practice.\textsuperscript{217} He implied that in a World Church, religious communities need to produce a style of life and of government truly suitable for modern times.\textsuperscript{218}

In a lecture given to Jesuits some years later (1972), Rahner called on all religious to "take the way of faith into the future:" to undertake "bold and extensive experimentation."\textsuperscript{219} Rahner implies that the witness needed in a World Church will involve a fresh rethinking of the vows on the part of religious.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{214}Rahner, "On the Evangelical Counsels," 162, 165. See PC no.5. See also, Sister Helen James John, "Rahner on Roles in the Church," 532.
\item \textsuperscript{215}Rahner, "On the Evangelical Counsels," 167. See PC nos.12-14.
\item \textsuperscript{216}Rahner, "The Position of Woman in the New Situation in which the Church Finds Itself," 85f.; cf., idem, "Present Tasks," 53. See PC nos.2, 3, 5, 8, 12-14, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{217}Rahner, "Present Tasks," in Grace in Freedom, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{218}Rahner, "Present Tasks," 53. See PC nos.2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 18.
\end{itemize}
In a book written more than ten years after the Council entitled *The Religious Life Today* (1976), Rahner insisted that change in the world and in the Church means change in religious life. Rahner emphasized that in view of the needs and circumstances of the Church of the future, this change will certainly mean the evolution of new lifestyles which are more in keeping with those of mature contemporary women and men. It may even entail the emergence of new forms of religious life. Rahner implies, therefore that laity, priests and religious are called to a profound decision of faith rooted in their baptismal commitment and that this involves continual adaptation in order to meet the changing needs of a World Church.

**Conclusion**

It was Rahner’s contention that Vatican II’s endorsement of the local church as the presence of Jesus Christ and of the Church heralds the beginning of a World Church in that it leads to the development of a variety of liturgies and proclamations of the message of Christianity in keeping with the pluriform quality of a World Church. These liturgies, in turn, lead to the formation of autonomous regional churches in which the collegial-synodal principle is operative both in theory and in practice. The local churches, therefore, are not out-posts of some far-off central administration ruled by agents of Rome. They are churches in their own right governed by a bishop who receives his authority directly from Jesus Christ himself and not from the pope. Rahner also emphasized that the universal call to holiness and to service in the Church calls for a personal decision of faith on the part of everyone in the World Church, priests, laity, religious as well as a willingness continually to adapt the outward form of these ministries to the changing needs of a World Church.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ECUMENICAL CHANGE OF MIND

Introduction

By the development that took place at Vatican II with respect to the new relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to non-Catholic Christians, to their churches and ecclesial communities, Vatican II signalled the emergence of a World Church, one which, in theory and in practice, takes seriously the gift and task of Christian unity, and is willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to achieve it. The purpose of this chapter is to develop Rahner's theological understanding of the significance of Vatican II as marking the first tentative approach by the Roman Catholic Church to discover and to actualize itself as a World Church by its declaration of a new relationship with non-Catholic Christians, non-Catholic Christian churches and ecclesial communities and by ratifying this new attitude as "truly Christian." ¹

This chapter unfolds in four sections. Section A summarizes the teaching of Vatican II with respect to non-Catholic Christians, non-Catholic Christian churches and ecclesial communities as well as the conciliar teaching regarding the development of dogma and the hierarchy of truths.

Section B explores the development of Rahner's theological understanding of the teaching of Vatican II with respect to the new relationship of the Church to non-Catholic Christians and to their churches and the significance of this ecumenical change of mind in terms of the emergence of a World Church. This section also serves as introduction to the major themes of Rahner's writings related to ecumenism by exploring his

¹Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 98. The German phrase is "wirklich Christliche."
understanding of the development of dogma, the relationship of scripture and tradition, and the "hierarchy of truths."

Section C presents Rahner's understanding of the theological possibility of recovering full communion among the churches based on the development that took place at Vatican II with respect to non-Catholic Christians and their churches and the implications this has for a World Church.

Section D explores Rahner's understanding of the concrete possibility of recovering full visible unity of the Church based on the new relationship of the Church to non-Catholic Christians and to their churches begun at Vatican II, the concrete obstacles to this unity, and the role of the papacy in bringing about an actual unity of the churches in the World Church.

By the irreversible ecumenical change of mind that occurred at Vatican II with respect to non-Catholic Christians, their churches and other ecclesial communities, Vatican II paved the way for the emergence of a World Church and opened a new epoch in Roman Catholicism.

A. The Teaching of Vatican II with Respect to the New Relationship of the Church to Non-Catholic Christians and to their Churches

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council with respect to the new relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to non-Catholic Christians and to their churches can be summarized in the following points: that the Church of Jesus Christ subsists {subsistit} in the Roman Catholic Church and that many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside the visible structure of the Catholic Church (LG no.8): that these elements,

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3 The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church also teaches that the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of the unity of all humankind (LG nos.9, 3, 28, 5). See Aloys Grillmeier, "The Mystery of the Church," Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol.1, 139f., esp. p. 140. See also, Kloppenburg, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, 124. Kloppenburg gives
as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, possess an inner dynamism toward Catholic unity (LG no.8);⁴ that the Church is linked to all the baptized who are honoured with the name of Christian, even though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or preserve unity of communion with the Roman Apostolic See (LG no.15; UR nos. 3, 22, 23);⁵ that all who have been properly baptised are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Roman Catholic Church (UR no.3);⁶ that of its very nature, baptism is oriented toward a complete profession of faith and finally toward a complete participation in eucharistic communion (UR nos.22, 23);⁷ that Roman Catholic Christians should acquire a better knowledge of the mentality of non-Catholic Christians (UR no.11);⁸ that in Catholic teaching there exists an order or "hierarchy of truths" (UR no.11);⁹ that the primary duty for Catholics in ecumenical work is to make an "honest and careful appraisal" of whatever needs to be renewed and achieved in the Catholic

these additional references to the theme of unity throughout the documents: LG nos.8, 13, 23, 32, 15, 7; UR nos.1, 3, 24, 2, 3; AG nos.1, 6, 7.

⁴For Latin translation see Tanner, The Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vol.2, 854. See also Abbott, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in The Documents of Vatican II, fn.#23, p. 23. See also, Grillmeier, "The Mystery of the Church," 146-152. See also Kloppenburg, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, 65-88. The "elements" of truth found outside the Catholic Church are listed in detail in LG no.15 and in UR no.3. (66)


⁶See Abbott, "Decree on Ecumenism," fn.#12, p. 345.


household itself (UR nos.3, 4, 6; LG no.15);\textsuperscript{10} that dialogue is the indispensable instrument in the encounter of the churches (UR 4);\textsuperscript{11} that study is essential if Catholic Christians are to come to understand the outlook of their separated brothers and sisters (UR no.9);\textsuperscript{12} that although common worship (\textit{communicatio in sacris}), may not be regarded as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians, the gaining of a needed grace sometimes recommends this practice (UR no.8).\textsuperscript{13}

The Council also taught the following with regard to the churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman See: that although the eastern churches are separated from the Roman Apostolic See, they possess true sacraments, above all by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the eucharist (UR no.15)\textsuperscript{14}; that in order faithfully to preserve the fullness of Christian tradition, and to bring about reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christians, the exceedingly rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the eastern churches needs to be preserved and fostered (UR no.15);\textsuperscript{15} that while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church, these churches have the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{See Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 69-81, 95-108. See also, Kloppenburg, \textit{The Ecclesiology of Vatican II}, 353, 355f., 146. See also Abbott, "The Decree on Ecumenism," fn.#33, p. 350.}

\footnote{See Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," vol.2. p. 82-83f.}

\footnote{See Abbott, "Decree on Ecumenism," fn. #41,42. See also, Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 108-111. See also, Kloppenburg, \textit{The Ecclesiology of Vatican II}, 358-360.}

\footnote{See Abbott, "Decree on Ecumenism," fn.#36, 362. See also, Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 102-108.}

\footnote{See Johannes M. Hoeck, "Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches," in \textit{Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II}, vol.1, 312-331.}

\footnote{See Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 132-136. See also, Kloppenburg, \textit{The Ecclesiology of Vatican II}, 356.}
\end{footnotes}
power to govern themselves according to their own discipline (UR no.16);16 that the differences in theological expressions of doctrine between East and West produce formulations that may often be considered as complementary rather than conflicting (UR no.17);17 that in spite of many weighty differences, there is much that binds the separated western churches to the Roman Catholic Church (UR nos.19, 21);18 that Catholics refrain from superficiality or imprudence in ecumenism (UR no.24).19

B. Rahner's Understanding of the Development of Dogma that took Place at Vatican II with Respect to the Ecumenical Change of Mind

It was Rahner's understanding that a true and irreversible development of dogma took place at Vatican II with respect to ecumenism, one that made possible a new relationship with non-Catholic Christians and with their churches20 with the result that all ecumenical activities instigated or developed by the Council can now be seen as the

16See Abbott, "The Decree on Ecumenism," fn.#65, p. 360. Unity does not mean uniformity. See also, Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 136-138. See also, Kloppenburg, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, 134f., 136ff. Kloppenburg states that in UR nos.16, 17, as well as in other conciliar texts, it is clearly stated that the visible unity of the Church allows, desires, and even requires pluralism (OE no.2; LG no.23; UR nos.16, 17).

17See Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 138-141. The Catholic Church does not hold the view that there is only one method and mode of procedure in theology and only one possible way of formulating revelation. (139) See also, Kloppenburg, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, 141, 357, 361.

18See Abbott, "The Decree on Ecumenism," fn.#73, and #74, p. 362. See also, Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree," 148-151. Feiner notes that in Protestant theology at the present time, the principle of scripture sola is in fact interpreted with many more distinctions and qualifications than previously. On the Catholic side, the Council refused to speak of two sources of revelation and also tolerated the view of many Roman Catholic theologians that the whole of revealed truth is found in Holy Scripture.(150)


contribution of the Council to Christianity's becoming a World Church. Before demonstrating the significance of the change for the emergence of a World Church, it is necessary to explore his understanding of the key concepts that contributed to this ecumenical change of mind as they were employed at Vatican II. These concepts include the development of dogma, the relationship of scripture and tradition (DV nos. 8, 9), and the meaning of the "Hierarchy of Truths" (UR no. 11). Concrete application of these concepts is critical to the practical realization of the restoration of full, visible unity of the Church as well as being indicative of that ecumenical change of mind which heralds the emergence of a World Church.

1. The Development of Dogma

By saying that a new and irreversible development of dogma took place at Vatican II with regard to the ecumenical change of mind, Rahner was asserting that the basic elements of dogmatic development were all present in the Council's teaching on ecumenism. For instance, it was obvious to him that the new attitude the Council adopted towards non-Christians and non-Catholic Christians and their religions represents a dynamic unfolding of the continuous "happening" of salvation history.

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23In the essay, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," Rahner identified five constitutive elements of the dynamism of dogmatic development (pp. 3-35, esp. 7-35).

24Rahner, "The Development of Dogma," 48, 50. Since this continuous event of saving history has now reached unsurpassable climax in Jesus Christ, nothing more is to be expected in the way of new revelation. See also, idem, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," 9; cf., idem, "The Death of Jesus and the Closure of Revelation," TI 18, pp. 132-142. See DV no. 19.
instance of dogmatic development, the one that occurred at Vatican II with respect to ecumenism implies the presence of the Holy Spirit, the inner light of grace and supernatural faith; a proclamation by the magisterium; a true "handing on" (paradosis) of tradition; and above all, the conscious awareness by the Church that what may have been part of its sense of faith for some time, is now held by it with the certainty of faith.

2. The Development of Dogma that took Place at Vatican II with respect to the Ecumenical Change of Mind

Rahner was convinced that a real development of dogma took place at Vatican II with respect to non-Catholic Christians and their churches. In his essay, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," Rahner argued that the Council represents a caesura in the history of the relation of the Catholic Church with other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities. Rahner noted that even though the Church's sense of faith always implied convictions which, at least in principle, authorized a more open and ecumenical relationship between the Church and other Christian churches and communities, these convictions were barely acted upon until Vatican II. Non-Catholic Christians were looked upon as a "mass of heretics" who were to be invited in a friendly or not so friendly way


27Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," 24, 26. Rahner discerned a two-fold movement within the development of dogma, one in the direction of an ever fuller expression of the individual dogma; the other tending towards compression and simplification of dogma into the one mystery of God. He maintained that theology today might well take up more intensively this second task; that is, the simplification of dogma by reducing the multiplicity of faith's assertions to their ultimate structures. (26)


to be converted and to return to the one true Catholic Church, without any expectation that this return to unity might also carry with it important changes in the Catholic Church itself.\footnote{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 97.}

Rahner called attention to the fact that Christianity has always maintained that there is a true history of revelation and of faith in which what happens is not always the same but includes new, far-reaching changes. He argued that the Church's sense of faith never ceases to be an historical reality following a single track with far-reaching caesura, even though this is not made clear in the usual theory of the history of dogmatic development.\footnote{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 98.}

According to Rahner, the most startling thing that occurred at this Council was that Catholic Christians expressly adopted a new attitude toward non-Christians and non-Catholic Christians and their churches and ratified it as truly Christian.\footnote{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 98.} He insisted that while it is true that historically speaking, this new awareness came out of the climate of modern liberal mentality, it cannot be attributed to relativism since the ecumenical change of mind grew from "genuinely Christian roots."\footnote{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 98.} In Rahner's view, this new attitude definitely abandons an older mentality; thus it remains obligatory for the future of the Church, like other great events in the history of faith.\footnote{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 98.} Although none of this was actually explicit in the Church's awareness in the past, it is present there now and can never be excluded. As such, a true development of dogma has taken place with respect to the new relationship of the Church to non-Christians and non-Catholic Christians and their churches.\footnote{Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 99.}

In a second essay, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican
Council," Rahner noted that the division of the Churches in Christendom is a great impediment to the propagation of Christianity in the whole world. Hence, all ecumenical activities which the Council itself developed, approved or instigated ought to be appreciated as contributions of the Council to Christianity's becoming a World-Church.\footnote{Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 82.} The Council achieved this precisely by adopting a new attitude towards non-Catholic Christians.\footnote{See UR nos.3, 4, 9, 17, 22, 23.} Partly through its ecumenical change of mind, the Church in its teaching at this Council began to act as a World-Church, at least in a rudimentary way.\footnote{Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 82; cf., idem. "Die zweite Konzilsperiode," Oberrheinisches Pastorablatt 65 (1964): 68-82, esp.76-78; cf., idem, "Dogmatische Fragen des Konzils," Oberrheinisches Pastorablatt 64 (1963): 234-50, esp. 245-247. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," diss. 238-303.}

3. Scripture and Tradition\footnote{Rahner, "Scripture and Tradition," SM vol. 6, 56.}

therefore, is not a source separate from tradition, but rather, is itself the living "oral" tradition of the Church. Rahner concluded that since every infallible dogma of the Church that has been handed down through oral tradition has its basis in scripture, it is useless to speculate that there could be a materially richer source of faith outside of scripture. Consequently, Rahner's understanding of the material sufficiency of scripture moves much closer to the Protestant position.

In a second essay, written the same year entitled, "Scripture and Tradition" (1963), Rahner addressed the question of the relationship between scripture and tradition as well as the related question as to whether Catholic Christians may legitimately accept a material sufficiency of scripture. He pointed out that the concept of "paradosis," of "traditio" or handing-down, has its ultimate and deepest meaning in that paradosis, in which the Son of God always hands himself over and delivers himself up to Christians in the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Rahner emphasized that holy scripture is the concrete form taken by the apostolic paradosis, not something else added on to it. Consequently, Rahner's understanding of the relationship between scripture and tradition comes closer to the Protestant understanding of the sola scriptura.

On the basis of the fact that belief in a particular material source of faith beside scripture did not exist before the Council of Trent, Rahner argued that it is entirely possible to formulate a Catholic sola-scriptura principle with regard to the Church's

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43Rahner, "Scripture and Theology," 91; cf., idem, "Scripture and Tradition," in SM vol.6, 56. See DV no.10.


46Rahner, "Scripture and Tradition," 100; cf., idem, "Scripture and Tradition," SM vol. 6, 56. See DV no.9.

deposit of faith. The only provision is that Catholic Christians understand that this principle also involves an authoritative interpretation which cannot be replaced by scripture.48

3. The "Hierarchy of Truths"49

In his essay, "A Hierarchy of Truths," Rahner explored the meaning and possibilities of the Council's teaching regarding an order of priority or hierarchy of truths within Catholic teaching and the importance of applying this principle in ecumenical discussion.50 Rahner maintained that it is not entirely obvious that Christian faith is related in exactly the same way to all the truths of faith, even though it is beyond dispute that all of these truths in themselves lay claim to the faith of Christians and can be the object of the fides qua (act of faith).51 Since the fides qua (act of faith) itself also participates in the hierarchial structure of the fides quae (content of faith), the statement that all the truths are to be held with the same Christian faith must be taken "with a grain

48Rahner, "Scripture and Tradition," 107, 110f. Rahner also pointed out that scripture cannot really attest itself by itself, but must attest every other part of the faith of the Church. Since this whole faith of the Church is largely attested to by Holy Scripture, it is impossible to find any proposition of faith so different from this totality that it appears to come from a completely different source. (110f.) See also, Ratzinger, "Revelation and Tradition," in Revelation and Tradition, 26-46. See DV nos.9, 10.

49Rahner, "Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church," TIT 14, pp. 3-23, esp. p.9 (G. 1971); "The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church," TIT 14, pp. 24-46, esp. pp.38-46 (G. 1972); "A Hierarchy of Truths," TIT 21, pp. 162-167 (G. 1982). We deal only with this last essay here since most of the key points of the two previous essays are contained in it. See also, idem, Foundations of Christian Faith, 382ff. (G. 1976)


of salt." In Rahner’s view, the teaching on the hierarchy of truths demonstrates that Christians are already in agreement on the primary truths of faith.53

Besides an "objective" hierarchy of truths, there is also an "existentiell" or "subjective" hierarchy which is not simply the equivalent of the objective hierarchy even though it is dependent on it.54 On account of the plurality that exists among people, Rahner considered it quite legitimate for the truths of faith to be present throughout the world in different ways in the consciousness of faith, sometimes moving to the foreground of this consciousness, sometimes receding to the background.55 Rahner felt it was imperative for Catholic Christians "to be more aware" of this existentiell hierarchy of truths and to "analyze it more profoundly" in its application to our time.56

C. The Theological Possibility of Full Communion Among The Churches

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council with respect to the new relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to non-Catholic Christians and to their churches reflects two important points which arise from Rahner’s writings on ecumenism and have a direct bearing on his understanding of the Council as heralding the emergence of a World Church. The first is that the recovery of full visible communion among the churches will mean a unified diversity, a unity forged amid great pluralism such as was experienced,


56Rahner, "A Hierarchy of Truths," 166, 167. For example, many people consider it obvious that they have to love their neighbour and to improve social structures. In the light of this they will strive to acquire an understanding of Christian faith and in this way they will of course construct for themselves an existentiell hierarchy in their faith. (166)
acknowledged and cherished at Vatican II. There is a parallel here between what Rahner had to say concerning the diversity of cultures, ways of expressing the Christian message and liturgies in the local churches with the type of pluralism that ought to be welcomed in the event of full unity of the Church. The second is the pressing need for a full visible unity of the Church in order that a World Church may bear effective witness to the gospel in today's secularized, post-Christian, atheistic world. Neither objective is possible without a new relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.

Before, during and after the Council, Rahner addressed specific questions in ecumenism as well as those having to do with the theology of ecumenism. Increasingly in the years following Vatican II, however, his focus shifted from a concern mainly with the classic questions of controversial theology as debated between the confessions themselves, to the critical importance of having one Church united in a common faith amid a plurality of expressions of that one faith, prepared both to dialogue with the secularized world and to give it an authentic witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Areas of Past Difficulty in Ecumenical Discussion

Even before the Council, Rahner concerned himself with specific questions in ecumenism, such as the problem of conversions and of how to reconcile the three--fold

57Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 81, 88.


sola of the Reformation with authentic Catholic belief. His conviction was that much of what is considered contradictory to Catholic belief when it comes to Protestant theology is actually deeply consonant with the Church’s teaching. With regard to the question of conversions, Rahner stated what Vatican II was later to emphasize, namely, that relations between the religious confessions and the Roman Catholic Church had changed since the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Christians born into the separated churches now could not be held responsible for the sin of separation that existed at the time of the Reformation. He also anticipated Vatican II in declaring that these non-Catholic Christians bring a "positive heritage" with them to ecumenical unity in the form of their love of scripture and their practice of a truly Christian life. Thus, Rahner anticipated Vatican II’s proclamation of a new relationship to non-Catholic Christians and to their Churches which would herald the emergence of a World Church.

In his essay, "Some Remarks on the Question of Conversions" (1962), Rahner expanded upon the previous essay by arguing that the official leadership of the Church should give more attention to the general ecumenical endeavour and less to the winning of individual converts. With Vatican II, he also stressed that Catholic Christians can no longer naively deny "good faith" to the many non-Catholic Christians who, despite close contact with the Church, never become Roman Catholics (LG no.16). Rather than spend energy combatting each other, the Christian churches ought to use their resources, knowledge and experience to help each other. Rahner was convinced that a great deal

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60This refers to the *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *sola scriptura* position of the Reformers.


62Rahner, "On Conversions to the Church," 382. See *UR* nos. 21, 22, 23.


of what separates Christian churches and keeps them separated, is not so much the theological differences, but rather "the whole way of life;" for example, the historically conditioned forms of piety, the contradictions in the human law of the Church etc. If all the denominations would together intensify their efforts to re-christianize the neo-pagan world, they would soon find themselves developing, in the process, a common style of Christian life which would eventually bring them concretely closer to each other.

Even before the Council Rahner was intent on reconciling the Protestant understanding of justification, faith and scripture with authentic Catholic belief. His purpose was to show that the seemingly irreconcilable aspects of Protestant theology were in many ways deeply consonant with authentic Church teaching. In his essay, "Questions of Controversial Theology of Justification" (1966), inspired by Hans Küng's book Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection, Rahner expressed the view that Küng had succeeded admirably in showing that those very truths which Barth found lacking in the Catholic position are actually held as authentic Church teaching.

In his writings during and immediately after the Council, Rahner attempted to do, in summary fashion, what Küng had done in his book; that is, try to reconcile the Protestant three-fold sola with Catholic belief in an effort to achieve dogmatic unity. In his essay, "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time" (1963), Rahner demonstrated how it is possible, with certain reservations, for a Roman Catholic to accept the Reformation

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69Rahner, "Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification," TII 4, pp. 189-218, esp. p. 190. Rahner did not feel that Küng brought out clearly enough against Barth that the response to God's justifying grace is as much gift as the gift itself and that justifying faith includes love. (199)
formula "simul justus et peccator." His first step was to explain why the Council of Trent had to reject the formula. The Catholic viewpoint is that justification, understood as God's action, transforms human persons down to the deepest roots of their being and divinizes them. For this reason, one cannot be, at the same time, both justified and sinner. On the other hand, the Reformation Formula has a perfectly positive meaning for Christian existence. Rahner pointed out that even though one cannot accept the abstract formula, one can nevertheless accept it as the expression of the experience of the individual person. Although a person may and must hope that he/she is justified in the sight of God, one must also, at the same time, admit that one is a sinner in need of God's mercy. Rahner concluded that even though Roman Catholics cannot accept the abstract formula of "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time," the formula is nonetheless justifiable if it is used to express the subjective experience of the Christian.

After the Council, two essays, occasioned by the anniversary of the Reformation, represented further attempts by Rahner to reach a doctrinal accord with the separated Churches with regard to the three great solas. In his essay, "The Question of Justification Today" (1967), Rahner argued that a true presentation of Catholic teaching on this question reveals that the (sola gratia) is no reason for the separation of the churches today. The emphasis now should be placed on reformulating this article of Christian

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70Rahner, "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time," TI 6, pp. 218-230. (G. 1963)
71Rahner, "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time," 221, 223.
72Rahner, "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time," 229.
73Rahner, "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time," 224f.
74Rahner, "Justified and Sinner at the Same Time," 224.
faith so that it is intelligible and credible to secular people.\textsuperscript{77}

In a second essay, "A Catholic Meditation on the Anniversary of the Reformation," Rahner extended his reflection on the "sola gratia" to include the Catholic perspective of "sola fide" and "sola scriptura."\textsuperscript{78} With regard to the "sola gratia" and "sola fide," Rahner noted that there are good reasons why this basic event of God's justifying grace and its acceptance through grace should be called "faith," even though this concept also includes all the fullness of Christian existence which we call faith, hope and love. Since the sola fide also includes hope and love, Roman Catholics can agree to the sola fide of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{79}

With regard to the sola scriptura, Rahner observed that the Catholic Church regards itself, according to Vatican II, as the "servant of the Scripture." He pointed out also that Protestant Christians know that the New Testament originated in the apostolic kerygma of the living and apostolic Church and that, therefore, Scripture is and remains the Church's book. They know too that scripture receives its full meaning only through the preacher's actual interpretation, by which faith is aroused.\textsuperscript{80} Rahner reasoned, therefore, that all Christians should be able to agree about the sola scriptura.\textsuperscript{81} Rahner also observed that Roman Catholics need not feel compelled by their faith to regard the Church and its

\textsuperscript{77}Rahner, "The Question of Justification Today," 96, 97-99. Rahner summarized the Catholic position in eight points.

\textsuperscript{78}Rahner, "A Catholic Meditation on the Anniversary of the Reformation," in Grace in Freedom, 100-111.

\textsuperscript{79}Rahner, "A Catholic Meditation on the Anniversary of the Reformation," 103.

\textsuperscript{80}Rahner, "A Catholic Meditation on the Anniversary of the Reformation," 103f.

magisterium as the first and fundamental factor of their Christian faith.\textsuperscript{82}

2. The Theology of Ecumenical Discussion

Increasingly after Vatican II, Rahner's writings focus less on the need for dialogue among the churches themselves over the traditional points of dispute found in the old controversial theology, and more on the need for all Christian churches to begin to take on a new dialogue partner—the secularized world, and to give a united and effective witness to it of the gospel.

In his essay, "Church, Churches and Religions" (1966), Rahner provided some insights into how Roman Catholic Christians should regard non-Catholic Christians and their churches.\textsuperscript{83} In the first place, the former need not regard the latter simply as entities which should not be there at all or as constituting a mere contradiction of the Church of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{84} In the second place, Catholic Christians should realize that all non-Catholic Christians and their churches are already united with the Church in that all possess the will to unity which is more fundamental than the will to separate and to remain separated, and that all possess the Spirit of God in faith and baptism.\textsuperscript{85}

In an essay written more than ten years later, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind" (1978), Rahner emphasized the division of the churches is clearly in direct violation of the explicit will of Jesus Christ and, as such, represents a "scandal" and a

\textsuperscript{82}Rahner, "A Catholic Mediation on the Anniversary of the Reformation," 104. "...the Catholic believes the Church (not: in the Church), because he/she believes in God...and not the other way around."

\textsuperscript{83}Rahner, "Church, Churches and Religions," \textit{TI} 10, pp. 30-49, (G. 1966) See also, Kasper, "The Dialogue with Protestant Theology," 152-156. For development in Rahner's ecumenical theology, see Lennan, \textit{The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner}, 244-249.

\textsuperscript{84}Rahner, "Church, Churches and Religions," 41.

"terrible accusation" against Christians. Rahner was convinced that in order to achieve unity two things are necessary: first, the effort to combine a unity of faith and a new way of functioning for the magisterium; second, the acceptance of a plurality of theological expressions of the one Christian faith. He saw that these theological differences present no threat to unity provided they can be seen as complementary rather than contradictory.

Beginning in the late sixties and throughout the seventies a rash of writings appeared on the theology of ecumenism and ecumenical discussion in which Rahner grappled with the question of how such a unity of faith with non-Catholic Christians could be achieved given the plurality of theologies and interpretations of the one common faith, and how the church's leaders, particularly those in the Roman Catholic Church, could facilitate this unity. In his important essay, "On the Theology of Ecumenical


87Rahner. "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," 169. See also, Jean-Marie Tillard, "Theological Pluralism and the Mystery of the Church," Concilium: Different Theologies: Common Responsibility--Babel or Pentecost vol. 171 (1984): 2-73. Tillard points out how theological pluralism was always present in the Church. This presented no threat to unity as long as these differences could be seen to be complementary in some way rather than contradictory to this one faith.


Discussion," Rahner outlined the tasks, methodology and basis of all ecumenical theology in a post-Vatican II Church, and so, I believe, for a World Church. According to Rahner, ecumenical theology has three basic tasks: to provide a presentation of that Church's own teaching in all its richness and depth; to give a thorough presentation of the doctrinal views of the other churches taking into consideration their origins, historical development, and their current positions; to have a total commitment to truth as well as an unreserved obedience to the revealed will of God.

Secondly, Rahner pointed out that the methodology for ecumenical discussion in the Church today differs considerably from the former controversial theology. Now the accent is on dialogue, not controversy; the communication of truth, not mere exchange of information (UR nos.4, 9). The Roman Catholic Christian, however, cannot surrender

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92Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion," 27. See UR no.16.


94Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion," 27, 28, 30. See fn.#7, p. 28 in which Rahner referred to the many places in UR in which the word "dialogue" is mentioned. See also, idem, "Catholic Ecumenism" under "Ecumenism" in SM vol. 2, 200-201. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," 242. See also, Lennan, "Ecumenism and Evangelism: A Proposal from Karl Rahner," 80.
this claim to truth in ecumenical dialogue in favour of a false irenics.\textsuperscript{95} I believe that Rahner's emphasis on dialogue rather than controversy and on the necessity of maintaining integrity of truth in all ecumenical discussion relates to the emergence of a World Church which began at Vatican II with its insistence on a new relationship towards non-Catholic Christians and to their churches.

Thirdly, Rahner asserted that the ultimate basis for all ecumenical discussion is the belief that all Christians share in God's justifying grace and so, are basically united in a common faith even though there are radical differences in the formulation of that faith among the various churches.\textsuperscript{96} It is this faith that constitutes the true basis and prior condition of all ecumenical dialogue.\textsuperscript{97} Seen in this way, the doctrinal position of the other Christian churches may not only fail to contradict Catholic belief but may be complementary and convergent with it.\textsuperscript{98}

In a second essay written the same year, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church" (1968), Rahner proposed that the diaspora situation of all the Christian churches into which they are plunged as a result of the pluralism of today's society will have a profound and positive effect upon the attitude of Christians towards one another.\textsuperscript{99} First.

\textsuperscript{95}Rahner, "On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion." 30. For a definition of "irenicism" and "irenical theology," see Johannes Brosseder, "Ecumenical Theology" under the heading of "Ecumenism" in SM vol.2, 204-207.


\textsuperscript{97}See UR nos.3, 7.


the separated churches will spontaneously be drawn closer together in a mutual sharing of tasks and decisions as they try to give a common witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in a secularized world. As a result, many of the old theological controversies dividing the churches will lose their force.  

Second, all of the churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, will have to reckon with a greater degree of pluralism among the theologies upheld within each church. According to Rahner, this growing pluralism is really a gift to the churches in that it provides a greater opportunity for the separated churches to arrive at a better theological understanding among themselves, and puts them in a better position to decide what belongs to the essence of the Christian faith and what is merely a theological interpretation of this one creed. Rahner contended that if these differences between creed and theology were clarified, the situation of pluralism in theology which prevails in the churches today and will prevail in the future would no longer pose an insuperable barrier to a unity of creed. It seems to me Rahner's point speaks directly to the situation of a World Church which is one of pluralism, and of the task belonging to ecumenical theology within such a church.

In an essay written the following year, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church" (1969), Rahner suggested that the pluralism of theologies which exists and has a right to exist in the Roman Catholic Church, has a significance for the

\[ \text{\[\text{\textsuperscript{100}}\text{Rahner, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church," 214f.}\]} \]

\[ \text{\[\text{\textsuperscript{101}}\text{Rahner, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church," 215. See also, idem, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," }\text{T1} \text{11, pp. 3-23. (G. 1969) See also, Jean-Marie Tillard, "Theological Pluralism and the Mystery of the Church," 62-72. See UR nos.15-17.}\]} \]


\[ \text{\[\text{\textsuperscript{103}}\text{Rahner, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church," 216f.}\]} \]
strivings of the ecumenical movement for a workable unity among the churches.\textsuperscript{104} If in today's new context, these theologies of the different churches are not "in the least incompatible with one another," might not the Roman Catholic Church be tolerant enough to require nothing more of them over and above the ancient formula of faith?\textsuperscript{105} As in the previous essay, he argued that a unity of creed with other Christian churches is possible and that the best way to achieve this is through a unity of life and action. Rahner implies that this is the kind of cooperation that ought to characterize a World Church.

In his essay, "The One Church and the Many Churches" (1971), Rahner continued to probe the same question as to how there can be a unity of faith amid a plurality of theologies but this time he did so from a different perspective.\textsuperscript{106} Here he examined the churches from the viewpoint of the sociology of religion\textsuperscript{107} and found that the official reasons for the divisions of the churches are hardly known at all to ordinary church members, including those in the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{108} Rahner's point is that the question of truth presents itself in a different way now than it did at the time of the Reformation. The real fundamental question of contemporary Christians today has to do with the basic substance of Christianity itself.\textsuperscript{109} According to Rahner, the Catholic Church of the future, and by that I believe he means the World Church, will be the "communio" of the


\textsuperscript{105}Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," 23.


\textsuperscript{107}Rahner, "The One Church and the Many Churches," 183.

\textsuperscript{108}Rahner, "The One Church and the Many Churches," 187; cf., idem, "Third Church"? \textit{TI} 17, pp. 215-227. (G. 1973)

\textsuperscript{109}Rahner, "The One Church and the Many Churches," 193. See also, idem, "A Hierarchy of Truths," \textit{TI} 21, pp. 162-167. See \textit{UR} no.11.
churches which, in the light of their own historical formation, will bring and incorporate into this one Church all they have received from God by way of positive Christian heritage.\textsuperscript{110}

In another essay, "Ecumenical Theology in the Future," written the following year (1972), Rahner extended the reflections of the previous essays by urging Christian Churches to take on a new dialogue partner--the secularized, post-Christian world--and to make preaching the gospel to it the main focus of ecumenical dialogue and not the controversies that have divided the churches in the past.\textsuperscript{111} Ecumenical theology in the future will still be concerned with thinking out afresh the classic questions of controversial theology, but it will be mainly concerned with the theological study of the common substance of Christianity and with finding a way to preach this basic message to the secularized world in a language it can understand.\textsuperscript{112}

To this end, Rahner advocated the development of an indirect ecumenical theology, one that would concentrate on the supposedly "non-theological aspects" of an ecumenical theology as these arise from the history of thought and the development of society\textsuperscript{113}, social relevance,\textsuperscript{114} and linguistics.\textsuperscript{115} Rahner seems to be implying that in a World

\textsuperscript{110}Rahner, "The One Church and the Many Churches," 195ff. See UR nos.19, 21.


\textsuperscript{114}See Rahner, "Institution and Freedom," TI 13, pp. 105-21. (G. 1971)
Church, theology can no longer be pursued in isolation; rather, it must be involved in an interdisciplinary dialogue with the contemporary sciences and arts.\textsuperscript{116}

In an essay written the same year entitled, "Some Problems in Contemporary Ecumenism" (1972), Rahner reiterated that what most of all constitutes ecumenical theology is the theology of the future, a theology to be worked out by all the churches as they seek to give a united witness to Jesus Christ in a secularized world.\textsuperscript{117} It was his contention that in so doing, the separated churches would become gradually more assimilated to one another and so more receptive to a full restoration of unity of the Church.\textsuperscript{118} Rahner seems to be implying that if the Roman Catholic Church is to become a World Church it must engage in theological dialogue with other Christian churches and join them in one concerted effort to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

In two essays that followed in 1973, Rahner continued to explore the ecumenical possibilities that flow from the presence in all the churches of Christians who lack any

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118}Rahner, "Some Problems in Contemporary Ecumenism," 253.
\end{itemize}
confessional awareness. In the first of these essays, "Is Church Union Dogmatically Possible"? Rahner expressed the view that there are no "absolutely impossible barriers" to dogmatic unity since there already exists in all of the churches a considerable difference between "official" church teaching and what most people in these churches actually believe. Yet, when one speaks about the faith of the Church, (sensus fidelium), it is this actual faith that is meant and not the official faith of the churches. Rahner concluded that the major Christian churches of today could unite, even institutionally, since their sense of faith presents no insuperable obstacle. He surmised that if this is correct, then the ecumenical question is one for the authorities in the different churches, rather than one for the theologians.

In the second essay, "Third Church"? Rahner took up the same question but this time from a sociological standpoint. The presence of "Third Church" Christians in all the churches: that is, of Christians who attach little or no importance to confessional differences, led Rahner to question whether this "common Christian ground" could provide

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122 Rahner, "Is Church Union Dogmatically Possible"? 214.

a sufficient foundation for a unity of faith among the Christian churches.\textsuperscript{124} He bravely asserted that the term "Third Church" is ultimately only a term for the "great and decisive one Church" in which Christians of the different denominations and Churches are already one.\textsuperscript{125} He believed that from this "oneness," this "common Christian ground" on which all ecumenism is based, would come "the living seed from which the fullness of unity can flower."\textsuperscript{126} In saying this Rahner seems to infer that the Roman Catholic Church, as a World Church, must be open to the possibility of a visible union of all the Christian churches and help to make this a reality.

In two essays written five years later (1978), Rahner took further steps towards resolving dogmatic questions that would seem to stand in the way of a unification in faith among all Christian churches and so to a visible unity.\textsuperscript{127} In the first essay, "Pseudo-Problems in Ecumenical Discussion," Rahner noted that important questions having to do with the sacraments, ministry and the Roman primacy remain open even on the Catholic side.\textsuperscript{128} With regard to the sacraments, Rahner observed that it is enough to say that the seven sacraments, as actual basic realizations of the nature of the Church, have their origin from Jesus Christ in the sense that the Church is "instituted" by him.\textsuperscript{129} This conception of the sacraments ought to be acceptable to Protestant Christians since it brings

\textsuperscript{124}Rahner, "Third Church”? 226. 223f. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," fn.#20, p. 247.

\textsuperscript{125}Rahner, "Third Church”? 226; cf., idem, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," TI 22, pp. 84-93, esp.pp. 87-88. See also, Lennan, "Ecumenism and Evangelism: A Proposal from Karl Rahner," 82-84.

\textsuperscript{126}Rahner, "Third Church”? 227. See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 284.


\textsuperscript{129}Rahner, "Pseudo-Problems in Ecumenical Discussion," 38.
out the true meaning of the *opus operatum.*

Similarly, with regard to ministry, Rahner noted that if one holds the opinion that the tri-partite organization of ministry in the Roman Catholic Church is not absolutely of divine law, it is possible to recognize the sacramental character, not only of the Eastern churches, but also of the Reformed Churches.\(^1\)

With regard to the papacy, Rahner expressed the view that if the exercise of the papal authority is sensitive to the *sensus fidelium* of the whole Church and respectful at the same time of the principle of subsidiarity concerning the local churches, Protestant Christians need have no fear of accepting the primacy. Much of what the Rome still claims even today by way of powers and rights acquired in the course of history is not part of the inalienable nature of the primacy.\(^2\) He emphasized that even if a Protestant Christian is prepared, in principle, to recognize a Petrine ministry in the Church, that does not mean that he/she is in a position to make out a "blank cheque" for the future. The Protestant Christian can be reassured that the pope does not receive any "new" revelations and that before making any *ex cathedra* announcement, he has done everything humanly possible to make sure that his teaching is in accord with the sense of faith of the whole Church: this includes, of course, consultation with the episcopate.\(^3\) With Vatican II, Rahner asserted that the role of Catholic theologians is to clear the way for unity first of all by encouraging Catholic Christians to enlighten and purify their own faith of

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\(^1\)Rahner, "Pseudo-Problems in Ecumenical Discussion," 38.

\(^2\)Rahner, "Pseudo-Problems in Ecumenical Discussion," 39f. "Even if these three grades are acknowledged as of divine law, the Church can nevertheless divide up its one ministry further and grant a share in it in different ways."


misunderstandings, and secondly, by creating better understanding between the
churches.\textsuperscript{134} Rahner's remarks on the exercise of the papal primacy relate to the
conditions which ought to prevail in the Roman Catholic Church if it is to become truly a
World Church and so a force for the restoration of the unity of the Church.

In the second essay, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," Rahner moved
increasingly toward the vision of a restoration of unity of the Church and, in so doing,
saw the need for the magisterium to develop a new way of functioning.\textsuperscript{135} It was clear
to Rahner that the only way to overcome the present state of "tacit acquiescence" and
"stagnation" in ecumenism" is for Church leaders to undertake boldly and confidently the
task of Christian unity.\textsuperscript{136} For the Roman Catholic Church, this involves proving by
concrete deeds that it is determined to renounce an "ecclesiological monoculture" and
become a World Church.\textsuperscript{137} In Rahner's view, by working together to achieve the unity
of humankind, all the Christian churches create conditions to ensure that Christianity
becomes increasingly a world religion or for the Church to become increasingly a "true
World Church;" that is, a Church truly "one" everywhere in the world.\textsuperscript{138}

D. Unity of the Churches--An Actual Possibility

In Rahner's later writings there is an increasing urgency to move from a unity in
faith to a full, visible unity of the Church.\textsuperscript{139} As Rahner focused more on the possibility

\textsuperscript{134}Rahner, "Pseudo-Problems in Ecumenical Discussion," 52. See UR nos.3, 4, 6, 9, 11;
LG no.15. See also, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," 68.

\textsuperscript{135}Rahner, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," TI 20, pp. 154-172. (G. 1978)

\textsuperscript{136}Rahner, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," 170.

\textsuperscript{137}Rahner, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," 170, 172. See also, Woolever, "A
Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World
Church," 253-255.

\textsuperscript{138}Rahner, "Unity of the Church--Unity of Mankind," 172.

\textsuperscript{139}Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," TI 22, pp. 84-93 (G. 1980); idem, "What the
Church Officially Teaches and What the People Actually Believe," TI 22, pp. 165-175, esp.
1982); "Concrete Official Steps Toward Unification," TI 22, pp. 80-83, (G. 1982); idem, with
of a real unification of the Church, he shifted more responsibility for this unity onto church officials, especially those of the Roman Catholic Church, and less on the work of theologians. Rahner gradually moved towards a concrete plan for achieving this visible unity and so towards the eventual realization of his vision of a World Church comprised of all the Christian churches.

In his essay "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," Rahner sought to counteract the "stagnation," "resignation," and "listlessness" that seemed to him to be hampering ecumenical progress by presenting five maxims that Christians and their churches could adopt in order to draw closer to the goal of full visible unity of the Church. In doing so, he demonstrated that as a World Church, the Roman Catholic Church can no longer be content with expressing its desire for unity in words only; it must show by concrete actions that it is really serious about the restoration of full unity of the Church.

In the first maxim, Rahner challenged all Christians in all churches, to a more intense, more radical living of the Christian life. Only by an "ever renewed" and more "radical return" to the core of the Christian faith can it be more clearly seen that the apparently contradictory statements of the different churches are really attempts to elucidate the inexhaustible fullness of Christianity from different points of view.

In maxim two, Rahner warned all Christians against forging a "cheap unity" by the creation of something like a "third confession" who, in its haste for ecumenical unity, would by-pass the history of faith in the various churches, and alienate the majority of

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140Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," *TI* 22, pp. 84-93, esp. p. 84. (G. 1980)

141Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 84f.

Christians in the process.\textsuperscript{143} Efforts towards unity ought to comprise all Christians if they are to be genuine and complete.\textsuperscript{144}

In the third maxim, Rahner warned against a narrow confessionalism which would create unity by merging all the confessions into one Church.\textsuperscript{145} By stressing the fact that "unity does not mean uniformity," Rahner implied that as a World Church, the Roman Catholic Church cannot expect to absorb all churches into itself, lord it over them, and remain unchanged itself in the process.

In maxim four, Rahner invited all Christians to "get to know each other really well."\textsuperscript{146} Rahner did not have in mind a mere increase of theoretical knowledge about the other churches but rather, a "vivid experience" of how other Christians live their faith.\textsuperscript{147}

In maxim five, Rahner called upon all Christians to appreciate and to celebrate the unity they already possess as God's gift.\textsuperscript{148} He argued that provided that the foundation of the Christian faith is there, full communion among the churches cannot and should not suppress considerable pluralism in the one Church.\textsuperscript{149} This point relates to the unity in diversity that should always be the hallmark of a World Church.

In an essay written the following year entitled, "What the Church Officially Teaches and What the People Actually Believe" (1981), Rahner moved closer to the


\textsuperscript{144}See UR no.1.


\textsuperscript{146}Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 90.

\textsuperscript{147}Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 91f. For example, joint ecumenical services should be born of a real desire to worship God with Jesus in the belief that doing this together is better than doing it alone.(92) See UR nos.4, 7, 9.

\textsuperscript{148}Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 92. See LG no.15; UR nos.3, 22, 23.

\textsuperscript{149}Rahner, "Ecumenical Togetherness Today," 93. See UR nos. 6, 7, 14-21.
articulation of a concrete plan for the full visible unity of the Church. In the first place, this would require that the Roman Catholic Church not withdraw the dogmas which the other side challenges. Neither, however, would it insist that the dogmas expressly taught by the magisterium be absolutely binding, in the same way, on the other Christian churches. Rahner reasoned that if the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church can tolerate the presence of Catholics within the Church who do not accept quite a number of dogmas, why should it refuse to allow Protestant Christians who have the same limitations with respect to dogma, into full communion in faith? Similarly, if the great regional Churches in the Roman Catholic Church have a certain autonomy in government, liturgy, and theology, why should something similar not be true for the churches of the Reformation if they are again in full communion with Rome? Rahner implies that the autonomy of the local churches, particularly since Vatican II, is a model of that type of "unity in variety" that should exist in the World Church.

In a third essay written a year later entitled, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith" (1982), Rahner continued to plead insistently for the exercise of an "epistemological tolerance" on the part of all Christian churches as the way to unity. Applied concretely, this means that no Church, including the Roman Catholic

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150 Rahner, "What the Church Officially Teaches and What the People Actually Believe," TI 22, pp. 165-175. (G.1981)

151 Rahner, "What the Church Officially Teaches and What the People Actually Believe," 174.


153 Rahner, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith?" TI 22, pp. 67-79, esp. p. 72. (G. 1982) Epistemological tolerance is based on the principle that one does not err if one refrains from affirming a proposition that is certainly or possibly true. An individual may know about the proposition, understand it well enough and still feel she/he has grounds for refusing to affirm it. This applies not only to individuals but also to groups.

Church, would declare a binding dogma of one Church to be irrevocably irreconcilable with its own understanding of the Christian faith. The exercise of "epistemological tolerance" on the part of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church implies that Protestant Christians could be in dogmatic unity with the Roman Catholic Church without having to give a positive assent of faith right away to many propositions that Roman Catholics consider binding in faith. Neither would Protestant Christians have to reject Catholic dogmas since they could not say with certainty that accepting them would mean giving up their own faith. Rahner hastened to add, however, that the fact that protestant Christians refrain from making a judgment about these tenets does not imply that they are moving towards the Catholic position.

Besides this unity of faith, the Church of the future, and here I think Rahner means a World Church comprised of all the Christian churches, will be characterized by a greater pluralism in the laws of individual churches, as well as in Christian life, liturgy and theology than has been allowed in the Roman Catholic Church. As a model for this pluralism in the "Church of the future" or the World Church, Rahner pointed to the type of relationship that already exists between the Roman Catholic Church and the Uniate Churches of the East.

In the fourth essay, "Concrete Official Steps Toward Unification," Rahner proposed more ways in which a full communion among all the Christian churches could be effected. First, concrete problems of an interconfessional nature that occur today in pastoral work such as those having to do with Sunday obligation, intercommunion,

\[\text{155} \text{Rahner, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith?" 73f.}\]
\[\text{156} \text{Rahner, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith?" 74; cf., idem, "Thesis II," in Unity of the Churches, 25, 31, 39.}\]
\[\text{157} \text{Rahner, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith"? 77f. See UR nos.14-17, 21.}\]
\[\text{158} \text{Rahner, "Realistic Possibility of a Unification in Faith?" 78; cf., idem, "Thesis III," in Unity of the Churches, 43-57. See OE nos.2-11.}\]
\[\text{159} \text{Rahner, "Concrete Official Steps Towards Unification," TI 22, 80-83. (G. 1982)}\]
canonical procedures, etc. might be reexamined and courageously solved. Second, the conclusions of every theological dialogue among the Christian churches during the last few decades should be published officially. The Roman Catholic magisterium ought to have the courage to use its possibilities, not just through admonitions and restrictions that show a lack of ecumenical spirit but through ecumenical measures aimed at full visible unity of the Church. Rahner's point emphasizes the kind of role the teaching office will be expected to exercise in a World Church.

These reflections were summarized and developed further the following year when Rahner and Fries published their hotly debated book, Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility (1983) in which the two theologians propose eight theses, which, if adopted by all the churches, would effectively bring about full union of the Church. It was out of a sense of urgency, born of the realization that Christianity can no longer encounter peoples and cultures with the Christian message in its "splintered" and "ruptured" state, that moved Rahner and Fries to compose these theses.

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161 Rahner, "Concrete Official Steps Towards Unification," 82. See UR no.4.

162 Rahner, "Concrete Official Steps Towards Unification," 82f.

163 Rahner and Fries, Unity of the Churches. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church," p. 257, fn.#42. See also, Nicholas Aidan, "'Einigung der Kirchen:' An Ecumenical Controversy" One in Christ 21 (1985): 139-166, esp. 139-141. See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 247-249.

164 Rahner and Fries, Unity of the Churches. While both theologians composed the theses, the accompanying commentaries were divided up between them. The commentaries on Theses I, IVa, V, VI, VIII were composed by Heinrich Fries. The commentaries on Theses II, III, IVb, VII are by Karl Rahner. See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 246f.
According to Thesis One (Fundamental Truths),¹⁶⁵ "one Church to be" or the future World Church, is a community of faith in which the "hierarchy of truths" proclaimed by Vatican II reflects the varied manner in which these truths connect to the foundation of Christian faith.¹⁶⁶ In the one Church of Jesus Christ, the partner churches understand their various and in some cases, contradictory teaching traditions, as various interpretations of the one faith of the Church given in the Christian creeds.¹⁶⁷ When this variety is seen in the light of a common foundation of faith, the result is mutual "convergence" and mutual correction and assistance which is guided by that foundation.¹⁶⁸ This point stresses that the image of the unity of the churches in a World Church is one of a "reconciled diversity" which is exactly the opposite of a "monolithic uniformity."¹⁶⁹

Thesis Two (Principles of Faith)¹⁷⁰ takes into account the "new and unsurpassable" pluralism of today's intellectual situation.¹⁷¹ In so doing, it recognizes the whole history of faith, of dogma and of theology that has taken place in all the

¹⁶⁵Thesis I states that, "The fundamental truths of Christianity, as they are expressed in Holy Scripture, in the Apostles' Creed, and in that of Nicaea and Constantinople are binding on all partner churches of the one Church to be."


¹⁷⁰Thesis II states that, "nothing may be rejected decisively and confessionally in one partner church which is binding dogma in another partner church. Furthermore, beyond Thesis I no explicit and positive confession in one partner church is imposed as dogma obligatory for another partner church. This is left to a broader consensus in the future. This applies especially to authentic but undefined doctrinal degrees of the Roman church, particularly with regard to ethical questions. According to this principle only what would be done which is already practice in every church today."

¹⁷¹Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis II, in Unity of the Churches, 25."
Christian churches since the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople.\textsuperscript{172} A unity of the "still-separated" mainline churches would be possible if no church would declare a proposition which is considered by another church to be absolutely binding on itself as a church, to be positively irreconcilable with the religious understanding of the other partner churches ("epistemological tolerance").\textsuperscript{173}

The issue in Thesis Three (Partner Churches),\textsuperscript{174} concerns pluralism with respect to the structures and discipline of individual partner churches. The Roman Catholic Church, if it is to be successful in seeking full unity of the Church, can and must concede to the Churches of the Reformation the same freedom in discipline and life that it concedes to the Churches of the East on the basis of the ecclesiological principle of pluralism.\textsuperscript{175} While the Petrine office and ministry must be accepted by all the Churches if unity is to take place, this does not mean that the concrete form of the exercise of the papal primacy as it exists in the Latin Church must be the same with regards to the churches of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{176} Just as the separated Christian churches existed peacefully side by side as distinct churches before visible division of the Church, so after


\textsuperscript{173}Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis II," 36, 39. See also, Woolever, "A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church. 261-263. See also, Nichols Aidan, "‘Einigung der Kirchen,’ An Ecumenical Controversy," 143-146.

\textsuperscript{174}Thesis III states that, "In this one Church of Jesus Christ, composed of the uniting churches, there are regional partner churches which can, to a large extent, maintain their existing structures. These partner churches can also continue to exist in the same territory, since this is not impossible in the context of Catholic ecclesiology or the practice of the Roman church, as, for example, in Palestine."


\textsuperscript{176}Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis III," 48f.
restoration of unity they can and should co-exist as distinct partner churches in the same territory. This thesis relates to the need of a World Church to respect the distinctiveness of all the local churches.

Thesis Four A (Petrine Service), points to the fact that today there are reasons for a renewed ecumenical attention to the issue of the papacy which hold a challenge for the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. Major steps have been taken since Vatican II on the part of Protestant churches to recognize the Petrine office as a concrete guarantee of the unity of the Church in truth and love. In addition, many interchurch documents point to the need for a renewal of the structures of the papacy so that these reflect the principles of legitimate diversity, collegiality and subsidiarity. Moreover, these demands of the partner churches for a renewed papacy are fully in accord with the demands of Vatican II. Thesis Four A, therefore, addresses the need for a center of

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178Thesis IVa states that, "All partner churches acknowledge the meaning and right of the Petrine service of the Roman pope to be the concrete guarantor of the unity of the church in truth and love."


180Fries, "Commentary on Thesis IVa," 63. 66f. See UR nos.4, 9.


182Fries, "Commentary on Thesis IVa," 82. See also, Nichols Aidan, "Einigung der Kirchen': An Ecumenical Controversy," 147-152. Nichols says that for Fries, the key lies in the idea of reception. For more on reception, see Tataryn Myroslaw, "Karl Rahner and the
unity in a World Church.

According to Thesis Four B, Rahner considered it imperative that Rome explain exactly how it envisions acknowledging the independence of the partner churches and be willing to make "concessions" to each of them for the sake of unity. With this in mind, he offered three suggestions as to how the individual autonomy of the partner churches could be specifically acknowledged by Rome. First, a particular arrangement could be made with regard to the specific manner of exercising the Roman teaching primacy. For example, encyclicals might be addressed to one partner church rather than to the whole Church at one time. Such an approach would take into account the great dissimilarity in mentality, and in religious and theological thinking that is bound to characterize a World Church. Second, a new way could be found for the structuring and functioning of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith whereby this body exerts its influence only by way of the bishops of these partner churches. Third, there is the possibility that the Pope would decide matters of faith for the Western partner church in differentiation from his ecumenical function for the whole Church, and that


183Thesis IVb states that, "The pope, for his part, explicitly commits himself to acknowledge and to respect the thus agreed upon independence of the partner churches. He declares (by human right, iure humano) that he will make use of his highest teaching authority (ex cathedra), granted to him in conformity with Catholic principles by the First Vatican Council, only in a manner that conforms juridically or in substance to a general council of the whole Church, just as his previous ex cathedra decisions have been issued in agreement and close contact with the whole Catholic episcopate."

184Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis IVb," in Unity of the Churches, 83-92, esp. 84. Rahner saw a precedent for these "concessions" in the concordats Rome frequently entered into with secular states for the sake of peace and unity.

185Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis IVb," 86.

186Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis IVb," 86.
these decisions would affect only the Western partner church over which he presides as patriarch.\(^\text{187}\) Rahner’s commentary on this thesis points to the fact that in a World Church, the pope’s function in matters of faith will be the preservation and clarification of the substance of faith already expressed in the ancient creeds rather than the issuing of declarations which seem to be definite additions to this basic substance.\(^\text{188}\)

The basis of Thesis Five (Episcopal Office),\(^\text{189}\) is that the statement of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (no.25) concerning the bishop as official head of the local church applies not only to the Roman Catholic Church, but also to all the churches.\(^\text{190}\) Fries explains that for a long time, Catholics understood apostolic succession simply as merely the uninterrupted succession of bishops in the Church but that today this process seen to refer primarily to the succession of the whole Church in the apostolic faith.\(^\text{191}\) While many of the still-separated churches are willing to accept apostolic succession as a sign of the apostolicity of the whole church, they cannot accept that the ministerial office exercised in their own tradition should be invalid until the

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\(^{\text{188}}\)Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis IVb," 89, 91. Rahner found the description of the Pope’s "non-defining" teaching authority set forth in LG no. 25 "inadequate" and "insufficient." He foresaw that in a unified church, a whole partner church might reject a non de fide teaching declaration. (91) See also, Aidan, "'Einigung der Kirchen': An Ecumenical Controversy," 150-152.

\(^{\text{189}}\)Thesis V states that "All partner churches, in accordance with ancient tradition, have bishops at the head of their larger subdivisions. The election of a bishop in these partner churches need not be done according to the normally valid manner in the Roman Catholic church. (The new Roman Canon Law also mentions ways of appointing a bishop other than through the pope’s free choice. See can. 377, par.1.)"

\(^{\text{190}}\)Fries, "Commentary on Thesis V," in Unity of the Churches, 93f.

\(^{\text{191}}\)Fries, "Commentary to Thesis V," 99. When this chain was broken at the time of the Reformation, apostolic succession appeared to be completely dissolved.
moment that it enters into the existing line of episcopal succession.\footnote{Fries, "Commentary on Thesis V.,” 98f., 105. See also, Woolever, “A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church,” 275-284. See also, \textit{Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry, (The Lima Report) Faith and Order Paper, no.111} (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 28-29.} Thesis V speaks to this objection by recognizing that the existence in the non-Catholic churches of local congregational offices and superior regional offices is not merely the result of purely human historical development or purely sociological necessity but rather a development that has taken place under the guidance of the holy Spirit.\footnote{Fries, "Commentary on Thesis V.,” 98.}

Thesis Six (Fraternal Exchange),\footnote{Fries, "Commentary on Thesis VI,” in \textit{Unity of the Churches}, 107-114.} is directed against two tendencies which threaten a true creative unity of the churches:\footnote{Fries, "Commentary on Thesis VI,” 107f., 111. See \textit{UR} nos. 15, 16, 19, 21. On the other hand, since the non-Roman Catholic churches, especially the churches of the Reformation, have had a long experience in what diversity means, they need to rehearse for unity in the midst of diversity. (111) See also, Woolever, “A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church,” 284-288. See also, Aidan, "‘Einigung der Kirchen,’: An Ecumenical Controversy," 153.} firstly, to see and evaluate the previous history and experience of the still-separated churches in solely negative terms; secondly, to understand unity as uniformity and to express it in those terms to other churches. This thesis emphasizes that the World Church must now learn a process that understands unity in terms of a "living diversity" of partner churches.\footnote{Fries, "Commentary on Thesis VI,” 107f., 111. See \textit{UR} nos. 15, 16, 19, 21. On the other hand, since the non-Roman Catholic churches, especially the churches of the Reformation, have had a long experience in what diversity means, they need to rehearse for unity in the midst of diversity. (111) See also, Woolever, “A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church,” 284-288. See also, Aidan, "‘Einigung der Kirchen,’: An Ecumenical Controversy," 153.}

Thesis Seven (Recognition of Offices),\footnote{Fries, "Commentary on Thesis VI,” 107f., 111. See also, Woolever, “A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church,” 284-288. See also, \textit{Aidan, ‘Einigung der Kirchen,’: An Ecumenical Controversy," 153.} deals with the difficult problem of the
mutual recognition of ministerial offices in the one Church of the future.\textsuperscript{198} Today, serious theological studies conclude that according to its own doctrine of sacraments, the Catholic Church may not reject the validity of Anglican ordinations.\textsuperscript{199} Rahner pointed out that when all churches have bishops, none of the partner churches will find it difficult to have "priests" who can then celebrate the Eucharist and administer absolution.\textsuperscript{200}

The presupposition in Thesis Eight (Pulpit and Altar Fellowship),\textsuperscript{201} is that pulpit and altar fellowship is the expression and goal of a community in faith.\textsuperscript{202} According to Fries, three conditions are necessary as a prerequisite for pulpit and altar fellowship: first, the foundation of an already existing fellowship among Christians that comes with baptism;\textsuperscript{203} second, the common interests between the churches;\textsuperscript{204} third, a shared

\textsuperscript{198}Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis VII," in Unity of the Churches, 107-114, esp. p.115. The Roman Catholic Church contests the validity of priestly and episcopal ordination in the Reformation churches except in very special cases (UR no.8).

\textsuperscript{199}Rahner, "Commentary on Thesis VII," 115f., 118. See UR no.8. Leo XIII declared Anglican orders "invalid" saying that the "intention" necessary to the validity of ordination had not existed at the beginning of the separated Anglican Church. This made subsequent ordinations invalid as well. (116)


\textsuperscript{201}Thesis VIII states that, "There is pulpit and altar fellowship between the individual partner churches."


\textsuperscript{203}Fries, "Commentary on Thesis VIII," 125.

\textsuperscript{204}Fries, "Commentary on Thesis VIII," 127. See LG no.15.
community of faith. In Fries' opinion, an "all inclusive," and "continuous" practice of eucharistic fellowship should not be practised until there is full eucharistic unity. Fries gives two reasons for this: first, the conditions do not yet exist for a possible full and continuous "faith, church, pulpit, and eucharistic fellowship;" second, a full eucharistic fellowship would be an implicit denial that the separation of the churches has any real theological significance. This thesis implies that as a World Church, however, the Roman Catholic Church has an obligation to move towards a communicatio in sacris with other Christian churches whenever conditions make it is possible to do so. It is seen that the ecumenical change of mind begun at Vatican II opened up the possibility of an actual full, visible restoration of unity of the Church and, in this way, initiated the emergence of a World Church.

Conclusion

Rahner maintained that just as there exists a legitimate independence of regional churches within the Roman Catholic Church, each with a variety of liturgies and proclamations of the one Christian faith, and just as various rites are allowed to exist with a certain amount of autonomy with regard to discipline, theology and Church practice, so

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too it is possible to have a restoration of the unity of the Church without a rigid uniformity. Rahner based this conviction on the presumption that a true history of faith has been taking place all along in the other Christian churches and that these churches bring an insight and a perspective on the Christian message that is more convergent than contradictory to authentic Catholic belief. In the face of today’s militant and world-wide atheism, no Christian church, including the Roman Catholic Church, can effectively bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in isolation from other Christian churches. Rahner saw clearly that if it is to be faithful to the will of Jesus Christ, to its mission to preach the Gospel and to the spirit of Vatican II, a restoration of full unity of the Church must be given a high priority on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, it was his thesis that by making possible a new attitude toward non-Catholic Christians and their churches, Vatican II paved the way for the emergence of a World Church. It is my conviction that if Rahner were to speak today, he would say that as a World Church, the Roman Catholic Church can never turn back on the path toward full visible unity of the Church until all Christian churches form one World Church, a unity in diversity, united in bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.
CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

Introduction

In becoming expressly aware at Vatican II of its responsibility for the future history of humankind,¹ and in renouncing for all situations in the whole world the use of any powers in proclaiming its message that are not implied in the power of the Gospel itself,² the Roman Catholic Church entered into a new relationship with the world and in so doing, set out on the road toward becoming a World Church.

The purpose of this chapter is to develop Rahner's understanding of the Second Vatican Council as the first tentative approach by the Catholic Church to discover and to actualize itself as a World Church by exploring another theme Rahner identified as emerging from the conciliar documents, that of the Church's relationship with the world. By entering into a new relationship with the world, one based on openness and concern for the future history of the world and for the rights of all human persons, including the right to freedom from coercion and freedom of conscience, Vatican II marked the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church, and caused it to enter into a new epoch in its history.

This chapter unfolds in four sections. Section A gives a summary of the teaching of Vatican II on the Church's relationship to the world particularly as it is found in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and in the Declaration on

¹Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," TI 20, p.81.
²Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 82.
Religious Freedom. All that is said there regarding the Church’s care and concern for the world, the need of the Church to safeguard the rights and freedoms of all human persons and the necessity of renouncing external means of power to rely on the power of the gospel, all indicate the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church.

Section B develops the following: Rahner’s understanding of the theological basis of the Church’s relationship with the world as one arising from the Church’s inner nature; the need for openness and dialogue with the world; Christian hope as the distinctively Christian’s attitude towards the world; the challenge of atheism; the task of evangelization and implications for a World Church.

Section C explores Rahner’s understanding of the Church’s pastoral responsibility for the world and for the future history of humankind in all of its economic, social and political dimensions and the implications this has for a World Church in terms of concern for the poor and oppressed, peace and war and the Church’s moral teaching. It also discusses Rahner’s understanding of the significance of the Council’s adoption of a new mode of expression in its relationship to the world, its insistence upon a pastoral approach to the world, and to the problem of atheism and the implications for a World Church.

Section D explores Rahner’s understanding of the relationship of the Church toward a society that is pluralistic in nature, particularly as this is emphasized in the Declaration on Religious Freedom in which the Church is called upon to protect human freedom and freedom of conscience, as well as to renounce all power that does not derive from that inherent in the gospel itself. All of these have implications for a World Church in terms of the need for structural change and freedom and tolerance within the Church itself.

It is seen that this new relationship to the world draws the Church away from a negative, closed and defensive attitude towards a more open, responsible and positive one which respects and encourages the unfolding of the various cultures, ways of living and modes of thinking. By allowing the world to assume its own responsibility, the World Church is left freer to pursue the mission that belongs especially to the Church, that of announcing God’s salvation to every person within the concrete situation of his/her life.
A. The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church's Relationship to The World

Although the Council tried to describe its fundamental relationship to the secular world in several decrees, it did so above all in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and in the Declaration on Religious Freedom. In his two important essays of 1979, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II" and "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," Rahner outlined the main points from these conciliar decrees that he considered to have relevance for the emergence of a World Church.3

1. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World5

Rahner maintained that all that is said in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World concerning the Church's responsibility for the future history of humankind6; the need for openness and dialogue with the world;7 the acknowledgement


5See Abbott, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," fn.#3, p. 200. The Pastoral Constitution is addressed not only to Roman Catholics and to Christians but to the whole world. (GS no.2)


of the "Third World" as part of the Church and as the object of the Church's care and concern: \(^8\) underline the fact that responsibility for the world can no longer be excluded from a World Church. \(^9\) He pointed out that at least in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, the Council adopted spontaneously a mode of expression which had the character neither of dogmatic teaching valid for all time nor of canonical enactments. \(^10\) In so doing, this Council set a precedent whereby the mode of "instruction" or "appeals," rather than that of condemnations and anathemas, would become the preferred way in which the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church would relate to the world. \(^11\)

2. The *Declaration on Religious Freedom* \(^12\)

Rahner maintained that all that is said in *Dignitatis Humanae* concerning the renouncement of external means of power in matters of religion (GS no.76; DH no.1); the respect due even to an erroneous conscience (GS nos.16, 19); \(^13\) the development of a

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\(^8\) See *GS* nos. 69, 73f., 86. See also Roberto Tucci, "The Proper Development of Culture."

\(^9\) Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 81.

\(^10\) Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, 89.


\(^12\) See John Courtney Murray, "Religious Freedom," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, 672-674. According to Murray, the issue of the development of dogma lay behind all the documents. (673) See also, Pietro Pavan, "Declaration on Religious Freedom," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.4, 49-86.

legitimately secular world outside the Church's control (DH nos.1, 2); the Church's need to exercise restraint even where it could legitimately have greater power in the secular sphere (GS no.76; DH no.1); the need to respect personal freedom and freedom of conscience (DH nos.2, 9, 8); the difficulty of giving a "Christian façade" to the restriction of freedom in the name of what is claimed to be alone good and right (DH nos.6, 3, 11, 12); all indicate a new relationship to the pluralistic world and thus point to the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as World Church.

B. The Openness of The Church to The World

By entering into a new relationship with the world, one based on openness and dialogue, and by the adoption of hope as the distinctly Christian attitude of the Church to the world, Vatican II moved the Roman Catholic Church in the direction of becoming a World Church. Far from existing in self-sufficient isolation from the world, the Church ought to risk itself in the service of the world, as befits a World Church. In its open-ended dialogue with the multicultural and pluralistic world, the World Church expects

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19See GS nos.41, 42, 76.
itself to be changed in the process and not only to be the agent of change in the world.

1. The Nature of the Church's Relationship to the World

Long before Vatican II, Rahner was convinced that the Church's relationship to the world was something derived from the sacramental nature of the Church and not an obligation thrust upon the Church from outside. As early as 1936, in his essay, "The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World," Rahner asserted that human persons encounter God in the world and not only in a radical opposition to the world.

In an essay written almost twenty years later, "A Theological Interpretation of the Position of the Christian in the Modern World" (1954), Rahner continued to explore this real tension between the Church and the world and in so doing, anticipated one of the most important problems facing Vatican II: how to build a bridge from the Church to the contemporary world. The Church must refuse to adopt either a "ghetto-like" mentality on the one hand or a false adaptation to the world on the other. This hints already at Rahner's later insights on the World Church.

Again, in a third essay written on the eve of the Council (1962), Rahner anticipated Vatican II by pointing out that the world, though not a sacralised world, is a


23Rahner, "Editor's Preface" to "The Committed Christian," 144, 146-149.

sanctified one. Hence, the Church has no need to "spiritualize" its relationship to the
world in order to justify this relationship. He also asserted that the Christian's
relationship to the world is realized not only in the interiority of faith, conscience and
prayer, but also in and by means of the world itself.

In his writings immediately after the Council, Rahner developed and expanded
upon these earlier reflections in the light of his growing understanding of Vatican II as the
emergence of a World Church. In the first of four essays written in 1966, Rahner
emphasized that the Church's relationship to the world ought to be one of service and of
total dedication to the growth of God's reign. In so doing Rahner implied that the mission
of the World Church has nothing to do with the self-assertion of the Church.

In the second essay entitled, "The New Image of the Church," Rahner stressed, as
did Vatican II, that the drama of the dialogue between God and human persons has
already irrevocably been decided by God in favour of human salvation. It would seem
therefore that a World Church can be fearless and untroubled in its view of the world.

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1965); "Theology--A New Challenge," in The Church After The Council, 75-106 (G. 1965);
"The New Image of the Church," TI 10, pp. 3-29 (G. 1966); "Present Tasks," in Grace in
Freedom 45-68 (G. 1966); "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," TI 20, pp. 90-102 (G.
1979); "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," TI 20, pp. 77-89 (G.
1979); "Das Verhältnis der Kirche zur Gegenwartssituation," HPT vol. II/2, 19-24 (1966);
"Theologische Deutung der Gegenwartssituation als Situation der Kirche," HPT II/I (Freiburg,
1966), 233-256; "Was wurde erreicht"? in Sind die Erwartungen erfüllt?, 27-33. (1966)

28Rahner, "The Council--A New Beginning;" "The Church --A New Image;" cf., idem,
"The New Image of the Church," TI 10, 3-29 (G. 1966); idem, "Theology--A New
Challenge;" idem, "Present Tasks," in Grace in Freedom, 45-68. (G. 1966) (All contained in
the book The Church After The Council)

29Rahner, "The Council--A New Beginning," 31. See also, GS nos.41, 42, 76.

LG no.48.
In the third essay, Rahner emphasized that the dialogue which the Church enters into with the contemporary world ought to be an open-ended dialogue; that is, it ought to be one in which the Church is shaped by the world and not just one in which the world is shaped by the Church. He argued that the reason why the Church's dialogue with the world is still in its infancy is that there is a tradition that tends to keep the Church in a self-sufficient isolation instead of causing the latter to risk itself in the service of the world.

These reflections culminated in the late sixties when Rahner followed with his ground-breaking essay, "Church and World," in which he demonstrated that, with Vatican II, the Church's teaching on the mutual relationship of world and Church has entered a new stage. He argued that the true Christian relationship of the Church to the world lies between two extreme positions: a. a false integrism that regards the world as mere material for the action and self-manifestation of the Church; b. a false esotericism in which what is secular is regarded as a matter of indifference for Christianity.

Rahner drew six implications of the new relationship of the Church to the world, each of which has implications for the emergence of a World Church. First, the official

32Rahner, "Present Tasks," in Grace in Freedom, 45-68. (G. 1966)
34Rahner, "Church and World," SM vol.5, 346-357. See also, Fahey, "The Mission of the Church: To Divinize or to Humanize?" PCTS 31 (1976): 51-69. See also, Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 122f. Rahner affirms that the world is a "unity in multiplicity." (123)
36Rahner, "Church and World," 349f. Rahner defined "integrism" as the false opinion that everything of importance for salvation belongs to the official Church; it wants to integrate the world into the Church. See also, Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 126.
Church can no longer turn its institutional contacts with the world into a means of exerting pressure in order to attain the legitimate aims of the Church. Second, the Church ought radically to respect the freedom of conscience and religion of individuals and groups not out of external compulsion but because to do so is in harmony with the Church’s nature. Third, given the complexity of today’s modern secularized world, the Church must realize that it is no longer possible for it to give direct prescriptions. Fourth, the Church must recognize that the growth of the world’s secular character is a Christian phenomenon even when this growth takes place by purely secular means. Fifth, the Church ought to be deeply accepting of the “concupiscent” condition of the world. Sixth, in its ministry to the world, the Church ought to have a real Christian acceptance of the secular nature of the world and a positive will for its development. The Church can only accomplish these objectives if it is totally committed to being a Church of dialogue with the world both inside and outside the Church. All six points demonstrate the fact that a World Church must be in open and respectful relationship to the world not imposing its own beliefs and objectives upon the world but rather letting the world decide freely whether and how it will respond to the Church’s initiatives.

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38 Rahner, "Church and World," 352. See GS no.76; DH no.1.

39 Rahner, "Church and World," 352. See GS nos.16, 19; DH nos.2, 8, 9.

40 Rahner, "Church and World," 352.

41 Rahner, "Church and World," 352f. Rahner also pointed out that the Church as the people of God (VolkGottes), stands in a relation to the world which is partly different from that of the official Church (Amtskirche). (353) See also, Farmer, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 129, 131. See GS nos.36, 54; LG no.36; AA no.7.


43 Rahner, "Church and World," 354. See GS nos.33-36, 54; LG no.36; AA no.7.

In an essay written the same year entitled, "Theological Reflection on the Problem of Secularisation" (1968), Rahner noted that the Church is entering into relationship with a world that is becoming increasingly secular in nature and pointed to five implications this has for the Church, each of which poses a challenge for a World Church. First, since the process of secularisation has a Christian justification, the Church can leave the world free to be itself in its "worldliness" and to assume its own responsibility. Second, the growing secularisation of the world challenges the Church to create genuine community in the local churches and also to make sure that a real process of democratisation is taking place within these churches. Third, the Church today has need of a "practical" or "pastoral" theology with a concrete "programme of action" for the future if the Church is to exercise a prophetic function in the world. Fourth, the Church needs to conduct an on-going study of the relationship of the Church to the

45Rahner, "Theological Reflection on the Problem of Secularisation," TI 10, pp. 318-348. (G. 1968) Rahner drew a distinction between the process of secularisation (Säkularisation) and secularism (Säkularisierung). He used the term "secularisation" (Säkularisation) to mean a ridding of the world of the Church's influence (319f.) See also, Patrick Lynch, "Secularization Affirms the Sacred: Karl Rahner," Thought 61 (1986): 381-393.

46See Patrick Lynch, "Secularization Affirms the Sacred: Karl Rahner," 381, 384. Whereas previously Rahner viewed secularization in a negative light, here he sees it as an inevitable part of the development of a World Church. See Rahner, Free Speech in the Church.


48Rahner, "Theological Reflection on the Problem of Secularisation," 326ff., 328f. The Church must now itself create what it could formerly presuppose as the natural basis of its own community. (327) See also, Patrick Lynch, "Secularization Affirms the Sacred: Karl Rahner," 382. See also, idem, "Dialogue in the Church," TI 10, pp. 103-121. See also, "Oneness and Multiplicity," 386f.

Fifth, the Church ought to accept and realistically endure the pluralistic and concupiscent nature of the world as a permanent reality. I believe Rahner's points illustrate the need for a World Church to come to terms with and accept the growing secularization of the world and be prepared to deal with it by offering today's Christians an experience of Church that helps them meet the challenge of proclaiming the gospel in a way that speaks to the contemporary age.

So far it is seen that the relationship of the Church to the world is a dynamic one that has its roots in the very being and mission of a World Church.

2. Openness and Dialogue with the World

In the years following Vatican II, Rahner became increasingly preoccupied with the need for a sincere and open dialogue with the secularized world and in particular with atheists. In his essay, "Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society" (1965), Rahner pointed out that dialogue is essential in a society which is no longer homogeneous and where Christians interact with non-Christians in every sphere of human life. Rahner implies that Roman Catholic Christians in a World Church can learn a great deal

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53 Rahner, "Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society," TI 6, pp. 31-42, esp. p. 35 (G. 1965) The dialogue advocated by Vatican II is made even more imperative today on account of the knowledge explosion.
from their dialogue-partners provided this dialogue is characterized by genuine freedom and mutual respect.\textsuperscript{54}

In a second essay, also written in 1965, Rahner argued that there is a pressing need for tolerance within the Church and in the Church's relationship to the world.\textsuperscript{55} The Church can no longer be the direct and official bearer of concrete imperatives.\textsuperscript{56} Rahner implies that tolerance is necessary in a World Church because it cannot be expected that this choice of concrete imperatives will always be seen to be the same for all Christians.\textsuperscript{57}

In a third essay entitled, "Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man" (1965), Rahner argued that precisely because Christianity is the religion of the absolute future, the Church has a responsibility to work for the intramundane future of the world.\textsuperscript{58} He pointed out that humankind is tending increasingly towards becoming a global unity based on pluralism. It seems clear that if the Church is to work for the intramundane future of the world, it must abandon the goal of absolute uniformity and become a World Church.\textsuperscript{59}

In essays that followed,\textsuperscript{60} Rahner continued to investigate the changed situation of the modern world and the significance of these changes for human persons and for Church. In his essay, "Christian Humanism" (1965) Rahner argued that Christianity does

\textsuperscript{54}Rahner, "Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society," 40f. Love is the language of this dialogue (1Cor. 13:1). (40)

\textsuperscript{55}Rahner, "Ideology and Christianity," \textit{T.I} 6, pp. 43-57. (G.1965)

\textsuperscript{56}Rahner, "Ideology and Christianity," 56.

\textsuperscript{57}Rahner, "Ideology and Christianity," 56f.


\textsuperscript{59}Rahner, "Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man," 68.

not give the Christian an excuse for being indifferent to the emancipation of the secular world since the process of secularization is itself one that is deeply Christian. He pointed out that only with the coming of Vatican II did it become clear that Christians have a duty towards a concrete future and that this task is a means of preparing concretely for God’s absolute future. I believe Rahner’s point illustrates that in a World Church, Roman Catholic Christians ought to have a vibrant and concrete awareness of their responsibility to further the coming of God’s reign by working to improve the quality of human life and respecting creation.

So far it is seen that openness and dialogue ought to characterize the relationship of the World Church to the world and that the Church has a responsibility to work for the intramundane future of the world.

3. Hope as the Distinctively Christian Attitude of the Church to the World

In view of the challenge presented by Marxism, Rahner sought to identify more specifically the distinctively Christian attitude of the Church to world and to lay the foundation for a theology of Christian hope. In so doing, Rahner affirmed the teaching


of Vatican II that the distinctively Christian attitude of the Church to the world is one of hope, a hope in the absolute future which impels itself into concern for the worldly future of the world.\textsuperscript{64} This hope becomes even more imperative given the "wintry" season that has fallen upon society and the Church since Vatican II. It is seen that the hope of a World Church is both realistic as well as concrete in that it expresses its belief in the absolute future by the constant effort to transform the structures of secular life.

Rahner's early essays after Vatican II reinforced the Council's teaching that Christian hope in the absolute future is realised in the constant effort to transform the structures of secular life.\textsuperscript{65} In his essay, "Faith and Culture" (1967), Rahner appeared to go even farther when he asserted that Christian hope is the ground of an always revolutionary attitude of the Church to the world.\textsuperscript{66} Acting in a revolutionary way means standing up for human rights.\textsuperscript{67}

In a second essay, also written in 1967, Rahner affirmed the teaching of Vatican II that Christians do not have two tasks, one Christian and one secular.\textsuperscript{68} Rather, the task which Christians have in common with all people is one they accomplish on the basis of their specifically Christian faith, hope and love.\textsuperscript{69} According to Rahner, the world,

\begin{quotation}
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{64}See LG no.35, GS nos.1, 38.

\textsuperscript{65}See AA no.7.


\textsuperscript{67}Rahner, "Faith and Culture," 72, 74, 71. See also, Robert J. Schreiter, "Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church," TS 50 (1989): 744-760. See GS nos.57-68.


\textsuperscript{69}Rahner, "Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the 'New Earth,'" 260. The Church cannot offer any "blueprints" for the concrete formation of the world but there is ample evidence in GS that the Church as the people of God does find such a programme of action. (262) See GS nos.43, 74-76.
precisely in its worldliness, exhibits a secret Christianity which finds expression in the growing movement of the world towards global unity. Rahner asserted that it is this growing unity which is the necessary prior condition for a "World Church."  

In his essay, "On the Theology of Hope," written the following year (1868), Rahner again affirmed the teaching of Vatican II that the basic attitude of the Church to the world is one of hope, the "greater hope" of belief in the absolute future, and the "lesser hope" of courage to transform the structures of social life. Rahner implies that with this courageous hope, the World Church actually has the power to dare more for the world than would be possible by mere human planning.

In Rahner's later essays and interviews after the Council, he was concerned with the problem of how Christians can maintain hope in the face of the growing perplexities of modern life and particularly in the wake of the "wintry season" of society and the Church. In his essay, "Utopia and Reality," Rahner expressed the view that Christian hope is not inconsistent with the honest admission that since the Council, society

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74 Rahner, "Utopia and Reality: The Shape of Christian existence Caught Between the Ideal an the Real," TI 22, 26-37 (G. 1983). Rahner defined "Utopia" as those goals and tasks that persons not only can, but ought to strive for. (27)
and the Church are living through a "wintry" season.\textsuperscript{75} Rahner made a direct connection between the crisis of hope and the slowness of the Roman Catholic Church to become a World Church.

Rahner elaborated on these reflections in an essay and an interview the following year (1984).\textsuperscript{76} In his essay, "Christian Pessimism," Rahner expressed the view that the undertone of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World is "too euphoric" in its evaluation of humanity and the human condition. According to Paul, (2 Cor. 4: 8), the perplexity of human existence is a permanent feature of human existence.\textsuperscript{77} It is the task of the Church to resist the tendency, in itself and in the world, to repress this pessimism and to remind Christians of the presence of the Holy Spirit in all the perplexities of human existence.\textsuperscript{78} I believe Rahner's point emphasizes that a World Church ought to resist the temptation to triumphalism by giving the message either implicitly or explicitly that acceptance of the Church and the gospel removes all hardship or ambiguity.

In an interview the same year (1984), Rahner elaborated on the phrase "wintry Church" saying that this expression applies not only to the Church and the kind of impression it makes throughout the world, but rather, attempts to characterize the central European Church and the impression it makes.\textsuperscript{79} He expressed the view that the "wintry Church" is the direct consequence of the failure on the part of Christians and the World Church to take Christianity completely seriously. Rather than interpret these wintry times

\textsuperscript{75}Rahner, "Utopia and Reality: The Shape of Christian Existence Caught Between the Ideal and the Real," 35f.


\textsuperscript{78}Rahner, "Christian Pessimism," 157f. They do this in the same way that they repress and deny their sinfulness, the sinfulness that the Christian message came to expose. (157)

\textsuperscript{79}Rahner, "A 'Wintry' Church and the Opportunities For Christianity," 190.
as a prelude to ultimate death, Rahner suggested that Christians see these times as a personal challenge to work so that the inner core of faith becomes alive once more.80

It is seen that the basic attitude of the Church to the world is Christian hope, a hope that expresses itself in the effort to transform the structures of secular life and to deal realistically and responsibly with the perplexities of human life. By directing its Christian hope towards the world, the Church at Vatican II took a step towards becoming a World Church.

C. The Church's Responsibility for The World and for the Future History of Humankind

By its pastoral concern and responsibility for the future history of humankind in all its dimensions, Vatican II made possible a new relationship with the world and in so doing, set the Roman Catholic Church in the direction of becoming a World Church. In the light of Vatican II, Rahner became increasingly convinced of the need for a "practical theology" such as that proposed by the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World so that in the tone of pastoral concern and instruction sounded by this Constitution, the Church, as a World Church, might continue to address the concerns of human persons. This pastoral concern of a World Church embraces all persons, even atheists. It is seen that coupled with the new spirit of openness and dialogue with the world is a renewed sense of responsibility for the world and concern for the concrete problems of the world. This is what it means for a World Church to be in open and loving relationship to the world.

1. A "Pastoral" Approach to the World

After Vatican II, Rahner addressed the pressing need for a "practical" or "pastoral" theology in many books and essays.81 In his essay, "On the Theological Problems

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80Rahner, "A 'Wintry' Church and the Opportunities for Christianity," 200.

Entailed in a ‘Pastoral Constitution’” (1967), Rahner emphasized that besides teaching and explaining the Catholic faith, the Church has a task of guiding the Christian actions of its individual members. By giving pastoral “instructions,” “recommendations,” "admonitions" and "encouragements" to Christians and to all humankind, the Church exercises a charismatic function in the world. Rahner implies therefore, that a World Church ought to be a pastoral Church concerned with the concrete problems and needs of Christians and of all human persons whether these persons be Christian or not.

Three essays followed in which Rahner explored the meaning and dimensions of this practical theology and the significance such pastoral "instructions" have for the Christian and for the Church’s relationship to the world. In his essay, “Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church” (1967), Rahner noted that despite the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, "practical theology" is still barely in its initial stages. He stressed the importance of the Church recognition that its social work...
is an integral element in practical theology and that the co-existence of ecclesiastical and secular social work is demanded by the very nature of Christianity. In so doing, he implied that new tasks belong to the social work of a World Church which need to be performed both in the world and in the Church.

In a second essay written the following year (1968), Rahner clarified the meaning and scope of "practical theology" by stating that this discipline is "the scientific organization of the Church's reflection on its own self actualization as this self-realization develops out of and in response to concrete situations." Consequently, the scope of practical theology in the Church is virtually unlimited. Rahner's point illustrates that in a World Church "practical theology" grows out of the changed situation of the Church and the world and the Church's willingness to respond to the changing needs of Christians and the world.

In a third essay, Rahner pointed out that while the problems of preaching the faith were well appreciated at the Council, the scientific theory underlying these difficulties was not fully presented. Rahner maintained that it is even more urgent that given the post-

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Rahner, "Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church," 369.

Rahner, "Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church," 370.


Rahner, "Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines," 104, 106f.

conciliar situation of the Church, these underlying problems be addressed. He implied that to achieve this, a World Church needs to develop a global pastoral strategy.  

2. A "Pastoral" Approach to Atheism  

After Vatican II, Rahner became increasingly convinced of the urgent need to address the deep theological questions which underlie the phenomenon of atheism. In his article, "What Does Vatican II Teach about Atheism," Rahner pointed out that these questions touch the essence of the problem of atheism and are not merely concerned with the best method of approaching the modern atheist. The pastoral-theological question of


how to approach modern atheism becomes the question of what is really meant by "God" and of how theists and Christians actually experience the mystery of God.⁹⁴

In an essay written the following year entitled "Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism" (1968), Rahner inquired more earnestly into the particular form of atheism which is prevalent in the world today.⁹⁵ He pointed out that there is an atheism which exists today by virtue of the fact that the world has become worldly.⁹⁶ First, this type of atheism ought to be regarded as the sole form of atheism today. Secondly, the type of atheism borne of the process of secularization demands very different treatment than that accorded it in the past.⁹⁷ Third, true theism ought to be presented as self-evident, both at the theoretical and social levels.⁹⁸ I believe his observations have implications for a World Church in that they point to the need for a global pastoral strategy which is prepared to deal with the underlying causes of this contemporary phenomenon.

In an essay written more than a decade later (1981), Rahner was more convinced than ever that the situation of secularized atheism would likely remain a permanent reality and implied that this situation presents an unprecedented challenge to the World Church.⁹⁹ First, it demands that the Church, in both its theology and its proclamation, ground its dialogue with atheism in a deeper appreciation of the reality of God as


⁹⁶ Rahner, "Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism," 169.

⁹⁷ Rahner, "Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism," 170, 172f. See also, idem, "Atheism," SM I, 116-122.

⁹⁸ Rahner, "Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism," 178, 181.

incomprehensible mystery. Secondly, it requires that the Church make clear, both in theory and in practice, that it is also the sacrament of salvation for the atheist. Thirdly, it calls for a continuing commitment on the part of the Church to struggle courageously and with all legitimate means against atheism. All three challenges as Rahner has articulated them flow from the teaching of Vatican II on atheism and point to a new relationship of the Church to atheists and non-believers, one that indicates that the Roman Catholic Church is moving in the direction of becoming a World Church through its pastoral concern for the salvation of all people.


(a) **The Church's Responsibility for the World**

In keeping with Vatican II, Rahner saw the responsibility of the Church for the world to consist in the function of social criticism, as well as in that of active involvement in finding solutions to the many problems affecting humankind today. In his essay, "The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society" (1969), Rahner advanced four arguments in defence of the socio-critical function of the Church in the world, each of which has implications for the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. First, the Church cannot adopt an indifferent attitude towards the world and

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100 Rahner, "The Church and Atheism," 140, 139f.

101 Rahner, "The Church and Atheism," 144ff. See LG no.16; GS no.22; AG no.7.

102 Rahner, "The Church and Atheism," 146-150.


still call itself Christian. Second, the eschatological hope of the Church allows it to criticize social structures and political ideologies. Third, the unity between love of God and neighbour points towards an attitude of concrete social protest. Fourth, social criticism is based on the principle that Christian theology is always a theology of the Cross. It seems to me that all four arguments demonstrate that a World Church is one intimately involved in the affairs of the world, and passionately concerned for its welfare, particularly when it comes to issues of justice and peace.

In an interview the following year (1970), Rahner observed that coupled with the move towards a more open and positive attitude towards the world that took place at Vatican II, there also came a new awareness of specifically contemporary problems and of the responsibility of the Church in helping to find solutions to them. He pointed out that this movement towards an increased awareness of the Church's responsibility for the contemporary world went far beyond what was foreseen and intended by the Council. To be faithful to the spirit of Vatican II, the Church needs to strive for a more living and

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vital unity between the Christian's relationship to God (vertical dimension) and his/her relationship with the world (horizontal dimension); as well as the wisdom to see more clearly than ever before that a more radical spirituality brings with it a more radical responsibility for the world and vice versa. Consequently, the Church ought to have the courage to demand more from its members in the way of service to the contemporary world. I believe that these points emphasize that a World Church has to be involved concretely in helping to alleviate the causes of oppression and injustice in the world and in helping to find solutions for all the human problems that beset peoples and nations today such as over-populations, hunger, disease and environmental abuse, and not pass this responsibility off on the grounds that the Church is interested primarily in people's supernatural welfare.

In his essay, "The Church's Commission To Bring Salvation and Humanization of the World" (1971), Rahner pointed out that there is a new relationship between horizontalism and verticalism which has emerged in this particular epoch. I believe Rahner is referring to the new epoch of the World Church. He argued that traditional Christianity has always emphasized that there is no experience of God for human persons which has not been mediated through an experience of the world. He concluded that the Church has a duty to contribute to the humanization of the world by concrete action.


114Rahner, "The Church's Commission To Bring Salvation and Humanization of the World," 304.
not just words. Rahner contended, unless it fosters, in each generation, a large number of Christians actively working for justice. Rahner’s remarks speak directly to the mission of a World Church which is to humanize as well as to divinize and to show, by its love of justice, God’s compassion and love.

(b) Conscience

In his writings after Vatican II, Rahner affirmed the teaching of the Council on the dignity of conscience and on the respect due even to an erroneous conscience. He emphasized, however, that in the changed situation of the Church, what is needed most is the courage to go forward to the utmost limits of Christian teaching and Christian conscience in arriving at new decisions which take this change into consideration. It seems to me that Rahner’s point demonstrates very vividly that a World Church cannot continue to operate out of the old mold but must endeavour to be faithful to the gospel of

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116See also, Woolever, “A Critical Evaluation of the Suitability of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology for a World Church.” 357. See GS nos.53-90.
Jesus Christ and to exercise leadership in matters of faith and morals in a way that is intimately in touch with the complex problems and difficulties of Roman Catholic Christians today. This will involve finding new solutions to old problems and in waiting before suggesting answers for fresh problems.

In his essay, "The Appeal to Conscience" (1963), Rahner argued that Roman Catholic Christians ought to be able to apply moral norms to their own particular situation without needing explicit direction from the Church in every case.\(^{119}\) He pointed out that leading a moral life is much more difficult in the changed world situation, with the result that what used to be an extreme borderline case in a moral situation has now become almost the "normal case."\(^{120}\) Rahner asserted that not only should the mature Christian have the ability to apply universal norms to a concrete situation, he/she ought to be able to see moral duties and obligation in cases where the official universal norms are too abstract.\(^{121}\) I believe Rahner’s point elaborates on the importance of personal responsibility in matters of conscience on the part of each Roman Catholic Christian in a World Church.

In his article, "The Theology of Risk" (1968), Rahner put the same point another way by arguing that the principle of risk is of the greatest importance for the Church, particularly in cases of doubt where the correct decisions about moral matters is not immediately obvious.\(^{122}\) He argued that now, more than ever, it is necessary for the Church to go forward with courage to the utmost limits of Christian teaching and Christian conscience. This will involve coming to new decisions drawn from the very


\(^{120}\)Rahner, "The Appeal to Conscience," 41, 43f. Rahner pointed out that it is possible to retreat to "conscience" in order to avoid trying to clarify a difficult moral situation.\(^{44}\) Cf., idem, "Situation Ethics in an Ecumenical Perspective," in *The Christian of the Future*, 39-48. (G. 1966)

\(^{121}\)Rahner, "The Appeal to Conscience," 50.

being and mission of the Church in answer to the present-day situation. Rahner implies, therefore, that the principle of risk ought to be operative in a World Church if it is to be faithful to its mission in the world today.

In an article written several years later, "Reflections on the Adult Christian" (1982), Rahner argued that at least in terms of western culture, the question of maturity, both in the world and in the Church, has entered a new phase. With Vatican II, he asserted that the mature Christian ought to come to a decision before God and conscience, implement it and be responsible for it, even in opposition to other Christians. Rahner implies, therefore, that two challenges await contemporary Roman Catholic Christians in a World Church: first, that of synthesizing their faith with all they know and experience as individuals; second, that of acting according to conscience in each situation.

Again, in an essay written the following year (1983), Rahner concurred with the teaching of Vatican II that in every dictate of conscience, even an erroneous one, there arises an absolute obligation that Christians can reject only at the risk of destroying themselves. Genuine tolerance comes of the presumption on both sides of the presence of a dictate of conscience in the other and so, of a common bond uniting both parties before God. It seems to me that Rahner’s position indicates the seriousness

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123 Rahner, "The Theology of Risk," 267f. Today, when the World Church has several possibilities open to it, the more radical solution is the better one. (268)


125 Rahner, "Reflections on the Adult Christian," 126. See GS no.43.


128 Rahner, "Conscience," 12, 11f. See also, idem, "Dialogue and Tolerance as the Foundation of a Humane Society," TI 22, pp. 14-37, esp. pp. 19ff. (G. 1983) By the same token, personal freedom of conscience and of religion should not infringe upon that of others
and respect with which the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church ought to regard
the conscience decisions of each Christian and the tolerance that ought to exist within a
World Church.

(c) **Concern for the World**

(i) **The "Third World"**

Like Vatican II, Rahner addressed the need for a genuine witness of poverty on the
part of the Church and in so doing, pointed to the world responsibility of a World
Church. In an essay written in 1972, Rahner observed that, due to the failure of the
Church’s members to accept poverty, the gospel does not shine as brilliantly in the world
as it should; yet this is precisely the witness needed in recognition of the Third
World. Here the question Rahner suggests is relevant: Is the Church and the
individual Catholic Christian within it, through a real fault in God’s sight, too rich really
to help the poor? These insights on the responsibility of the Church for the Third
World are developed further in Rahner’s writings on the Church’s responsibility for peace
and justice.

(ii) **Peace, War, Revolution**

Rahner’s essays and interviews after Vatican II reinforced the Council’s teaching

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because this would constitute a violation of the common good. (11f.) Cf., idem, "On the

129Rahner, "The Unreadiness of the Church’s Members to Accept Poverty," *TI* 14, pp.
270-279 (G. 1972); idem, "Karl Rahner in New York," An Interview by Eugene C. Bianchi,
*America Magazine* 112 (1965): 860-863. See also, "The Theology of Poverty, *TI* 8, 168-
214 (G. 1960). See also, Yves Congar, "Poverty in Christian Life," *Concilium* vol. 15, *War,
Poverty, Freedom* (New York: Paulist, 1966), 49-70. See *GS* nos.34, 69, 86.

130Rahner, "The Unreadiness of the Church’s Members to Accept Poverty," *TI* 14, pp.
270-279, esp. pp.275, 279. (G. 1972) See also Eugene Bianchi, "Karl Rahner in New

131Rahner, "The Unreadiness of the Church’s Members to Accept Poverty," 279.
on peace and justice. In view of the needs of the "Third World," however, Rahner was prepared personally to move beyond the teaching of Vatican II and encouraged individual Christians to do the same.132 In general, he pleaded for less restraint on the part of the Church in matters connected with peace and justice and more responsibility on the part of individual Christians.

In a lecture in 1968, Rahner affirmed the Council’s insistence that peace is the result of righteousness and pointed to several practical ways in which Christians could fulfil the mandate of peace in today’s world.133 By learning to see the institutionalized injustices of society, by assuming their own social-political and social critical task and by taking personal responsibility for the Third World, Roman Catholic Christians in the Church can promote world peace.134 Rahner concurred with Vatican II, however, that there are times when the use of force is permitted and even actually prescribed.135 On the basis of the Sermon on the Mount the Christian will always argue in favour of the

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least possible use of force in bringing about change. I think this relates to the importance of the witness of every Roman Catholic Christian in a World Church on behalf of justice and peace.

In his essay, "On the Theology of Revolution" (1972), Rahner stated that today there actually exists a "global revolutionary situation," one that calls for the cooperation of the Church. This cooperation presupposes an acknowledgment that first, a revolution of this kind at least in general terms is necessary if the underdeveloped world is really to obtain a share in the world's wealth; and secondly, that the Church must learn how concretely to proclaim the word of God today and how to strive for the reign of God as a community and not merely as an "agglomeration of individuals." Cooperation in the global revolutionary situation also requires that the Church learn to help the poor in their present day social situation in a new way. This will involve making real these human rights within Church structures in a way corresponding to this contemporary age. It seems to me that Rahner's remarks speak directly to the urgency of a united witness on the part of a World Church and the effectiveness such a witness can have particularly when church structures model that sensitivity to justice the Church would like to see in society.

In his later interviews and essays, Rahner returned with even greater intensity to

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137Rahner, "On the Theology of Revolution," TI 14, pp. 314-330, esp. 322. (G. 1972). In this essay, Rahner defined "revolution" as that process of changing society such that there may be a greater scope for freedom and an increase in justice and harmony among all people. (318) On the concept of revolution, see K. Hecker, "Revolution," in SM 5, 359-365.


the responsibility of the Church to advance the cause of peace and justice by insisting that
the Church take a firm stand against nuclear war. In an interview in 1982, Rahner went beyond the
statement of Vatican II regarding the immorality of nuclear war by stating that, in his opinion, even the
possession of nuclear arms is immoral. At that time, he stated that even though the official Church had not yet come
to see the need of unilateral and absolute nuclear disarmament, this fact did not prevent the individual
Christian from taking such a stand.

In an essay written the same year entitled "Nuclear Weapons and the Christian" (1982), Rahner
presented his own decision of conscience regarding the possession and the
use of nuclear weapons. He argued that care for the future history of humankind and
sensitivity to the needs of the poor demands that the Church and individual Christians
have the courage to insist on total nuclear disarmament. Rahner's own position was
that no use of nuclear weapons is ever justified and that total nuclear disarmament is
consistent with this stance. He argued that only a change of consciousness can
convince Christians to attach a higher priority to the misery of millions of people living in

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Interview with Horst Wünsche, 359-361 (G.1982) "The Future of the World and of the
Church," interview with Ciancarlo Zizola in Faith in a Wintry Season, 154-163 (G. 1982);
 idem, "Nuclear Weapons and the Christian," TII 23, pp. 16-32 (G.1982); idem, "The Peace of
A Hope For Many," interview with Günther Grona in Faith in a Wintry Season, 82-83 (G.
1983); idem, "The Theological Dimension of Peace," TI 22, pp. 38-42. (G. 1983)

143Rahner, "The Future of the World and of the Church," interview with Ciancarlo Zizola

144Rahner, "The Future of the World and of the Church," 157. See also, idem, "The
Catholic Church and the Peace Movement," 360.

that the just war teaching has also served as a salve for the conscience which enabled
Christians to carry on wars and conquest. (17)

146Rahner, "Nuclear Weapons and the Christian," 18f. This decision is made in spite of the
acknowledgement of the theoretical uncertainty of every definite position on this question (GS
no.43).
abject poverty than to their own need for security. In later essays Rahner sought to develop a theology of peace upon which concrete decisions of conscience regarding nuclear war and disarmament could be founded. In his article, "The Peace of God and the Peace of the World" (1982), Rahner asserted that human persons have not only the possibility but, in certain circumstances, the duty of standing up for that righteousness (justice) which leads to peace. He insisted, however, that Christians will always have to choose the way of love, both personally and collectively. Rahner implies that Christians in a World Church must struggle for justice and peace but always in a way that favours non-violence.

In a second essay, "The Theological Dimension of Peace" (1983), Rahner emphasized that inner freedom is necessary if one is to enter freely into situations of conflict for the sake of justice. He observed that in all conflicts of some importance, peace is possible only if either or both parties are willing to forego something for the sake of peace without any perceptible compensation in return. Rahner's observation emphasizes that a World Church has need of courage and self-sacrifice in its struggle for justice and peace.

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147 Rahner, "Nuclear Weapons and the Christian," 30, 23, 25f. See also, idem, "The Peace Movement: A Hope For Many," interview with Günther Grona in Faith in a Wintry Season, 82-83 (G. 1983). In this interview, Rahner expressed the belief that if Christians took seriously the teaching of the whole Church in Gaudium et Spes (nos.80-82) no more would need to be added.


152 Rahner, "The Theological Dimension of Peace," 39ff. Such generosity and inner freedom is only possible if one is open to the ultimate reality and fulfilment of God. (41)
So far it is seen that the responsibility of the Church for the future history of humankind paves the way for the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. As a World Church, it ought to continue to address the world in the tone of the Pastoral Constitution and seek new way to serve the needs of humankind, particularly those of the poor and oppressed.

D. The Relationship of The Church Towards a Pluralistic Society

In his writings and lectures, particularly after Vatican II, Rahner continued to explore the need for freedom in the Church and the responsibility of the Church to work for the extension of this freedom throughout the world. As he grew in his understanding of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church, Rahner expanded and developed these ideas pointing out concrete ways in which the practice of freedom and toleration within the Church could serve as a model for secular society. It is seen that a World Church has the responsibility of widening the sphere of freedom both within and outside the Church, not only for Christians but for all people.

1. Freedom in the Church

Even before Vatican II, Rahner saw the Church as the sacramental sign of freedom.

for itself and for the world.\textsuperscript{154} In his early essay, "Freedom in the Church" (1953), Rahner defended the principle of freedom of conscience by arguing that each person within the Church has a "zone of freedom" in which the Church leaves the individual Christian to her/his conscience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{155} He further asserted that in the Church there ought to be the exercise of the principle of subsidiarity whereby individuals and groups are left appropriately free to function independently.\textsuperscript{156} Vatican II was later to endorse both the principle of freedom of conscience and that of subsidiarity as essential elements of a World Church.

In his essays written during the Council, Rahner explored more deeply the meaning and concept of freedom and in so doing, drew important implications for the exercise of freedom in a World Church.\textsuperscript{157} In his essay "Theology of Freedom" (1965), Rahner pointed out that the freedom of the human person is still a created freedom: that is, it is always co-determined by guilt in the history of humankind.\textsuperscript{158} This created freedom, however, is also a liberated freedom and so, it can risk the venture involved in a total trusting surrender to God's providence.\textsuperscript{159}

In another article written the same year (1965),\textsuperscript{160} Rahner observed that with this

\textsuperscript{154}Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," TIT 2, pp. 89-107 (G. 1953); cf., idem, Free Speech in the Church, 9-50 (G. 1959); idem, "The Theology of Power," TIT 4, pp. 391-409. (G. 1960)

\textsuperscript{155}Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," 105, 101-104.

\textsuperscript{156}Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," 105f. See also, idem, Free Speech in the Church, also written before the Council, (G. 1959) in which Rahner upheld the right to public opinion in the Church.


\textsuperscript{158}Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," 194, 183ff., 190.


\textsuperscript{160}Rahner, "Origins of Freedom," in Grace in Freedom, 226-246. (G. 1965)
pluralistic society has come an enlargement of the sphere of freedom which presents enormous potential for growth, both for individuals Christians and for the Church. He implied that since this widening of the sphere of freedom is of Christian origin, the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church has a responsibility to cooperate with this development, and to seek to extend the sphere of freedom to every person and nation. Consequently, it can never be the duty of society or of the Church to take away the sphere of freedom from other human persons, even when the decisions of these persons appear wrong. This seems to suggest that a World Church ought to respect the freedom of every person and nation.

2. Transformation in the Church and in Society

In his writings after the Council, Rahner continued to insist on the need for freedom in the Church, as well as on the importance of a continual transformation of Church structures. In a lecture in 1967, Rahner asserted that "tolerance" is essential to the Church. Without it, the World Church cannot achieve its end--the free

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161 Rahner, "Origins of Freedom," in Grace in Freedom, 232, 234. This sphere of freedom, however, is not without its dangers.


166 According to Rahner, toleration in the Church does not have the same meaning as toleration in civil society. Tolerance applies to the concept of a community with a common "ideology," shared convictions, a common programme binding on all by a free decision. Nevertheless, tolerance in the Church has values in common with tolerance in civil society. See idem, "Toleration in the Church," in Meditations on Freedom and the Spirit, 75-115, esp. pp. 77f.

167 See DH nos.9, 11.
self-realization of each human person in God.\textsuperscript{168} Rahner implies that the exercise of tolerance in a World Church involves the willingness to carry on a dialogue with all those who are outside the Church and to do this not only with regard to social and political questions, but also with respect to philosophical and religious issues.\textsuperscript{169}

In an essay written five years later entitled "Institution and Freedom" (1971), Rahner endeavoured to show more clearly that the goal of Christian hope consists precisely in strengthening the connection between religious and social freedom.\textsuperscript{170} He argued that while all institutions invariably both make freedom possible and frustrate it, some institutions are created for the special purpose of contributing to freedom by counteracting the restrictive effects of other institutions.\textsuperscript{171} I believe that Rahner considered the World Church to be an institution for the safeguarding of freedom.

These reflections culminated in an essay written four years later in which Rahner maintained that the transformation of Church structures can have a positive effect on a society that both desires and needs new modes of action.\textsuperscript{172} In his essay, "Transformation in the Church and Secular Society" (1975), Rahner observed that the Church has been involved in a process of change, a process that will probably become increasingly more widespread all over the world.\textsuperscript{173} He was convinced that by achieving a new equilibrium between authority and freedom, and by having the relationship between

\textsuperscript{168}Rahner, "The Test of Christian Freedom," 255. See DH nos.1, 2.
\textsuperscript{169}Rahner, "The Test of Christian Freedom," 257.
\textsuperscript{170}Rahner, "Institution and Freedom," TI 13, pp. 105-121, esp. p. 106. (G. 1971) Rahner noted that the apparent opposition between institution and freedom should not be allowed to obscure the deep underlying unity between the two entities. See DH nos.1, 2, 6, 9, 11.
\textsuperscript{171}Rahner, "Institution and Freedom," 117, 119.
the grass-roots and the official ministry embedded in the Church's structure, the Church could become a model for secular society. Rahner implied therefore, that as the Church moves increasingly in the direction of becoming a World Church it has the potential to become a powerful instrument of societal transformation.

3. Toleration in the Church and in the Relationship of the Church Towards Secular Society

In his later writings, Rahner continued to emphasize the importance of dialogue and tolerance within the Church and in the Church's relationship to the world. In his essay, "Freedom and Manipulation in Society and the Church" (1976), Rahner contended that Christians cannot expect history in society or in the Church to be entirely free from any trace of manipulation. Despite all the confusion in the world and in the Church, the Christian has the task of being the "bearer of the history of freedom" together with the Church. He was convinced, however, that the Church can only be that place of religious freedom if it manages to contain within itself a space of social freedom. He argued that even in the Church it will always be necessary to fight again and again for this space of freedom, to define it repeatedly and if possible, to enlarge it. This applies above all to the exercise of charismatic gifts which cannot be extinguished or adequately manipulated by the institutional Church. Rahner reached the conclusion that enlarging the sphere of freedom within the Church necessitates a reinterpretation of the Church's pastoral office. He argued that the feudalistic and paternalistic models of office

\[\text{174}^\text{Rahner, "Transformation in the Church and Secular Society," 173ff., 177f.}\]

\[\text{175}^\text{Rahner, "Freedom and Manipulation in Society and the Church," in Meditations on Freedom and the Spirit, 36-47, esp. pp. 54. (G. 1976) There is in freedom itself an aspect of violent manipulation of others which, under certain conditions, is morally justified. (43) See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 202.}\]

\[\text{176}^\text{Rahner, "Freedom and Manipulation in Society and the Church," 60. See DH nos.2, 3, 6, 9, 11.}\]

\[\text{177}^\text{Rahner, "Freedom and Manipulation in Society and the Church," 60.}\]
ought to be replaced with an understanding of "office as function." By this Rahner meant that office is a "serving function" in which the various duties are undertaken for specified lengths of time and are carried out in a way which encourages grass-roots leadership.

In an essay written a year later (1977), Rahner asserted that tolerance has its basis in the very being and nature of the Church. Consequently, all conflicts and the overcoming of conflict ought to be seen and treated in a Christian way.

Two years later in an essay entitled, "The Church’s Responsibility for the Freedom of the Individual" (1979), Rahner warned against looking for unrealistic utopias in society and in the Church and insisted that the Church’s gospel of Christian realism is and remains the primary service that Christianity performs for the freedom of the individual and society. Applied to the World Church, this means that, despite the permanence of its ultimate structures, the Church is capable of very far-reaching structural changes that could benefit not only the World Church but also secular society.

In an essay written some years later, Rahner argued that since tolerance is an acknowledgement of the absolute dignity of the freedom and responsibility of human

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179 Rahner, "Freedom and Manipulation in Society and the Church," 67f.


183 Rahner, "The Church’s Responsibility for the Freedom of the Individual," 57, 53, 62f. Rahner maintained that if the Church could manage to undertake structural changes more rapidly than is possible in secular society it might be possible for it to take the lead once again instead of trying to catch up to societal change. (62f.)
persons it stands far above all utilitarian considerations about peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic society.\textsuperscript{184} He pointed out that it was only after a lengthy process of spiritual growth that Christianity and the churches have discovered that tolerance is part of the Christian message.\textsuperscript{185}

Thus, it is only by standing for freedom, both inside and outside the Church, and for the rights of the poor and oppressed that the Roman Catholic Church can emerge as a World Church.

**Conclusion**

Rahner maintained that the Roman Catholic Church began to emerge as a World Church at Vatican II precisely by adopting a new relationship to the world, one characterized by openness, concern for the future history of humankind, willingness to dialogue with people of different cultures, mentalities, religions, philosophies and with non-Christians and atheists. By allowing itself to be shaped by the world and by helping, in turn, to shape the world by offering it new patterns and modes of action, the Roman Catholic Church shows itself to be truly a World Church. Rahner was convinced that only by adopting a pastoral approach to the world, that is, by truly taking to heart the needs and concerns of all humankind, can the Roman Catholic Church hope to continue moving in the direction of becoming a World Church. In particular, this means taking the side of the poor and oppressed in a new way and making that witness authentic by the Church's own style of leadership and practice of Gospel poverty. Rahner demonstrated that by its reliance only on the power of the gospel, and by its total commitment to the principle of religious and social freedom enunciated at Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church becomes a World Church. This was the direction indicated at Vatican II. The


\textsuperscript{185}Rahner, "Dialogue and Tolerance as the Foundation of a Humane Society," 21f., 25. The Council was right to acknowledge that while error in itself has no rights erring people do.(21)
question is: Will the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church have the courage to carry this inspiration forward by concrete action in service to the world?
CHAPTER VI

THE THEOLOGY OF THE COUNCIL

Introduction

The theology of Vatican II was a "transitional" theology which paved the way for the development of a "world" theology and so for the emergence of a World Church. The "world" theology needed in a World Church is one that is not bound to any one culture; nor is it the product of a culturally and regionally homogeneous society. Rather, it is a theology made up of a plurality of theologies, each expressive of the one Christian faith as well as of the efforts of Christians everywhere to come to terms with their unique cultural identity and experience of the history of salvation.¹ Rahner emphasized that until Vatican II, Roman Catholic theology was located in the framework of a single civilization and exported on a massive scale to other civilizations.² With Vatican II, the beginnings of a "world" theology were provided such that theology would no longer be simply European but have the potential to become inculturated in a variety of traditions.³ The movement from a "transitional" theology to a "world" theology necessarily takes place within the causa finalis of Vatican II, the future of the Church, to which the Council committed itself.⁴

The purpose of this chapter is to develop Rahner's basic theological understanding

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³Rahner, "Christianity, a Religion for the Whole of Humanity," interview with Gwendoline Jarczykx. In Faith in a Wintry Season, 164-166.

⁴Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 87.
of Vatican II as the beginning of the emergence of a World Church through the theme of the Council's theology. It is seen that over time, Rahner came to view the Council's theology as one of the indicators that the Roman Catholic Church is moving in the direction of a World Church.

This chapter unfolds in four sections. Section A explores Rahner's understanding of the theology of the Council as a "transitional" theology made up of two aspects—the aspect of neo-scholasticism as well as the aspect of a more biblical approach—and the impact this has on the future direction of theology in a World Church.

Section B examines, in detail, Rahner's understanding of the challenge Vatican II presents to theology, the new tasks of theology after Vatican II, questions left open by the Council, pluralism in theology within the unity of one faith and the need for a "world" theology for a World Church.

Section C explores Rahner's understanding of the future of the Church and the Church of the future, the need for structural change in the Church, the characteristics of the Church of the future and the demand for a global pastoral strategy for the World Church.

Section D examines Rahner's insistence on the close interrelationship between theology and spirituality and the importance of stressing this, particularly in the era of the World Church. This section also describes the characteristics of the spirituality of the Church of the future in the era of the World Church.

The diversity that results from the response of a "world" theology to a variety of questions, questions which may not be experienced by Christians everywhere in the world in the same way, is bound to influence the character of theology itself, pose new challenges and necessitate new methods of procedure for the magisterium.

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A. The Council's Theology

Vatican II with its "transitional" theology prepared the way for the development of a "world" theology since it showed a willingness to break out of the old mode of neo-scholastic theology and to embrace aspects of the new theology. Rahner described the theology of Vatican II as a "transitional" theology in that it contained two elements: on the one hand, neo-scholasticism was taken for granted as is evidenced by the pre-conciliar drafts prepared for the Council by the Roman commissions; on the other, there were present elements of a more biblical theology which proposed themes that had not been drawn simply from the repertoire of neo-scholasticism. The biblical aspect was significant for three reasons: first, it exercised a moderating influence on any sort of theological exuberance, particularly in the area of Mariology; second, as far as possible it made an effort to take ecumenical needs into account; third, it brought more clearly to the fore of the Church's awareness a series of teachings which were never stated clearly enough to make a practical impact on the life of the individual Christian.

The theology of the Council, therefore, was a "transitional" theology that moved inexorably towards becoming a "world" theology despite the "defensive" theology evidenced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the "signs of fatigue" that could be detected in theology in the decade after Vatican II. Rahner was convinced that

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7Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," 94. (G.1979) Among doctrines proposed for definition were the descent of all human beings from one pair (monogenism) and "limbo" as the destiny of unbaptised children. Rahner pointed out that both these have almost entirely disappeared today. It should not be inferred, he maintained, that this aspect was merely obscure and negative.

8Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II, 94.

9Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 94f. Rahner cited these examples: the sacramentality of episcopal ordination; the doctrine of the episcopate as a whole with and under the pope; the doctrine that human authors of Scripture were not inspired "secretaries" of God but truly human composers of these Scriptures; the cautious formulation of the inerrancy of the Scripture etc. (95)

10Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 95. Rahner described the theology of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as a "defensive" theology, "too nervous" and
theology would continue to renew itself until, corresponding to the Council itself, it became a "world" theology for a World Church. Other countries would follow the lead of Latin America in developing theologies of their own, reflective of their respective cultures and their experience of the history of salvation. In this transition to a "world" theology, the theology of the West would still have an important function but only if it succeeded in becoming a "missionary" theology, that is, one open to the world, using the language of the culture and working to achieve a unity of dogmatic and fundamental theology.

Vatican II made a new start possible and legitimate for theology by allowing it the freedom to break out of the mould of a "monotonous neo-scholasticism" which was intended to be acceptable everywhere in the whole world. It was Rahner's hope that theology would be everywhere in the World Church. Its task would be to seek answers for the urgent questions of particular regions without trying to impose these solutions on the whole Church. The resultant diversity would influence the character of theology itself as well as present the magisterium of the World Church with the challenge to develop different modes of procedure from those of the past when it appeared to address the whole Church as a single cultural group.

Vatican II only provided a very abstract and formal outline of the tasks facing the Church and of the growth of theology in the future. Rahner was convinced that any

"too little creative" in regard to the questions of modern theology, as well as being unsuccessful in justifying its prohibitions and warnings in the light of a living and broad coherence of faith.


13Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of Vatican II," 96. For example, It is no longer true that candidates for the priesthood from the missionary countries must study in Rome and be initiated from there into neo-scholastic theology.


discussion about the Church must take place in the light of the *causa finalis* of Vatican II; that is, the future of the Church to which this Council committed itself.\(^{16}\) Rahner believed that, in this task, it is necessary to have recourse to the basic substance of the Christian message so that the World Church might reformulate the Church’s faith in a way that corresponds to the particular historical situation of all the churches.\(^{17}\) Rahner implied that if this task were fulfilled, there would come about the real pluralism of life and of outlook which is much more significant than a pluralism of proclamations and theologies within the western Church.\(^{18}\) The real pluralism is the pluralism that exists in a Church that has truly become a World Church, a pluralism, therefore, not only in theology but in every aspect of Church life.

**B. A "World" Theology for a World Church**

Vatican II paved the way for the emergence of a World Church by making possible the development of a “world” theology, a theology not bound to European or western culture, but rather one made up of many theologies, each expressive of the faith experience of a variety of peoples. Rahner’s appreciation of Vatican II’s immense challenge to theology grew over time as he became more reconciled with the abiding reality of an irreversible pluralism in philosophy and theology and came to see this situation as contributing positively to the emergence of a World Church. In his early essays after the Council, Rahner was concerned with the Second Vatican Council’s challenge to theology and with the immediate tasks of theology after the Council. In the intervening years up to 1970 he came to grips with the problem of pluralism in theology and of the immense challenge this posed for a World Church in terms of maintaining a unity of faith amid a plurality of theologies. By 1970 Rahner was thoroughly convinced that the days of a single homogenous theology in the Church were all but finished. With

\(^{16}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 87.

\(^{17}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 87.

\(^{18}\)Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 88.
the enunciation of his thesis that Vatican II marked the emergence of a World Church, Rahner began to insist more urgently on a real inculturation of theology which would aim at the development of indigenous theologies throughout the world. In his very late essays and interviews, Rahner expressed the view that the Church is now in fact and not just potentially the world-wide Church with regional churches and that this poses immense challenges for theology in general and for European theology in particular.

1. The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology

Rahner's early essays after the Council were preoccupied with Vatican II's challenge to theology and with the new tasks it poses for a World Church. As early as 1965 Rahner predicted that the theology of the Council would not be the final stage of theology. There would come another even more important one, for which Vatican II would be seen to have been simply an indirect preparation. I believe that Rahner was referring to the theology of a World Church with its preaching of the old fundamental truths of Christianity in a new way, especially to those outside the visible boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Besides undertaking a thorough thinking through of the texts of the Council and an exhaustive commentary on them, theology after the Council will be expected to address those questions merely hinted at, or left open by Vatican II. These are the old questions that always remain pertinent and always present themselves in

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epochal new ways.²³

In his important essay, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," Rahner pointed out that by proposing themes which were always part of the Church's faith but had not found a clear expression in theology at the time of the Council, Vatican II presented immense tasks for theology.²⁴ He maintained that the Council was of great importance for theology in two ways, both of which, I believe, have implications for the emergence of a World Church. First, the Council consciously left open many questions and/or expressly recognized them as requiring further theological investigation. Rahner implied that questions such as those having to do with the collegiality of the bishops and the significance of the local church have real implications for the concrete life of the World Church and for Christian existence.²⁵ Second, the Council's whole attitude showed a spirit of freedom together with an awareness of problems and respect for specialists.²⁶ The implication is that theological relevance and theological freedom are essential ingredients of a World Church.

Rahner pointed out eight ways in which Vatican II posed an immense challenge to theology and, in so doing, moved the Roman Catholic Church in the direction of becoming a World Church. First, an emphasis on historical theology shows how authoritative dogma originally arose out of a concrete response to the demands of a difficult situation. Thus, it demonstrates how to apply the lessons of the past to tomorrow's challenges in a World Church.²⁷ Secondly, biblical theology has the task of


²⁴Rahner, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," TI 9, pp. 3-27, esp. p. 7. (G. 1966). For example, few catechisms at the time of the Council made mention of the fact that the sacrament of penance is reconciliation with the Church and yet this is clearly part of ancient tradition. (4)


²⁶Rahner, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," 5. This attitude is summarized in the axiom of Paul VI "to study first and then to decide."

determining, out of its own study, the themes of systematic theology. By this Rahner indicates that theology in a World Church needs to be much more firmly rooted in Scripture than has been the case in the years before Vatican II (QT no.16). 28 Third, post-conciliar theology needs to be rooted in the ecclesiology of Vatican II. From that vantage point theology after Vatican II will come to be a theology of the local church and of the collegial-synodal principle in the Church. 29 Fourth, the Church of the future requires a new moral theology, one that is positively oriented towards love, the abandonment of a constricted concern merely for the salvation of the individual and a morality of service to the world. 30 Fifth, the theology of the future, and by that I believe Rahner is referring to the theology of a World Church, ought to be directed outwards towards the world. This will require a theology of all forms of atheism and unbelief. 31 Sixth, the dialogue with the world begun at Vatican II, particularly in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, must be made actual in a World Church and this will necessitate a new Christology and a renewed theology of hope. 32 Seventh, the theology of the future

28Rahner, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," 13; cf., idem, "Exegesis and Dogmatic Theology," TI 5, pp. 67-93. Rahner pointed out that for example, up to the present day there is probably not a single official Roman Catholic ecclesiology which expounds a theology of the local Church as a concrete actualization of the Church as a whole. See also idem, "The New Image of the Church," TI 10; cf., idem, "On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community" TI 10; cf., idem, "The Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship," TI 10.

29Rahner, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," 14ff. Rahner listed approximately twenty-five themes for conciliar theology that arise from the documents of Vatican II.

30Rahner, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," 17. See also Lisa Cahill, "Moral Theology and the World Church," PCTSA 39 (1984): 35-51. Cahill points out that it is not possible to select one culturally distinct system of Christian ethics which is normative in relation to others. (35)


32Rahner, "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," 19f. Rahner noted that there is lacking a real hermeneutics of eschatological statements, as well as a Christology includes the question of Jesus Christ within an evolutionary world view and that this latter
ought to be an ecumenical theology in that it must be willing to learn from Protestant exegesis and biblical theology and also from Protestant systematic theology. 33 Eighth, there is a need for a practical, or pastoral theology. After a Council that intended to be "pastoral," Rahner indicates that a theology of the World Church can do no less than deal with the Church in the modern world with the same thoroughness and clarity as did the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. 34

In a second essay, "Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority after the Council," I believe Rahner drew some important implications for the exercise of the teaching office in a World Church. 35 He argued that today's situation of pluralism makes it impossible for theologians to give simple "yes" and "no" answers to previously fixed and formulated doctrine. Rahner's point illustrates the fact that as a result, the former ways and means of doctrinal leadership are evidently insufficient for a World Church. 36

There is no need for the bishops in a World Church, for instance, simply to wait for authoritative decisions of doctrinal political measures from Rome before addressing the concerns of a particular regionally diverse situation of which they have first hand

presupposes an anthropology which allows for a new interpretation of the human person. (19) See also idem, "Reflections on the Experience of Grace," 11, 86-90.


35Rahner, "Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority after the Council," 11, 9, pp. 83-100 (G.1966). In this essay Rahner responds to a letter of Cardinal Ottaviani, Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, to the chairman of the bishops' conference in which the latter enumerates ten errors or abuses he detects in theology since the Council. The content of this letter is reproduced in AAS 58 1966: 659-661.

36Rahner, "Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority after the Council," 90.
knowledge. Secondly, it is possible to have "new" problems with the "old" questions. Here too, the bishops have a task. They must recognise that the solution to these questions has not yet been found. I believe his point illustrates that the solution to theological problems in a World Church will depend on the training of young theologians, on the encouragement given to theology by bishops and on the continuing collaboration between bishops and theologians begun at Vatican II. 

2. A Pluralism of Theologies

In his essays and books in the late 1960's Rahner became increasingly convinced that there can never again be one homogeneous theology in the Church; rather, the World Church will contain a plurality of theologies in one unity of faith. The challenge of a World Church lies in maintaining this unity of faith amid diverse theological expressions. In his essay, "Philosophy and Philosophising in Theology"

37Rahner, "Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority after the Council," 91.

38Rahner, "Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority after the Council," 93f. For example, Rahner lists several misunderstandings that exist in the Church today having to do with the morality of mixed marriages etc. (93)


41Rahner, "Philosophy and Philosophising in Theology," TI 9, pp. 46-63. (G. 1968) See also, Lisa Cahill, "Moral Theology and the World Church," PCTSA 39 (1984): 35-51, esp. p. 35. Cahill maintains that "particular voices in the WC teach that the gospel is heard only as it is incarnated in specific cultural settings, and that no one of those settings can claim the
(1968), Rahner argued that due to the pluralism of philosophies, theology can no longer count on one unified philosophical system as a dialogue partner and that on account of the close interrelationship between the two disciplines, theology itself will become diversified. There are two consequences for theology arising from this situation of pluralism which Rahner seemed to imply have relevance for a World Church. First, there will be an inevitable multiplicity of theologies. Second, this will result in a totally new situation for the Church’s teaching office. In a World Church, theology’s new dialogue partner will be the secular sciences, both natural and humanistic. Rahner implies that in this new context, theology in a World Church will be understood primarily as the deeper source of human existence and not simply as a type of synthesis or amplification of it.

As Rahner became more convinced that there would never again be single homogeneous theology, he became increasingly preoccupied with the question of how to maintain a unity of faith amid a plurality of theologies and saw this as one of the greatest challenges for a World Church. Over time, his appreciation of the pluralism in theology grew as he saw the potential contained in this situation for moving the Roman Catholic finality and supremacy that belong to the Lord and his Spirit alone. (35) See also, Michael Scanlon, "Systematic Theology and the World Church," PCTSA 39 (1984): 13-34.


45Rahner, "Philosophy and Philosophizing in Theology," 56. Rahner suggested that from this starting point, we may be able to grasp the nature of the "basic theological course" advocated by Vatican II. See also, idem, "Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests," TI 6, pp. 113-138 ff.
Church in the direction of becoming a World Church. In his positive appreciation of pluralism in theology, however, he never relinquished the conviction that this pluralism ought to serve the unity of the one Christian faith.

In his essay "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church" (1969), Rahner viewed the pluralism in theology as a negative state of affairs, something to be striven against and overcome. In order to maintain unity of faith the teaching authority had the right to set up "new and unequivocal boundaries" to control the pluralism of theologies. Rahner recognized, however, that theological pluralism is based on the fact that the formula in which the teaching authority of the Church exercises its creed always includes, among other things, the element of time-conditioned language. He foresaw that in future, the magisterium will hardly be in a position to arrive at any fresh positive expressions of doctrine. Instead, the ancient credal formulas and the earlier doctrinal statements of the Church will constitute the initial expression of a common creed to which many theologies, while retaining their pluralism, refer, and which they are intended to serve. He concluded that in the future, therefore, the magisterium will regard this pluralism among theologies as a necessary enrichment of the Church.

In another essay written the same year entitled, "The Theology of the Future" (1969), Rahner reiterated that the Catholic theology will continue to be a theology of the

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41Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," 13.

42Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," 14.

43Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," 20.

44Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," 19, 23. Rahner also noted that this has immense significance for ecumenical theology in a World Church since, in this new context of pluralism in theology, the theologies of the different Churches are not in the least incompatible with one another. 23
one abiding creed of the Church. The theologies attached to this one creed, however, will remain quite different from one another in method, structural development, outlook, terminology and practical consequences. I believe that Rahner's point brings home the fact that in a World Church there will never again be a homogeneous theology but rather many theologies each of which will have a different bearing upon and approach to the one creed. Consequently, it will be increasingly necessary in a World Church for these theologies to be in constant dialogue among themselves.

Rahner enumerated six characteristics of the theology of the Church of the future, each of which has relevance for a World Church. First, this pluralism in theology will open up new ecumenical possibilities since there will be no attempt at falsely smoothing out the differences between the Christian churches. Second, the theology of the future will concentrate very decisively upon the ultimate and basic questions of the Christian message. Third, the theology of the future will have an ecumenical quality since the theologies of the various Churches will be conscious of their responsibility to maintain a constant dialogue with one another, together with a readiness to learn from each other. Fourth, the theology that characterizes the Church of the future, or the World Church as Rahner would later call it, will seek to encourage Christians to make decisions and to engage in concrete action in shaping the future. Fifth, the theology of the future will discover in a fresh and more living way that ecclesiological element which is proper to it


\[52\] Rahner, "The Theology of the Future," 139.


\[57\] Rahner, "The Theology of the Future," 144.
and which belongs permanently to its very nature. Sixth, the theology of the future will be a critical theology and not just a theology "on its knees" although it will need to proceed more from prayer than previously.

3. A "World" Theology for a World Church

By 1970 Rahner was thoroughly convinced that the future theology of the Church would become less and less rooted in European Western culture and more and more transformed into a "world" theology suitable for a World Church. In his essay, "Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future" (1970), Rahner argued that the Church of the future would become less and less the theology of a society which is culturally and regionally homogeneous and more and more the theology of a World Church. As a theology of a World Church, this theology would never again be in a position to find an obvious basis for itself in one specific culture or to claim a particular region as its own special possession. Theology, itself, therefore would take on the same characteristics of

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58 Rahner, "The Theology of the Future," 145: cf., idem, "Concerning our Assent to the Church as She Exists in the Concrete," VI 12, 142-160. (G. 1969)


62 Rahner, "Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future," 36.
the diaspora situation of a World Church. It would be deeply mystagogical and profoundly missionary and so, be truly an ecumenical theology, open to other expressions of the one Christian faith outside the visible boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Rahner appears to come fully to terms with the fact that in a World Church, Roman Catholic theology would have to reckon with a considerable amount of pluralism within itself while maintaining unity in faith.

These insights were brought out more clearly in an interview that took place the same year (1970) in which Rahner described the shift that has taken place in theology since the time of the Council and the challenge this presents to the World Church. He pointed out that the situation of theology has changed since the Council. During the Council the central issue was ecclesiology, whereas today the burning question in theology is the mystery of God, in Jesus Christ, in one's neighbour and working out the relationship among these three in a way that is meaningful in the life of a Christian.

Four features characterize this theology of a World Church. First, this theology will be a pluralistic theology, rather than a single, homogeneous theology for the entire Church. A

63Rahner, "Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future," 36.


pluralism of theologies is necessary in a World Church that is true to its missionary task of relating itself genuinely to the plurality of cultures in the world.\(^68\) Second, this theology will be more immediately missionary and mystagogical than in the past in keeping with the diaspora situation of a World Church with its demand for a personal commitment of faith.\(^69\) Third, the theology of a World Church will have to be demythologizing; that is, it must seek to make the message of Christianity truly accessible to people today.\(^70\) Fourth, the theology in a World Church will be more transcendental; that is, it will bring out more clearly the role of the knowing subject.\(^71\)

According to Rahner, the function of theology in the life of the World Church has two aspects: first, it must serve the Church’s mission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the present age in a way that is intelligible to contemporary persons; second, it must exercise a critical function by resisting any tendency within the Church itself to become a

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\(^68\)Rahner, "The Church’s Responsibility for the World," 49.


\(^70\)Rahner, "The Church’s Responsibility for the World," 49; cf., idem, *A New Christology*.

ghetto or sect within the world.\textsuperscript{72}

By the late 1970's, Rahner began to insist more urgently on the need for a truly indigenous theology throughout the various regions of the World Church. In his essay, "The Present Situation of Catholic theology" (1979), Rahner noted that today, Roman Catholic theology is no longer an exclusively European enterprise. South American theology has been working towards an explicit emancipation from European theology. Other theologies are emerging, all eager to address themselves to the task of developing an indigenous theology hardly conceived of before Vatican II.\textsuperscript{73}

Rahner's concluded that the new theology\textsuperscript{74} that characterizes the World Church must deal with the real questions of contemporary people and not evolve solely along esoteric lines.\textsuperscript{75} Secondly, it ought to serve as a science of proclamation of the gospel, be of service to people and be consistent with the mentality today.\textsuperscript{76}

By the 1980's Rahner claimed that the Church is in fact and not just potentially a World Church.\textsuperscript{77} In his essay, "A Theology that We Can Live with" (1987), Rahner came

\begin{footnotes}

\item[73]Rahner, "The Present Situation of Catholic Theology," \textit{TI} 21, 70-77, esp. p. 70. (G. 1979)

\item[74]Rahner, "The Present Situation of Catholic Theology," 76f., 72f. This new theology cannot be characterized simply as the theology of the Second Vatican Council because with all its progressiveness, traditional theology still predominated at the Council in topics, Latin, terminology, Scripture. (72)

\item[75]Rahner, "The Present Situation of Catholic Theology," 76.

\item[76]Rahner, "The Present Situation of Catholic Theology," 77.

to grips with the question of how a Church which has grown up in one very limited
corner of history can still seriously strive to be a "worldwide" Church present in all
cultures. He implied that one way it can hope to do this is by having a theology that is
meaningful to people in their existential lives. The theology of a "worldwide" Church, (a
terms which I believe could be used here as a synonym for "World Church"), can never
be a "pure" science because it must always be a reflection of the lived Christianity of
those who make up the World Church. 

Rahner gave four characteristics of this theology. First, it must be an "ecclesial
theology" so that one can live with it in the Church and do this honestly. Consequently,
Roman Catholic Christians can certainly pursue a political theology and a theology of
liberation. Second, it ought to be a thinking theology; that is, it must come to grips
sufficiently with modern problems. Third, it must be a theology which seeks the unity
amid the diversity of revelation and the truths of the faith. Fourth, theology in a

Second Vatican Council," TI 22, pp. 97-105 (G.1982); "A 'Wintry' Church and the
Opportunities for Christianity," Interview with David Seeber, in Faith in a Wintry Season,
(1984): 189-200; "Theological Thinking and Religious Experience," interview with Rogelio
Carcia-Mateo and Peter Kammerer for Entschluss, in Karl Rahner in Dialogue, (1982):352-
359; "Horizons of Thinking in Theology," interview with Manfred Waldenmair Lackenbach
and Thomas Untersteiner, in Karl Rahner in Dialogue (1982): 352-359; "Christianity: A
Religion for the Whole of Humanity," interview with Gwendoline Jarczykx, in Faith in a
Wintry Season, (1983): 164-166; "The Church's Situation," interview with Detlef Drewes, in
Faith in a Wintry Season, (1984): 183-185; "Aspects of European Theology," TI 21, pp. 78-
98. (G. 1983)

Rahner, "A Theology that We Can Live With," 105.

Rahner, "A Theology that We Can Live With," 103.

Rahner, "A Theology that We Can Live With," 107.

Rahner. "A Theology that We Can Live With," 109. This means coming to grips with
the problems which modernism gave rise to in Catholic theology, and for which it really
presented very short sighted solutions. See also, Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Ecclesial and
Cultural Roles of theology," PCTSA 40 (1985): 15-35 and Response by Margaret O'Gara in
the same volume, p. 33-35.

Rahner, "A Theology that We Can Live With," 111.
"worldwide" Church or World Church ought to be a theology of mystery concerning itself with God and not merely with social criticism and human freedom. As such, it will be a theology that can be lived with since Christians will experience that it is the beginning and the foretaste of eternal life.\(^3\)

In his essays and interviews throughout the mid eighties, Rahner returned insistently to the need of a "world" theology for a World Church. In an interview in 1982, Rahner stated that theology has the task of being a worldwide theology and not only a theology suited to European or North American culture.\(^4\) To do this, it must develop a theology of the different cultures and situations in the world.

In a second interview the same year, (1982) Rahner reiterated that the days are past when church life and Roman Catholic theology could be considered "nice, useful imports." In a Church which is now, little by little, becoming a World Church, the countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia are achieving greater self-responsibility and working toward a theology of their own, one more suited to their needs and aspirations.\(^5\)

In a third interview, the following year (1983), Rahner again insisted that contemporary theology must be a theology of a World Church.\(^6\) The challenge of a World Church is to arrive at a Christianity that has generously achieved an inner and


essential synthesis with other cultures.\textsuperscript{87} With Vatican II, the beginnings of a theology have been provided that will no longer be simply European, but rather be one which is inculturated in a variety of traditions. Rahner observed that the impression is that Rome is very hesitant in this area, an indication, perhaps that the Vatican has not yet understood that an East Asian or African Christianity ought to have a very different appearance from a European counterpart.\textsuperscript{88}

In a fourth interview the following year (1984), Rahner emphasized that at Vatican II, the Church broke out of its western limits, a break that must now find clearer expression in the way theology is pursued in a World Church.\textsuperscript{89} The cultural and philosophical particularities of many nations need to be incorporated in the theological elaboration of unchanging Christian truths.

In a late essay, Rahner affirmed that today the Church is, in fact, and not just potentially a World Church and that this has great implications for theology in general and for European theology in particular.\textsuperscript{90} In his essay, "Aspects of European Theology" (1983), Rahner arrived at the conclusion that the only way to preserve unity of faith amid a plurality of theologies is for each theology to serve all the other theologies in the World.\textsuperscript{91} These different theologies, even though they exist in the one Church with its

\textsuperscript{87}Rahner, "Christianity, A Religion for the Whole of Humanity," 165.

\textsuperscript{88}Rahner, "Christianity, A Religion for the Whole of Humanity," 165. "It has to be asked why Rome balks at efforts to carry the process of inculturation any further. It surely has to do with an understandable desire to reinforce unity in, matters of faith and Christian morality."


\textsuperscript{91}Rahner, "Aspects of European Theology," 84. There is a development in Rahner's thinking here from his earlier essay, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church" (G. 1969), in which he stated that the teaching office ought to set boundaries to control the pluralism of theologies and so ensure a unity of faith. (13)
one faith, are really different and they remain different. It will be important in a World Church for Rome to take the initiative in promoting dialogue among the different theologies so that the problems which are bound to arise among them can be settled, as much as possible, by the theologies themselves, and not by an authoritative intervention on the part of Rome.

Rahner emphasized, however, that European theology will continue to have an important task to perform among the other theologies in a World Church. First, it can help the other theologies by humbly distinguishing in a self-critical way between what is specifically Christian and what is merely European. Second, it can strive to preserve and develop world cultures within a desirable plurality. Third, it can act as mediator and co-ordinator among theologies in a World Church.

Thus far it is seen that Vatican II's challenge to theology takes place within the growing pluralism of theologies, a situation that is bound to characterize a World Church and which will eventually lead to the development of a "world" theology truly reflective of the diversity of a World Church.

C. The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future

According to Rahner, the movement from a "transitional" theology to a "world" theology necessarily takes place within the causa finalis of Vatican II, that is, the future of

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95 Rahner, "Aspects of European Theology," 91.

the Church to which the Council committed itself. The Church of the future will have a
different sociological structure from that of the past, particularly when it comes to the
exercise of the petrine ministry. Moreover, these structural changes will not happen
automatically. They will come about as a result of a concrete global pastoral strategy for
the World Church. None of these structural changes, however, will be effective without
the support of an exceptionally strong spirituality, a deep interior renewal, and an
interpenetration of spirituality with theology.

In the years following Vatican II, Rahner began to think deeply and with
increasing concreteness about the future of the Church and the Church of the future.
Throughout the late sixties and early seventies he began to insist on the urgent need for
structural change in the Church. This insistence became even greater throughout the
seventies when he came to see Roman centralism as one of the chief obstacles to the
emergence of a World Church. By the 1980’s Rahner was convinced that such structural
changes would not take place without a conscious global planning strategy for the World
Church. In the late eighties, Rahner returned to his insistence on the need for a closer
interrelationship between spirituality and theology without which any structural changes
would be ineffective in bringing about a true interior renewal of the Church and
consequently, the emergence of a World Church.

97 Rahner, "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," 87.

98 Rahner, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church," 112, 203-217 (G. 1968);
"Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," 112, pp. 81-97 (G. 1969);
idem, The Shape of the Church to Come, translated and with an introduction by Edward
Quinn (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); idem, "Structural Change in the Church of the
Future," 110, pp. 115-122 (G. 1977); idem, "The Future of the Church and the Church of
the Future," 110, pp. 103-114 (G. 1979); idem, "Perspectives on Pastoral Theology in the
Theology in the Future," in The Church of the Future: A Model for the Year 2001 by
Walbert Bühlmann, 185-197 (G. 1982); "The Future of the World and of the Church,"
interview with Giancarlo Zizola, in Faith in a Wintry Season, Rome (1982): 154-163; "The
Church’s Situation," interview with Detlef Drewes, in Faith in a Wintry Season, (1984): 183-
187; I Remember: An Interview with Meinold Krauss.
1. Structural Change in the Church of the Future

From the late sixties onward, Rahner became increasingly preoccupied with the need for structural change in the Church. In his essay, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church" (1968), Rahner predicted that the Church of the future would have a different sociological structure from that of the past.99 According to Rahner, three elements characterize this new structure of the Church of the future, or as Rahner would later term it, the World Church. First, the church of the future will be a "little flock" of personally committed believers.100 Second, it will be a community of sisters and brothers united in faith and love. Third, it will be open to the world and ready to be shaped by those who care for it.101 Within this new sociological structure, the Creed and the preaching of the Gospel will find new ways of expression.102

In his essay, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church" (1969), Rahner argued that, as a charismatic community, the Church is an "open" as opposed to a "closed" system.103 By this statement I believe that Rahner implies that a World Church must positively will to remain open since only in this way can it be true to its pilgrim

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99Rahner, "Perspectives for the Future of the Church," TI 12, pp. 203-217. (G. 1968) See also, Robert Kinast, "How Pastoral Theology Functions," 431f. Kinast applies the characteristics of theological pluralism to pastoral ministry. If the problematic side of theological pluralism is all that is stressed, there is little benefit to the pastoral minster. (431)


103Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," TI 12, pp. 81-97 (G.1969). An open system is the opposite of a totalitarian system (closed system) in that it can be defined only in terms of a point outside the system. (89) See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 214f.-218.
nature. Indeed, it is from the nature of the Church, as constituting an open system in a radical and abiding sense, that the charismatic element in the World Church derives its true essence. As a consequence, obedience in an "open church" is to be conceived of otherwise than would be the case in a closed system. By this Rahner implies that the individual Catholic Christian in a World Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, works out ever afresh, a synthesis between the responsible teaching of personal initiatives on the one hand, and obedience on the other.

Rahner's insistence on the need for structural change in the Church continued throughout the early seventies during which time he sought to articulate more exactly the precise characteristics of the Church of the future. In his paper prepared for the 1971 German Bishops' Synod Rahner proposed five characteristics of the church of the future, each of which has application to the World Church. First, the church of the future, or the World Church as Rahner would later term it, ought not only to take the risk of being a Church with "open doors" but it must be an "open Church:" that is, it must be open with

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104 Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," 94. "When we use the term charismatic we are using a key word to stand for that ultimate incalculability which belongs to all the other elements in the Church in their mutual interplay."

105 Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," 94.

106 Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," 95. "In a closed system such authority decides everything and is itself influenced by no-one."

107 Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," 97. "The charismatic element does exist in the church, and it does not merely stand in a dialectical relationship to the institutional factor as its opposite pole, existing on the same plane. Rather it is the first and the most ultimate among the formal characteristics inherent in the very nature of the Church as such."

108 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come. This book was written in preparation for the German Synod 1971. It was first published in German with the title Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance in 1972. In his introduction, Quinn points out that although Rahner is primarily interested in the Roman Catholic Church in Germany, most of what he says holds also for the Church in other Western countries. (5) I am making application of some of the points in Part Three of the book entitled, "How Can a Church of the Future be Conceived"? to the World Church. See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 213.
regard to orthodoxy. Concretely this means, for example, that it comes to recognize that the church law of celibacy can, and even must be changed in the light of the pastoral situation of the Church in the future. Second, the church of the future must be an ecumenical church, but with this difference: the unity sought in a World Church will be much more pluralistic in character, both theologically and institutionally, than that previously known in the Catholic Church. Third, the "church of the future" or the World Church will be a church "from the roots;" that is, it will be built up from below by basic communities that come about as a result of the free initiative and association of Christians. Such a community has the right to be recognized as Church by the episcopal great Church and to have its community leader recognized by the latter through ordination. Fourth, the World Church ought to be a democratized Church; that is,

109 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 93. See also, Lennan, The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, 213. Rahner maintained that the future of the World Church could not be considered as complete.

110 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 95, 94. Rahner gave other examples of areas where there could be changes. Among them are the following: the obligation of confessing once a year only binds those who are conscious of grave sin; (94) "It is not clear that divorced people who remarry after a first, sacramental marriage can in no circumstances be admitted to the sacraments as such."(95) Rahner also says that it is not so clear as people think, what are the possibilities even for a Christian conscience in regard to the state's penal laws against termination of pregnancy.(95)

111 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 102. 105. The future function of the papacy would be related to the maintenance of the unity of the Church, "while allowing considerable autonomy to the constituent Churches, and to a decisive and vigorous defence of the basic substance of the Christian faith." (105)

112 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 108. See also, Metz, "Theology Today: New Crises and New Visions," 5, 7f. The Second Vatican Council aims at a transition from a Church of dependents to a Church of subjects- from a Church for the people to a Church of the people. (5) It is important for theology to watch for symptoms of this transformation- to theologically reflect upon the emergence of a new model of ecclesial life which is appearing today alongside the traditional types of the paternalistic and services church.(7f.)

113 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 109f., 114. Rahner also envisioned the prospect of married church leaders when he insisted that celibacy must not be imposed if a church cannot find a sufficient number of celibate leaders. (110). Rahner also considered the
there must be greater collaboration with those who are affected by decisions and appointments. Changes will be needed in the way in which persons are selected and appointed to office in a World Church. Fifth, the Church of the future must be a socio-critical Church as emphasized by Vatican II when it stressed that the abolition of unjust social structures and the alleviation of the needs of the poor in the Third World countries are responsibilities of every Christian.

2. The Petrine Ministry

By the late seventies, Rahner became convinced that concrete structural changes were needed, particularly in the exercise of the petrine ministry. This became more apparent to him as he gradually came to view Roman centralism as one of the chief threats to the emergence of a World Church. In his essay, "Structural Change in the Church of the Future" (1977), Rahner pointed out that it has become increasingly clear and more apparent in the Church’s self-understanding that the supreme and permanent power of jurisdiction of the pope for the whole Church is not simply identical with the structure that has developed through the ages. Rahner’s point emphasizes the fact that in a World Church, the creation of concrete norms that are valid for the Church as a

question of the ordination of women from the viewpoint of the needs and necessities of the community.

114 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 120f. Rahner does not see why the priests of the diocese concerned should not co-operate really effectively in the election of their bishop.

115 Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, 123-130. See also, Metz, "Theology Today: New Crises and New Visions," PCTSA 40 (1985): 1-14. Metz observed that there are two different even seemingly opposed visions of the future of the Church which are currently engaged in a struggle with one another. Will a pre-Reformation Western Christianity attain dominance? Or will a vision dominate which tries to save the irreplaceable tradition of the Western Church in conjunction with the innovation within the emerging Churches? (1)


whole should be brought about with the obvious collaboration of the regional churches. Rahner pointed out that since Vatican II, people throughout the Church have been engaged in creating such new juridically constituted structures to facilitate this collaboration of all Roman Catholic Christians in the Church's life and decision-making. There is, however, as Rahner noted, a real fear and concern among people that Roman centralism will impose an undue uniformity on the living structures of the great particular churches of Africa, Asia, Latin America and India.

In a second essay, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future" (1979), Rahner emphasized that geographically speaking, Europe and Rome are by no means any longer at the center of the Church and insisted once again that the churches outside Europe ought to be really independent and culturally rooted in their own countries. In this context, he believed that we must now distinguish between the dogmatically assured, authentic Petrine ministry to the whole Church and the Pope's function as Patriarch of the West. Furthermore, the dialogue between the Church and the world begun at Vatican II must continue and this will demand from the World Church changes in life-style, in the style of proclamation of the Christian faith, in the treatment of people who have "come of age" and in respect for freedom of conscience.

In two interviews, one in 1982, and one in 1984, Rahner continued to

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118Rahner, "Structural Change in the Church of the Future," 119f.

119Rahner, "Structural Change in the Church of the Future," 123.

120Rahner, "Structural Change in the Church of the Future," 130, 127.

121Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," TI 20, pp. 103-114, esp. p. 110. (G. 1979)

122Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," 111.

123Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," 111.

warn that in the Church of the future, or the World Church, Roman centralism cannot be allowed to exist. His point emphasizes the fact that the Church, if it is to become a World Church, will have to become decentralized to a much greater extent than officials realize. For example, freedom must be given to the great regional churches of Latin America, Africa, and Asia to formulate their own canonical regulations in their own way.

3. A Global Pastoral Strategy for a World Church

These concrete structural changes, however, will not happen without careful planning and foresight. By the 1980's Rahner was convinced of the need for an active global pastoral strategy for the World Church. In his essay, "Perspectives on Pastoral Theology in the Future" (1981), Rahner presented five strategies or duties by which the World Church could begin to develop a global pastoral strategy. First, there is the need for the World Church to build a new awareness of the faith. According to Rahner, a plan for systematic and pastoral theology should calmly and courageously head

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127Rahner, "The Church's Situation," 187. For instance, Canon Law should be decentralized much more.


130Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 112f. All the traditional means are no longer adequate to bring the message of Christianity to people as they really are. For example, there is, as yet, no encyclical on atheism. (113) C.f., idem, "What the Church Officially Teaches and What People Actually Believe," *TI* 22, pp. 165-175. (G. 1981)
in the direction of a theology and proclamation that are open to the whole world. Rahner maintained that, although Vatican II solemnly declared that regional churches are not simply administrative districts of the one universal Church, on the whole, nothing has changed. To say that unity requires uniformity with the western church, is to sabotage the principle of the relative independence and diversity of the great regional churches.

Second, attention must be paid to the unsolved problem of the relation between the universal Church and the great regional churches. Rahner maintained that, although Vatican II solemnly declared that regional churches are not simply administrative districts of the one universal Church, on the whole, nothing has changed. To say that unity requires uniformity with the western church, is to sabotage the principle of the relative independence and diversity of the great regional churches.

Third, in keeping with Vatican II’s insistence on the Church’s global responsibility for peace and justice, there is need of more earnest study of these questions and more courageous action. Roman Catholic Christians must have the courage to come up with more concrete demands for social change, for peace and disarmament even when these are rejected by the Church.

Fourth, there is need for the World Church to adopt various changes of emphases in its proclamation of the Gospel in recognition of the diaspora situation of the Church. For all practical purposes, the Church acts on the unstated proposition that there still exists a more or less intact homogenous Catholic Christianity whereas this

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131Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 114. If Christianity is to become a world religion, that is, the religion of the peoples and cultures that did not originate near the Mediterranean or in the West, the only possible course is to be open to the whole world.

132Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 115. For example: Rome continues to look for the most uniform canon law possible; approved liturgies are in fact nothing but translations of the Roman liturgy; there is no real degree of autonomy, or tangible initiatives granted to the churches of South America or of Indonesia.

133Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 115f. Rahner observed that although the Church has done much in this regard its efforts have been sabotaged by the laziness or quiet resistance of subordinates.

134Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 116. Rahner observed that it looks as if Rome is "anxious and nervous preferring to call back to the sacristy those Christians who are actively trying to carry out there task of social criticism in the world."

situation today is practically finished. The World Church should carefully and impartially take into account the social and political presuppositions of the different cultures.

Fifth, there is the task to turn away from a "bourgeois Church" or a "services Church." This demand presents Christians with a clear challenge that will involve careful thought and planning.

To support such structural changes, it will be more important than ever that the World Church be deeply rooted in a profound spirituality that reflects the close interrelationship between spirituality and theology. By the mid eighties, Rahner returned to the primary theme of his theology, that every Christian, and hence, all churchly life, must be solidly rooted in the mystagogical experience of the incomprehensible mystery of God in faith, hope, and love. In an interview in 1984, Rahner emphasized that it is more necessary than ever that the Church of the future, the World Church, be a Church of "exceptionally strong spirituality," a "Church of prayer," a Church made up of Christians who put the love of God for God's own sake ahead of everything else.

Thus far it is seen that structural change, particularly change in the exercise of the petrine ministry, is a foregone conclusion for a World Church, but one that will demand

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137 Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 117f. For example, the Church might choose to quietly ignore those opinions taken for granted today that may be morally questionable and focus its energies instead on other issues. (117). Rather than continuing to try to hold onto the policy of spreading out pastoral care everywhere as uniformly as possible, should not the World Church try instead to develop "instances" of pastoral ministry? (118)

138 Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 118f.

139 Rahner, "Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future," 118. The demand to turn away from a bourgeois Church includes an important and correct view of the future which Christians have to think about and plan for. If, for example, the Church really wants to hold onto celibacy in the future this position will entail far-reaching changes. Lay people will enjoy more independence, power and Importance.

140 Rahner, I Remember: An Interview with Meinold Krauss, 184f., 187ff.
careful planning and foresight on its part.

D. The Spirituality of the Church of The Future

Rahner saw the problem of Christian living as the decisive question facing the World Church. He remained convinced that the spirituality of the future must be an ecclesial spirituality, one solidly rooted in the Church. With the passage of time, he came to view this post-conciliar time as a "wintry" season in which the full theological, ecclesiological and pastoral significance of Vatican II had yet to be realized in the life of the Church. This wintry season will turn to spring, Rahner believed, when Christians work so that the inner core of faith becomes alive once again and the Church is revealed as the sacrament of salvation for the world.

I. An Ecclesial Spirituality for a World Church

Shortly after the Council, Rahner identified the problem of Christian living or the spirituality of the future, as the decisive question of the post-conciliar Church. While the Council did not offer any kind of systematic programme for the form Christian living was to take in the future, it did act as a kind of catalyst in this regard by pointing to some elements that would characterize a genuinely Christian and ecclesial spirituality. Whatever the mode this Christian living is to take in the future, Rahner was convinced that the devout Christian of the future will either be a "mystic," one who has

141Rahner, "Christians Living Formerly and Today," TI 7, pp. 3-24. (G. 1966) See also, Robert Masson, "Spirituality for the Head, Heart, Hands and Feet: Rahner’s Legacy," Spirituality Today 36 (1984): 340-353, esp. p. 352f. Masson points out that Rahner’s theology suggests that the spirituality of the future will have to be humble and open. (352) Spirituality will not only have to live with diversity; it will have to value that diversity while also patiently seeking the unity of truth and love in the pluriformity of expressions. (353)

142Rahner, "Christians Living Formerly and Today," 6, 7. See DV nos. 21-26 in which the Council emphasized that the life of the Christian grow from a genuine participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, on love for the scriptures, on the exercise of a spirit of fraternal freedom, and on regarding the world with its needs and its future destiny as each the task of each Christian. To these Rahner added the reading of spiritual classics, confession of devotion, prayer before the Eucharist and solitary prayer and meditation. (7)
"experienced" something of the mystery of God, or else he/she will cease to be anything at all.\textsuperscript{143} He maintained that devout Christian living will no longer be sustained by the unanimous, manifest public convictions and religious customs of society.\textsuperscript{144} From within their diaspora situation, devout Christians will be challenged to take up their tasks in the world of today, and to co-operate with humanity in the construction of a freer world and better world.\textsuperscript{145}

In an essay written almost ten years later entitled, "Courage for an Ecclesial Christianity" (1975), Rahner argued that since Christianity has not only a pneumatological character, but also an historical and social one, every Christian is, by nature, an ecclesial Christian. He implies, therefore, that attachment to the Church will always characterize the Roman Catholic Christian in a World Church.\textsuperscript{146}

Rahner expanded on this insight four years later in his essay, "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future" (1979), in which he identified attachment to the Church as one of the characteristics of this spirituality and the criterion of any genuine spirituality.\textsuperscript{147}

First, the spirituality of the Church of the future will always be an ecclesial spirituality, one living in the Church, receiving from it, giving itself to the Church.\textsuperscript{148} It will also always be one that finds concrete expression in the sacraments of the Church, even though


\textsuperscript{144}Rahner, "Christians Living Formerly and Today," 15.


\textsuperscript{146}Rahner, "Courage for an Ecclesial Christianity," TI 20, pp. 3-12, esp. p. 9.

\textsuperscript{147}Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future," TI 20, 18-32. (G. 1979)

\textsuperscript{148}Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future," 145.
this ecclesial manifestation may vary considerably in the years ahead. Second, in keeping with Vatican II, the spirituality of the Church of the future will have a sociological, political dimension facing onto the world and bearing responsibility for it. Third, the spirituality of the Church of the future will preserve the history of the Church’s piety in order to discover afresh what it can offer to the Church of the future. In this way, the World Church will always be open for new pentecostal beginnings emerging from the grass roots, and not expect them to originate only from Rome. Since it will not be supported by a Christian atmosphere, the spirituality of the World Church will have to live much more clearly than formerly out of a solitary, immediate experience of God and the Spirit. At the same time, sisterly and brotherly community will be a real and essential element of the spirituality of the World Church.

2. A "Wintry" Spirituality for a "Wintry" Church

By the 1980's Rahner began to experience real discouragement over the fact that the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church which began at Vatican II, was not making the progress he had hoped; in fact, there were even signs of

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150 Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future," 145. The spirituality of the Church of the future will be a spirituality of the Sermon on the Mount and of the evangelical counsels in that it will be a continual protest against the idols of wealth, pleasure and power.
152 Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future," 148. The spirituality of the Church of the future will also have to concentrate on the ultimate data of revelation, the ineffable incomprehensibility of God as the very heart of human existence and consequently, of spirituality. See also, John O'Donnell, "The Mystery of Faith in the Theology of Karl Rahner," Heythrop Journal 25 (1984): 316f.
regression. It seemed to him that, as far as the World Church was concerned, the seeds of the "new pentecost" planted by Vatican II lay buried as in a "wintry" season. In an interview in 1981, Rahner stated that the spirituality of the Church of the future will be of two types: one "wintry" corresponding to the present condition of the Church, and one charismatic and enthusiastic. I believe Rahner's point emphasizes that both types of spirituality ought to be the object of pastoral care in a World Church and not simply the second type.

In a second interview in 1984, Rahner explained that the phrase "wintry" Church applies not only to the Church and the kind of impression that the Church makes throughout the world. Rather, it attempts to characterize our central European Church and the impression it makes. He saw these "wintry" times as a personal challenge to each Christian to work so that the inner core of faith becomes alive. Then the Church will again shine radiantly, he predicted, and it will become clear that the Church--the World Church--is, as it is intended to be, the sacrament of salvation for the world.

It is seen that the spirituality of the World Church is, above all, a Christian and ecclesial spirituality, one that hopes against hope, even in the "wintry" season of the Church’s life.

Conclusion

Vatican II paved the way for the development of a "world" theology capable of reflecting the pluriform reality of a World Church. By adopting aspects of the "new"

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theology alongside the themes of a more traditional theology, Vatican II prepared the way for multiple theologies, different expressions of the Christian message, each reflective of the multi-textural and contextual quality of a World Church. At the same time, the Second Vatican Council issued a tremendous challenge to theology, particularly by its insistence on the ecumenical dimension of all theological endeavour. To be faithful to the causa finalis of Vatican II—the future of the Church to which the Council committed itself—the Roman Catholic Church ought to continue to move in the direction of becoming a World Church; that is, it ought to encourage the development of various theologies throughout the World Church and to allow these different expressions of the Christian faith to have a practical bearing upon the transformation of Church structures, particularly when it comes to the exercise of the petrine ministry. At the same time, this world theology must be a vibrant and profound theology, one based on a living experience of God in Jesus Christ, and capable of showing how this grace can make a difference in the life of a Christian. A World theology, therefore, ought to be a profoundly practical theology, one deeply in touch with the day-to-day struggles of people throughout the World Church and capable of being lived by them whatever their circumstances. A World Theology says that no one theology can adequately express the depth of the Christian faith.
CONCLUSION

Throughout the dissertation I have endeavoured to draw out the meaning and implications of Rahner's thesis regarding Vatican II and the world Church. My aim here is to synthesize the analysis found there in the following manner: first, to summarize Rahner's reflection on how Vatican II signalled the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church as verified by the six major themes he identified in the conciliar documents and as demonstrated by his writings on these themes, particularly after Vatican II; second, to show the significance of the concept of World Church for Rahner's theology; third, to look at the post-conciliar Church through the lens of Rahner's vision of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church in order to see how the realization of this vision constitutes the major challenge facing the Church and Christianity as it enters the next millennium.

A. Summary of Rahner's Thesis Concerning Vatican II and the World Church

It was Rahner's contention that Vatican II marked the first tentative approach by the Roman Catholic Church to discover and actualize itself as a World Church and that this development opened a new epoch in the history of Roman Catholicism. This dissertation attempted to develop Rahner's thesis concerning Vatican II and the World Church through an exploration of the six key themes Rahner identified in the conciliar documents and his writings on these themes, particularly after Vatican II. They are: A Council of the World Church; The Optimism of Universal Salvation; The Local Church; The Ecumenical Change of Mind; The Church's Relationship to the World and The Theology of the Council. By World Church, Rahner meant a Roman Catholic Church which is not merely an extension of Western European centralized Church with exports around the world but rather, a culturally, liturgically, theologically diverse Church, one
appropriately independent in its local expression and whose diversity is acknowledged, cherished and celebrated as at Vatican II. Such a Church no longer seeks to be materially identified with the culture of the West but embraces a whole range of national histories and cultures. It recognizes that the world can no longer be directly shaped by the Church's imperatives; that the Church is the Church of all people, and as such, can no longer judge membership in the Church by external standards when real membership ("in corde") is something far more difficult to ascertain; that Church will continue to be ever more increasingly the "little flock" of those who believe as a matter of individual and personal responsibility. Rahner also wished to emphasize that even though he is speaking of the Roman Catholic Church and its future his interest lies in this Church as a part of Christianity as one and whole, and that in the last resort, he is looking in an ecumenical spirit to the future of Christianity and its unity.\(^1\)

In Chapter I: "A Council of the World Church," it was seen that Vatican II was a true gathering of a World Church in that bishops were present there from all over the world and not as agents of the pope or as missionary bishops but rather as shepherds in their own right bringing with them all the concerns and needs of their people. It was there, in this gathering at Vatican II, that the Roman Catholic Church began to act and speak like a World Church by its proclamation on the optimism of universal salvation, its recognition of the local church, its ecumenical change of mind, its new relationship to the world, and its theology. Rahner contended that by so being and doing, Vatican II opened a new epoch in its history such as only occurred once before in the history of the Roman Catholic Church when Jewish Christianity made the transition to gentile Christianity. It was also seen that Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council developed with the passage of time. On the eve of the Council, Rahner had few, if any expectations that this Council would produce anything new or earth-shattering. Is it

\(^1\)Rahner, "The Position of Woman in the New Situation in which She Finds Herself," \textit{Th} 8, 75-93, esp. pp. 80f.

\(^2\)Rahner, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," 103-114, esp. p. 103f. (G. 1979)
possible that by 1979 Rahner could have overestimated the Council's significance in the life of the Church? I do not think so. His insights with regard to the Council's significance as he expressed them in his essay "Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council," are among his most significant ecclesiological contributions. In Chapter II: "The Optimism of Universal Salvation," it was seen that the universal and effective salvific will of God, together with the admission of the possibility of a really salvific faith in revelation even outside Christian verbal revelation, created basic assumptions for the World Church-mission which had not previously existed. For example, in a World Church, God's universal salvific will can no longer be reduced to those who accept the explicit teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and are baptized. Every Roman Catholic Christian as a member of a World Church is now bound in conscience to hold fast to the belief in God's universal salvific will and to affirm the mysterious union in faith among all people who share in this common call to supernatural salvation through participation in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. According to Rahner's theology, this hope is well grounded anthropologically, Christologically and theologically. For Rahner, and for Roman Catholic Christians in a World Church, this world is a graced world, human persons are graced persons and all of human history is a graced history embraced by God's universal salvific will. Consequently, the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church is the sacrament of a salvation which is offered permanently to the world outside and not only to those within the visible structure of the Church. The role of the Church as a World Church is to be an effective sign of this grace of salvation which is already at work everywhere in the world, and not only or even primarily within the visible structure of the Roman Catholic Church. As a World Church, the Roman Catholic Church is a pilgrim Church, a sinful Church and a Church of sinners constantly aware of its provisionality.

It was also seen that by its positive appraisal of non-Christian religions and its implicit affirmation of the conclusions in Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity,

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Vatican II clearly proclaimed the optimism of universal salvation and set the Roman Catholic Church in the direction of becoming a World Church. The mission of a World Church, therefore, is not directed exclusively to individuals but rather to civilizations whose cultures and history have the potential to achieve a new incarnational presence of Jesus Christ in the world. A World Church, therefore, recognizes the salvific value of non-Christian religions not only for their members but for the world and for the Roman Catholic Church itself.

Reference was made in the dissertation’s introduction to an image Rahner used when speaking of the Church and Vatican II. It was that of the Church "cleaning its own glasses" in order to see other things in a "clearer, sharper, more colourful way." Chapter III: "The Local Church" is an application of that metaphor. Here we saw that the local Church is no mere sub-division of some huge mega-institution called the Church, but is, rather, through its worship, the Church at its highest point of self-actualization. In reflecting upon itself, its nature as a diaspora community, its liturgy, its beliefs, its government and its ministry, the Roman Catholic Church put its own house in order, and in so doing, began to model a World Church. It was seen that the development of a variety of liturgies leads to the development of autonomous regional churches in which the collegial-synodal principle is operative both in theory and in practice. With regard to the variety of liturgies, it was seen that in a World Church there ought to take place a true inculturation of the Christian message so that theologically, culturally, liturgically each local church is able to express in its own way its own lived experience of the Christian message.

With regard to autonomous regional churches, we saw that the bishops, as an episcopal college, share the responsibility of governing the Church with the pope as head of the college and that each local bishop rules his own flock in the name of Christ and out of concern for the whole Church. The bishops express the collegial nature of their episcopal consecration concretely first through ecumenical councils, and then through episcopal conferences, synods and other means of collaborative effort outside of ecumenical councils. It was seen that each member of the Church is called to holiness and service in the Church and as such, has the right to participate actively in decision-
making. It was Rahner's view that in a World Church, each Christian ought to be profoundly and personally committed to the Christian faith and be given the freedom and scope needed to freely and responsibly carry out his or her service to the Church.

In Chapter IV: "The Ecumenical Change of Mind," we saw that a true and irreversible development of dogma took place at Vatican II with respect to ecumenism, and that in making possible a new relationship with non-Catholic Christians and their churches, this Council set the Roman Catholic Church on the way to becoming a World Church. Just as a legitimate pluralism of liturgies, ways of governing, and ways of expressing the one Christian faith is allowed to exist within the Roman Catholic Church, so too it is possible to have a restoration of unity of the Church without a rigid uniformity. It was also made clear that in the face of today's militant and world-wide atheism, no Christian church, including the Roman Catholic Church, can effectively bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in isolation from other Christian churches. Rahner concluded that a restoration of full unity of the Church involves seeing opposites not as contradictory but rather as complementary. As pointed out, the reconciliation of different theological positions belongs to the very nature of Catholicity and has been practised for centuries in the Church, as for example in the Chalcedonian formulation which represented a synthesis between the theologies of the Antiochene and Alexandrian Schools. This fact is the basis for hoping that all Christian churches who share the same basic core of faith but have a different theological expression of it may one day form one church in the confession of this single faith. It is up to Church officials, particularly those in the Roman Catholic Church, to clear away the obstacles standing in the way of a full, visible unity of the Church.

In Chapter V: "The Church's Relationship to the World," it was seen that by the adoption of a new relationship to the world, one based on openness, dialogue, concern and responsibility for the future history of humankind, Vatican II opened the way for the emergence of a World Church. It was also seen that if the Roman Catholic Church is to become a World Church, it must accept that it cannot exercise direct control over all ethical and religious questions which arise today or claim a place of special privilege in society beyond that assigned to it. This new relationship to the world presents a particular
challenge to the Church to find a way to deal with the phenomenon of atheism and to address its causes. It was recognized that the Church must constantly resist the temptation to turn its institutional contacts with the world into a means of exerting pressure in order to attain its own legitimate aims. On the contrary, the World Church ought to model that genuine process of democratization it would like to see flourish everywhere in the world. As a World Church, therefore, the Roman Catholic Church is to be the protector of human rights in the world and model this pattern of justice in its own internal structures. Hence, the basic attitude of the World Church to the world is one of Christian hope, a hope that expresses itself in the constant effort to transform the structures of secular life. It was seen that this hope is not utopian; there is realism mingled with it which can honestly admit that society and the Church are living through a wintry season. By the adoption of a truly pastoral approach to the world, by respect for the growth and variety of cultures, the pluralism of philosophies and theologies, the variety of ethical and political systems, the Roman Catholic Church shows itself to be a World Church.

It was also seen that today a "global revolutionary situation" actually exists and that there is room in the Church for a theology of revolution on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Rahner concluded that even in the Roman Catholic Church there is an "open system" in which the most varied factors work together to throw light upon the Church's awareness of its faith. It was also noted that even in the Church it will be necessary again and again to fight for the sphere of freedom. Feudalistic and paternalistic models of office must be broken down and give way to a new understanding of office, one suited to the mentality and needs of a World Church.

In Chapter VI: "The Theology of the Council," it was recognized that the theology of the Council was a transitional theology, one which paved the way for a world theology suitable to a World Church. Vatican II made a new start possible and legitimate for theology by allowing it to break out of the mold of a "monotonous neo-scolasticism" intended to be acceptable everywhere in the world. It was seen that in a World Church there will no longer be a single, homogeneous theology but instead a plurality of theologies, each a different expression of the one Christian faith. Consequently, each regional Church will develop its own indigenous theology, one emerging out of its own
unique cultural identity and experience of salvation. Rahner concluded that in this sense, Vatican II issued a great challenge to theology and to the leaders of the Church whose task it now is to maintain a unity of faith amid a plurality of theologies. In order to accomplish this task, each theology in a World Church must serve the other theologies.

It was also seen that Rahner came to regard Roman centralism--that is, a desire to impose a uniform structure and theology on the whole Church--as one of the greatest obstacles to the emergence of a World Church. In this connection Rahner stressed the need for structural change in the Church, particularly in terms of the exercise of the petrine ministry. Also in this regard, Rahner rightly pointed out the need for global pastoral strategy for a World Church.

It was also seen that the spirituality of the future is the decisive question facing the World Church. This calls for the recognition of the profound interrelationship and interdependence between spirituality and theology. Rahner emphasized that the spirituality of the Church of the future, and hence that of the World Church, will be an ecclesial spirituality, one that hopes against hope during the "wintry season" of the Church's life.

Having summarized the main points of Rahner's thesis concerning Vatican II and the World Church and its implications as demonstrated in Rahner's writings on these themes after the Council, we move now to an analysis of the significance of the concept of World Church for Rahner's theology.

B. The Significance of the Concept of World Church for Rahner's Theology

Rahner maintained that his basic theological interpretation of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church helps towards a better understanding of Vatican II. I maintain that the idea of a World Church also helps us to understand Rahner's theology better since it illumines the depth of his theological insight and the breadth of his practical, pastoral ingenuity. As such, it also provides a unifying thread to Rahner's whole theology uniting his pre-conciliar thought to his post-conciliar reflection. In this sense, Vatican II acted as a catalyst for Rahner's theology, causing him to expand and develop many of his earlier insights in the light of his growing consciousness of the significance of this Council as the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. It
has been noted how much Rahner contributed to the Council by his theological acumen, his energy, skill and commitment. The aim here, however, is see how the concept of a World Church, as it began to emerge at Vatican II, was significant for Rahner's theology, both in terms of its theological development and its practical application.

Throughout the dissertation I have placed emphasis on the development of Rahner's theology, particularly in the years after Vatican II. This development was not by accident. It is definitely linked, I maintain, to the influence of his growing appreciation of Vatican II as the initiation of a World Church. It has been pointed out that the Council affirmed and endorsed much of what was present in Rahner's earlier theology, for example: the conclusions of his theory of the supernatural existential; the possibility of possessing the faith that leads to salvation even apart from hearing the official word of revelation; the conclusions of his theory of anonymous Christian and anonymous Christianity; his concept of the Church of sinners and the sinful Church; his belief in the sacramental nature of the Church; his respect and love of the local Church; his understanding of collegial-synodal principle in the Church; his belief in the salvific value of non-Christian religions not only for their members but for the world and even for the Roman Catholic Church; his belief that membership in the Church is not limited to those who are explicitly baptised in its faith; his firm belief in the universal call to holiness and his rejection of a "two-tiered" strata of Church membership and holiness; his firm conviction that the Church must be a strong voice for freedom in the world, for human dignity and for peace and justice; his theology of revolution and his endorsement of the principle of non-violence; his belief in the rights of the laity; his strong endorsement of the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity ratified by Vatican II; his belief that the Church must show an active and concrete concern for the world but without becoming worldly; his strong conviction that the Church is not Christianity, is not the kingdom come in all its fullness but is only a sign pointing to that reality; his strong belief that the faith of the Church and that of each individual Christian ought to be rooted in a profound and experiential knowledge of the incomprehensible mystery of God, particularly as this mystery is manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; his strong belief that spirituality and theology are profoundly interrelated, interdependent and
interconnected; his belief that the function of leadership in the Church is to serve and that the spiritual mission of the Church has nothing to do with the Church's self-aggrandizement; his belief that there is one source of revelation with two aspects; his belief in dogmatic development and how this occurs throughout the theological reflection of the Church down through the ages; his firm conviction that the Roman Catholic Church can be satisfied with nothing less than a full visible unity of the Church; his belief that various theological expressions of revealed truth are ultimately complementary rather than conflictual with authentic Catholic theology.

All of these seeds were present to some degree in Rahner's earlier theology, but after Vatican II, with its promise of a World Church, he was inspired to develop them to an astonishing degree. Let us return briefly to each of these six elements Rahner identified in the conciliar decrees to see how Rahner's growing consciousness of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church influenced the development of his theological thought causing it to move with ever greater depth of insight, conviction, flexibility, and inclusiveness towards the vision of a World Church.

1. A Council of the World Church

As noted, Rahner's use of the term "World Church" is more nuanced than first would appear since it refers not only to the future of the Roman Catholic Church but also to that of Christianity as a whole and to its unity. Whether Rahner coined the phrase "World Church" himself or borrowed it from Bühlmann is unimportant. Bühlmann's book confirmed Rahner's own experience of Vatican II. But Rahner's insight, unlike Bühlmann's, was more than a sociological analysis: it was a theological interpretation that grew with years of reflection on the meaning of this Council and on his experience at witnessing first hand a real development in the Church's faith with respect to each of the six elements present in the conciliar documents. The seeds of his preconciliar thought, his

experience at being present at this Council and theological reflection upon that experience and on the teachings of Vatican II over a long period of time led Rahner to conclude that with this Council, the Roman Catholic Church had crossed a frontier behind which it would be impossible for it to retreat.

2. The Optimism of Universal Salvation

The doctrine of God’s universal salvific will was at the very basis of Rahner’s theory of the supernatural existential, as it was of his view of salvation-revelation history, his theological anthropology, his transcendental Christology and trinitarian theology. After Vatican II with its unabashed proclamation of the optimism of universal salvation, however, Rahner developed his former insights with greater boldness and conviction, enthusiasm and energy and, in so doing, provided the Church with the theological justification for many of the Council’s teachings. For example, the optimism of universal salvation and its connection with the emergence of a World Church led Rahner to insist even more vigorously on his theory of anonymous Christianity and anonymous Christians since he found in this theory the most plausible explanation for how unbelievers, pagans and even atheists can possess the saving faith that leads to salvation without having heard the word of revelation.

The vision of a World Church and the optimism of salvation which points to it also led Rahner to broaden considerably his understanding of the sacramental nature of the Church, proved by his statement that the Church is the sacrament of a salvation already at work in the world. The breadth of vision expressed by the Council’s optimism of salvation and its implications for a World Church also led Rahner to develop his insight on the salvific value of non-Christian religions causing him to make explicit what was merely stated implicitly in the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions; namely, that these religions are salvific for their members, as well as in themselves, since Jesus Christ dwells in them by his grace and by his Spirit. The optimism of salvation within the unfolding vision of a World Church also led Rahner to broaden considerably his understanding of the missionary task of the Church. He moved from regarding the Church’s missionary zeal as directed primarily to individuals, to seeing it as fundamentally oriented to the
salvation of whole nations and peoples. I believe that each of these developments in Rahner's theology can be traced to his growing consciousness of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church. In fact, I think it is doubtful whether Rahner's theology would have developed in the way it did, in this regard, without Vatican II and its vision of a World Church.

3. The Local Church

The teaching of Vatican II on the local church, its endorsement of the use of the vernacular in the Church's liturgy and of the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity, and the relationship of each to the emergence of a World Church provided the wide context which allowed Rahner to develop his theology of the local church, his understanding of the meaning and application of the collegial-synodal principle in the Church and his theology of worship and of ministry. As pointed out, many of the Council's teachings in these areas were already present in Rahner's earlier theology. With the awareness of Vatican II as the beginning of a World Church, however, Rahner's insights on these topics deepened and expanded as he pondered their relationship to the unfolding vision of a World Church. For example, the Council's renewed theology of the local church enabled Rahner to place his earlier insights on the diaspora condition of the Christian and of the Church in a broader perspective given the fact that this situation is a direct result of the inability of a World Church to rely any longer on a homogeneous Christian society. Similarly, in the movement towards a decentralized Church, Rahner recognized the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. He found support in Vatican II's theology of the local Church for his belief that the Church is, in fact, better represented by such small, poor, struggling local communities than by a triumphalist Church whose image is far from being that of the crucified Christ. Through a development of his theology of the cross and of the Church, Rahner was able to assert that the poverty and lowliness of the local church provide a model of what the World Church should always be if it is to be faithful to the mystery it celebrates and to the spirit of Vatican II.

Rahner's theology of the Mass and of the sacraments also developed and expanded
with his growing understanding of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church. From seeing only a spiritual movement from the Mass and the sacraments outward towards the world, he moved to an appreciation of how the grand liturgy of the world is brought into reflex awareness in the Church’s liturgy. At the same time, only after Vatican II and his awareness of this Council as the emergence of a World Church do we find in Rahner such insistence on the need for a variety of liturgies, or for different ways of celebrating the Eucharist and the sacraments, and also arguments in favour of developing different formulas of Christian faith which reflect the genius and culture of different peoples.

The development of autonomous regional churches flowed naturally for Rahner from the variety of liturgies in a World Church. Once again, without Vatican II and the vision of a World Church it is doubtful, it seems to me, whether Rahner would have striven as hard as he did to answer the question as to the precise relationship between the pope and the bishops. He obviously saw that such a clarification of roles would be essential to the successful emergence of a World Church. The development of Rahner’s theology of the episcopacy is clearly related to the need he foresaw for bishops to make decisions on their own authority and out of concern for the whole Church without having to wait for directives from Rome in every case. Similarly, the importance Rahner placed on the practical application of the collegial-synodal principle in the Church as it finds expression in bishops’ conferences, synods etc. is a direct consequence of his conviction that, in a World Church, the bishops share with the pope the supreme decision-making authority in the Church.

Similarly, Rahner’s theology of the priesthood, of the diaconate, of the laity and of religious life developed considerably after Vatican II in the light of his growing consciousness of the emergence of a World Church. He saw clearly that the future of a World Church depends on the depth of commitment of each member of the Church and that without a dedicated and resourceful laity the future of such a Church would be jeopardized. He predicted an expanding role for women within the reality of a World Church and encouraged theological debate on the question of women’s ordination so that, in time, the needed change in mentality could take place. With the needs of a World Church in mind, he encouraged religious communities to take up more vigorously the
challenge of renewal and adaptation as well as to make more authentic their witness to the life of the evangelical counsels. Once again, each of these developments in Rahner's theology point to his growing appreciation of this Council as the emergence of a World Church.

4. The Ecumenical Change of Mind

Even before Vatican II Rahner was wholeheartedly committed to ecumenism, to reconciling disparities between authentic Catholic teaching and Protestant belief and to show wherever possible that these views were more convergent than divergent. After Vatican II, however, and with his growing consciousness of this Council as the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church, he redoubled his efforts at trying to remove any outstanding obstacles on the Catholic side that would make a full, visible unity of the Church difficult for Protestant Christians. The openness of Vatican II with respect to the plurality of rites existing within the Roman Catholic Church, and the privileges accorded these rites, inspired Rahner to look for a parallel between this tolerance of theological expression within the Roman Catholic Church and that which ought to exist in the event of a full restoration of unity of the Church. His unfolding vision of a World Church also led him to insist that only a united Christendom could successfully meet the challenge of proclaiming the gospel in the face of today's persistent and militant atheism. The vision of a World Church led Rahner to utilize to the full the conciliar notion of a "hierarchy of truths" (UR no. 11) by showing how there exists not only an objective hierarchy but a subjective one as well in which persons, groups and even churches may legitimately differ from one another according to how each perceives the closeness of these truths to the core of faith. Also, in the light of his growing understanding of Vatican II as the emergence of a World Church, Rahner redoubled his efforts to show that a doctrinal unity among the Christian churches was possible and to clear the way for such a unity. His theology of ecumenical discussion also broadened, illustrated by his proposal that an "indirect ecumenical theology" ought to be pursued given the pluralistic situation of a World Church and the concomitant impossibility of discussing ecumenical matters in isolation from other disciplines. At the same time, he
also began to broaden the scope of his own ecumenical inquiry, taking on the most formidable theological obstacles to full restoration of unity, i.e. those having to do with the sacraments, ministry, exercise of the Roman primacy. As his consciousness of the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church deepened, so did Rahner’s growing conviction that a full visible unity of the Church is possible if Church leaders are prepared to take the necessary steps.

5. The Church’s Relationship to the World

With its initiation of a World Church, Vatican II opened again, in a new and more vital way, the question of the relationship of the Church to the world. In the Church’s movement towards a more open, more positive and less defensive attitude towards the world, Rahner recognized the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church. Thereupon, he found scope and a broader framework in which to develop his pastoral theology as well as his theology of grace, of freedom, of hope, of justice. He saw that with Vatican II the Church’s relationship with the world had entered a new stage, one built on an acceptance of the graced reality of the world. No doubt he looked upon this new development as a recognition of the conclusions of his theology of grace and as an affirmation of his Ignatian mysticism of joy in the world and of service to it through the cross. Hence, he had no difficulty concluding the following: that the world has a future apart from the Church’s and a right to move towards that future; that the Church cannot and must not attempt to subsume the world into itself; that, on the contrary, the Church ought to respect the world, leave it free to pursue its inherent “worldliness,” enter into dialogue with the world and live in creative tension with the world. I believe that, on the whole, it is safe to say that after Vatican II, Rahner’s theology turned increasingly towards the world and its history, shown by his growing insistence on the need for openness and dialogue with the world and on the Church’s responsibility for peace and justice. His practical theology was geared to meeting the changing needs and circumstances of a World Church and in preparing the Church’s ministers to respond to this challenge.

Rahner’s theology of hope began to take on a more sober realism when confronted with the realization that society and the Church are living through a "wintry season," a
situation which is the direct result of the failure of the Church to let go of its predominantly European identity and become a World Church. His growing conviction that Vatican II marked the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church also moved Rahner to lay down the foundations for a theology of atheism. In answer to the problem of a persistent and militant atheism, Rahner was not content to offer superficial solutions, but instead drew deeply from his theology of mystery in order to address the underlying causes which give rise to this phenomenon. Without Vatican II and its initiation of a World Church it is doubtful whether Rahner would have insisted as vehemently as he did on a response from the Church on this question.

Reflecting on Vatican II and the World Church, Rahner developed his theology of conscience sensing, no doubt, how important personal responsibility would become in a World Church in which church authorities would no longer be able to supply a ready-made answer to the complex moral dilemmas facing Christians today. Likewise, after Vatican II, with its strong emphasis on the Third World and the responsibility of a World Church in its regard, Rahner developed further his theology of revolution, of peace and non-violence. He stressed more vigorously the importance of the Church’s witness to gospel poverty, and of the responsibility of each Christian to do something concrete to aid the Third World. With his growing consciousness of the World Church and its global responsibility for the poor and oppressed, Rahner was prepared to move beyond Vatican II by insisting on the abolition of all nuclear weapons. Although he concurred with the Council that the use of force is permitted and sometimes even required (revolution), his growing conviction was that people ought to draw on the power that is theirs to effect societal change by means of non-violent resistance and protest. It was on account of his growing conviction of the Council as paving the way for the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church that Rahner envisioned a new relationship between the grassroots and the official ministry, one that would serve as a model for secular society. In all these ways Vatican II with its vision of a World Church served as a catalyst for Rahner’s theology thereby allowing it to expand to its full potential.
6. The Theology of the Council

With his growing awareness of the World Church, Rahner became increasingly convinced that the theology of the Church would need to become less and less rooted in European western culture and more and more transformed into a "world" theology suitable for a World Church. Even before Vatican II, Rahner sought to counteract the negative effects of a predominantly neo-scholastic theology by insisting that theology cannot be confined to the old theses, as valid and as important as these may be. He saw clearly that the theology of the Roman Congregations would never be adequate to meet the complex needs of a World Church. As his vision of Vatican II and the World Church began to take shape, he could see the rise of a South American liberation theology, an African theology, and Indian theology and an Asian theology. It was his vision of a World Church which led Rahner to conclude that the theology of the West would still have an important function but only if it succeeded in becoming a "missionary" theology: "by that he meant a theology open to the world, using the language of the culture, and working to achieve a unity of dogmatic and fundamental theology. He saw clearly that in a World Church, theology would take on the same characteristics of the diaspora situation of a World Church; that is, that it would become a pluralistic theology rather than a single, homogeneous theology for the entire Church.

As he came to see Vatican II as the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church, he insisted more strongly on the need for structural change in the Church, particularly with respect to the exercise of the petrine ministry. It was this expanding consciousness which also led him to insist more vehemently that the Church is an "open system" as opposed to a "closed one," a Church from below rather than being merely a hierarchical society. He became increasingly convinced after Vatican II and his own experience of being present at the Council that Europe and Rome are no longer at the center of the Church and that churches outside Europe need to be really independent and culturally rooted in their own countries. He had always insisted that the world has the right to plan its own future, but after Vatican II and his growing understanding of this Council as the emergence of a World Church he extended this idea to the World Church by proposing that it begin to plan its own future by adopting a global pastoral strategy.
At the same time, Rahner’s vision of a World Church led him to a deeper development of his spiritual theology because of his sense that the most urgent need of Christians today is for a profoundly personal experience of the incomprehensible mystery of God in Jesus Christ, and for support for this faith within a community of believers. By insisting on the interrelationship and interdependence between spirituality and theology, Rahner pointed to the integration that is necessary for those who would witness to Jesus Christ in the midst of today’s fragmentation.

Having explored the significance of the concept of World Church for Rahner’s theology, we turn now to a consideration of the challenge his vision of a World Church holds for the future of the Church and for Christianity as a whole.

C. A World Church--The Challenge of the Next Millennium

As mentioned in the introduction, a dissertation on this topic is very timely given the preparations underway throughout the whole Church and all of Christendom for the celebration of the Jubilee marking the coming of the third millennium. This is so, in the sense that the six major themes Rahner identified in the conciliar documents which indicate the movement towards a new global consciousness in the Roman Catholic Church also set the agenda for the coming millennium. I believe Rahner would agree that the challenge facing the Roman Catholic Church in the next millennium is to become the World Church it began to be at Vatican II.

As also noted in the introduction, the dissertation is forward looking, taking its momentum from Rahner’s theology which was always directed towards the future of the Church--the causa finalis of Vatican II. Keeping in mind that the future of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church is also tied to the future of Christendom as a whole and to its unity, let us look briefly at the post-conciliar Church through the lens of Rahner’s vision of a World Church and ask on the eve of the new millennium the same

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question he asked after Vatican II: What has been achieved and what more has still to be accomplished? The format here, for the most part, will be the same as his on that occasion, that of merely raising questions and leaving the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

The emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church at Vatican II takes place within the larger paradigm shift underway in the world in which a global spiritual transformation is slowly taking place. The evolution in which humanity is caught up is a spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in which human persons are sensing more profoundly and personally their deep interconnectedness with each other and with the universe. This new consciousness finds expression in a new understanding of community, of feminism, of ecology and of ecological feminism, all of which contribute to the unfinished agenda of Vatican II. The question is: Will the Roman Catholic Church and Christianity as a whole seize the kairos of this moment and that of the coming millennium in order to become a World Church so as to make real the new sense of unity in variety, of interconnectedness taking place within human consciousness and so further the spiritual transformation taking place in the world?

Chapter I: "A Council of the World Church," demonstrated clearly that a World Church is a culturally, liturgically, theologically diverse Church; one that is appropriately independent in its local expression and whose diversity is acknowledged, cherished and celebrated as at Vatican II. Is this the type of Church the Roman Catholic Church is moving towards as it enters the third millennium? Or, does it still appear as a European-westernized church with exports around the world? Does the Church have as yet a world episcopacy which acts as such, and do the Roman Curia and the Roman Congregation, in their make-up and procedures reflect the multi-cultural dimension of a World Church? What of the three outstanding tasks Rahner predicted for the Church of the future? Does the Church have as yet a plurality of proclamations of the one Christian faith? Has there

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6The three tasks were: 1. the need to develop a plurality of proclamations of the Christian faith within the unity of one faith; 2. the need for an exercise of the petrine ministry which is more in keeping with the needs of a World Church; 3. the need to develop autonomous regional churches.
emerged a new form for the exercise of the petrine ministry or is this ministry still being carried out in the style of a Western Patriarch? Is pluralism in liturgy marked by a comparable pluralism in canon law and church practice? Does the Church have a world episcopacy which acts as such and do the Roman Curia and the Roman Congregations, in their make-up and procedures, reflect this multi-cultural dimension of a World Church? Finally, did something like a "qualitative leap" take place at Vatican II and does the image which the Church projects today verify that indeed such is the case?

Chapter II: "The Optimism of Universal Salvation," implied that the salvation-optimism of Vatican II extends beyond human persons and their personal histories to embrace all of creation (Rom.8). Christians in a World Church, therefore, have a responsibility to hold the world and all that is in it with the same optimism of the triune God. In view of the paradigm shift taking place today, there can be a new appreciation of the "mediatorship," interrelationship, interconnectedness and interdependence of human persons and indeed of all creation in the work of salvation. On the eve of the new millennium one might ask: Where is the Church’s salvation-optimism since Vatican II? Has it deepened and expanded with the renewed understanding of the interconnectedness of the universe?

The Roman Catholic Church as a World Church is also a pilgrim Church, a sinful Church made up of sinners. As such, the Church has always to renew itself, and can never again return to being a triumphalist Church. It has been recognized that if the coming celebration of Jubilee is cultivated without recognition of the need for repentance and renewal, the festivities may take on a triumphalist tone that could embarrass Christians and repel adherents of other faiths. That is why the preparations for the celebration of the third millennium have called for penance, for a collective examination of conscience regarding the mistakes and sins of the past. The efforts of the Church in the recent decade to make real its repentance with regard to anti-Semitism, racism, gender bias and disunity have been noteworthy since Vatican II but have these gone far enough in the eyes of the victims?

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7Dulles, "Preparing for the Third Millennium: The Church’s Plan."
With regard to the local church, in the over thirty years since the close of Vatican II, and as the third millennium approaches, it would be well to ask where the Roman Catholic Church is with regard to the development of a variety of liturgies and of autonomous regional churches, as well as to how the members of the Church are responding and being aided to respond to the universal call to holiness and to service in the Church. With regard to the liturgy one might ask the following: Are there local liturgies that really reflect the culture and the "hierarchy of truths" of each culture and people? Is there a pluralism with respect to canon law and ecclesiastical praxis in the local churches? Has the Roman Catholic Church come to see and recognize the essential differences of other cultures or has it seen fit to remain a western church? Has there taken place a true inculturation of Christianity, theologically, culturally, liturgically? Is there a plurality of proclamations of the one message of Christianity? Are there various "Short Formulas" of Christian faith or are the old formulas still the only ones being used?

Similarly, with regard to the development of autonomous regional churches, one might ask the following questions: Is there still a certain type of Roman centralism that tends to impose itself on the whole Church? Do the bishops still consider themselves the pope’s delegates and act as such, or do they realize their own responsibility to rule their own flock in Christ’s name and out of concern for the whole Church? Does the institutional Church still think that everything depends on it alone and that it is in automatic and sole possession of the Spirit? Does the Church "presuppose" "encourage" and "respond to" the charismatic element in the Church"? Have the Synod of bishops and the episcopal conference become institutions to further the expression and operation of the principles of collegiality in the Church? How today does the college of bishops, with and under the pope, reflect the distinctive qualities of a World Church, that is, its unity in diversity? Has the Roman Curia been effectively reorganized, internationalized and modernized since Vatican II? Has there been any change in the formation and function of the College of Cardinals since the Second Vatican Council?

Similarly, with regard to the universal call to holiness and to service in the Church one might inquire as to the following: Is the Church since Vatican II made up of more deeply and actively committed members? Is the relationship between clergy and laity one
based on mutual respect, equality, shared responsibility and decision-making? Do the members of the Church really know and support each other at the grass-roots? Do the laity have an increasing conviction that they are the Church and are they allowed to act accordingly? Have women been given equal status and equal opportunity in the Church with men? Where is the discussion of women's ordination in the Church since Vatican II; that is, if indeed it has been allowed to take place at all? Is there still a two-tiered notion of Church membership operative in the Church? Are there still power struggles between groups? Have the rights of the laity been given juridical status in the Church? What changes, if any, have been made with respect to clerical celibacy in areas where there is a shortage of priests? Is the priesthood, the diaconate, religious life taking on new forms? Where is the process of democratization at in the Church since Vatican II? Has there been any movement to ordain pastoral assistants in the Church? Are "basic communities" springing up and flourishing? Is the spiritual life of the members of the Church deepening and becoming more integrated? In terms of the spiritual transformation taking place throughout the universe "small" is "beautiful, the microcosm is just as important as the macrocosm and there is a deepening sense that the whole is indeed present in each of its parts and the parts in the whole. A World Church that truly respects and appreciates the local church is a support for this movement taking place in the world.

In Chapter IV: "The Ecumenical Change of Mind," the expectation was that the Roman Catholic Church as a World Church would move towards an effective and visible unity of the Church in the near future. Consequently, one might ask: Is Christianity moving towards unity or away from it? And what does this movement have to contribute to the growing unity of the world and of the human race and indeed all of creation? There is a growing tension in Rahner, it seems to me, between his wanting to confine his understanding of World Church to the Roman Catholic Church and his desire to have this concept embrace a globalized Christianity. In no theme is this tension more evident than in the discussion of the ecumenical change of mind in which he argues that if the Roman Catholic Church fails in its mission to achieve a real and effective restoration of full unity of the Church and makes the necessary concessions to effect such a unity, it cannot become a World Church.
As the new millennium approaches, it seems appropriate that the Roman Catholic Church interrogate itself on its fidelity to the mandate of Jesus Christ (Jn 17:21). As Dulles has observed, at the celebration of the Great Jubilee of the year 2,000, it would be a scandal if the different Christian communities were unable to come together with a greater show of unity than they have displayed in recent centuries. According to John Paul II, the movement promoting Christian unity is not just some sort of appendix which is added to the traditional activity of the Church:

Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of the Church's life and work, and consequently, must pervade all that the Church is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature.  

Both Rahner and John Paul II agree that it is not enough to talk in abstract terms about full unity of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church as a World Church must be prepared to talk about specifics and about the conversion it is prepared to undergo for the sake of restoration of full unity of the Church. Both also are in agreement that time is of the essence. A World Church cannot put off a restoration of full unity of the Church if the Church is really serious about carrying out the will of Christ and the mandate of Vatican II.

With regard to the Church's relationship to the world, one might gauge the movement of the Roman Catholic Church towards becoming a World Church by a positive response to the following questions: Has the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church been increasingly one of openness and dialogue or has a "nervous," "defensive" mentality caused the Church to back away from the world and retreat to the "ghetto"? Has the World Church become a strong voice for the rights of the poor and oppressed and a staunch upholder of human dignity and freedom? Is there as yet an encyclical on

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9Pope John Paul II, Ut Unum Sunt: On Commitment to Ecumenism," nos.20, 3; cf., idem, "As the Third Millennium Draws Near," 406f., #16, and p. 410, #34.
atheism? Is the teaching office of the Church less inclined to issue moral imperatives for
the whole Church and more content to give general directives while leaving specifics up
to bishops and bishops' conferences and to the consciences of sincere Catholics? Is the
Church as a World Church continuing to address the world in the tone of pastoral concern
and exhortation exemplified at Vatican II? Has the Church's stand on the possession and
use of nuclear weapons become more unequivocal and so more credible in the face of
world hunger and poverty?

In Chapter VI: "The Theology of the Council," the implication was that the
Council's transitional theology would yield in time to a World theology suitable for a
World Church. Consequently, one might ask: Has the Roman Catholic Church as a
World Church welcomed the development of a variety of theologies? Is theological
development, inquiry and study growing throughout the Church and are such efforts
encouraged by the hierarchy? With regard to structural change in the Church, is the
Petrine ministry being exercised differently since Vatican II and is it seen to be a force for
unity in the world? Does the Church have as yet a global pastoral strategy and is it
working?

Indeed, many signs are present of the World Church which began to be at Vatican
II. The Church, as a whole, however, is still far from realizing the vision of a World
Church Rahner came to associate with Vatican II. This dissertation is offered in the hope
that a better understanding of Rahner's basic theological interpretation of the Second
Vatican Council as the emergence of a World Church will lead to a full flowering of these
seeds planted by the Council and to a deeper appreciation of the role of Rahner's theology
in making this vision a reality.
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Explanatory Note Regarding the Bibliographical Listing of the Primary Sources

Since chronology is so important to the argument of the dissertation, the primary works of Karl Rahner will be listed chronologically according to the German date of publication.

The primary Sources will be listed under two categories: reference works, and chronological listing of books, essays and articles.

1. Bibliographical Aids

These include all bibliographies of Rahner’s works, including references to secondary sources, consulted during the writing of the dissertation.

2. Reference Works

These include all large reference works written, co-written or edited by Rahner as well as some major multi-volume works.

3. Chronological Listing of Books, Articles, Essays

This section, by far the largest, includes all the works of Rahner consulted and/or made reference to in the dissertation. For the Rahner works written between 1924-1974, the Verzeichnis number will be from the Bleistein and Klinger Bibliographie Karl Rahner. For the Rahner works written between 1974-1979, the Verzeichnis number will be taken from the Imhof and Treziak bibliography found in Wagnis Theologie Karl Rahners. For the works written between 1979-1984 (year of Rahner’s death), the Verzeichnis number will correspond to the bibliography complied by Paul Imhof and Elisabeth Meuser and
reprinted in Glaube im Prozess: Christsein nach dem II. Vatikanum.

The German title will appear in the bibliography only if the work has not been translated into English or if I have quoted from the German original in the course of the dissertation.

The books, essays, and articles in this section will be arranged chronologically according to the German date of publication corresponding to the Verzeichnis number that appears to the right of each entry. Where no Verzeichnis number has been assigned to an entry anywhere in the bibliographies consulted, the adjacent bracket will be left empty. The entry will be listed, however, under the correct date of German publication.

In order to assist the reader to follow the chronological development of the dissertation more easily, the original date of the German publication will always be listed in brackets beside each first citation footnote entry of a primary source. This excludes items from reference works. Even though English references predominate in this dissertation there has always been recourse to the German original.

There will be one classification of listing for secondary sources to include books, reviews, studies pertinent to the dissertation, and articles.

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