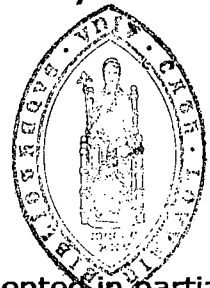


UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN
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AUTHORITY AS SERVICE

With Particular Reference to the Ministerial Authority of the
Bishop in His Particular Church
(Vol. I)



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fulfilment of the requirements for
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by

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Abbreviations

AA	Decree, <i>Apostolicam actuositatem</i> (Vatican II).
AAS	<i>Acta apostolicae sedis</i> .
AGD	Decree, <i>Ad gentes divinitus</i> (Vatican II).
ARCIC	Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.
BEM	'Faith and Order' Commission, <i>Baptism Eucharist and Ministry</i> , Geneva, World Council Churches.
CBCN	Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria
CCSL	<i>Corpus christianorum series Latina</i> , Tournai.
CD	Decree, <i>Christus Dominus</i> (Vatican II).
DC	<i>La documentation catholique</i> , Paris.
DH	Decree, <i>Dignitatis humanae</i> (Vatican II).
DMC	<i>Discorsi Messaggi Colloqui del S. Padre Giovanni XXIII</i> , 6 vols, Città del Vaticano, 1960-67.
DV	Constitution, <i>Dei verbum</i> (Vatican II).
GS	Constitution, <i>Gaudium et spes</i> (Vatican II).
LG	Constitution, <i>Lumen Gentium</i> (Vatican II).
Lima M	'Faith and Order' Commission, <i>Ministry</i> , in ID., <i>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry</i> , Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1982.
ME	Groupe des Dombes, <i>Le ministère épiscopal</i> .
NRT	<i>Nouvelle revue théologique</i> .
OT	Decree, <i>Optatam totius</i> (Vatican II).
PL	Patrologia Latina, éd. J.-P. Migne, Paris.
PO	Decree, <i>Presbyterorum ordinis</i> (Vatican II).
PRM	Groupe des Dombes, <i>Pour une réconciliation des ministres</i> .
RSPT	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RTL	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
SC	Constitution, <i>Sacrosanctum concilium</i> (Vatican II).
T	Tome
UR	Decree, <i>Unitatis redintegratio</i> (Vatican II).
WCC	World Council of Churches.

General Introduction

1. The Aim

In this work, we intend to study the nature, signification and use of authority in the Catholic Church. It is a work in fundamental ecclesiology. We shall defend the view that authority can be properly understood or defined only within the concept of service which constitutes its essence and meaning. This is true not only for the life of the Church but also for the life of every other society or community. Every society or community needs the existence of authority because of the indispensable service to be rendered in view of the attainment of its end or finality. The understanding of authority as service becomes more pronounced when we come to the ecclesial context due to the fact that the whole Church is ministerial. Here authority finds itself as a reality within the domain of Christian existence which is a life of mutual service.

Thus, writes Yves Congar: *“Le secret de la conception néo-testamentaire de l'autorité (comme service) consiste, croyons-nous, en ceci : l'autorité n'est pas posée d'abord et comme la première donnée ; elle existe comme un ordre institué, soit par le Christ, soit par les Apôtres, soit par l'Eglise, à l'intérieur du domaine de l'existence chrétienne, laquelle est la donnée première, et qui est essentiellement service”*¹. The implication is that authority in the Church is to be considered not only as something which is to be lived in the spirit of service. It is also intrinsically service because it is to be lived as imitation of Jesus Christ who chose only service as the expression of his authority. For as the Scripture says: “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mtt. 20, 28).

¹ Y. CONGAR, *Le développement historique de l'autorité dans l'Eglise. Éléments pour la réflexion chrétienne*, in *Problèmes de l'autorité* (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 38). Ed. J. M. TODD, Paris, Cerf, 1962, p. 148.

In studying the question of authority as service, we shall pay particular attention to the ministerial authority of the bishop in his particular Church while leaving as subject of another work the full treatment of the role of the bishop in the universal Church or communion of Churches, a role which is equally related to his role in his particular Church. We shall be concerned primarily with how ministerial authority is to be understood and exercised in the Church. Although, what we shall discover about the nature of authority in the Church in this work shall apply in a special way to the bishop, it will be, nevertheless, essentially true of the other levels of the hierarchy, namely, the pope, priests and deacons.

We shall endeavour in this work to show that authority in the Church is essentially moral. In this primary sense, authority does not aim at any other goal than to serve as a help to the work of salvation which God does through the mission of the Church². Our aim will be to establish that any other understanding of authority which neglects this limit, is illegitimate in the Church. Authority has also juridical dimension. This sense of authority is of secondary importance in the Church. This is because juridical authority exists as a support and help for a better realization of the moral goals of authority. It is to express and serve the reality of God's grace and love operative in the Church. Our work will be properly conscious of the distinction and relation between moral authority and juridical notion of authority in the Church³.

² The Church is essentially missionary as it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. *AG*, n° 2). It is sent into the world to teach, sanctify and to love. This mission is accompanied with a participation in the authority of the risen Lord (cf. *Mtt* 28, 18-20).

³ Moral authority is authority derived from service of love or from witness of the Gospel. It is an authority which is founded not on the basis of a law but on the basis of the truth that it communicates and the credibility that it embodies. It operates by appealing to human conscience and thus, it respects human responsibility. Juridical authority is an authority socially recognised and properly constituted for specific responsibility in a community. It imposes itself by force of law or tradition. In the Catholic Church, it is the ordained ministers who are the direct subjects of this kind of authority through the sacrament of Orders and ecclesiastical appointment. Juridical authority is, however, subordinate and dependent on moral dimension of authority in the Church which it has to express. It is also service and must be understood as such in the Church. To the extent that the Church is able to live this equilibrium will determine her fidelity to the form of authority which, as we shall see, Christ recommended to his followers.

2. Statement of the Problem

1°) In spite of the fact that it is often ambiguous, authority is an important and constructive reality in human society. This is evident in the fact that when there is a deficiency in its exercise in families, schools, Churches and civil societies, there is the risk of disintegration and chaos. When authority is exercised excessively in terms of exercise of power, individual persons lose their liberty and their dignity. Therefore, the way authority is conceived and exercised in a given society determines the respect that is accorded to the dignity of human existence and the cohesion of social life⁴. All this show the importance of the subject of our thesis.

On the other hand, authority has an added importance in the Church because it belongs to the divine constitution of the Church and shares the mysterious reality of the Church. Its acceptance is thus, a constitutive part of the faith of the community in the Catholic tradition. By this I mean that no one can be taken seriously to be a Catholic unless he also accepts the authority divinely entrusted to the college of bishops to define doctrinal matters as belonging to the deposit of the faith of the community, and to shepherd and direct the Church. Catholics believe that when the college of bishops or the pope acting *ex cathedra* come to a decision on a matter of faith or morals, that such decision is therefore endowed with infallibility promised to the Church in the apostolic body or in the person of the apostle Peter. In the history of the Church only two such doctrinal decisions or definitions can be attributed to the bishop of Rome, namely, the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854) by Pius IX and the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1950) by Pius XII. The other dogmatic definitions in the Church are the work of Ecumenical Councils.

However, the big problem is that today in the modern world, authority is under crisis. It is hotly contested. The modern man is marked by the attitude of suspicion and aversion towards all traditional forms of authority. In the family, parental

⁴ Cf. A. DENAUX, *L'autorité dans l'Eglise : une défi pour les anglicans et les catholiques romains*, in *Irénikon*, 1 (2002), p.10.

authority is faced with rejection. In the civil society, state authority is only tolerated as a necessary 'evil'. The matter is not better for the Church. Today many people no longer accept the authority of the Church in matters of faith. There are today so many defections from the Catholic faith in the western world as many Christians now claim the liberty to live the faith according to their personal dictates and decisions irrespective of the teachings of the Church. Therefore, we can see, as J. Stagaman says, that "the crisis of religious authority is part of a much larger crisis in Western industrialized society"⁵. The root cause of the modern disregard of all traditional authority in the West is no doubt the influence of the culture of *Enlightenment* marked by the primacy of individual liberty and the insistence on personal spontaneity and affectivity. In reaction against a world that has become very rational, organised and impersonal, the modern man claims the right to live these values in all spheres of human society including the religious domain. In this regard, the main recourse to action is through individual decision. As a result, regulations or rules of conduct imposed from outside as embodied in hierarchies, traditions and institutions are distrusted or sometimes even rejected as affront to individual liberty and autonomy.

From the above perspective, the problem that faces us is: In the midst of the modern suspicion and disputation of authority, how is authority to be represented and lived in the Church in such a way that it can be accepted as a gift of God for the service of salvation rather than as an affront on personal liberty? Apart from the problem posed to authority in the Church due to the sense of modern understanding of freedom, there is also the problem of the possibility of abuse of authority which poses a theological problem. Those who exercise religious authority legitimate this authority by appeal to the will of God. They pretend to speak in the name of God. They also pretend to formulate divine truths, thus imposing a way of living on the faithful. But when religious authorities pretend to have the truth, how does one be sure that they speak in the name of God? How does

⁵ D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1999, p. 5.

one be sure that they are not trying to impose their own will or their proper truths and rules of conduct? The difficulties involved in responding to these questions help us to understand why the modern man has become critical towards authorities⁶. Thus, says A. Denaux : “*L’obeissance à l’autorité, - autorités religieuses incluses, - n’est plus aussi évidente qu’elle ne l’a été par le passé, étant donné cette possibilité d’abus de pouvoir*” ⁷. It is here that our interest on authority understood and exercised as service is of paramount importance in this thesis, for a servant authority is the only sure way to avoid the abuse of authority.

2°) Furthermore, we can distinguish between authority in the Church and authority of the Church. By authority in the Church we mean the way the Church lives authority *ad intra*. This refers to the internal functioning of the ecclesial organs that express authority in communion with the People of God. At the universal level is the college of bishops and the bishop of Rome. Here we also have the Synods and Ecumenical Councils as expressions of collegial authority. The Roman Curia is an organ of papal authority. At the level of the particular Church we have the diocesan bishop. The Pastoral Council, Diocesan Synod, Episcopal Council, and Presbyteral Council are some of the synodal organs of authority in the particular Church. The Parish priest and the Parish Council are also important organs of authority in the diocese.

The way the Church lives authority *ad intra* as visible in the above structures of the Church, influences the authority or credibility which the Church has *ad extra*. By authority of the Church *ad extra*, we mean the authority which the Church has in the world outside of it. Here we have to mention the world of politics, other religions, science, etc. The manner in which authority is exercised in Christian communities is a constitutive part of the witness and message of the Church to the world. If the Church is open to the modern world, it will integrate into its internal experience of authority the best of values present in the way authority is exercised

⁶Cf. A. DENAUX, *L’autorité dans l’Eglise*, p. 10.

⁷*Ibid.*

in the contemporary cultures. In this way, this effort to integrate the best of values of the contemporary experiences of authority will constitute a part of its witness as a Church open to the world of its times. The problem here is therefore: How is authority to be lived *ad intra* in a Church which wishes to be open to the world of its times in such a way that it will become a credible testimony of its message so that the world might believe?

3°) The movement for the unity of the Church is a notable feature of the contemporary Christian spirit. For some time now this movement has been sweeping the Churches eventuating in many important multilateral and bilateral dialogue statements. Many of these dialogues attach a considerable importance to the question of authority in the Church. This is not surprising because one of the roots of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, was the way the Roman Catholic Church exercised authority institutionally at that epoch, a practice which was marked by centralization, frequent insensibility to the pastoral dimension and tendency of the high clergy to adopt the profane modalities of exercise of authority as against Christ's call for authority without domination in the Christian society. The study of the issue of authority in the Church will, therefore, not be complete without considering the ecumenical dimension of it. Here one of the questions that must be confronted is: How should authority be exercised as service in the Church in such a way that it will facilitate and favour the unity of the Church?

4°) Authority present in the Christian communities (which is a participation in the authority of Christ) is not exhausted in the hierarchical offices of the Church or in episcopacy. It is also manifested in other ways such as Scripture, Tradition, liturgy, doctrines of the Church, consensus of theologians, charisms and *sensus fidelium*. In the Roman Catholic Church today, the frequent source of crisis in authority in the Church since the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968) is the relation between hierarchical authority and *sensus fidelium*. By *sensus fidelium* we mean that collective wisdom of the people of God which stems from living the gospel as faithful members of the Christian community. This wisdom was widely consulted

and taken into account by the papacy before the definition of the Marian dogmas⁸. But many argue that it was ignored in promulgation of *Humanae Vitae* by pope Paul VI. The relation between hierarchical authority and *sensus fidelium* has since then been a subject of debate and controversy. The problem can therefore be stated: How is authority to be lived and understood in the Church in such a way that there will be a creative harmony and balance between hierarchical understanding of authority and the *sensus fidelium* of the People of God? In other words, what value is to be accorded to the insights of the faithful in the face of certain statements or attitudes of those with ministerial authority in the Church?⁹

5°) Authority can also be treated within the context of a particular local community. This affords us a living context so as to evaluate how authority has been understood and lived within that background community. In this process, we can point out anomalies or inconsistencies with Christ's example of authority as service and ecclesiological self-understanding of the Church as a way to future reconstruction. The Nigerian Church is just an example of such local community. It is a Church which is known not only for its service but also for its over stress on hierarchical authority to the detriment of the authority of the People of God. The problem which shall preoccupy us then is: How is authority to be understood and lived as service within the context of the Nigerian Church in such a way that it conforms to the evangelical model of authority without domination and to the vision of Vatican II of the ecclesiology of the People of God? How is authority to be exercised in such a way that one takes into consideration the best of values in the traditional cultural experience of the people?

3. State of the Question, Inspiration and Motivation

The subject of authority in the Church is a beneficiary of an extensive and abundant literature and materials. Many important theologians have at one time or the other devoted some reflection to this subject. There is no surprise in this as the

⁸Cf. J.-M.R. TILLARD, *Sensus fidelium*, in *One in Christ*, XI/1 (1975), p. 2-29, see especially p. 2-11.

⁹Cf. *ibid.*

question of authority is important in ecclesiology. The understanding of authority is always a key determining factor of the direction and shape of ecclesiology. For instance, an authoritarian understanding of authority in the Church invariably leads to a juridical and institutional ecclesiology, while the understanding of authority as service leads to the ecclesiology of the People of God. Thus, the question of authority in the Church is of considerable theological interest. There is also a considerable ecumenical interest on the question of authority in the Church as evident in the number of ecumenical statements on the issue. This is not surprising as the question of authority in the Church was one of the central issues that led to the division of Christendom in the 16th century as we have noted.

Among the contemporary thinkers who have contributed enormously in re-thinking the meaning and place of authority in the Church today, special mention is to be made of Hans Küng and Yves Congar. Küng's major interest is on the charismatic structure of the Church. He is not comfortable with the present 'one sided' christological emphasis of the Catholic Church which, according to him, leads to clericalism and legalism¹⁰. He turns to the study of St. Paul in order to discover the riches and dynamism of the charismatic ecclesiology of his communities as expressed in a special way in his earliest letters, namely, first Corinthians, first and second Thessalonians. Positively, his discoveries helped him to emphasis the moral understanding of authority in the Church¹¹. But because he was partly reacting to the 'one sided' christological emphasis of the Catholic Church, he ended up unfortunately in reducing the structures of the Church to only one structure, the charismatic structure¹².

On the other hand, Congar is renowned for his balanced approach to ecclesiology. His studies on different aspects of the question of authority in the Church is so rich in exegesis, theology and history. He may be regarded as the

¹⁰ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Continuing Charismatic Structure*, in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. R. S. ANDERSON, Edinburgh, T & T. Clark, 1979, p. 476-477.

¹¹ Küng's re-interpretation of the word 'apostle' in the light of Pauline contribution and his interpretation of apostolic succession have moral orientation.

¹² Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, 11th Edition, Kent, Burns & Oates, 1995, p. 394.

Thomas Aquinas of our time in ecclesiology. This present work is also inspired by his great contributions especially as regards what concerns the understanding of authority as service. Furthermore, in 1961 an international symposium held at *Notre-Dame du Bec* shortly before the Second Vatican Council devoted its study to the question of authority in the Church. The result of this Anglo-French symposium was published under the title, *Problèmes de l'autorité*¹³. The subject of authority was treated from the theological, historical, moral and political perspectives. Some of the interesting themes treated include, authority of the Scripture and Tradition, authority of the councils, authority of conscience, authority of the laity. However, this symposium failed to treat the question of authority from the ecumenical perspective, although it had as one of its themes, the Orthodox point of view on the problem of authority in the Church.

In 1966 a well known American Catholic theologian, John McKenzie published a book titled, *Authority in the Church*¹⁴. In the first part of this book, McKenzie dwells with some important New Testament texts which helped him to elaborate a theory of authority in the Church according to the New Testament. The second part of his work was devoted to a number of very penetrating reflections on certain aspects of authority in the Church. McKenzie holds that the idea of authority in the Church is unique and hence cannot be conceived after the likeness of a political entity. He stresses that there has been no development in the theory of authority in the Church to correspond to the political evolution of recent centuries. He is convinced that the theory of authority in the Church today has largely remained what it was since the 16th century. McKenzie does not consider authority from the ecumenical perspective or from the perspective of Vatican II.

In 1996, Meneo A. Afonso came up with a short but an interesting work on authority in the Church with the title, *What is the Nature of Authority in the*

¹³ J. M. TODD (ed.), *Problèmes de l'autorité* (coll. *Unam Sanctam*, 38). Paris, Cerf, 1962.

¹⁴ J. L. MCKENZIE, *Authority in the Church*, New York, Sheed & Ward, 1966.

*Church?*¹⁵ He treated the question of authority in the Church from both the historical and theological perspectives. Afonso holds that authority in the Church is *sui generis*. Thus, its theological articulation has to be based upon and drawn out from the essential reality of the Church. According to him, juridical power in the Church must serve and express the power of God's grace and love in the Church. He did not, however, consider authority from the ecumenical perspective or from the perspective of Vatican II. Furthermore, in 1999 David J. Stagaman, an American Catholic theologian, published his *Authority in the Church*¹⁶. Here he treated the question of Church authority only from the historico-theological point of view while neglecting the ecumenical perspective. There are also many other works published on authority in the Church, but let us stop at mentioning only the above.

From the above mentioned books published on authority in the Church, we have seen that the question of authority was dealt with under certain aspects and not under others. For instance, the ecumenical question of authority in the Church was not posed in most of them. The study of Church authority in the light of Vatican II was also not dealt with by many. This underlines the novelty of our thesis as our research is an attempt to develop the theory of authority in the Church in a comprehensive way and thus from many important angles, notably, the human sciences, New Testament, Vatican II, ecumenism, and the experience of a local Church. Furthermore, I was motivated to embark on my present theme of authority as service by the pastoral need of helping the Nigerian Church with a critical study of an area which is very important but often talked not so much about in the writings of Nigerian theologians.

4. Method

As the subject of this thesis is authority as service, precisely its nature, signification and use in the Church, we shall adopt approaches which will enable us to discover and establish how authority ought to be understood and exercised in the

¹⁵ M. A. AFONSO, *What is the Nature of Authority in the Church?* Lanham, University Press of America, Inc, 1996.

¹⁶ D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, Collegeville / Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1999.

Church. This implies that our project will be based on many methods rather than on one unique method. The first chapter on the concept of authority will be based on sociological and philosophical method. The aim is to understand the general notion of authority in human society in order to be able in subsequent chapters to appreciate its specifically ecclesial character. The second chapter will apply the method of biblical theology. As the study of Sacred Scripture is as the soul of theology, we shall pay special attention to the data of historical revelation as expressed in the New Testament and as they concern particularly the meaning of authority in biblical ecclesiology.

Furthermore, the third, fourth and fifth chapters of this work will be theological in approach. Since our particular concern in this work is the authority of the bishop in his particular Church, we shall dedicate chapter three to the important question of apostolic succession using the method of theological and critical analysis of sources. If in the Catholic Church a particular importance is attached to the office of the bishop, it is because the bishops are considered as the successors of the apostles in their mandate and mission. It is, therefore, important that we also consider and analyse theologically this important doctrine of apostolic succession in order to discern hermeneutically in what precise sense the bishops can be considered as successors of apostles today. In the fourth chapter, we shall appreciate theologically the important evolution in Catholic ecclesiology in Vatican II as regards what concerns the understanding of authority as service in the Church. On the other hand, the understanding of authority in the Church cannot be complete without taking into account the experience and position of non Catholic Churches. Nourished by the same Word of God, it may happen that these Churches have preserved aspects of the common Christian revelation which, due to political and cultural evolution, the Catholic Church has not preserved. It is this interest which will take us into the analysis of ecumenical perspectives on authority as service.

This work will naturally culminate in pastoral concern and method as we shall also consider the question of authority in the Church from a particular contextual

perspective: the Nigerian Church. We hope that the resources and vision we may gain from other chapters on the nature of authority in the Church will place us on a vantage position to undertake a thorough pastoral analysis and evaluation of the actual state of episcopal (hierarchical) authority in the Nigerian Church. Our method in this thesis will also be shaped by the constant need to situate the responsibilities of special representatives of the Church within the context of the ministerial structure of the whole Church.

5. Plan

We have divided our thesis into six chapters.

1°) The first chapter deals with the concept of authority. We shall begin this chapter with an attempt to define the word ‘authority’ within the context of service. We shall then deepen the meaning and signification of the concept of authority by tracing its etymological roots and evolution. Having uncovered the etymological meaning of authority from its Latin origin, we shall next consider and distinguish two general kinds of authority, namely, personal (charismatic) authority and official (functional) authority. We shall also note that despite the distinctions we can make between personal and official authority, both are inherently related as practically speaking every manifestation of the existence of authority in human society often involves these two kinds of authority concomitantly.

Furthermore, we shall present critically J.F. O’Grady’s structures and models of authority¹⁷. This shall enable us to understand authority in its variation of absolute, legislative, learned, and charismatic dimensions. We shall next consider the important distinction and relation between authority and power. We shall discover that although the two words are related, they are not identical. This is because authority concerns only certain aspect of power precisely the moral aspect, hence our definition of authority as legitimate or moral power. On the other hand, we

¹⁷ J. F. O’GRADY, *Authority and Power : Issues for the Contemporary Church*, in *Louvain Studies*, 10/2 (1984), p. 122 -140 .

shall also critically assess Max Weber's concept of 'authority' as power and domination. Following his sociological analysis, we shall underscore that although Weber's theory does not help us to understand the true meaning of authority, it however, enables us to understand what can become of authority when it ceases to promote human freedom and responsibility. This consideration will lead us to the examination of the limits of authority and the question of authority as service. Furthermore, we shall also adopt a philosophical approach by studying critically the critique levelled against authority in its historical and traditional understandings and forms by some thinkers. Finally, we shall study the question of authority from other important angles including the question of consensus.

2°) In the second chapter, we shall carry our inquiry into the heart of Christian Revelation, by studying the foundation of authority as service in the apostolic Church. We shall begin this chapter by looking at the place of the word 'authority' in the New Testament as well as its soteriological connotation. Here we shall note the reluctance of the New Testament in applying the word *exousia* to Church leaders and its preference rather for the words *diakonoi* and *charisma*. We shall also observe that the main concern of the apostolic Church was not the formal signification of authority conceived in terms of jurisdiction, but its substantial signification or its use which is always conceived in the moral sense. We shall next try to develop the understanding of authority as service according to the New Testament by taking Jesus Christ in his person, teaching, life, death and resurrection as the model of Christian authority.

One of the conclusions we shall derive from Jesus' model of authority is that though his authority was given to him by his heavenly Father, it was only through his redemptive service that he revealed this authority and made it meaningful for his disciples. The disciples of Jesus were able to recognize that he has authority not simply because he claimed authority, but because they saw it revealed in his life and ministry, especially in his death and resurrection. In the same way, authority in

the Church must be revealed and recognized through service to the Christian community.

Furthermore, we shall consider Paul's conception and style of apostolic authority which represents for us in the New Testament the best example of a concrete realization of the nature and content of the authority of service of which Jesus Christ is himself the model and symbol. We shall discover that Paul's conception of his apostolic authority is marked by two tendencies: (1) Preoccupation to show that authority in the Church is the authority of Christ and the Gospel. (2) Preoccupation to show that he is only a servant, who has received from God the authority of service. Next, we shall consider the place of charisms in Pauline communities as well as the relation between authority and charism in the ecclesiology of Paul. On the other hand, we shall tackle the difficult question of whether 'office' in the Christian community was a later development in Pauline communities of his pastoral letters or a development which can be traced to Paul himself. Here we shall note that while the principal preoccupation of the earliest letters of Paul was the community principle and its multiple charismatic services, that of the pastoral letters became the ministerial constitution of the Church.

Furthermore, how do we reconcile the notion of authority and charismatic structure of the Church seen at work in early Pauline communities with the one that developed in his later communities of the post-apostolic period, or with the presbyteral structure of the primitive Jerusalem Christian community? In examining the issues involved, we shall consider and evaluate three theological perspectives, that of E. Käsemann, H. Küng and P. Grelot. In arriving at conclusion, we shall strive at integrity and completeness of view. We shall favour the conception of authority which links the bestowal of charismatic gift and development of office as a fruitful interaction in the light of the Catholic conception of the union of the divine and the human in the incarnation. Finally, we shall end the chapter with the consideration of authority in the primitive Jerusalem community.

3°) Given the fact that we intend to give special attention to the authority of the bishop in his particular Church in this work, we shall study in chapter three the important Catholic doctrine of the bishops as successors of the apostles since it is on this doctrine that the authority of the bishops is based. Here we shall consider the question of apostolic succession particularly as it concerns apostolic ministry of the bishop, and basically as it concerns the whole Church, who shall be considered as the successors of the apostolic Church. We shall begin this discussion by considering the meaning, development and signification of the word ‘apostle’ in the New Testament. We shall distinguish between the ‘apostles’ and the ‘Twelve’, and show that, even though related, the two concepts are not identical in meaning in the New Testament. We shall conclude this chapter on the basis of our findings on the basic apostolic succession by considering the sense in which the bishops can be considered as the successors of the apostles.

4°) Chapter four of our thesis titled “Authority as service in Vatican II” deals with two mutually related themes. The first theme is the Council’s concept of authority. Here we shall try to articulate the concept of authority implicit in the documents of Vatican II particularly in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. We shall note that the Council uses the word ‘authority’ only in the technical sense, that is only with regard to the hierarchy in the Church. This makes its concept of authority pre-eminently institutional. Although, the Council privileged institutional understanding of authority, we shall discover that there is certainly a place in its documents for a variety of other forms of authority exercised inside the Church such as the authority of the Scriptures, authority of *sensus fidelium*, authority of conscience, authority of the laity, and authority of expertise and learning.

In line with the institutional concept of authority privileged by Vatican II, we shall consider three elements which are constitutive of this authority in the Church following the main lines of the Council. We shall discuss these elements under three subjects: (1) Source and foundation of authority. (2) Mode of exercise of

authority. (3) The relational and shared character of authority. We shall end our discussion of the Council's concept of authority by pointing out the merits and demerits of its institutional understanding of authority.

The second theme which we shall examine in this chapter concerns the episcopal authority and the rediscovery of the sense of community in Vatican II. We shall appreciate the major contribution of Vatican II to the understanding of episcopal authority in the history of the evolution of Catholic ecclesiology, from the point of view of its rediscovery of the sense of community, and the communion that this implies in the Church. We shall begin thus by situating the ecclesiological renewal in its historical context. We hope that this approach shall place us on a better pedestal for the appreciation of the factors and movements that led the Church to this important ecclesiological event and consciousness.

It will also be important to note here that the ecclesiological evolution attained in Vatican II was not only as a result of theological factors. There was also the political factor owing to the growth of democratic consciousness and culture especially after the second world war. We shall also consider certain key theological options that paved the way for the renewal of Church authority. Furthermore, armed with the renewed ecclesiological consciousness of Vatican II, we shall proceed to the examination of the new image and identity of the Vatican II bishop in the context of his particular Church. Owing to the fact that prior to the Council, the bishop tended to exercise his authority as someone "above and outside the Church", we shall lay emphasis on his re-insertion in the communion of his particular Church as achieved by Vatican II.

5°) In chapter five we shall turn our attention to discussions on authority in the Church as contained in the statements of some important ecumenical dialogues. Our aim is to see what new visions we can gain in the elaboration of our theme of authority as service, its nature and manner of exercise in the Church. Thus, we shall dwell on the following dialogue statements: (1) The document of "Faith and Order"

Commission of the World Council of Churches on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). We shall be concerned precisely with the section on Ministry as it is here that the question of authority poses itself. (2) The documents of the “Group of *les Dombes*”¹⁸, namely, *Pour une réconciliation des ministères* (1973) and *Le ministère épiscopal: réflexions et propositions sur le ministère de vigilance et d’unité dans l’Eglise particulière* (1976). (3) The documents of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), namely, the “Final Report” (ARCIC I, 1981) and “The Gift of Authority” (ARCIC II, 1999). (4) Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on “Ministry in the Church”, “The Gospel and the Church” and “Church and Justification”.

In examining the above documents, we shall proceed from the method of theological analysis of data to that of evaluation or drawing of conclusions. We shall conclude this ecumenical chapter with a look at some elements of theological convergence in the ecumenical perspectives on authority. We shall note among other things that all the dialogue statements on the question of authority are marked by their preoccupation to situate authority within the context of communion. In other words, they are interested in the circulation of authority in the life of the whole Church while preserving specific responsibility and distinct authority to those with ministerial positions in the Church. Finally, we shall articulate some future perspectives for continuing dialogue on authority in the Church.

6°) The sixth and final chapter on episcopal authority and the community in the Nigerian Church shall be pastoral in approach. The principal focus here will be to examine and evaluate how far the Nigerian Church has accepted and applied the implication for Church authority of Vatican II’s ecclesiology of the People of God. We are not going to focus on what is already positive about this in the Nigerian Church but on the areas where there is need for improvement. In this light, we shall

¹⁸ We shall not include in this chapter the latest document of the Group of *les Dombes* titled, *Un seul Maître: L’autorité doctrinale dans l’Eglise*, Paris, Bayard, 2005. This is because this book appeared in the market only when we have almost completed our research work. However, we shall be able to integrate some of its most pertinent insights particularly in our general conclusion to this thesis.

begin by considering some major traits of episcopal (hierarchical) authority as lived in the Nigerian Church. We shall then try to provide some theological and sociological explanations on the possible factors responsible for the tendency of the Nigerian Church towards the direction of juridical and institutional ecclesiology. Finally, we shall analyse some possible solutions which will include the integration of the African 'palaver' model of leadership and the reform of the system of clergy formation. We shall end our entire project with a general conclusion.

Chapter One

The Concept of Authority : Moral and Social Orientation

Introduction

Our thesis focuses on authority as service in the Church. This theme is to be treated with special eyes on episcopal authority. Our methodology will begin with conceptual analysis of authority itself which is our key term in this work. This approach will help us to understand the dynamics involved in the articulation and application of the concept within the context of social relations or community which is its proper milieu. Towards this direction, we shall adopt a perspective which is open and comprehensive enough, namely, the social and moral orientation. This is not without foundation. On the one hand, the social aspect of our orientation will enable us to situate authority within the social context. This is because in relation to authority, the question of human community and its common-good poses itself existentially as the primary *datum*. It is in this context that the question of authority legitimately poses itself and only as a means to the attainment of a society's finality or common-good. On the other hand, the moral aspect of our orientation shall help us to keep before our eyes, the fact that authority ought to be understood and used in such a way that it serves the total good of the human person as a social being.

Furthermore, we shall also consider the etymology of the word 'authority' in order to understand its true meaning as well as later development of the concept in relation to this origin. This approach shall lead us to different applications of the concept of authority and to the important distinction and relation between authority and power among other things. Furthermore, the sociological analysis of Max Weber of the

aspects of *dominion* or ‘authority’ will not help us to understand what authority truly means but to understand what can become of authority when it ceases to promote responsible freedom and degenerates into a relationship of power and domination. Our philosophical approach to the crisis of authority shall enable us to study and evaluate the critique leveled against authority within the context of its historical back-drops by some thinkers. Finally, a study of the question of authority from other important angles will bring this chapter to a conclusive end. We also wish to state here that our concept of authority in this chapter is influenced by its understanding in the Roman Catholic Church.

1. Brief Explication and History of the Concept

The word ‘authority’ is not easy to define. This is because it has varied shades of meaning as a result of evolution in its usage and the application of the word to different contexts. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1976) defines authority in the following ways: (1) “A citation used in defense of one’s actions, opinions”. (2) “The power to require and receive submission”. (3) “The right to expect obedience”. On the other hand, Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary (1963) defines authority as “the right to command and to enforce obedience; the right to act by virtue of office, station or relation”. Furthermore, J. F. O’Grady defines authority as “the right to influence thought, opinion, or behavior”¹. In all these definitions, the emphasis generally falls on the word ‘right’ which is a moral quality which confers legitimacy to the exercise of power within a social relationship. Power is hereby understood as the possibility which a person has to make his ideas or his will to prevail over those of other persons².

In the above light, we can give a working definition of authority as legitimate power in so far as it is power directed to the service of the common-good. When this

¹J. F. O’GRADY, *Authority and Power*, p. 123.

² Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Autorité, initiative, coresponsabilité*, in *La Maison-Dieu*, 97 (1969), p. 1.

power ceases to be directed to service or undermines human dignity and responsible freedom, it loses its legitimacy and becomes mere power over others (i.e. domination) or coercion rather than genuine authority. Service is hereby understood as whatever that promotes or enhances human collective good in a community. It is for this value that authority exists. In other words, authority promotes this value in a particular way being responsible for unity which is indispensable to the existence, cohesion and continuity of any community. The etymological roots of authority help us to see the necessary link between authority and service since it is the contention of this work that authority cannot be understood or defined outside the context of service which constitutes its essence and meaning.

In other words, any attempt to get a good idea of what authority truly means ought to begin from its root origin. Thus, considered from the etymological point of view, authority comes from the Latin *auctoritas*, from *auctor* (cause, sponsor, guardian, promoter, surety), from *augere* (to increase, to enrich, or to augment)³. Authority is therefore, something whose exercise uplifts man by enriching the common-good, protecting human rights and responsibility. Every understanding of authority must protect this ‘Magna Charta’ in order to be a genuine understanding of authority.

Originally, *auctoritas* according to the Roman law tradition was applied to the guardian (the *auctor*) who was responsible for the increase of the goods of his or her ward⁴. “It then came to mean the respect, dignity and importance of the person concerned”⁵. Later on *auctoritas* which was at first applied to persons was equally claimed by the Roman Senate and thus was born institutional authority or authority of office. Although, the Senate had the authority to be heard (*auctoritas*), it did not

³Cf. W. MOLINSKI, *Authority*, in *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. V, ed. K. RAHNER *et al.*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1970, p. 129.

⁴Cf. F. X. KAUFMANN, *The Sociology of Knowledge and the Problem of Authority*, in *Authority in the Church*, ed. P. F. FRANSEN, Leuven, University Press, 1983, p. 19.

⁵W. MOLINSKI, *Authority*, p. 129.

exercise the power of governance (*potestas*)⁶. Cicero has given an account of this in his work on the State when he distinguished the authority (*auctoritas*) of the senate from the power (*potestas*) of officials and the freedom (*libertas*) of the people⁷. According to A. Baruzzi the Roman Senate demonstrated “as never again the meaning of this fundamental political concept. Recalling the original invention of *auctoritas* among the Romans, it turned out to be that fundamental essence of political power concentrated in the senate, something which involved power in the sense of *potentia*, of ability and capacity, so that a piece of advice, the formulation of a statement was able to gain such weight that it could be implemented simply thanks to being stated. The *potentia* of Roman *auctoritas* developed from itself a kind of *potestas* which surpasses and is capable of surpassing all other *potestates* because it derives from the most comprehensive sphere of human capacity, from the source of political power which the Roman defined as *auctoritas*”⁸.

Given our analysis so far, we can understand how *auctoritas* developed a characteristic double meaning as it can be related to the qualifications of persons (personal authority), or of positions (the authority of office). In which ever way it was used authority primarily referred to the competence or ‘trustworthiness’ of the person or the institution to which the authority is attributed⁹. It is this competence which may be personal or official which confers the right (authority) and ability (power) to influence thought, opinion, or behavior. According to D. J. Stagaman, “we consider people competent for one of two reasons: either they are endowed with certain personal qualities that are held in high esteem, or they have received their ability to act through a particular delegation or a pattern of doing so in the society”¹⁰. Due to the

⁶Cf. *ibid.*

⁷Cf. H. WALDENFELS, *Authority and Knowledge*, in *Concilium*, 180/1 (1985), p. 32.

⁸Cited in *ibid.*

⁹Cf. F. X. KAUFMANN, *Sociology of knowledge and Problem of Authority*, p. 19.

¹⁰D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, p. 37.

fact that all authority implies a responsibility¹¹, authority is something that often involves *potestas* (power of governance/ jurisdiction). Since authority is principally a question of responsibility for the common good, he who bears authority or the responsibility for the *augere* can only but serve. Whatever prerogatives, titles, or qualifications which may be attributed to him as a result of his position or responsibility ought to be related to or grounded in service which is the horizon in which they must be understood. In this sense, authority is service.

2. Kinds of Authority

Generally speaking, we can speak of two kinds of authority which are mutually related¹². One kind arises spontaneously within the context of social groups where an individual capable of influencing the attitude of others as a result of his special charisms spontaneously assumes authority. This may be regarded as personal or charismatic authority as verified in the life of such persons as Jesus of Nazareth and Martin Luther King (Jr.). The second kind of authority is verified in the right and power conferred on certain individuals in view of the function which they play within the context of a determined social institution. This may be regarded as functional, institutional or official authority. In the first instance, the leader's source of authority is his person, while in the second case, the source of authority is the social group or institution concerned¹³. The question of legitimacy of authority also arises here. With regard to personal authority, legitimacy is based on the recognition of the personal qualities or competence of the leader such as his talent, ability, skill, knowledge, wisdom, expertise, holiness, etc. It is in this light that authority of the expert (e.g. medical doctor, theologian, scientist) is often spoken about. On the other hand, as

¹¹ The two words, authority and responsibility are related, though not coterminous in meaning. Responsibility is the quality of being responsible or answerable for something which may be things or persons or both. Authority always implies a responsibility for human beings. In this sense, not all responsibility imply authority. One can be responsible for a business enterprise and may not have any person under him. We cannot, therefore, talk of authority in this case.

¹² Cf. G. BURDEAU, *Autorité*, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 3, Paris, Bergman, 1996, p. 579.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*

regards official or functional authority, legitimacy is based on the social investiture of the leader (e.g. ordination of a bishop). But even in this case, it is desirable that the leader should also have personal authority in the sense of requisite personal credentials or competence showing that he can act correctly. Thus, writes W. Molinski: "Official authority is the authority which a person has, not by reason of his personal superiority, but by reason of a function conferred on him or at least respected by the society. It is desirable that the wielder of such authority should also have personal authority, but since it is based essentially on its role in the good of society, its range and nature must be determined by its function, and not by the bearer's qualities. An office sanctioned by society and hence legitimate, can impose obligations and so be 'authoritative' even when the office-holder is inadequate and unworthy. But the exercise of such authority is confined to his function in society – within which he can claim recognition"¹⁴.

Furthermore, authority cannot be something which an institution or someone can go all out to possess on his own. It is rather attributed by others and thus, constitutes itself in a social process. It can be said to be the confidence and the trust which a person or institution commands. It is this confidence and trust which confer the rights and power which a person or institution may exercise in the society.

2.1. Personal or Charismatic Authority

By charism we mean here the special personal gifts or virtues of a leader by which he can effectively influence thought, opinion and behavior. The authority of a charismatic leader is not constituted simply by the fact that he is endowed with special personal gifts that transcend the reach of many people but above all by the fact that his talents effectively serve the good of persons or of a community by which authority is attributed to him even though he may not be accorded any official status. Louis

¹⁴W. MOLINSKI, *Authority*, p. 129-130.

Janssens is, therefore, correct when he makes the following statement on the angelic doctor while explaining how a charismatic power can transform into authority :
*“Quand nous disons que dans la science théologique saint Thomas a sur nous une autorité charismatique, nous affirmons que l’éclat de sa science théologique est bien l’élément de fait en vertu duquel il peut avoir de l’autorité, mais que pour exister effectivement celle-ci suppose que nous poursuivons la science théologique comme une fin, dont les exigences se réalisent en nous sous l’influence de la science du grand docteur”*¹⁵.

Furthermore, the talents which motivate a people to follow a charismatic leader and to attribute authority to him varies from epoch to epoch and from one social group to another. This contention is in line with the views of D. J. Stagaman. According to him some people seem to have authority in view of their talents. Even though they lack any official status, people flock to them and spontaneously attribute authority to them. However, the talents which make them attractive to people and draw to themselves followers are socially and historically conditioned. Today in the United States, one of the necessary skills for getting elected president is the ability to get one’s message across on television. In the fourteenth century, the French people followed a young girl into battle against their English enemies. By so doing, they were able to liberate themselves from English domination because the young girl had been called to lead in battle by the voices of her favorite saints¹⁶. Today such a thing would not have been the case as she would have been probably placed under the care of a psychologist. “Thus, the talents which give rise to charismatic leadership and its concomitant authority have been and are evaluated differently according to the historical epoch. Moreover, in particular subgroups, charismatic authority is accorded to people who are

¹⁵L. JANSSENS, *Droit personnel et autorité*, Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1954, p. 31.

¹⁶D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, p. 25.

outgoing, spontaneous, and venturesome; in other groups, it is gained by those who are reserved, cautious, and judicious”¹⁷.

On the other hand, authenticity and a sense of vocation are among the dominant characteristics of charismatic leadership or personal authority. These characteristics are manifested in a person’s life-style, conviction and courage. For instance, Martin Luther King (Jr.), and Nelson Mandela represent example of leaders who through their conviction and courage were able to effect a change in a nation’s system of values and behavioral practices¹⁸. “When life style is authentic, i.e. when espoused values are congruent with public behaviour, beliefs are recognized as convincing and their relevance is accepted. If that is the case, because of its compelling integrity and exemplary de-alienation, charisma is attributed”¹⁹.

Charismatic leaders are more preoccupied with the provision of direction, orientation, meaning and purpose than with order or “the instrumental coordination of cooperation”. They “function as guide and coach providing direction and orientation”. Through their leadership, people are able to deal with life’s problems, as well as resolve alienation in an authenticity of conviction²⁰. Charismatic quality is a necessary element in authority in the Church. This is because as R. Nauta puts it : “Authenticity of belief and courage in communication, particularly of religious leaders, are necessary for the recognition of the relevance of what is symbolized and expressed. Weber referred to one type of charismatic prophet as a leader who by his own example demonstrated the way to salvation, and to a second type as one who was primarily an instrument for the proclamation of a god-given mission. Basically, referring to the distinction between substance and form, these differences in type of charismatic

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Cf. R. NAUTA, *Mosaic and Pauline Charisma. The Cultural Relevance of Religious Leadership*, in *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 11 / 2 (1998), p. 51.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52.

leadership can be related to what may be called Mosaic and Pauline types of leadership”²¹.

2.2. Charismatic Authority According to Max Weber

Weber’s description of charism is substantially consistent with what we have so far seen of the term above. He considers charism as exceptional gift or quality possessed or attributed to a person, such as sanctity and heroism. Prophets, magicians, warriors and heroes represent for him examples of charismatics.²² Charismatic authority, therefore, consists in attributing to a person extraordinary or supernatural qualities as if such a person was a messenger of God. This kind of authority is marked by a number of features. (1) As an exceptional manifestation which erupts outside the sphere of the ordinary and the regular, charismatic authority challenges the established order of things and the *status quo*. It operates as a movement or phenomenon outside the legal or recognized institutions thus manifesting a rupture with the existing social order²³. (2) This mission must be recognized by supporters or followers devoted to its cause without which the project will lose all signification. Thus, there arises the need that the charismatic leader must continue to confirm his quality or vocation by further exceptional deeds without which his authority risks disappearance²⁴. (3) Charismatic authority also has a basis in emotion. It can appeal to the sentiment of the people through new inspirations and concrete revelations²⁵. (4) It establishes a sort of internal hierarchy inside the circle of charismatic movement composed of a group of disciples closer to the leader or master and charged with immediate responsibilities²⁶.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 54.

²²Cf. M. WEBER, *Sociologie des religions* (coll. *Bibliothèque des sciences humaines*). Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 370.

²³Cf. J. FREUND, *Le charisme selon Max Weber*, in *Social Compass*, 23/4 (1976), p. 387.

²⁴Cf. *ibid.*

²⁵Cf. *ibid.*

²⁶Cf. *ibid.*

Furthermore, the death of the leader provokes the question of succession which can be regulated in a number of ways : (1) By election or selection of another charismatic leader as successor. (2) By sacramental objectification of charism or designation of successor by consecration as in apostolic succession of ministries in the Church. (3) By belief in the charismatic qualification of a family or heredity for example as in hereditary royalty. In the above senses, the leader acts not so much by virtue of personal qualities as by inherited or acquired qualities or still by legitimization procured by act of election²⁷.

2.3. Functional / Official / Institutional Authority

Authority as a function is a necessity in human society as every community manifests an undeniable form of authority. It is a truth long recognized by philosophers that it is 'natural' for man to unite with others and to live in the society. Aristotle for instance, noted that he who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god²⁸. It is because man is naturally a social being that authority is also necessary, for it has an essential role to play in the realization of the goals of any society whether this society is the family, state, Church or conventional societies. Given this background in view, authority as a public function can be defined as "a moral power that exercises an essential function as a cause of united action"²⁹. The specific role which authority plays in a given societal context is determined by the nature and end of that society. W. Molinski has shown that official authority, with its rights, privileges and power, does not summon the individual directly to free action. It demands in the first place the recognition of the justification or necessity of the group in question. Next it demands the recognition of the authority of the group in question, and finally the recognition of

²⁷Cf. M. WEBER, *Sociologie des religions*, p. 372.

²⁸Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. REEVE, Indianapolis, Hackett Publ. Company, 1998, p. 5.

²⁹G. J. MC MORROW, *Authority*, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America, Vol. 1, 1967, p. 1111.

the authority serving this organization. This is because official authority is founded on the priority of society over its individual members. The implication is that authority is a function of society and not vice versa. Its existence is limited by the needs of society which define its claims. This implies that to belong freely to a certain organization or necessarily to a society one must freely acknowledge authority or at least necessarily respect it. "But real authority exists for the subjects only in so far as they accept willingly the necessary social order. The anarchist rejects all official authority because he rejects social directives for his freedom. It remains true that official authority summons man to freedom, in its own ways"³⁰.

One who exercises authority as a public or official function is said to be *in* authority. But strictly speaking, it is the office and not the occupant which possesses authority. This is because the authority of the officials is a delegation of the community or the group³¹. They possess this authority in so far as they continue to occupy this public position. Says D. J. Stagaman: "Groups freely form themselves into permanent associations in which they designate that specific tasks will be carried out only by some, namely, the designated officials to whom the group delegates the power to act in the name of and for the good of the group. These officials are expected to harmonize and orchestrate the efforts of the members into a unity. Since delegation is always in some sense specific, at least in terms of the goods internal to the practice, official power is always limited"³².

On the other hand, the authority to issue official orders generally needs institutional justification. In other words, people who are confronted with the exercise of official authority, according to Stagaman, "do not look to the merits of the order given but to the issues of whether the official has been properly designated and whether the

³⁰W. MOLINSKI, *Authority*, p. 130.

³¹One exception to this rule is found in the churches of the Catholic wing where the authority of the hierarchy is seen as coming directly from God and thus, not a simple delegation of the community.

³²D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, 1999, p. 49-50.

command is given within the confines of the delegation (...) what the community believes and values is relevant to evaluation only in some instances”³³. However, in line with our understanding of authority as service, what the community believes and values is part of the process of the evaluation of every deed of official authority. Institutional justification alone is not enough as authority exists for the community and not vice versa. The tendency to judge the actions of officials on the basis of their legality rather than on the merits of the command has often led to numerous abuses of official authority both in the Church and in the society in general. Stagaman argues that “the solution to this historically well-documented problem, however, does not lie either in an anarchy which repudiates all institutional authority or in an ethics of suspicion which decrees that obedience should be given only when the merits of the case are demonstrated. The solution to this pattern of abuse lies in our remembering that the permanence of *in* authority (official authority) is temporal”³⁴.

2.4. The Relation between Charismatic and Official Authority

In the light of the terminological vocabulary used by the Jesuit theologian D.J. Stagaman, one whose authority is of charismatic nature is said to be *an* authority as his authority is directly derived from his person here understood as his exceptional gifts which motivate others to attribute authority to him and to follow him. On the other hand, one whose authority is of institutional nature derives his authority from the public function or office which he occupies. Such a person is said to be *in* authority because authority properly belongs to the office in question. Says Stagaman: “We need to distinguish between *an* authority, which is also called charismatic and sometimes epistemic authority, and *in* authority, which is also called official or deontic. The life of the party is *an* authority, while the quintessential bureaucrat relies on *in* authority. Founders of communities are invariably examples of *an* authority. The

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

administrators who succeed them in leadership function *in* authority. Teachers, heads of government, and managers of enterprise depend on *in* authority for their positions, but must display *an* authority if they are to act well in their capacities...Those virtues which command the greatest respect in any group are always the sources of the greatest *an* authority (...)"³⁵.

On a final note, one can say that the two kinds of authority we have seen are inherently related. Although one can legitimately make a distinction between charismatic and functional authority, practically speaking every manifestation of the existence of authority in human society often involve these two kinds of authority concomitantly. Official authority needs personal authority to function properly just as personal authority needs official authority in order to be fully effective. Thus, writes Stagaman: "In conclusion, it cannot be stated too strongly that almost all the examples of authority we know in our day-to-day lives involve both *an* and *in* authority. The distinction is largely notional, theoretical, and abstract. Considerations of concrete instances of *in* authority generally require some *an* authority norms. Exclusively *an* authority, though possible, is rare"³⁶.

The implication of the above conclusion means that the concept of authority with which we are concerned in this work is a comprehensive one which articulates both the qualities of personal and official authority. Our interest is not to separate charismatic authority from functional authority because of the fact that our daily life needs both authority. In this light, we have duly defined authority as legitimate power. Let us explain. In the first place, authority is something that often involves power (*potestas*) which makes it possible for authority to be able to accomplish its responsibility for the good of the society or social group. On the other hand, this power ought to be a legitimate one in the sense that it has to be founded, accepted and

³⁵ D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, p. 49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

exercised as service of the common good. It is here that the question of personal authority comes into play for it is this which guarantees the exercise of authority according to the nature and end of a social group. It is not enough to be entrusted with power or official competence; one needs also to have personal competence or charisms showing that he can act well and without which one may not be able to accomplish properly his responsibilities for the common good. One may add here that authority in the Church with which we are concerned in this work is in the above light both of institutional and charismatic nature. T. Govaart-Halkes articulates in a nutshell what we are trying to show about functional and charismatic authority as mutually complementary faces of authority: *“Autorité et charismes ne peuvent s’opposer, ils ont besoin l’un de l’autre, se complètent mutuellement et constituent ensemble les fondements de l’autorité. Tous deux appartiennent à l’essence de l’Eglise, s’imbriquent mutuellement et peuvent se retrouver face à face en une tension bénéfique”*³⁷.

3. Structures / Models of Authority

We have seen from the above that generally speaking there are two basic kinds of authority, personal and official authority. These two forms of authority, though can be distinguished, are not necessarily separate realities which are opposed to each other but are complementary. Every other representation or form of authority is a variation of any of the above kinds. It is in this light that J. F. O’Grady’s structures and models of authority ought to be seen³⁸. The only exception in his models is God’s absolute authority which is however not a human authority. Briefly let us have a critical look at his presentation of these models.

³⁷ T. GOVAART-HALKES, *En quête de nouvelles formes d’autorité et d’obéissance dans l’Eglise*, in *Concilium*, 49 (1969), p. 64.

³⁸ Cf. J. F. O’GRADY, *Authority and Power*, p. 124 -126.

3.1. Mystical / Autocratic / Absolute

O'Grady considers the character of mystical/autocratic/absolute authority as its claim to unlimited authority. God is presented as an example of absolute authority. The manifestation of God's absolute authority is recognized in the life of a person who accepts belief in a personal God and thus yields in humble and total submission to Him in faith. The Christian martyrs or all those who like Christ died for their faith manifested in their lives God's unlimited authority and thus His claim over life and death. On the human plain, to be classified under absolute authority is the king who in his kingdom claims the status of divine right as evident for instance during the time of the Roman Empire with the development of Emperor worship. O'Grady also classifies under mystical/autocratic/absolute authority what he calls the claims by popes, bishops, and other religious leaders. By including the popes and the bishops, O'Grady actually has the pre-Reformation era as well as the pre-Vatican II epoch of the Church more in mind. One can add that the definition of the dogma of papal infallibility in Vatican I confers on the pope a form of absolute authority precisely in his solemn declarations concerning matters of faith or morals in the exercise of his universal Magisterium.

Finally, O'Grady generally classifies under absolute authority "any person who brooks no interference, accepts no suggestions, and allows no limitations or questionings"³⁹. According to him "the right to such claims might be based on position, office, ownership (...)"⁴⁰. Authority is in the strict sense about leadership, although generally speaking it can include more than that. No wonder then that O'Grady includes ownership as a foundation of the right to claim authority.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

In my own opinion, it is only God who can truly claim absolute authority. This is because His absolute authority and power corresponds to His absolute goodness. As we have earlier noted, authority as legitimate power in the community is destined to the service of the common-good. When it ceases to be oriented in this direction, power loses its legitimacy and becomes coercion or mere power over others rather than real authority. Because all human being is capable of this temptation of power, only God who in His absolute goodness can truly claim absolute authority. Parents may in principle claim absolute authority over their own children in so far as they are yet to reach the age of reason or maturity. But in practice they cannot always make this claim as there have been parents who committed homicide against their own children. In the Church when the pope exercises his charism of papal infallibility which is also that of the whole Church, he exercises his absolute spiritual authority. We as Catholics are bound by our faith to give accent to this solemn declaration but we can only pray that such declaration conforms to the unfathomable mystery of God. In this way, the unlimited spiritual authority of the pope is in fact limited by the sovereignty of God.

3.2. Legislative / Bureaucratic Authority

The advance of law and all forms of authority based on it have resulted to a new concept of rights and obligations, as well as to the limitation or abrogation of absolute authority⁴¹. This is because within the context of the rule of law individuals are no longer only objects of authority but also subjects of authority in the sense that they have rights protected by the law. The divine right of kings no longer implies absolute authority as the system of the rule of law would lead to the establishment of parliaments, legislative bodies, laws, and constitutions. In today's democratic culture, modern state governments as well as many other forms of public authority have

⁴¹Cf. *ibid.*, p. 125.

integrated a system of legislation or constitution which leads to the exercise of authority on the basis of the law and thereby limiting absolute or autocratic authority.

On the other hand, the absolute form of authority has also undergone a process of erosion in religious domain. As O'Grady remarks: "The Protestant Reformation as well as the experience of the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II have further limited the authority of pope, bishops, and other religious superiors. Finally, the new revised Code of Canon Law modifies the authority of these same individuals with the recognition of the rights of all members of the Church community. Legal and bureaucratic authority which recognizes the rights of others continues to change an autocratic authority"⁴².

However, the authority of the pope and the bishops in the Catholic Church needs to be further limited in practice so that authority in the Church will begin to function in a way that is more suited to the historical and cultural evolution of today, namely, in a personal, collegial and communitarian ways with its implication also on decision making.

3.3. Learned Authority

While considering above personal authority something which I also denoted as charismatic authority in the sense of authority based on certain exceptional gifts or quality of the person, I included within its ambience the authority of the expert based on the learned gift of knowledge. Thus, in the wide sense, the learned authority of the expert such as that of the theologian or scientist or politician is a form of charismatic authority. Since authority is essentially a question of leadership, there can be derivatively leadership in knowledge and not only in social life and organization. However, O'Grady treats learned authority as if it is completely independent of

⁴² *Ibid.*

charismatic authority. According to him, the authority of the learned person is rooted in his expertise, that is on his discipline, intelligence, and education⁴³. He gives as example of learned authority today think-tanks in industry or in politics while in ancient times the authority of the counselor who is allowed by a wise ruler to influence his decision with the wisdom of age and experience is given as another example of the authority of the expert. Furthermore, he takes note of the fact that religious leaders have like legal authority equally turned to learned authority. The Second Vatican Council is thus seen as “a monument to the wisdom and expertise of men and women throughout the world”⁴⁴.

3.4. Charismatic Authority

We have earlier seen much about charismatic or personal authority which is based on the rare gifts of individuals or on the quality of the person. O’Grady also sees charismatic authority as rooted on the quality of the person⁴⁵. As we noted above, he treated learned authority independently of charismatic authority. According to him “certain individuals arise in every walk of society with gifts that transcend the experience of most other members of society. The community gladly allows them to influence thought, opinion, and behavior”⁴⁶. This is what O’Grady regards as charismatic authority. We are also of the same view with him. But where one may part ways with him is his apparent exclusion of authority based on the learning of the expert which can be considered as exceptional gift from charismatic authority. In our view, the expertise of the truly learned person is part of the quality of his person. It is in this sense that one can consider such great theologians like Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner and Yves Congar who have contributed very much in

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125-126.

positively shaping the direction of the Church with their exceptional gift of learning as having charismatic authority in the Roman Catholic Church circles.

On the other hand, O'Grady was right when he said that "moral qualities or characteristics viewed as moral qualities, lay the foundation for the right to exercise control over others"⁴⁷. In this sense the exercise of charismatic authority or its creative use is rooted in moral qualities. According to him "John XXIII, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. are examples of the creative use of this norm of authority" while "Jonestown is an example of the destructive use of such authority"⁴⁸.

4. Authority and Power

We have already given our working definition of authority as legitimate power. In other words, authority involves the exercise of a certain kind of power without which it cannot be fully effective or real. As legitimate power, authority cannot involve the exercise of any kind of power. Thus, we must get right what we mean by power and in what sense it is associated with authority⁴⁹. This is because the word 'power' is a vague and ambiguous concept. "One sense of the word suggests the coercion of unwilling subjects who, far from acknowledging a ruler's authority, submit to his power as to a gunman's, for fear of what he might do to them"⁵⁰. Various definitions of power have been given. According to Max Weber's classic definition of power: "Power is the probability that one actor in a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests"⁵¹. In other words, power is the ability to cause or prevent change⁵².

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "The relations between power and authority are complicated, however, not only by the vagueness of 'power', but also by varying shades of meaning of 'authority' ". P. EDWARDS (ed.), *Authority*, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, New York, Macmillan & the Free Press, 1987, p. 214.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ M. WEBER, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 15.

⁵² Cf. R. MAY, *Power and Innocence*, New York, Norton, 1972, p. 99.

In ordinary social science usage, power is defined as the ability to influence, guide, manipulate, shape, control or transform the human or natural environment in order to advance one's purpose⁵³. Finally, Karl Rahner defines power as "a certain self-assertion of acting spontaneously without the previous consent of another, to interfere with and change the actual constitution of that other"⁵⁴.

On the other hand, authority is fundamentally both a moral and social concept. As rooted in the service of the good of the human person as a social being, authority has a moral goal and orientation. Also as founded in human community, authority has a social character, and thus serves the end and finality of a given community. Thus, authority is not identical with power in the way we have defined power. Authority is rather the right to exercise power in such a way that it respects its moral and social character mentioned above. Authority is therefore moral or legitimate power. What constitutes the legitimacy of power? First is its source, which may be founded on personal qualities (personal authority) or on public function (official authority) or on both. Second is its exercise, which refers to the laws or norms guiding its use which depends on the nature and finality of a giving community. Third is its shared character.

This understanding of authority as legitimate or moral power is important because authority effects change in others primarily by arousing the dictates of conscience in subjects and in this way preserves their dignity and freedom. The distinguishing mark of authority is that it is exercised only over those who voluntarily accept it. Authority is therefore not pure power and must be distinguished from mere power which may be based on sheer superior force or on some form of moral coercion⁵⁵. In this light, an armed robber at gun point has the power to rob and command his victim, but he does

⁵³Cf. B. LOOMER, *Two Conceptions of Power* (D.R. Sharpe Lectureship on Social Ethics), Chicago, Divinity School Winter, 1976, p. 12-26.

⁵⁴ K. RAHNER, *Theology of Power*, in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 4, ed. K. RAHNER, New York, Herder, 1966, p. 409.

⁵⁵ Cf. J. L. MCKENZIE, *Authority in the Church*, p. 6.

not possess authority to do so. The implication of this is that authority can never be determined by the amount of control which it can exercise as is the case with mere power or violence. If authority signifies a kind of power, it is evidently not the kind manifest in the exercise of naked or coercive power. It rather signifies a kind of power which is deployed for the service of the common good which includes the freedom, dignity, and self-development of individuals constituting the society or community. Here, we understand power in a broader sense as the capacity or ability to get what one wants by affecting the behavior of others. But “authority cannot always be understood as a capacity to affect other men’s behavior. A man who has authority to act may yet be unable to make his will effective, like a policeman vainly trying to quell a riot”⁵⁶.

Thus, ‘authority’ cannot be identified with ‘power’. However, it needs power in order to be efficacious in social life just as power needs authority in order to function properly. On this writes Jacques Maritain: “*Le juste privé de tout pouvoir et condamné à la ciguë ne diminue pas – il grandit en autorité morale. Le gangster ou le tyran exerce un pouvoir sans autorité. Toute autorité, dès lors qu’elle touche à la vie sociale, demande à se compléter (...) d’un pouvoir, sans quoi, elle risque d’être vaine et inefficace pour les hommes. Tout pouvoir qui n’est pas l’expression d’une autorité est inique. Pratiquement, il est donc normal que le mot autorité implique le pouvoir. Il reste que ce qui importe, c’est l’autorité*”⁵⁷.

Furthermore, “authority is always in the service of others and their freedom”⁵⁸, while mere power always coerces. Authority measures itself by the confidence, credibility and creative dependence that it establishes among people while mere power divides people into two in a solitary way : “*Les uns demeurent dans la solitude de leur impuissance et les autres dans la solitude de leur puissance*”⁵⁹. Authority

⁵⁶ P. EDWARDS (ed.), *Authority*, p. 214.

⁵⁷ J. MARITAIN, *Principes d’une politique humaniste*, Paris, Hartmann, 1945, p. 42-43.

⁵⁸ T. McMAHON, *The Moral Aspects of Power*, in *Concilium*, 10/9 (1973), p. 53.

⁵⁹ A. DUMAS, *Autorité et pouvoir*, in *Ces mots qui nous font croire et douter*, Paris, Éditions Oecuméniques, 1971, p. 118.

primarily operates by appealing to the free assent of the subject. In this way it gives expression to the internal and external personal development. Power seeks to interfere with and change the actual constitution of the other without his previous consent. Authority begins where it is freely recognized and ends where it becomes power, thus giving rise to dictatorship.

Can authority ever use coercion ? This is only possible when the common good is endangered by the wrongful exercise of individual freedom. In this case the coercion or power used must always be proportionate to the intended genuine effect and must always respect human dignity and be therapeutic.

On the other hand, authority has the right to command obedience. But this is in principle possible only when this right is based within the range of its competence. Genuine obedience can only be given to moral power, not to force or moral coercion⁶⁰. This moral basis of obedience has been defined by T. Corbishley in the following terms : "Ideally, obedience is given naturally and almost spontaneously to the wise and good man, to the man whose authority is based on his power to see further, plan more effectively, conceive a nobler ideal than his subordinates. In principle, it is only in virtue of his possession of such qualities that obedience to him is justified. In other words, obedience is a wholly rational and reasonable attitude of mind provided that the man who is in authority bases his orders on reason, on what is for the general good, which should be thought of as other than the good of the individuals constituting the general body"⁶¹.

In spite of the fact that obedience to persons in authority is an indication of the existence of authority, the understanding of authority cannot be primarily based on the possibility of receiving obedience as it can also be received by sheer force or moral pressure. However, this is what Max Weber does in the sociological analysis of his

⁶⁰ Cf. J. L. McKENZIE, *Authority in the Church*, p. 6.

⁶¹ T. CORBISHLEY, *Power and Authority*, in *The Way*, 3 (1963), p. 287-288.

three types of 'authority' or dominion, namely, rational, traditional and charismatic species of authority which are all centered in offices or persons who are obeyed. His analysis permits us to study what can become of authority when it fails to be rooted in service and authenticity and degenerates into a relationship of power and domination.

5. Max Weber : Authority As Power and Domination

5.1. His Sociological Theory

Weber describes 'authority' or dominion as that prospect of receiving obedience from given persons to a command of a specific content⁶². According to him religious power is based on the monopoly or control of means considered as necessary for salvation⁶³. The question which Weber tries to consider is how a relationship of authority transforms itself into a relationship of domination. He began with a psychological approach of trying to understand the reasons why people obey authority in order to be able to discover how the process of domination works. Weber thus arrives at three factors : habit, intellectual convictions, and affective connections. But these cannot of themselves suffice for establishing an enduring dominion. Thus, belief is also required in the legitimacy of the domination, that is in the conviction that authority has the right to command, regardless of what the command contains in detail while others have the responsibility to obey. Weber analyzed the grounds for such belief and consequently proposes three main forms of legitimacy (legal, traditional, and charismatic) corresponding to three kinds of such a belief.

First is what Weber describes as legal or rational dominion⁶⁴. It is based on the belief that the office holders have lawfully come to the position of authority and that

⁶²Cf. M. WEBER, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 4th edition, Tübingen, 1956, p. 38; see F. X. KAUFMANN, *The Sociology of Knowledge and the Problem of Authority*, p. 20.

⁶³Cf. M. WEBER, *Sociologie des religions* (coll. *Bibliothèque des sciences humaines*). Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 368.

⁶⁴Cf. *ibid.* p. 369.

their power is by this very fact grounded in law. This is the ground of legality of modern states and the power which their leaders claim when they demand taxes from citizens, grant or refuse a building permit⁶⁵. The same reality can also be applied to the Church. Says P. Granfield : “Thus bishops in the Church through valid appointment and ordination receive from Christ according to divine law their power to act as pastors of the Christian community. The Code of Canon Law explains in detail the legal character of ecclesial authority. Besides specific canons on the Pope, bishops, cardinals, and other officials, it also delineates the nature of juridic acts (Cans. 124-128), the power of governance (Cans.129-144), and the meaning of ecclesiastical offices (Cans.145-196). The latter section also deals with the conferral of office and its loss by resignation, transfer, removal, or privation. The legal basis of legitimacy is framed according to a monarchical understanding of Church authority, it remains a problem for those who live in a democracy ”⁶⁶.

Furthermore, in legal domination, submission is not accorded directly to personal authority but to impersonal norm or set of laws which also limit the power of decision of the authorities as well as fix in a precise way the nature and the duration of their mandate. Thus, authority within the context of legal domination derives its force from the respect for the law or the legal order as grounded on contract (e.g. constitution) or on the will of the legislator⁶⁷. One mode of such domination as Weber sees it is the modern bureaucracy. This institution is represented by officials or agents who acquire the power of domination on its behalf by delegation for the purpose of specific competence.

On the other hand, the second kind of legitimacy is described by Weber as traditional dominion⁶⁸. It is grounded on the belief in the sacredness of age-long

⁶⁵Cf. F. X. KAUFMANN, *The Sociology of Knowledge and the Problem of Authority*, p. 20-21.

⁶⁶P. GRANFIELD, *Legitimation and Bureaucratization of Ecclesial Power*, in *Concilium*, 197/3 (1988), p. 87-88.

⁶⁷Cf. M. WEBER, *Sociologie des religions*, p. 370.

⁶⁸Cf. *ibid.*

traditions and reverence for office holders whose ascendancy is in line with this long standing and revered tradition. It accords a discretionary power to the office bearers but the exercise of their authority is, however, guided by customs and experiences acquired from the past in the management of communal affairs⁶⁹. P. Granfield also interprets this Weberian conception of traditionally based authority in terms of the Catholic Church : “A good example is the conviction that bishops are the successors of the apostles, and the Pope, the successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ. The Catholic Church relies on scripture and tradition, including the later conciliar and dogmatic teachings. Fidelity to the past helps the Church preserve continuity, yet it may make modern adaptations and creative change difficult”⁷⁰.

Furthermore, Weber describes the last kind of legitimacy as charismatic dominion⁷¹. It derives its source from “extraordinary devotion to the holiness or the heroism or the exemplary life of a person and the order revealed or created by him”⁷². The charismatic authority constitutes itself in opposition to tradition and law due to the importance it attaches to the exceptional or to persons gifted with special qualities⁷³. It institutes its proper norms outside of all regimentation by law or by institution and thus, depends so much on spontaneous inspiration. Granfield observes that though there can be advantages to genuine charismatic authority, it can become disproportionate, as shown by the papal cult in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries⁷⁴.

⁶⁹Cf. J. FREUND, *Le charisme selon Max Weber*, p. 385.

⁷⁰P. GRANFIELD, *Legitimation and Bureaucratization of Ecclesial Power*, p. 88.

⁷¹Cf. M. WEBER, *Sociologie des religions*, p. 370-373.

⁷²M. WEBER, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, p. 159.

⁷³Cf. J. FREUND, *Le charisme selon Max Weber*, p. 385.

⁷⁴Cf. P. GRANFIELD, *Legitimation and Bureaucratization of Ecclesial Power*, p. 88.

5.2. Evaluation of Weber's Theory

Critically considered Weber's sociological analysis of the phenomenon of authority especially as experienced during his own day did not lead him to the discovery of what authority is essentially but to what authority became or can become when it is reduced to a relationship of power and thus ceases to serve and to promote freedom. His study is situated within the context of the socio-political, cultural and religious situation of Europe especially in the 19th century and early 20th century⁷⁵. His concentration on the sociological data observable in a special way during his day led him to the analysis of dominion or domination which is more of a power relationship than authority which has to do with service and moral power⁷⁶. In other words, his own method which is sociological, in spite of its merits, also constituted his own limitation and modified his results. Furthermore, the difference between dominion and a purely power based relationship, is that with regard to the former there is a minimal measure of agreement to this relationship by those subject to it as verifiable in their voluntary submission,

⁷⁵Cf. K. GABRIEL, *Power in the Contemporary Church in the Light of Sociological Theories: Max Weber, Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt*, in *Concilium*, 197/3 (1988), p. 30-31 : "Weber is particularly concerned with the analysis of the structures of domination of industrially developed capitalist societies. In this context he analyses the transformation of the structure of domination within the Catholic Church as a process of bureaucratization and centralization. The central characteristics of this are seen by Weber as an age-old process of separating or 'expropriating' the individual from the means of religious domination, their concentration at the summit and their allocation from above to below. For Weber this historically unique process of expropriation takes place in the context of the destruction of the Church's feudal structures with their multiplicity of forms of autonomous religious domination, a development which for the first time opened up the way for the concentration of the means of religious domination at the summit. The same applies to second element of this process: the concentration at the summit of the authority to make decisions and the delegation of these powers from above to below in a system of the domination and subordination of offices. Weber sees the significance of Vatican I in its having brought this process to a definite conclusion with its declaration of the pope's universal episcopate".

⁷⁶Cf. F. X. KAUFMANN, *The Sociology of Knowledge and the Problem of Authority*, p. 18: "More recent sociological attempts at definition, therefore, view authority, too, as a source of power, which, however, is distinguished from other sources of power (e.g., money, force) as a less alienating form of power. Concerning the concept of dominion, it is clear that relationships of dominion are distinguished from relationship of mere power by the acknowledgement of the superiority, that is, by a certain measure of authority. Normally dominion rests as much on authority as on other sources of power".

though not necessarily to every injunction. With regard to purely power relationship the response of those under submission is usually that of fear and resistance⁷⁷.

As a moral or legitimate power, authority cannot be primarily interpreted in terms of command and obedience structure nor in terms of rule and subordination as Weber does which led him more to the discovery of power and domination relationship. In view of its character as service, authority has to be primarily interpreted in terms of the trustworthiness, credibility and qualifications of one in the position of authority on the basis of which others freely recognize and attribute authority to him. K. L. Scheppele and K. E. Soltan collaborate this view when they wrote: "We argue that the association of authority with obedience to authority figures is just one example of a more general phenomenon. Authority, in our view, is not simply the right of actor A to get actor B to carry out A's will voluntarily. Instead, authority is found when actor B finds compelling particular properties of A, when A may be a person, a solution to a puzzle, or, more generally, any alternative in a choice situation. Authority is constituted not by person A willing a particular state of affairs which is then carried out, but rather by person B being attracted to the state of affairs offered by alternative A and voluntarily choosing that option over others. When generalized this way, authority resides not only in persons or offices, but also in texts, rituals, types of explanation, justifications, reasons, or particular real or ideal social arrangements"⁷⁸.

Furthermore, the merits of Weber's sociological theory of 'authority' in terms of power and domination is that it helps us to clarify the distinction which exists between authority and domination. On the one hand, authority in the authentic sense is rooted in service of common good and respects human freedom and dignity. Domination is abuse of authority as it is rooted on the interest of a superior power, denigrates human freedom, dignity and social good, and reduces the people to simple objects of the acts

⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁸ Cf. K. L. SCHEPPELE & K. E. SOLTAN, *The Authority of Alternatives*, in *Authority Revisited* (coll. *Nomos*, XXIX). Ed. J. R. PENNOCK & J. W. CHAPMAN, New York, University Press, 1987, p. 170.

of one in authority. On the other hand, authority in its true sense primarily appeals to the free consent of the individual to a command of a specific content in the context of its competence and brings to bear its power only when the common good is threatened or endangered. On the other hand, domination tries to accomplish its will by evoking fear or by placing undue emphasis on obedience and submission to its authority base which in Weber's theory can be legal, traditional or charismatic. True authority operates in a circular relationship implicating participation, dialogue and co-responsibility, while domination establishes a pyramidal form of relationship and creates inequalities among people.

6. The Limits of Authority

The implication of authority as legitimate or moral power is that it is not only the right to determine something in the life of others, but first and foremost the rightful freedom to do what is genuinely right and to communicate this to others⁷⁹. This means that one in authority has no right to make demands that exceed the power vested on him. He cannot impose unjust laws or burdens on others. As a matter of fact, "unjust laws or ordinances are not from the moral point of view binding at all and thus the obedience owed by subjects is always conditioned by the rightful exercise of authority"⁸⁰.

However, the problem as John McKenzie sees it is how to determine the *modus operandi* for deciding when what authority commands is the right thing to do. He puts it this way: "Who determines that what authority commands is the right thing to do?"⁸¹. His answer is that it can neither be left alone to the judgment of the authority as this will lead to absolute power on the part of the authority neither can it be left

⁷⁹ Cf. X. KODAPUZHA, *The New Vision of the Role of Authority in the Church According to Vatican II*, in *Christian Orient*, 9/1 (1988), p. 24.

⁸⁰ J. L. MCKENZIE, *Authority in the Church*, p. 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

alone to the judgment of the governed as this may result in a chaotic situation. On this basis, McKenzie opts for a middle position by referring the decision on the rightness of a command to the judgment of both authority and the governed through their appropriate channels⁸². However, McKenzie failed to be precise enough for in modern societies, authority and government are based on the rules and constitution of these societies which provide the objective criteria for the function and exercise of authority. In the Church the objective principle is the Word of God and her living tradition. However, for practical purposes the whole people of God ought to be involved in the discernment of God's will and decision making as authority encourages creative dependence. In this light it may be suggested that in the Church the ancient Synodal system of government should take precedence over the actual present hierarchical-monarchical system.

7. Authority As Service

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that authority exists in the society and draws its right of existence not only *a priori* from certain personal or official rights but also from the service which it actually renders within the society or community. Authority does not precede the society in existence. Rather we first of all have the society and then authority as an essential means to the attainment of the ends of the society through service oriented to the common-good. By service as we said before we mean anything which promotes human common-good. In the family for instance, the authority of parents over their children is based not only on the fact that they have begotten their children but also on the parents' invaluable service of care, education and training of their children. Parents who neglect to care for and train their children may lose their authority over them. However, parental authority tends towards its own

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*

abrogation for as soon as the children attain adulthood, they gain the freedom for self-responsibility.

On the other hand, leaders in the State derive their authority not only from their social investiture or legal rights, but also from the services which they render to maintain justice, responsible freedom, human dignity and mutual co-existence. In short, their authority as service is basically about the creation of the necessary condition for the material, intellectual and spiritual development of the human person in the society. In the Church the bishops derive their authority not only from their nomination and episcopal ordination but also from the services which they render within the Christian community in view of its growth, up building and salvation of the people of God. In this way, they become like Jesus whose authority is that of service. Thus, in truth authority is not simply 'abstract' rights, it is also service. Or put in another way, authority is the right to serve in a public and particular way within the context of a community in view of its good and development.

As a function thus within a community the social recognition of authority is part of its constitutive reality. But the fundamental element about the truth of authority is its moral constitutive part, that is how this authority is to be used and for what purpose it is to be used. This is based on the service to be rendered to the community and thus on the necessary qualifications and competence which the responsibility for others implies⁸³. Without this service, authority loses its meaning and signification, and as well becomes subject to all kinds of abuse and crisis as human history testifies.

8. The Crisis of Authority: Towards a Philosophical Analysis

It is because historically human authority has not always lived up to its expectation of service that there is a lot of suspicion about authority today⁸⁴. Yves Simon has

⁸³ Cf. F. X. KAUFMANN, *The Sociology of Knowledge and the Problem of Authority*, p. 19.

⁸⁴ Cf. F. ROUSTANG, *Les fondements de l'autorité*, in *Christus*, 9/33 (1962), p. 438: "*considère l'autorité comme un mal nécessaire que l'on est bien forcé de subir, mais duquel on doit chercher à tout prix à se guérir*";

given a critical analysis of this present suspicion against authority: "Persons in authority enjoy positions of privilege and have access to goods and honors not available to the majority of men ; thus it seems that authority is in 'conflict with justice'. And because vitality is evidenced by immanence and spontaneity, it may appear that the core of freedom is weakened by authority, which is in 'conflict with life'. Sometimes authority seems to be in 'conflict with truth', since lovers of truth see all too often that authority is a kind of tool used to keep people in a state of ignorance favoring the *status quo*. Even more, many think that law can take the place of authority, that law is stable and orderly, free from the contingencies of the exercise of authority ; thus they envision authority as in 'conflict with order' " ⁸⁵.

8.1. Hannah Arendt

Furthermore, some people even consider authority as something that is destined to disappear as the society perfects itself⁸⁶. Hannah Arendt says that one ought to talk about what authority 'was' and not what it 'is'. According to her, authority has lost its ontological basis in modern life and thus it has no more any external standard to which authorities can appeal. She writes : "Historically we know of a variety of sources to which authoritative rulers could appeal in order to justify their power ; it could be the law of nature, or the commands of God, or the Platonic ideas or ancient customs, or a great event in the past (...) in all these cases legitimacy derives from something outside the range of human deeds"⁸⁷.

see also N. SCHIFFERS, *Autorité / Pouvoir*, in *Dictionnaire de Théologie*, ed. P. EICHER, Paris, Cerf, 1988, p. 31; B. DONAHUE, *La crise de l'autorité*, in *Concilium*, 114 (1976), p. 97.

⁸⁵Cited in G. J. MC MORROW, *Authority*, p. 1111.

⁸⁶This is the view of antiauthoritarian philosophers. According to G. J. Mc Morrow "some antiauthority theorists assert that authority is necessary only on a provisional basis because of the 'insufficiency' of its members, as in the case of children, the illiterate, and the primitive. The implication of this position is that once (and if) the deficiency is removed, authority is no longer necessary. A subtle justification of sterilization and euthanasia has sometimes found its roots in such a theory. The basis of the deficiency theory of authority springs from the myth that there is a direct proportion between social progress and the progress of personal freedom. The next logical step in the theory is to equate social development and personal freedom with the inevitable or proportionate decay of authority" *Ibid*.

⁸⁷H. ARENDT, *What Was Authority?* in *Authority* (coll. *Nomos I*). Ed. C. J. FRIEDRICH, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 82.

One of the periods when the ontological foundation for Arendtian authority was in place was the late Middle Ages when the theory and practice of authority tended to depend on sources 'outside the range of human deeds'. The divine will as W. E. Connolly noted was said to be expressed in nature and thus discernible in the things, events, words, deeds, and living beings that constituted the world⁸⁸. The natural world was consequently imbued with a *telos*, harmony and divine purpose which can be discerned in function of guiding human life and activity. Thus, authority in the understanding of Hannah Arendt would be this reference to sources outside the range of human deeds in the justification of the acts and injunctions of those who were the custodians of this authority. Continues Connolly: "Authorities, in this setting, appealed to some privileged access to the purposiveness of the world. Through careful study of ancient texts or by living in communion with God or by being specially ordained by God they could interpret authoritatively signs available to them and they could then act with authority. To feel the pull of authority in these circumstances is to seek to emulate conduct embodied in an exemplary individual or text"⁸⁹.

Arendt describes the traditional structure of authority that emerged in this Medieval context with the image of a pyramid: "The pyramid is indeed a particularly fitting image for a governmental structure whose source of authority lies outside itself, but whose seat of power is located at the top, from which authority and power is filtered down to the base in such a way that each successive layers from top to bottom are not only firmly integrated into the whole but are interrelated like converging rays whose common focal point is the top of the pyramid as well as the transcending source of authority above it. This image, it is true, can be used only for the Christian type of authoritarian rule, as it developed through and under the constant influence of the Church during the Middle Ages, when the focal point above and beyond the earthly

⁸⁸Cf. W. E. CONNOLLY, *Modern Authority and Ambiguity*, in *Authority Revisited* (coll. *Nomos XXIX*). Ed. J. R. PENNOCK & J. W. CHAPMAN, New York, University Press, 1987, p. 11.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 12.

pyramid provided the necessary point of reference for the Christian type of equality, the strictly hierarchical structure of life on earth notwithstanding”⁹⁰.

The hallmark of this Arendtian authority of the middle ages is the unquestioning submission by those who are asked to obey. In this sense, authority is distinguished from coercion and persuasion⁹¹. “On this view, authority is distinguished from coercion as a mode of influence because it involves some sort of ‘recognition’ on the part of the subject that the person to whom he submits is ‘entitled’ to obedience and it is distinguished from persuasion in that obedience is not procured by ‘argument’ ”⁹².

On the other hand, it is unfortunate that Arendt does not speak of transformation in understanding of authority in the modern world leading to the emergence of new forms of its expression and experience but rather of loss of authority. The reason for this is that she drew her concept of authority from a very specific historical and political form of it. This is the hierarchical traditional structure of the Medieval Europe based on the unity of *Christendom*, that is unity of faith and the alliance between ‘the throne and the alter’ which made Pope Gelasius I to write to Emperor Anastasius I in the fifth century : “Two are the things by which this world is chiefly ruled : the sacred authority of the Popes and the royal power”⁹³. Given this particular historical background, Arendt saw the hallmark of authority in the unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey⁹⁴ rather than in service for the sake of which authority exists. According to her, religion and thus also tradition played a principal role in the maintenance of this order owing to the Church’s utilization of her teaching function in the cultivation and propagation of dogmatic beliefs that fulfilled her political need of keeping the people submissive to her authority especially through fear or moral

⁹⁰H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1985, p. 98.

⁹¹Cf. H. ARENDT, *On Violence*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1970, p. 45.

⁹²R. B. FRIEDMAN, *On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy*, in *Authority*, ed. J. RAZ, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 64.

⁹³Cited in H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 126-127.

⁹⁴Cf. H. ARENDT, *On Violence*, p. 45.

coercion⁹⁵. Arendt, therefore, sees the elimination of religion and tradition from public life in the modern world as being responsible for the loss of authority : « Historically, we may say that the loss of authority is merely the final, though decisive, phase of a development which for centuries undermined primarily religion and tradition »⁹⁶.

8.2. Authority and the Enlightenment

Furthermore, the passage from the Medieval period or the era of *Christendom* to the Modern period was marked by a new emphasis which also affected the understanding of authority in the modern times. The philosophy of Enlightenment led to the exaltation of reason, human freedom and autonomy disparaging all external sources of authority outside the range of human subjectivity. G.W.F Hegel, for instance, noted that the prominent thinking in his epoch was the principle of 'interiority', which considers both externality and authority as impertinent and lifeless⁹⁷. Immanuel Kant exalted the human reason as the supreme arbiter and principle that gives itself its own laws. He considered Enlightenment as the overcoming of self-caused immaturity. Thus, he says: "Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's own intelligence without the guidance of another. The motto of the Enlightenment is 'sapere aude' – have the courage to use your own intelligence"⁹⁸. Kant holds that reason is the best tool which

⁹⁵Cf. H. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 132-133: "The introduction of the Platonic hell into the body of Christian dogmatic beliefs strengthened religious authority to the point where it could hope to remain victorious in any contest with secular power. But the price paid for this additional strength was that the Roman concept of authority was diluted, and an element of violence was permitted to insinuate itself into both the very structure of Western religious thought and the hierarchy of the Church. How high this price actually was might be gauged by the more than embarrassing fact that men of unquestionable stature- among them Tertullian and even Thomas Aquinas- could be convinced that one of the joys in heaven would be the privilege of watching the spectacle of unspeakable sufferings in hell. Nothing perhaps in the whole development of Christianity throughout the centuries is farther removed from and more alien to the letter and spirit of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth than the elaborate catalogue of future punishments and the enormous power of coercion through fear which only in the last stages of the modern age have lost their public, political significance. As far as religious thought is concerned, it certainly is a terrible irony that the 'glad tidings' of the Gospels, 'life is everlasting', should eventually have resulted not in an increase of joy but of fear on earth, should not have made it easier but harder for man to die".

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁹⁷Cited in G. J. MC MORROW, *Authority*, p. 1111.

⁹⁸I. KANT, *What is Enlightenment?* in *Kant's Moral and Political Writings*, ed. J. FRIEDRICH, New York, Modern Library, 1949, p. 132-139, see p. 132.

we have for getting at the truth and that it operates better when it is unchecked by authority. Authority for him is useful only to immature people and it is only provisional. It is only through rational insight that one can arrive to true personal conviction and not by authority⁹⁹.

On the other hand, Hans Georg Gadamer has tried to rehabilitate authority against the background of discrediting prejudices of the Enlightenment. He accepted the Enlightenment position that authority is a source of prejudice. But he also accepted that authority can also be source of truth. This was denied by the Enlightenment. Writes Gadamer in his hermeneutical work, *Truth and Method* : “The Enlightenment’s distinction between faith in authority and using one’s own reason is, in itself, legitimate. If the prestige of authority displaces one’s own judgment, then authority is in fact a source of prejudices . But this does not preclude its being a source of truth, and that is what the Enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated all authority”¹⁰⁰.

Gadamer faulted the Enlightenment for its concept of reason and freedom as a result of which blind obedience, its absolute opposite, was stressed in the concept of authority. Against this tendency, he positively noted that authority of persons “is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgement and knowledge – the knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence i.e., it has priority over one’s own”¹⁰¹. In this way, the only form of authority that Gadamer retains is authority of knowledge.

8.3. Conclusion drawn from these Philosophical Theories

The above philosophical criticisms of authority in the first place show that authority is under crisis in modernity. The object of these criticisms is no doubt the concrete

⁹⁹Cf. A. DULLES, *The Resilient Church*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1977, p. 93.

¹⁰⁰H. G. GADAMER, *Truth and Method*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1989, p. 279.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

historical forms and manifestations of authority. The record is not at all enviable. Do we have to talk about the history of world dictatorships, bloody and cruel regimes, totalitarian and absolutist governments? The history of the last two world wars with its spell of disaster is still fresh in our memories. It is also a historical fact that it is the manipulation of such values as authority and obedience which paved the way to nazis extermination camps¹⁰². It is also a proven fact that the manipulation of the factors of obedience and authority is also a major factor in the sustenance of communist regimes with all their ideologies of power and domination. On the part of the ecclesiastical government, the historical records also contain conspicuous indices of domination and authoritarianism especially as manifest in the early modern times.

Given this evidence of failures of authority in its historical forms and the consequent human cost of oppression and suppression, it is not surprising that Enlightenment philosophers and thinkers of modernity laid an uncompromising emphasis on individual liberty and auto-determination at the detriment of all traditional forms of authority. However, what is rejected in principle generally speaking is not the very idea of authority but its concrete historico-authoritarian forms based on the structure of sub-ordination and domination. Thus, writes P. Valadier : *“S’il est vrai que la modernité ne respecte pas la tradition simplement parce qu’elle est la tradition, ou l’autorité parce que celle-ci se proclame autorité, elle respecte une autorité qui exhibe ses raisons d’être respectée, et elle admet une tradition qui fait valoir sa pertinence et son bien-fondé. Elle accepte les autorités qui justifient leurs dires et leurs actes, non en invoquant simplement ce ‘éternel hier’ dont parle Weber, mais en montrant leur pouvoir créateur : on le voit dans les arts et dans les sciences, aussi bien qu’en politique”*¹⁰³.

¹⁰²Cf. F. Z. CASTIGLIONCHIO, *Influences socio-psychologiques et socio-politiques sur l'autorité de l'Eglise*, in *Concilium*, 117 (1976), p. 102.

¹⁰³ P. VALADIER, *L'autorité en morale*, in *Etudes*, 379 (1993), p. 220.

Thus, the only form of authority that can pass the ‘acid test’ of modernity is not simply authority of knowledge as Gadamer thinks, but more generally moral authority here understood as authority which imposes itself primarily on the basis of its own truth, value, transparency and efficacy. Authority acceptable in modernity is one which justifies its claims before the human agent conceived as free and autonomous. Thus, with the centering on the self, “the quest to justify authority in modernity is the quest to ground it in the rational consent of agents who agree (or promise) to obey rules and officials installed according to proper procedures”¹⁰⁴. Due to the trumpeted role placed on subjectivity, one can wonder if the modern understanding of the self as an agent is morally compatible with the exercise of authority at all. Based on this understanding of the self has the modern world adequate resources for determining a shared set of ends worthy of consent ? ¹⁰⁵.

There is no doubt for us that Enlightenment emphasis on human subjectivity is exaggerated. This is because the individual is always a social being and lives in community with others. There must, therefore, be a way of striking a balance between individual good and the common good of the community. It is not only authority which must justify its claims before the human agent, the individual ought also to justify its choices and preferences in dialogue with the community for it is not only the individual who has his freedom and good to protect but also the entire community. On this writes P. Valadier : “*L’individu, si toutefois il veut être respecté comme personne humaine, doit justifier ses attentes, passer ses désirs au crible du discours, donc de la raison. Affirmer ses choix et ses préférences ne peut constituer la base de l’autorité moderne, comme si les divers pouvoirs se devaient s’incliner inconditionnellement devant toute expression de soi faite par l’individu. Celui-ci doit exhiber ses raisons, entrer dans le jeu de la discussion collective*” ¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁴ W. E. CONNOLLY, *Modern Authority and Ambiguity*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ P. VALADIER, *L’autorité en morale*, p. 221.

Avery Dulles has noted that the rebellion against authority during the time of the Enlightenment was a time-conditioned reaction against the excesses of ecclesiastical authoritarianism which reached its height in early modern times. He holds that authority will always generate a negative image as reflected in the writers of the Enlightenment where it becomes oppressive and violates the integrity of honest inquiry and conscientious decision¹⁰⁷. The importance of the critical thinking developed by Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant is that this thinking can be helpful in guarding against the absolutization of authority. It can be helpful in detecting errors or false emphasis into which the authorities may have fallen. It can be useful in assessing competing claims to authority and in reinterpreting past statements in order to grasp their true significance for new situations¹⁰⁸.

Despite the historical conditioning to the Enlightenment reaction, its claim that the rejection of authority is a sign of adulthood cannot be sustained. This is because in practically all aspects of life, mature persons rely upon authority in the sense that they depend on the advice given by experienced and knowledgeable persons, whom they regard as experts in the field. If this happens in the field of law, in medicine, in history, and art criticism, why not in religion?¹⁰⁹ "In the case of religion which, like Christianity, claims to rest on definite revelation given in the past, belief is essentially linked with the acceptance of the testimony of those who, allegedly, were the prime recipients of the revelation. There is no way in which reason can prove by universally cogent arguments the truth of the interpretation that the New Testament and the creeds give to the figure of Jesus. If we antecedently refuse to take anything on authority, we cut ourselves off from the benefits of historical revelation. Christianity ceases to have any value except as a set of symbols for interpreting our own experience"¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. A. DULLES, *The Resilient Church*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

9. The Relational Character of Authority

Furthermore, authority is fundamentally a relational reality because it is essentially something that binds a people together in a unity of action for the common-good. It is in the will of a people for the common good that the locus of authority has to be primarily located generally speaking. In the Church, even though the origin of authority is divine, it is not to be exercised without the participation of the community of the people of God. In this way, authority also finds its relational dimension in the Church. Neglect of the relational or communal dimension of authority can lead to serious consequences. Writes D. J. Stagaman : “Authorities who forget their authority is from God soon substitute themselves for the absent divinity. Those who fail to remember that the origin of their authority is in the will of the people towards the common good inevitably lead the people according to their darkest impulses”¹¹¹.

Truly speaking, therefore, authority cannot be understood outside its relational dimension. T. Govaart-Halkes has explained how this relational character of authority can be realized together with all the communication and interaction that this implies : *“Mais nous aspirons aujourd’hui et dans des années à venir, à des hommes qui peuvent en conduire d’autres, à des porteurs d’autorité susceptibles de vivre dans une atmosphère de dialogue, prêts à écouter et ensuite à tenir compte de ce qu’ils ont appris dans leur réponse, afin de créer progressivement une responsabilité collégiale. Nous étendons ici le critère de maturité à la capacité de vivre en des états relationnels, dans le dialogue. L’autorité devient à ce moment un phénomène inter humain ; il s’agira de situations « sur le terrain » et des relations qui s’y nouent. Nous avons, en effet, affaire avec des hommes, et il ne nous revient pas de décider à leur endroit à partir d’une plate-forme surélevée et solitaire et de leur imposer quelque chose sans qu’ils puissent l’examiner”*¹¹².

¹¹¹ D. J. STAGAMAN, *Authority in the Church*, p. 29.

¹¹² T. GOVAART-HALKES, *En quête de nouvelles formes d’autorité et d’obéissance dans l’Eglise*, p. 63.

Applying the above reflections on the Church, T. Govaart-Halkes discovers another ground for the affirmation of the relational dimension of authority within the Christian community, namely, the presence and action of the Spirit: *“En mettant ces réflexions en rapport avec le mécanisme de l'autorité dans l'Eglise, il ressort que cette vigilance pour les aspects relationnels, la sensibilisation à l'esprit de communication, représentent une concrétisation de notre confiance dans l'action et les dons de l'Esprit dans l'Eglise”*¹¹³.

10. Authority and Consensus

If authority is to discover and express its relational and communal character, it must be a vital instrument in the promotion and formation of consensus. Human limitation means that no one individual person possesses in isolation all the needed competence and qualification which the responsibility for others entails. Authority must, therefore, in a sense be seen as the sum total of all the gifts and talents in the community. Consensus seeking allows all the members of the community to contribute to the work of authority with their different gifts without prejudice, however, for the authority of those who have the special responsibility to preside. It also makes authority a true service by eliminating unnecessary inequalities that divide people by situating authority within its proper social context of human inter-relationships¹¹⁴. It is in this light that H. Waldenfels observed : “(...)consensus has a central focus where it is a matter of human existence, its knowledge and its goals. It does not allow people either to be pushed out of the way into loneliness and isolation or to be robbed of their fundamental freedom and forcibly united in particular linguistic rules and patterns of behaviour . As a result it finds or ought to find its place everywhere that authority appears as a source of judgment that creates or promotes freedom. This is the case both in the political and legal field and also in the religious and theological field. Here

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Cf. H. WALDENFELS, *Authority and Knowledge*, in *Concilium*, 180/4 (1985), p. 36.

we encounter formulae like *consensus omnium, consensus gentium, consensus fidelium, consensus Patrum, consensus theologorum*"¹¹⁵.

Karl Rahner draws attention to the basis for consensus thinking which according to him derives "its life from the fundamental intellectual confidence that man, in the understanding of himself that he is equipped with and that sustains him, cannot simply fall out of the truth. It reveals itself with a certainty sufficient for the maintenance for intellectual existence in the fact that all the dimensions of actual living together, joint celebration, worship, personal love and other actions of human and inter-personal existence that depend on the realities denoted in the formula do in fact succeed"¹¹⁶.

As a remedy to the abuse of authority, H. Waldenfels observes that it is a responsibility on the part of those in authority to establish that their function is truly a service to their people by ensuring that their activities are capable of winning consensus while also being attentive to the actual processes of forming consensus. He also rightly concludes that "the attitude to consensus is one of the criteria for examining critically the relationship of authority, power and rule"¹¹⁷.

But what is consensus and how does one arrive at it? Here the work of the German contemporary philosopher, Jürgen Habermas can be very elucidating. In his *Wahrheitstheorien*, Habermas embarks on the explication of what he calls consensus theory of truth. By consensus, he does not mean de facto consensus or our matter-of-fact agreement but rational consensus, that is consensus or agreement arrived at between parties by a process of critical discussion. It is such rational consensus which according to Habermas can suffice to ground truth claims. For a consensus to be rational or grounded it must be arrived at by the sole force of the better argument. This implies that the evidence and arguments in the discussion will be presented in such a

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶K. RAHNER, *Schriften zur Theologie* Vol. VI, Einsiedeln, 1965, p. 109-110; cited in H. WALDENFELS, *Authority and Knowledge*, p. 36.

¹¹⁷H. WALDENFELS, *Authority and Knowledge*, p. 36.

way that any rational, competent judge would come to the same conclusion. If anyone should disagree, he could - if he would let himself be guided by the force of the better argument - be brought to agree with us¹¹⁸. The criterion of truth is "not the fact that some consensus has been reached, but rather that at all times and all places, if only we enter into a discourse, a consensus can be arrived at under conditions which show the consensus to be grounded"¹¹⁹. These conditions which make consensus possible are known in Habermas' terms as the "ideal speech situation"¹²⁰.

It is a situation of argumentative discourse whereby all the partners in the dialogue or cooperative search for truth are free from all constraints on argumentative reasoning. In other words, this form of interaction is marked by absence of all distorting influences. The only determining factor or permissible force is the "peculiarly unforced force of the better argument". This also implies that "there must be for all participants a symmetrical distribution of chances to select and employ speech acts, that is an effective equality of chances to assume dialogue roles. If this is not the case, the resultant agreement is open to the charge of being less than rational, of being the result not of the force of the better argument but, for example, of open or latent relations of domination, of conscious or unconscious strategic motivations"¹²¹.

Habermas' ideal speech situation appears to be unrealistic. This is because the actual situations of theoretical discourse hardly approximate this purity. However, it can serve as a critical standard against which every actually achieved consensus can be measured and as a guide for the institutionalization of discourse¹²². Here lies the importance of Habermas. One can ask at this point: What is the attitude of the Church authority towards the formation of consensus understood in the Habermasian sense?

¹¹⁸Cf. T. McCARTHY, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1984, p. 307.

¹¹⁹J. HABERMAS, *Wahrheitstheorien*, in *Wirklichkeit und Reflexion: Festschrift für Walter Schulz*, Pfullingen, 1973, p. 239; cited in T. McCARTHY, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, p. 308.

¹²⁰J. HABERMAS, *Wahrheitstheorien*, p. 239.

¹²¹T. McCARTHY, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, p. 308.

¹²²Cf. *ibid.*, p. 309.

What place is argumentative reasoning and cooperative search for truth given within the structure of the Church? In the Roman Catholic Church, it would seem that not enough attention is given to the formation of consensus. This is because so many burning issues which ought to be open to discussion by the whole people of God are reserved to the hierarchy particularly to the pope¹²³. Free and critical discussion of issues in the Church by the whole people of God leading to the formation of consensus is one of the ways by which the Holy Spirit can lead the Church today.

11. Authority and New Modes of Social Dependence

Modern sociological studies have shown that there is a change and evolution from modes of interpersonal dependence and authority relations characteristic of traditional western society to new forms in modern societies. This evolution has led to a new experience of authority as well as to new forms of its expression. According to H. Carrier : *“Là où autrefois on pensait en termes d’obéissance, on parlera désormais de partage des responsabilités, de participation au pouvoir ; le terme employeur supplante celui de maître ou de patron. Le mot chef est remplacé par celui de leader ; et souvent le mot responsable vient relayer celui de supérieur. L’autorité elle-même sera appréciée en termes de prestige, d’ascendant, de compétence”*¹²⁴.

In pre-industrial and traditional European society authority was the affair of a few and it was exercised directly on persons. Obedience appeared as the highest social virtue as much emphasis was laid on it. It seemed as if the society cannot subsist except on the foundation of obedience which those in authority claim from their subjects¹²⁵. *“Le père commandait souverainement à une famille qui pouvait*

¹²³Such issues like the ordination of women, priestly celibacy and birth control are all reserved to the pope and not open to discussion and dialogue.

¹²⁴H. CARRIER, *Dépendances et libertés de l’homme moderne. Aperçus sociologiques*, in *Christus*, 33/9 (1962), p. 469.

¹²⁵Thomas Aquinas is known to have written in the Middle Ages thus : *“Que les inférieurs obéissent à leurs supérieurs; car autrement ce serait la ruine de la société humaine”* (*Summa Theologiae*, II a, IIae, q.104, a.6.).

*regrouper plusieurs ménages. Le curé avait autorité sur les multiples aspects de la vie du village. Le maître d'œuvre imposait à ses compagnons une discipline qui touchait non seulement au travail mais à la vie de compagnons et aux activités religieuses. Le seigneur lui-même imposait sa juridiction plénière à tout son domaine. Dans un contexte ainsi personnalisé, obéir signifiait spontanément l'acceptation d'une volonté connue et respectée. L'obéissance connotait une attitude 'de respect et d'honneur' envers le supérieur ; accomplir le 'bon plaisir' du maître ne se dissociait pas de l'acte d'obéir”*¹²⁶.

On the other hand, new ways of dependence and authority relations have evolved in harmony with modern times and spirit. Social order is no longer directly hinged on obedience to persons in authority but on obedience to laws which protect individual right and responsibility. New modes of association and organization have arisen which often only claim from their members voluntary adhesion, co-operative attitude and a sort of auto-discipline¹²⁷.

Conclusion

We have seen that authority is a word dense with meaning and signification. From the definitions of some authors, we saw in the first place that it is a right which is a moral quality that confers legitimacy to the exercise of power for service within a social relationship. The etymological meaning of the word 'authority' further helped us to clarify the concept and to discover its fundamental meaning or essence as service within the context of human society and community. We also considered the evolution of the concept which made it possible to be applied not only to qualifications of persons but also of positions or office. We saw that in each of these cases authority

¹²⁶ H. CARRIER, *Dépendances et libertés de l'homme moderne. Aperçus sociologiques*, p. 470.

¹²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

has a fundamental moral and social connotation which distinguishes it from a relationship of mere power or coercion.

From what we have discussed, we can distinguish two general kinds of authority based on its source or origin. When the source is some exceptional personal quality or gifts, the authority which issues from it is known as personal or charismatic authority generally speaking. When the source of this authority is an official status or position, it is known as functional authority or authority of office. We equally noted that these two kinds of authority are not mutually exclusive but are complementary in the full understanding of authority which we have designated as legitimate or moral power. Apart from these two basic kinds of authority, we can also use the word 'authority' in a derived sense as when we speak of texts, rituals, types of explanation, justifications, reasons, laws, or particular real or ideal social arrangements as having authority.

On the other hand, we can also distinguish two senses of authority based on its mode of operation. When authority seeks to prevail primarily on account of its own truth, and by the demonstration of its value, efficacy, transparency and authenticity, it is known as moral authority. Its marked feature is its respect for human freedom, integrity, conscience and dignity. On the other hand, when authority operates on the basis of some legal competence or jurisdiction, and thus seeks to prevail primarily on this account it is known as juridical authority.

On the basis of its multiple significations, authority can be defined in several ways provided that each definition is related to the service of the common good of a community and to some personal or / and official rights as the source of the authority in question. Thus, socially and morally speaking, authority can be defined as legitimate power¹²⁸, a charge or a responsibility for the common good, a moral power

¹²⁸Cf. W. SIEBEL, *The Exercise of Power in Today's Church*, in *Concilium* 197/3 (1988), p. 40: "Legitimate power is socially accepted power, power which feels bound to the objectives, standards and traditions of the

playing an essential function for the sake of united action in the life of a community. Two things are important when speaking about authority : (1) Its social recognition. (2) Its use – which refers to the qualifications and competence which the responsibility for others implies. While the former has a jurisdictional connotation, the later is moral. It is the moral constitutive part of authority, which is the essential element of its truth as it is this that guarantees the service of the common good without which authority has no reason to be. In this sense, authority (*auctoritas*) is best expressed by the Latin root word *augere* – which means to increase, enrich, augment . It is this sense which authority primarily carries in the New Testament.

As a function in human community, authority is basically the moral power to serve the common-good, the exercise of which is only limited by the ends and nature of a given society. We earlier noted that service is hereby understood as whatever leads to the human common good. It is for this value that authority exists. In other words, authority promotes this value in a particular way which is indispensable to the existence and continuity of any community. But how can authority be truly a service and avoid degenerating into abuses which is responsible for the modern suspicion, critique and uneasiness about it as we saw in our philosophical analysis? Here we have to follow H. Waldenfels in affirming that the attitude of those in authority to consensus is the ‘acid test’ of authority as service. In other words, they must be able to demonstrate that their activities are capable of winning consensus as well as pay attention to the actual process of the formation of consensus. In this way authority

social system and tries to act in a way that will be in line with the maintenance and welfare of the whole”. On the legitimation of power writes Siebel thus: “ In all social systems power finds its legitimation on three different levels: there is the legitimation of the office, the legitimation of the person, and the legitimation of the acts of rule that are actually carried out. The first form of legitimation – the legitimation of the office – asks about the sphere of responsibility and its justification in the framework of the whole social system, with its tradition. The second form of legitimation – the legitimation of the person – asks whether the office has been properly assumed by the person holding it (e.g. whether the choice or election was valid). The third form of legitimation, finally – the legitimation of particular actions – asks whether what the ruling person does is in accordance with law (in the wider sense of justice, not merely in the sense of a defined law in force). The legitimation of action can be defined least readily. But it presupposes that a ruling person who is in another sense legitimated can still lose that legitimation through an unlawful act of rule. When unlawful acts by rulers are controlled by members of the social system, this ensures that the legitimation process is fundamentally speaking never at an end”.

becomes truly what it is: service of the common good. This is also the way out of the abuses which authority often stumbles into. In the Church, the attitude to consensus is demonstrated in the priority given to ecclesial communion.

On the other hand, the fact that new modes of social relations and dependence which emphasis the communal and relational character of authority have displaced the older understanding of the essence of authority as hinged primarily on the prospect of receiving obedience (M. Weber) or on the unquestioning obedience by those who are asked to obey (H. Arendt) is a creative development in the line of new experience of authority and the rediscovery of service in modern times.

Chapter Two

Authority as Service: Foundation in the Apostolic Church

Introduction

In chapter one, we undertook the study of the concept of authority by placing it within a perspective larger than the Christian ecclesial community. This enabled us to have a general idea of the concept as well as consider the relation between various major forms or manifestations of authority in human society. The study of the general meaning of authority in human society is also a preparation for us in order to appreciate better the need of authority in the Church and the problems that could be associated with it by the way it is understood or exercised. One of the important conclusions we arrived at is that authority has a social dimension in the sense that it always implies human existential character as a being with others and arises out of the necessity of satisfying the common human good within this existential relation. However, the specific form which authority takes in any given community depends on the nature and end of that community.

In this light, authority in the Church as shown in the New Testament has a fundamental connotation which distinguishes it from other manifestations of authority in human society. This is because as the nature and end of the Church as a community is unique, the specific form which authority takes in the Christian community ought also to reflect in its notion and character something unique. The uniqueness of the notion and character of authority in the Church derives from the fact that the Church is a community of salvation as a present and eschatological reality. Thus, authority has a soteriological goal, connotation and foundation in the Church. If authority is

understood as a help to the work of salvation which God Himself does in the Church, then its nature and content must be the example of the One who is the Way to salvation, Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Saviour. In this chapter, we shall study how the apostolic Church understood and lived the above truths about Church authority as shown in the New Testament.

1. The Concept of Authority in the New Testament and its Soteriological Connotation

1.1. *Exousia* in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, the word ‘authority’ is normally designated by the Greek word *exousia*¹. It appears 93 times². Often it refers to the authority of God or of Jesus Christ. It is rarely applied to the apostles or to speak of a Church ambassador. Only in about seven cases does the New Testament use the word authority in such a sense. In five of them Jesus gives authority to his disciples to drive out demons: Mtt. 10, 1; Mk 3, 15; 6, 7; Lk 9, 1; 10, 19. In the other two, what is referred to is the authority, which an apostle has as a minister of the work of God in the Church: 2Co 10, 8; 13, 10³.

Two possible reasons may be responsible for the apparent reluctance of the New Testament in applying the word *exousia* in designating Church officials: (1) The awareness of the apostolic Christian communities of the negative connotation of the word in the Jewish-Hellenistic religious and political world around them. Here

¹“ In early Greek usage *exousia*, derived from *exestin* denotes ability to perform an action to the extent that there are no hindrance, as distinct from *dynamis* which denotes intrinsic ability. It can also mean the right to do something or the right over something, and thus, carried in its meaning, authority, permission or freedom. The term denotes more the possibility of action used with regard to the rights of parents, masters, or owners of property. Such rights of course, are illusions unless backed up by power, and when the power is present, we can find it difficult to separate *exousia* and *dynamis*. The usage in classical Greek, however, clearly roots the word in right rather than actual exercise”. J. F. O’GRADY, *Authority and Power*, p. 130.

²Cf. Y. CONGAR, *La hiérarchie comme service selon le nouveau testament et les documents de la tradition*, in *L’Episcopat et l’Eglise universelle (coll. Unam sanctam, 39)*. Ed. Y. CONGAR & B. D. DUPUY, Paris, Cerf, 1962, p. 80.

³ Cf. *ibid.*

authority often meant dominating power. The determination of the apostolic Church to combat the infiltration of this negative conception in her midst is evident in such polemic as Mtt 20, 24-28; Mk 10, 35-45; Lk 22, 24-27 which denounce domination in the Church and exult the conception of authority as self-sacrificing service. The ambivalence and ambiguity in the understanding of *exousia* may therefore, be regarded as a reason why the New Testament is slow in applying the word to Church leaders. However, when it is explicitly applied effort is immediately made to specify the positive sense which is meant: "(...) the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for destroying" (2 Co 10, 8; 13, 10). (2) The need to reserve the word to God and to the Lordship of Jesus Christ whose *exousia* is absolutely positive and salvific. It is only with reference to God that *exousia* can be applied without corruption because His absolute power corresponds to His absolute goodness. In God alone is there no selfishness and thus, He is the only person truly qualified to bear *exousia*. His authority is oriented to salvation (cf. Jn 17, 2; 10, 17-18; Mk 10, 45). Thus, says Joseph Blank: "The power of God and Christ cannot and should not be understood according to 'profane' (sociological or legal) ideas of power (as 'projections' of social or economic ideas and conditions). For both the power of YHWH and of Jesus Christ have a basically *soteriological structure*; 'power' has here a positive goal, a creative content: that is the redemption and liberation of man, his life. YHWH brings about salvation for His people; the very fact that Jesus did not cling on to 'power', 'as if it were plunder', brought about the true redemption of man. The commandments too (e.g. the Ten Commandments, likewise the 'Sermon on the Mount') must be seen from this soteriological point of view, that is, as making possible true freedom, life and salvation"⁴.

In spite of the reluctance in the application of *exousia* to Church leaders, there is no doubt that in the New Testament there are positions of authority in the Church. But the

⁴ J. BLANK, *The Concept of Power in the Church: New Testament Perspectives*, in *Concilium*, 197/3 (1988), p. 17.

main concern of the apostolic Church is not the formal signification of authority conceived in terms of jurisdiction and power but its substantial signification or its use, which is always conceived in the moral sense. By placing the emphasis on the moral conception of authority, it was possible for the apostolic Church to lift the concept of authority above the category of pure profane representations of power and to situate it in the category of service or means to salvation. This is responsible for the fact that the two major terms applied to Church leaders in the New Testament namely *diakonoi* / *douloi* and *charisma* have intrinsically soteriological connotations in the Christian community.

1.2. *Diakonoi* / *Douloi* and *Charisma*

The above two terms are able to retain their essentially soteriological connotation when applied to Church leaders due to the fact that they also intrinsically imply absolute dependence on the authority of God. It is this absolute dependence on the authority of God, which ensures the subordination of the authority of Church leaders to the soteriological finality of the Christian community. On *douloi* and *diakonoi* writes T. F. Torrance :“The former refers to status rather than function and describes the relationship that determines the very structures of existence in Christ. The *δουλος* lives under the total claim of God and is completely subordinate to Jesus Christ, to whom he belongs body and soul. The latter refers to function rather than status and describes the service of those who exist in an absolute relationship to Christ as Lord. The *διακονος* is one who has been given a task by his Master, and who does only what is commanded by Him, not what he thinks out for himself. The servants of Christ (whether we think of them as *δουλοι* or *διακονοι*) are not their own masters, for they belong to another. They do not carry out their own wishes or minister to their own glory, but they do only what they are told and serve only the glory of their Lord”⁵.

⁵ T. F. TORRANCE, *Service in Jesus Christ*, in *Theological Foundation for Ministry*, ed. R. S. ANDERSON, Scotland, T & T Clark Ltd., 1979, p. 715.

On the other hand, *charisma* as used by St. Paul in his letters refers to the gift of God which concretely expresses itself in service or in the act of the building up of the Christian community. According to Hans Küng: "it signifies the call of God, addressed to an individual, to a particular ministry in the community, which brings with it the ability to fulfil that ministry"⁶. So there is always that essential reference to God as the source and to the Christian community as the place where this gift becomes service. Although, this gift is given gratuitously, it is the intention of the giver, which determines how it is to be used. In this way *charisma* like *diakonia* maintains its soteriological connotation, as it is precisely the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the use of our gifts and services which guaranties believers justice, salvation or eternal life⁷.

From the foregoing, it is evident that authority in the Church has the structure of service. It is not just an authority, which is to be deployed into service, but it is above all an authority, which defines itself, as it is exercised. It is not first an abstract concept, which is to be translated into reality but first a life, which is lived for God and for others, energy for salvation. In this way, authority of Church leaders mediates the authority of God, who is the sole author of salvation. Authority in the Church according to the New Testament is first obedience to God, submission to the reign of God and service of love, before being a certain right to determine something in the life of others, a position or an office. In fact for this right to determine something in the life of others to qualify as true authority, it must be exercised as an act of obedience to God according to the Christian faith and love. Unless these theological distinctions are kept in mind, people run the risk of confusing Church authority with mundane authority or authoritarian regimes. K. H. Ohlig noted these distinctions. According to him, the Christian belief that the authority of the Lord stands behind the Church and all it does, is not always correctly understood. The Church speaks with authority from

⁶ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, Kent, Burns & Oates, 1967, p. 188.

⁷ Cf. J. BLANK, *The Concept of Power in the Church*, p. 17.

the Lord only if and to the extent that it preaches the Lord. Every utterance of the Church does not necessarily have the support of Christ's authority, for if it had, then all further discussion would be meaningless⁸. "The Church has authority only in so far as it claims no power for itself but refers everything it does to the authority of Jesus. The Church's rights are solely those of selfless service in the preaching of Jesus Christ. It has to be poor in the sense that it can claim nothing for itself. Every claim, therefore, that the Church makes must be founded in Jesus, or it has no validity at all. The Church can make binding pronouncements only in the ultimate sense of confessing Christ, as Peter did, and submitting itself to him. But if the Church thinks in 'human' terms, and puts the preservation of its own existence before everything else, then it becomes an enemy"⁹.

Authority in the Church is, therefore, fundamentally moral and Jesus Christ remains the model of this authority.

2. Jesus Christ as the Model of Authority

2.1. Charismatic / Moral Authority

Although he has his authority from his Father theologically speaking, Jesus' authority belongs primarily to the sociological category of charismatic order as understood in the terms of Max Weber though not in the ideological sense in which Weber conceived his analysis. Jesus' whole life and death understood by the apostolic Church as ministry erupted as a movement or phenomenon outside the legal or recognized religious and political institutions of the time. His ministry, which was the eruption of the kingdom of God equally, manifested itself as a rupture with the existing social order. His authority was not derived from any public function as he had no function in Judaism but by the virtue of his ministry alone he drew to himself

⁸ K. H. OHLIG, *The Theological Objectives of Church Reform*, in *Concilium*, 3/8 (1972), p. 57.

⁹ *Ibid.*

the greatest and most noble authority (cf. Mtt 7, 28-29; Mk 1, 22; Lk 4, 32). Thus, his authority belonged to the prophetic tradition of charismatic ministry rather than to the priestly tradition with its purely functional conception of ministry (cf. Lk 10, 29-37 – the parable of the good Samaritan) or to the rabbinical tradition with its legalistic conception of authority (cf. Mtt 23, 1-7)¹⁰. As pre-eminently a prophet, Jesus' ministry consisted essentially in the preaching of the Good News and the eschatological reign of God already present in his person and in his activities (cf. Mk 1, 15). According to P. Schmidt: "The prime link between the Church and the historical Jesus runs through the prophetic mission of the apostles. Of course Jesus' own activity must not primarily be seen as the exercise of an office; it was charismatic. Jesus is first and foremost a prophet, and the first 'messengers of the gospel' saw their task of preaching as an extension of his prophetic mission"¹¹.

By the sole force of his personality, message and life-style, Jesus drew to himself a large group of disciples. Many left their jobs and professions to follow him despite the hard demands he placed on discipleship (cf. Mtt. 16, 24-26, Mk 8, 34-38; Lk 9, 23-26). In Jesus there was perfect correspondence between the message and the messenger, between his word and his action. He does what he says and says what he does. He lives as he teaches and teaches as he lives. His proclamation of the Gospel and his actions manifest coherently the nearness of the Kingdom of God. The chart of the Beatitudes is the chart of his existence¹². Thus, the apostolic Church regarded his whole life and death on the cross as service. The aspect of authority that he primarily

¹⁰ The parable of the good Samaritan is a critique by the apostolic Church against purely functional conception of ministry. The priest and Levite preoccupied with their cultic function as evident in the parable of the good Samaritan neglected the demands of love and charity that constitute the essence of ministry. On the other hand, Jesus warning of his disciples against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes in Mtt 23, 1-7 is a critique by the apostolic Church against legalistic conception of authority at the detriment of its essentially moral dimension.

¹¹ P. SCHMIDT, *Ministries in the New Testament and the Early Church*, in *Europe Without Priests?* Ed. J. KERKHOF, London, SCM, 1995, p. 62.

¹² Groupe des Dombes, *Un seul Maître. L'autorité doctrinale dans l'Eglise*, Paris, Bayard, 2005, p. 121.

embodied in himself and incarnated in his ministry is, therefore, moral authority or authority derived from service.

2.2. Authority derived from Service

The uniqueness of the model of authority represented by Jesus as handed down to us in the New Testament is that it is above all authority fully won as reward upon his labours after his apprenticeship of service marked by the cross and his resurrection into glory. An expression of the conviction of the apostolic Church in this truth is the post resurrection mandate of Jesus to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nation; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time (Mt 28, 19-20)"¹³.

Thus, the ministry of Jesus culminating in his death and resurrection was his immediate access to full and universal authority over the Church and the world. It was a passage from the cross to the crown, a passage from servitude to glory. One thing remarkable is that as God Jesus could have dispensed himself from any need to conquer or win his authority through service since he had the authority or mandate of

¹³ In his commentary on the gospel of Matthew, W. Hendriksen writes on the import of the full authority of the risen Jesus as reward upon his labours or redemptive service: "When he says, 'To me has been given' we naturally interpret this to mean that he is referring to a gift he has received as Resurrected Mediator. One might add: 'as a reward upon his accomplished mediatorial work, the atonement which he rendered'. But did he not make a somewhat similar claim long before his death and resurrection? See 11:27. Not only this, but did he not, even during the days of his humiliation, exercise power over human hearts, death even? Did he not prove this on many occasions? True, but there is, nevertheless, an important difference. Before his triumph over death the enjoyment of that gift was always in some way curtailed. For example, he must tell the leper not to make known that he was cured (8, 4). The blind men whose eyes were opened receive a similar order (9:30). He is kept from calling on the Father to send legions of angels to rescue him (26:53). To be sure, he himself does not desire this help, but self-restraint is also restraint. He does indeed raise from the dead the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow at Nain, and Lazarus. At the moment of his death some saints are raised. But though all of this was indeed astounding, it is not the same as actually exercising unlimited power over both heaven and earth, having it proclaimed everywhere without any restriction, and then at the end of the age raising all the dead, and judging all men. It is the investiture of the risen Christ with such unrestricted, universal sovereignty, that Jesus now claims and which, especially within a few days that is after his ascension to heaven, he is beginning to exercise. That is the reward upon his labors (Eph. 1: 19-23; Phil. 2, 9, 10; Rev. 5; etc.)" W. HENDRIKSEN, *The Gospel of Matthew. New Testament Commentary*, Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974, p. 998.

his Father. But he never considered this authority from his Father as a privilege, which gives him legitimate and automatic right to power. Thus, he refused the power, which the devil proposed to him in his temptation: "Next taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the Kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me' " (Mt 4, 8-10). What is at stake here is what means Jesus has to deploy in the accomplishment of his mission. He rejected the proposition of the devil, which is the way of power and domination¹⁴. He refused the way of power in order to follow the credible way of authority through the proposition of his ministry and the imposition of his passion: *"Jésus aurait pu avoir pouvoir sur les royaumes de la terre et commander dans la solitude de son extraction divine, comme si sa légitimité pouvait le dispenser de sa crédibilité. Le contraire s'est passé: aucune légitimité n'apparaît en lui antérieurement ni extérieurement à son apprentissage de la croix"* ¹⁵.

In his incarnation, Jesus emptied himself of his divinity and took the form of a servant. He became fully identified with humanity in order to save mankind from within by operating in man's very history, life and predicament. In so doing, his authority was experienced as internal force of freedom, energy for new life and total transformation. The story of Jesus is a story of a person whose suffering and misery brought life to others (Mk 10, 45). It is a story of a person who on the cross lost all 'power' in order to win authority and credibility: *"Dans la passion il est dépouillé de tout pouvoir. Il est moqué dans sa dérision par les tenants des pouvoirs effectifs: les princes de la religion, les tenants du savoir, les responsables de l'ordre, les catalyseurs de l'opinion publique, jusqu'à l'effroi découragé du cœur solitaire de ses*

¹⁴ Groupe des Dombes, *Un seul Maître*, p. 121 : "Lors des scènes de tentation, il refuse avec la plus grande fermeté toute facilité égoïste, toute recherche d'honneur personnel et tout appétit de richesse (Mt 4, 1-11). Il renonce à faire de son autorité un pouvoir pour lui-même, ordonné à sa propre gloire, ou dont il userait pour contraindre les autres".

¹⁵ A. DUMAS, *Autorité et pouvoir*, p. 115.

amis. Ainsi seulement, nu, privé de tout pouvoir sur la croix, il reçoit l'autorité au matin de Pâques"¹⁶.

This way followed by Jesus in the process of expressing and winning his authority by the process of self-emptying and life of servitude is the theme of the famous hymn of *kenosis*. "His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are, and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2, 6-11).

In the above hymn of *kenosis*, St. Paul expressed the totally meritorious character of the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ. It was an authority derived from his absolute obedience to the Father and from his redemptive service to mankind. Because of this the Father has given him absolute authority. On the other hand, the new humanity redeemed by him is to worship him as well as proclaim his Lordship. This process of self-emptying, which is at once the expression of and route to true authority is also the way proposed to his disciples: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross everyday and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, that man will save it" (Lk 9, 23-24). Jesus' total self-giving was not pursued simply as a model of conduct but as a revealer of what it means to be God. According to J. Rease: "Being God means being the Giver, the creative author of all goodness. God can know no holding back, no selfishness, no fear of loss of power, no threat of diminished existence. For God no dichotomy exists between creative power and

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

saving care towards those he has made capable of enjoying his presence and friendship”¹⁷.

2.3. The Cross : Paradoxical Authority

(i) The cross remains the ultimate reference and turning point of Jesus’ service. It is the culmination of his ministry and the key to the understanding of the mystery of authority in the Church as power of love. Owing to the embarrassing and painful way in which Jesus experienced humiliation and death the cross became a scandal to the Jews and madness to the Greeks (cf. 1Co 1, 23). Yet it is this crucified Christ preached by the apostles that became for the Christian the manifestation of the power and wisdom of God (cf. 1 Co 1, 22-25). The paradox of the cross thus consists in the fact that the primitive Christians saw in the cross, which was symbol of rejection and suffering, the revelation of God’s power as self-abnegation and supreme love. In the light of this mystery of the cross, authority embodied by Jesus is paradoxical and it is characterized by non-violence, renunciation of ‘power’, and vulnerability. On this writes Gerard Lohfink. “When others took steps to do away with him by violence because of his message, he preferred to let himself be killed than to answer the violence of his enemies with violence in return. That is Jesus’ authority. It is a *paradoxical authority* to the very last, an authority which in its unprotectedness and vulnerability turns any other type of authority upside down”¹⁸.

He was able to turn other types of ‘authority’ upside down because of the reversal of values he operated by making his death a service (cf. Mk 10, 45; Jn 10, 17-18). Authority is no longer to be seen as something oppressive, creative of fear, or as instrument of domination but as something liberating, creative of confidence and life giving. He died to human power as represented in the brutality and cruelty of his

¹⁷ J. REASE, *The Events of Jesus. Power in Flesh*, in *Concilium*, 10/9 (1973), p. 44.

¹⁸ G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and Community*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984, p. 117.

executioners in order to destroy it and make authority possible. He destroyed naked power in order to convert it to service and thus into instrument of salvation and life. According to P. Debergé: “*La croix est, en effet, l’aboutissement de son engagement total au service de Dieu et des hommes: comme il avait vécu pour tous, Jésus meurt pour tous. Mais, parce qu’elle est pleinement en harmonie avec son entière mission messianique, la mort de Jésus est aussi une mort rédemptrice: une vie donnée ‘en rançon pour la multitude’ (Mk 10, 45), un corps offert et un ‘sang versé pour la multitude’ (Mk 14, 24; cf. 6, 30-43)*”¹⁹.

As we saw in the first chapter of this work, authority creates unity and interdependence while naked power divides and sets up walls of discrimination among people. By the authority generated by Jesus’ supreme sacrificial service on the cross, he has broken down the wall of discrimination among men and created new relationship and established unity among people: “All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3, 27-28).

(ii) The importance of the cross or Jesus’ death as the place of the supreme manifestation of Jesus’ authority is also evident in two special ways in the theology of the Gospel of John. On the one hand, John sees the death of Jesus as his glorification and return to his Father (cf. Jn 16, 5-15). In his death, Jesus initiates a movement by which the Father exalts and glorifies him²⁰. It is also a movement which manifests the authority he has from his Father to give life: “Father the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to whom you have given him” (Jn 17, 2). Thus, his death on the cross will result in the recognition of his divine status and authority as one who has

¹⁹ P. DEBERGE, *Enquête sur le Pouvoir. Approche biblique et théologique*, Paris, Nouvelle Cité, 1997, p. 88.

²⁰ Cf. F. J. MATERA, *On Behalf of Others, Cleansing and Return. Johannine Images for Jesus Death*, in *Louvain Studies*, 13 (1988), p. 173.

come from above: “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He” (Jn 8, 28). The full authority which he assumes (cf. Mtt. 28, 18) as a result of his glorification and return to his heavenly Father through his death will win for him all mankind: “And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself” (Jn 12, 32). This ability or authority to draw all men to himself and accord them eternal life will be at the same time the act of the Father: “No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6, 44).

On the other hand, John uses the metaphor of the shepherd or the pastor to portray the nature and style of Jesus’ authority. Jesus is the good shepherd, whose authority over his sheep is service oriented. His authority is based on the fact that he loves and takes care of his sheep (cf. Jn 10, 9ff). Thus, when he leads out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and they follow him because they can hear his voice (that is recognize his authority or attribute authority to him). The sheep do not recognize any other voice or authority other than that of the shepherd (cf. Jn 10, 8). Unlike the hireling who has no authority at all over the sheep except the power to kill and profit over them, Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep as a demonstration of his love and authority (cf. Jn 10, 10-13). Laying down of his life for his sheep is a command, which he received from the Father. It is also a free will offering on the part of Jesus (Jn 10, 18).

(iii) Furthermore, it is because the apostolic Church understood the passion and death of Jesus as the supreme manifestation of his authority as service that the most important teachings on the evangelic ministry in the Gospels are placed within the context of his movement to his passion. Peter’s profession of faith in the christological identity of Jesus and Jesus constitution of Peter as the visible head and leader of his Church in Matthew’s Gospel (16, 13-23) is followed immediately by the first announcement of the passion which is also the route to be followed by all his disciples

and ministers in the Church (cf. also Mk 8, 27-33; Lk 9, 18-22). The conditions of discipleship are also placed immediately after this prophecy of the passion (cf. Mt 16, 24-26; Mk 8, 34-38; Lk 9, 23-26). On the other hand, Jesus' teaching on service as the model of Church leadership, which is the most important of its kind in the synoptics, appears also within the perspective of the passion. In Matthew and Mark, the teaching appears immediately after the third announcement of the passion, while in Luke it is placed within the context of the passion narrative itself (cf. Mt 20, 20-28; Mk 10, 35-45; Lk 22, 24-27). Furthermore, the Gospel of John also contains some important teachings on the evangelical ministry which are situated within the passion perspective: Jesus' washing of the feet of his disciples and its consequent explanation are situated within the context of the Last Supper (Jn 13, 1-20). Finally, Jesus' constitution of Peter as pastor of his flock is followed immediately by the announcement of Peter's passion and death (Jn 21, 15-19).

The fact that these most important teachings of Jesus on the evangelical ministry are placed within the perspective of the passion reveals the inseparable link between authority in the Church and the self-sacrificing style of its exercise. It not only reveals the attitude that should govern the bearers of authority which is the same attitude that led Jesus to his death, it also reveals the identity of the purpose of apostolic authority with that of the passion. Both have the same goal of obtaining salvation, which is the Christian common good. The purpose of authority in the Church is to be instrument of salvation.

2.4. Authority of the Servant

(i) It is significant that the New Testament does not primarily conceive authority in the Church in terms of power, submission or superiority which a person has over others on the basis of which privileges and dignity accrue to him. This is why the concepts used in secular Greek for civil and religious authorities are consistently

avoided with reference to ministries or authority in the Church. For example, the expression *archè* which implies a primacy, whether in time ('beginning', 'first principle') or in rank ('power', 'authority', 'office') is used in the New Testament only for the Jewish and pagan authorities (cf. Lk 12, 11; 20, 20; Tt 3, 1) and in a different sense for Christ (Col. 1, 16) referred to as the beginning of all things, the creative principle of the world²¹. On the other hand, *timè* which means value, price, esteem, honour, respectability is used only once in the New Testament to describe the honour and dignity of the high priestly office (cf. Heb 5, 4)²². *Télos*, which means end, conclusion, goal, and remainder and describes the total power of office is equally avoided in the New Testament²³.

Also the concepts which designate the priest (*hiereus*), priestly office (*hierateia*) or the exercise of priestly office (*hierateuein*) are equally not used by the New Testament to speak of Church ministry²⁴. The term *hiereus* is reserved to the Jewish or pagan priests or for Jesus himself in an eschatological sense. In the book of Revelation, *hiereus* is applied three times to the disciples of Jesus (1, 6; 5, 10; 20, 6). On the other hand, the word *hierateuma* or priestly body is applied only to the baptized, to the Church as a whole (cf. 1 Pt 2, 5, 9)²⁵ in the sense of a radical relationship with Christ.

(ii) Thus, with reference to authority in the Church, the New Testament explicitly avoids the use of terms, which are current in secular or religious Greek and prefers the use of the word *diakonia*. This is because these Greek terms express the relationship of the ruler and the ruled, and can be misrepresented as positions of honour, privileges, and titles. The primary concern of the apostolic Church is not with the right or power which authority can confer to leadership in the Christian community, even though this

²¹ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 389.

²² Cf. *ibid.*

²³ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴ Cf. R. PESCH, *Structures du ministère dans le Nouveau Testament*, in *Istina*, 16 (1971), p. 439.

²⁵ Cf. P. SCHMIDT, *Ministries in the New Testament and the Early Church*, p. 53.

is not denied but with the goal and actual use of authority. In other words, the use of authority is always considered as part of the understanding of authority and in fact its essence. It is because of this that the New Testament is careful to warn against all authority based on power and privileges according to the following statement credited to Jesus Christ: "Among the pagans it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. This must not happen with you" (Lk 22, 25).

In the earthly kingdoms, the rulers and leading men exercise power over their subjects as well as make them conscious of the fact that they are their rulers. Authority is regarded as a means to amass personal privileges, rights and power. Because often not much attention is paid to its true use, authority or greatness becomes synonymous with power and domination. But Jesus proposes another way to greatness with its consequent and radical reversal of values and new attitude: "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all" (Mk 10, 43-44). Here Jesus is saying that in the kingdom where he is the Lord, greatness is acquired not through domination and power but through service. "Greatness consists in self-giving, in the outpouring of the self in service to others, for the glory of God. To be great means to love"²⁶. What is the implication for authority in the Church?

Authority in the Church cannot be an authority based on law and power like the office of secular rulers. But this does not mean that law and power has no role at all to play in the organization of the Church as a society here on earth. Thus, commenting on the commandment of service in Matt. 20, 26-27 writes R. Schnackenburg: "*Sous une forme paradoxale, la sentence établit la hiérarchie qui doit exister dans le groupe des disciples de Jésus qui veulent accéder au Royaume de Dieu: cet ordre s'oppose du tout au tout aux volontés de puissance du monde. La parole appartient au groupe des*

²⁶ W. HENDRIKSEN, *The Gospel of Matthew. New Testament Commentary*, p. 748.

*exhortations les plus aiguës de Jésus et peut se comparer à celle qui traite du renoncement à ses droits. On ne retire pas ainsi toute valeur au pouvoir; comme l'ordre juridique, il peut avoir une valeur relative et être nécessaire pour les affaires de ce monde. Mais le disciple de Jésus doit être prêt à y renoncer en vue du Royaume de Dieu*²⁷.

On the other hand, there cannot be in the Church any kind of office, which is based on knowledge and dignity, as is the case with the scribes: “The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do; since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they. Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels, like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi. You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted” (Mt 23, 1-12).

(iii) From the foregoing, it is clear that what the New Testament wants to emphasize is authority based on service. Thus, the valid model of this authority is neither the secular ruler nor the learned scribe, but the man who serves at table²⁸: “For

²⁷ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Le message moral du Nouveau Testament*, trans. from German by F. SCHANEN, Lyon, Éditions Xavier Mappus, p. 107-108. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

²⁸ According to Hans Küng, “the distinction between master and servant was nowhere more visually apparent than at meals, where the noble masters would lie at the table in their long robes, while the servants, their clothes girded, had to wait on them. Even when *diakonia* (or the verb *διακονειν*) was used in a wider sense, meaning ‘to be responsible for the meal, for food and drink, for the means of subsistence’, or quite generally carried the

who is the greater; the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves" (Lk 22, 27). Jesus is here both the one at table and the one who serves. Or rather he is at table as the one who serves. In other words, authority is co-extensive with service; it is founded on service and is defined in terms of service in such a way that authority in the Church is always the **authority of the servant**. It is not the authority of the ruler or the king. This meaning and use of authority appears very clearly in John who situates **Jesus example of authority of the servant** within the context of fraternal love and illustrates it with his menial service of the washing of feet of his disciples: "He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was. They were at supper (...) Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing" (Jn 13, 1-5).

The sight of the Master's washing of the feet of his disciples was so shocking to Peter who had not yet appropriated the radical and paradoxical meaning of authority of the servant that he at first resisted it: "Never" said Peter "You shall never wash my feet" (Jn 13, 8). But to have a share in the kingdom where Jesus reigns, it is absolutely necessary that Peter accepts the order and the *status quo* of the authority of the servant as symbolized in Jesus: "If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me". "Then Lord" said Simon Peter "not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well" (Jn 13, 8). Using his example as a basis, Jesus goes on to inseparably link authority and service, and by so doing shows that the concept of service is always contained in that of authority: "When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes

sense of 'serving', it never lost its flavour of inferiority. This kind of service was unthinkable for a free Greek, for whom the development of his own personality and the exercise of power were supreme things. For a Jew it was not necessarily an inferior activity(...)" H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 390.

again he went back to the table. ‘Do you understand’ he said ‘what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you. I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the man who sent him” (Jn 13, 12-17).

Jesus’ authority is, therefore, a unique kind of authority. He is the Lord and Master, who is at the same time the servant of God and men. No dichotomy exists between his Lordship and his servant existence. According to D. M. Stanley: “This pattern for the exercise of authority within the Christian Church, which was created by Jesus, is something of a paradox. Upon closer inspection, however, it is seen to have been determined by the shape of the paschal mystery itself; it is seen to have been given its form by the central Christian mystery: Jesus’ redemptive death and resurrection. Christ’s *kenosis* and exaltation (cf. Phil 2, 6-11), through which he himself has acceded to universal authority ‘in heaven and upon earth’ (and hence in the Church), clearly indicate the necessity of a radical transformation on the part of all who are called to participate in the *exousia* of the exalted Lord”²⁹. Furthermore, Karl Barth has given one of the best interpretations of the place of *diakonia* in the definition of Christian existence and authority in the Church following the example and model of Jesus.

2.5. Karl Barth on *Diakonia*

(i) In fidelity to the example and teaching of Jesus who made service the supreme test of all apostolic and evangelical ministry in the Church, Karl Barth talks about the law of service. He sees the basic constitution of the Christian community as diaconal

²⁹ D. M. STANLEY, *Authority in the Church: A New Testament Reality*, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 39/1 (1967), p. 558.

and this has its basis in the fact that the Lord Himself, who rules the community as the Head of His body, “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Mk 10, 45)³⁰. As the crucified and risen Lord, there is no dichotomy between his Lordship and his life of total service. His Lordship and kingship is revealed only in his existence in service. In Jesus to serve is to reign. He reigns as he serves. Authority is, therefore, service. Thus, according to Barth: “He is the king and Lord of the world and the community as the One who on the cross was defeated and in that way victorious, humbled and in that way exalted. He is the king and Lord as the one who serves His Father, and therefore His own and all men. It is as this One who serves that He rules and requires obedience. He is not, therefore, one of the lords who do not serve but only rule and leave the serving to others. He is the Lord as He is first the servant of God and all others. The two things cannot be separated or reversed. It is not the case that He rules and at the same time serves, or serves and at the same time rules. It is as He serves that He rules. It is as the humiliated Son of God that He is the exalted Son of Man”³¹.

Following the same diaconal principle of the life of Jesus which does not permit any dichotomy between authority and service, but sees them as homogenous and co-extensive, Barth does not see any distinction between privileges and duties, claims and obligations, dignities and burdens in the Church which is a contrast community. He writes: “There can be privileges and claims and dignities only in and with the duties and obligations and burdens of service”³². Barth’s basis for this ecclesiological reality is Jesus’ example and important teaching on evangelical ministry: “Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10, 43-45).

³⁰ Cf. K. BARTH, *The Law of Service*, in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. R. S. ANDERSON, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1979, p. 707.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 708.

The implication of the above is that in the Church there is no outright rejection of positions of power and offices of authority insofar as they exist for service or determined by the evangelical ministry which is their *raison d'être*. This is what Barth means by the law of service: "The law to be sought and established and executed in the Christian community must always have the character and intention of a law of service. It must always be law within an order of ministry"³³. It is in this light that he defines the basic constitution of the Church as existence in mutual service: "The community of Jesus Christ, as the body of which He is the Head, exists as it serves Him. And its members, Christians, as members of this His body, exist as – united by the service which they render to their Lord- they serve one another"³⁴.

The law of service does not carry with it an accompanying law of rule, as it recognizes no other law at variance with it. In the Church the demand of service laid upon each Christian and in a special way on all those with particular responsibilities does not thus, constitute the basis for authorization of all kinds of claims, dignities and privileges as may well be the case, and quite in order, in other human societies. "There can be no autonomous demanding. For the community and each of its members legitimate demanding can be only the demanding of that which is necessary to fulfil the common requirement of service. The dignity can be only that of the burden, the claim that of the obligation and the privilege that of the fulfilment of duty. The rule can be only that which in itself and as such is service - and only service (...) the true Church law that we seek must give guidance and direction-to ensure that it is not a question of the abstract demanding of dominion, or the abstract demanding of service, i.e., that which is made exclusively in the context and fulfilment of service (...)"³⁵.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 708-709. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

(ii) Evaluation of Some of the Positions of Barth on *Diakonia*

Furthermore, Barth has rightly noted the pre-eminent place of service as the being and life of the Christian community in all its functions. According to him, “nothing that is done or takes place can escape the question whether and how far within it the community serves its Lord and His work in the world, and its members serve one another by mutual liberation for participation in the service of the whole”³⁶. However, his distaste for clericalism in the Church compelled him to reject the technical application of evangelical terms as *diakonia* and *ministerium* to those with particular responsibilities in the Christian community. He thinks that the use of such terms to denote particular services in the Christian community might give the false impression that there are certain aspects of the life of the Church that are determined by service while others are not. He thus, writes: “True Church law must guard against the emergence of these false distinctions; and where they have been made already it must remove them. It must declare and maintain the radical openness of the whole life of the community for its determination to service”³⁷.

However, I think that Barth stretched the matter too far. The technical use of a term does not in any way preclude other possible uses or its general application. For instance, the term apostolic succession can refer in a technical sense to succession in apostolic ministries of the Church or to episcopal succession, while it can also stand in a general sense for the apostolic succession of the whole Church. It is true as Yves Congar says that the word normally applied to those who exercise authority in the Church is *diakonia* which expresses the notion of authority as a particular function exercised in the community³⁸. But this technical usage of *diakonia* does not prevent Congar from making other possible applications of the term. It is in this light, that he

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 709.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 710.

³⁸ Cf. Y. CONGAR, *La hierarchie comme service selon le Nouveau Testament et les documents de la tradition*, p. 81.

distinguishes three levels of service or *diakonia* in the Church in his work, *Ministères et communion ecclésiale*: (1) Occasional and spontaneous services which are of a general kind assumed by the members of the Christian community and by which they build up the Church, for example visit of the sick, an engineer who becomes an animator in a eucharistic celebration, a mother of a family catechizing a group of children. (2) Services which are more stable due to their direct relationship with the regular activities of the Church, for example services of permanent catechists, liturgical animators and lectors, eucharistic ministers (3) Ordained ministries, which are public functions and offices in the Church³⁹. It is to this third level that belongs the technical application of *diakonia*.

The multiple possibilities in the usage and application of *diakonia* is also in line with the tradition of the New Testament. P. M. Beemaert has given evidence of five stages in the evolution and usage of *diakonia* in the New Testament: (1) The service of table in general (cf. Lk 17, 8; Jn 2, 5-9) and service at the table of the Word and Bread in the Eucharist (cf. Act. 6, 1-4). (2) The theme of Christ as Servant who gives his life as a ransom for us together with the theme of the disciples as servants of their brothers and sisters (Mt. 20, 26-28; 23, 12; Lk 22, 26; Jn 12, 26; Mk 9, 35; Mt 25, 44). (3) The apostolic service as is the case with that of Paul and other apostles and collaborators in the apostolic ministry. “*Paul parle souvent de son travail apostolique comme d’une ‘diakonia’; mais Apollos, Timothée et Tit, Stéphanas (à Corinthe) sont aussi des ‘serviteurs’; le terme est parfois utilisé dans le sens plus précis d’auxiliaires ou d’assistants (ainsi Ph 1,1; Phm 13, voir Ac 19, 22; 2Tm 1, 18; 4,11)*”. (4) The big collection or service rendered by gentile Christians to the mother Church in Jerusalem (Rm. 15, 25-31; 2 Co 8,4.19.20; 9, 12, Act 11, 29). (5) The services of organised diaconate evident in the pastorals indicate evolution towards a more precise use of the term, *diakonia* (cf. I Tm 3, 8, 10.12.13). However, *diakonia* continues also to

³⁹Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Ministères et structuration de l’Eglise*, in ID., *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (coll. *Théologie sans frontières*, 23). Paris, Cerf, 1971, p. 43-44.

characterize the attitude of Paul (cf. 1 Tm 1, 12) and *diakonos* the attitude of Timothy (1 Tm 4, 6)⁴⁰.

Finally, Barth thinks the word “office” must be removed from the ecclesiastical vocabulary and replaced by “service”. His reason for this position is that he is against anything capable of creating unnecessary distinctions in the Church or polarizing the Christian community. He is “against every separation into the ruling and the ruled, the teaching and the hearing, the confessing and the established, the taxable and the enfranchised community”⁴¹. While giving due respect to particular gifts and tasks and their limits, Barth wants the responsibility of all for all and for the whole to be maintained and asserted. Barth’s emphasis on the responsibility of the community as a whole is in order, but by rejecting the place of office in the Church, he seems to be denying the role of authority in the Church. What is important is not to reject the place of office in the Church but to place emphasis on its conception and exercise as service within the entire ministerial reality of the Church. From the New Testament evidence, there is no doubt that Paul conceived of his apostolic service in the Church as an office even though the word itself does not appear in this sense. This is seen from the fact that he insists that his mission to act in the Church in an official title or with authority comes from the mandate he received from the risen Christ (cf. 2 Co 10, 8; Gal. 1, 1; 1)⁴². But since this apostolic ‘office’ or authority is only that of service (cf. 2Co 10, 8; 13, 10), Paul also refers to himself as servant (cf. 1 Co 3, 5). Thus, there can be the title of office in the Church, though only that of service.

2.6. Authority as Credibility

The reality of the authority of Jesus during his earthly ministry in the New Testament is not in doubt. The authority, which he has, was as a result of his divine

⁴⁰ Cf. P. M. BEEMAERT, *Vocabulaire et attitude de la “diaconie”* in *Lumen Vitae*, 2 (1998), p. 193-197.

⁴¹ K. BARTH, *The Law of Service*, p. 713.

⁴² Cf. J. McKENZIE, *Le Nouveau Testament*, in *Concilium*, 117 (1976), p. 26.

status as Son of God and his relationship with the Father. “He has the right to judge, to teach, to give life and to make individuals respond to him as children of God because of who he is: the Son of God. If God is the ultimate authority, Jesus shares in this same authority”⁴³. The authority of Jesus as the authority of God is often presented in an explicit way in the gospel of John unlike as in the synoptics: “He has granted the Son to have life in himself and has given him authority to execute judgement” (Jn 5, 26-27). “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me” (Jn 7, 16). In the execution of the authority of God, Jesus seeks not to bring glory to himself but to Him who sent him. Thus, in speaking of this authority, Jesus does so in the context of fulfilling his mission of being the obedient and loving Son of God even to the point of death (cf. Jn 10, 17-18; 17, 2).

On the other hand, in the Synoptic gospels, the authority of Jesus as the authority of God is not presented as a given but as something that is perceived through his deeds and teaching. Often it is presented in such a way that it is the people who attribute authority to him. In this way, the authority of Jesus appears as the credibility and confidence which his deeds or message inspire and not as a claim which he himself makes in an explicit sense. Many passages in the Synoptic gospels illustrate this. In Luke 4, 31-32, Jesus teaches the people on a Sabbath day. “And his teaching made a deep impression on them because he spoke with authority” (v. 32). Here Luke links the effect of Jesus’ teaching to his authority. The effect of his teaching, a deep impression on the people, leads to the affirmation of Jesus’ authority. In Matthew, the authority manifest in Jesus’ teaching is contrasted with the scribal way of teaching which does not manifest any authority (7, 28-29). According to A. Dumas: “*Les scribes étaient les hommes du pouvoir, monopolisateurs de la lecture et de l’explication. Mais les scribes demeuraient seuls, multipliant à distance commentaires et commandements, sans que de cette accumulation jaillisse l’autorité, que seule*

⁴³ J. F. O’GRADY, *Authority and Power: Issues for the Contemporary Church.*, p. 135.

*aurait pu leur reconnaître une foule acquiescente, ce qui n'est pas une foule écrasée de paroles et de savoir. Jésus sans pouvoir engendrait l'autorité"*⁴⁴.

Furthermore, not only the teaching of Jesus but also his miracles evoke credibility and authority to the extent that even the unclean spirits recognize this authority in him: "In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God'. But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet. Come out of him'. And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new' they said 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him'. And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside" (Mk 1, 21-28).

From the foregoing, it is evident that instead of laying emphasis on his authority conceived in a formal sense, Jesus chose to leave his message and deeds to speak for him in order to win his authority as credibility and confidence, which his life evokes. In this light, he does not validate his authority with any preconceived criteria of legitimization as if his authority in itself is sufficient irrespective of its effects. For Jesus authority is not just a certain right but also the rightful exercise of that right. His authority as we have seen is one that is perceived in his deeds (cf. Mt 9, 5) and in his teaching (cf. Mk 1, 23-28) in such a way that the people experience it through the salvific effect of his action. It is, therefore, not a surprise that when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask him whether he was the awaited Messiah, Jesus did not take recourse to any formal justification or to *a priori* criteria of legitimisation of his authority, but simply pointed out to them the salvific signs of God's presence already at work by his ministry, therefore, leaving John the Baptist to judge for himself: "Go

⁴⁴A. DUMAS, *Autorité et pouvoir*, p. 113-114.

back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and Good News is proclaimed to the poor, and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me”(Mt 11, 4-6).

The fact that Jesus wanted to claim his authority as credibility instead of laying any direct claim on any formal right from above authorizing his actions is responsible for his refusal to take recourse to any formal legitimisation of his right to teach or act when demanded by his adversaries, the bearers of the legal and traditional authority of the time (cf. Mt 21, 23). For them to have authority is simply to have been authorized, that is to possess the right to act and thus, they asked him: “What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?” (Mt 21, 23).

2.7. Authority of the Truth

Jesus’ authority has only one way of taking hold on people and ceasing control of their hearts. It is an authority whose only power is its own truth and authenticity. Jesus has the authority of the truth because he is in his person, life and deeds the revelation and manifestation of the Father. Thus, before Pilate Jesus describes his mission in terms of a commission to bear witness to the truth (cf. Jn 18, 37). The incarnation of Jesus is the coming into the world of divine truth (cf. Jn 18, 37; 1, 17). Jesus’ authority as revelation of truth comes from the fact that he belongs to what is above (Jn 8, 23), is the sole person who has descended from heaven (Jn 3, 13), has seen what the Father does (Jn 5, 19), and has heard what the Father has said (Jn 8, 26)⁴⁵. Because he is the bearer of the truth (Jn 14, 6), Jesus has the authority of the truth such that all who are on the side of truth recognize his authority or listen to his voice (Jn 18, 37). And it is precisely because Jesus has authority as the truth which distinguishes his kingdom from the kingdom of this world based on power and violence (Jn 18, 36-37). Jesus

⁴⁵Cf. R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1971, p. 854.

expects his authority to be freely recognized and embraced only on the basis of the truth, as such it cannot like the earthly kingdom over which Pilate presides be defended or imposed by power or force of arms.

2.8. Concluding Reflections on Jesus' Model of Authority

The authority of Jesus is authority received from the Father who has put everything into his hands (Jn 13, 3) and has given him this authority to execute judgement (Jn 5, 26-27) and to give eternal life (cf. Jn 17, 2). But this authority is at the same time one whose sole mode of revelation and attainment of recognition is through service. In this sense, we say that the authority of Jesus is authority revealed in or derived from service. This fact does not contradict the earlier fact that it is still the authority received from God. The two facts are thus, complementary and are equally two aspects of the same reality, which is the authority of Jesus.

Jesus came from the Father and thus, he has the authority of God. But it was only in and through his redemptive service that he revealed and made this authority meaningful to man. The disciples of Jesus were able to recognize that he has authority because they saw it revealed in his life and ministry, especially in his death and resurrection. Thus, they could attribute authority to him and manifested this in the formation of the primitive Christian communities and in the confession of the Lordship of Jesus as their *credo*.

From the point of view of its source, Jesus' authority is from his heavenly Father. From the point of view of its revelation or recognition by those to whom it is destined (his disciples) Jesus' authority is derived from his redemptive service. The fact, that Jesus lived his authority as service or as one derived from service can be seen from the theology underlying the New Testament. It is evident that the story of the life and ministry of Jesus was presented in such a way as to show the disciples'

incomprehension of the person and mission of Jesus before the paschal events. Peter's confession of the Christological identity of Jesus for instance, was attributed by Jesus to the revelation of his heavenly Father (cf. Mtt 16, 13-20). Peter demonstrates his incomprehension of whom he has confessed by his refusal to associate the person of Christ with suffering and death (cf. Mtt 16, 21-23). Even after the resurrection, though before the Pentecost, the disciples still thought of Jesus and his mission in terms of earthly kingdom and power as in Mk 10, 35-45 (cf. Act 1, 6-8). The purpose of these examples is to show that it was only through the life and ministry of Jesus, especially through his paschal mystery culminating in the descent of the Spirit that the disciples came to understand the person and mission of Jesus, and thus become able to acknowledge truly and fully his Lordship and authority (cf. Mtt 28, 18-20, Phil 2, 6-11).

From the foregoing, we can speak of a sort of double movement involved in revelation and manifestation of the one reality of Jesus' authority: On the one hand, it is authority he received as commission or mandate from God the Father to give eternal life. On the other hand, it is authority revealed in his actual work of salvation (in his words, deeds, death and resurrection) and recognized as such by his disciples. Consequently, the concept of service is part and parcel of the definition of authority of which Jesus is the embodiment. It is in fact the essence of this authority as the service of Jesus is the locus of the revelation of his authority, identity, and mission. In other words, he posited his service first and then through it and in it his authority as a right and power which the Father gave him became revealed.

Following the model of Jesus, authority in the Church is not an abstract right or privilege possessed *a priori* by the Church irrespective of the use to which it can be deployed. Rather, it is authority revealed as a right to the extent that it first becomes service. Just as Jesus' authority was recognized as a right which the Father gave him

only in and through his redemptive service, authority in the Church is in the first place service before it is a certain right or power.

3. St. Paul's Conception and Style of Apostolic Authority

There is a resurgence of interest in the study of St. Paul's letters among many Catholic scholars in recent times. The interest is provoked by the desire to study the factors of dynamism and creativity seen in Pauline communities, that would serve as basis for the renewal and reform of ecclesiastical institutions and the organisation of the Church. I wish to add that St. Paul by many standards merit this attention. By the testimony of the New Testament, he is known to have had the best known apostleship. St. Paul was a great charismatic and prophet figure. The nature of his call to apostleship was a privileged preparation for the invaluable role he played in the early Church. His apostleship owes more to the prophetic tradition and this enabled him to go beyond the limitations of institution. His letters were the earliest New Testament writings and thus, provide us with more exact picture of the apostolic Church.

Paul's conception and exercise of his apostolic authority represents for us in the New Testament the best example of a concrete realization of the nature and content of the authority of service of which Jesus Christ himself is the model and symbol. His special conversion experience, his vision of the risen Lord as well as his call to apostleship outside the institution or the circle of the Twelve were all a privileged preparation for his apostolic ministry and authority. His conversion experience while in his mission of avowed fulfilment of the dictates of the Law and the tradition of his ancestors (Gal 1, 14) resulted in the transfer of the same enthusiasm and spirit of mission into his apostolic ministry for which like Jesus he suffered so much and gave his life. His vision of the risen Christ constituted the origin of his commission or vocation as an apostle (1 Co 9, 1; Gal 1, 16).

Paul's conception of his apostolic authority is marked by two tendencies: (1) Preoccupation with showing that authority in the Church is the authority of Christ and of the Gospel. (2) Preoccupation with showing that he is only a servant, who has received from God the authority of service. In other words, the proper role which belongs to him is to manifest the authority of Christ in his service. In what follows, we shall consider how Paul maintains the relation and reference between the authority of Christ/Gospel and his own apostolic authority of service.

3.1. Authority in the Church as the Authority of Christ/Gospel

3.1.1. Authority of Christ as Head of the Church

Paul is very much aware that the Church belongs not to him but to Christ. Christ is the only Lord of the Church. In order to express the authority and Lordship of Christ over the Church, one of the most important terms he uses is that of "head" in reference to Christ (cf. Eph 1, 21-23; 5, 23-25; Col 1, 15-8; 2, 9-10). Christ is presented as head (*kéfalé*) of both the universe and the Church which is represented as his body (*sôma*). As regards the signification of the word 'head' du Plessis makes a distinction between the cosmic headship of Christ and the headship of Christ over the Church. For him the two relations are of a different character even though they are mutually applicable to each other: "Close investigation proves these two relations to be of a different character. In the one case it stresses Christ's function as Ruler and in the other case He is the One who incorporates his Church within himself. This last relation actually comprises two aspects viz. that He is the point of integration and at the same time the power behind the integration. It is however true that his Rulership function- which is mostly applied to the world at large- is also applicable to his relationship with the Church. At the same time his function as Integrator can also apply to the world at large"⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ I. J. du PLESSIS, *The Rule of Christ and the Rule in the Church*, in *Neotestamentica*, 10 (1976), p. 21-22.

Furthermore, whether Christ is seen in his function as ruler or integrator, Paul's preoccupation is to express the Lordship of Christ whether in the Church or over the whole of creation and the way this authority is exercised especially in the Church. Thus, what is primarily at stake is the authority of Christ both as the cosmic Lord and the Lord of his Church. M. Barth has shown that in the Old Testament 'head' "designates a tribal chief, political ruler, or military leader. Once, in 2 Chron 13, 12, it is stated that God is 'at the head' of Isreal. In this sense, 'head' implies all functions of rulership, e.g. the role of a savior, a representative, a source and guarantor of unity. It also denotes, without being used as a metaphor, the prime position held by something or somebody"⁴⁷.

Thus, the headship of Christ denotes fundamentally his authority and hence the position which he occupies both in the Church and in the world. Christ is the "head" in the sense that he is at the "summit". His position is "above" because "God has put all things under his feet" (Eph 1, 21)⁴⁸. He is by this qualification the head of his body the Church (Eph 1, 22). The fact that the primary signification of the term "head" as used by Paul refers to the supreme authority of Christ is shown by the fact that in Col 2, 10 the term designates the universal lordship of Christ over all creation, which includes even forces and powers hostile to his reign. As the "head" his position at the "summit" also implies his first position, which is not only chronological but also ontological in the sense that in him creation finds its accomplishment owing to the fact that he is the principle of all existence⁴⁹.

On the other hand, the consideration of Christ as the head of the Church in Eph 5, 23-25 shows not only Christ's position of authority (or Lordship) in and over the

⁴⁷ M. BARTH, *Ephesians 1-3* (coll. *The Anchor Bible*, 34), New York, Doubleday & Company, INC, 1974, p. 184.

⁴⁸ Cf. P. CONGAR, *Le Christ, Chef invisible de l'Eglise visible d'après saint Paul*, in *Problème actuels de Christologie* (coll. *Textes et études théologiques*). Bruges, Desclée de Brouwer, 1965, p. 371.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

Church but how this authority is exercised, thus putting to relief the redeeming role of Christ. Christ is the head of the Church as the Lord which has authority over her. "He proved his Lordship over his Church by sacrificing his life for her. His example is held up to every man to demonstrate the quality and character of a man's dominion over his wife. Only that man who is prepared to sacrifice his life for his wife, may claim being her head (ruler). This condition restrains a husband from tyranny"⁵⁰. Furthermore, Christ's work of salvation is not limited to the Church. The whole of creation is also included in God's plan of salvation which Christ has realized by making peace through his death on the cross (Col 1, 20).

However, the relation between Christ and his body, the Church, is presented by Paul in a much more intimate way than the relation between him and his headship of the universe. In this light, Christ is the head of his body, the Church not only as the Lord who has authority over her but also as the source to which she owes her existence and life. According to M. Barth, "the cross of Christ is the ground on which the Church stands, the source from which her life flows, the instrument by which her status as Christ's beloved is demonstrated"⁵¹. On the other hand, T. R. Potvin suggests that the signification of 'source' also implied in Christ as the head of his body, the Church, may be responsible for the fact that the New Testament completely avoids the word "head" in reference to Church leaders. According to him: "In both the Old Testament and the New Testament there would seem to be a connection between the fact of being the head of a group and the fact of being its source. This is true even in the case of the husband since woman is considered as coming from man and being created for man (I Co 11, 3, 8-9; Cf. Eph. 5, 21-32 where woman is considered as coming from man and being created for man). Perhaps it is in the light of this fact that

⁵⁰ I. J. du PLESSIS, *The Rule of Christ and the Rule in the Church*, p. 22.

⁵¹ M. BARTH, *Ephesians 4-6* (coll. *The Anchor Bible*, 34A), New York, Doubleday, & Company, INC., 1974, p. 684.

the New Testament never uses the term 'head' to denote the leaders of the community. Christ alone is the source of his Body, the Church, and is thus termed its Head"⁵².

Furthermore, Christ is the head of the Church as the principle of her growth and life according to the following words of Paul: "If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love" (Eph. 4, 15-16). The authority of Christ therefore in the perspective of St. Paul, coincides with salvation. He is the Lord in and over the Church as he is her redeemer and saviour. He is the head of the Church as her source and principle of life. His death on the cross did not bring his headship to an end. As the risen Lord, he still lives in the Church and through his Spirit in the hearts of his faithful, he continues to exercise his sovereign Lordship over the Church. He is irreplaceable as no one can succeed him or take his place in the Church. He however, associates visible representatives or human shepherds in the exercise of his authority in the Church but only as the servants of the Gospel. The task of demonstrating this authority of service especially with regard to his own case is a major preoccupation of St. Paul in his letters.

3.1.2. The Authority of the Gospel

In the theology of Paul, the Gospel is first and foremost a person, Jesus the Lord. Proclamation of the Gospel is therefore, primarily the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ⁵³: "For it is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Co 4, 5; cf. 1 Co 12, 3). This

⁵² T. R. POTVIN, *Authority in the Church as Participation in the Authority of Christ According to Saint Thomas*, in *Eglise et Théologie*, 5 (1974), p. 227.

⁵³ "The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart. If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved. When scripture says: those who believe in him will have no cause for shame, it makes no distinction between Jew and

Gospel is synonymous with the paschal event i.e. the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. 1 Co 15, 3-4), which is the manifestation of the saving power of God: “ For I am not ashamed of the Good News; it is the power of God saving all who have faith” (Rom 1, 16).

In his work, *Paul and His Theology*, Joseph Fitzmayer outlines six characteristics of the Gospel in Paul⁵⁴: (1) Its revelatory or apocalyptic nature. The Gospel reveals God’s renewed salvific activity for all people through his Lordship. “It now reveals to Christians the plan conceived by God and hidden in him from all eternity (1 Co 2, 7) to bring humanity, Gentiles as well as Jews, to share in the salvific inheritance of Israel, now realized in Christ Jesus”. (2) Its dynamic nature. The Gospel for Paul is not an abstraction but the manifestation of the saving power of God (Rom 1, 16). “The gospel may, indeed, announce a proposition, ‘Jesus is Lord’ (1 Co 12, 3; Rom 10, 9), to which human beings are called to assent, but it involves more, for it proclaims a Son whom God has raised from the dead, Jesus, who is delivering us from the coming wrath” (1 Thess 1: 10). It is a gospel that comes “not in words alone, but with power and the holy Spirit” (1 Thess 1:5); it is “the word of God, which is at work (*energeitai*) among you who believe” (1 Thess 2, 13; cf. 1 Co 15, 2). (3) Its kerygmatic character. Paul’s Gospel has the same origin with pre-pauline kerygmatic tradition: “I passed on to you above all what I received” (1 Co 15, 1-2). (4) Its promissory nature. The gospel continues the promises made by God of old. (5) Its universal character. This underlines the universal character of salvation (Rom 1, 16; cf. 10, 12). (6) Its normative role in Christian life.

It is the normative function of the Gospel which directly concerns us here. In this light writes Fitzmayer: “For Paul the gospel stands critically over Christian conduct,

Greek: all belong to the same Lord who is rich enough, however many ask his help, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10, 9-13).

⁵⁴ Cf. J. A. FITZMAYER, *Paul and His Theology. A Brief Sketch*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1989, p. 39-41.

church officials, and human teaching. It tolerates no rival(....)”⁵⁵. Thus, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul makes an uncompromising appeal for a return to the true Gospel such as he preached it. To substantiate the authenticity of his Gospel and thus his apostolic authority, he argues that he did not receive his gospel from any human agency but directly from Jesus Christ himself (Gal 1, 11-12). No authority belongs to him in himself except to the Gospel which he bears. Therefore, he is ready in principle to take a distance by his person in order to guarantee to the Gospel its objective and sacred character, and he does not rule out the possibility of his own apostasy⁵⁶: “(...) and let me warn you that if anyone preached a version of the Good News different from the one we have already preached to you, whether it be ourselves or an angel from heaven, he is to be condemned” (Gal 1, 8). The sovereignty of the Gospel was affirmed by Paul as against the champions of a return to Judaism in the early Church. These judaizers wanted to foist on the Gentile Christians certain Jewish practices like circumcision, dietary and calendaric regulations. But Paul defended the liberty and supremacy of the Gospel: “I was so determined to safeguard for you the true meaning of the Good News, that I refused even out of deference to yield to such people for one moment” (Gal. 2, 5).

On the other hand, despite all his esteem for Peter as an acknowledged leader of the early Church (Gal. 2, 9), he found it necessary to rebuke him publicly in Antioch when out of fear for the Jewish Christians of James’ circle (the judaizers), Peter failed in fraternal love for the Gentile Christians (Gal. 2, 11-13) and thus undermined his authority. In this instance, Paul placed the truth of the Gospel above everything: “When I saw they were not respecting the true meaning of the Good News, I said to Cephas in front of everyone, ‘ In spite of being of a Jew, you live like the pagans and not like the Jews, so you have no right to make the pagans to copy jewish ways’ ”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁵⁶ Cf. J. GNILKA, *La relation entre la responsabilité communautaire et l'autorité ministérielle d'après le NT, en tenant compte spécialement du 'Corpus Paulinum'*, in *Paul de Tarse. Apôtre du notre temps*, ed. L. De LORENZI, Rome, Abbaye de S. Paul h.l.m, 1979, p. 466.

(Gal. 2, 14). According to Joachim Gnllka: “*Les relations fraternelles avec les membres de la communauté font partie de la vérité de l’Evangile. Le ministre pêche contre la vérité de l’Evangile et met en danger son autorité, s’il manque à la charité fraternelle*”⁵⁷.

3.1.3. Paul’s Authority of Service

Having underscored the fact that Paul’s conception of authority in the Church refers in the first place to Christ and the Gospel, what place and role does he assign to his own apostolic authority? Paul sees himself as having been called to be an instrument of the divine authority for the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul’s role and place as instrument of God’s authority of salvation is seen from the kind of terms he uses in describing or talking about it. In this perspective, he describes himself as servant (*diakonos*) of God (2 Co 6, 3-4), of Jesus Christ (Rm 1, 1; 1 Co 4, 1), of the Gospel (Eph 3, 7) and of the Christian community (2 Co 4, 5). He also talks about himself as a steward (*oikonomos*) of the mysteries of God (1 Co 4, 1), cultic minister (*leitourgos*) of the Gospel (Rm 15, 16).

All these terms show that Paul sees himself as having been given only the authority of service in relation to God, the source of this authority (cf. Gal 1, 1) and in relation to the Christian communities to whom this authority is destined. As a servant of God, he is depended on the power and authority of God (cf. 2 Co 4, 7-11; 1 Co 3, 10). A servant is one who has been given a specific task and does only what has been demanded of him by his master. He acts only to the glory of the master. This is because his authority is a responsibility and a duty. As such he is dependent on his master. In a similar way, Paul sees his apostolic ministry and authority as a task, a responsibility and a duty: “Not that I do boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it. If I have

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

chosen this work myself, I might have been paid for it, but as I have not, it is a responsibility which has been put into my hands" (1 Co 9, 16-18).

Thus as his authority is a responsibility and a duty, Paul does not arrogate to himself the authority for his actions. He recognizes himself only as a steward of God's authority and thus, he always links this *exousia* with his stewardship: "(...) the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for destroying" (2 Co 13, 10; cf. 2 Co 10, 8). In other words, the authority in question is not his own proper authority, but the authority of God of which he is only an instrument. As a servant and an instrument of God, Paul recalls to the dispute-torn Corinthian community that neither he nor Apollos matters (1 Co 3, 5). He claims that he had been assigned the task of doing the planting while Apollos irrigated the plant but it is God that gives growth (1 Co 3, 7). "When this is remembered, no one can assign much importance to what Paul or Apollos does"⁵⁸. But considered from another angle, what God's servants do has an importance in that in order to found and nurture Churches God does not act directly. He uses His servants as instruments or intermediaries⁵⁹. This earns for the latter the title of co-operators in God's work (1 Co 3, 9). Because it is God who essentially and fundamentally does the work, He is entitled to claim the result: "you are God's farm, God's building" (1 Co 3, 9). As others play only the role of helpers, co-operators or servants, authority in the Church is a *diakonia* which is "pure service fulfilled in accordance with the requirements of an external authority, that of the Lord"⁶⁰. But even in the condition of service, God's servants or stewards still have the

⁵⁸ W. F. ORR & J. A. WALTHER, *1 Corinthians* (coll. *The Anchor Bible*, 32). New York, Doubleday & Company, INC., 1976, p. 171. According to Orr and Walther: "Paul felt a special commission to go to new places where the gospel had not been preached and there to proclaim it for the first time, winning converts and establishing churches (Rom 15, 20; II Cor 10, 14-16). Others, like Apollos, directed the work of the established church, instructing it and guiding its growth – which Paul compares to irrigation (...) The Christian apostle or leader went to the people and spoke the gospel message to them, but it was God operating through his Spirit who brought the people to faith and established them in a fellowship. Proper faith perceives that the human servants – whether they plant or irrigate, whether they found churches or guide their growth – serve one function: they are all one, performing the work of God, whose activity uses their services for life and growth" (p. 171-172).

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁶⁰ T. F. TORRANCE, *Service in Jesus Christ*, p. 716.

master's full gift of authority (cf. 2 Co 10, 8; 13, 10). It is with this grace of authority that Paul could lay the foundation of Christian communities by the preaching of Jesus Christ, who is the Good News and the one foundation of the Church (1 Co 3, 10-12; 2 Co 4, 5).

3.2. Authority and Community

Paul's relation with the communities he founded is marked by friendly attitude, service and respect for their responsibility and autonomy. In spite of the grave controversies which troubled the life and unity of the Corinthian Church, Paul prefers to come to them with love and goodwill than with harshness (1 Co 4, 21)⁶¹. He rejected authoritarian attitude towards his communities due to his faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in his existence as a *diakonos* (2 Co 4, 5). As he is equally subject with them to Christ as their Lord and Master, Paul stands with his communities as a fellow worker while exercising his authority. He is aware that it is he who belongs to the Church and not the Church to him. Thus, writes R. Blanks: "He does not issue his approvals, encouragements, instructions, warnings and censures in isolation from the community but as one who stands within it, surrounded by all the gifts and ministries the Spirit has granted its members. Even at a distance he can envisage them assembling together with his spirit present in their midst"(1 Co 5, 3; Col 2, 5)⁶².

A particular case of scandal in the Corinthian community during the absence of Paul and which attracted his reaction best illustrates the relation of his authority with the community. A man committed a scandal by cohabiting with the wife of his father. In his surprise that the community had not reacted, Paul intervened through his letter. But he did this in a way that did not jeopardize the autonomy and responsibility of the community: "When you are assembled together in the name of the Lord Jesus, and I

⁶¹ Cf. G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and Community*, p. 118.

⁶² R. BLANKS, *Paul's Idea of Community*, Massachusetts, Hendrickson, 1994, p. 90.

am spiritually present with you, then with the power of our Lord Jesus he is to be handed over to Satan so that his sensual body may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord”(1 Co 5, 4-5).

In the above statement, far from any attempt to issue commands to the community of Corinth, Paul rather tries to reach a common accord with them, and by so doing he even mentions their presence before his. He did not exclude automatically the sinner but demanded the community to do the exclusion itself, and by so doing he respected the responsibility and autonomy that belongs to the community. Paul's aim here is to help the community to exercise the initiative and autonomy that rightly belongs to her and by which she is capable of the mission entrusted to her⁶³. In the light of such respect for the responsibility of his communities, Paul's approach to authority developed closely with his idea of freedom. He wants his communities to claim the freedom which is theirs through the Gospel of Jesus Christ they received (Gal 5, 1, 13)⁶⁴. His authority is not to limit this freedom or to regiment it, but to lead them to the full discovery of its true dimensions and to discern the false versions (1 Co 1, 10-16; 3, 21-23)⁶⁵. “Their freedom is a reality to be appropriated, not a possibility to which they must be gradually introduced”⁶⁶. Paul has a holistic conception of Christian freedom. By freedom, he means total liberty which involves freedom from law (or human oppression), sin and death⁶⁷. Conscious of what Christian freedom and dignity implies, Paul always relates with his communities and co-workers in a personal and respectful way rather than in a formal sense. Thus, “he could have insisted in Thessalonika on the weight of his authority ‘as apostle of Christ’, but instead treated the Thessalonians lovingly, like a mother fondling her children (1 Thess 2, 7)”⁶⁸.

⁶³ Cf. J. GNILKA, *La relation entre la responsabilité communautaire et l'autorité ministérielle d'après le NT*, p. 467.

⁶⁴ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *L'Eglise dans la force de l'Esprit* (coll. *Cogitation fidei*, 102). Paris, Cerf, 1999, p. 379.

⁶⁵ Cf. R. BLANKS, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 181.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *L'Eglise dans la force de l'Esprit*, p. 379.

⁶⁸ G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and Community*, p. 118.

On the other hand, he does not use coercion or threat to enforce obedience to his words or to exercise his authority. His only instrument is the force of persuasion by word and personal example. This is evident for instance in his letter to Philemon. Here Paul preferred to use love, gentility, and persuasion alone to make a case for Onesimus where he could have equally used his authority to command Philemon to do what is required. Paul's tone, humility and love in this letter is particularly touching.

Furthermore, in writing to his communities, Paul frequently uses terms which connote 'exhortation' and 'appeal' rather than 'command' or 'decree'⁶⁹. Most often he uses the term *parakalein* (or appeal) which appears 23 times in his writings⁷⁰. Each time, what he seeks is the voluntary decision of his audience, their consent and commitment to what he says. He urges submission not to his own will but to the Gospel that he bears as the following statement of his shows: "For it is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Co 4, 5).

On the other hand, in Churches where the Gospel was seriously undermined, Paul uses his most authoritative tone in correcting abuses. Such was the case with the Churches of Corinth, Thessalonika and Galatia. Gerald Lohfink shows that it was especially at Corinth that Paul could not fully realize his theological understanding of community. The reason for this according to Lohfink came partly "from Paul's unwillingness to keep his communities immature, which led him to leave them an extraordinary broad room for charismatic activity. Paul sought free obedience and bound the charisms to the reason of the Spirit and of love – in doing so undertook a great risk. But this was precisely the risk of authority without domination in the

⁶⁹ Cf. R. BLANKS, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 176.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

following of Jesus. The Church will always find it necessary to choose between the security of bondage and the risk of liberty”⁷¹.

Thus, in his letters to the community of Corinth as well as to those of Thessalonika and Galatia, Paul uses “the strongest possible language to bring their members to their senses”⁷². For instance, in 1 Co 14, 37 Paul refers to what he writes to the Corinthians as “a command from the Lord”; while to the Thessalonians he says again in strong terms that “ anyone who objects (to his words) is not objecting to human authority, but to God, who gives you his Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 4, 8). However, here Paul is not making any claim to the authority of God as something which he possesses in himself but as something which is mediated through the Gospel that he preaches. In this light, the presupposition is that he expects the truth of what he says to these communities to be self-evident to them.

3.3. Authority and Its Criteria of Legitimation

During the course of his ministry, Paul was often challenged to justify his apostolic authority. Generally, three criteria of legitimisation of his authority are discernible in his letters: (1) Legitimation by the divine origin of his authority. (2) Legitimation by the fruits of his apostolate. (3) Legitimation by conformity to the evangelical life. These three criteria are all inter-related and constitutive of his apostolic authority. In the following paragraphs we shall show how Paul with vigour tried to justify his apostolic authority before his communities and before all those who contested his divinely given mission to the people of God of the Gentile origin . The three types of legitimisation may be considered respectively as traditional, functional and charismatic as we shall now see.

⁷¹ G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and Community*, p. 119.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

3.3.1. Legitimation by the Divine Origin of His Authority

The first kind of legitimisation mentioned above may be regarded as traditional⁷³. This is because by founding his call to apostleship on his vision and mandate of the risen Christ, Paul defends the notion of the apostle as an authorized representative. Unlike the other apostles, Paul did not have the privilege of any pre-paschal relationship with Jesus. But by the Grace of God (Eph 3, 2), he has been given the grace of apostleship together with the Twelve who were chosen personally by Jesus before his death. His apostolic appointment comes directly from God and not from human agency: “an apostle who does not owe his authority to men or his appointment to any human being but who has been appointed by Jesus Christ and by God the Father who raised Jesus from death” (Gal 1, 2). His preoccupation to found his apostleship on a vision and a mandate of the risen Lord, shows that the apostolic Church before whom he had to justify his claims, recognizes only an apostleship derived from the express will of Christ: “Then God, who had specially chosen me while I was still in my mother’s womb, called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son in me, so that I might preach the Good News about him to the pagans” (Gal.1, 15).

His meeting in Jerusalem with the leading men of the Good News, namely Peter and the Twelve was accompanied by the official recognition of the divine origin of his apostleship: “(...) these people who are acknowledged leaders (...) as I say, had nothing to add to the Good News as I preach it. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been commissioned to preach the Good News to the uncircumcised just as Peter had been commissioned to preach it to the circumcised. The same person whose action had made Peter the apostle of the circumcised had given me a similar mission to the pagans” (Gal 2, 6-9).

⁷³ Cf. J. N. ALETTI, *L'autorité apostolique de Paul. Théorie et pratique*, in *L'apôtre Paul. Personnalité, style et conception du ministère* (coll. *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium*, LXXIII). Ed. A. VANHOYE, Leuven, University Press, 1986, p. 234.

3.3.2. Legitimation by the Fruits of His Apostolate

The second criterion of legitimisation of Paul's apostolic authority is functional: legitimisation by the fruits of his apostolate or by the work realized⁷⁴. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 9, 1—2, against those who contested his apostleship, Paul argues out his place as a legitimate agent of Christ on the basis of his conversion of the Corinthians to the faith. In other words, they are his living proof, the 'seal' of his apostleship in the sense that their existence as Christian community authenticates the reality of that apostleship⁷⁵: "I, personally, am free: I am an apostle and I have seen Jesus our Lord. You are all my work in the Lord. Even if I were not an apostle to others, I should still be an apostle to you who are the seal of my apostolate in the Lord"(1 Co. 9, 1-2).

3.3.3. Legitimation by Conformity to the Evangelical Life

The last criterion of legitimisation of his apostolic authority is Paul's style of life and the conformity of apostolic life to the Gospel. This kind of legitimisation may be known as charismatic. In this light, even though he is under no obligation to any person, Paul manifested his freedom for the Gospel by making himself a slave to all in order to win as many as possible to Christ: "So though I am not slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could"(1 Cor. 9, 19).

In a society where the occupation of a lower status was denigrated as slavish and servile, and not worthy of the noble, Paul shows that he chose to move from high to low status for the sake of the Gospel and in order also that his apostolic authority may be a counter sign to those who had a worldly vision of Christian leadership. As D. B. Martin explains: "In 1 Cor. 9, 16-18, by depicting his leadership as slavery to Christ, Paul takes one step away from their position. They think of Christian leadership as

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Cf. B. WITHERINGTON III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, p. 207.

modelled on the benevolent, free, high-status *sophos*. Paul, however, depicts his leadership as the derived authority by association with his master Christ. This does constitute a claim to authority but one different from that of the strong. Then in verses 19-23, Paul takes a further, more radical step away from the position of the strong. By using the demagogue model of the leader as slave of all, Paul rejects the status-maintaining leadership of benevolent patriarchalism. Again, he still claims leadership, but it is leadership from below. It is an exercise of authority, but a more subtle, ambiguous authority that is not based on normal social position and normal status hierarchy. In both sections, slavery depicts leadership”⁷⁶.

Furthermore, the title: ‘authority of the crucified’, best qualifies not only Paul’s understanding of his apostolic authority but also the way he lived it. Like Jesus who was poor, humble and preferred to die rather than defend himself and the truth of his teaching with earthly power, Paul also renounced domination in the exercise of his authority: “We are not dictators over your faith, but are fellow workers” (2 Co 1, 24). He could have taken advantage of his apostolic authority to mount a dominative power over his communities. But rather he chose the path of love, patience, endurance, humility, weakness and self-sacrifice which are also the path of the helplessness of the crucified Lord: “We carry with us in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may always be seen in our body, indeed while we are still alive, we are consigned to our death every day, for the sake of Jesus, so that in our mortal flesh the life of Jesus, too, may be openly shown” (2 Co 4, 10-12).

Thus, the nature of apostolic authority, therefore, also shares in the paradox and mystery of the cross. The same weakness and helplessness associated with its exercise are also its power and its strength: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Co 12, 10). “Only in this impotence does service become completely selfless and achieve a power

⁷⁶ D. B. MARTIN, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity*, New Haven, Yale University, 1990, p. 135.

able to overcome all obstacles”⁷⁷. It is this paradox of the authority of the crucified Jesus reflected in a living way in Paul’s sufferings for the sake of the Gospel which drew to him the resistance of his adversaries who refused him the title of apostle and the authority which goes with it. *“Les adversaires de Paul n’assoient pas leur autorité sur le seul critère de l’origine (2 Co 3, 1: les lettres de recommandation; 2 Co 11, 22: l’origine juive; etc.); les modalités de la performance sont à leurs yeux tout aussi essentielles: l’éloquence, l’autorité personnelle, la force et la prestance (2 Co 10,10), les signes de puissance (2 Co 12, 11s). Ce qu’ils contestent, c’est la faiblesse chronique de Paul, les continuels affrontements qui semblent faire de lui le jouet de l’adversité: comment un homme sans cesse menacé par la mort peut-il prétendre être le héraut de l’Evangile, puissance de Dieu en Jésus ressuscité? Le paradoxe vient de ce que Paul ne veut cacher ni ses faiblesses ni ses souffrances: il les met au contraire au grand jour, précisément parce que, selon lui, elles appuient son autorité”*⁷⁸.

3.4. Concluding Reflection on Paul’s Apostolic Authority

Authority in the Church is the authority of Christ and the Gospel. The apostle bears the authority of Christ and incarnates in his life the authority of Gospel. But he does this in the status of a servant who is responsible to his master. Paul’s apostolic authority is, therefore, a responsibility and obedience to the Lord. As such no authority belongs to him in himself. As a grace his apostolic right and freedom has a divine origin. It is founded on his vision of the risen Christ and his sending on mission. But it is as a responsibility for others and as obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ that he lived this authority. In Paul’s conception of authority in the Church, the right or freedom of action on the part of the leader cannot be separated from the corresponding service and responsibility. I agree essentially with Ernest Käsemann when he states: “The Apostle’s theory of order is not a static one, resting on offices, institutions, ranks

⁷⁷ G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and Community*, p. 120.

⁷⁸ J. N. ALETTI, *L’autorité apostolique de Paul*, p. 234.

and dignities; in his view, authority resides only within the concrete act of ministry as it occurs, because it is only within this concrete act that the Kyrios announces his lordship and his presence”⁷⁹.

On the other hand, authority can also be recognized from the social point of view as a right conferred on a person by a community as a responsibility for its good. But this social criterion of recognition, although important, is insufficient, as it does not help to distinguish in practice authority from domination. A person recognized as having been invested with a right to serve the common-good can use this right as a power to dominate others. Paul rarely relies on this type of recognition in the conception of his apostolic authority even though he knows its importance and place as evident in Ga 2, 9-10: “So, James, Cephas and John, these leaders, these pillars, shook hands with Barnabas and me as sign of partnership: we were to go to the pagans and they to the circumcised. The only thing they insisted on was that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do”. The shaking of hands can be regarded as the social investiture of Paul’s apostolic authority. But this investiture alone has no supreme value. Its true value is revealed in the service that is rendered to the community. Service is thus both the true meaning and realization of authority.

4. Charism and Authority in Pauline Communities

The originality of St. Paul’s ecclesiology lies in his development of the theology of the Church as body of Christ, or as communion of charisms. The conception of the Church as the body of Christ with diverse operations of the same spirit, is fundamental to the understanding of authority in the Church. The role of the Holy Spirit can be said to be the element of ‘democratisation’ in the Church. This is because the idea of the Church as a body where the Spirit is at work in each of her different members for the good of the whole body, gives rise to certain truths about the nature of the Church and

⁷⁹ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament* in ID., *Essays on New Testament Themes* (coll. *Studies in Biblical Theology*, 41). London, SCM Press, 1964, p. 83.

the role of authority such as: communion, co-responsibility, interdependence of functions, mutual respect and service, equality of dignity, freedom, and the concern for the common-good.

In his theology of the Church, Paul avoids secular terms of office (αρχη, τιμη, τελος) in the description of the function of authority in the Church as they “express a relationship of rulers and ruled”⁸⁰. He prefers to use the term ‘charism’ which according to Käsemann “describes in a theologically exact and comprehensive way the essence and scope of every ecclesiastical ministry and function”⁸¹. In the following pages, we are concerned primarily with the meaning of charism and its relation with authority. As a charism, the function of authority in the Christian community is related and interwoven with other charisms or functions in its signification and finality.

4.1. The Word ‘Charism’

The origin of the word ‘charism’ is not clear. The term was not used in classical Greek literature. Nevertheless, it appears twice in the work of Philo of Alexandria who was Paul’s contemporary. Here charism means ‘token of favour’ in quite an ordinary sense of it⁸². In the New Testament apart from 1 Pt 4, 10, it was only Paul who uses the term. He uses it in a theological sense “to refer to the work of the Spirit through mutual ministry”⁸³. *Charisma* means gratuitous gift⁸⁴. Etymologically, it is derived from the Greek’s *charis* or *chairein*, which in biblical theological understanding means gratuity, benevolence, and God’s gift that is granted to the individual⁸⁵. “It

⁸⁰ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 187.

⁸¹ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 64.

⁸² Cf. R. BLANKS, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 90.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸⁴ Cf. R. LAURENTIN, *Les Charismes: Précisions de vocabulaire*, in *Concilium*, 129 (1977), p. 20: “(...)le suffixe *μα* dont la nuance répond à ce qu’exprime le parfait des verbes: l’action parfaite, achevée. La racine *χαρις* connote aussi la joie, selon l’étymologie du verbe correspondant *χαριζομαι* auquel se rattachent *χαρις* grâce et *χαρᾱ* joie: celle d’une libération harmonieuse des énergies du sujet au service de Dieu”.

⁸⁵ Cf. L. BOFF, *Church, Charism and Power*, p. 156.

presupposes a profound mystical experience of the presence of Christ and the Spirit as living and active realities in the lives of individuals and in the communion of the faithful, living out the new ethos begun by the Gospel”⁸⁶.

In his famous and widely quoted masterpiece *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, Ernest Käsemann has given one of the best theological and exegetical analysis of charism in Pauline communities. Taking his point of departure from Rom 6, 23, Käsemann rightly observes that the unique charism of God is the life which has appeared in Christ and which has laid its hold on men⁸⁷. Other charisms are dependent on this one great charism in the sense that they are its manifestations and concretisations, “so that eternal life is not one gift among many but the sole and unique gift of the End”⁸⁸. This reference to eternal life as the source and soul of all charisms enabled Käsemann to place the experience of these gifts within the dynamic and concrete revelatory perspective of the eschatological dominion of Christ in two ways: (1) As the “Spirit is our present participation in eternal life, we can possess him” and “participate in his gift only as he possesses us”. (2) We can only possess *charis* “to the extent which it seizes hold of us and to which the lordship of Christ acting through it brings us into the captivity of his service”⁸⁹. This shows that there is no autonomous charism as distinct from the giver. On this writes also H. Küng: “Whether a man is an apostle, a prophet, teacher, evangelist, a bishop or a deacon, whether he consoles, exhorts, forgives, loves – all these things are gifts in Jesus Christ and point to him who is and does all these things in his own person. Charisms are the revelations, in concrete and individual form, of the *charis*, the power of God’s grace, which takes hold of us, leads us to our appointed service and gives us an individual share in the reign of Christ”⁹⁰.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Cf. E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 64-65.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 189.

Due to its dependence for its being on the power of God's grace which gives rise to it and sustains it, every correct definition of charism must have Christ or the activity of the Spirit as its central reference point. In this light, R. Laurentin defines charisms as "*les dons par lesquels l'Esprit Saint structure l'Eglise, en éveillant de l'intérieur, selon les dispositions et qualités de chacun, les services et fonctions communautaires*"⁹¹. Leonardo Boff defines it as "manifestation of the Spirit's presence in the members of the community, causing everything that they are and do to be done and ordered for the good of all"⁹². For Hans Küng, "it signifies the call of God, addressed to an individual, to a particular ministry in the community, which brings with it the ability to fulfil that ministry"⁹³.

Certain salient characteristics are discernible from these definitions: Charisms are operations of the Spirit in the life of the members of the Christian community. These divine operations take place by liberating human energies, talents and qualities for the service of God and for mutual service. This also presupposes human co-operation. Thus, Laurentin could speak of human disposition in his definition of charism. But the emphasis is always on the gratuity of the gift on the part of God and its utility on the part of the Church.

4.2. Two Criteria of Genuine Charism

Paul presents us with two criteria or norms for the discernment of genuine charism: (i) A charism is said to be from God when it is lived in the spirit of gratuity and always redirected to God by its receiver. In this sense, the gift or Spirit from God leads to the recognition and affirmation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ: "(...) no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit" (1 Co 12, 3). Here Paul is directing a critique against those who were fomenting trouble in the

⁹¹ R. LAURENTIN, *Les Charismes: Précisions de vocabulaire*, p. 21.

⁹² L. BOFF, *Church, Charism and Power*, p. 158.

⁹³ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p.189.

Corinthian community by their quest for extraordinary powers of miracle and ecstasy, which they turned into personal glory. The fact that they applied the term πνευματικά to designate these phenomena shows that they recognize these gifts as coming from the Spirit. But the Corinthians did not direct them back to the giver by the way they lived it, and hence creating disorder and division in the community. Thus, Paul had to remind them, in order to call them to order, that the “Spirit which comes from God binds men to Jesus and to his reign”⁹⁴. The fact that Paul uses the Hellenistic term πνευματικά in 1Co12ff and sometimes substitutes it with χαρίσματα as in 1Co 12, 1, and 14, 1, shows that he attached certain importance to these potentialities⁹⁵. But for him, the specifically Christian element consists in the fact that the Spirit is said to be from God where Jesus, rather than any person or power of this world, is the Lord⁹⁶.

(ii) The second mark of a true charism is its communal character. Charisms are not natural talents possessed by individuals for their personal profit and glory. Charism is a call of God, which brings with it a specific task, a vocation, which also means a definite service to be rendered for the edification and building up of a community. In order to know a true charism one ought to look at its function and usefulness for the community⁹⁷. Paul gives us the basic norm when he said: “No one should seek his own interest but rather that of the other” (1Co 10, 24). “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1Co 12, 7). Charism and service are inseparable. They are like two sides of a coin. No wonder then that in 1 Co 12, 4ff διακονίαῖ is interchangeable with the *charismata*: “There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of ways in different people(...)”. This means that what is given to every one is the same, namely, the Spirit or eternal life (Rm 6, 23). But the specific way in

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁹⁵ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 66.

⁹⁶ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p.182.

which the Spirit is concrete for each individual is different, as the Spirit announces his presence through a variety of operations or services. Because these operations or services are essentially the work of the Spirit and manifestations of the Lordship of Christ, the individual Christians who are not passive share in this eschatological dominion of Christ by putting their charisms to the service of the Christian community. Thus, writes Käsemann: "For Paul, to have a charisma means to participate for that very reason in life, in grace, in the Spirit, because a charisma is the specific part which the individual has in the lordship and glory of Christ; and this specific part which the individual has in the Lord shows itself in a specific service and a specific vocation. For there is no divine gift which does not bring with it a task, there is no grace which does not move to action. Service is not merely the consequence but the outward form and the realization of grace. Eternal life quickens, and announces its presence within earthly reality by begetting new obedience"⁹⁸.

4.3. Variety and Scope of Charisms

There is variety in the gifts of the Spirit. This is because the operation of the Spirit is varied and diverse in different people who have a share in the Spirit. Ac 2 shows that the Spirit has been poured out 'on all mankind'. As every Christian has received the call of God, each Christian is a charismatic. "Everybody has received his own particular gifts from God, one with a gift for one thing and another with a gift for the opposite" (1 Co 7, 7). Charisms as Hans Küng shows "are not special marks of distinction belonging to a chosen few, whether on account of their enthusiasm or of

⁹⁷ Cf. L. BOFF, *Church, Charism and Power*, p. 162.

⁹⁸ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 65. Paul was conscious of the fact that "even existing charismata can be misused, as in Corinth. According to 11 Cor. 11.13 there can even be false apostles(...) For him the test of a genuine charisma lies not in the fact that something supernatural occurs but in the use which is made of it. No spiritual endowment has value, rights or privileges on its own account. It is validated only by the service it renders". *Ibid.*, p. 67.

their office in the Church, but a distinguishing mark of the whole Church, of the fellowship of all believers”⁹⁹.

What is given in common to each Christian equally is the gift of the Spirit or “eternal life in Jesus Christ” (Rm 6, 23). But what is given to each individual in a personal and unique sense is diverse. In this light, the concrete gift of the Holy Spirit varies according to the diversities of human condition, natural talents and vocations within the Christian community in a life lived totally for God and for others. When one’s condition of life, talents and vocation in the community are lived in service of the common vocation of the Church which is eternal life or kingdom of God, they become *charisma*. In Paul’s theology of the Church, everything which one is or has is charism when lived in the Spirit of gratuity and reference to God as the source. Jürgen Moltmann has given a true interpretation of Paul’s understanding of charism in the Church in the above direction. The experience of the Spirit, as Moltmann shows, is something as concrete as the human beings who are subject of this experience. The call of God is something addressed to the whole person. Each person also brings his whole being in service of his vocation. Thus, each person disposes to the Spirit what he is and who he is: not only one’s natural talents but also one’s condition as man or woman, poor or rich, Jew or pagan, handicapped or non-handicapped. In this way, the whole person is charismatic¹⁰⁰.

As Käsemann shows, Paul does not consider any domain of human existence as excluded from the reign of Christ be it religious, social or corporeal. That is why the Apostle could say: “I know and I am convinced by the Lord, that nothing is unclean in itself” (Rm 14, 14). The field of the Church’s presence cannot be only the community of faith and worship, but the whole world, which truly belongs to Christ alone. “All things stand within the charismatic possibility and are holy to the extent to which the

⁹⁹ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p.187.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *L’Esprit qui donne la vie* (coll. *Cogitation fidei*, 212). Trans. from German by J. HOFFMANN, Paris, Cerf, 1999, p. 249-250.

holy ones of God make use of them”¹⁰¹. The whole of life, together with death, can become charismatic if lived in the Lord and for the Lord. It is therefore, the lordship of Jesus over our gifts, our condition of existence and actions that is essentially constitutive of charism. In this light, there is nothing that is charism in itself for there is no divine gift which does not bring simultaneously with it a definite task. As Käsemann puts it: “Eternal life does not encourage sleeping partners or uninvested capital”¹⁰². *Charisma* can therefore, not be the prerogative of officials of the Church or of some extraordinarily gifted individuals but the common endowment of all Christians. Paul’s doctrine of charisms is theologically based on his central doctrine of justification by faith and is as well “the concrete expression of the doctrine of the new obedience, just because it is at the same time the doctrine of the *justification impi*”¹⁰³.

Apart from the kind of *charismata* that are given when one places his talents and condition of life in the service of the kingdom of God, there are also new kind of gifts or particular charisms which the Spirit arouses only within the community of faith and gives for the building up of the community. This is so because according to Paul, the community is the place of the revelation of the Spirit¹⁰⁴. This kind of charisms may be known as ministerial charisms in the strict sense, and corresponds to the charisms of those who exercise permanent ministries in the Church. Moltmann groups these particular charisms into three categories: kerygmatic (preaching), diaconic (services) and cybernetic (leadership) charisms¹⁰⁵. But as Moltmann notes, no dichotomy exists between the two kinds of charisms as the whole of life is to be lived under the lordship of Christ. He says: “*Les dons mis à la disposition de la communauté et ceux qui sont pratiqués dans la famille, l’activité professionnelle et la société ne doivent pas être*

¹⁰¹ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 72.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ J. MOLTSMANN, *L’Esprit qui donne la vie*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

séparés. Ils ne sont pas soumis à des lois différentes. Être chrétien fait un tout. Le critère est toujours la suite de Jésus"¹⁰⁶.

4.4. Interdependence of Charisms

In the ecclesiology of Paul, the charisms need each other for the well being and growth of the community. The diversity of gifts is not seen as source of disintegration in the community but as its strength. This is because each member receives his charism not for his own personal interest but for the benefit of the entire community. The diversity in the existence of charisms was not responsible for the disorder which erupted in the charismatic community of Corinth but resulted from the fact that the Corinthians sought for the gifts for their sake, rather than for the benefit and edification of the community which is the proper destination of the charisms. Thus, the Apostle's reaction was aimed not at repressing these charisms but at putting them within the proper limit of their true liberty and in the service of the community. It is this service of love which makes the unity of the Church possible. Thus, writes Käsemann: "The body consists not of one member, but of many. Conversely, this multiplicity does not cause the body to disintegrate but makes its unity possible. For while like entities can only cancel each other out and render each other superfluous, unlike entities can perform mutual service and in this service of *agape* can become one"¹⁰⁷.

It therefore, follows that the community is not a one man band or divided along hierarchical lines. Each member has received his charism from God for mutual service, such that the Church is constituted by all the charisms of the Spirit in the community. This is why the image of the Church as body of Christ best illustrates Paul's understanding of the Church, which can be considered as charismatic

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 70.

ecclesiology. The well being and growth of the body as a living organism is dependent on the proper and harmonious functioning of all its parts. If a part is sick, the whole body is also sick. In the same way, each member of the Christian community in Paul's theology of the Church is important and useful to the community. The good of the whole Church depends on the fact that each member exercises his gift for the benefit of all. Writes G. Hasenhüttl: "The fundamental charismatic structure of the Church means that each individual has his or her place in the community, a place that is determined by the individual's charism; it also means that each one constitutes the Church"¹⁰⁸.

On the other hand, there is no distinction in dignity between members based on their exercise of a gift¹⁰⁹. The only distinction is functional. Each person has a duty to exercise his charism and there is no room for privileges which endanger the cohesion of the whole: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you, nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you'" (1 Co 12, 21). Paul considers fraternal love as the regulating principle of all the charisms and as the greatest charism (1 Co 12, 31). It is love which ensures that each charism keeps to the right measure, which is the building up of the community in fraternal love (cf. 1 Co 13,1-13). All the charisms are included in love which is the work of the Holy Spirit¹¹⁰.

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that Paul wishes to place the accent on the building up of the community and on the co-responsibility of all, rather than on the rank or position occupied by a person. Edward Schillebeeckx sees this attempt by Paul as effort to neutralize hierarchical differentiation which may result from the existence of variety of services and the quest for the status of personal power¹¹¹. He makes room for diversity of services and at the same time emphasized the unity of

¹⁰⁸ Cited in L. BOFF, *Church, Charism and Power*, p.160

¹⁰⁹ Cf. R. BLANKS, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 9.

¹¹⁰ Cf. H. SCHÜRMANN, *Les charisms spirituels*, in *L'Eglise de Vatican II*, t. 2 (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 51b). Ed. G. BARAUNA, Paris, Cerf, 1967, p. 567.

¹¹¹ Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Plaidoyer pour le peuple du Dieu* (coll. *Théologies*). Paris, Cerf, 1987, p. 71.

service in the edification of the community. But despite the egalitarianism in the communities of Paul owing to the fact that each person has his gift, the charisms are ranked hierarchically according to their effect (cf. 1 Co 12, 28). Thus, “those that make the most profitable contribution to the community’s growth are accorded the highest importance”¹¹². In this order, the charism of the apostle is the most important in the hierarchical order of service¹¹³. Furthermore, it is significant that in Pauline communities, all the existing functions or services are known as charisms. Schillebeeckx has shown that the variety of the lists of charism in the different communities is a sign of the great liberty which exists in the structural order of service of the Churches, and the introduction of some sort of ecclesial organisation¹¹⁴. The important question now is: How is unity attained in the presence of the diversity of charisms and how is diversity in unity attainable? Alternatively, what is the place of authority in Paul’s theology of the Church founded on the doctrine of charisms?

4.5. The Charism of Authority

To say that authority is a charism is first and foremost to say that authority is a gift of God like other charisms of the Spirit, a gift which expresses and realizes itself as service. As a gift of God, authority in the Church cannot be exercised without

¹¹² R. BLANKS, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 96.

¹¹³ “Paul gives first place to the apostles, for without their preaching of the gospel and binding together of their converts the communities would not exist. Behind this ministry lies the possession of ‘wisdom’, which for Paul signifies special insight into God’s saving plan and its benefits for his hearers. Yet despite its preeminent position, Paul never says that his ministry is derived from a particular charisma, e.g., apostleship, but only from *charis* in general (Rom 12: 3; Eph 3: 7). The reason for this could be that the apostle exercises all the basic gifts(...) These form a necessary part of his equipment if his communities are to be founded on the broadest possible base. His leaving them then provides the opportunity for the same range of gifts to develop within the communities themselves. Second are the prophets, for they communicate to the community those things that it needs to hear directly from God for its concrete encouragement, admonition, and direction. Teachers come next, for they are able charismatically to draw specific insights from what God has already done or said and to extrapolate practical challenges for the present(...) The existence of these ‘higher’ gifts reminds us that some exercise a charisma in a regular fashion, providing the basis for a continuing ministry, while others exercise it only in an intermittent or occasional manner. All, according to Paul ought to and can prophesy, but only some have an ongoing ministry of this kind and can therefore, be regarded as ‘prophets’ (1 Cor 12: 29)” (R. BLANKS, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 96-97).

¹¹⁴ Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Plaidoyer pour le peuple de Dieu*, p. 71. Cf also Eph 4, 11; Rm 12, 6-8.

reference to the giver, who is always present in his gift. Thus, it always bears in itself the character of a claim made by the Lord. This pre-eminently occurs in the act of service since it is in service that the Lordship of Jesus announces itself. Authority in the Church can be fully what it should be only in service.

On the other hand, authority is a unique kind of charism. This is because in the ecclesiology of Paul, authority as a function is not a solitary responsibility of some particular individuals in the Church. It is first the responsibility of the whole Christian community. This fact is evident in the earliest and genuine letters of Paul. In these correspondences, Paul always addresses the entire community rather than a particular individual or a group in the community. Even when certain functionaries of the community are mentioned as in the letter to the Philippians, this was done only after the whole community has been mentioned. All this goes to show that Paul does not see the Church as a community divided into two classes, the rulers and their subjects. The whole Church is ministerial and responsible for her life and mission.

The pre-eminence of the community principle in Paul's theology of the Church is founded on his understanding of the Church as body of Christ, or as constituted by charisms and the members who bear these charisms. In this light, unity in diversity and diversity in unity, which is the function of authority is the organic function of all the charisms. As we earlier saw this occurs when each charism functioning properly makes its contribution to the building up of the community in mutual service. The principle responsible for this is not some designated official persons but the Holy Spirit. This is because the communion of the Christian community is primarily the work of the Spirit. The Spirit creates the communion of believers by endowing the community with diverse charisms (cf. 1 Co 12, 12-13)¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁵ Cf. M. A. SANTANER, *Homme et pouvoir église et ministère* (coll. *La vie des hommes*). Paris, Edition Ouvrières, 1980, p. 112.

The Spirit does not only give His gifts to believers. He also continues to exercise His sovereign control over them. He does not force His gifts on people but works in human heart and moves the human will in a way that safeguards his integrity and freedom¹¹⁶. The Spirit works directly in human will through His gifts. Moved by Him, each charismatic puts his gifts to the well-being and upbuilding of the community. In this way, unity and order results in the Church. Thus, unity and order are not only the work of the Spirit. It is also a human work, the work of the community as a whole. In this sense, every Christian has the right and duty of co-responsibility in the work of authority in the Church. Thus, writes Jürgen Moltmann: *“Tous les membres de la Communauté messianique sont doué d’Esprit et ainsi responsables de ministères. Il n’existe aucune séparation entre les responsables de ministères et le peuple. Il n’existe non plus aucune séparation entre l’esprit du ministère et l’esprit libre”*¹¹⁷.

On the other hand, the Spirit also directs the community by using human mediations. But the role of the Spirit as the principal source of unity and order in the Church and the collective responsibility of the entire Church radically relativize all human guarantee of unity and order in the Church. Thus, within the context of the ministerial responsibility of the entire Christian community, there are those who hold this ministerial function or authority as a particular responsibility or charism (cf. 1 Th. 5, 12-13; 1 Co 12, 28; 16, 15-18; Rm. 16, 1-16; Eph 4, 11; Phil 1, 1). But in all these cases of particular ministerial responsibility, Paul in true fidelity to his doctrine of charisms places the accent on the concrete services rendered in the community for its up building rather than on these functions conceived in the abstract way. Thus, in 1 Th 5, 12-27, Paul speaks of those who have particular ministerial responsibilities among the Thessalonians, those who lead them and instruct them. To these leaders proper respect is to be accorded because of their work (5, 12, 13). In the Church of Corinth,

¹¹⁶ Cf. R. BLANKS, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 104.

¹¹⁷ J. MOLTSMANN, *L'Esprit qui donne la vie*, p. 386.

the Stephanas family, who were said to have the charisms of the ‘first-fruits’, are to be esteemed because of their hard work for and among the faithful (cf. 1 Co 16, 15-18).

The fact that Paul places the emphasis on concrete services rendered for the benefit of the community rather than on the functional title of those with particular responsibilities in the Church, shows his desire to neutralise all hierarchical distinctions capable of dividing the community into two unequal classes. Not only certain particular responsibilities are important in the community, but all available functions and charisms are. In all this, love is the basic norm: “Nobody should be looking for his own advantage, but everybody for the other man’s” (1 Co 10, 24). Thus, even though in reality there is nothing wrong in eating food offered to idols, yet I may not do so if this may lead to the fall of a weak brother (1 Co 8, 13). Furthermore, as every Christian has the vocation to use his charism for the building up of the community in love, each person cooperates in the work of authority. A charism that is not exercised with love creates discord, dissension, hatred, and division in the community. This was a recurrent problem in the Church of Corinth that had many difficulties in attaining cohesion and unity (cf. 1 Co 1, 10-16). In the face of disintegrating factors, the imperative of order and discipline is inevitable¹¹⁸. These imperatives are also in the understanding of Paul charism insofar as they preserve their true function. The purpose of the charism of order or authority is not of course to limit other charisms but to “keep them within their limits, within the community and in service to it”¹¹⁹.

4.6. Office and Charism: Progressive Institutionalization

By offices we mean here those public ministries in the Christian community to which one can accede not only by the possession of the necessary charisms but also by being officially commissioned or appointed. They can be distinguished from mere

¹¹⁸ Cf. L. BOFF, *Church, Charism and Power*, p. 163.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

charisms which are a sort of spiritual ministries. An office is a function or a position which stands over against the rest of the community and tends to express authority by its own nature. Usually this authority is based on a pre-existing law or tradition in the community. On the other hand, a charism is also a function but it does not express authority in advance but *post facto*. Whether offices existed in the early communities of Paul in the above sense that we have explained it, is not certain. However, despite some dissenting voices like that of P. Grelot as we shall see, it is the consensus of many scholars that functions or ministries in early Pauline communities were based only on charisms. This consensus can afford us a working hypothesis but it cannot afford us an absolute guarantee of certainty. This is because, if Paul attributes all ministries in the Church to the activity of the Spirit, it is hard to see how he could have characterized the development of "office" in the Church as anything other than a gift of this same Spirit¹²⁰.

On the other hand, what is absolutely sure is that in these early communities of Paul there existed side by side with other services, functions which were official (cf. Rm 12, 6-8; 1 Co 12, 27-30). These official and private functions or services were closely knit together within charismatic life of the community such that the community remained one coherent whole and not divided into two distinct classes. However, even though the development of offices in the Church was a phenomenon which was clearly visible in the post-apostolic period, the germ of this development can be traceable to the apostolic period. For instance, in his Letter to the Corinthians, Paul appeals to them to be obedient to Stephanas and his colleagues in the ministry (1 Co 16, 15-16). "The obvious signs of God's grace in their ministry should command obedience"¹²¹. The emphasis of authority here is on concrete service rendered by Stephanas' family not on any office as is always the case with Pauline tradition. Even when Paul addresses the bishops and deacons at Philippi, it is not likely that there has

¹²⁰ Cf. P. KEARNEY, *New Testament Incentives for Different Ecclesial Order?* in *Concilium*, 10/8 (1972), p. 57.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

been any significant structural development beyond that noted in Corinth¹²². “These titles probably represent functions in the Church, that is, ministries exercised more in virtue of the personal qualities of the ministers than because of their occupying a socially acknowledged position bearing authority of itself. However, by the time these titles recur in the Pastorals, they represent stable offices in the Church. They are positions to which one can aspire (1 Tim. 3. 1) and for which one must give evidence of suitable preparation (1 Tim 3.6, 10)”¹²³.

Thus, the development of offices in the communities of Paul became a clear *datum* only in the Pastorals. As integral part of the social structure of the Church, these offices tended to express authority of their own nature. They possessed an independent existence and could lead to the succession of persons exercising them. “The officeholder in the Church, even beyond the respect and obedience his personal qualifications might command, could appeal to the authority of his office itself”¹²⁴.

The development of offices in the Pastorals has been attributed by scholars to historical factors. Here we meet a different situation from what was the case in the primitive Pauline communities. This is evident from the fact that these epistles were addressed to the leaders of the communities, Titus and Timothy, rather than to the whole community as it is usual with the Pauline tradition of his ‘genuine’ letters. The disappearance of the apostolic generation and above all the death of the powerful personality and founding figure of the apostle Paul resulted in the modification of the existing situation of the communities. The growth of the communities and the appearance of new generation of people created new problems which needed solutions¹²⁵. The Church was menaced by both internally and externally inspired

¹²² Cf. *ibid.*

¹²³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Cf. R. PESCH, *Structures du ministère dans le Nouveau Testament*, p. 437.

problems such as the Gnostic heresy, false doctrines, and apostasy¹²⁶. Thus, the principal objective of the Pastorals became the preservation of the deposit of faith or the Gospel as received from the apostle Paul: "My dear Timothy, take great care of all that has been entrusted to you" (1 Tm 6, 20). "Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. You have been trusted to look after something precious; guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (2 Tm 1, 13-14).

While the principal preoccupation of the earliest letters of Paul was the community principle and its multiple charismatic services, that of the Pastorals became the ministerial constitution of the Church. The charismatic and dynamic life of community so pronounced in the 'authentic' letters of Paul gave way to preoccupation with the authenticity of ministry. An example of this is the fact that charisms were now institutionalised and conferred through ordination and the laying on of hands (cf. 1 Tm 4, 14; 2 Tm 1, 6). In this process, the community as a whole lost its responsibility to the profit of ordained ministers. Authority was no longer something that announces itself primarily in the concrete act of service (or charism) where the *Kyrios* takes up again his Lordship but took on the character of a pre-given *datum* before all expression in service. It took on an expressly juridical character and undertone. It became synonymous with a right or power conferred on a person or persons over a community which is to be deployed into service rather than something that defines itself concretely in the very act of service.

This is how Joachim Gnailka rightly evaluates the situation: "*Maintenant la communauté n'a plus qu'à obéir et à se plier aux préceptes de ceux qui portent les charges. L'étroitesse de cette vue communautaire se montre en ceci que l'on abandonne l'image paulinienne du corps et de l'organisme et qu'on la remplace par*

¹²⁶ Cf. J. GNILKA, *La relation entre la responsabilité communautaire et l'autorité ministérielle d'après le NT*, p. 463.

*celle de la maison construite sur le fondement de la vérité. La vitalité et le dynamisme de l'organisme communautaire sont perdus. En effet, maintenant le chrétien est dans l'Eglise comme on est dans une maison ; il n'est plus Eglise, comme les membres ensemble constituent le corps. La multiplicité des 'modèles' communautaires du NT présente les lettres pastorales presque comme antithèse de l'Evangile de Saint Matthieu. Alors que dans ce dernier on trouve des paroles critiques et sceptiques contre les prétentions ministérielles, dans les lettres pastorales on ressent le ministère comme le dernier rempart contre le courant subversif de la fausse doctrine et de la désagrégation”*¹²⁷.

However, in spite of the strong hierarchical assent of the Churches of the Pastorals, the ministry of the bishop and the presbyter has not been monopolised by one person as was later to be the case with Ignatius of Antioch. It remained a collegial responsibility involving a number of bishops/presbyters. It was only in the course of the first part of the second century that the majority of the bishops will cede their places to only one bishop who now had responsibility and authority over a group of presbyters.

On the other hand, presbyters were also mentioned by the Pastorals. Like the bishops they also formed a college and had the same functions which were the direction and presidency of the community. It is not possible to say what was the relationship between the bishops and presbyters but as Rudolf Pesch shows: “*il semble que le titre de presbytre est plus familier à l'auteur des lettres, tandis que, le titre d'évêque lui paraît provenir d'une autre tradition canonique(. ..)*”¹²⁸.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ R. PESCH, *Structures du ministère dans le Nouveau Testament*, p. 448: “*Originellement, les deux titres renvoient à différents types de constitutions d'Eglises qui, au temps des Pastorales, seront fusionnées dans les communautés connues de l'auteur. De la structure épiscopale découlent des diacres (cf. Ph 1, 1), qui, à côté de l'annonce de l'Evangile, assument surtout l'administration des biens en vue de l'assistance. La gradation ultérieure : diacres - presbytres - évêque est déjà prédestinée dans les Pastorales à travers la subordination du diacre. Les presbytres, quant à eux, sont la figure d'une structure communautaire anciennement patriarcale, empruntée au judaïsme*”.

Finally how do we reconcile the notion of authority and charismatic structure of the Church seen at work in early Pauline communities with the one that developed in his later communities of the post-apostolic period or with the presbyteral structure of the primitive Jerusalem Christian community? In examining the issues involved, we shall consider and evaluate three perspectives, that of E. Käsemann, H. Küng and P. Grelot.

4.6.1. Ernest Käsemann : Charismatic Model

The development of institutionalised form of Church life where offices played an important role as evident in the Pastorals as well as in the Acts of the Apostles is regarded by the Lutheran theologian, Ernest Käsemann as illegitimate and erroneous development stimulated by a difficult historical situation and the struggle for survival: “(...) the community of which the Pastorals are the mouthpiece is being heavily pressed back on to the defensive and its order represents something in the nature of a stockade erected against its assailants in a last despairing effort for survival. This order is chiefly designed simply to mark the frontiers which separate the Church and the world. For the Church is no longer seen here in the context of the Pauline missionary situation; it is no longer the world-wide body of Christ, the dominion of that grace which has invaded the world in its total being. Rather it is the house of God, *familia Dei*, and as such exposed to attack from outside and in need of protection”¹²⁹.

Käsemann therefore denounced the model of Church order represented by the Pastorals on the basis that it arose out of abnormal historical situation, the result of which was an ecclesiology of self-defence. He sees as its antithesis the Pauline charismatic communities marked by the reign of the liberty of the Spirit. It is this latter Church structure which Käsemann accepts as authentic and normative. According to J. H. Roberts “the above point of view sometimes presupposes the Lutheran notion of a canon within the canon where the researcher has to decide for himself what he accepts

¹²⁹ E. KÄSEMANN, *Ministry and Community in the New Testament*, p. 85.

as canon. In the case of Käsemann this means a decision for the “Pauline Church structure (based on the ‘genuine’ letters of Paul)”¹³⁰.

However, Käsemann’s position which is line with the main stream Protestant position as articulated as far back as Adolf Harnack¹³¹ and Rudolph Sohm¹³² has been criticized especially by scholars from the Catholic side. P. Kearney criticizes it on two main grounds. He thinks that such a position does not take seriously enough the new situation of the Church as evident in the Pastorals, a situation which made the Church to seek stabilization in the face of “waning eschatological expectation and of emerging theologies seen as dangerous to the tradition”¹³³. He thus criticizes it for its opposition of charism and office. For Kearney, it is not a question of “a simple dichotomy expressing a contrast between a genuine Spirit-filled authority and a human presumption to structure and channel the divine”. He showed that even in the Pastorals “the movement of the Spirit was still being discerned with regard to the exercise of authority”¹³⁴. On the other hand, Kearney picks another fault with anti-institutional

¹³⁰ J. H. ROBERTS, *Can Offices Be Founded in Paul?* in *Neotestamentica*, 10 (1976), p. 2.

¹³¹ According to Adolf Harnack in his *What is Christianity?* the Church lost its original freedom in the ecclesiastical order that emerged from the struggle with Gnosticism in the second century. “It was now forced to say: You are no Christian, you cannot come into any relation with God at all, unless you have first of all acknowledged these doctrines, yielding obedience to these ordinances, and followed out definite forms of mediation”. A. HARNACK, *What is Christianity?* New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1957, p. 208; cf. also A. HARNACK, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two centuries*, New York, Putnam’s Sons, 1910.

¹³² Sohm was a contemporary of Harnack and a Lutheran historian of canon law. He carried a step further Harnack’s critique in his book on *The Essence and Origin of Catholicism*. He saw the rise of Catholicism in the introduction of ecclesiastical law under the influence of Rome. He considered not only legalism but also law itself as incompatible with the nature of the Church as a spiritual community. Cf. R. SOHM, *Wesen und Ursprung des Katholizismus*, Leipzig, Teubner, 2nd ed., 1912.

¹³³ P. KEARNEY, *New Testament Perspective for a Different Ecclesial Order*, p. 57.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*: “In 1 Tim. 1. 18, the words of prophecy spoken with respect to Timothy’s ordination, however they functioned in the actual situation, are a clear sign that the movements of the Spirit were still being discerned with regard to the exercise of authority. Surely the very demand that prospective officers give evidence of sustained fidelity to obligations was itself an attempt to establish the workings of God’s grace in the candidate”. On the other hand, R. Pesch shows that in the Pastorals there was still place for prophetic pronouncement and diaconal conception of ministry: “1 Tm 2, 8 *parle encore d’une parole spontanée dans le cadre du culte et en 2, 12 on presuppose pour tous les hommes le droit d’enseigner dans la communauté. Le ministère de presbyter et d’évêque n’est pas encore totalement monopolisé et le ministère n’est aucunement typé dans le seul registre cultuel et sacré. Les requêtes, qui sont adressées aux ministres, ne sont pas déterminées à partir d’une conception administrative mais en fonction du nécessaire service, de la considération de la communauté et de*

view of the Church. He sees such a view as rooted in the distrust for human co-operation in God's work of salvation. Says he: "To imply that authority in the Church is to be legitimated by nothing more than the effects it produces (the sign of its charismatic power) is in effect to deny to the Church the authority to structure itself anew in human fashion to meet new human situations. Catholic tradition of the union of human and divine in the Incarnation would favour understanding the bestowal of charismatic gift and the development of office as a fruitful interaction (note in Eph 4. 11-12 the charismatic character of Church development and the approximation towards the situation of the Pastorals)" ¹³⁵.

4.6.2. Hans Küng: Double Origins of the Church

Furthermore, a well known Catholic theologian, Hans Küng, has made an interesting attempt to resolve brilliantly the opposition posed between charism and office as evident in the work of Käsemann and his colleagues. He criticizes those who neglect the tensions and contrasts in the New Testament constitutions of the Church or see nothing but contradictions and oppositions¹³⁶. Küng distinguishes two basic and original forms of Church organization in the early Church: the institutional (presbyteral) form in the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem and the charismatic (episcopal and diaconal) form in the Pauline communities. During the time of the writing of Acts and Pastorals, the two systems, the episcopal and presbyteral had amalgamated as may be gleaned from the Pastorals and Luke's projection of the existing situation of his own Church into the Pauline communities.

Given the fact that the origin of the Church is duplex, Küng argues against any attempt to polarize the pneumatic-charismatic structure of Pauline communities and the institutional-presbyteral structure of the Jerusalem community. He maintains that

ceux qui se tiennent au-dehors (ce qui était aussi le point de vue de Paul)". R. PESCH, Structure du ministère dans le Nouveau Testament, p. 449.

¹³⁵ P. KEARNEY, *New Testament Perspective for a Different Ecclesial Order*, p. 57.

the distinctions and contrasts between Palestinian and Pauline constitutions of the Church cannot be taken “as analogical with the contrast between office and charism”. This is because there are many common and uniting features between these two Church orders, that is between a ministry inspired by a free gift of the Spirit and a ministry exercised by special appointment. These two ministries have as their foundation the apostolic witness and commission. They are also based on the priesthood of all believers and thus presuppose faith in the Gospel and the receiving of baptism. In addition, both are subject to the discernment of the whole community of believers¹³⁷.

Another common feature according to Küng is that “the ministry exercised by special commission, as much as charismatic ministries without special commission, is in its own way, a charismatic ministry”¹³⁸. The special appointment by men cannot simply be reduced to arbitrary decision. This is because these men can only commission those whom God has called and not those whom they wish or that suite their purposes. This special commission, as much as the free gift of the Spirit, takes its origins from the grace of God who has freedom to call whom he wishes. Both those who commission and those who are commissioned must be the willing tools of God. The special commission just as the gifts of the Holy Spirit has its origin from the authority of the glorified Lord. The demands of his Gospel and the call to follow him have equal application to both kinds of ministry. “The special commission, as much as charismatic ministry, takes its origin from the freedom of the Spirit, which excludes any compulsion or power or enforced obedience towards other men and demands freedom, voluntary action and co-operation in mutual humility and love. The spiritual

¹³⁶ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 413-417.

¹³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 420-422.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 421.

nature of every ministry in the Church is recognized in Corinth as much as in Jerusalem”¹³⁹.

For Küng what is fundamental about Church order is its charismatic structure as it is on this that the priesthood of all believers is based. Within the context and background of this general charismatic service in the Church, arise also the services of specially commissioned or appointed men as equally legitimate development of Church order. Küng sees the charismatic structure as the constitution of the Pauline communities¹⁴⁰. This general charismatic structure of the Church was lost in the post-apostolic period to the profit of the ministries with special commission or linked to official position¹⁴¹. For Küng the system of appointed office in the Church cannot be justified on the basis of actual development of such offices, nor on the ground of the actual abuses of charisms¹⁴². His theory of justification is rather based on historical needs and circumstances: According to him, two closely linked facts point to the real answer. In the first place, the young Church obviously expected the imminent return of the Lord, during the lifetime of the first generation. But this expectation of an imminent end did not materialize and communities which had prayed ‘Lord, come quickly’ had to establish themselves on a longer-term basis. In the second place, the death of the apostles as in the case of Paul left a tremendous gap in the Christian ranks. During their life time, the apostles had guided the communities with the authority entrusted to them. They controlled the variety of charisms by their exhortations and

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* These common features between the two Churches, according to Küng, enabled them to live together in one Church rather than being mutually exclusive. “These common features explain why, when the later Church came to decide on the New Testament canon, it accepted and included non-Pauline as well as Pauline writings...as a valid and genuine testimony of its own origins(...)these common features are the reason why the Church of the present does not have to make an exclusive choice between two alternatives. If an exclusive choice of this kind had been made by those responsible for drawing up the New Testament canon, it would have ignored the history of the Church, in which both kinds of constitutions co-existed and indeed increasingly influenced one another; and to make such an exclusive choice would again be to ignore the history of the Church’s origins” (*Ibid.*, p. 422).

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 432.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, p.424.

admonitions, by commands and warnings even though they often exercised this authority from a distance¹⁴³. “These two developments seem to have made it inevitable that one kind of ministry should become more important than the other. Rather than those charismatic ministries the authority of which could only be recognized *post facto* by the community, increased importance was given to those ministries which were exercised in the community on the basis of a special commission, and with an authority given in advance”¹⁴⁴.

The aim of this development is to make possible the continuation of the apostolic commission and mission in the post-apostolic period. This is because: “if the words of the apostles could no longer be heard, the Church risked losing contact with its foundation, the Gospel of Jesus Christ himself. The danger that the young Church might lose touch with its origins, and, following a very common pattern of the time, become absorbed into the all-absorbing world of syncretic Hellenism, could only be resisted if, despite the inevitable development of tradition in the course of its history, the Church remained determinedly faithful to the original apostolic testimony”¹⁴⁵. On the other hand, Küng’s position has been criticized by P. Grelot¹⁴⁶.

4.6.3. P. Grelot: Charismatic and Institutional Aspects of Church Order as Equally Fundamental in Pauline Communities

Grelot gives his accord to what may be regarded as the general and indisputable consensus of scholars on the nature and development of ministry in Pauline communities, namely, the pre-eminence of community responsibility, organic growth of functions in line with the concrete needs of the community, and the emergence of

¹⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. P. GRELOT, *Sur l'origine des ministères dans les églises pauliniennes*, in *Istina*, 16 (1971), p. 452. Grelot asserts that Küng’s thesis on the charismatic structure of the Church in Pauline communities was motivated either by the ecumenical problem of ministries in the Churches of the Reform or by that of a future time when the local Churches might be without legitimately ordained ministers.

personal charisms by the action of the Holy Spirit¹⁴⁷. However, he goes further than this using a more rational approach which takes seriously not only the divine action but also the human instrumentality. He says : "*Les communautés ne sont pas nées à l'existence à l'appel de l'Esprit Saint tout seul: cet appel a eu pour organe l'annonce de l'Evangile effectuée par Paul lui-même*"¹⁴⁸ Grelot argues that the practical and visible action of the apostle Paul in the foundation of his communities such as the external form he gave to them, the embryonic organization he left behind and the way he verified its evolution constitute an essential part of the life of these communities which should not be neglected or glossed over as if they were not important¹⁴⁹. He opines that what Paul concretely did as a missionary and as a person is equally fundamental in the understanding of the constitution and development of the organically structured life of his communities. "*Le fait même que les communautés s'étaient réunies autour de lui et qu'elles avaient fait en sa présence l'expérience de la vie nouvelle animée par l'Esprit, les mettait aussi en possession d'une praxis qui avait sûrement une forme concrète. Est-il incongru de s'intéresser à cette praxis, dans la mesure où elle est saisissable ?*"¹⁵⁰.

Due to the importance he attaches to the *praxis* of the apostle Paul in the constitution of his communities, Grelot concludes that ministerial responsibility in Pauline communities developed not only in function of experience as Küng holds but also with reference to the founding apostle¹⁵¹. In this light, he does not see any contradiction between the special action of the Holy Spirit which is responsible for the diversity of charisms and the institutional action of Paul which is responsible for the ecclesial status of ministerial functions (charisms)¹⁵². As such the charismatic and

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 456.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 458-459 : "*Il me semble même qu'on distingue ainsi la façon dont les dons particuliers de l'Esprit se sont rencontrés avec l'action organisatrice de Paul. En effet, la proposition formulée par Stéphane*

institutional structures of Church order are seen by Grelot as equally original and fundamental in Paul. For him instead of classifying as danger to the liberty of the Spirit anything which appears as an institution in the process of development in Pauline communities, one should rather ask for its sense, its function of service, its organic relation, and its reference to the original apostolicity which it manifests concretely and permanently¹⁵³. Grelot's position is certainly inspired by practical questions of order and common sense which in his view Paul himself does not give us a ready made answer: "*Si la soumission à la règle de foi, dont la Tradition des apôtres est la mesure, s'impose impérativement à tous les détenteurs de ministères, comment dans la pratique peut-elle prendre forme pour être assurée sans hésitation ni déviation? Et si tout le peuple fidèle doit se sentir communautairement responsable de l'Evangile dont il est dépositaire, comment donner à ce sensus fidei une possibilité de s'exprimer de façon organique en respectant les fonctions propres des théologiens et des pasteurs ? Toutes ces questions sont pertinentes. Saint Paul ne leur fournit pas une réponse toute faite*"¹⁵⁴.

4.6.4. Evaluation of The Three Theological Positions

Of the three positions above on institutionalisation and development of ministries with special commission in Pauline communities, I would say that the position of P. Grelot is a more balanced and tenable position. This is because it takes seriously both divine action and human co-operation in the work of God. If the activity of the Holy

et ses familiers 'en vue du service' peut être légitimement comprise comme la manifestation d'un charisme personnel dû à l'action de l'Esprit en eux. Il suffit pour cela de se souvenir du principe posé en 1 Co 12, 4-5.7 : Il y a diversité de dons, mais c'est le même Esprit ; diversité de services (=ministères), mais c'est le même Seigneur(...)A chacun la manifestation de l'Esprit est donnée en vue du bien commun. Mais l'accès effectif aux fonctions ministérielles paraît bien se situer au point de jonction entre le surgissement des charismes individuels, reconnaissables non seulement à la générosité des propositions spontanées mais aussi aux aptitudes concrètes pour tel ou tel 'service', et l'action de l'apôtre, qui a reconnu l'authenticité de ces charismes et s'est adjoint leurs détenteurs comme collaborateurs dans l'annonce de l'Evangile et l'édification de l'Eglise".

¹⁵³ Grelot surely has in mind such passages as Phil. 1, 1 where Paul makes reference to bishops and deacons and Eph. 4, 11 (which is however believed to have a deutero-pauline character).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 463.

Spirit is recognized in the life and mission of the Church of the Pastorals and Acts, I see no reason why Käsemann should regard the development of offices there as illegitimate and erroneous. If the development of offices there is illegitimate, the post-apostolic Church would not have included the *corpus* of the Pastorals as well as the Acts among the canons of the New Testament.

On the other hand, even though community principle and responsibility predominated in early Pauline communities, we should not rule out completely possible institutional actions of Paul as Grelot opines. This is because even though the action of the Spirit as manifest in the multiple charisms at work in these communities is the principal source of unity, human co-operation is also important. God does not work alone. He also works through human instrumentality as shown in the apostolic work of Paul and in the work of those with ministerial charisms whom Paul may have appointed as overseers in his communities at his departure from one place to the other. It is the function of these stewards of the communities that with time would develop into stable offices as at the time of the Pastorals. Küng like Käsemann may therefore not be right in seeing nothing else than purely charismatic constitution in the early Pauline communities. What may be taken as certain is the pre-dominance of community principle and the responsibility of the whole community due to the basic charismatic order of these communities. But to deny every element of human structure is to neglect the fact that the Church is also a community of human beings and needs also to be structured in a human way in order to meet its social needs and challenges.

From what we have seen so far, the idea of authority that emerges from both early and later Pauline communities shows that authority in the Church is concomitantly of charismatic and institutional nature. However, the emphasis that can be placed on either the charismatic or institutional aspect depends on the needs and challenges of the Christian community. In the early Pauline communities, the emphasis was placed on the charismatic constitution and thus on the responsibility of the whole community.

On the other hand, in the Pastorals it was necessary to place the emphasis on stable offices as the Spirit continued to lead the Church in new ways in new human condition and challenges.

5. Authority in the Primitive Jerusalem Community

We get the little knowledge we have about the primitive Church of Jerusalem from the Acts of the Apostles. In this first Christian community which lasted only for a short while, we find the activities of the institution or the Twelve at the centre of its life¹⁵⁵. However, we are only concerned here with the way authority was understood and expressed. In this community, authority was realised in a way that portrayed its three constitutive dimensions: personal, collegial and communal. The first dimension, which is personal, was realised in the presidential activities of Peter as the head of the college of the apostles (Ac 1, 15-26; 2, 14-36; 5, 3-11). Peter did not exercise his authority in isolation. He did so always as the head, spokes-person, and member of the college of the apostles. Some passages are very clear on this: "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed them (the people)(...)" (Ac 2, 14). "So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them(...)" (Ac 6, 2). "We must therefore choose someone who has been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was travelling round with us"(Ac 1,21). The above passages show that the apostles saw themselves as a college, who has been entrusted with a common mission.

On the other hand, authority had also real communal dimension in the primitive community of Jerusalem. The apostles did not form a separate class of 'superior disciples'. But they remained in fellowship with the rest of the believers. This was reflected in the fact that everybody participated in every decision that affected the life of the whole community: The election of the seven deacons was realised by the 'whole assembly' (Ac 6, 5). When there was a conversion of a large number of people in

¹⁵⁵ Cf. R. PARENT & S. DUFOUR, *Les ministères*, Paris, Centurion, 1993, p. 33.

Antioch, it was not just the Apostles or the Elders who sent Barnabas to Antioch. We are told that it was the whole Church at Jerusalem that did so (Ac 11, 22; 15, 22)¹⁵⁶.

Another significant feature of authority as it was exercised in the primitive Jerusalem community is its synodal and conciliar character. A typical example of this was the apostolic Council of Jerusalem (cf. Ac 15). It was a Council convoked to discuss the exemption of the Gentiles Christians from the burden of the Jewish law, and to discuss the recognition of the apostolic commission of Paul and Barnabas by the leaders of the Jewish Church. We are told that when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem they were received by the whole Church together with the apostles and elders (cf. Ac 15, 4). In this Council, Peter gave a decisive speech while James, the leader of the Jerusalem community, played the role of president of the assembly. After a long and careful deliberation, James gave the ruling. However, his ruling far from being his own individual decision was the articulation of the movement of the Spirit in the hearts and minds of the whole participants in the assembly. It was a true representation of their sentiments and *sensus fidei*. It was therefore, not a surprise that when the apostles and elders decided to choose delegates to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the decision of the Council, the whole Church concurred with this (cf. Ac 15, 22). The decision was the exemption of the Gentiles from some of the burdens of the Jewish law and the recognition of the apostolic commission of Paul and Barnabas.

From the above, it is evident that authority in the primitive Jerusalem community had a predominantly institutional constitution. As an institution, the responsibility for authority was played principally by men who had special apostolic commission. This, however, does not diminish the charismatic character of the apostolic authority, as the apostles were also great charismatics. All their activities in the community as well as

¹⁵⁶ Cf. L. SWIDLER, *Demo-kratia, the Rule of the People of God, or Consensus Fidelium*, in *Authority in the Church*, ed. P. F. FRANSEN, Leuven, University press, 1983, p. 229.

their missionary commitment were under the spell of the Holy Spirit. Some examples suffice to illustrate our point. At the descent of the Holy Spirit, the apostles spoke in tongues in such a way that people that gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of the Pentecost heard them speaking in their different languages (cf. Ac 2, 1-13); Peter's inspired and efficacious first missionary preaching (cf. Ac 2, 14-41); the numerous miracles and signs worked through the apostles (cf. Ac 2, 43; 3, 1-10); the courage and power of the Spirit exhibited by Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 4, 1-31; 5, 17-42); the creation of new ministries to meet new human situations and challenges to the community as in the case of the Seven deacons (cf. Ac 6, 1-7); the conversion of the Gentiles as was the case of Cornelius and family (cf. Ac 10) and the apostolic decision not to impose on the Gentiles Jewish law of circumcision as a condition for their christianization (cf. Ac 15). The implication of the above is that the apostles not only possessed official authority, they were also men of great personal qualities.

Conclusion

Before this point, we have already reached a number of conclusions at various stages of this chapter on the nature of authority which has its foundation in the apostolic Church. It suffices to recall at this juncture some of these conclusions. Authority according to the New Testament is both charismatic and institutional. The charismatic dimension predominated in the early Pauline communities, while the institutional dimension was more pronounced in the Church of Acts and the Pastorals. In the New Testament understanding of authority in the Church, the emphasis was generally placed on the moral conception of authority. This is evident in its reluctance to apply the word *exousia* which has ambivalent character to Church leaders, but prefers more the terms *diakonoi/douloi* and *charisma*, terms which have soteriological and moral significations. As we saw, the *diakonos* is the servant who does only what the master commands, while the *doulos* is one who lives under the total claim of God and is completely subordinate to Christ to whom he belongs body and soul. On the

other hand, we saw that charism is a gift of the Spirit to be lived only with reference to God in the service of the community.

Thus, in the light of the above, the discharge of the gift and function of authority in the Church is considered primarily by the New Testament as obedience to God, submission to the reign of God and service of love, before being considered as a certain position of power. This is so because authority in the Church has a soteriological goal as it is a participation in the authority and mission by which Christ mediates salvation to the world. It is not surprising therefore, that the main concern of the apostolic Church is not with the formal signification of authority conceived in terms of jurisdiction and power (even though this was not denied) but with its substantial signification or use, which is always conceived in the moral sense. As we also noted, by placing the emphasis on the moral conception of authority, it was possible for the apostolic Church to lift the concept of authority above the category of pure profane representations of power and to situate it in the category of service or means to salvation.

Furthermore, having depicted the soteriological connotation of authority, we saw in Jesus Christ, the author of salvation, the model of authority conceived as service. As one who was sent by the Father, he had the authority of God. But as we noted, it was only in and through his redemptive service that he revealed and made this authority meaningful to man. The disciples of Jesus were able to recognize that he had authority because they saw it revealed in his life and ministry, especially in his death and resurrection. In this way, they could attribute authority to him and manifested this in the formation of the primitive Christian communities, in the handing on of the apostolic tradition and in the confession of the Lordship of Jesus as their *credo*. In other words, Jesus had authority both as a mandate and as service, though it was only in his redemptive service that this mandate from his heavenly Father was revealed and recognised by his disciples. As authority in the Church is determined by the shape of

the Pascal mystery, Church authority which is not demonstrated in the service of salvation as act of obedience to God becomes mere power or domination.

On the other hand, we also saw that for Paul authority in the Church is the authority of Christ and the Gospel. The apostle bears the authority of Christ and incarnates in his life the authority of the Gospel. But he does this in the status of a servant who is responsible to his master. Paul's apostolic authority is, therefore, a responsibility and obedience to the Lord. The implication of this for authority in the Church is that although Church leaders can command the obedience of their flocks this must be within the context of carrying out their mission of service of salvation in obedience to the Lord; so that in the final analysis the obedience commanded is truly obedience to God.

We also undertook in this chapter an elaborate analysis of the meaning and place of charism in the Church as handed down to us in the Pauline heritage. We considered the relationship between charism and authority. We saw that in a sense authority is also charism. This is responsible for the fact that the whole Christian community participate in the function of authority in such a way that unity results by putting to the service of the Church their different gifts in love. It is not surprising then that the early Pauline communities were dominated by community principle and responsibility even though there also existed particular ministerial responsibilities of a few. On the other hand, we also adopted the thesis that the development of offices in the Church had germs in the early Pauline communities. But it was only in the Pastorals as well as in the Acts that we have fully stable offices of authority as the Spirit continued to lead the Church in new ways within the context of new challenges and condition. The development of stable offices in the Church is in our view legitimate because they are fruits of the Holy Spirit. We cannot therefore toe the line of scholars as Käsemann who can only accept the charismatic constitution of the Church while regarding the development of offices as illegitimate and erroneous. Authority in the Church is not

only of charismatic nature, it is also institutional. This authority as we saw in the primitive Jerusalem community was exercised in the Church in its personal, collegial and communal dimensions.

Chapter Three

The Bishops as Successors of the Apostles

Introduction

The Catholic Church is a Church with a fundamental episcopal structure. By this I mean that the episcopacy is considered as a divine institution and the mission of the Apostles is said to be perpetuated by the existence of the order of bishops, who according to the Catholic tradition are successors of the Apostles¹. The importance attached to the office of the bishop is evident in the official teaching and practice of the Catholic Church along the ages. Its dogmatic principles as an ecclesiological rule were first enunciated in the teaching of St. Ignatius of Antioch² as early as the second century. It was further elaborated upon in the third century by St. Cyprian of Carthage to whom is often attributed the famous adage: “Where the bishop is, there is the Church”³.

In the Catholic tradition, apostolic succession is understood mainly in the sense of succession in the apostolic commission and office. This explains the reason why

¹ Cf. *LG*, n° 18.

² Cf. IGNATIUS, *Smyrnaeans*, 8.1f., 9.1: “Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your presbyters, too, as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command from God. Make sure that no step affecting the church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop’s sanction. The sole eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the catholic church. Nor is it permitted to conduct baptisms or love feasts without the bishop. On the other hand, whatever does have his sanction can be sure of God’s approval too. This is the way to make certain of the soundness and validity of anything you do: You have only to acknowledge God and bishop, and all is well; for man who honours his bishop is himself honoured by God, but to go behind the bishop’s back is to be a servant of the devil”.

³ CYPRIAN, *Epistle*, 66, 8.

supreme authority over the Church is attributed to the bishops as bearers of the apostolic authority, and the often random criticisms of the Catholic Church for her apparently excessive institutionalisation and centralization. In view of the relations and continuity seen between the apostolic authority and episcopal authority in the Catholic Church, we shall endeavour in this chapter to articulate the precise nature of the apostolic-episcopal succession or succession in the apostolic ministry instituted by Christ by situating it within its proper general context of the apostolicity of the Church, what is called in the ecumenical dialogue and by many theologians the apostolic succession of the whole Church⁴.

1. The Origin of the Word “Apostle” and Its General Usage in the New Testament

In classical Greek usage, the word *αποστολος* (derived from the Greek root – *αποστελλειν* meaning: to send away, to send out)⁵ designates a fleet sent out or a naval expedition, a group of colonists, a passport or bill of delivery⁶. It is rarely used in the context of the sending of an individual person or to designate a messenger or an envoy in the sense it has been used in the New Testament. Thus, Hans Küng could say in line with other scholars, “secular Greek offers no linguistic parallels to the concept of the word ‘apostle’ ”⁷. Even the attempt made by some renowned scholars like K. H. Rengstorf and J. B. Lightfoot to derive the concept of the word from the Jewish juridical institution known as *Shaliah* has been seriously put to question by recent

⁴ Cf. J. REMMERS, *La succession apostolique de l'Eglise entière*, in *Concilium*, 34 (1968), p. 37; H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 355; Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission, *The Gospel and the Church* n° 57, in *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. H. MEYER & L. VISCHER, New York / Ramsey, Paulist Press (Geneva, WCC), 1984, p.168-189 (see p.181); ‘Faith and Order’ Commission, *Ministry* n° 34-38, in ID., *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (coll. *Faith and Order Paper*, no. III). Geneva, WCC, 1982. From now on all references to the this Lima text (BEM) on ‘ministry’ will be as follows: Lima M, followed by reference number.

⁵ Cf. F. KLOSTERMANN, *Apostle*, in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America, 1967, p. 679.

⁶ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 346.

⁷ *Ibid.*

studies⁸. This is because *Shaliah*, as used in the rabbinical tradition, never had any religious connotation before the New Testament period⁹.

In the light of the above development, the following conclusions can be drawn on the derivation of the word *αποστολος*: the origin and precise significance of the term is disputed. However, the idea of *αποστολος* as designating a messenger, an envoy, or 'one sent' in the New Testament was certainly influenced by the Jewish-hellenistic culture. We have seen that in its derivation from the Greek verb *αποστολλειν* there is some reference to 'being sent'. On the other hand, the Jewish book of Chronicles, an Old Testament text, shows that some men were 'sent' to teach the Law (cf. 2 Ch 17, 7-9). However, the transformation in the meaning of *αποστολος* from a term which connotes a temporal function of being sent on mission, to a title of a permanent office in the Church is a New Testament development¹⁰. B. Rigaux who argues that the term apostle was a creation of the primitive Church, even places its origin in the Church of Antioch where the believers were named 'Christians' (Ac 11, 26)¹¹.

In the New Testament, the word apostle appears several times, though not always with the same sense. It appears only one time in Matthew and Mark, 34 times in Luke (6 times in his gospel, and 28 times in Acts) and not less than 34 times in Paul, including the pastoral letters¹². Basically, the word means 'ambassador'¹³ and its

⁸Cf. J. GIBLET, *Les Douze: Histoire et théologie*, in *Le prêtre. Foi et contestation* (coll. ? *Réponses chrétiennes*). Ed. A. DESCAMPS, Gembloux, J. Duculot, 1970, p. 45-48.

⁹ J. Giblet also shows that Judaism is conversant with temporal delegation of power in view of a determined task, but this took place only within the juridical context. According to him, it was only as from the 140 AD that we find the first rabbinical attestation of the religious usage of *Shaliah* (cf. J. GIBLET, *Les Douze*, p. 47-48). On the other hand, B. Rigaux shows that the term applies to missionaries sent to the Jews of the Diaspora. Their function was to establish the calendar, collect gifts, visit the local communities and to designate their teachers, and to maintain the link between the Diaspora and Palestine. These missionaries received the imposition of hands, and the one who prays in the name of the community was given the title of 'envoy'. But rabbinical attestations of this was in the post – New Testament period. Cf. B. RIGAUX, *Les douze Apôtres*, in *Concilium*, 34 (1968), p. 11.

¹⁰ Cf. F. KLOSTERMANN, *Apostle*, p. 679.

¹¹ Cf. B. RIGAUX, *Les douze Apôtres*, p. 11.

¹² Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 346.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*

“broader usage which includes any Christian missionary (Barnabas in Acts 14.13 ; 1 Cor 9.6) is older than its technical usage as limited to the Twelve and Paul, who puts himself on a par with them”¹⁴. It is also used once in reference to Christ himself (Heb 3,1). Luke even ascribes to Jesus the attribution of this title to the Twelve (Lk 6,13).

2. Theological Development of the Word “Apostle” in the New Testament

2.1. The Relationship between the “Twelve” and the “Apostles”

The term ‘Twelve’ frequently used by the synoptic writers in reference to the special circle of twelve disciples of Jesus is not identical to the word ‘apostles’ although the two words are related. The Twelve is a symbolical and eschatological concept of pre-Easter origin concretised by Jesus in his institution of twelve special disciples from a larger circle of disciples. The formula: “He made them 12” shows that the group is an institution (cf. Mk 3,13-19). They were set apart in order to play a special role in the realisation of a New World inaugurated by Jesus¹⁵. The number Twelve symbolises the twelve tribes of Israel thought of in terms of the old people of God, but its true significance is defined in function of eschatological reign of God now already present in anticipatory way in the existence of the community of the Twelve and Jesus.

Gerhard Lohfink has given a vivid explanation of the full import of Jesus’ prophetic action of the institution of the Twelve, by situating it in the light of Israel’s eschatological hope¹⁶. The system of the twelve tribes, as he notes, had ceased to exist at the time of Jesus and only two and one half were all that remained, namely Judah, Benjamin and half of Levi¹⁷. It was therefore, hoped that the coming eschatological

¹⁴ F. KLOSTERMANN, *Apostle*, p. 679.

¹⁵ Cf. *Le ministère sacerdotal : Rapport de la commission internationale de théologie*, Paris, Cerf, 1971, p. 56.

¹⁶ Cf. G. LOHFINK, *Jesus and Community*, trans. from German by J. P. GALVIN, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984, p. 10.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

reign of God would lead to the restoration of the twelve-tribe people¹⁸. The Twelve exemplified this restoration and thus “the awakening of Israel and its gathering in the eschatological salvific community, something beginning then through Jesus”¹⁹. They “were the beginning and centre of growth of the eschatological Israel(...)”²⁰. Thus, even though the number Twelve materially represents the old Israel, in both form and content it signifies the eschatological Israel or the new people of God already inaugurated by the preaching of the reign of God and by the presence of Jesus. It therefore represents, to use the words of Hans Küng, “the full tale of both the old and the new people of God”²¹.

On the other hand, the word ‘apostle’ as we have earlier shown expresses a concept whose milieu of origin was the primitive Apostolic Church and thus was a post-Easter development and reality. It is, therefore, not historically exact that Jesus might have during his life time given the title ‘Apostles’ to the Twelve as Luke says (cf. Lk 6.13). It was much later in the development of the concept of apostleship in the apostolic Church that the term was identified with the Twelve. We must not forget that the Gospels were also coloured by theology. Even though the word ‘apostle’ has a connotation wider in significance than that of the ‘Twelve’, the synoptic writers and Acts of the Apostles use it as if it was co-extensive in meaning with the Twelve by sometimes identifying the latter simply as Apostles (cf. Mtt 10, 2; Mk 6, 30; Ac 1, 2; 2, 37). The only exception is Ac 14, 4 and 14 where the word ‘apostle’ refers to Paul and Barnabas. Thus, we can say that the notion of apostleship common in the synoptics and Acts is more institutional than charismatic. For example the condition of apostleship outlined by Luke in Ac 1, 21-26 is charged with all the signification

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ G. LOHFINK, *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God*, trans. from German by L. M. MALONEY, Collegeville / Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 1999, p. 164.

²¹ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 349.

contained in the term- Twelve²². It does not suffice to have been only a witness of the resurrection, one also needs to have been a witness of the earthly life of Jesus (cf. Ac 1, 21-22). To this condition is now added the post-paschal mission which enlarges the first (and transient) sending on mission of the disciples (cf. Mtt 10, 5-6). The central thing now was the paschal events which sums up Jesus' life and mission to humanity, and as such the content of preaching was organised to serve its propagation²³. Owing to the permanence of the Church's ordained mission, which continues the mission of Christ, apostleship later took on a permanent character in contrast to the Jewish delegation of essentially transitory nature²⁴.

In the light of the above development, it is necessary to agree with B. Rigaux that at the time of the writing of the Luke's Gospel and the Acts, the 'Twelve' became the 'Apostles'²⁵. Institution and mission were integrated into broader perspective in function of the emerging religion. The Twelve thus became Apostles not simply by virtue of a new definition or mission. Their election, power, and mission were because of their relationship with Jesus precisely as the Twelve²⁶. Their qualification as witnesses of the risen Lord and the commission they received from him were only a part of their qualification for apostleship in Lukan terms. The other part is their pre-paschal relationship with Jesus or condition as the Twelve (cf. Ac 1, 21-22). St. Luke's concept of apostleship is, therefore, generally institutional. The meaning of 'apostle' and the Twelve is tied up so much close together to a point of identity. It is to St. Paul that we have to turn in order to understand the full theological implication of apostleship.

²² Cf. B. RIGAUX, *Les douze Apôtres*, p. 16-17.

²³ Cf. J. GIBLET, *Les Douze*, p. 52.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁵ Cf. B. RIGAUX, *Les douze Apôtres*, p. 13.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13. Still focusing on the theology of 'apostle' as employed by Luke, Rigaux concludes: "*La substitution de 'les Apôtres' à 'les Douze' apparaît donc plus comme une nouveauté de vocabulaire qu'une nouveauté dans les choses. Le fait nouveau, c'est la situation post pascale qui comprend la Résurrection et l'organisation en communauté de prière, d'enseignement, de charité, et de possession de l'Esprit où existe une autorité reconnue*" (*Ibid.*).

2.2. St. Paul and the Theological Development of the Concept of Apostle

Christ established the Twelve but they never became apostles in the strict sense of the term during his earthly life. They were chosen to become apostles by Christ: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men (...)" (Mk 1, 17)²⁷. The temporal mission given to them by Christ (cf. Mk 6, 7) was not identical to their ministry after the Pentecost (cf. Ac 1, 8) and the goal of the election of Matthias was to complete the group of Twelve²⁸. In the light of this, it is not exact as M. Thurian thinks that Jesus instituted the apostolic ministry while instituting the college of the Twelve²⁹. Thurian ties the concept of apostleship too close to the idea of the Twelve although he also includes St. Paul among the apostles. He as well failed to make any distinction between the two concepts. No doubt, he was more influenced by the understanding of apostleship present in the synoptic Gospels and Acts than the understanding in Paul, whose letters were the earliest to appear in the New Testament community.

In technical theological usage, the word 'apostle' applies to those to whom the risen Lord manifested himself as living and to whom He commissioned for missionary preaching³⁰. St. Paul is no doubt the person who developed this strict theological sense of apostleship and he applied it to himself. His Letters as we have observed, are the oldest in the New Testament and predate the synoptics. Paul's conversion experience and mission to the Gentiles were responsible for his charismatic conception of apostleship. For many people, as C. Pietri observes, St Paul represents a charismatic Church and the liberty of an evangeliser carried along by the Holy Spirit and independent of the letter of an institution³¹. He preaches the Gospel, which creates the

²⁷ Cf. N. AFANASSIEFF, *L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, trans. from Russe by M. PROBOT, Paris, Cerf, 1975, p. 157.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 155.

²⁹ Cf. M. THURIAN, *Sacerdoce et ministère*, Taizé, Les Presses de Taizé, 1970, p. 57.

³⁰ Cf. L. CERFAUX, *La théologie de l'Eglise suivant saint Paul* (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 10). Paris, Cerf, p. 193.

³¹ Cf. C. PIETRI, *Des ministères pour le nouveau peuple de Dieu? Ier et IIe siècles*, in *Les Quatre Fleuves* (coll. *Cahiers de recherche et de réflexion religieuses*, 5). 1975, p. 20.

community leaving the Christian community to discover her proper responsibility for organising the Church, while retaining for *himself* a certain exceptional responsibility within the community³². Although he failed to bring out well what precisely is constitutive of apostleship, M. Thurian was right to observe that Paul's call to the apostleship actually injected into the institution of apostleship a prophetic-spiritual dimension³³.

In 1 Co 9, 1 Paul makes an apologetic justification of his apostleship and invokes his apostolic liberty. He bases his apostleship on the appearance of the risen Lord to him and refers to the Corinthians as the seal of this apostleship. Historically speaking, he is the last of the Apostles to whom Jesus appeared (cf. 1 Co 15, 8). However, he was not less an apostle. His apostleship is a consequence of his Damascus conversion experience³⁴. Paul also justified his apostolic vocation by a personal commission he received from the risen Lord. Even though his election was not based on any pre-paschal relationship with Jesus, by the Grace of God (Eph 3, 2), he, the smallest and the last of the apostles, is placed side by side with the Twelve, who were elected personally by Jesus before his death. His apostleship surpasses the investiture of a particular community: "an apostle who does not owe his authority to men or his appointment to any human being but who has been appointed by Jesus Christ and by God the Father who raised Jesus from death" (Gal 1, 2). His constant preoccupation to

³² Cf. *ibid.*

³³ Cf. M. THURIAN, *Sacerdoce et ministère*, p. 67-68. Thurian sees the election of Paul as a prophetic and spiritual event destined by divine providence to vivify the apostleship and save it from the cult of institutional rigidity. The Twelve could have resisted the Spirit and restricted their service to the old Israel and remain attached to its laws if not for the opposition of Paul who defended the universality of the Church and equality of all humanity whether Jew or Gentile (cf. Gal 2, 11-14). According to Thurian, the implication of this is that God wants the continuity of the traditional and ecclesial institution represented by the Twelve to manifest His fidelity to His promises, but He also wants prophetic renewal and spiritual event in the Church to manifest His liberty. He is a faithful God, but He is also sovereign. The college of the Twelve represent the apostolic institution which gave rise to the ecclesial institution while the apostleship of Paul represents the spiritual event at the origin of prophetism in the Church. This is a warning to the Church to be always disposed to welcome prophetic events and judgment as it applies to her life.

³⁴ Says H. Kûng: "It is clear from the very early evidence of Gal 1, 15-17 that Paul dates his apostleship from the Damascus experience (cf. 1, 11-13) and that there were apostles in Jerusalem before Paul's calling(...). At

found his apostleship on a vision and a mandate of the risen Lord, shows that the apostolic Church before whom he had to justify his claims, did not recognise any apostleship other than one derived from the express will of Christ. He recounts his meeting in Jerusalem with the leading men of the Good-news, which shows that his apostleship was fully certified by Peter and the Twelve³⁵.

From what we have said above, it is evident that Paul played a fundamental role in the development of the theological understanding of apostleship. Hans Küng, in his famous book, *The Church*, appreciates his impact. The important contribution of Paul, according to Küng, is that he made the notion of apostle as authorised representative of Jesus Christ central to his theology. Küng shows that it was Paul who founded, developed, and saved this technical theological concept of apostleship from decay and disuse. In his opinion, the word might have been used both before Paul and in his time without special theological implication for missionaries and messengers of the communities³⁶. Through him (Paul) the Church became conscious of what is meant when individuals like himself and Peter are spoken of as 'apostles'³⁷. "In consequence, the twelve chosen by Jesus during his life time, who may well have previously been referred to as apostles, but not in a strict sense, became known as apostles in the full Pauline sense of the word"³⁸.

Hans Küng's view on the evolution of the concept of apostle from its general usage in reference to any Christian missionary or ambassador of the Church, to its technical application to the Twelve and Paul seems to be true. First, this evolution explains

1Cor.15, 5 Paul refers to the appearances of Jesus to Peter and the Twelve; these are therefore the first witnesses of the resurrection". Cf. H. Küng, *The Church*, p. 348.

³⁵ " (...)these people who are acknowledged leaders - not that their importance matters to me, since God has no favourites- these leaders, as I say, had nothing to add to the Good News as I preach it. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been commissioned to preach the Good News to the uncircumcised just as Peter had been commissioned to preach it to the circumcised. The same person whose action had made Peter the apostle of the circumcised had given me a similar mission to the pagans" (Gal 2, 6-9).

³⁶ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 351.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

progressively how the word ‘apostle’ which was used in two different senses (broad and technical) in Pauline letters, was limited to the Twelve alone in the synoptics. The evolution to the strict theological usage, according to Küng, might have been connected with the need to save the apostolic idea from total decay and banalization³⁹. One can, therefore, understand why Paul was bent in rigorously and systematically invoking his apostolic authority and defending it against the Galatians (cf. Gal 1 & 2). It is evident that there were some people in Galatia who claimed the title of apostle and were leading the people astray with a different version of the Good News, other than the one preached by Paul⁴⁰.

Thus, it is likely that the word ‘apostle’ was used before and during the time of Paul in a broad sense without special theological implication for missionaries, in which case Paul would have been the first person to associate it strictly with the notion of authorised representative. This special and strict theological usage of the word ‘apostle’ in reference to the Twelve and with the inclusion of St. Paul, is the sense in which we are going to use it subsequently. Their qualification as apostles in this strict theological sense is because they are the only persons whom the New Testament established as having seen the risen Lord and at the same time as having directly received from him a commission for missionary preaching.

3. The Uniqueness of the Apostles and of their Witness

3.1. Agents of Revelation for the Church at all Times

The resurrection of Jesus and the communication of the Spirit stand as the focal point of the Christ-event. It is this paschal experience which totally transformed the

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁰ For instance in Gal 1, 6 - 9 Paul has this to say in reference to the Galatians: “I am astonished at the promptness with which you have turned away from the one who called you and have decided to follow a different version of the Good News(...)it is merely that some troublemakers among you want to change the Good News of Christ(...)if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one you have already heard, he is to be condemned”. It is apparent that these preachers of false Gospel claimed to be true apostles and thus Paul had to warn against their activities.

life of the Apostles and, through their ministry, gave birth to the Church: the meaning of Scriptural prophecies and their fulfilment in Jesus became clear to them; they received the Spirit of Truth and the charism of authentic testimony; liberated from fear they assumed their missionary role and responsibility for the early Christian communities. Thus, as the privileged group to whom the crucified and risen Lord manifested himself and from whom they received his authoritative mandate to be his witnesses, the apostles are by this fact true agents of revelation for the Church at all times⁴¹. They communicated by word, life and testimony what they learnt from the crucified and risen Lord directly by revelation. In the light of this special privilege, one can say that revelation ended with the death of the last apostle. The testimony of this revelation has been consigned in a unique sense in the Sacred Scripture.

3.2. Originality of their Testimony

The apostles are unique by virtue of their witness. They are the privileged witnesses of the risen Lord's self-manifestation and testimony to himself. As such the apostolic preaching as fixed in the New Testament texts is the original and fundamental testimony of Jesus Christ. Subsequent Christian generations cannot dispense with this original testimony but must pass through it to know the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot receive new self-manifestations of the risen Lord "but can only preach anew the tradition of the original apostolic witness"⁴². This original apostolic witness as consigned in the Scripture remains a privileged source of revelation and norm for the Church. It is not identical to the Word of God as it is also the word of the apostles, but through it the Word of God is expressed, and can be heard and understood.

⁴¹ Cf. P. GRELOT, *La vocation ministérielle au service du peuple de Dieu*, in *Aux origines de l'Eglise* (Coll. *Recherches Bibliques*, VII). Bruges, Desclée de Brouwer, p. 164.

⁴² H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 355.

3.3. Foundation of the Church

The apostles played a unique and irreplaceable role in the foundation of the Church. Through their original witness and fundamental ministry which historically predated all Church ministries, the Church came to exist. It is in this sense that the Church is said to be built on the foundation of apostles and prophets (cf. Eph 2, 20). In other words, the apostles in themselves are not the foundation of the Church. It is only in relation to Christ and by virtue of their ministry and commission that they may be regarded as foundation of the Church. In this case, they are only secondary foundation, while Christ is the essential corner stone or primary foundation (Eph 2, 20).

4. Apostolic Succession

Given the uniqueness of the apostles and of their witness, in what sense is it possible to speak of apostolic succession today? In terms of the ministry of first witnesses of the resurrection and of those who received direct commission from the risen Lord, the apostles are unique and irreplaceable. In this sense, they can have no successors, and the vocation to the apostleship ended with the death of the last apostle. But in another sense, it is possible and legitimate to speak of apostolic succession. Even though, their ministry as first witnesses of the resurrection has ended, the apostles have left for the Church a legacy of their witness and this has come down to us in the form of the New Testament writings. Although, there were no further direct divine commissions after the apostles (as what remained was only the ministry of those commissioned by them or by the Church), the mission of the apostles remains as it is a universal one and by this fact surpasses the person of the apostles⁴³. As this mission is meant to endure until the end of time, so also the apostolic mandate and ministry. Thus, it is possible to speak of succession in apostolic tradition (which links the Church to its apostolic origins) and thus of the apostolic succession of the whole

⁴³Cf. J. REMMERS, *La succession apostolique de l'Eglise entière*, p. 40.

Church. This primary sense of apostolic succession precedes all succession in apostolic ministries as articulated in the Report of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission on 'The Gospel and the Church': "In the New Testament and the early fathers, the emphasis was obviously placed more on the substance of apostolicity, i.e., on succession in apostolic teaching. In this sense the entire church as the *ecclesia apostolica* stands in the apostolic succession. Within this general sense of succession, there is a more specific meaning: the succession of the uninterrupted line of the transmission of office. In the early church, primarily in connection with defence against heresies, it was a sign of the unimpaired transmission of the gospel and a sign of unity in the faith"⁴⁴.

3.4. Succession in Apostolic Tradition: Apostolic Succession of the whole Church

The Church is *priori* to and precedes every individual or ministry that is in it. In the *Credo*, we confess the apostolicity of the Church. This means that the whole Church is apostolic and lives in continuity of faith, life, and mission with the apostles. Apostolic succession of the whole Church or succession in apostolic tradition is accomplished when the Church continues to maintain identity with its apostolic origins, in terms of continuity in the permanent characteristics of the apostolic Church⁴⁵. The 1982 ecumenical statement on 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry', issued by the 'Faith and Order' Commission of the World Council of Churches listed these permanent characteristics, here understood as constituting the apostolic tradition: witness (to the apostolic faith), proclamation, celebration (of baptism and Eucharist), transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion, service, unity and *koinonia*⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission, *The Gospel and the Church* n° 57.

⁴⁵ Cf. Lima M, 34.

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

Since the whole Church is apostolic, it is the whole Church including every one of her members which succeed the apostles before any particular succession. All those who have received baptism have been called to the royal priesthood of the faithful and thus, to the universal apostolic vocation of the Church⁴⁷. All Christians have been called to witness to and confess the apostolic faith. Each has been called to animate the world with his faith and to put his charism at the service and edification of the community. In this sense, each Christian participates in the succession of the action of the apostles constructors of the Church and by this title has a co-responsible role in the service rendered by pastors⁴⁸. It is also the common responsibility of every Christian, to work towards the unity and communion of all Christians since apostolic succession exists only where the apostles are seriously considered as the foundation of the unity of the Church in every place and time⁴⁹.

4.1.1. Hans Küng : Moral and Spiritual Succession

In the light of the above, Hans Küng has made a detailed study of the meaning and reality of apostolic succession. His approach is moral and spiritual rather than formal and juridical. Its merits lies in the priority he gave to the apostolic identity and inner continuity implied in the succession, as well as the importance he attached to the reality of the Church as a community. Thus, for Küng the question of apostolicity and that of succession are linked up together. As the whole Church is apostolic, having been gathered together through the preaching of the apostles and built on the foundation laid by them, Küng contends, that apostolic succession is something that applies to the whole Church and not just to a few individuals⁵⁰. But he said only a part of the truth when he says that it is to the whole Church that the authorised mission and

⁴⁷Cf. J. REMMERS, *La succession apostolique de l'Eglise entière*, p. 41.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 355.

ministry of the apostles have been handed on⁵¹. He failed to realise as well that it was to the apostolic college that Christ gave the mandate in a particular way. Taking the apostolicity of the Church as a point of departure, Küng describes apostolic succession of the whole Church in terms with profound moral connotations: "The Church is the successor of the apostles in obedience, and from this obedience it derives its authority(...)This succession must be understood in terms of substance, not just of history; there must be a real inner continuity(...)This real continuity and link with the apostles can be illustrated in two ways; the Church is apostolic, is a true follower of the apostles, when it preserves in all its members continuing agreement with the ministry of the apostles"⁵².

On the other hand, Küng sees this obedience to and continuity with the apostles charismatically and spiritually as a work and gift of the Spirit. It is a requirement and a vocation rather than an attribute to be possessed. Says Küng: "This succession cannot simply be created for the Church by itself, it is something that is granted to it by the Spirit of God and Christ. The Church has only to be open to the Spirit in faith, and it will find the necessary obedience to the apostles and their witness. In this sense, apostolic succession is a thing of the Spirit. Apostolicity too is a gift and a requirement at the same time"⁵³.

Another merit of Küng's understanding of the vital link of the Church with the apostles is its scriptural dimension. First, he notes the important place of the apostolic witness as the source and norm of the Church in preaching, faith, and action. Next, he interprets apostolic succession in terms of the continual and living confrontation of the Church and all its members with this apostolic witness. According to him "apostolic succession is fulfilled when this witness is heard, respected, believed, confessed and

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 356.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 356.

followed”⁵⁴. From apostolic tradition understood as apostolic witness, Küng makes an important transition to the Sacred Scripture (or New Testament): “The Church has been given this apostolic witness not in any abstract or indeterminate way, but in concrete historical form. The living witness of the apostles is handed down to us in the writings of the New Testament, which in turn rest on the writings of the Old Testament”⁵⁵.

4.1.2. Evaluation of Küng’s Interpretation

Küng’s uniquely scriptural understanding of the apostolic witness is at once the source of his strength and weakness. On the one hand, his position may not go down well with the official teaching of the Catholic Church. The Church regards the ‘Sacred Tradition’ understood as the living transmission of the apostolic witness as belonging together with the canonical writings of the New Testament and on the same title to the single deposit of the Word of God. The apostolic preaching expressed in a special way in the inspired books, according to the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, continues to be transmitted in a living way by the Church in her life, doctrine and worship. By means of the Sacred Tradition, “the full canon of the sacred books is known to the Church and the holy Scriptures themselves are more thoroughly understood and constantly actualised in the Church”⁵⁶.

On the other hand, the argument of the Catholic Church in favour of the living Tradition has its merits since the Church cannot neglect or ignore its concrete historical past and begin anywhere. However, one is left to wonder what the precise nature of this Tradition is since, as a living Tradition, it is also subject to historical transformation and evolution. On this score, it may not be proper to place the living Tradition side by side with the fixed Tradition (or the Sacred Scripture), which is the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *DV*, n° 8.

apostolic witness in its original and fundamental form. In fact, the living Tradition precisely because it is **Tradition in evolution** must always be subject to and tested by the norm of the Scripture because of the very fact that the Scripture is the **fixed Tradition**. It is true that originally it was through the living Tradition that the Church was able to decipher the valid apostolic testimony (canonical writings of the New Testament) from other traditions. However, once this original testimony was fixed, further valid development of the living Tradition ought to be tested by its norm. This is also the view of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). In a recent document titled, *The Gift of Authority*, the Commission reflects on the place of the Scriptures within Tradition. The Scriptures, according to it: “occupy a unique and normative place(...)As the written witness to God’s ‘Yes’ they require the Church constantly to measure its teaching, preaching and action against them”⁵⁷.

Thus, apostolic succession of the whole Church has to do with the handing on of the original apostolic witness expressed in a fundamental way in the Scriptures. This handing on is expressed in the life, faith, and witness of the whole Church and of each one of her children. Thus, it is the entire people of God that bear the living Tradition as the following statement of ARCIC notes: “The people of God as a whole is the bearer of the living Tradition. In changing situations producing fresh challenges to the gospel, the discernment, actualisation, and communication of the Word is the responsibility of the whole people of God. The Holy Spirit works through all members of the community, using the gifts he gives to each for the good of all. Theologians in particular serve the communion of the whole Church by exploring whether and how new insights should be integrated into the ongoing stream of Tradition. In each community there is an exchange, a mutual give-and-take, in which bishops, clergy and lay people receive from as well as give to others within the whole body”⁵⁸. But in a

⁵⁷ Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Gift of Authority* n° 19, in *One in Christ*, 35 (1999), p. 243. Henceforth references to this text shall be made as follows: *GA* followed by reference number.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

particular and special sense, the living Tradition is handed on through succession in the apostolic ministry or by the regular transmission of the ordained ministry.

4.2 Succession in Apostolic Ministry : Apostolic Succession in the Strict Sense

By apostolic succession in the strict sense, we mean, the manner whereby the “ministry of the Christian Church is held to be derived from the apostles by a continuous succession”⁵⁹. The continuation of the apostolic ministry in the Church through the regular transmission of the ordained ministry is part of the apostolic heritage of the Church. The apostles themselves made provision for the continuation of their ministry by establishing successors in their place. This transmission of sacred powers is at the service of the unity and continuity of the apostolic tradition of the Church, or of the fidelity of the Church to her apostolic origins in Christ. In other words, the succession of apostolic ministry through the existence of the ordained ministry has, as its particular task in the Church, the preservation and the actualisation of the apostolic faith⁶⁰. The existence of apostolic ministry in the Church is because of the pastoral mission to teach, rule and sanctify given by Christ to the whole Church, but in a particular sense to the apostles. In given them this mandate, Christ also promised them his enduring divine assistance which implies the continuation of the apostolic mandate and thus of the apostolic ministry well beyond the death of its original recipients⁶¹.

In the New Testament, Christ left no words about how the apostolic mandate was to be handed on. Nevertheless, the practice of his apostles in the early Christian communities showed how they understood the mind of the Lord⁶². Imitating what

⁵⁹ The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 3rd edition, E.A. Livingstone, 1997, p. 91.

⁶⁰ Cf. Lima M, 35.

⁶¹ Cf. F. A. SULLIVAN, *Apostolic Succession*, in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America, 1967, p. 695

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*

Jesus did by choosing and sending them out to continue his work, the apostles chose other persons with whom they shared their authority and associated in their mission⁶³. Examples abound in the New Testament: the institution of the seven 'deacons' (Ac 6, 1-7), the presence and activity of presbyters (Ac 11, 30; 21,18; 15, 2.4.6.22; 1 Tim 5, 17; 1 Tim 4, 14; Tit 1, 5), of prophets and teachers (cf. 1 Co 12, 27-30). In Acts and the Pastoral Letters, Paul and others are shown as laying on hands for the installation into the ministries of episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate (e.g. Ac 6, 6; 14, 23; 1 Tim 4, 14; 2 Tm 1:6; 5, 22; Tit 1, 5).

As the Church moved from the apostolic to the post-apostolic period, one particular kind of ministry among all the above existing charismatic ministries of leadership became increasingly important, namely, the pastoral ministries of presbyters, *episkopoi* (bishops) and deacons, which were based on a special commission (the laying-on of hands)⁶⁴. Gradually, the office of the bishop began to gain an unprecedented importance. The Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians testifies to this⁶⁵. Writing towards the end of the first century, Clement witnesses to the belief of the Church that the Apostles installed bishops and then enacted the rule that when these men died, other proven men should succeed them in their ministry⁶⁶. Thus, while at the end of the 1st century the college of presbyters or bishops presided over some local Churches, in the first decade of the 2nd century, as evident in St. Ignatius of Antioch's letters, the system of 'monarchical' episcopate has already been firmly entrenched in the Church particularly in Syria and Asia Minor⁶⁷. Furthermore, the development of heresies in the second century led to the beginning of the development of hierarchical succession of bishops and to doctrinal delimitations⁶⁸. The Church was

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 442.

⁶⁵ Clement was a presbyter-bishop in the Church of Rome. He challenged the fact that a faction in the Church of Corinth has ousted the legitimately elected leaders, the presbyter-bishops (cf. Clement 44, 47, 6; presbyter and bishop are used interchangeably in the letter) and he exhorts them to reinstate their legitimate leaders.

⁶⁶ Cf. CLEMENT, *Letter to the Corinthians* 42: 4-5, 44:1-3 (A.D. 80).

⁶⁷ Cf. F. A. SULLIVAN, *Apostolic Succession*, p. 695-696.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

able to contain heretical menace and guarantee the continuity of authentic apostolic tradition in the Church, through hierarchical or episcopal succession⁶⁹. These 'monarchical' bishops who were equally renowned for their outstanding example of faith and spirituality, were held as the successors of the apostles⁷⁰. Irenaeus of Lyons⁷¹ was one of them and he even produces a list of names of 12 bishops of Rome from the time of Peter and Paul to his own day⁷².

Apostolic succession in the ministry has been extensively treated in the ecumenical dialogues. The fruit of these discussions is best seen in BEM. Embodying a broad ecumenical consensus, the chapter on Ministry states that apostolic succession in the ministry is to be valued as "serving, symbolising, and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion"⁷³. The document distinguished between the apostolicity of the whole Church and the apostolic succession in the ministry, as well as subordinated the latter to the former seen as its goal and purpose. Episcopal succession is considered as having become "one of the ways, together with the transmission of the gospel and the life of the community, in which the apostolic tradition of the Church was expressed"⁷⁴.

However, the Lima text affirms that in churches with episcopal succession, it is increasingly recognized that a continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission has been preserved in Churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopate.

⁶⁹Cf. IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, iii. 1.

⁷⁰ Cf. F. A. SULLIVAN, *Apostolic Succession*, p. 696.

⁷¹ According to L. N. Terence: "Around 185 C.E. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, wrote *Against the Heretics*, attacking the Gnostics, who claimed that Jesus had passed esoteric oral traditions on to them, in addition to the public, exoteric traditions passed onto the apostles. Irenaeus countered this argument by insisting that the teaching of Jesus had been passed onto the apostles, who had handed that teaching onto the bishops(...) Thus it is through the bishops that the Church remains united with the true faith taught by Jesus and the apostles. The bishops, especially the bishops of sees founded by the apostles (e.g., Antioch, Rome), become the bearers and guarantors of the apostolic tradition. When serious conflict arise in the Church (e.g. Arianism), it is the bishops who meet in council to settle these conflicts". L.N. TERENCE, *That All May Be One. Hierarchy and Participation in the Church*, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1997, p. 98.

⁷² Cf. IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, iii, 1-3.

⁷³ Lima M, 36.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

This recognition is reinforced by the fact that the reality and function of the episcopal ministry have been preserved in many of these churches, with or without the title ‘bishop’. For instance, there is always the transmission of ministerial responsibilities through ordination by persons in whom the Church recognise the authority to transmit the ministerial commission⁷⁵. These considerations according to the Lima text do not diminish the importance of the episcopal ministry. “On the contrary, they enable Churches which have not retained the episcopate to appreciate the episcopal succession as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church”⁷⁶.

The Catholic Church in its response to BEM expressed some reservations about the treatment of apostolic succession. According to it, the bishop is not only a sign and servant of apostolic succession, but he is also in the Catholic understanding, the qualified spokesman in the communion of Churches. “Through the episcopal succession, the bishop embodies and actualises both catholicity in time, i.e., the continuity of the Church across the generation, as well as the communion lived in each generation”⁷⁷. Avery Dulles opines that this criticism of the Catholic Church should not be interpreted as a rejection of the Lima text but rather as an indication that, like most ecumenical statements, it falls short of embodying the full Catholic doctrine⁷⁸.

4.3. In what Sense are the Bishops Successors of the Apostles?

4.3.1. The Position of the Catholic Church

There is no historical evidence to show that there is a direct and unbroken line of succession from apostles to the today’s bishops⁷⁹. Only the bishop of Rome or the

⁷⁵ Cf. Lima M, 37.

⁷⁶ Lima M, 38.

⁷⁷ *Roman Catholic Church Response to BEM*, in *Churches Respond to BEM*, Vol. VI (coll. *Faith and Order Paper*, 144). Ed. M. THURIAN, Geneva, WCC, 1988, p. 33.

⁷⁸ A. DULLES, *The Church as ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic’*, in *One in Christ*, 1 (1999), p. 12-26, see p. 25.

⁷⁹ Cf. H. KÜNG, *Christianity. The Religious Situation of Our Time*, London, SCM, 1995, p. 125.

pope is the successor of a definite apostle. It is informed by this wisdom that Vatican II was able to state that bishops become successors of the apostles by belonging to the college of bishops⁸⁰. In other words, it is the episcopal college that succeeds the apostolic college: the succession is thus collegial and functional, as the bishops' commission goes back to the commission of the apostles. The apostolic college according to Vatican II is thus perpetuated in the episcopal college and "one is constituted a member of the episcopal body in virtue of the sacramental consecration and by the hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college"⁸¹. Thus, apostolic succession is not constituted in a linear sense of a chain of office bearers. It is rather constituted, as Walter Kasper shows, by the "cooptation and incorporation of new members into the apostolic college and its mission through time"⁸². It is by becoming a member of the college of bishops and through hierarchical communion and pastoral responsibility in a local Church that one becomes a successor of the apostles. Apostolic succession is about the rooting of a bishop in the mission of the apostles, a mission which devolves to the whole episcopal college as successor to the apostolic college. He becomes a guardian and guarantor of the doctrine or tradition of the apostles in communion with the body of bishops.

Kasper has shown that apostolic succession is intrinsically connected with apostolic tradition and ecclesial communion. On the one hand, succession in the office of the bishop is seen as "an essential expression and an instrument of apostolic tradition"⁸³. Through the existence of the office of succession, a tradition becomes acknowledged as apostolic⁸⁴. The office of succession is also the instrument for the active transmission of the apostolic tradition. It is a sign, but not an absolute guarantee, of the

⁸⁰ Cf. *LG*, n° 22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² W. KASPER, *Apostolic Succession in the Office of Bishop as an Ecumenical Problem*, in *Theology Digest*, 47 (2000), p. 205.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

true tradition⁸⁵. The intimate connection between apostolic succession and apostolic tradition was most singularly put to relief in the early Church during the second century struggle with heresies⁸⁶. In this sense, succession in the office of the bishop constitutes the foundation for handing on the authentic apostolic testimony from generation to generation. Thus, says Vatican II: “(...)according to the testimony of St. Irenaeus, the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved in the whole world by those who were made Bishops by the Apostles and by their successors down to our own time (St. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III, 3, 1; cf. Tertullian, De Praescr., 20, 4-8; Pl 2, 32; CC 1, 202)”⁸⁷.

On the other hand, apostolic succession is also closely associated with ecclesial communion just as it is with apostolic tradition. The inner connection between apostolic succession and communion is evident in the practice attributable to the early

⁸⁵ According to Walter Kasper : “The individual bishop or bishops can also deny the *traditio* and thus fall out of the *communio*. In such a case it is consistent with the tradition that such bishops do not merit obedience. The history of the early and medieval church knows of bishops who were removed and condemned by the papacy. We even hear of heterodox teaching, synods that were not received, and even of times - as Cardinal Henry Newman discovered - when the faithful and not the bishops transmitted the true faith” (*Ibid.*, p. 206).

⁸⁶ A major problem in second century Christianity was how to justify the authenticity of the Church's apostolic Tradition in the face of Gnostic heresy which claimed the possession of the true Tradition in the form of secret doctrine from the apostles transmitted through the intermediary of a chain of doctors. The Church will react to this by establishing like the heretics a list of bishops going back to the apostles in justification of the legitimacy of the Church's Tradition of the apostles. G. Dix puts it well when he wrote: “*Dans les circonstances de l'époque, cette prétention nouvelle et frappante de tenir une tradition secrète et plus authentiquement chrétienne transmise par une succession de maîtres autonomes, ne pouvait être combattue que par un nouvel accent mis sur la tradition collective, maintenue par la succession de maîtres autorisés (...) Chacun d'eux, à son tour, a repris de son prédécesseur la même cathedra ou chaire de docteur. La stabilité doctrinale de cette succession était garantie par son caractère public, qui faisait apparaître immédiatement toute déviation; sa pureté était garantie par son harmonie avec l'enseignement donné du haut des chaires de docteurs de toutes les autres Eglises*”. G. DIX, *Le ministère dans l'Eglise ancienne*, Neuchâtel, Delachaux & Niestle, 1955, p. 39. The first known person to draw argument from episcopal succession in the justification of apostolic Tradition is Hegesippus (A.D. 180): “When I had come to Rome, I visited Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherus. And after Anicetus (died), Soter succeeded, and after him Eleutherus. In each succession and in each city there is a continuance of that which is proclaimed by the law, the prophets, and the Lord”. *Memoirs*, cited in EUSEBIUS, *Ecclesiastical History* 4: 22. Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D. 189) borrows the argument of Hegesippus and at the same time takes it further. He justifies the apostolic Tradition of the Church by showing that it is visible in all the Churches and by enumerating those who were installed as bishops by the apostles as well as their successors: “It is possible, then, for everyone in every Church, who may wish to know the truth, to contemplate the tradition of the apostles which has been made known to us throughout the whole world. And we are in a position to enumerate those who were instituted bishops by the apostles and their successors down to our own times, men who neither knew nor taught anything like what these heretics rave about” (*Adversus Haereses* 3: 3:1).

⁸⁷ LG, n° 20.

Church whereby local Churches participated in the appointment of their own bishops. During the episcopal consecration of a new bishop, at least three bishops were necessary as consecrators and the new bishop received *litterae communionis* from his co-bishops⁸⁸. This foundation of apostolic succession in ecclesial communion shows that the individual bishop alone does not stand in apostolic succession. The theory of his ordination as belonging to an uninterrupted chain of laying on of hands which goes back as far as one of the apostles is untenable. He rather stands in apostolic succession as a member of the episcopal college which succeeds the apostolic college in its mission until the end of time. As the succession is collegial, “the agreement of bishops with each other is a decisive sign of their apostolic teaching”⁸⁹.

Furthermore, Pope John Paul II, in his magisterial teaching in continuity with the theology of Vatican II, has shown that the bishops can be successors of the apostles in two senses, doctrinal and pastoral. In the first place, he reaffirmed the well established fact that the apostles could not have successors on the basis of their unique personal experience of friendship with Christ during his earthly life and their unique role in forming the Church which implies the work of witnessing and handing on Christ’s word and mystery on the basis of their direct knowledge. But he also acknowledged that the apostles have also received a mission of authoritative teaching and pastoral leadership which can and must be handed on to successors in the fulfilment of the work of universal evangelization according to the intention of Christ. John Paul II holds that in this second sense, the Apostles had co-workers and later successors⁹⁰. The Second Vatican Council gave a strong theological foundation to the apostolic succession of bishops by stating that the succession is of divine institution: “The sacred Synod consequently teaches that the Bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the Apostles as Pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to

⁸⁸ Cf. W. KASPER, *Apostolic Succession in the Office of Bishop as an Ecumenical Problem*, p. 205.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁹⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Bishops are Successors of the Apostles*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 15, 1992.

them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ (cf. Lk 10: 16)”⁹¹.

4.3.2. Evaluation of the Catholic Position

In the light of the above position of Vatican II on apostolic succession, one does not fail to notice its strong juridical accent. A lot of weight is placed on the fact of membership of the episcopal college, hierarchical communion, and divine institution. On one hand, this way of understanding apostolic-episcopal succession no doubt has its merit as it is rooted in the historical tradition and development of the Church: (1)The Catholic Church is rooted in the history of the ancient Christian tradition going back to the apostolic Church. (2)The existence of Catholic episcopal college is in line with this tradition. (3)The history of the decisive influence of the bishop of Rome whose See is said to have connection with the ministry or death of the princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, goes back to as early as St. Clement of Rome before the end of the 1st century of the Christian era⁹².

On the other hand, inspite of the juridical-historical legitimacy of the Catholic interpretation of apostolic - episcopal succession as found in LG, its fundamental weakness is that it does not bring out well the true inner reality and continuity necessarily and primarily implied in the succession. This is an element, which could have given the Catholic understanding an ecumenical importance and force, as well as help to prevent possible abuses of authority. Consequently, the vital link that exists between apostolic succession (here understood in terms of formal juridical legitimacy) and apostolicity, fidelity, faith and the reality of the Church as community was not adequately developed. This failure to develop the way the apostolicity of doctrine and of the whole Church, conditions or shapes the understanding of apostolic succession of

⁹¹ LG, n. 20.

⁹² Clement of Rome, the third bishop of Rome is said to have intervened in the Church of Corinth in AD 96, where a bitter quarrel broke out as a result of the removal of certain presbyters by the community.

ministry, evoked the reaction of Protestant reformers who went to another extreme by developing the apostolicity of doctrine at the expense of juridical-historical succession of ministry or apostolic succession in the strict sense⁹³. Thus, there is need to restore the true and necessary balance between apostolicity of the Church and episcopal succession, as we shall now embark on.

4.3.3. Restoring the Equilibrium between Episcopal Succession and Apostolicity of the Church

The bishops are successors of the apostles not only by the fact that they legitimately occupy the apostolic office and have thereby inherited the apostolic mandate. But more importantly, they are apostolic successors if they faithfully continue the apostolic ministry which is at the service of the apostolic faith of the Church and thus of her unity and continuity. Thus, the two realities ought to go together. **A function or an office cannot be separated from the moral and spiritual qualities linked up with its reality and which form part of its truth**⁹⁴. The apostolic ministry does not exist for the sake of those who exercise it as their particular function, but for the service of the apostolicity of the Church. Therefore, apostolic-episcopal succession must be primarily interpreted in terms of discipleship, faith, and fidelity to the apostles. The bishops are first the disciples of the apostles in the Church. In a special sense, they owe obedience and commitment to the faith and life example of the apostles. Their

⁹³ Luther for instance recognized only moral authority and rejected the authority of juridical institution. As Yves Congar shows: Luther “*ne connaît pas d'autorité humaine antérieure à la communauté des fidèles et supérieure à elle: la Parole seule fait un peuple de Dieu et, en ce sens, l'Eglise. Mais la communauté des fidèles se donne des ministres en un acte où il faut voir un acte de Dieu lui-même. Ces ministres sont essentiellement ministres de la Parole, et toute l'authenticité de leur ministère vient de leur fidélité envers cette Parole*” Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Ministères et Structuration de l'Eglise*, dans ID., *Ministères et communion ecclésiale*(coll. *Théologie sans frontières*, 23), Paris, Cerf, 1971, p. 52.

⁹⁴ Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Ministères et structuration de l'Eglise*, p. 73.

authority and ministry as successors of the apostles are not a plat-form in order that others may submit to them, but that they themselves may submit to the apostles through faithful service of the Christian community and in openness to the Spirit.

Truly, the bishops occupy the place of the apostles and to them have been entrusted the apostolic mandate in a special way. However, their true authority is primarily derived from their fidelity to the apostolic faith and testimony. There is neither value nor legitimacy in mere mechanical and juridical succession of bishops, without living reference to the apostolic faith confessed and professed by the Church. As Karl Barth rightly pointed out: "*La réalité vivante de la succession est attestée par ce seul fait que le successor se soumet à un antecessor, comme si ce dernier était encore vivant et disposait d'un libre pouvoir*"⁹⁵. Episcopal succession is, therefore, not a value in itself. Without faith and openness to the Spirit on the part of the bishops, apostolic-episcopal succession becomes mechanical⁹⁶. What is desired is apostolic succession seen not only from the legitimate juridical viewpoint (or from formal validity of ordination), but also primarily from the moral and spiritual perspectives of fidelity to the apostolic faith and practice. This can make it easier for the Catholic Church to accept more readily the ecclesial claims of those other Churches who, though do not have perfect communion with her, have however maintained in their Churches continuity in the apostolic faith, cult and mission.

On the other hand, the mere fact of succeeding the apostles by being a member of the episcopal college and with all the theology that this may imply, does not exempt the bishops from the possibility of making mistakes or even of failure⁹⁷. Like other human beings, they are equally weak and frail creatures who have their treasures in earthen vessels. They therefore depend on the grace of God and on the support,

⁹⁵ K. BARTH, *Dogmatique* 1/1, Genève, 1953, p. 100 ; cited in Y. CONGAR, *Ministères et structuration de l'Eglise*, p. 61.

⁹⁶ Cf. H. KÜNG, *The Church*, p. 442.

⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

intercession, and encouragement of their community. On this basis, episcopal succession by itself is not a guarantee of the continuity and unity of the Church. St. Augustine was aware of this truth when he wrote: "Catholic bishops are not to be followed if they mislead by expressing sentiments contrary to the Scriptures"⁹⁸. It is only in relation to true faith and complete fidelity of the bishops to the apostolicity of the Church and with openness to the Spirit, that they may be considered as guarantors of the continuity and unity of the Church. This ability to guarantee the continuity and unity of the Church is, therefore, not an unconditional attribute of episcopal succession but a responsibility and a mission to each individual office-bearer.

Furthermore, because the ministry of the bishops is exercised in the context of a sacerdotal community of mutual service and gifts of the Spirit, they are always to involve the whole people of God in the search for the truth and the will of God. The charisms of the Holy Spirit are not exhausted in the existence of the body of bishops. The bishops have the charism of apostles. Nevertheless, in the apostolic Church there were also the charisms of the prophet, evangelists, healers, helpers, etc (cf. 1 Co 12, 4-11). All these charisms are distributed by the same Spirit to different members of the Christian community for the building up of the Church. The ministry of the bishops is necessarily linked to and supported by the effective participation and contribution of the other members of the community. Therefore, the ministry of the bishops is not to suppress these other charisms but to direct and channel them through their charism of apostles for the best possible mutual service of the community. Theirs is a ministry of direction, unity, order, and organisation in the charismatic community of mutual service.

⁹⁸ The translation into English is mine. For the original see AUGUSTINUS, *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, 11, 28 (PL 43,401-411).

4.3.4. Are Bishops Successors of the Apostles by Divine Institution?

As we have already seen, the Catholic Church answers this question affirmatively. The position of the Catholic Church was clearly stated by Vatican II⁹⁹. It is also shared by the Orthodox Church and other Churches of the 'Catholic' tradition. However, the historical problem posed by this question of episcopal succession cannot be solved by a mere simple response such as given by Vatican II. This is because the New Testament does not make any clear distinction between *episkopoi* and *presbuteroi*. There is no indication in the New Testament that the apostles left behind at the head of local Churches single 'bishops'. Rather what we see is the existence of collegial ministry in the Churches which the apostles left behind. Thus, these men whom the apostles or their co-workers put in charge of local communities are always designated in the plural as *episkopoi* or *presbuteroi* (cf. 1 Tm 5, 17; 1 Tit 1, 5-7; Phil 1:1; Acts 20, 17, 28). Francis A. Sullivan defends the above view when he writes: "There is no clear evidence in the New Testament that the apostles or their missionary co-workers appointed one man in each church as its 'bishop' with authority over the presbyters. As far as we can tell, local leadership during the period of the New Testament was collegial in structure, although the beginning of the development towards the historical episcopate can perhaps be seen in the role of James, 'the brother of the Lord' at Jerusalem at the time of Paul's final visit to that Church (Acts 21: 18), and possibly in that of Diotrephes in 3 John 9"¹⁰⁰.

A transition from collegial ministry which marked earlier local communities as shown above to episcopal structure of ministry in which one bishop presided over the presbyters and deacons, as well as over the congregation is seen clearly defined only at the beginning of the second century, a phenomenon which became generalized in the

⁹⁹ Cf. LG, n° 20.

¹⁰⁰ F. A. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In. One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*, New York, Paulist Press, 1988, p. 167.

Christian world at the beginning of the third century. Today no theologian seriously puts to question the assertion that the historical episcopacy emerged as a post-New Testament development of Church organisation¹⁰¹. The question that faces the theologian, then, is: can the result of such historical development be understood as of divine institution?¹⁰² As a matter of fact the importance of this question is evident in the ecumenical dialogue where the Catholic and Protestant different understandings of apostolicity depends on whether a positive or a negative answer is given to this question¹⁰³. For instance, a positive answer to this question as is given by the Churches of the Catholic tradition will mean that the possession of the historical episcopacy is an essential element for the fullness of the apostolic faith and therefore of the apostolicity of a Church. In this sense, its absence in the Protestant Churches is serious obstacle to the visible Church unity.

The Second Vatican Council has given a positive answer to the question of historical episcopacy as of divine institution. What remains is to decipher what sense this concept of divine institution can be applied to such elements of Church structure as the historical episcopate. No serious Catholic theologian today takes this to mean that Christ directly instituted the episcopacy¹⁰⁴. With regard to the organisation of the Church, Christ did not leave any blue print to be followed by his disciples. In the apostolic Church of the New Testament, we find that it was the apostles who decided on how to structure the Church progressively as the need arose. A good example is the appointment of the seven deacons at Jerusalem. In making such decisions, they felt guided by the Holy Spirit (cf. Ac 6, 1-6)¹⁰⁵. The development of Church structure did not end with death of the apostles, as the Holy Spirit continued to guide the Church in her structuring in the post-New Testament era. In this period, the Church felt seriously

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

the need for a focal point of unity in each local Church. The need for single pastoral leader in each local Church as a focal point of unity may not have been felt while the apostles or their co-workers were there. But when the apostles were no longer there to maintain unity, the need was felt for the leadership of one man¹⁰⁶. As the voice of the apostles could no longer be heard, the Church felt the need for strong and authoritative leaders who can defend the unity of the faith decisively in the face of difficulties and false doctrines. That was how the Church came to have personalities like Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons. Thus, within a century or so after the death of the apostles, each Church had at its head a single bishop, and these bishops got recognized as the legitimate successors to the apostles in their role of pastoral leadership¹⁰⁷.

The question remains: can we speak of divine institution in the above case? The Catholic perspective believes we can do so because this development of the episcopate was guided by the Holy Spirit, and was part of God's design for His Church. It is also a development that is consistent with what was already taking place in the Church of the New Testament. For instance, the pastoral mandate given to the apostles towards the end of Matthew's gospel imply a continual ministry beyond the death of the apostles. We have seen that in many ways the role of the original apostles was unique and non-transmissible. But as their pastoral ministry has to continue till the end of time, which is the obvious sense of last words of Matthew's gospel, this means that others will succeed them in their pastoral ministry, and therefore their mandate, and the authority to carry it out, had to be transmitted to others¹⁰⁸. On the other hand, in the New Testament we see that provision was also made for those who would succeed the apostles in their pastoral ministry. For instance, in the letters addressed to Timothy and Titus, one of their main duties was to appoint men qualified for the ministry in the Churches of Ephesus and Crete (cf. 1 Tim 3 1-13; 5, 22; Tit 1, 5-9).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

But how does one establish that the development of the historical episcopate in the post-New Testament period was guided by the Holy Spirit and was part of God's design for his Church? On this writes Sullivan: "It seems to me that the most convincing reason we have for believing this is the fact the Church came to recognize its bishops as the legitimate successors of the apostles, with the consequence that the church accepted the teaching of these bishops as *normative for its faith*"¹⁰⁹. It is a basic article of the Catholic faith that the Holy Spirit maintains the Church in the true faith. It is the same Holy Spirit which guided the Church of the second and third century in the discernment of the writings which will constitute the canon of the Scriptures and normative for the Christian faith which also guided the same Church in the universal recognition of its bishops as the rightful successors of the apostles¹¹⁰.

Conclusion

We started this chapter by tracing the root and origin of the word 'apostle'. We saw that its derivation and understanding was influenced by the Jewish-Hellenistic culture of the New Testament times. But its precise theological content as a title of a permanent office in the Church is a creative development of the apostolic Church. We also considered the general usage of the word 'apostle' in reference to any Church ambassador and its technical usage with reference to the Twelve and to St. Paul. The conclusion we arrived at, is that the general usage of the word historically preceded its strict theological application. It is this later and strict usage of the word 'apostle' (as witnesses of the risen Lord's self-manifestations and direct recipients of His commission for missionary preaching) that we adopted for the purpose of this work.

On the other hand, although the 'Twelve' and 'apostles' are related, they are not identical. While the Twelve is symbolically related to the twelve tribes of Israel, its

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

significance is rooted in the presence of the salvific eschatological community of the new people of God. Apostolic succession is basically not a matter of particular officials but of the whole faith community and of each individual Christian. The bishops may be considered as the successors of the apostles in the strict sense of the term by virtue of their pastoral office and membership of the episcopal college as well as the necessary communion that this implies. But this fact alone is not enough as faith and fidelity to the apostolic life are essential to the succession. Thus, we can say with Pope John Paul II that “bishops are successors of the Apostles not only in authority and sacred power but also in the form of apostolic life, in apostolic sufferings endured for the proclamation and spread of the Gospel, in their gentle and merciful care of the faithful entrusted to them, in their defence of the weak, and in their unremitting concern for the People of God”¹¹¹.

The ministry of the bishops, although derived from a particular kind of apostolic succession proper to them, is linked up with the ministry of the entire community, as the whole Church is also the successor to the apostles; all are called to witness to and confess the apostolic faith. There is, therefore, a correlation between the succession of the whole Church from the Church of the apostles and the succession of episcopal ministry from the ministry of the apostles. The latter is at the service of the former¹¹². Thus, says the group of *les Dombes* in its ecumenical document: “*A l’intérieur du sacerdoce des baptisés, le Christ structure son Eglise par le ministère pastoral*”¹¹³.

Finally, the bishops are successors of the apostles by divine institution in the sense that the Holy Spirit guided the development of the historical episcopacy and thus it is part of God’s design for His Church. This is seen in the fact that the Church of second

¹¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores Gregis: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World*, n° 43, 2003.

¹¹² B. SESBOÛÉ, *Pour une théologie oecuménique* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei*, 160). Paris, Cerf, 1990, p. 291.

¹¹³ Groupe des Dombes, *Pour une réconciliation des ministères* n° 31, in *Pour la communion des Eglises. L’apport du Groupe des Dombes 1973-1987*, Paris, Centurion, p. 62. All further reference to this text will be made as follows : Dombes PRM, followed by reference number.

and third century came to recognise its bishops as legitimate successors of the apostles as well as recognised the teachings of these bishops as normative for its faith.

Chapter Four

Authority as Service in Vatican II

Introduction

The second Vatican Council was convoked by pope John XXIII and lasted from October 1962 to Dec. 8, 1965. It was a Pastoral and Ecumenical council. Its aim was the renewal of the Church (*aggiornamento*) and thus the presentation of Christ to the world in a way situated to the needs of the contemporary world. In order, to attain these goals, the council abandoned the “culture of fear and suspicion that had led to predominantly defensive choices in the government and life of the Church in order to isolate it and to protect its truth from the dangers of contamination to which encounter with others and the world could lead”¹. The Council, therefore, adopted a more friendly attitude to the world. It renounced the tradition of condemnation and doctrinal definition so much characteristic of previous Councils and concentrated on what the Church could offer to the world, namely, “the ancient message of the gospel”².

This general ecumenical Council, first announced by John XXIII during his allocution of January 25, 1959, is a turning point in the history of self-consciousness of the Roman Catholic Church. This remarkable feat was achieved by a fundamental ecclesiological re-orientation, which corrected the pyramidal vision of the Church with a community oriented and circular structure of the Church as the people of God. It is first announced in the sequence followed by *Lumen Gentium* which placed on the order of priority the chapter on the people of

¹ A. RICCARDI, *The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council*, in *History of Vatican II*, Vol. II, ed. G. ALBERIGO & J. A. KOMONCHAK, Leuven, Peeters (Maryknoll, Orbis), 1997, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

God before that on the episcopate, and by so doing showed that bishops, laity, and religious are all in the first place members of the people of God.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is an attempt to articulate the Council's concept of authority. The second part considers episcopal authority and the rediscovery of the sense of community in Vatican II. While the first part gives us an insight into the Council's idea of authority, the second part attempts to situate this authority within the context of the particular Church with reference specifically to the authority of the bishop. Each part has its own conclusion.

1. Second Vatican Council's Concept of Authority

1.1. Preamble

So far we have tried among other things to show that authority cannot be understood or defined outside the concept of service. In other words, it is only in service that one can truly and fundamentally show that he has authority. Here lies also the fundamental distinction between authority and power. While authority is necessarily revealed in service without which it is mere domination, power can exist as a separate phenomenon without service as is evident in many world dictatorships. In our second chapter we affirmed that authority in the Church is not an abstract right or privilege possessed *a priori* by the Church irrespective of the use to which it can be deployed. We noted that just as Jesus' authority was recognized as a right which the Father gave him only in and through his redemptive service, authority in the Church is in the first place service before it is a certain right or power. How does the concept of authority decipherable in Vatican II conform with this image of authority without domination presented to us in the New Testament as we saw in our second chapter?

From the outset, it will be proper to signal that what we are dealing with here, namely, analysing the Council's concept of authority is a Herculean task. This is because there is no systematic reflection on the theory of ecclesial authority in the

conciliar documents. It is also expedient to point out here that the Council uses the term ‘authority’ only in the technical sense, that is in reference to the hierarchy in the Church. This implies that its concept of authority will be pre-eminently institutional. However, in principle the Council does not exclude other important senses involved in a more comprehensive understanding of authority.

1.2. Terminology

Vatican II uses the word ‘power’ (*potestas*) as a synonym of ‘authority’ (*auctoritas*) while speaking of authority in the Church. The Council sometimes interchanges the two terms in its usage thereby silently indicating that it understands power and authority as synonymous concepts³. Says the Council: “The order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in their role as teachers and pastors, and in it the apostolic college is perpetuated. Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without

³ The fact that the Council sometimes uses the word ‘power’ in places where it could have used ‘authority’ seems to suggest that it takes the two words in the Church as having a singular signification. Examples are abound to illustrate this in the Conciliar documents: “To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power” (AA, n° 2, par. 2). “The holders of office, who are invested with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interest of their brethren(....)” (LG n°18, par. 1). “The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular Churches assigned to them by their counsels, exhortations and example, but over and above that also by the authority and sacred power which indeed they exercise exclusively for the spiritual development of their flock in truth and holiness(....)This power, which they exercise personally in the name of Christ, is proper, ordinary and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately controlled by the supreme authority of the Church and can be confined within certain limits should the usefulness of the Church and the faithful require that; in virtue of this power bishops have a sacred right and duty before the Lord of legislating for and of passing judgement on their subjects...The pastoral charge, that is, the permanent and daily care of their sheep, is entrusted to them fully; nor are they to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiff; for they exercise the power which they possess in their own right and are called in the truest sense of the term prelates of the people whom they govern. Consequently their authority, far from being damaged by the supreme and universal power, is much rather defended, upheld and strengthened by it(....)” (LG, n°27). “The Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered. The order of the bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in their role as teachers and pastors, and in it the apostolic college is perpetuated. Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff(....)This same collegiate power can be exercised in union with the pope by the bishops while living in different parts of the world” (LG n°22). Speaking on the ministry of priests the Council says: “Priests exercise the function of Christ as Pastor and Head in proportion to their share of authority (....) For the exercise of this ministry, as for the rest of the priests’ functions, a spiritual power is given them, a power whose purpose is to build up” (PO, n° 6, par. 1)”. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

the agreement of the Roman Pontiff”⁴. In the above statement, it would seem that the words ‘authority’ and ‘power’ are identical in meaning. However, in some other places, the Council would seem to suggest otherwise. In this case, the words ‘authority’ and ‘power’ are sometimes used side by side as if to say that the two words are complementary: “The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular Churches assigned to them by their counsels, exhortations and example, but over and above that also by the authority and sacred power which indeed they exercise exclusively for the spiritual development of their flock in truth and holiness, keeping in mind that he who is greater should become as the lesser, and he who is the leader as the servant” (cf. Lk 22, 26-27)⁵.

The above two forms of usages of the words ‘authority’ and ‘power’ found in *Lumen Gentium* seems to suggest that the Council Fathers were aware of the semantic affinity and distinction between authority and power. However, they did not give the exact meaning to be attached to them. In our present thesis, the word authority is not identical to power because as we have seen authority can only be defined within the context of service. Power on the other hand, can exist without service. There is affinity between the two words, authority and power, in so far as authority often includes power. But we cannot neglect the necessary distinction between them. Vatican II is in accord with the above position since it uses sometimes not only the word ‘power’ to refer to ‘authority’ but also the word *diakonia* or service: “That office, however, which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is, in the strict sense of the term, a service, which is called very expressly in sacred scripture a *diakonia* or ministry (cf. Acts 1: 17 and 25; 21: 19; Rom. 11:13; 1 Tim. 1: 12)”⁶.

Office in the above sense should be understood as pastoral office which is a subject of authority. It is this pastoral office or authority which is to be strictly understood as service or *diakonia*. It is also in this sense of authority understood as

⁴ LG, n° 22. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

⁵ LG, n° 27. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

⁶ LG, n° 24.

service that the Council, after having entrusted the authority to interpret the Word of God to the “living teaching office of the Church” does not fail to emphasize that “this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant”⁷. Consequently, authority in the Church is always destined to service, that is it is pastorally oriented. By describing authority or pastoral office in the Church fundamentally as a service, Vatican II is consistent with our thesis that authority cannot be understood or defined outside the context of service which constitute its essence and signification. Two concepts are therefore necessary in the understanding of authority in Vatican II documents, that of power and service.

By power we mean here the possibility which a person has to make his idea and will to prevail over those of others within a determined social system⁸. This is the sense which authority prominently carries in most of the instances where the term is used in the documents of Vatican II. It can be called juridical authority and it is about powers and jurisdiction. Juridical authority concerns the right to make decisions valid in law. In the Church, the highest instance of this authority is represented by the Roman Pontiff and the college of bishops: “The Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered. The order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in their role as teachers and pastors, and in it the apostolic college is perpetuated. Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal Church”⁹.

On the other hand, in the particular Church, the highest instance of juridical authority is represented by the local ordinary with due respect to the prerogatives of the popes (cf. *LG*, n° 27). Vatican II goes on to indicate the juridical implication of episcopal authority thus: “In virtue of this power bishops have a sacred right and a

⁷ *DV*, 10.

⁸ Cf. Y. CONGAR, *La réception comme réalité ecclésiologique*, in *RSPT*, 56 (1972), p. 399.

⁹ *LG*, n° 22.

duty before the Lord of legislating for and of passing judgement on their subjects, as well as of regulating everything that concerns the good order of divine worship and of the apostolate”¹⁰.

However, juridical authority, the authority to legislate, judge and regulate is only one aspect of authority in the Church. The other aspect is moral and it concerns the fact that authority is to be exercised in the Church after the image of the Good Shepherd and in the spirit of service: “Sent as he is by the Father to govern his family, a bishop should keep before his eyes the example of the Good Shepherd, who came not to be waited upon but to serve (cf. Mt. 20, 28; Mk. 10, 45) and to lay down his life for his sheep (cf. Jn. 10: 11)”¹¹. But authority cannot be understood or exercised as service in the Church unless this authority is also understood as a shared one, that is as an authority open to participation and co-responsibility of the faithful. No authority can pretend to serve the community which isolates itself and refuses to favour participation and formation of consensus. Vatican II warns the bishop not to “refuse to listen to his subjects whose welfare he promotes as of his very own children and whom he urges to collaborate readily with him”¹².

Authority that listens and promotes collaboration as Vatican II urges is one which stands a better chance of becoming a true service to the people because it is rooted in their life. It is this rootedness in the life of the community through openness to its gifts, talents, fellowship and collaboration that gives authority its relational and shared character. The understanding of authority in the Church as relational and as a shared responsibility in Vatican II is in line with the most authentic Christian tradition. Writes Yves Congar: “*Dans la tradition chrétienne, la plus assurée, les ministères exerçant l'autorité n'ont jamais agi seuls. Cela a été vrai des Apôtres : cf. Ac 15, 2-23 et 16, 4 : 2 Tm 1, 6 rapproché de 1 Tm 4, 14 ; 1*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* The underlining is mine for emphasis.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.* The underlining is mine for emphasis.

Co 5, 4-5, où l'on peut voir une application de la discipline communautaire rapporté en Mt 18, 17-20(...)"¹³.

Given the fact that Vatican II uses the word 'authority' only when speaking of the hierarchy in the Church, we can conclude from it that its concept of authority is pre-eminently institutional. In the light of this institutional understanding of authority, we advance the thesis that Vatican II's concept of authority is pre-eminently that of legitimate power though it is open to other senses of authority. As legitimate power, therefore, certain elements constitute the legitimacy of power or authority in the Church. We shall follow the main lines of the Council to discuss these elements under three headings or subjects: (1) Source and foundation of Authority (2) Mode of exercise of authority (3) The relational and shared character of authority.

1.3. Source and Foundation of Authority in the Church

1.3.1. Continuity and Permanence of the Mission of the Apostles

The ultimate source of authority in the Church is the risen Lord and his Spirit. By going back to Jesus' constitution of the apostolic college, the Council Fathers situated the origin of the ecclesiastical ministry in the express will of Christ: "The Lord Jesus, having prayed at length to the Father, called to himself those whom he willed and appointed twelve to be with him, whom he might send to preach the kingdom of God (cf. Mk. 3:13-19; Mt. 10:1-42). These apostles (cf. Lk. 6:13) he constituted in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from amongst them (cf. Jn. 21: 15-17)"¹⁴.

Jesus' action of constitution of a college of Twelve shows according to Joseph Ratzinger that the first form of the ecclesiastical charge or function is collegial and

¹³ Y. CONGAR, *La réception comme réalité ecclésiologique*, p. 397.

¹⁴ LG, n° 19.

represented by the 'Twelve'¹⁵. Even though that the apostles are unique in terms of their position as first witnesses of the risen Lord and as his directly commissioned agents, the Council rightly notes that their mission or mandate is a universal and a permanent one given the fact that "the Gospel, which they were charged to hand on is, for the Church, the principle of all its life for all time"¹⁶. The continuity and permanence of the mission of the apostles introduces the issue of apostolic succession both in the post-apostolic period and today. The Council shows that apostolic ministry has continued till today because the apostles made provision for the continuation of this ministry by entrusting to their immediate collaborators the mission of tending the flock of God for which the Holy Spirit has appointed them as shepherds in the Church and making a "ruling that at their death other proven men should take over their ministry"¹⁷.

Furthermore, the Council affirms that apostolic succession is perpetuated in the order of bishops which is as such seen as a divine institution: "Moreover, just as the office which the Lord confided to Peter alone, as first of the apostles, destined to be transmitted to his successors, is a permanent one, so also endures the office, which the apostles received, of shepherding the Church, a charge destined to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops. The sacred synod consequently teaches that the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church(...)"¹⁸.

1.3.2. Episcopal Consecration : Sacramental Foundation of Authority

Authority in the Church as presented to us by Vatican II has a sacramental basis. It is rooted in the sacrament of Order. The episcopate is the fullness of this sacrament. It is through episcopal consecration that a bishop is received into the episcopal college which entitles him to participate in the pastoral mission entrusted

¹⁵ J. RATZINGER, *La Collégialité épiscopale : Développement théologique*, in *L'Eglise de Vatican II. Etudes autour de la Constitution conciliaire sur l'Eglise*, t. III (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 51c). Ed. G. BARAUNA, Paris, Cerf, 1966, p. 768.

¹⁶ *LG*, n° 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

to the apostles by Christ. Enriched by studies in liturgical and patristic sources, Vatican II adopted a renewed perspective in the understanding of episcopal consecration. This perspective is ecclesial and marks a departure from post-Tridentine theological attempt to define bishop and priest solely in terms of certain cultic powers-the priest being one who had the power to offer Mass and forgive sins, the bishop one who had the additional power of confirming and ordaining¹⁹. The primary meaning of the sacrament does not consist in the handing on of this or that particular power from person to person. Its meaning must first of all be understood as a *consecration*, the setting apart of a man to perform a certain role in the building up of the Church of God. This sacrament thus cannot be seen as a personal possession or as an individual privilege, “but as a *sacramentum ecclesiae*, giving the Church her divinely-instituted structure and organization”²⁰.

The sacramentality of episcopal consecration was clearly stressed by Vatican II. The episcopal consecration confers sacramentally and ontologically all the pastoral charges, but the exercise of this function has to be regulated according to the norms of the hierarchical community²¹: “The holy synod teaches, moreover, that the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness, namely, which both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the acme of the sacred ministry. Now, episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, the duty also of teaching and ruling, which, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college”²².

The fact that the episcopal consecration now confers all the pastoral charges marks a return by Vatican II to that comprehensive understanding of the sacrament

¹⁹ Cf. R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II : The Re-discovery of the Episcopate*, in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 33 / 3 (1966), p. 217.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Cf. G. PHILIPS, *L'Eglise et son mystère au IIe concile du Vatican. Histoire, text et commentaire de la constitution Lumen Gentium*, t. 1, Paris, Desclée, 1967, p. 297.

²² LG, n° 21.

of Orders which was wide spread in the early liturgical tradition and especially the liturgies of the eastern Church. In the liturgical prayers, not only the cultic or priestly role of the bishop but also his teaching and ruling roles are linked with the liturgical action of laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit which accompanies it. The recipient of the sacrament is “set aside, sanctified and perfected”²³ for the chief responsibility and principal ministry in the Christian community as vicar of Christ. Thus, episcopal consecration is the fullness of the sacrament of Order because it is through it that God commissions the bishops to undertake the highest ministry in the Church, namely, to continue the work of the apostles as the vicars of Christ²⁴. In Vatican II, episcopal consecration thus, confers the sacrament of Orders in its plenitude rather than the supreme degree of the same sacrament as it was thought of in its earlier formulation by the Council before the definitive text²⁵. “*La première formule, en effet, considère l’épiscopat comme l’aboutissement dont les degrés inférieurs sont comme des préparations, alors que de fait, c’est l’épiscopat qui est la source dont tous les autres degrés ne sont que des participations qui ne se comprennent que par rapport à lui*”²⁶.

Episcopal consecration is rightly considered as an integration into the ministry that belongs to the whole episcopal college as successor to the apostolic college in its ministry of unity of the universal Church. Belonging to the episcopal college no longer appears as an exterior order of things added to the episcopal consecration by the jurisdiction given to the bishops by the pope. Rather, it is seen now as a natural development which gives the episcopacy its full sense. Jurisdiction appears as the concrete development of the mandate contained in the sacrament. By so doing, the



²³ Syrian Rite of Ordination, J. L. ASSEMANI, *Codex liturgicus ecclesiae universae* (Rome 1766), 25; cited in R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II: The Rediscovery of the episcopate*, p. 218.

²⁴ Cf. LG, n° 20.

²⁵ Cf. J. RIGAL, *Découvrir les ministères*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 2001, p. 115 : “L’affirmation s’appuie notamment sur ‘l’usage liturgique de l’Eglise et la voix des Saints Pères’. C’est ainsi que dans la Tradition apostolique d’Hippolyte de Rome (vers 220) la prière d’ordination épiscopale désigne, à deux reprises, l’épiscopat comme ‘Souverain Sacerdoce’, tandis que saint Cyprien parle à son sujet du ‘rang sublime du sacerdoce’ (Lettre 35). C’est donc un retour aux sources que de parler de ‘plenitude du sacrement de l’Ordre’”.

²⁶ J. LECUYER, *L’Episcopat comme sacrement*, in *L’Eglise de Vatican II. Etudes autour de la Constitution conciliaire sur l’Eglise*, t. III (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 51c). Ed. G. BARAUNA, Paris, Cerf, 1966, p. 749.

Council, as Walter Kasper explains, founded again the pastoral power in the Church (*jurisdictio*) in the sacramental power of order (*ordre*). The *Nota praevia 2* makes a distinction between the charges (*munera*) conferred by the episcopal consecration and the powers (*potestates*). The charges (*munera*) are conferred by the consecration, but they cannot be exercised as powers (*potestates*) except by juridical determination realised when a bishop is assigned particular subjects or tasks. The concrete exercise of the charges conferred by sacramental consecration to episcopacy is consequently linked intrinsically with hierarchical communion with the pope and the rest of the members of the episcopal college²⁷. Thus, the Council does not separate the power of Orders, that is the power to sanctify from the power to teach and to govern concretised in the power of jurisdiction as done by theologians of the Middle Ages²⁸.

Owing to the influence of saint Ambrose and saint Jerome, Latin theology in the middle ages was largely oriented towards the understanding of the sacrament of Orders in the light of the presbyteral order. Priesthood referred in the first place to the presbyters and their power to offer the Eucharist and consecrate the body of Christ. As a result of this the question was wrongly posed. When it was question of the status of the bishop, one asked what his consecration could add to the ordination of the priest. Vatican II situates itself in another perspective in fidelity to the surest data of history and above all to liturgical sources. In the early liturgical tradition, the episcopacy was not a complement of the presbyteral order. Rather the

²⁷Cf. W. KASPER, *La Théologie et l'Eglise* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei*, 158). Paris, Cerf, 1990, p. 401-402.

²⁸Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La collégialité épiscopale. Développement théologique*, p. 769-770 : "La théologie de la haute Scolastique s'opposait à la sacramentalité de l'épiscopat en excipant surtout de l'argument que l'Ordre se rapporte au corpus verum du Seigneur, au ministère eucharistique, par conséquent, et qu'à ce point de vue la consécration épiscopale ne confère pas de pouvoirs nouveaux, puisque le presbytérat suffit à donner qualité pour célébrer le saint sacrifice. Selon elle, ceux que confère la consécration épiscopale s'étendent sur le corpus mysticum, l'Eglise. Ceux-là, les théologiens du Moyen Ages les appellent juridiction et les distinguent de l'Ordre, compris comme destiné au service eucharistique. La théologie actuelle reconnaît à nouveau que corpus verum et corpus mysticum sont coordonnés l'un à l'autre. Le corps réel du Seigneur nous est donné pour que le corps mystique s'édifie par sa vertu, car ce n'est que par là que le don du corps réel trouve son sens parfait. C'est pourquoi il est impossible de séparer l'un de l'autre les deux aspects du ministère selon leur objet formel, car ils constituent une unité au service du corps du Seigneur".

presbyters were presented as collaborators of the episcopal order and the presbyterate understood in the light of the episcopal function²⁹.

As we have noted, episcopal consecration because of its sacramentality confers the three pastoral charges which, however, for their concrete application as powers require effective hierarchical communion of a bishop with the rest of the members of the episcopal college as well as with its head. The authority which a bishop exercises in his diocese is seen as a participation in the authority which properly belongs to the whole episcopal college. *“La sacrement n’apparaît plus uniquement comme don individuel, mais comme intégration, conformément à son sens foncier, à un « ordo », c’est-à-dire au corps de ceux qui gèrent ensemble l’Eglise par leur ministère et qui ne le peuvent qu’ensemble. A l’inverse, la juridiction apparaît comme le développement concret du mandat contenu dans le sacrement”*³⁰.

1.3.3. Episcopal Consecration and Collegiality

Participation in the authority which belongs to the whole episcopal college as successor to the apostolic college is preceded by two intimately related conditions on the part of the bishop: episcopal consecration and communion with the head and members of the college³¹. These two conditions form a basic unity. This is because the sacramental root already contains the idea of communion owing to the fact that by his consecration the bishop is admitted to a communion, in the sense of a college. This acceptance into a college implied in episcopal consecration “is of its very nature a commission to work in communion with his fellow bishops in the building up of the Church”³². The emphasis on the collegial character of the episcopacy comes very much to light in the rite of episcopal consecration or ordination³³. For instance, while examining the bishop-elect, the principal

²⁹ Cf. J. LECUYER, *L’Episcopat comme sacrement*, p. 749-750

³⁰ J. RATZINGER, *La collégialité épiscopale. Développement théologique*, p. 770.

³¹ Cf. LG, n° 22.

³² R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II : The Rediscovery of the Episcopate*, p. 220.

³³ Cf. *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Ecumenical Council 2*, New York, Pueblo, 1980, p. 89-100; cited in S. WOOD, *The Sacramentality of Episcopal Consecration*, in *Theological Studies*, 51 (1990), p. 483-484.

consecrator asks if he is “resolved to build up the Church as the Body of Christ and to remain united to it with the order of bishops under the authority of the successor of the apostle Peter”.

Furthermore, both the prayer inserted in Eucharistic Prayer 1 and the solemn blessing mention the “order of bishops” to which the newly consecrated bishop is raised by virtue of his consecration. The homily which is suggested for the celebration asks the community to “gladly and gratefully, therefore, receive our brother who we are about to accept into the college of bishops by the laying on of hands”. Within this homily the bishop-elect is also admonished to “never forget that in the Catholic Church, made one by the bond of Christian love, you are incorporated into the college of bishops. You should therefore have a constant concern for all the Churches in need”. It is also interesting that the rite itself includes a collegial act which is realized in the laying on of hands by the consecrating bishops. In this way, the collegial character of episcopal consecration becomes inscribed in the rite of ordination. The implication of this is that the bishop-elect is not simply consecrated a bishop but enters into the order of bishops, and becomes a member of the college of bishops. Through his consecration, the bishop enters into a net-work of relationships with his fellow bishops which signifies sacramentally the collegial nature of the Church as a “communion of communions”. “Membership in and union with the college of bishops is consequently an essential element within episcopal consecration, and arguably represents the ‘fullness of orders’ which sets the episcopacy apart from the other orders”³⁴.

The other condition for membership in the college of bishops is actual communion with the head and members of the college. “One who should receive consecration but did not preserve the bonds of communion uniting him with the other members of the college and with the successor of Peter, would not in fact be a

³⁴ S. WOOD, *The Sacramentality of Episcopal Consecration*, p. 485.

member of the college”³⁵. It is closely related to the first condition - episcopal consecration - as it is the concrete realisation of what consecration in itself implies. “For Episcopal consecration of its very nature is directed toward and in some way already anticipates that brotherly communion of the bishops with one another and with their head, which is the essence of collegiality”³⁶. In linking collegiality with episcopal consecration, the Council wants to show that membership in the college of bishops is not accidental feature of the Church’s life or something which can be explained by mere grant of papal jurisdiction. According to R. Seamus “the sacramental basis of collegiality means that it is something intended by Christ to be part of the abiding structure of his Church”³⁷. By founding collegiality in the sacrament of episcopal consecration, Vatican II has succeeded in overcoming the Medieval radical dissolution of the relation between sacrament and jurisdiction³⁸.

R. Seamus has shown how this isolation of *potestas ordinis* and *potestas jurisdictionis* came about. He locates the origin of this problem in the medieval theology which separated the Eucharist and Church leading to the development of a eucharistic theology isolated from the Church. Concomitantly, Medieval ecclesiology lost its essential sacramental and eucharistic dimension. The result was a theology of sacrament ordered only to the Eucharist and without reference to the Church. While the sacrament of Orders was understood simply in relation to the Eucharist, the power of jurisdiction on the other hand was understood simply in relation to the Church. It is noteworthy that having lost its essential sacramental and eucharistic structure, the Church became understood more as an organisation than as a community. In this circumstance of sociological view of the Church,

³⁵ C. McGARRY, *Collegiality and Catholicity*, in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 32 / 3 (1965), p. 195.

³⁶ R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II : The Rediscovery of the Episcopate*, p. 220.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas who was the dominant authority in Medieval theology saw spiritual power in the Church as being double : while one is sacramental, the other is jurisdictional and received from a superior authority. The sacramental power is for the consecration of the Eucharist and it is received in ordination, the power of jurisdiction of the bishop comes from the pope and it is given for the government of the Church. Thus, the separation of sacrament and jurisdiction was complete (cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologia*, IIa. IIae, q. 39, a.3). For a detailed theological history of the distinction between the power of order and power of jurisdiction see L. VILLEMEN, *Pouvoir d'ordre et pouvoir de juridiction. Histoire théologique de leur distinction* (coll. *Cogitation fidei*, 228). Paris, Cerf, 2003.

Seamus opines that “it was inevitable that jurisdiction came to be seen as a power of external administration and government”³⁹.

Furthermore having been dissociated from its sacramental basis, it appeared more like profane governing power with its tendency towards centralization. In the ensuing juridical ecclesiology, the pope became the source and fount of all power and jurisdiction while “the Church appeared as a purely monarchical society with the bishops no more than local functionaries of papal administration”⁴⁰. By linking collegiality with episcopal consecration, Seamus rightly concludes that Vatican II has restored once again the basic unity of sacrament and jurisdiction. By so doing the Council wants to show that “the juridical structure of the Church is something which flows from its inner sacramental nature and is determined by it”⁴¹. In this light jurisdiction in the Church differs from purely external or profane ruling power. Says Seamus: “What Episcopal jurisdiction is, whence it comes, and how it is to be exercised, is determined by the very nature of the Church as a plurality of eucharistic communities in communion with one another. This is the real content of the doctrine of collegiality”⁴². The implication of this according to Seamus is : “There never can be in the Church such a thing as absolute centralisation since the reality of the many Churches within the one Church is part of her unchanging God given structure”⁴³.

1.3.4. The Sacramental Nature of Authority

It is through the sacrament of Orders that the risen Lord through his Spirit communicates a share in his pastoral authority to his chosen ministers. This communication of a share in his authority is assured by the special promise of his presence in the ministerial actions of the sacred ministers: “Though seated at the right hand of God the Father, he is not absent from the assembly of his pontiffs; on

³⁹ R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II. The Rediscovery of the Episcopate*, p. 220.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

the contrary indeed, it is above all through their signal service that he preaches the Word of God to all peoples and administers without cease to the faithful the sacraments of faith; that through their paternal care (cf. 1 Cor. 4: 15) he incorporates, by a supernatural rebirth, new members into his body; that finally, through their wisdom and prudence he directs and guides the people of the New Testament on their journey towards eternal beatitude”⁴⁴.

Louis-Marie Chauvet has given a good account of the sacramental foundation of authority in the Church in the line of Vatican II. In his article *Le fondement sacramentale de l'autorité dans l'Eglise*, Chauvet notes that authority in the Church is of the institutional order, conferred by a rite of investiture, the sacrament of Orders. He distinguishes this kind of authority from the one founded on competence and knowledge (e.g. the authority of the medical doctor or of the theologian) and from the one founded on charism or on personal qualities like the authority of a charismatic leader. However, he rightly notes that these two latter kinds of authority are important for the sacramental or institutional authority of a priest within the actual cultural context and thus ought to be linked together. According to him: “*L'autorité sacramentelle / institutionnelle d'un prêtre (son 'pouvoir') est souvent mal reçue aujourd'hui par les chrétiens si elle n'est liée à une réelle compétence manifestant qu'il 'a autorité' en savoir et en savoir-faire, ainsi qu'à la dimension 'charismatique' d'un savoir-être qui lui donne de 'faire autorité'.*”⁴⁵

Furthermore, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, brings out the intrinsic nature of sacramental authority. In its section on the nature of the priesthood, it first of all noted the participation of all the baptised in Jesus' anointing by the Spirit and thus, the sharing of the whole Mystical body in the priesthood and mission of Christ. Out of this body, certain people are appointed as ministers by the Lord to play the role of visible principle of unity of the members.

⁴⁴ LG, n° 21.

⁴⁵ L.-M. CHAUVET, *Le fondement sacramentel de l'autorité dans l'Eglise*, in *Lumière & vie*, 229 (1996), p. 70-71.

“These men were to hold in the community of the faithful the sacred power of Order(...)and were to exercise the priestly office publicly on behalf of men in the name of Christ”⁴⁶.

In the above light, authority in the Church is a participation in the “authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his body”⁴⁷. It presupposes the sacraments of initiation as foundation. But it “is nevertheless conferred by its own particular sacrament”⁴⁸. This authority which has its source in the risen Lord and his Spirit is truly sacramental in that the recipients through the sacrament of Orders are marked by an indelible character: “Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head”⁴⁹. The sacramental foundation of authority in the Church implies that if all the people of God are equal in dignity before God through the grace of their baptism, they differ from the point of view of functions. The Council, therefore, excludes every form of inequality in the Church and affirms the fundamental equality of all believers, leaving behind as divinely ordained or willed only functional diversity arising from the diversity of vocations in the Church: “Although by Christ’s will some are established as teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors for the others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ”⁵⁰.

The Council’s affirmation of functional diversity within the context of fundamental equality of dignity of the grace of the baptismal priesthood, enabled it to recognise the fact that this distinction also implies union especially with regard to the distinction between the sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God as

⁴⁶ *PO*, n° 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *LG*, n° 32.

this distinction is in function of the unity and building up of the Mystical Body of Christ⁵¹.

1.3.5. Some Practical Implications of Sacramentally Founded Authority

From our analysis so far, we have been trying to show that the source of authority in the Church is not in the Church herself but in God from whom it is received as a gift and as a service on a sacramental basis. This is equally true of the authority of the pope whose existence is due to the sacramental foundation of his episcopal ordination, since it is as the bishop of Rome that he has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church. On the other hand, since there is no sacrament for papal consecration, we cannot have in the Church an absolute monarchy which is conceived independently of the episcopal college which is based on a sacramental foundation. In the same way, we cannot have a papal infallibility which is not a crystallization of the infallibility of the whole episcopal college which is in turn a crystallization of the infallibility of the Church⁵².

By integrating the authority of the pope within the context of the community of the baptised and the episcopal college in the service of ecclesial communion of which he the pope is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the visible centre, the council succeeds in ameliorating the disequilibrium created by the isolation of the figure of the pope in the Church current before Vatican II. If before the Council, the pope was attributed monarchical power of the absolute kind in the Church, the Council in the new dispensation will affirm that the head of the Church is Christ⁵³.

On the other hand, Joseph Ratzinger opines that the declaration in *Lumen Gentium* n° 22 is destined to avoid creating any opposition between the primacy of the pope and the power of the episcopal college. The aim according to him is not to

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵² Cf. O. G. HERNANDEZ, *La nouvelle conscience de l'Eglise et ses présupposés historico-théologiques*, in *L'Eglise de Vatican II. Etudes autour de la constitution conciliaire sur l'Eglise*, t. II (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 51b). Ed. G. BARAUNA, Cerf, Paris, 1967, p. 199.

⁵³ Cf. *LG*, n° 7.

see the college as a competing power to that of the pope. The reason being that there cannot be any college without the bishop of the seat who is the *primus inter paris*⁵⁴. The college thus cannot act either against or without him. While the episcopal body cannot be a college of the universal Church except with the pope as its head, the pope is without the college, universal pastor and can exercise his power freely without a pre-given mandate. As for these affirmations, it is clear that they are based on jurisdiction and concern exclusively the power of taking valid decisions on the basis of the law and rights⁵⁵. Another way of looking at the matter - from the moral point of view - will lead to results totally different. Writes Ratzinger: “Là, d’une part, le pape ne devra jamais négliger le sentiment des évêques et, avec eux, la voix de l’Eglise universelle. D’autre part et à l’inverse, il faudra qu’il puisse y avoir des initiatives prises en tout indépendance par l’épiscopat”⁵⁶.

Problem arises when one begins to consider the issues involved only from one perspective, juridical or moral without considering the intrinsic relation of co-ordination between the juridical and moral aspects.

1.3.6. Radical Dependence of Ecclesial Authority

From the above, it is evident that the foundation of authority in the Church is sacramental. This sacramental basis of authority signifies also its radical dependence with regard to the Lord who is the source of all authority in the Church. Thus, while entrusting his flock to human shepherds he does not cease himself to be the true Shepherd who leads his sheep to pasture. The fact that the source of authority in the Church transcends the Church due to its divine origin is signified in the epicletic prayer of ordination. In the central part of the prayer of episcopal ordination which is directly taken from the n° 3 of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (v. 215), the three consecrating bishops pray:

⁵⁴ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La collégialité épiscopale. Développement théologique*, p. 778.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

“And now pour forth that Power which is from Thee, of ‘the princely Spirit’ which Thou didst deliver to Thy Beloved Child Jesus Christ, which He bestowed on Thy holy Apostles(...)”⁵⁷. Authority in the Church is, therefore, a gift of the Spirit. It is, therefore, radically dependent on the Spirit.

During the period of antiquity, there existed the election of bishops by the Christian people. “Let him be ordained as bishop, the one who has been chosen by all the people”⁵⁸ wrote Hippolytus of Rome. However, this election by the Christian people even though constitutive of the process of the ordination as the choice of God is said to be verified in the people’s choice, was not the decisive element. The decisive factor was the prayer of epiclesis accompanied by the imposition of hands, the rite through which the grace of the Spirit is imparted. In other words, ordination is always at the same time a grace of God and a human choice⁵⁹.

1.4. Mode of Exercise of Authority as Service

We have considered the source and foundation of authority in the Church as one of the elements constitutive of authority in the Church in the light of Vatican II. We saw that its source is divine and its foundation sacramental. But the understanding of authority in the Church does not consist only in the powers which go with this authority, a conception which can lead us to the understanding of authority as purely jurisdictional. The way this authority is to be exercised or used in such a way that it conforms to its finality is also an essential part of its understanding in the Church just as in any other human community. Authority does not have its being in itself and thus, it is not an end in itself. It has relevance and value, if it helps the human person and his community to grow, develop and enrich the common-good. One very positive thing about Vatican II is that it took the idea of service in the Church seriously and put it to relief in its documents. In doing this,

⁵⁷ HIPPOLYTUS, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 21, trans. G. DIX, London, 1937, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Cf. P. M. GY, *La théologie des prières anciennes pour l’ordination des évêques et des prêtres*, in *RSPT*, 58 (1974), p. 607.

the Council recovered an important element of biblical theology and as well as rediscovered a forgotten aspect of ecclesiology which was due to exaggerated juridical conception of the Church. In the following pages, we intend to consider the various elements and conditions that make the exercise of authority in the Church truly a service to the people of God. We shall begin by looking at that fundamental change effectuated by Vatican II which made it possible to speak and understand authority in terms of service.

1.4.1. Changes in Perspectives

From the proceedings of the Preparatory Commission and the final text that emerged, voted and promulgated in 1964, it is evident that the Council effected a fundamental change in perspectives which enabled it to project the priority of Christian existence and the people of God over all diversity of ministries and vocations in the Church. J. Rigal has shown that the first two preparatory schemas presented four major difficulties⁶⁰ : (1) In the first place, it appeared as if the apostolic ministry transmitted through ordination had priority over the Church and Christian existence. (2) This ministry was situated outside and even above the people of God especially 'laity'. (3) It appeared as if all the ministries were reserved to the hierarchy alone. (4) The relation established between the community and the ministers scarcely created room for any reciprocal relation. Below is a list of the ecclesiological plan and priorities of the first schema:

1. The militant Church
2. The members of the militant Church and the necessity of the Church for salvation
3. The episcopacy as the supreme degree of the sacrament of Orders and of the priesthood
4. The residential bishops
5. The states of evangelical perfection
6. The laity
7. The magisterium of the Church
8. Authority and obedience in the Church

⁶⁰ Cf. J. RIGAL, *Découvrir les ministères*, 2001, p. 110.

9. The relations between the Church and the State
10. The necessity for the Church to announce the Gospel to all the peoples
11. Ecumenism
12. The blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God and the mother of all men⁶¹

In the above schema, the accent is not exerted on the service which the Church ought to render to humanity and on the humble abnegation in which this is to be accomplished to the world. The Church is presented as a power “*qui veut soumettre toutes les nations à son service. Cet esprit juridique et dominateur n’était pas celui du Christ*”⁶². This first schema by the preparatory commission was outrightly rejected by the Council Fathers due to its abstract and triumphalistic presentation of the Church conceived as a juridical and institutional society. They preferred a doctrinal text on the Church presented in a pastoral and ecumenical spirit in line with the opening speech of pope John XXIII which marked the beginning of the Council⁶³. The new perspectives in the mind of the majority of the Council Fathers are reflected in the following words of Mgr. Elchinger : “*Hier, dit-il, on considérait l’Eglise davantage comme une institution; aujourd’hui on la voit beaucoup plus clairement comme une communion. Hier, on voyait surtout le Pape, aujourd’hui on est en présence de l’évêque uni au Pape. Hier on considérait l’évêque seul ; aujourd’hui les évêques ensemble. Hier la théologie affirmait la valeur de la hiérarchie ; aujourd’hui elle découvre le peuple de Dieu. Hier elle mettait en avant ce qui sépare ; aujourd’hui ce qui unit. Hier la théologie de l’Eglise considérait surtout sa vie interne ; aujourd’hui elle voit l’Eglise tournée vers l’extérieur*”⁶⁴.

With the rejection of the ancient schema (1962) on the Church, a new commission was set up by the Council Fathers together with the pope to prepare a new schema. This conciliar commission came up with a new project in 1963 which was submitted to the Synod assembly on the summer of that year. Even though the new text tried to present a new vision of the Church, there were still some

⁶¹ Cf. G. PHILIPS, *L’Eglise et son mystère au IIe concile du Vatican*, t. 1, p. 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶³ Cf. A. RICCARDI, *The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council*, p. 14-18.

⁶⁴ Cited in G. PHILIPS, *L’Eglise et son mystère au IIe concile du Vatican*, t. 1, p. 17-18.

inconveniencies as the hierarchical structure of the Church still took pre-eminence over the people of God or the entire community of the faithful as shown below:

1. The mystery of the Church
2. The hierarchical structure of the Church and the episcopacy in particular
3. The people of God and especially the laity
4. The vocation to holiness in the Church⁶⁵

However the text that was voted and promulgated in 1964 overturned the former perspectives in favour of a new vision of things. The hierarchy in this new dispensation was no longer at the centre of things as it was replaced with the priority which was given to the entire people of God and to Christian existence itself such that all that had been said of the people of God applied equally to the laity, religious and clergy⁶⁶. The fact that the Council spoke about all the People of God first before speaking about the hierarchical constitution of the Church, the laity and the religious life points to the priority of the ecclesial community and of the vocation common to all the baptised over all diversities of ministries and of vocations in the Church⁶⁷. In this light writes J. Rigal: *“La réalité première du Peuple Dieu ne réside donc pas dans la différence des fonctions et des services mais dans le ‘nous ecclésial’ constitué par l’ensemble des fidèles. Les ministres ne surplombent pas cet ensemble : ils en font partie. L’unité précède la distinction”*⁶⁸.

This priority given to the community of the faithful will have its consequences on the way of conceiving of the Church and on the nature and purpose of diversity of ministries in her midst. Rigal draws out these consequences accordingly: (1) The people of God as a whole participate and exercise the three functions of Christ (prophetic, sacerdotal and royal). In this sense, it is the ecclesial community which is in the first place disciple of Christ and his witness. No wonder then that the Constitution on the liturgy could say: “Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is ‘the sacrament of unity’, namely, the

⁶⁵Cf. G. PHILIPS, *L’Eglise et son mystère au II concile du Vatican*, t. 1 p. 21.

⁶⁶ Cf. LG, n° 30.

⁶⁷Cf. J. RIGAL, *Découvrir les ministères*, p. 111 .

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

holy people united and arranged under their bishops. Therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church. They manifest it, and have effects upon it”⁶⁹. (2) On the other hand, the call to holiness is no longer a special call addressed to a specific group in the ecclesial community, namely, the clergy and the religious alone but a call destined to all the faithful irrespective of their position or state in life⁷⁰. Also all the baptised constitute the Church with the same fundamental qualifications: the same dignity and freedom of children of God, the same law which is the new commandment of love and the same destiny, the kingdom of God⁷¹. The above fundamental changes in perspectives in ecclesiology led the Council to what could be regarded as the Copernican revolution of the Second Vatican Council, namely, the conception and description of hierarchy as ministry and service within the ecclesial community⁷².

By describing the hierarchy as service, M. Löhrer maintains that the Council has made its own an essential affirmation of the Sacred Scriptures on the ecclesial function or authority⁷³. He goes on to attribute the revalorisation of the ministerial character of ecclesial authority to the progress recorded in exegesis and ecumenical theological dialogue⁷⁴. The idea of service penetrates deeply into the conception of the ecclesial function at its various degrees of existence. The episcopacy is in this sense called “the acme of the sacred ministry”⁷⁵. The priests are also said to be called to the service of the People of God⁷⁶. The deacons also participate in their own way in this ministerial function in communion with the bishop and the *presbyterium*⁷⁷.

⁶⁹ SC, n° 26.

⁷⁰ Cf. LG, n° 40.

⁷¹ Cf. LG, n° 9.

⁷² LG, n° 24

⁷³ Cf. M. LÖHRER, *La hiérarchie au service du peuple chrétien*, in *L'Eglise de Vatican II. Etudes autour de la constitution conciliaire sur l'Eglise*, t. III (coll. *Unam sanctam*, 51c). Ed. G. BARAUNA, Paris, Cerf, 1966, p. 727

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁵ LG, n° 21.

⁷⁶ Cf. LG, n° 21.

⁷⁷ Cf. LG, n° 29.

1.4.2. Double Reference of the Ministerial Function

The notion of ministry in the Church always implies a double reference, namely, reference to Jesus Christ as the source and to the community of the faithful to whom it is destined. On the one hand, the theme of the Good News announced by the Church is always Jesus Christ and not the ecclesiastical function or authority. The bearers of ministerial functions in the Church are, therefore, accountable in a special way to Jesus Christ and their ministry has to be accomplished in strict subordination to him. On the other hand, this function has to be executed as a ministry destined to the entire community of the People of God. This is because the bearers of this charge are in the first place servants of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as they are his instruments in the service of the building up of the entire body. The dogmatic constitution on the Church expresses this ministerial obligation by a theological comparison with the incarnate Word⁷⁸: “As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (cf. Eph. 4:15)”⁷⁹.

What is said here applies in a particular way to ministerial function or authority in its sacramental function in the Church. This sacramental function demands a lot of personal devotion which will be different from ordinary functionary⁸⁰. The fundamental attitude required by the ministerial function is, therefore, that of humble service. The ministry does not give any right over persons since it is exercised for the good of the community. The minister thus, follows the way of charity, humility and abnegation⁸¹. This is in contradistinction to the view point of the Council of Trent which compared the hierarchy with an army prepared for battle⁸².

⁷⁸Cf. M. LÖHRER, *La Hiérarchie au service du peuple chrétien*, p. 728.

⁷⁹ LG, n° 8.

⁸⁰ Cf. M. LÖHRER, *La Hiérarchie au service du peuple chrétien*, p. 728.

⁸¹ Cf. LG, n° 5.

⁸² Cf. J. RIGAL, *Découvrir les ministères*, p. 113 ; Trent, Session 23, c. 4.

1.4.3. Unity and Diversity of Services

Called to the service of the Church is not only those who exercise the hierarchical function but also all the members of the Church. All have the right and obligation to serve. Using the Pauline theology of the Church as the body of Christ as basis, the Council affirms: "Also, in the building up of Christ's body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 1-11)"⁸³. This implies that there cannot be an isolated service in the Church as all the different gifts both charismatic and hierarchical are co-ordinated by the one Spirit, the principle of unity, in the edification of entire ecclesial body. The aim here is not that of a simple harmony and co-operation of the different gifts and charges in the visible and concrete expression of the ecclesial community. The gifts and charges are ordained in the first place to the growth and edification of the entire community in Jesus Christ: "From him 'the whole body, supplied and built up by joints and ligaments, attains a growth that is of God' (Col. 2:19). He continually provides in his body, that is, in the Church, for gifts of ministries through which, by his power, we serve each other unto salvation so that, carrying out the truth in love, we may through all things grow unto him who is our head (cf. Eph 4:11-16, Gk)"⁸⁴.

In the same line, the Council also outlines the services that the laity are to render to the Church. Apart from the hierarchy who teach in his name and by his power, Christ also carries out his prophetic office through the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and the grace of the word so that the power of the Gospel may shine out in daily family and social life⁸⁵. On the other hand, the Council Fathers also brought to the fore the diversity of ecclesial tasks which is to be understood in the functional sense, that is in the sense that they have to serve the good of the entire

⁸³LG, n° 7.

⁸⁴LG, n° 7.

⁸⁵Cf. LG, n° 12.

body⁸⁶. "Hence it is that the People of God is not only an assembly of various peoples, but in itself is made up of different ranks. This diversity among its members is either by reason of their duties-some exercise the sacred ministry for the good of their brethren-or it is due to their condition and manner of life- many enter the religious state and, intending to sanctity by the narrower way, stimulate their brethren by their example"⁸⁷.

In the light of the above consideration of the unity and diversity of services, we wish to stress the fact that authority in the Church as a specific form of ecclesial service cannot function in an isolated way. Its character as service within the context of the understanding of the Church as body of Christ according to the theology of Paul, implies that it is surrounded by other gifts and services of the Spirit. Its specific function is to make visible and concrete the ministerial character of the whole Church. It does this by effectively making possible the participation and co-responsibility of the entire people of God in what concerns the life and mission of the Church. However, this co-responsibility is a differentiated one as every one is co-responsible according to his function and status in the ecclesial community.

1.4.4. The Pastoral Character and Understanding of Authority

The image of the Church as body of Christ certainly includes the hierarchy since all ecclesiastical charges are destined to promote the good of the faithful⁸⁸. This image, however, does not bring out well the proper and distinctive character of the ministerial function of authority in the Church because its major concern is generally speaking the mutual co-ordination of the different members of a single body and their participation in a common gift, namely, the gift of the Spirit⁸⁹. The image of the pastor which the Council exhaustively uses with reference to Church ministers enables us more than any other image to understand better the essential

⁸⁶ Cf. *LG*, n° 18.

⁸⁷ *LG*, n° 13, a. 3.

⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Cf. M. LÖHRER, *La hiérarchie au service du peuple chrétien*, p. 729.

christological character of authority which does not impose itself by virtue of a simple right (jurisdiction) but understands itself as imitation of Christ, the Good Shepherd⁹⁰, who did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life for his sheep: "The Church is, accordingly, a sheepfold, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ (Jn. 10: 1-10). It is also a flock, of which God foretold that he would himself be the shepherd (cf. Is. 40:11; Ex. 34:11 f.), and whose sheep, although watched over by human shepherds, are nevertheless at all times led and brought to pasture by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and prince of shepherds (cf. Jn. 10: 11; 1 Pet. 5:4), who gave his life for his sheep (cf. Jn. 10: 11-16)"⁹¹.

The symbol of pastor is important for the understanding of authority as service because of the unique place which it reserves to Jesus Christ as the supreme and irreplaceable Pastor of his Church. Even after his death and resurrection, he remains the supreme Pastor of his Church and he does not hand over this responsibility to human representatives or "successors". In this light, the image of the pastor or shepherd cannot be applied to ecclesiastical ministers without underlining the fact that they exercise this function in strict dependence on the supreme and actual leadership of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd himself⁹². It is with this understanding in mind that the Council employs the image of pastor and the flock with regard to those invested with the ecclesiastical function and the faithful. On the other hand, the Council also affirms that this pastoral task ought not to be exercised to the detriment of the liberty and autonomy which belong to the laity in the Church. Thus, apart from the ever present and supreme ministry of Jesus Christ, the pastoral function, which is exercised for the good of the people, is also limited by the proper right of the faithful and by the way in which every faithful receives immediately from God a charism⁹³.

⁹⁰ Cf. *LG*, n° 27: "Sent as he is by the Father to govern his family, a bishop should keep before his eyes the example of the Good Shepherd, who came not to be waited upon but to serve (cf. Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45) and to lay down his life for his sheep (cf. Jn. 10:11)".

⁹¹ *LG*, n° 6.

⁹² Cf. M. LÖHRER, *La hiérarchie au service du peuple chrétien*, p. 729-730.

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 732; Cf. *LG*, n° 30.

Furthermore, even though the bishops as the pastors of the Church have a true authority over their Churches, they can only use it to edify the faithful in the truth and holiness, as the principle of its exercise remains that “the greater should become as the lesser and he who is the leader as the servant (cf. Lk 22:26-27)”⁹⁴. This implies entering into the spirit of service as embodied in the life and mission of Jesus Christ: “In the first place, the shepherds of Christ’s flock, in the image of the high and eternal priest, shepherd and bishop of our souls, should carry out their ministry with holiness and eagerness, with humility and fortitude; thus fulfilled, this ministry will also be for them an outstanding means of sanctification. Called to the fullness of the priesthood, they are endowed with a sacramental grace, so that by prayer, sacrifice and preaching, and through every form of episcopal care and service, they may fulfil the perfect duty of pastoral love. They should not be afraid to lay down their life for their sheep and, being a model to their flock (cf. 1 Pet. 5:3), they must foster a growing holiness in the Church, also by their own example”⁹⁵.

1.4.5. The Sacramental Function of Authority

So far we have been trying to stress the mode in which authority is expected to be exercised in the Church. We saw that one is not to separate authority from its function of service in the Christian community. To do this will be to cut off authority from its source of meaning and being. In this light, the mode in which authority is to be exercised enters into its content, shapes and defines it. It is in this way that authority can within the Church and as part of the Church, perform the symbolic function as sacrament of Christ’s presence among men. The Council was aware of this sacramental function of the ecclesiastical ministry when toeing the line of the Scriptures, it called on priests to be models of the flock entrusted to them: “As to the faithful, they (the priests) should bestow their paternal attention and solicitude on them, whom they have begotten spiritually through baptism and

⁹⁴ *LG*, n° 27.

⁹⁵ *LG*, n° 4.

instruction (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:23). Gladly constituting themselves models of the flock (cf. 1 Pet. 5:3), they should preside over and serve their local community in such a way that it may deserve to be called by the name which is given to the unique People of God in its entirety, that is to say, the Church of God (cf. Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1, and *passim*)”⁹⁶.

But the priests are able to be models of their flock because they are expected to first of all to model their own life as pastors after Christ. By conforming to Christ and imitating him in the exercise of their functions, they place themselves under the same vital law of their master who emptied himself and took the form of a slave for our salvation. In this way, they are able to communicate more fully the fruit of the apostolic ministry of which they are sharers: “Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, ‘though he was by nature God(...)emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave’ (Phil. 2:6,7), and ‘being rich, became poor’ (2 Cor. 8:9) for our sake”⁹⁷.

It follows that since the Church is the sacrament of the entire salvific reality of Christ, it is also necessary that she becomes also the sacrament of the divine *kenosis*. In other words, the exercise of the ministerial function in the Church ought to be a symbolic recall of the incomparable condescendence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In the true sense, therefore, authority in the Church cannot be isolated from its proper mode of operation and exercise. The task of theology is to show the intrinsic link between the ministerial function and its mode of exercise which consists essentially in the imitation of Christ, the model and law of Church ministry. In this sense, the elaboration of the Council gives an indication of the direction to follow. It can help to overcome the tendency to objectify in an exaggerated way the ministerial function in the Church. Historically speaking, it was the controversy of ‘Donatism’ which led the Church to stress the objective and

⁹⁶LG, n° 28.

⁹⁷LG, n° 8.

functional aspect of the hierarchical powers. This was with regard to the celebration of the sacraments⁹⁸. The Donatists had held that “the part played by the minister in the administration of the sacraments was substantial and not merely instrumental”. Therefore, for them “a minister without grace could not confer the sacraments”⁹⁹. Only a holy priest can confer validly a sacrament. In reaction to this controversy, it was saint Augustine that elaborated the official position of the Catholic Church which almost went to another extreme of emphasising the juridical autonomy of the administration of the sacrament. For him “a sacrament, the institution of Christ administered by men, is not dependent on the quality of man who administers it, for this would be to attribute the creation of a spiritual gift to a man”¹⁰⁰.

However, the validity of the functional administration of the sacrament even though true is not the only important element to be considered. This is because the personal morality of the minister can modify the effects of a sacrament validly administered. Thus, according to Edward Schillebeeckx: “*Du point de vue de Dieu et de l'Eglise, l'acte officiel ecclésial et la sainteté personnelle, ainsi que la volonté apostolique de sanctification, sont inséparables*”¹⁰¹. On the basis of this affirmation, Schillebeeckx goes on to make the following clarifications: “*Ce n'est pas parce qu'anciennement les Donatistes et plus récemment Luther ont fait dépendre la vertu des sacrements de l'intention sainte du ministre comme individu, que nous devons tomber dans l'autre extrême et croire que, du point de vue ecclésial et sacramentel, tout est normal et juste pourvu que soient administrés des sacrements valides. Certes, le sujet récepteur n'est pas alors positivement frustré. Mais la nature intime du sacrement demande davantage*”¹⁰².

⁹⁸ Cf. M. LÖHRER, *La hiérarchie au service du peuple chrétien*, p. 734.

⁹⁹ D. FAUL, *Donatism*, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America, 1967, p. 1002.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1003.

¹⁰¹ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Le Christ sacrement de la rencontre de Dieu*, Paris, Cerf, 1960, p. 115.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

As we earlier said, the ministerial function in the Church has a sacramental character because it is also a participation in the mystery which the Church herself typifies, namely, Jesus Christ, the God-Man. Consequently, *“le ministre ne doit pas seulement agir comme ministre de l’Eglise visible, mais comme ministre du mystère de l’Eglise”*¹⁰³. It is in this way that he can contribute to the fecundity of the sacrament he administers in the name of the Church with his life. Continues Schillebeeckx : *“Le rite sacramentel est en effet un acte que le Christ accomplit avec son corps mystique, un acte du Christ dans et par son Eglise. Dans la participation à la plénitude du Christ, la foi et la dévotion de tous ceux qui sont unis au Christ par la vie de la grâce collaborent à la fécondité du sacrement. Il est donc pour le moins exigé du ministre que lui-même soit également porteur de cette devotio Ecclesiae”*¹⁰⁴.

1.5. Authority as Relational and Shared Responsibility

In its true sense, authority is never held or exercised alone. It is always a shared responsibility. It has a relational dimension. Since it is at the service of the community, authority is always conceived in relation to the community of gifts and talents which reinforces its character and shapes its use. As we said earlier, the conception of authority as relational and shared responsibility in Vatican II was due to two major factors: (1) The recovery of the pneumatological aspect of the Church (2) The rediscovery of the episcopate or the principle of collegiality.

1.5.1. The Recovery of the Pneumatological Aspect of the Church

1.5.1.1. Office and Charism: Work of the Same Spirit

One of the greatest achievements of Vatican II is the recovery and emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church¹⁰⁵. The implication of this is that it is the

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁵ “For much of the history of Western ecclesiology, the role of the Holy Spirit has been eclipsed by a certain Christo-monism, a tendency to focus exclusively on the saving work of Christ. This has long been the objection of Orthodox theologians and it was made time and again by French Dominican ecclesiologist Yves Congar. This Christo-monism locates the origin of the Church in the Last Supper where, it was

Holy Spirit and not the hierarchy who is the principal authority in the Church. He endows the Church with varied charismatic and hierarchical gifts. The Spirit therefore directs the Church not only through the ecclesiastical office but also through charisms, all which have the same source in the one Spirit. Thus, the Council could write: "The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple, and he prays in them and bears witness to their adoption as children. He leads the Church into all truth, and he makes it one in fellowship and ministry, instructing and directing it through a diversity of gifts both hierarchical and charismatic, and he adorns it with his fruits"¹⁰⁶.

Vatican II's pneumatological understanding of the Church overcame the centuries-old opposition between charism and office. In this ecclesiastical controversy on the concept of authority, the protestant camp generally emphasised the charismatic foundations of authority, while Catholicism stressed the institutional offices of authority. Vatican II sought a way beyond this polemical impasse. On the one hand, the Council clearly reaffirmed the place of the episcopate and the papacy as essential structures of ecclesial authority. On the other hand, it recognized that both ecclesiastical office and charism are complementary manifestations of the work of the one Spirit animating the Church and thus they need not be in opposition¹⁰⁷. All ministries in the Church have a charismatic foundation. This is because the Holy Spirit apportions spiritual gifts "among the faithful of every rank" in order to render all of the faithful "fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which help the renewal and the building up of the Church"¹⁰⁸.

The recovery of the pneumatological vision of the Church in Vatican II was therefore crucial for the Council's emphasis on the inter-dependence between

commonly held, Christ instituted the sacraments of Eucharist and holy orders. In this view the Church was instituted whole and entire at the Last Supper" R. R. GAILLARDTZ, *Teaching with Authority*, Collegeville / Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1997, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶LG, n° 4.

¹⁰⁷Cf. R. R. GAILLARDTZ, *Teaching with Authority*, p. 26-27.

¹⁰⁸LG, n° 12.

office and charism, and consequently for the understanding of authority as a shared responsibility in the Church. In the Council's effort to recover the charismatic dimension of the Church, Joseph Cardinal Suenens played a prominent part. It was he who in a great debate on the Constitution on the Church pointed out that "to St. Paul the Church of the living Christ does not appear as some kind of administrative organisation, but as a living web of gifts, of charisms, of ministries"¹⁰⁹. On the basis of this charismatic structure, Suenens contends that "a statement about the Church which only spoke about the apostles and their successors and failed to speak about prophets and teachers would be gravely defective"¹¹⁰. In reaction to an initial ecclesiological draft which over-emphasised the hierarchical aspects of the Church to the detriment of its charismatic nature, Suenens stressed the value of charisms of holiness, perspicacity, dedication, generosity, and prophetic criticism rooted in the lives of all believers.

M. A. Fahley believes that it was partly due to Suenens' urging, that Vatican II came to emphasize the collaborative role of the faithful in its Constitution on the Church¹¹¹: "The pastors, indeed, know well how much the laity contribute to the welfare of the whole Church. For they know that they themselves were not established by Christ to undertake alone the whole salvific mission of the Church to the world, but that it is their exalted office so to be shepherds of the faithful and also recognize the latter's contribution and charisms that everyone in his own way will, with one mind, cooperate in the common task"¹¹².

One of the implications of the recognition of charisms in the Church is the recognition of the role and responsibility of the laity. It means that it is not only from above that the Holy Spirit works in the Church, that is, through the officials. The Spirit also works from below in ordinary baptised Christians with no official

¹⁰⁹ J. SUENENS, *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, London, 1969, p. 19; Cf. J. DALRYMPLE, *The Holy Spirit and Personal Responsibility*, in *Authority in a Changing Church*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1968, p. 204.

¹¹⁰ J. DALRYMPLE, *The Holy Spirit and Personal Responsibility*, p. 204.

¹¹¹ Cf. M. A. FAHEY, *Ecclesial Community as Communion*, in *The Church as Communion*, ed. J. H. PROVOST, Washington, D.C., Canon Law Society of America, 1984, p. 7.

¹¹² LG, n° 30.

standing in the hierarchical set up¹¹³. Because it is the same Spirit who is at work both in the hierarchy and in the simple faithful, authority in the Church is necessarily a relational reality, a matter of collaboration and shared responsibility. Authority in the Church is not only vertical and hierarchical. It has also a horizontal and communal dimension. This latter dimension was put to relief in the Council's plea for the promotion of the responsibility of the laity: "The pastors, indeed, should recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church. They should willingly use their prudent advice and confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, leaving them freedom and scope for acting. Indeed, they should give them the courage to undertake works on their own initiative. They should with paternal love consider attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. Moreover the pastors must respect and recognize the liberty which belongs to all in the terrestrial city"¹¹⁴.

The Council's call for the recognition of the role and responsibility of the laity in the Church is in line with its grounding of all Christian ministry in the three-fold ministry of Christ as teacher/prophet, priest/sanctifier, and pastor/king. It is the whole people of God and not only the hierarchy who share in the three-fold ministry of Christ, each according to his condition and function in this community. Thus, here lies the organic structure of the priestly community based on the sacraments of Christian initiation. Although, the ministerial priesthood differs essentially from the common priesthood of the faithful, the Council equally insists that they are ordered, one to another as each is a participation in one priesthood of Christ¹¹⁵. Vatican II reserves technically the word *ministerium* to bishops, priests and deacons, while for the ministries of the laity, a variety of terms are used, namely, *munus*, *missio*, *charisma*, *apostolatus* and *officium*. Thus, while a distinction is made between the ordained ministry and non-ordained ministry, the

¹¹³ Cf. J. DALRYMPLE, *The Holy Spirit and Personal Responsibility*, p. 204.

¹¹⁴ LG, n° 37.

¹¹⁵ Cf. LG, n° 10.

call of all the baptized to the work of mission and service in the Church is recognized¹¹⁶.

1.5.1.2. Plurality of Forms of Authority

Just as Vatican II reserves technically the word *ministerium* to the hierarchy, the word 'authority' was also reserved technically to the hierarchy especially the bishops in the conciliar documents. It is for this reason that Louis Marie Chauvet, as we have earlier shown, rightly sees authority in the Church as being of institutional order with the sacrament of Orders as its foundation. Does this mean that Vatican II recognizes no other form of authority except that linked to the institution? My contention is that it recognizes a variety of forms of authority exercised inside the Church even though it used the word 'authority' technically only for the hierarchy. This plurality of forms of authority in the Church is made possible due to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the whole Church. The Council recognized the authority of the Sacred Scriptures as a privileged medium of the word of God and as well as the authority of the Sacred Tradition with the same title to the word of God¹¹⁷. It equally recognized the special authority of the magisterium who has the duty to proclaim the teaching of the Church normatively in service of that word¹¹⁸.

The Council also recognized the general sense of the faithful as one of the living voices that have authority in the Church. This general sense of the faithful or *sensus fidelium* is based on the fact that the whole people of God as a believing community possesses a supernatural instinct or appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) which allows them to recognize and respond to God's Word¹¹⁹. Avery Dulles contends that the *sensus fidelium* as a theological font ought not to be confused with the public opinion poll. This is because not all in the Church are equally

¹¹⁶ Cf. D. McLOUGHLIN, *Authority as Service in Communion*, in *Governance and Authority in the Roman Catholic Church*, ed. N. TIMMS & K. WILSON, London, SPCK, 2000, p. 126.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *DV*, n° 9, 10.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *DV*, n° 10.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *LG*, n° 12; *DV*, n° 8, 10.

faithful Christians. Many Church members are as much subject to the influence of the mass media and the secular fashions of the day as they are influenced by the gospel and Christian way of life. As a result of this, Dulles argues that the views of active and committed Christians ought to be given more attention than those of indifferent or marginal Christians. But he holds that even the doubts of marginal persons should be attentively considered as they may sometimes contain some prophetic message for the Church¹²⁰. According to him: "The sense of the faithful should be seen not simply as static index but a process. If it becomes clear that large numbers of generous, intelligent, prayerful, and committed Christians who seriously study a given problem change their views in a certain direction, this may be evidence that the Holy Spirit is so inclining them. But there is need for caution and discernment to avoid mistaking the influences of secular fashion for the inspirations of divine grace"¹²¹.

Furthermore, the Council affirms the authority and competence of the laity to apply the Gospel to the social questions of the world today¹²². It affirms also the inviolable authority of one's individual conscience¹²³ as well as the authority of expertise and learning¹²⁴. The co-existence in the Church of the above senses of authority, both technical and non technical, presupposes a relational, dynamic and communion based ecclesiology. Thanks to Vatican II this ecclesiology has been made possible in the Constitution on the Church under ecclesial images and metaphor employed, namely, people of God, body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit. Avery Dulles maintains that the health and vigour of the Church depends on the mutual co-existence of several distinct organs of authority which serve as mutual checks and balances. Their existence is marked by natural tension and dialogue. Authority comes to its full expression only in their mutual interaction and convergence¹²⁵. Thus, says Yves Congar: "(...)if the question is to be considered

¹²⁰ Cf. A. DULLES, *The Resilient Church*, 1977, p. 98.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.100.

¹²² Cf. *GS*, n° 43.

¹²³ Cf. *GS*, n° 16 ; *DH*, n° 3.

¹²⁴ Cf. *GS*, n° 62 , 44 ; *AG*, n° 22.

¹²⁵ Cf. A DULLES, *The Resilient Church*, p. 99.

theologically, it is impossible to restrict oneself to a single criterion, or to ancient texts without the 'living magisterium', or to the living magisterium without the ancient texts, or to authority without the community, or to the latter without the former, or to apostolicity of the ministry without the apostolicity of doctrine, or vice versa, or to the Roman Church separated from catholicity, or to the latter detached from the former(...)All these criteria together should ensure a living faithfulness and identity in the full historicity of our lives and our knowledge. The fullness of the truth is associated with that of the means that God has given us to enable us to live by it; and with the totality of Christian existence"¹²⁶.

But in order that the distinct organs of authority in the Church function harmoniously and in unity, there is in the Church the exercise of ministerial authority of the bishops, whose function is to guard the Church in the unanimity of faith and in the faithful actualisation of the message of the Gospel. Let us now examine in greater detail, some of the distinct organs of authority in the Church recognised by Vatican II.

a. Sacred Tradition

Etymologically, Tradition (from the Latin *traditio*) is the action of transmitting something¹²⁷. In this large sense, it is at the heart of the economy of salvation which entails the historical transmission of the Word of God from generation to generation and from epoch to epoch. However, in the strict and current sense of it, Tradition is another way of transmitting the Word of God other than the Scripture. It is the living transmission of the Word of God in and through the doctrine, life and worship of the Church¹²⁸. "By means of the same Tradition the full canon of the sacred books is known to the Church and the holy Scriptures themselves are more thoroughly understood and constantly actualised in the Church"¹²⁹. The

¹²⁶ Y. CONGAR, *Norms of Christian Allegiance and Identity in the History of the Church*, in *Concilium*, 83 (1973), p. 24-25.

¹²⁷ J. RIGAL, *L'Eglise en quête d'avenir* (coll. *Théologies*). Paris, Cerf, 2003, p. 119.

¹²⁸ *DV*, n° 8.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

authority of Tradition derives itself from the fact that “the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scripture alone”. In this regard “both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feeling of devotion and reverence”¹³⁰.

The Council also rejected the theory of two sources of revelation by affirming that both Tradition and Scripture constitute a single deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted the Church. “By adhering to it the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”¹³¹.

b. Scripture

“Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit”¹³². As the Word of God committed into writing, Scripture has a permanent character in contrast to Tradition which has a dynamic and evolving shape due to the fact that its continuity involves the integration of new elements in fidelity to the original Tradition as fundamentally consigned in the Scripture. In this sense, Sacred Tradition includes the Sacred Scripture but goes beyond it. Thus, one cannot separate them as they are “bound closely together, and communicate one with the other”¹³³. Tradition completes the Scripture in the sense that it preserves the integrity of the biblical message by transmitting its content in the living continuity of faith. Vatican II could thus, say: “(...)Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit”¹³⁴.

There are multiple expressions of Tradition such as the doctrine, life and worship of the Church. Scripture is also an expression of Tradition. It is the first of all expressions of Tradition. As saint Cyprain said, it is “the principle and head of

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, n° 10.

¹³² *Ibid.*, n° 9.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

the divine tradition”¹³⁵. It therefore follows that Scripture is the supreme rule of the Word of God. J. Rigal rightly refers to it when he writes: “*Elle n’est soumise à aucune règle qui la jugerait. En revanche la Tradition lui est soumise. Certes, l’Ecriture ne représente pas la seule autorité de l’Eglise, elle n’est pas la seule norme ecclésiale, mais elle est la seule norma normans, la norme qui ‘norme’, celle qui fonde toutes les autres(....)*”¹³⁶.

Furthermore, the episcopal Magisterium is the servant of fidelity to the Word of God transmitted in a singular way by the Scripture. In the Church, the Magisterium does not enjoy any autonomy in relation to the Word of God, but it is charged to interpret it in authentic way. “At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith”¹³⁷. Thus, the sacred Scripture cannot be separated from the life of the Church. It is as Kallistos Ware says: “*Bien loin d’être une autorité extérieure placée au-dessus de l’Eglise, l’Ecriture vit et se comprend dans l’Eglise. L’autorité de l’Ecriture forme avec l’autorité de l’Eglise elle-même une seule unité indivise*”¹³⁸. Vatican II affirms a similar view when it says: “Sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others”¹³⁹.

However, this does not mean that one cannot make use of his personal judgement or the critical scientific research in the understanding of the Scripture¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁵ CYPRAIN, *Epist.* 74, 10, 1.

¹³⁶ J. RIGAL, *L’Eglise en quête d’avenir*, p. 121. According to the witness of Augustine of Hippo, the authority of the Scriptures “*confirmée du temps des apôtres par la succession des évêques et par la propagation des Eglises, a été placée comme sur un trône élevé pour recevoir la soumission de toute intelligence fidèle et pieuse*”. Augustin, *Contre Fauste*, XI, 5.

¹³⁷ DV, n° 10.

¹³⁸ K. WARE, *L’exercice de l’autorité dans l’Eglise orthodoxe*, in *Irenikon*, 54 (1981), p. 456-457.

¹³⁹ DV, n° 10.

¹⁴⁰ This critical scientific research is made by theologians with the help of critical instruments of history, philosophy, and human sciences according to the questions raised by the historical situation of the Church and the world at large. The authority of the theologian in this regard comes from his scientific competence in matters of the faith of the Church. And he exercises this authority at the service of the Church. The authority of the Magisterium comes from his ordination and his specific ministry as one charged with authentic interpretation of the Word of God, the transmission of the apostolic faith and preservation of its purity and

But the Church has the right and the duty to examine the result of critical studies. It can accept them, reject them or modify them in the light of the faith which it has inherited from the apostles. On the other hand, the relation between Tradition, Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church ought to be rightly understood. The function of the Scripture is not to legitimate the ecclesial institution but to clarify it, test it, reform and save it. The protestant reformers were right in according a critical function to the sacred Scripture. This was against the background of the tendency of the Catholic Church to confound sometimes the authority of the Scripture and the authority of the Church. Even though the two authorities are related, they cannot be identified. Vatican II has shown us how this relationship must be understood when it said: "This Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant"¹⁴¹.

c. Authority of the People of God

Authority in the Church is not entrusted to the bishops in an isolated way. They share this authority with the whole people of God. If authority has as its goal the service of fidelity to the Word of God, then it is first the responsibility of all the faithful in the Church, before being the particular responsibility of the ministers. The people of God as a whole is responsible for the continuity and rectitude of the apostolic faith. The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) noted this truth while *Lumen Gentium* gave it a theological foundation.

In *Dei Verbum*, one sees that before considering the role of the Magisterium, the Council puts to relief the responsibility of the people of God, a people structured by the union of the pastors and the faithful: "Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the

plenitude. According to Claude Geffré: "Certes, le magistère a autorité sur l'interprétation de la foi proposée par les théologiens, mais il doit tenir le plus grand compte de la recherche théologique dans son effort pour exprimer de manière scientifiquement responsable le *sensus fidei* des croyants et pour interpréter la confession de foi en fonction des interrogations les plus radicales de notre temps". C. GEFFRÉ, *Le christianisme au risque de l'interprétation* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei*, n° 120). Paris, Cerf, 1983, p. 91-92. But for the ministry of the theologian to be valid, he must be rooted in the faith and life of the Church.

¹⁴¹ DV, n° 10.

Church. By adhering to it the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (cf. Acts 2: 42 Greek). So, in maintaining, practicing and professing the faith that has been handed on there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful”¹⁴². The union and harmony between the people of God and its pastors willed by the Council implies that the exercise of the Magisterium can only be done in communion with the whole Church.

Furthermore, the fact that the preservation of the truth of faith is the collective responsibility of all the baptized is rooted in their possession of *sensus fidei* which is an active capacity for spiritual discernment, an evangelic intuition based on the baptismal vocation and nourished by life as an active member of a Christian community. According to W. Beinert: “The sense of faith is a free charisma attaching to all members of the Church, enabling them inwardly to appropriate the object of faith. It is by virtue of this sense of faith that the Church in its entirety – which expresses itself in the consensus of faith – recognizes faith’s object and bears living witness to it, in constant harmony with the Church’s teaching office”¹⁴³. This *sensus fidei* of the faithful cannot be exercised in an isolated manner but always in communion with the Church. Thus, Vatican II will also speak of *sensus fidelium* (the Christian instincts of the faithful, *GS*, n° 52, par. 3) which manifests itself either in partial or universal consensus.

The Council grounds the responsibility of the whole people of God in their possession of *sensus fidei* which assures the indefectibility of the Church. It also situated doctrinal infallibility in the context of the infallibility in faith of all believers: “The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20 and 27) cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ W. BEINERT, *Bedeutung und Begründung des Glaubenssinnes (Sensus fidei) als eines dogmatischen Erkenntniskriteriums*, in *Catholica*, 25 (1971), p. 271-303; cited in H. VORGRIMLER, *From sensus fidei to consensus fidelium*, in *Concilium*, 180 / 4 (1985), p. 5.

the whole people, when ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful’ they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (magisterium), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God (cf. 1 Th. 2:13), the faith once for all delivered to the saints (cf. Jude). The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life”¹⁴⁴.

Thus, by their possession of *sensus fidei* the People of God participate in the exercise of Christ’s prophetic office. The Council teaches that Christ fulfils his prophetic office “not only through the hierarchy who teach in his name and with his authority, but also through the laity. For that very purpose he made them his witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech (see Acts 2: 17-18; Rev. 19: 10), so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life”¹⁴⁵. The Council does not say how the People of God with its *sensus fidelium* can influence or determine concretely the formulation of doctrine in the Church.

As a matter of fact the infallibility which is attributed to the pope or to the college of bishops in the definition of doctrines under determined circumstances, is the fruit of the indefectibility and infallibility in belief which is proper to the whole Church¹⁴⁶. This implies that the whole Church must be involved in the exercise of the charism of infallibility possessed by its pastors in the definition and proclamation of the truths of faith through adequate attention to the *sensus fidelium* of the people of God. The formulation of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950) is a model of how the dynamic and normative role of the faith of all the members of the Church ought to be put to

¹⁴⁴ LG, n° 12.

¹⁴⁵ LG, n° 35.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. J. RIGAL, *L'Eglise en quête d'avenir*, p.124 : “Ce terme technique (l’indéfectibilité) signifie que la communauté ecclésiale reste durablement dans la vérité, même si on ne peut exclure telle ou telle erreur de parcours. L’infailibilité se situe à l’intérieur de l’indéfectibilité ; elle concerne la doctrine enseignée : en quelque sorte, elle exprime l’indéfectibilité”.

work. In these two instances, the *sensus fidelium* “provided the only sufficient grounds for certitude that these particular doctrines were really contained in the deposit of faith”¹⁴⁷. The whole Church was the teaching Church and functioned as a community of believers.

Thus, the maintenance of the Church in the truths of the faith is not the sole responsibility of the bishops as it is primarily the responsibility of the entire body of the faithful owing to their *sensus fidei* (cf. *LG*, n° 12). Joseph Ratzinger recognises this fact in his book, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu* when he says: “*La vérité n’est pas le privilège de la hiérarchie, elle est l’apanage de l’épouse du Christ, parce que toute l’Eglise contient la présence vivante de la Parole divine et par conséquent, elle ne peut jamais dans son ensemble se fourvoyer*”¹⁴⁸. The role of the people of God in the assurance of the Church in the truth which comes from the Spirit of God can be seen at work in the case of Arian crises in the 4th century A.D., when the hierarchy as a whole seemed to have given in to arianistic tendencies. It was only the indefectible attitude of the faithful that assured the victory of the Nicene faith¹⁴⁹. John Henry Newman who studied this historical phenomenon in his *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, concluded that it was the faithful, and not the institution of the magisterium vested in the bishops, that maintained the Catholic faith in the aftermath of the Arian controversy: “The episcopate, whose action was so prompt and concordant at Nicea on the rise of Arianism, did not, as a class or order of men, play a good part in the troubles consequent upon the Council; and the laity did. The Catholic people, in the length and breadth of Christendom, were the obstinate champions of Catholic truth, and the bishops were not”¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁷ F.A. SULLIVAN, *Magisterium*, New York, Paulist Press, 1983, p. 105.

¹⁴⁸ J. RATZINGER, *Le nouveau peuple de Dieu*, Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1971, p. 77.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁵⁰ J. H. NEWMAN, *The Orthodoxy of the Body of the Faithful during the Supremacy of Arianism* (Appendix, Note V), in *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, fifth edition, London, Pickering and Co., 1883, p. 445; cited in P. G. CROWLEY, *Catholicity, Inculturation and Newman's Sensus Fidelium*, in *The Heythrop Journal*, 33 (1992), p. 161-174, see p. 165. Confer also J. H. NEWMAN, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. J. COULSON, London, G. Chapman, 1961.

Thus, it is clear that the *sensus fidelium* of the people of God does not limit itself to the reception¹⁵¹ of the texts of the magisterium, it also assures the continuity of the integrity of the Christian faith and ecclesial life. What place does one give to it today in the context of a synod, pastoral council, and in the elaboration of official documents of the magisterium?

d. Authority of Conscience

Vatican II affirms the authority of conscience as the ultimate authority in each person with regard to all decisions bordering on morals and the faith. "It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. Therefore he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters. The reason is because the practice of religion of its very nature consists primarily of those voluntary and free internal acts by which man directs himself to God. Acts of this kind cannot be commanded or forbidden by any merely human authority"¹⁵². It therefore follows that where authority and rules are in conflict with individual conscience, the individual is obliged to oppose and to object, at least by not following the authority's instruction. This is the individual's inherent right¹⁵³. What then is the role of Church institutional authority

¹⁵¹ The subject of reception in the Church has been treated in a magisterial way by Yves Congar in his *La 'Réception' comme réalité ecclésiologique*, in *RSPT*, 56 (1972), p. 370-403. According to M. J. Himes "By no means does reception reduce to the acceptance of another's teaching because of submission to that other's official status. Rather, reception entails the respectful hearing of the other's statement of faith and the discernment that the statement is coherent with the apostolic tradition and perhaps further illuminates one's own experience of the Christian life. The classic cases of reception of doctrine in the Church's history are the (sometimes very slow) acceptance of the teaching of a council by a subsequent council or in the adherence accorded by the local churches to the conciliar decision. In these cases reception of the doctrine did not depend upon the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the assembly, but on the recognition that the doctrine was grounded upon the original apostolic witness. In brief, the reception was not that the teaching is true because it was taught by a council, but that the council had taught it because it is true. ..Reception does not confer validity on a teaching, nor does the lack of reception necessarily deny the truth of a doctrine". M. J. HIMES, *The Ecclesiological Significance of the Reception of Doctrine*, in *The Heythrop Journal*, 33 (1992), p. 146-160, See p. 155.

¹⁵² *D H*, n° 3.

¹⁵³ Cf. P. HUIZING & K. WALF, *What does the 'Right to Dissent' mean in the Church?* in *Concilium*, 158 / 8 (1982), p. 3-9.

with regard to conscience. Its role of course is not to suppress or restrain conscience, but to help it to grow by throwing light on it and protecting it. Thus, says pope John Paul II: “*L’Eglise s’adresse à l’homme dans l’entier respect de sa liberté (...). Elle propose, elle n’impose rien: elle respecte les personnes et cultures, elle s’arrête devant l’autel de la conscience*”¹⁵⁴. The pope is here in accord with Vatican II which declared that the human person “must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience” (*DH*, n° 3).

However, we have to add that an erroneous conscience is not good. For the conscience to work legitimately and properly, there is need for the individual person to be committed to the search for the truth and to let himself to be informed by the Word of God. Thus, the exercise of conscience ought not to lead to religious individualism.

1.5.2. Episcopal Collegiality and Shared Responsibility

The rediscovery of the episcopal collegiality in Vatican II has helped to raise the understanding of authority in the Catholic Church as a shared responsibility to a significant status. The term ‘collegiality’ was introduced by the Second Vatican Council in order to define the co-responsibility of the bishops for the Church with and under the pope as primate. Through the new emphasis on collegiality the one sided emphasis of the First Vatican Council on papal authority was corrected. The Second Vatican Council affirmed the definitions of 1870 but placed them in a new context. The attempt to understand papal primacy within the context of collegiality or greater responsibility of the bishops has led to some decentralization of authority in the Roman Catholic Church. This decentralization is seen for instance in the Council’s endorsement of new or renewed episcopal conferences of bishops such as the World Synod of bishops and the national conference of bishops as vehicles for furthering collegial spirit.

¹⁵⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical: Redemptoris missio*, 1990, n° 39.

Two doctrines of collegiality are found juxtaposed in Vatican II. One has the universal Church and the place of the episcopal college in it as its point of departure. It is the doctrine that Christ entrusted to his apostles as a college, the responsibility and authority over his Church, and that the order of bishops which succeeds to the college of apostles is also the subject of supreme and full authority over the universal Church. This understanding of collegiality is the one privileged by the Council and it concerned itself especially with the definition of the supreme and full jurisdiction of the college of bishops over the Church and striking a balance of this with the supreme and full jurisdiction of the pope. This particular doctrine of collegiality has been described by Hermann Pottmeyer as collegiality from above¹⁵⁵. The other doctrine of collegiality pays attention to its dogmatic significance. Its starting point is the reality of the local Church within the universal Church. From this context, it determines the importance of the episcopal office for the universal Church. This doctrine of collegiality, even though it holds a lot of possibilities for the renewal of the Church due to its underlying ecclesiology of communion was not fully developed by the Council. Hermann Pottmeyer refers to it as collegiality from below¹⁵⁶.

1.5.2.1. Collegiality in Relation to the Universal Church

In article 22 of the Constitution on the Church, the Council sets out its vision of collegiality within the context of the universal conception of the Church. The doctrine of collegiality is based on Christ's action of constitution of the apostolic college. He did not choose the apostles as individuals whom he would commission individually to proclaim the kingdom of God. But he chose them as a stable group or college with Peter at their head. He equally commissioned them with their mission to the ends of the earth and shared with them his authority as a college. According to the Constitution, the apostolic college is the prototype of the episcopal college: "Just as, in accordance with the Lord's decree, St. Peter and the

¹⁵⁵Cf. H. J. POTTMEYER, *Towards a Papacy in Communion*, trans. M. J. O'CONNELL, New York, Herder & Herder, 1998, p. 117.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

rest of the apostles constitute a unique apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another"¹⁵⁷.

It is therefore clear in the Council's position that the bishops are the successors of the apostles. But this succession is collegial. As we have seen it is through episcopal consecration and hierarchical communion that a bishop is incorporated into the college of bishops, and hence is able to participate in the collegial mission and responsibility. The implication of this is that the true nature of the Church is not adequately expressed in a juridical structure which stresses papal primacy without episcopal collegiality. The college of bishops is equally invested with the office of teaching and ruling the universal Church in communion with the pope as head, due to the episcopal consecration of its members and, thus, they have their authority as college immediately from Christ.

The inner constitution of this college is analogous to that of the apostolic college. The same relationship which existed between Peter and the apostolic college also regulates the relationship between the pope and the college of bishops in the government of the universal Church. Peter did not hold his office outside and independently of the apostolic college, as he was primarily an apostle among his brother apostles. In like manner, the pope does not hold his office outside the episcopal college as he is primarily a bishop among his brother bishops. Thus, according to R. Seamus : "It is because he is a bishop within the episcopal college – and not someone quite independent – that he is pope; more precisely, it is because he is bishop of Rome that he is pope and head of the college. The Council is complementing the work of Vatican I; it helps us to see both pope and bishops in their true theological significance by setting their ecclesial role within the one episcopal college where the head and members complement each other"¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁷ LG, n° 22.

¹⁵⁸ R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II : Rediscovery of the Episcopate*, p. 224.

But the real theological challenge to the idea of shared responsibility represented in the doctrine of the episcopate is in specifying the exact relationship between the episcopal college and the pope, the latter acting without juridical dependence on the college of which he is the head. Vatican II juxtaposed two statements on *suprema potestas* in the universal Church¹⁵⁹. The Council emphasized the juridical dependence of the college in relation to its primate and the juridical independence of the pope within the collegial ministry, and left further discussion to the theologians¹⁶⁰.

Many theologians still consider Rahner's treatment of the problem of two inadequately distinct subjects of *suprema potestas* in the universal Church vital even though his treatment first predated the Second Vatican Council. In Rahner's theological view, there can only be one fundamental subject of supreme authority – the college of bishops assembled under the pope as its head¹⁶¹. The same view was held by Rahner in his post-Vatican II writings¹⁶². According to him, "there are two modes in which this supreme college may act: a 'collegiate act' properly so-called, and the act of the pope as head of the college"¹⁶³. In Rahner's analysis, we can say that ontologically each exercise of papal primacy or authority is really collegial in nature because the pope, as the head of that college expressed the college in his actions. He cannot act in a way which would substantially differ from collegiate act which occurred only when the whole college, with the pope, was involved¹⁶⁴. While the action of the pope was that of the college ontologically speaking, he is not juridically dependent on the college. He does not need the college's approval before having the capacity to act¹⁶⁵: "In the strictest and most precise sense the pope has a supreme power not as a figure over against the college or above it, for

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *LG*, 22.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*; see also P. J. BURNS, *Communion, Councils, and Collegiality: Some Catholic Reflections*, in *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, ed. P. C. EMPIRE & A. MURPHY, Minnesota, Augsburg Publ. House, 1974, p. 167.

¹⁶¹ Cf. K. RAHNER & J. RATZINGER, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, London, 1962, p. 64-135.

¹⁶² Cf. K. RAHNER, *On the Relationship Between the Pope and the College of Bishops*, in *ID.*, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. X, trans. D. BOURKE, London, Darton & Todd, 1973, p. 50-70.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. R. LENNAN, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 161.

this college is in fact itself indisputably vested with this same power. The position is, rather, that the pope exercises this same power as an individual also, and this is precisely why in his possession of this power he is set apart from every other individual bishop and also from the sum total of all the bishops”¹⁶⁶.

Rahner cannot envisage any other way of reconciling the supreme authority of the pope and the supreme authority of the college of bishops as both are developed in the documents of Vatican II. For him, the ‘Petrine function’ of preserving communion and unity of faith is institutionalised in an office which is by its nature collegial even when its *suprema potestas* is exercised by the pope without any juridical dependence on the universal episcopal college¹⁶⁷.

On the other hand, Patrick Burns contends that the emphasis on a papal primacy that is juridically unlimited, was balanced both in Vatican I and Vatican II by the free admission of non-juridical limitations on that same primacy. Bishop Salas of Chile reflected the mind of the majority at Vatican I in his speech of June 10, 1870: “The power of the supreme pontiff is limited by natural and divine law. It is limited by the precepts and teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is limited by the common good of the Church. It is limited by the voice of conscience. It is limited by the rule of faith and discipline, etc(...)But it cannot be limited or restricted by the bishops, either individually or corporately, either in council or out of council”¹⁶⁸.

Furthermore, in his official *relatio* on chapter four of *Pastor Aeternus* (July 11, 1870), bishop Gasser of Brixen held that before any official doctrinal pronouncement or definition, the pope was morally bound to use every necessary means to inform himself of the faith of the Church. “What the pope taught infallibly was the consensus of the congregation of believers and the universal episcopate”¹⁶⁹. What Vatican I wished to exclude as did Vatican II was simply any *absoluta*

¹⁶⁶ K. RAHNER, *On the Relationship Between the Pope and the College of Bishops*, p. 58-59.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. P. J. BURNS, *Communion, Councils, and Collegiality: Some Catholic Reflections*, p. 168.

¹⁶⁸ Cited in P. J. BURNS, *Communion, Councils, and Collegiality*, p.169.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

necessitas, in juridical terms, of prior consultation or subsequent approbation¹⁷⁰. It is also to be noted that an amendment sought by pope Paul VI in Vatican II to the effect that the pope in the discharge of his responsibilities was only answerable to God, was rejected by the Theological Commission on the basis that “the Roman Pontiff is also bound to revelation itself, to the fundamental structure of the Church, to the sacraments, to the definitions of earlier councils and other obligations too numerous to mention”¹⁷¹.

1.5.2.2. Collegiality in Relation to the Local Church

We have so far considered only one aspect of the doctrine of collegiality in the Church, namely, the idea of the college of bishops as the supreme directive body of the Church in union with the pope as its primate. The emphasis here was not placed on communion of the Churches which collegiality serves and represents in its real theological sense but on the authority of the college of bishops as the supreme governing board of the Church. “The main concern in this approach is to move beyond Vatican centralization by striking a balance between the supreme and full jurisdiction of the pope and the supreme and full jurisdiction of the college of bishops”¹⁷². This concept of collegiality which has the universal Church and the relation of the college of bishops to it as its starting point has Karl Rahner as one of its chief proponents. The logical implication for the episcopal office of this doctrine of collegiality was echoed by Rahner in his work *Bishops: their Status and Function* when he said: “A bishop is bishop of a place because and in so far as he belongs to the supreme directive body of the Church”. Rahner maintains that a bishop may not derive his membership of the episcopal college simply from the fact of his local office¹⁷³.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid*.

¹⁷¹ K. RAHNER, *Commentary on Lumen Gentium 18-27*, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. H. VORGRIMLER, New York, Herder & Herder, 1967, p. 202.

¹⁷² H. J. POTTMEYER, *Towards a Papacy in Communion*, p. 118.

¹⁷³ Cf. K. RAHNER, *Bishops : Their Status and Function*, London/Baltimore, Helicon, 1963, p. 17-22.

In contrast to the above understanding of collegiality is the understanding of collegiality found in the early Church and in the Fathers of the Church. "This approach takes as its starting point the particular or local church; it understands the universal church to be a community or communion of Churches (*communio ecclesiarum*), and this communion to be the source of collegiality"¹⁷⁴. Although it was not the dominant concept of collegiality in Vatican II, the Council also reflected this patristic doctrine of collegiality through its new emphasis on the local Church.

1.5.2.2.1. New Emphasis on the Local Church

An important landmark of Vatican II is its rediscovery of the theology of the local Church. Due to the emphasis on Roman centralization reinforced by the counter Reformation, there was a tendency in the post-Tridentine theology to conceive the Church as institution rather than as mystery, as organization rather than as community. The ecclesiology which developed in this epoch stressed the sociological vision of the Church rather a vision of the Church in theological categories. The result was the conception of the local Church as little more than an administrative unit of a unique and world wide diocese, a segment of the one undivided *societas perfecta*¹⁷⁵. The Council's new emphasis on the local Church with the ministry of the bishop as its centre, in which the whole Church of Christ is truly present is a return to the Church's origin. In the biblical and patristic ecclesiology, the local community is seen as the visible and concrete realization here and now of the one Church of God, thanks to the celebration of the Eucharist. The universal Church has no existence apart from the local communities where it becomes a living and concrete reality. The local Church is not simply a part of the universal Church, but it realizes and represents in itself the whole mystery of the Church. It is not visualized as an administrative division of a larger whole, but as wholly Church, a living cell in which the living mystery of the whole Church in itself is present. Vatican II echoes this biblical and patristic theology of the local

¹⁷⁴ H. J. POTTMEYER, *Towards a Papacy in Communion*, p. 118.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II : Rediscovery of the Episcopate*, p. 228.

Church: "The Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. For in their own locality they are the new people called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness (1 Thess. 1: 5)"¹⁷⁶.

The decree on bishops presents a diocese as a "particular Church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative"¹⁷⁷. The whole mystery and reality of the Church is present in the local Church because in it the word of God is preached and the Eucharist celebrated. The celebration of the Eucharist welds the new people of God mystically into that which they receive, the body of Christ, and thereby giving the local community its ecclesial status. Explains the Council : "In them (i.e. in the local congregations) the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and the mystery of the Lord's supper is celebrated, that by the flesh and blood of the Lord's body the whole brotherhood may be joined together(...)In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living far from each other, Christ is present. By virtue of him the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is gathered together. For the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ does nothing other than transform us into that which we consume"¹⁷⁸.

As we have seen, where the Eucharist is celebrated the whole mystery and reality of the Church is realized and made present. The local Church by virtue of the ministry of the bishop is a typical case of this. This is why it cannot be regarded simply as a part of the universal Church and the bishops cannot be taken as mere vicars of the pope. It is this unique place of the local Church in relation to the universal Church which helps to grasp the real signification of episcopal collegiality and leads us to consider the relationship between papal primacy and episcopal office in a new light¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁶ LG, n° 2.

¹⁷⁷ CD, n° 11.

¹⁷⁸ LG, n° 26.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. R. SEAMUS, *Vatican II : Rediscovery of the Episcopate*, p. 230.

1.5.2.2.2. Episcopal Collegiality and Communion

Owing to the celebration of the Eucharist and the action of God's word, each local Church is the Church of Christ, but none is the whole Church, none is self sufficient. Because none is the whole Church, each local Church exists only in communion with other local Churches. This is seen in the fact that "the bishop who is the very personification of the local Church does not stand alone, indeed does not stand at all except in so far as he is a member of the college, in communion with all the bishops of the whole Church"¹⁸⁰. The patristic Church was marked by this sense of collegial relationship of the bishops. In this Church, the collegial relationship which existed among the bishops was a reflection of the communion of the Churches. Each bishop was an agent of ecclesial communion in such a way that their collegial acts together expressed the ecclesial communion among the Churches¹⁸¹. The mutual exchanges between the Churches, a manifestation of their communion was evident in the practice of the extension of eucharistic inter-communion to members of other communities and in mutual exchange of letters¹⁸².

Episcopal collegiality was not based on a theory about Church governance. It was rather based on the conviction of the Churches about the unity in communion present and active in their local eucharistic assemblies. The impetus of communion was from below (based on the concrete communion of believers and sacramentalized in the celebration of the Eucharist) rather than from above, and therefore collegiality was ascending rather than descending¹⁸³. In this light says Walter Kasper: "Collegiality is (...)the official, outward aspect(...)of the sacramental unity in communion"¹⁸⁴. In the patristic ecclesiology, the authority exercised by the bishops together was founded on their relationships to their

¹⁸⁰ C. McGARRY, *Collegiality and Catholicity*, p. 196.

¹⁸¹ Cf. R. R. GAILLARDÉTZ, *Teaching with Authority*, p. 44.

¹⁸² For instance, Ignatius of Antioch in Syria (about 110-115) wrote letters to various sister Churches as he was being taken in imperial custody to Rome for martyrdom. These are letters to the Churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and a letter to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

¹⁸³ Cf. R. R. GAILLARDÉTZ, *An Ecclesiology of Communion and Ecclesiastical Structures*, in *Église et Théologie*, 24 (1993), p. 181.

¹⁸⁴ W. KASPER, *Theology and Church*, New York, Crossroad, 1989, p. 157.

respective Churches. The bishop functioned as a corporate person, as the personification of his Church. It was on this account that Ignatius of Antioch could write to the faithful of a Church which he had not visited that he knew all because he had met their bishop¹⁸⁵. "This corporate function of the bishop enabled him to act both as the voice of the episcopal college to the local community and as the voice of local community to the Church at large"¹⁸⁶. He proclaims the faith of the universal Church when he speaks the faith of his local Church as the local Church embodies concretely the universal Church. It was for this reason that as from the second century on wards, the consensus of the episcopal college was regarded as a clear evidence of the authenticity of teaching¹⁸⁷. "The capacity of the bishops to reflect the mind of the Church universal conditions and is conditioned by their capacity to reflect the mind of the local churches"¹⁸⁸.

This collegial authority of the bishops as a body is thus rooted in the nature of the Church as *koinonia* and it is expressed by what the Orthodox Churches call the principle of synodality. It means that the authority of the Church is grounded in the communion of Churches and not based on any external principle exercised over the Churches. In a similar sense, Congar has in mind authority grounded in communion when he speaks of the principle of conciliarity in the Church. All institutional expressions of ecclesial authority such as regional synods and ecumenical councils are considered by him as concrete manifestations of the Church's fundamental nature as a communion¹⁸⁹: "Councils, while creations of the church, are an expression of the conciliarity which derives from the very nature of the Church, which is to be a communion, *koinonia*(...)A council seeks to express the community of views, the unanimity of the Church on the basis of the local or particular

¹⁸⁵ Cf. IGNATIUS, *Ephesians* 1, 3 ; *Magnesians* 2; *Trallians* 1.

¹⁸⁶ M. J. HIMES, *The Ecclesiological Significance of the Reception of Doctrine*, p. 153.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Cf. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *Teaching with Authority*, p. 45.

churches(...)whether this unanimity exists implicitly and has to be elicited and made explicit, or has to be sought in order to be expressed”¹⁹⁰.

One thing remarkable with contemporary understanding of synods and councils is that it fails to reckon with the above ecclesiological convictions rooted on the nature of the Church as communion. Synodal and conciliar deliberations for the early Church were not understood as acts of a governing board placed over the Church. “Rather, synodal and conciliar deliberations are concentrated expressions of the mind of the Churches”¹⁹¹. On the other hand, it is within this ecclesiology of communion that the ministry and authority of the bishop of Rome took root. The Petrine primacy was not founded on any direct historical succession but on the episcopal character of the pope as the bishop of the local Church of Rome. This particular local Church had assumed a prominent place in the communion of Churches due to its association with the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in addition to some other factors of a more political nature¹⁹². Thus, writes J.-M.R. Tillard: “For the bishop of Rome, as for all the bishops, everything derives from one and the same sacrament (episcopacy), from one and the same mission to build and to keep the Church in communion, from one and the same power given for the sake of this mission. But this power operates in different ways according to the office which each member receives within the college. In the case of the bishop of Rome, the dimension of *solicitudo universalis* is extended to a special degree, though always remaining within the sacramental grace of the episcopate”¹⁹³.

The tradition of the early Church on authority of the Church grounded in communion was also reflected in Vatican II in its description of the relationship between the college of bishops and the communion of Churches: “The individual bishops(...)are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular churches, which are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these

¹⁹⁰ Y. CONGAR, *The Conciliar Structure or Regime of the Church*, in *Concilium*, 167 (1983) p. 3-4.

¹⁹¹ R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *Teaching with Authority*, p. 45.

¹⁹² Cf. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *An Ecclesiology of Communion and Ecclesiastical Structures*, p. 182.

¹⁹³ J.-M.R. TILLARD, *The Bishop of Rome*, Wilmington, Glazier, 1983, p. 40- 41.

and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists. And for that reason precisely each bishop represents his own Church, whereas all, together with the pope, represent the whole Church in a bond of peace, love and unity”¹⁹⁴.

When understood in relation to the communion of the Churches, it becomes possible to appreciate episcopal collegiality as an important principle for a theological and ecclesiological understanding of ecclesial authority. This important relationship between the college of bishops and communion of the Churches was not consistently treated in the documents of Vatican II. The reason for this was the prominence and priority given to canonical and juridical aspects of collegiality. For instance, one only has to lament the separation made in Vatican II between membership in the episcopal college and the assignment of a pastoral charge to a local Church¹⁹⁵. The Council did not establish any relation between pastoral responsibility to a local Church and membership in the college of bishops. The only relation it established was between episcopal consecration and episcopal college¹⁹⁶. A bishop is said to become a member of the college of bishops immediately upon episcopal consecration. No mention was made of the need for a pastoral charge. This tendency to situate the bishop in the episcopal college without any relationship to a local Church can only but seriously weaken the relationship between the episcopal college and the communion of Churches, prominent in the consciousness of the early Church. This position can lead to the perception of the collegial authority as essentially independent of and external to the communion of Churches¹⁹⁷. “Collegiality, a theological and ecclesiological principle of leadership for the early Church, risks becoming, as it was before Vatican II, a mere juridical principle of leadership”¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁴ LG, n° 23. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. J. FAMERÉE, *Collégialité et communion dans l'Eglise*, in *RTL*, 25 (1994), p. 199-203 ; H.-M. LEGRAND, *Collégialité des évêques et communion des Eglises dans la réception de Vatican II*, in *RSPT*, 75 (1991), p. 545-568.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. LG, n° 21.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *Teaching with Authority*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

1.5.2.2.3. Manifestations of Collegiality

Within the context of an ecclesiology of communion, the responsibility of the bishop towards his particular Church cannot be separated from his responsibility to the universal Church which he exercises as a member of the college of bishops¹⁹⁹. Vatican II made a distinction between collegiate action which applies to the formal acts of the whole episcopal college and collegiate spirit (*affectus collegialis*) as characteristic of such ecclesial structures as the episcopal conferences and world synod of bishops²⁰⁰. During the Council some people had suggested that it was only those structures of the Church whose origin were *de iure divino*, namely, papal primacy and the universal college which were the only authentic expressions of episcopal collegiality. What place in collegiality does one give to institutions whose origin are *de iure ecclesiastico* such as episcopal conference (or synod of bishops)?

(i) At Vatican II a great number of the Council Fathers wanted the theological status or doctrinal foundation of episcopal conference to be defined. Many elements were proposed as theological foundation: the collective power of the bishops, the mission of the bishops for the whole Church, the plenitude of the episcopal charge, the communion of charity and of truth made present in the Eucharist (or eucharistic foundation), the *koinonia* of the local Churches²⁰¹. It was also discussed whether the principle of collegiality of bishops can be used as theological foundation. Many

¹⁹⁹ Cf. LG, n° 23, § 2: "Individual bishops, in so far as they are set over particular Churches, exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them, not over other Churches nor the Church universal. But in so far as they are members of the episcopal college and legitimate successors of the apostles, by Christ's arrangement and decree, each is bound to have such care and solicitude for the whole Church which, though it be not exercised by any act of jurisdiction, does for all that redound in an eminent degree to the advantage of the universal Church. For all the bishops have the obligation of fostering and safeguarding the unity of the faith and of upholding the discipline which is common to the whole Church, of schooling the faithful in a love of the whole Mystical Body of Christ and, in a special way, of the poor, the suffering, and those who are undergoing persecution for the sake of justice (cf. Mt. 5:10); finally, of promoting all that type of active apostolate which is common to the whole Church, especially in order that the faith may increase and the light of truth may rise in its fullness on all men. Besides, it is an established fact of experience that, in ruling well their own Churches as portions of the universal Church, they contribute efficaciously to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of Churches".

²⁰⁰ LG, n° 23.

²⁰¹ Cf. R. SOBANSKI, *La théologie et le statut juridique des conférences épiscopales au concile Vatican II*, in *Les Conférences épiscopales. Théologie, statut canonique, avenir* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei* 149). Ed. H. LEGRAND, J. MANZANARES, & A. GARCÍA, Paris, Cerf, 1988, p. 120-121.

Fathers were favourably disposed to this evoking dogmatic reasons (episcopal collegiality as founded on the divine right and concretised in witness of unity), historical reasons (the reunions of bishops of the early Church²⁰²) and pastoral reasons (episcopal conference as the necessary condition of the exercise of the episcopal charge). The Episcopal conference was even described as collegiality in act²⁰³ and presented as collegial institution which is to be integrated into the structures of the Church²⁰⁴.

However, this attempt to make collegiality the theological foundation of episcopal conferences was not without opposition. Some Fathers opposed it. For instance, A. Carli invoked theological, juridical and historical reasons against such a move, notably, the absence of union of the whole episcopal college and lack of the presence of the exercise of the *suprema potestas*²⁰⁵. On the other hand, cardinal B. Alfrink presented what could be regarded as the middle position on the issue of collegiality as foundation for episcopal conferences. According to him, the function and power of the whole episcopal college cannot be transferred to a national or local assembly of bishops. He accepts that the idea of collegiality can realise itself in a certain manner in the episcopal conferences, but it cannot be question of collegiality in the strict sense here. For him, the authority and power of the conference comes from the authority and power which each bishop gives to it. In other words, the proper, ordinary and immediate power of a diocesan bishop cannot be juridically limited by an episcopal conference except when the authority and power of the latter comes to it from the supreme authority of the Church in view of the good of the Church²⁰⁶. Due to the fact that the Fathers failed to arrive at consensus on the

²⁰² Cf. R. SOBANSKI, *La théologie et le statut juridique des conférences épiscopales au concile Vatican II*, p. 123-124.

²⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.* Pope John Paul II takes a similar position in his Apostolic Letter on the theological and juridical nature of episcopal conferences. For details see *Apostolos Suos – Mutu Proprio* (21 May, 1998).

theological or doctrinal foundation of the episcopal conferences, the conciliar commission decided to expose only the historical and pastoral foundation²⁰⁷.

(ii) Hence, the theological status and doctrinal authority of the conferences of bishops remained problematic after the second Vatican Council. Opinions in the theological world continued to be divided. Two great theologians, Jerome Hamer and Joseph Ratzinger in their earlier writings held that episcopal conferences were partial realizations of collegiality²⁰⁸. Ratzinger expressed his disapproval for those who held on to a narrow view of collegiality which saw its only expression in the formal acts of the whole college of bishops in communion with its head, the bishop of Rome. He stuck to the more fluid notion of collegiality as was manifested in the regional synods of early Church. In this Church, every relationship between a bishop and another was regarded as an expression of this collegiality. Owing to this understanding of collegiality, the participation of three bishops at episcopal consecration was considered as sufficient. Ratzinger, therefore, contended that every exercise of collegiality need not be an exercise of the supreme authority of the Church, which was the attribute of entire episcopal college²⁰⁹.

However, Ratzinger and Hamer later revised their positions. Now prefects of the Congregation for the Doctrine of faith and the Congregation for Religious, respectively, they denied any proper theological foundation for episcopal conferences in the concept of collegiality²¹⁰. Ratzinger's and Hamer's change of opinion seems to have been influenced by the post-conciliar writing of Henri de Lubac²¹¹. Making use of Eucharistic ecclesiology as his starting point, de Lubac held that the theology of communion based on the Trinitarian unity and sacramentalized in the Eucharist, permits for only two fundamental expressions of collegiality: the

²⁰⁷ Cf. Cf. R. SOBANSKI, *La théologie et le statut juridique des conférences épiscopales au concile Vatican II*, p. 123-124.

²⁰⁸ Cf. J. HAMER, *Les conférences épiscopales, exercice de la collégialité*, in *NRT*, 85 (1963), p. 966-969 ; J. RATZINGER, *The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality*, in *Concilium*, 1 (1964), p. 39-67.

²⁰⁹ Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality*, p. 39-67.

²¹⁰ Cf. J. HAMER, *La responsabilité collégiale de chaque évêque*, in *NRT*, 5 (1983), p. 641-654 ; J. RATZINGER, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics. New Essays in Ecclesiology*, New York, Crossroad, 1988.

²¹¹ Cf. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *An Ecclesiology of Communion and Ecclesiastical Structures*, p. 195-196.

expression of collegiality by the individual bishop precisely as the bishop of a particular Church and the expression of collegiality by the whole episcopate as a college. This is because according to him, the Church is at the same time one and many, universal and particular. It is not something in between theologically speaking and as such there cannot be a partial manifestation of collegiality or intermediate collegial structures. De Lubac considers episcopal conferences and world synods only as collective acts of bishops²¹².

However, a more balanced understanding of collegiality based on the ecclesiology of communion was produced by the Extraordinary Synod of 1985. The synod Fathers consider the ecclesiology of communion as the sacramental foundation of collegiality. They see the theology of collegiality as something that far surpasses in limit its mere juridical aspect. For them, the collegial spirit is broader than effective collegiality juridically understood. Therefore, they consider the collegial spirit as the soul of the collaboration between the bishops on the regional, national and international levels²¹³. According to them, "Collegial action in the strict sense implies the activity of the whole college, together with its head, over the entire church. Its maximum expression is found in an ecumenical council(...)From this first collegiality understood in the strict sense one must distinguish the diverse partial realization, which are authentically sign and instrument of the collegial spirit: the Synod of Bishops, the episcopal conferences, the Roman Curia, the *ad limina* visits, etc. All of these actualizations cannot be directly deduced from the theological principle of collegiality; but they are regulated by ecclesial law"²¹⁴. Thus, in the judgment of the synod Fathers, episcopal conferences are also partial realizations of collegiality. They are, therefore, important moment for the exercise of episcopal oversight and co-responsibility.

²¹² Cf. H. De LUBAC, *The Motherhood of the Church followed by Particular Churches in the Universal Church*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1982. Cf. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *An Ecclesiology of Communion and Ecclesiastical Structures*, p. 195-196.

²¹³ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Final Report II C*, 4, in *Origins*, 15 (1985), p. 448.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Concluding Reflection to Vatican II's Concept of Authority

We have noted that Vatican II applies the word 'authority' only in the technical sense, that is only when talking about the hierarchy in the Church. This implies that its concept of authority is pre-eminently institutional. However, the pre-eminence given to the authority of office in Vatican II does not mean that it is not open to other forms of authority, as there is certainly a place in its documents for a variety of forms of authority exercised inside the Church such as the authority of the Scriptures, authority of *sensus fidelium*, authority of conscience, authority of the laity, and authority of expertise and learning. We saw that it is only when these multiple organs of authority in the Church converge that authority will be fully expressed.

In line with the pre-eminence of institutional authority in Vatican II, we defined the Council's concept of authority as that of legitimate power. It is the legitimacy which characterizes power in the Church that ensures that the image of authority present in the conciliar documents tallies with the image of authority without domination or authority as service presented to us in the New Testament. We considered this legitimacy under three angles or subjects. First, we saw that authority in the Church has a divine source and a sacramental foundation. Since our focal point is the episcopacy we saw that the episcopate is the fullness of the sacrament of Order. This implies that through his consecration, the bishop is entrusted with the highest ecclesial charge and pastoral authority which is a participation in the mission and authority that belongs to the entire episcopal college as successor to the apostolic college.

The second element of authority as legitimate power which we considered is the mode of exercise of authority. We saw that authority is to be exercised in the Church in strict conformity to its pastoral character as *diakonia* or service of the people of God after the manner of Christ who came to serve and not be served, and to give his life for his sheep. All these were clearly demonstrated by the teaching of the

Council, inscribed in its ecclesiological priorities and thus gave its concept of authority an evangelical image.

The third element of authority conceived as legitimate power which we considered is its relational and shared character. We saw that if authority is to be properly conceived, it has to be understood in relation to a community of gifts since it is fundamentally in service of the community. It is the mark of the community which gives authority its relational and shared character. We saw that Vatican II was not lacking in this conception. It tried to evolve a theory of authority more relational and shared in character by its recovery of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and by its rediscovery of the theology of the episcopate to balance the affirmations on papal primacy in Vatican I. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Church made it possible for Vatican II to relativize the authority of office and to recognize the place of charisms and the responsibility of non clerical members of the Church. It is because the Holy Spirit acts in the whole Church that Vatican II was able to open itself up to a variety of forms of authority exercised in the Church other than institutional authority. On the other hand, we saw that the episcopal office is also collegial. The collegial character of episcopal office means that it is within this context that we have to understand the authority of pope who as primate of the college is, however, juridically independent from it in the exercise of his authority. Although, juridically independent, the pope as we saw is morally bound to observe certain criteria with regard to the truth on which the Church is founded. In the exercise of his responsibilities, he is morally bound to consult his brothers in the episcopate and to observe the *sensus fidelium*.

Finally, we saw that the doctrinal significance of the episcopal office is better seen in the light of the ecclesiology of communion which takes the local Church as its starting point than in the light of an ecclesiology which takes its starting point from the universal Church. This latter understanding of episcopal office was the one privileged by the Council as it preoccupied itself primarily with the juridical aspects of the episcopal collegiality, namely, its supreme authority over the whole Church.

This is why its concept of authority is pre-eminently institutional. The institutional model of authority privileged by Vatican II has its merits and demerits. Positively, it helps to guarantee the Church's unity and its doctrinal continuity with the Church of apostolic times²¹⁵. But when taken in isolation this model has certain difficulties. Here is how Avery Dulles sees it: "By insisting as it does upon the formal and juridical aspects of authority, it (institutional authority) encourages a kind of doctrinal extrinsicism, sometimes referred to as the 'blank check' theory of assent. Furthermore, it does not sufficiently attend to the fact that the official teaching would not have power or credibility except that it emanates from a community of faith and is, so to speak, inscribed within this community. Official teaching has no force unless it somehow expresses the faith of the believing Church, and unless the teachers are bound by conviction to the community of believers"²¹⁶.

2. Episcopal Authority in Vatican II and the Rediscovery of the

Sense of Community

The ecclesiology of Vatican II was an attempt to go beyond the social and juridical auto-comprehension of the Church that marked the history of the Church in the second millennium. The Fathers of the Council wanted to recover an understanding of the Church which was theological and a renewed sense of authority in the Church which was conscious of the community. All this was made possible by the rediscovery of the mystery of the Church, privileging of the common priesthood of the faithful, the radical reinterpretation of the hierarchy as *diakonia*, and the revalorization of the understanding of the Church as communion, which is the fundamental theological key for the building of a true ecclesiology of the community of people of God. These subjects shall receive our attention in this work. But discussion on them shall be preceded by an attempt to situate the Vatican ecclesiological breakthrough in its historical context. This attempt shall also include a look at the major factors without which the current ecclesial self-

²¹⁵ Cf. A. DULLES, *The Resilient Church*, p. 97.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

understanding would not have been possible. We shall look at the major ecclesiological texts of Vatican. We shall next focus on the new image and identity acquired by the Vatican II bishop within the context of his particular Church.

2.1. Situating the Ecclesiological Renewal in its Historical Context

2.1.1. The Triumph of Pyramidal Church and the Loss of the Sense of Community

The era of social and juridical ecclesiology which began with the conversion of Constantine and continued across the Christianity of the Medieval Age reached its greatest moments of triumph in the polemic ecclesiology of the counter Reformation and in the ecclesiology of Roman centralization of Vatican I. Before the protestant Reformation, the Church was largely unself-conscious about her own nature from a reflexive theological point of view²¹⁷. Express ecclesiological treatises were non-existent. The auto-comprehension of the Church was, however, implicit in reflections on great theological themes like sacraments, incarnation, faith and in canonical collections which projected the temporal power of the Church over and against that of civil authorities²¹⁸.

It was thus the Reformation, which challenged the social and juridical posture of the Church and compelled it to come to the maturity of theological self-consciousness. The result of this challenge was a polemic ecclesiology, which emphasised the hierarchical and institutional dimensions of the Church, which were elements called into question by the reformers²¹⁹. This is how an American

²¹⁷ Cf. J. LINNAN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, 21 november, 1964 and *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, Christus Dominus*, 28 October, 1965, in *Vatican II and Its Documents: An American Reappraisal* (coll. *Theology and Life Series*, 15). Ed. T.E. O'CONNELL, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 1986, p. 19.

²¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 39.

²¹⁹ This canonical conception of the Church owes its origin to Robert Bellarmine. The mistake of Bellarmine according to Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole is that he situated ecclesiology within the category of social realities by taking his point of departure from the etymological definition of the Church as *Ekklesia* or assembly. It is an ecclesiology centred on the means by which the community receives grace and on the activities which express this community rather than on the fraternal communion of charity which forms this community. This is because this theology is a theology of controversy. Writes de La Soujeole, "*Elle se fixe, par définition, sur le terrain de l'adversaire, mais - c'est là sa limite - elle ne l'élargit pas. Or*

theologian, J. Linnan, described it: "Because polemic always distorts one's vision, many other elements in the Church's self-understanding were neglected or even overlooked. This Roman Catholic theology of Church emphasized structure, authority, the sacred power of the Pope, bishops and clergy, and adherence to propositions defining Catholic faith as criteria for Church membership. It constructed a monolithic Church"²²⁰.

The consequent effect of this pyramidal vision of the Church was the neglect of the place of the Christian community. The role of Christ in the Christian community and the understanding of the Church as the creation of the Holy Spirit were forgotten in the ensuing theology of the Church, that identified it with the visible institution and its authority. The arrival of modernity and secularisation further created many problems and challenges for the pyramidal conception of the Church. The Enlightenment, for instance, forced "the issue of faith and religion from the centre of the arena of public concern to the periphery of the private judgement of the individual"²²¹. The Church found herself increasingly incapable of coming to terms with a world that was more and more undergoing mutation owing to the discovery of its freedom and possibilities. The official reaction of the Church was marked by fear and suspicion as well as "outright rejection of a world view, which, however, had already been assimilated by most of the faithful"²²². A typical example of this is Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864).

The pyramidal ecclesiology of the Church attained its highest moment of glory in the definition of Vatican Council I (1870) of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope. It was a Council which dedicated itself to the rejection of errors and to the

*l'ecclésiologie des Réformés à laquelle s'oppose notre controversiste repose sur une certaine conception des relations entre membres qui forment la communauté (justification par la foi seule) et non sur les relations qui manifestent cette communauté (le rejet des "oeuvres"). Bellarmin ne sortira pas de ce cadre, et c'est pourquoi sa définition ne repose que sur la profession de foi, la participation aux sacrements et la soumission aux pasteurs, en tant, que ces actes engendrent la communauté, expriment des médiations nécessaires. Il n'y ajoutera pas de considérations relatives à la charité agissante qui exprime la vie reçue pas les médiations. C'est une sérieuse limite". B.-D. DE LA SOUJEOLE, *Le sacrement de la communion. Essai d'ecclésiologie fondamentale* (coll. *Théologies*, 85). Paris, Cerf, 1998, p. 27.*

²²⁰ J. LINNAN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, p. 40.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

most potent reaffirmation of the authority of the pope in the Church, in opposition to “individualism, rationalism, materialism, liberation, scientism and statism of the modern world”²²³. Giuseppe Alberigo shows that Vatican I insisted almost exclusively on an understanding of Christian revelation removed from all historical context and development, and designed by nature to be imparted from on high²²⁴. “The Church’s *magisterium* now formerly identified with the hierarchy, was given the task of ascertaining and condemning error as well as that of finding effective juridical sanctions”²²⁵.

Owing to political circumstances, the Church at Vatican I could not complete its work with the doctrine on episcopate which could have had a balancing effect on the doctrine of papal primacy and infallibility. Therefore, the post-Vatican I image of the bishop that emerged after the Council was that of a “delegate of the pope” who exercised authority over his community and was accountable only to the Roman Pontiff. The Catholic Church appeared as an all encompassing institution or one diocese directed from Rome.

2.1.2. Major Factors Responsible for a Renewed Church

2.1.2.1. Renewal Movements and the Quest for the Rediscovery of the Church as Communion and Community

As from the 19th century, there were many renewal movements in the Church which struggled for the recovery of forgotten or neglected elements in Christian tradition, for example, the aspect of the Church as communion and community²²⁶. These movements also paved the way for a more positive understanding of the role

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²²⁴ Cf. G. ALBERIGO, *The Authority of the Church in the Documents of Vatican I and Vatican II*, in *Authority in the Church*, ed. P. F. FRANSEN, Leuven, Peeters, 1983, p. 127-128.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Cf. J. FAMERÉE, *Plus de démocratie dans l'Eglise catholique. Par fidélité à l'Evangile*, in *Démocratie dans les Eglises* (coll. *Trajectoires*, 10). Bruxelles, Lumen Vitae, 1999, p. 42 : “(...)les recherches bibliques et théologiques font redécouvrir l'aspect communautaire et communionnel de la vie ecclésiale (l'Eglise n'est pas seulement une tête, qui, bibliquement, est d'ailleurs le Christ et non le pape, elle est aussi un corps, un peuple avec toute la diversité et la circulation de vie que cela suppose). Il en va de même pour les pasteurs: à chaque niveau, ils sont un corps, un ordre, un collègue. Personne n'est ministre seul, pas même le pape”.

of the Church in the modern world. Exegetical studies accomplished in the area of biblical ecclesiology led to the rediscovery of the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, and thereby relativized the historical Church in dependence to the eschatological reality of the kingdom of God²²⁷. The Church was again primarily considered from the point of view of her mystery²²⁸. On the other hand, attention also turned to the study of patristic tradition, which led to the discovery of the “richness of ecclesial forms and traditions and to the historical character of the Church as a developing and changing institution”²²⁹. Also the liturgical revival led to the rediscovery of the sacramentality of the Church and “shifted the focus from universal institution to the particular worshipping community”²³⁰. The ecumenical movement led the Catholic Church to reconsider the polemic character of her relationship with other Christian Churches. On the other hand, theological progress in Orthodox Churches in the 20th century also led to the rediscovery of the concepts of synodality, community and communion in the Catholic Church²³¹.

2.1.2.2. Other Factors

Another factor responsible for the ecclesiological renewal of Vatican II was the emergence of new theological method and language. At the root of this

²²⁷ Cf. J. FRISQUE, *L'ecclésiologie au XXe siècle*, in *Bilan de la théologie du XXe siècle*, t. II, ed. R. V. GUCHT & H. VORGRIMLER, Paris, Casterman, 1970, p. 422. Cf. also J. LINNAN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, p. 41.

²²⁸ Credit goes to A. Möhler who in the 19th century is said to have put to relief the pneumatological dimension of the Church and to Feckes for the christological dimension. Cf. J. FRISQUE, *L'ecclésiologie au XXe siècle*, p. 422 : “L’insistance sur le Saint-Esprit comme ‘âme’ de l’Eglise en relation avec le Christ qui ne cesse de l’envoyer, dévoile au cœur de l’Eglise une réalité de vie proprement surnaturelle, agissant dans ses croyants pour en faire des membres actifs et les ordonner à la croissance de l’Eglise. Celle-ci ne peut donc en aucune manière se réduire à la hiérarchie. Mais c’est le rôle du Christ dans son Eglise qui retient avant tout l’attention, et il n’est pas exagéré de dire que sa redécouverte constitue le fondement de l’expérience moderne sur l’Eglise (Feckes). Le Christ comme Tête de l’Eglise opère la divinisation des membres, par la médiation de son humanité, c’est son intervention toujours actuelle qui explique la “divino-humanité” de l’Eglise (Tyszkiewicz) et c’est ce principe du théandrisme ecclésial qui empêche de voir dans l’Eglise la production de forces sociologiques naturelles”.

²²⁹ J. LINNAN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, p. 41.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²³¹ See for example: N. AFANASSIEFF, *The Church which Presides in Love*, in *The Primacy of Peter* (coll. *The Library of Orthodox Theology*, no. 1). London, The Faith Press, p. 57-110. G. R. P. FLOROVSKY, *Le Corps du Christ vivant, in La Sainte Eglise universelle. Confrontation œcuménique*, ed. G. R. P. FLOROVSKY & L. R. PRENTER, Paris, Neuchâtel, 1948.

development was the decline of the highly deductive methodology of scholastic philosophy, and the shift to historico-inductive methodology of post-Kantian critical philosophies. This shift which is marked by “emphasis on the actuality of existence and experience”, “changed both the method and language of theological reflection”. It also gave rise to “a body of theological thought which was a major resource for Vatican II”²³².

The second Vatican Council was also marked by a certain paradigmatic shift. The end of the Second World War and the end of colonialism, emergence of Catholic Churches outside Europe, growth in democratic culture, world-wide revolution in communication and the consequent consciousness of cultural pluralism were all the characteristics of the historical context which gave rise to the renewed Church of Vatican II²³³. Finally, we must not forget the factor, vision and charismatic personality of pope John XXIII, who announced his decision to convoke a new Council less than ninety days after his election as successor to Pius XII²³⁴. He had the vision to recognise that the “catholic Church was on the threshold of an extraordinarily important historical juncture in which it would be necessary ‘to define clearly and distinguish between what is sacred principle and eternal gospel and what belongs rather to the changing times’”²³⁵.

2.2. The Major Ecclesiological Documents

The major ecclesiological texts directly concerned with episcopal authority are the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church (*Christus Dominus*). The ecclesiology expressed in these two documents is the product of the dialectical confrontation between the classical Roman hierarchical and institutional ecclesiology represented

²³² J. LINNAN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, p. 42.

²³³ Cf. *ibid.*

²³⁴ Cf. G. ALBERIGO, *The Announcement of the Council from the Security of the Fortress to the Lure of the Quest*, in *History of Vatican II*, Vol. I. *Announcing and Preparing Vatican II : Toward a New Era in Catholicism*, Leuven, Peeters, 1995, p. 1.

²³⁵ JOHN XXIII, *Allocution to the Franciscan Order* (April 16, 1959): DMC 1:250; cited in G. ALBERIGO, *The Announcement of the Council from the Security of the Fortress to the Lure of the Quest*, p. 3-4.

by the ‘conservatives’ at the Second Vatican Council, and the renewed theology of the Church as required by the renewal movements already considered above²³⁶. J. Linnan has given a good account of the theology that issued from this confrontation at Vatican II: “What emerges is a theology that is rooted in the teaching of Sacred Scripture and takes into account an historical tradition more ancient and inclusive than that of the post-reformation period, or even that of the medieval West. Its emphases are shaped by the *lex orandi* and by the real experience of a believing community. It is set in a context which strives to embrace the whole world, its history, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism. While it preserves the fundamental elements of the classical Roman theology of Pope, hierarchy and institution, it radically alters and relativises these by stressing the mystery of the Church, the relationship of Church to the kingdom of God, the people of God, the particular Church, the episcopal college, and finally, by clearly recognizing that the Church of Christ cannot be simply identified with the Roman Catholic Church”²³⁷.

During the process of its formation, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church underwent a thorough rewriting and many revisions, before being finally approved on November 21, 1964. The final vote was 2151 positive, 5 negative²³⁸. On the other hand, the “Decree on the Pastoral Office of bishops in the Church” (*Christus Dominus*) also knew many evolutions before its final present form. It was initially submitted as two different drafts: “On Bishops and Diocesan Government” and “On the Care of Souls”. These two drafts were later combined into a new draft – *Christus Dominus* – due to lack of time in dealing with two documents²³⁹. After many revisions, the decree was approved on October 28, 1965. In this final document, the Council treated the office of the bishop in three directions: “the bishops in relation to the universal Church; the bishops in relation to their own

²³⁶ Cf. J. LINNAN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, p. 42.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 44.

²³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 45.

Churches or dioceses; and the cooperation of bishops in councils, synods, and episcopal conferences”²⁴⁰.

2.3. A Fundamental Ecclesiological Re-orientation and the Rediscovery of the Sense of Community

2.3.1. Recentring on the Mystery of the Church

The first step taken by the Council Fathers in their fundamental reorientation of the Church's self-understanding, hitherto distorted by polemic and social emphasis, is the restoration of forgotten or neglected elements in Christian tradition. The most important point in this direction is the recentring on the Mystery of the Church. This permitted the Fathers to lay emphasis on the inner nature of the Church as a participation in the life of the Trinity, as a sacrament of communion with God and of unity among all people²⁴¹, and as a people brought into unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit²⁴². The Church is equally described as the Mystical Body of Christ²⁴³ and Temple of the Holy Spirit²⁴⁴. Finally, the application of a series of biblical images completes the description of the Mystery and the inner reality of the Church.

By emphasizing the Mystery of the Church²⁴⁵, the Council has shown that it is only from the point of view of faith that we can understand the inner reality of the Church²⁴⁶. Most of the confusions committed in the auto-comprehension of the Church owe their origin to the attempt to reduce the Church to a purely human

²⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid*.

²⁴¹ Cf. LG, n° 1.

²⁴² Cf. LG, n° 4.

²⁴³ Cf. LG, n° 7.

²⁴⁴ Cf. LG, n° 3.

²⁴⁵ “Il s’agit d’une ecclésiologie du mystère au sens honoré dans la tradition orientale: la réalité de grâce voulue et communiquée par Dieu y est antérieure à la considération des moyens de grâce(...)L’accent premier est mis sur l’action transcendante de Dieu dans le Fils par l’Esprit, sur la vie des fidèles comme manifestation de la grâce, une vie ‘théandrique’, selon l’expression orientale”. (B.-D. DE LA SOUJEOLE, *Le sacrement de la communion*, p. 121-122).

²⁴⁶ Cf. *l’Eglise : Constitution “Lumen Gentium”*. Texte et commentaires par une équipe de laïcs et de prêtres (Vivre le concil), Maison name, 1966, p. 37.

society²⁴⁷. The Church of Vatican II is not only a visible society structured with hierarchical organs, it is also a community of faith, hope and charity. In this renewed Church, as the true community of the faithful, her social structure is at the service of the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the principal agent of her construction²⁴⁸. On the other hand, the description of the Church as a sacrament shows the total dependence of this community of the faithful on Christ, who is the primordial sacrament of the Father²⁴⁹. By describing the Church in terms of communion, the Council has laid the theological foundation for the integration of all ministries and roles in the Church within the context of a truly living community of charity.

2.3.2. The Church: Community and People of God

In rediscovering the understanding of the Church as people of God, a community called to be a sign and instrument of human unity and salvation, we arrive at the heart of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. The term “people of God” underscores the fundamental fact that the Church belongs not to men but to God. This people, prefigured by Israel according to the ancient alliance, are through faith in Christ finally established as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation(...)who in times past were not a people, but now are the people of God’²⁵⁰. By considering the Church as people of God, Vatican II has also brought to the fore the fundamental importance of community in the self-understanding of the Church.

²⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Cf. *LG*, n° 8.

²⁴⁹ Walter Kasper sees the description of the Church as sacrament as the Council’s antidote to ecclesiological triumphalism, clericalism, and juridism. It puts to light the mystery of the Church which is hidden in its visible form and which cannot be understood except in faith. It shows that on the one hand, the Church comes totally from Christ and has to be constantly referred to him. On the other hand, inasmuch as a sign and instrument, she exists totally for the service of humanity and the world. The sacramentality of the Church also expresses the servant character of the Church. According to Kasper, the Council speaks explicitly of the servant condition of the Church in three aspects: (1) The Church is the Church of the poor. (2) She is the Church of sinners. She is at once holy and on the other hand called to self-purification and renewal. (3) She is a persecuted Church. “*Selon cette triple condition de serviteur, l’Eglise est le signe de Jésus-Christ, qui s’est livré lui-même et a pris la condition de serviteur (Ph 2, 6-11). Parler de l’Eglise comme sacrement ne signifie donc pas nier le scandale de l’Eglise concrète; au contraire on entend le mettre en relief (cf. également GS 43)*”. W. KASPER, *La Théologie et l’Eglise* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei*, 158). Paris, Cerf, 1990, p. 351-352.

²⁵⁰ *LG*, n° 9.

For instance, a part of the opening sentences of the chapter II of *Lumen Gentium* reads: “He (God) has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness”²⁵¹.

It is this bond and link established by God between people through faith in Christ that makes the Church a community. In this sense, the Church is first a community of people with a common faith, a common hope and a common charity in God through Christ. While speaking further about the people of God, Vatican II strikes at the heart of the matter when it spoke of this people in terms of “communion of life, love and truth”²⁵². Communion refers to the whole Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, and not only to a part of her members. This way of speaking of the Church as communion, has a fundamental implication for the way of life, the way of taking decision and the way of acting together of the whole community, which is the people of God, the Church.

Vatican II also made another important rediscovery when it explicitly affirms the common priesthood of all believers. The fundamental condition of every Christian is that of baptism. It is baptism that makes each member of the Christian community priest, king and prophet through faith in Christ. Important consequences follow by the attribution of priesthood to the whole Church and thereby also to each one of her members. It underscores the fundamental unity of all the baptized in Christ, which is prior to all diversity in ministry and function in the Christian community. Thus, says the Council: “There is a common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ, a common grace as sons, a common vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope and undivided charity. In Christ and in the Church there is, then, no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex, for ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* The underlining is mine for emphasis.

²⁵² *LG*, n° 9.

freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3: 11)"²⁵³.

On the other hand, all the baptized can lay claim to a common Father in Christ and thus, all are together brothers and sisters. This fraternity, based on a common fatherhood in God, is the basis of the equality that ought to reign in the Christian community. This fundamental equality and dignity of all Christians leads to a renewed description of the identity of the laity : "The term 'laity' is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world"²⁵⁴. Thus, the three dimensional office of Christ is not reserved exclusively to the hierarchy but characterizes the whole members of Christ's faithful on the basis of their baptismal vocation. The laity are equally here integrated into the mission of whole Church.

2.3.3. The Hierarchy: Servants of the Community of People of God

The hierarchy exists in and for the community of the people of God. This is what the Council Fathers mean when they chose the revolutionary biblical term of *diakonia* to describe the activity of the hierarchy inside the community of the people of God²⁵⁵. The description of the hierarchy as exercising the office of service inside the Christian community is a revolution of its kind. This is so because right up to October 1962, when the bishops were arriving for the Council, most of them were still imbued with the pyramidal vision of the Church. To speak of the Church, for them, was to speak of the hierarchy and its authority over the

²⁵³ LG, n° 32. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

²⁵⁴ LG, n° 31.

²⁵⁵ Cf. LG, n° 24.

faithful²⁵⁶. The Council's decision rather to speak of the hierarchy as ministry or service inside the Church can, therefore, be regarded as the "Copernican ecclesiological Revolution" of the Second Vatican Council. It represents a single most important achievement of Vatican II. It marks a definitive correction of the social, juridical and institutional ecclesiology of past centuries.

2.3.4. Trinitarian Communion : Theological Foundation of Community of People of God

Although the proper ecclesiology of Vatican II is that of the people of God, it is the ecclesiology of communion, which is the central and fundamental concept in the documents of the Council²⁵⁷. Communion is a fundamental concept because it expresses more conveniently the inner reality of the Church or her origin in the mystery of the Trinity, which is in line with the Council's priority²⁵⁸. The Trinitarian communion is, therefore, seen as the foundation of ecclesial communion. J. Rigal was right when he observed: "*Dire que l'Eglise est un mystère de communion, c'est souligner que les membres de l'Eglise participent à la communion qui existe entre le Père, le Fils et l'Esprit Saint. Le terme 'communion' avant de concerner le fonctionnement de l'institution ecclésiale, désigne la nature*

²⁵⁶ Cf. G. MARTELET, *N'oublions pas Vatican II*, Paris, Cerf, 1995, p. 3.

²⁵⁷ This view that the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental concept in Vatican II documents is that of the 1985 extraordinary synod of bishops held in Rome. Cf. *DC*, 83 (1986), p. 39-40. The Council does not give a particular chapter to the idea of the Church as communion as it did to that of the people of God. But the ecclesiology of communion is implicit in the different documents of Vatican II. The word *communio* appears about 100 times, more frequently in *Lumen Gentium* and in *Unitatis redintegratio*. The Council also used many other concepts to express the idea of communion, thereby going beyond the strict use of the word *communio*. This includes: community, society, unity, body, temple, city, people, etc. Cf. J. RIGAL, *L'ecclésiologie de communion. Son évolution historique et ses fondements* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei*, 202). Paris, Cerf, 1997, p. 63.

²⁵⁸ The word 'communio' according to Kasper points to the transcendental reality from which the Church comes and by which she lives. "*Communio ne désigne pas la structure de l'Eglise, mais son essence, ou comme le dit le Concile: son mysterium. De fait, l'aggiornamento du Concile consistait en ce que, face à la concentration sur la figure visible et hiérarchique de l'Eglise qui prédominait de façon unilatérale dans les trois derniers siècles, il remet au premier plan le mystère de l'Eglise qui ne peut être saisi que dans la foi*"; cf. W. KASPER, *La Théologie et l'Eglise*, p. 393.

ou mieux le mystère de l'Eglise dans ce qu'il a de plus intime, de plus profond, de plus inattendu, de plus missionnaire" ²⁵⁹.

De La Soujeole, clarified the three elements which are constitutive of the ecclesial communion: (1) The divine offer to human being of participation in His life, knowledge and love (i.e. of participation in Trinitarian communion). (2) Effective participation of human person not only in what is offered but also through it in God himself. (3) The community which results from these relations. The ecclesial communion is thus both vertical and horizontal. It is expressed by the activities by which Christians receive and give, namely, communion in the same faith, communion in the same charity and communion in the same sacraments²⁶⁰.

What we have said so far on communion also has important consequences for the self-understanding of the Church and her actual organization as a community of the faithful. In the first place, this ecclesiology underscores the priority of the vocation of the whole community of the people of God. Thus, says J. Rigal: "*L'ecclésiologie de communion valorisée par Vatican II donne un singulier relief à la vocation commune de tous les baptisés. Elle souligne la priorité du 'nous ecclésia', constitué par l'ensemble du peuple de Dieu, sur toute diversité de fonctions et de charismes. L'Eglise-communion ne peut s'identifier à une Eglise hiérarchique où quelques-uns monopolisent le pouvoir et les responsabilités. Elle recouvre, au contraire, la communauté des fidèles, c'est-à-dire tous les baptisés en tant qu'ils forment le Corps vivant du Christ*" ²⁶¹.

On the other hand, because the ecclesiology of communion is an ecclesiology which is marked by vision of the whole Church, it demands also by this fact the effective coresponsibility of the community in all aspects of the life and mission of the Church. On this point affirms J. Rigal again: "*L'avènement de l'Eglise-communion ne peut se faire sans la mise en oeuvre d'une coresponsabilité effective.*"

²⁵⁹ J. RIGAL, *L'ecclésiologie de communion*, p. 130.

²⁶⁰ B.-D. DE LA SOUJEOLE, *Le sacrement de la communion*, p. 277-279.

²⁶¹ J. RIGAL, *L'ecclésiologie de communion*, p. 68.

*Cette ouverture exige que l'on passe d'une concentration des responsabilités entre les mains de quelques-uns à une multiplicité de services. Une telle évolution n'est possible que si le peuple de Dieu devient, dans les faits, ce qu'il est en droit: la réalité enveloppante à l'intérieur et au service de laquelle s'inscrivent les différents ministères. La volonté de Vatican II de promouvoir un partenariat engagé dans une unique mission ne fait aucun doute*²⁶².

2.4. The Bishop in His Particular Church: His New Image and Identity

2.4.1. Rediscovery of the Particular Church

The rediscovery of the particular Church is a result of the ecclesiological renewal that took place in Vatican II. This renewal, as we saw, is linked to the shift of emphasis to the Mystery of the Church and the correction of the Church of pyramid and centralization. Thus, Vatican II considers the particular Church primarily in the light of its mystery before its geographical or topographical dimensions. "A diocese is a section of the People of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy so that, loyal to its pastor and formed by him into one community in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes one particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active"²⁶³.

The first thing to be noted in this description is its refusal to speak of the particular Church in terms which tend to refer to it as a part of the universal Church. In the first redaction of the schema of the decree *Christus Dominus*, the diocese was defined in these terms: *Diocese est pars quaedam dominici gregis*²⁶⁴. "Définir l'Eglise locale de cette manière, c'est sous-entendre qu'elle est un simple fragment, une parcelle, une section de l'Eglise du Christ, de sorte que la fondation

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ LG, n° 11.

²⁶⁴ Cf. J. RIGAL, *L'ecclésiologie de communion*, p. 69.

d'une Eglise déterminée constitue une sorte d'amputation des autres Eglises. Dans cette logique, l'Eglise universelle devient une addition d'Eglises particulières"²⁶⁵.

Thus, by refraining from speaking of the Church in terms of 'part' of the universal Church²⁶⁶, it was possible for Vatican II to fully recognize the ecclesiality of particular Churches, based on the presence of the essential ecclesiological elements: Holy Spirit, Gospel, Eucharist, and the apostolicity of the episcopal ministry. These elements are constitutive of the particular Church. On the other hand, it is the rediscovery of the place of the Eucharist in life of the Church²⁶⁷, which permits the Council to think of the particular Church as Church of Christ and of its relationship with the universal Church. The vital place of the bishop in the particular Church is equally emphasized: "(...)the principal manifestation of the Church consists in the full, active participation of all God's holy people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers"²⁶⁸.

The Council refers to the particular Church as the empirical and contextual realization of the one and unique Catholic Church²⁶⁹. It is a true Church of Christ insofar as her existence is rooted in the divine vocation, in the Word of Christ, in the grace of the Holy Spirit and in the exercise of the apostolic ministry, especially by the Eucharist. The particular Church is fully the Church of Christ but it is not the whole Church. The whole Church or the universal Church is the communion of

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁶⁶ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'Evêque dans l'Eglise*, in *Vatican II. La charge pastorale des évêques* (coll. *Unam Sanctam*, 74). Paris, Cerf, 1969, p. 106.

²⁶⁷ It was *Sacrosanctum concilium* which opened the way for complete vision of the plenitude of the Church realized in a place through liturgical celebration. For instance, it says in n° 26: "Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is 'the holy people united and arranged under their bishops'. Therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church. They manifest it, and have effects upon it".

²⁶⁸ *SC*, n° 41.

²⁶⁹ Vatican II privileges the conception of the Church as a community at a local level, and the conception of the Church as communion of local Churches at the universal level. Cf. G. ALBERIGO, *The Authority of the Church in the Documents of Vatican II*, p.139. Vatican II also applies the word Church to all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful celebrating the Eucharist (Cf. *LG*, n° 26). This position is in line with that of the patristic tradition, which holds that it is the Eucharist that makes the Church.

particular or local Churches. It is in them and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church or universal Church exists. There is no anteriority of the universal Church over the particular Churches and vice versa. What exists is mutual interiority between the particular Churches and the universal Church modelled after the Holy Trinity, where unity of God and trinity (or diversity) of persons is simultaneous²⁷⁰. Furthermore, the rediscovery of the particular Church (on the basis of ecclesiology of the Eucharist) as true Church of Christ, motivated Vatican II to accord the particular Church her veritable autonomy in the organization of her proper life and mission. In many of its texts, the Council accorded great respect to the particularity and diversity of each local Church. For instance, Vatican II notes that at the heart of ecclesial communion, particular Churches have their proper traditions²⁷¹.

On the other hand, the bishop and his particular Church are inseparable. His ministry is an essential constitutive element of his particular Church. The rediscovery of the sacramentality of the episcopal order by Vatican II has further given importance to his right place in his particular Church. The bishop is invested with fullness of the sacrament of Orders²⁷². His episcopal consecration confers to him the plenitude of pastoral authority, namely, the power to teach, sanctify and govern. He has this given to him directly by Christ in his consecration. He is, thus, a vicar of Christ in his particular Church, not a delegate or vicar of the pope²⁷³. He exercises his episcopal authority personally in his own right and in the name of Christ. It is proper, ordinary and immediate power²⁷⁴. This is, however, without prejudice to the authority of the Supreme Pontiff to make the necessary canonical determination to the actual exercise of this authority where the good of the Church and of the faithful requires it. As a result, the authority of the bishop “far from being damaged by the supreme and universal power, is much rather defended,

²⁷⁰ Cf. J. FAMERÉE, *Ecclésiologie catholique. Différences séparatrices et rapprochements avec les autres Églises*, in *RTL*, 33 (2002), p. 38.

²⁷¹ Cf. *LG*, n° 13, 23; *AGD*, n° 8, 22.

²⁷² Cf. *LG*, n° 26.

²⁷³ Cf. *LG*, n° 27 § 2.

²⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

upheld and strengthened by it(...)"²⁷⁵. Finally, each bishop is a member of the episcopal college and thus, participates in the universal solicitude of the college.

2.4.2. Reinsertion of the Bishop in the Communion of His Particular

Church

2.4.2.1. A Christian with His People

After his elevation to the episcopacy, the bishop fundamentally remains a Christian with his people. Together with the rest of Christ's faithful in his community, he stands on the same ground of equality and dignity before God. Like them, he has been called to a common faith, common hope, and common charity in Christ. The same vocation to perfection, the same salvation and the same grace of adoption as sons have been offered to the whole community in each one of her members regenerated in Christ through baptism²⁷⁶. St. Augustine recaptured the priority and the pre-eminence of this fundamental baptismal condition of all Christians in his famous formula: *vobis sum episcopus, vobiscum christianus*²⁷⁷. Elsewhere, he says: "*en ce qui nous concerne il faut considérer deux choses: d'abord que nous sommes chrétiens, ensuite que nous avons l'autorité; ayant l'autorité nous sommes comptés parmi les pasteurs si nous en sommes de bons, étant chrétiens nous sommes avec vous, nous aussi, des brebis*"²⁷⁸.

As a Christian, therefore, the bishop in his local Church community is nourished by the same Word of God and by the faith confessed by the entire community especially when gathered to celebrate the liturgy of the Church²⁷⁹. His predication is marked by the faith of this community, which his predecessors have watched over. He cannot cut himself off from this communion of the faith of the Church. The charism of apostolic ministry given to the bishop is never given to him in a

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Cf LG, n° 32 § 2 & 3.

²⁷⁷ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Sermo* 340, 1 (PL 38, 1483).

²⁷⁸ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Sermo* 47, 2 (CCSL 41, 573).

²⁷⁹ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale. Ecclésiologie de communion et catholicité* (coll. *Cogitatio fidei*, 191). Paris, Cerf, 1995, p. 221.

purely individualistic way. It is linked with the other charisms given by the Holy Spirit to the entire community. As an author puts it, the bishop in a eucharistic assembly “*n’est pas seul à consacrer: tout le peuple fidèle qui l’entoure consacre et offre avec lui*”²⁸⁰, even though he has a particular role to play. Thus, even though Christ has entrusted his particular Church to his pastoral care, the bishop remains a disciple and a sinner like other faithful in his community.

2.4.2. 2. First Servant in his Community

The bishop is the first servant in his particular Church community. He and his clergy alone do not make the Church. The Church is the entire community of the faithful of Christ in communion with the universal Church. The Church does not truly exist unless the lay people are also fully and actively implicated in her life and mission according to the following words of Vatican II: “The Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. For the Gospel cannot become deeply rooted in the mentality, life and work of a people without the active presence of lay people. Therefore, from the foundation of a Church very special care must be taken to form mature Christian laity”²⁸¹.

Vatican II struck again an important point when it noted that the bishop is the visible source and foundation of unity in his particular Church²⁸². Through his apostolic ministry, he links his particular Church to the faith of the apostles, and thus maintains her in the unity and continuity with the Church of the apostles. But this does not mean that the bishop is the principle and foundation of the Church. This privilege belongs to the Holy Spirit, to the Gospel, and to the Eucharist. Even the apostles were not the foundation of the Church except by title of their service of these realities²⁸³. In the same way, Vatican II, while revalorising the function of the

²⁸⁰ GUERRIC, *Sermo 5* (PL 51, 209-210).

²⁸¹ AG, n° 21.

²⁸² Cf. LG, n° 23.

²⁸³ Cf. H.- M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l’Eglise particulière et rôle de l’Evêque dans l’Eglise*, p. 116.

bishop, also constantly witnesses to the fact that this function is to be understood as service²⁸⁴.

As a true servant of God, the bishop is not above his Church, for this position belongs to Christ. On the other hand, he is not outside his Church for he exercises his episcopal ministry in his community. Hervé-Marie Legrand has interpreted the ministry of the bishop as essentially that of being a link and mediation between his particular Church and the universal Church²⁸⁵. In this mediation, exchange of witness, of communion and of services is implicated²⁸⁶. It is because the bishop is in the Church, that he is able to witness to the identity of his particular Church with the apostolic Church²⁸⁷.

2.4.3. The Pastoral Image of the Bishop: Episcopal Functions in the

Light of the New Ecclesial Realities

Vatican II characterizes the functions of the bishop in terms of the traditional triple ministerial functions: prophetic, sanctifying and governing. The origin of this trilogy is rooted in the three offices of Christ. In these three offices of Christ all the people of God, the hierarchy as well as the rest of the faithful, participate even though at different titles. The baptized is called to charity (*diakonia*), to participate actively in the liturgical celebration (*koinônia*), and to witness to the faith (*marturia*). On the other hand, the bishop receives the corresponding authority of government, sanctification and magisterium²⁸⁸. It is, therefore, necessary to situate constantly the hierarchical ministry within the context of the ministerial structure of the entire Church. The major text of the Council on the triple functions of the bishop is the decree on the "Pastoral Office of the Bishop" (*Christus Dominus*).

²⁸⁴ Cf. *CD*, n° 16; *LG*, n° 24, 27, 32, 41; *AGD*, n° 11, 16.

²⁸⁵ Cf. H.- M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'Evêque dans l'Eglise*, p. 118.

²⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 119.

²⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 125.

2.4.3.1. His Teaching Function

The council considers the teaching function of the bishop in such a way as to give priority to its pastoral program, namely, the updating and penetration of the message of the Church in the world of today. In this light, primacy is given to proclamation of the Gospel over all other functions of the bishop. The Council also insists, in connection to this, on the need to adapt the message of the Church to the needs of the contemporary time. Finally, it concludes with examination of the dialogic nature of this message.

a. The Primacy of Proclamation

The Council gives priority to the proclamation of the Gospel over all other aspects of the teaching function of the bishop, namely, over the doctrinal and academic aspects. This priority is noticeable in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which presents the liturgical assembly as the agent and privileged place for the transmission of the faith. *Lumen Gentium* also attributes the same priority to proclamation when it noted that “among the more important duties of bishops that of preaching of the Gospel has pride of place”²⁸⁹. This affirmation of the Council is biblically rooted. The first function given to the apostles by Christ was to preach the Gospel to all creatures (cf. Mk 16, 15 & Mtt 28,19) and to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (cf. Ac 1, 8).

On the other hand, the principles enunciated in *Dei Verbum* seem more significant for appreciating the autonomy and primacy of the task of proclamation. In this Constitution of Vatican II, the bishops are said to succeed the apostles in their role as teachers with the task of safeguarding the full and living Gospel in the Church²⁹⁰. The task of proclamation also involves the responsibility of interpreting the Word of God. While attributing the responsibility of authentically interpreting the Word of God to the magisterium, the Council was also quick to relativise this responsibility by maintaining that the magisterium is not superior to the Word of

²⁸⁹ *LG*, n° 25.

²⁹⁰ Cf. *DV*, n° 7.

God, but is its servant²⁹¹. The magisterium exercises its responsibility in the name of Christ and with his authority. Bishops who teach in communion with the pope are to be revered as witnesses of divine and Catholic truth. The faithful are obliged to submit to their decision in matters of faith and morals “with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind”. On the other hand, “this loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra*(...)”²⁹². Moreover, the responsibility of interpreting the Word of God cannot be fulfilled without its constant link with living tradition and Scripture as it functions for the *salus animarum*²⁹³. Still significant for proclamation is the affirmation by the Council in *Unitatis Redintegratio* of the existence of a ‘hierarchy’ of truths in Catholic doctrine. This is based on their “relation to the foundation of the Christian faith”²⁹⁴. It shows that all the doctrines or teachings of the Church are not all of the same weight. Some are closer than others to the heart of the Christian message. This is a sure way of “overcoming an abstract and non-historic presentation of doctrine”²⁹⁵.

Furthermore, this effort to encourage a contextual and living proclamation of the Gospel brings to light the necessity of the role of the theologian in the Church. The nature of the relationship that should exist between him and the magisterium is also an important question. As to the above, Vatican II has some clarifications and guidelines to give. It recognizes well the role of theology in the interpretation of the content of Revelation consigned in the Scripture and in the Tradition of the Church²⁹⁶. The Council affirms that the task of the exegete is to lead to a more profound understanding of the Scriptures. Through the fruit of his research, he is to assist the ministers of the divine Word in their task of proclamation²⁹⁷. The Council recognizes the autonomy of theological research to develop according to its proper

²⁹¹ Cf. *DV*, n° 10.

²⁹² *LG*, n° 25.

²⁹³ Cf. G. ALBERIGO, *The Authority of the Church in the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 140.

²⁹⁴ *UR*, n° 11.

²⁹⁵ G. ALBERIGO, *The Authority of the Church in the Documents of Vatican II*, p. 140.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *DV*, n° 23, 24.

²⁹⁷ Cf. *DV*, n° 23.

and legitimate method²⁹⁸. It is to take into account philosophy and history, in order to discover the best way to communicate the Christian doctrine to people of today. This appropriate way to proclaim the Word of God, according to the Council, is to be the law of all evangelisation²⁹⁹. The task of theological research is also put within the context of all the Church: "With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the whole people of God, particularly of its pastors and theologians, to listen to God and distinguish the many voices of our times and to interpret them in the light of the divine Word, in order that the revealed truth may be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and more suitably presented"³⁰⁰.

The Council, therefore, wants the theologian and the magisterium to work together for the mission of the Church and in communion with all the faithful. Even though each has his particular task to perform in the Church they are, however, linked together. There is no opposition between them because "*elles ont même source, même règle - le témoignage et la confession de foi apostolique- et servent les mêmes hommes en vue de la même fin*"³⁰¹. Vatican II reserves to the magisterium the title of authentic doctor on the grounds that it has received a divinely given ministry to guard and interpret the Word of God³⁰². But it plays this role only as a servant of the Word of God. As it is not above the Word nor has a monopoly of it, the magisterium can only perform its duties well only in communion with the whole community of the people of God (and its theologians) according to the following words of C. Geffré: "*Dans la tradition catholique, il revient au magistère, en tant que conscience interprétative authentique de l'Écriture, de juger de la fidélité des nouveaux langages théologiques par rapport au contenu de la foi apostolique; mais le magistère ne peut jouer son rôle de règle de foi, avec le*

²⁹⁸ Cf. DV, n° 12.

²⁹⁹ Cf. GS, n° 44.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Y. CONGAR, *La théologien dans l'Eglise aujourd'hui*, in *Les quatre fleuves*, 12 (1980), p. 8. Even though, sometimes conflict can arise between the magisterium and the theologian in their collaborative service of the mission of the Church, it is not always a negative factor. Of course, conflicts, if they are healthy and not bitter, can be a positive factor which leads to growth and development of the Church.

³⁰² Cf. DV, n° 12 § 3.

charisme qui est propre, qu'en demeurant à l'écoute de la Parole divine et des appels de l'Esprit répandu dans tout le peuple de Dieu"³⁰³.

b. Adaptation of the Message of the Church to the Needs of the Contemporary Times

After privileging the proclamation of the Gospel, the decree *Christus Dominus* insists strongly on the adaptation of the message of the Church to the needs of the contemporary times: "Bishops should present the doctrine of Christ in a manner suited to the needs of the times, that is, so it may be relevant to those difficulties and questions which men find especially worrying and intimidating"³⁰⁴. This implies that the Church has to clarify the values of the human person and the social and economic realities of his life with the light of the Gospel "*pour que la connaissance de Dieu se transforme en connaissance de l'homme et pour que la connaissance de l'homme se transforme en connaissance de Dieu*"³⁰⁵. What the Council has in mind is not what is normally called the "social doctrine of the Church", which has an ambiguous sense as if the Church has ready made solutions which she proposes to human problems. On the other hand, the bishops are not expected to propose technical solutions to economic and social problems, as this is outside their area of competence, which is strictly religious and evangelical³⁰⁶. By insisting on the adaptation of the message of the Church to the needs of the contemporary times, the Council wants to show that the understanding of God and the understanding of man are complementary³⁰⁷. It is this need to adapt the Gospel to the needs of the people of today which led the Council to the redaction of the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", *Gaudium et Spes*.

³⁰³ C. GEFFRE, *La théologie dans l'Eglise aujourd'hui*, in *Dictionnaire de la théologie chrétienne*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1998, p. 797–798.

³⁰⁴ *CD*, n° 13.

³⁰⁵ H.-M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'évêque dans l'Eglise*, p. 130.

³⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁰⁷ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'évêque dans l'Eglise*, p. 129.

2.4.3.2. The Sanctifying Function of the Bishop

a. His Liturgical Role

The reversal of the Tridentine theology of the priesthood in favour of the episcopal order by Vatican II had the effect of projecting the liturgical role of the bishop. By restoring to the episcopacy its integrity, Vatican II was able to recognize the authority of the bishop with regard to the control of the liturgical life of the particular Church³⁰⁸. Thus, says the Council: "It is therefore bishops who are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, and it is their function to control, promote and protect the entire liturgical life of the Church entrusted to them"³⁰⁹.

The significance of this new position of the Church in Vatican II can be better appreciated if it is remembered that after the Council of Trent, the authority which the bishops had on liturgical matters ceased to exist. Trent was responsible for this because it entrusted to the pope the care of publishing a new missal and a new breviary, which eclipsed the liturgical authority, which the bishops had before³¹⁰. *"Dès 1588 la création de la Congrégation des rites allait d'ailleurs retirer officiellement tout droit et toute initiative à l'épiscopat en matière liturgique. Désormais les diocèses ne pourraient plus avoir leurs livres particuliers et les propres diocésains étaient soumis à l'approbation du Saint-Siège"*³¹¹. Furthermore, *Mediator Dei* of pope Pius XII reduced the responsibility of the bishop to that of enforcement of the liturgical canons of the Holy See on the divine cult³¹². It is therefore evident that Vatican II made a break-through when it enunciates the

³⁰⁸ Without the bishop, as Mgr. G. Philips observes, there cannot be any legitimate celebration of the Eucharist: *"Sans lui, (...) il ne peut y avoir de célébration eucharistique légitime; et le péché de schisme consiste précisément dans le fait, comme dans le cas des Donatistes, d'ériger autel contre autel et d'opposer un évêque à un autre évêque. Le pasteur est en même temps le 'prêtre' principal dans le sens de 'sacrificateur'. Puisqu'il dirige la communauté, c'est à lui que revient d'offrir le culte chrétien à Dieu et d'être le premier liturge"*. (G. PHILIPS, *L'Eglise et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*, p. 343).

³⁰⁹ CD, n° 15.

³¹⁰ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'évêque dans l'Eglise*, p. 137.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Cf. *ibid.*

principles which would permit each people to create a liturgy which would enable them to pray according to their proper genius³¹³.

As a result of the new status of the bishop owing to his investiture with the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, Vatican II confers on him the title of “the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood”; a function which he exercises in a pre-eminent way in the eucharistic celebration. In addition, Vatican II gives to the bishop the sole right of regulating the celebration of the Eucharist in his particular Church. Thus, says the Council: “Moreover, every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the bishop, to whom is confided the duty of presenting to the divine majesty the cult of the Christian religion and of ordering it in accordance with the Lord’s injunctions and the Church’s regulations, as further defined for the diocese by his particular Church”³¹⁴.

b. Service of Sanctity

Christus Dominus also presents the bishop as master of sanctity by title of his ordination. He is to care for the sanctity of the flock of Christ entrusted to him at ordination: “As spiritual guides of their flocks, bishops should be zealous in promoting the sanctity of their clergy, their religious and their laity according to the vocation of each individual, remembering that they are under an obligation to give an example of sanctity in charity, humility and simplicity of life”³¹⁵. This text prevents any attempt to conceive the episcopal ministry as a pure function, which requires only juridical qualification and administrative ability³¹⁶. The foundation of this development is the charismatic aspect of the episcopal ordination. “*Les textes liturgiques invitent très clairement à retrouver ce lien entre l’ordination et le don de l’Esprit*”³¹⁷.

³¹³ Cf. *ibid.*

³¹⁴ *LG*, n° 26.

³¹⁵ *CD*, n° 15 § 3.

³¹⁶ Cf. H.- M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l’Eglise particulière et rôle de l’Evêque dans l’Eglise*, p. 138.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

2.4.3.3. His Function of Government

The revalorisation of the episcopacy by Vatican II led it to consider the bishop as the bearer of supreme authority in his particular Church³¹⁸ though with certain provisions for the universal authority of the pope³¹⁹. But this authority of the bishop in his diocese is not an absolute one, as absolute authority over the Church certainly belongs to Christ. It is for this reason that the image of the bishop, which Vatican II presents to us, is not that of an absolute and despotic monarch who exercises an arbitrary and unlimited power over his subjects. It is rather a pastoral one. While maintaining the supreme authority of the bishop in his diocese, the Council also radically relativises this authority by subordinating it to the good of souls and by creating synodal structures to promote the participation of all the people of God in the government of the Church.

a. A Pastoral Government

The Council presents us an episcopal government essentially pastoral and modelled on the image of the good pastor. His government is not first conceived in juridical and administrative terms but as service for the good of souls: "In exercising his office of father and pastor the bishop should be with his people as one who serves, as a good shepherd who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him, as a true father who excels in his love and solicitude for all(...)"³²⁰. The first concern of the bishop is, therefore, not the application of legislation or the rules of good administration but the good of souls³²¹. He is to be imbued with a broad and holistic vision of the different circumstances of need in his diocese³²². He is to adapt his apostolate to the needs of time³²³. Thus, he is invited to make use of the services of pastoral sociology to know not only the spiritual and moral conditions

³¹⁸ Bishops are neither functionaries of the pope nor impersonal executors of the orders coming from on high. "Détenteurs d'une autorité propre, ils sont les vrais chefs de leurs ouailles". G. PHILIPS, *L'Église et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*, p. 353.

³¹⁹ Cf. LG, n° 27.

³²⁰ CD, n° 16.

³²¹ Cf. H.-M. LEGRAND, *Nature de l'Eglise particulière et rôle de l'Evêque dans l'Eglise*, p. 139.

³²² Cf. CD, n° 16-19.

³²³ Cf. CD, n° 16.

of his flock but also to know their social, demographic and economic conditions³²⁴. What the bishop is expected to promote is a holistic pastoral work³²⁵.

b. A Synodal Government

A very important aspect of the breakthrough recorded in Vatican II is its revalorisation of synodal structure of ecclesial government. It is a form of government which can promote effectively the participation of all the baptized in the life and mission of the Christian community. This synodal government is properly ecclesial because it is theologically rooted in ecclesial communion. According to G. Bihin and Ph. Van Vlaenderen: *“La vie chrétienne veut être participation continuelle aux mêmes biens spirituels, échange permanent des dons et charismes reçus par chacun, au bénéfice de tous. Donner et recevoir, communiquer et partager: cette façon propre de l’être-ensemble des chrétiens, constitue le cœur de la synodalité”*³²⁶. In view of this, all the baptised are called to coresponsibility in the life and mission of the Church. Synodal form of government is an attempt to translate this theological and spiritual reality concretely into the structures and institutions of the Church.

The synodal structures put at work by Vatican II include the diocesan synod, pastoral council (diocesan and parochial), presbyteral and episcopal councils. The most important are the pastoral and presbyteral councils. The pastoral council is representative of the totality and diversity of the diocese: laity, religious and ordained ministers. Its task is “to investigate and consider matters relating to pastoral activity and to formulate practical conclusions concerning them”³²⁷. It has only a consultative voice. Its creation, the mode of designation of members, and its convocation are the prerogative of the diocesan bishop. It is also the duty of the bishop to preside over it and to publish its acts.

³²⁴ Cf. CD, n° 17.

³²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

³²⁶ G. BIHIN & Ph. VAN VLAENDEREN, *Gouverner l’Eglise autrement? Pour une Eglise-Communión*, Bruxelles, Evo, 1998, p. 58.

³²⁷ CD, n° 27.

On the other hand, the presbyteral council represents the totality of the priests of the diocese in their diversity of assignments or work. The *presbyterium* or the senate of the bishop co-operates with the bishop in the government of the diocese. It has only a consultative voice. But the bishop is obliged to listen to the *presbyterium* in issues of great importance. The synodal mode of government is very much characteristic of the patristic Church and it has many advantages. It is the appropriate form of pastoral government which is inherently demanded by the ecclesiology of Vatican II, which is the ecclesiology of people of God. This ecclesiology made the Council Fathers to make a crucial affirmation in *Ad Gentes Divinitus* n° 21: "The Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy".

Synodal pastoral government is the only possible form of ecclesial government rooted in the primordial sacramental structure of the Church. The right and duty of all the faithful to participate in it, is based on the sacraments of Christian initiation. Through baptism all become members of the body of Christ by virtue of the same divine grace, and are thus responsible together for the life and mission of the Church. Here lies also the basis of the fundamental equality of all the faithful. On the other hand, it is also known that the Church inherited from her apostolic origin the apostolic ministry, which exercises a particular responsibility within the context of the common responsibility of all the baptized in the Christian community. This introduces diversity of responsibility or competence within the fundamental equality of all believers. The Church cannot by herself dispense with any of these two coexisting sacramental layers in her structure as they are given to her as gifts from God. To emphasize the apostolic ministry of the bishop at the expense of the part common to all the people of God would be to reduce the Church to the hierarchy, and also expose her to the risk of arbitrariness and unlimited powers. On the other hand, to emphasize only the common responsibility of the baptized would be to reduce the Church to a purely democratic or parliamentary mode of government. Jean-Marie Tillard is therefore right when he notes: "*La marche de*

l'Eglise locale ne se règle ainsi ni selon le mode hiérarchique où un seul impose sa volonté, ni selon le mode démocratique ou "parlementaire" où tout se fait de façon collective par vote de motions proposées, amendées et acceptées à la majorité des voix. Elle se règle selon le mode dit synodal où, à tous les échelons, la communauté entière se trouve active mais dans le respect des fonctions propres, dont certaines sont données avec le sacrement du ministère ³²⁸.

The vitality of a local Church, therefore, depends on how this equilibrium is maintained between the inalienable rights of the faithful to participate in the edification of the Church and the functions exercised by the diocesan bishop. A good example of its sacramental realization is in the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop surrounded by his *presbyterium* and with the full and active participation of the rest of the people of God. However, the difficulty in this sacramental foundation of authority in the Church lies in the fact that the bishop is not only accountable to his particular Church community, but he is also to render account to God before whom he stands personally responsible. It is therefore no wonder that while affirming the *sensus fidei* of the faithful³²⁹, the Council gives all the synodal organs in the particular Church no more than a consultative status. The aim is to give the bishop room for freedom of action, given the fact that his office is of divine institution and that he is by this also answerable before God³³⁰.

There lies the difficulty. We are here in the domain of personal conscience and judgement of the bishop. What happens when he decides to dispense with the *sensus fidelium* of his community without sufficient reason while invoking the hierarchical principle that the decision lies with him³³¹. Thus, the personality of the bishop is also important. The synodal form of government proposed by Vatican II is no doubt a wonderful project. But its realization depends on the readiness of the diocesan bishop to take seriously its effective application. This is also the view of

³²⁸ J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 331.

³²⁹ Cf. *LG*, n° 12.

³³⁰ Cf. *LG*, n° 27.

³³¹ Cf. J.-M. R. TILLARD, *L'Eglise locale*, p. 327-328.

J. Rigal when he says: "*L'Eglise synodale voulue par Vatican II ne se fera que si le projet communautaire entre résolument dans les mentalités, les institutions, les décisions*"³³².

Conclusion

Truly Vatican II has demonstrated itself as a Council with a corrective and renewal mission in the Church. Out of this mission has emerged a Church very much conscious of her sacramentality and servant status, a Church aware that she is not identical to the kingdom of God but exists for the kingdom of God; a Church conscious of her sinfulness and thus of her constant need for conversion and renewal³³³. The path to these revolutionary ideas was cleared when the hierarchy described itself as service and revalorised the mystery of the Church. Linked up to this is the recognition of the Church as the people of God, an ecclesiology that is to give to the Church a new vision, a new point of reference and place her on a new pedestal. The immediate effect of this new self-understanding of the Church is the correction of the social and juridical ecclesiology of the past and the recovery of forgotten elements in the Christian tradition. This work of recovery resulted in the revalorisation of the concept of communion, which is the fundamental and central concept of Vatican II's ecclesiology.

On the other hand, the rediscovery of the particular Church and the revalorisation of the place of the bishop in this community constitute another high point of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. In this particular Church community founded on the Eucharist, Gospel, Holy Spirit and the apostolic ministry, the bishop is fully in charge and represents Christ. But his role is only that of service of his community of the people of God, a community within which he is fundamentally situated as a Christian with his people. The synodal structures put to work by Vatican II is one of the greatest achievements of its ecclesiology of the

³³² J. RIGAL, *L'ecclésiologie de communion*, p. 159.

³³³ Cf. *LG*, n° 8.

particular Church. This implies that the bishop can no longer work as an isolated individual. He has to put into work for the good of his community, not only his personal apostolic charism but also all the charisms which the Holy Spirit has bestowed on his community. A major place to test the fidelity of his commitment to these Vatican II's ideals is the workability and effectiveness of the organs of synodal coresponsibility and action in his diocese.

On the other hand, despite the great merits of Vatican II's ecclesiology, there exist also some difficulties with certain points. First, we have to mention the coexistence of certain divergent affirmations, which undermine a unified vision and motivation for action. Such is the case sometimes between the affirmations concerning the people of God and affirmations pertaining to the hierarchy. In spite of the good will of the Council Fathers to privilege the Church of the people of God, they still found it difficult to harmonize this position with the doctrine on hierarchical constitution of the Church. J. Rigal agrees when he observes: "*La volonté de Vatican II de promouvoir un partenariat engagé dans une unique mission ne fait aucun doute. On peut regretter cependant de ne pas retrouver vraiment dans le chapitre III de la constitution Lumen gentium, consacré à la constitution hiérarchique de l'Eglise, la visé ecclésiale du 'peuple de Dieu' "*"³³⁴.

Finally, the purely consultative character ascribed to the synodal organs that collaborate with the bishop in the particular Church does not tally with the dignity and duty of the people of God to take effective part and responsibility in the Church. The people of God can be said to participate actively and fully in the life of the Church only when they collaborate effectively in the process of arriving at decisions that affect the life of the diocese, though with recognition to the proper authority of the bishop as the successor of the apostles³³⁵.

³³⁴ J. RIGAL, *L'ecclésiologie de communion*, p. 68.

³³⁵ Cf. J. FAMERÉE, *Plus de démocratie dans l'Eglise catholique*, p. 57.

ADDENDUM

Thèse de **Peter OKAFOR** :

AUTHORITY AS SERVICE with Particular Reference to the Ministerial

Authority of the Bishop in his Particular Church.

(1) Ajoutez : '**than**' au page 230, Second Paragraphe, ligne 5-6 : 'The ecclesiology which developed in this epoch stressed the sociological vision of the Church rather than a vision of the Church in theological categories'.

(2) Enlevez: '**anything which promotes...**' pour le remplacer avec '**a human activity directly oriented...**' au page 47, premier paragraphe, ligne 6-7: 'By service as we said before we mean a human activity directly oriented to the human common good.

(3) Enlevez: '**the Apostles**' pour le remplacer avec 'Christ' au Note de bas de page 86 (ligne 3) de page 167 (Chapitre 3): « ...doctrine from Christ transmitted through the intermediary of a chain of doctors ».