

**Toward a Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The
Contribution of Edward Hahnenberg**

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Introduction

Over the past fifty years, the pastoral landscape in the Roman Catholic Church in North America and many parts of western Europe has changed dramatically with the widespread introduction of lay ecclesial ministers. These professionally trained persons have come to take up positions which had largely been held by priests and religious communities. Lay ecclesial ministers are persons who are not ordained (lay) but are formally assigned by a representative of the church (ecclesial) to participate in the mission that Christ gave the church (ministry).¹ There has been a significant decline in the ordained priesthood in the United States and a simultaneous and commensurate expansion of lay ecclesial ministry. While similar statistics could not be found for Canada, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reports that in 2017, there were 39 651 lay ecclesial ministers working parishes in the United States, 25 757 diocesan priests and 11 424 religious priests.² Clearly, lay ecclesial ministry is a ministerial form which has taken root.

The dramatic growth of lay ecclesial ministry in the years since the Second Vatican Council was not anticipated by the Council Fathers in the form that has unfolded, although it can be argued, as Hahnenberg does, that "...a view of baptism as initiation into the church community provided an important source for promoting the active contribution of all Christians to the church's mission."³ As we will see in Chapter 1, the emergence of lay ecclesial ministry in North America, North-Central Europe, and Australia in the years following the Second Vatican

¹ David DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*, (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2005), 15.

² Web site of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>. April 6, 2018.

³ Edward Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: Crossroad, 2003), 170.

Council have given rise to many questions: What is the specific relationship of lay ecclesial ministers to the church? Is this relationship of lay ecclesial ministers an employment relationship only or can it be understood theologically as a vocation and a participation in the church *ad intra*? How is lay ecclesial ministry incorporated into the church's understanding of itself and of its mission, and how is this expressed in the life of the church? How is lay ecclesial ministry related to the priesthood of all the baptized? Or as Edward Hahnenberg phrases it, "how are ministries to be ordered with the baptismal community?"⁴ I contend that such a reflection is necessary in order to help lay ecclesial ministers as well those in positions of authority in the church, as they grapple to ways to better understand the ecclesial identity of this group, and thus put in place the necessary guidelines and supports to ensure that lay ecclesial ministers can be constructive partners in the mission of the church.

In this thesis, I will examine the writings of American theologian Edward Hahnenberg to identify insights which can help in the development of a theology of ministry which is inclusive of lay ecclesial ministry. Edward Hahnenberg has held a Chair in Catholic Systematic Theology at John Carroll University since 2011 and written widely on questions of lay ecclesial ministry. His engagement with the question of lay ecclesial ministry includes participation in the theological discussions regarding lay ecclesial ministry, including the 2011 for the Collegeville National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry⁵ and serving as theological consultant to the U.S. Bishops' Subcommittee on Lay Ministry between 2003 and 2005, at the time when that Committee was considering the question of lay ecclesial ministers, and drafting *Co-Workers in*

⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 151.

⁵ National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry is a gathering of practitioners, church leadership and theologians designed to prioritize the theological foundations for vocation and authorization in lay ecclesial ministry.

*the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*⁶ (hereinafter *Co-Workers*). As such, he has both studied lay ecclesial ministry and been an active participant in the church as it attempts to grapple with this new reality. Hahnenberg's work with the U.S. Bishop's Subcommittee allowed him to identify other questions which required theological investigation, such as a closer attention to a theology of Christian vocation. These questions became the subject of further study by Hahnenberg.

In this thesis, I will review the body of work by Edward Hahnenberg to see how his work on issues such as a trinitarian approach to ministry and the evolution of a theology of Christian vocation can provide helpful avenues for arriving at a theology of ministry which can make room for lay ecclesial ministry. I will provide an overview of Hahnenberg's writings, and then synthesize the major themes in his writing and describe how these can contribute to a theology of lay ministry which includes lay ecclesial ministry.

Hahnenberg looks at how post-Reformation Catholicism has conflated "vocation" with "states of life" (i.e. ordained, religious, lay). These states of life become hardened categories. When anomalies arose, efforts were made to force these anomalies into the pre-determined categories in a way which Hahnenberg refers to as a deductive approach. Hahnenberg offers a theological approach which is inductive, starting from lived experience. Such an inductive approach recognizes ministerial forms as historical, trusts that God continues to act *in* history, and thus imposes on the theologian the important task of attending to experience. Hahnenberg's inductive approach underscores the importance of discernment within theological reflection to see where God is leading His church in the current moment.

⁶ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on the Laity, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 2005.

This thesis will be organized into five chapters:

- 1) Setting the context: Hahnenberg's presentation of the pastoral and theological questions raised by lay ecclesial ministry;
- 2) How a theology of vocation can help shed light on the experience of lay ecclesial ministry;
- 3) Hahnenberg's theological starting point for a theology of ministry: the ontology of God as relational;
- 4) The need to situate ministries within their ecclesial context;
- 5) The role of the anomaly and how this gives rise to a need for discernment.

I enter into that discussion holding onto the challenge posed by Thomas O'Meara in his book *Theology of Ministry*:

In charting ministry, we cannot be content with verbal justifications, whether they are the gift of hierarchies or of theologians; but, like the New Testament with its fresh metaphors and concrete proclamations, we must push our discussion of priesthood and charism until we have reached their reality in psyche and society.⁷

Hahnenberg's work is engaged in this theological endeavour. In this thesis, I hope to bring to light the contributions he has made to giving us the methods and language to engage in respectful dialogue on the question of lay ecclesial ministry, one which is both faithful to tradition and open to development.

⁷ Thomas F. O'Meara, *A Theology of Ministry*, rev. ed. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press 1999), 21.

Chapter 1

Setting the Context: Pastoral and Theological Questions Raised by Lay Ecclesial Ministry

This chapter will define what is understood by the term “lay ecclesial ministry,” identify some of the questions this category raises about the traditional categories of “ordained” and “laity,” and look to the documents of the Second Vatican Council to see what direction is provided in these which can help us formulate the theological language around lay ecclesial ministry. This will help set the ground for discussing Edward Hahnenberg’s contribution toward a theology of lay ecclesial ministry.

1.1 Definitions: what are lay ecclesial ministries?

Lay ecclesial ministry is a broad category which encompasses the many ways in which professionally trained lay-people are engaged in the mission of the church, including lay pastoral associates and directors of religious education.

After studying the question of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States, a subcommittee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, a resource guide to help diocesan bishops to provide “a common frame of reference for ensuring that the development of lay ecclesial ministry continues in ways that are faithful to the church’s theological and doctrinal tradition and that respond to contemporary pastoral needs and situations.”⁸ I have chosen to use the term lay ecclesial ministries (rather than alternatives such

⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on the Laity, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 2005, 5.

as lay pastoral associates, for example) because it is the term which is used by that Committee, and is also the term used by Edward Hahnenberg, whose work is the subject of this thesis. In this thesis, I follow the definition taken up by the USCCB in that report, which defines lay ecclesial ministry according to the following qualifiers:

1. *Authorization* of the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church as leaders;
2. *Leadership* in a particular area of ministry;
3. *Close mutual collaboration* with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons;
4. *Preparation and formation* appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them.⁹

The USCCB is careful to note that the term lay ecclesial ministry is not “a new rank or order among the laity”¹⁰ but a descriptive term to discuss the reality of lay people carrying out work on behalf of the church. The term encompasses many roles, as long as these abide by the four-pronged qualifiers identified above.

Hahnenberg defines lay ecclesial ministers as “professionally prepared lay people who exercise ministerial leadership in parishes, dioceses, and other institutions.”¹¹ He suggests three criteria which shape their ecclesial relationships:

1. The minister’s level of participation in service;
2. The kind and importance of the ministry itself; and,

⁹ Direct citation from USCCB, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 10.

¹⁰ USCCB, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 11.

¹¹ Edward Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission: The Theology of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,” in *Reflections on Renewal: Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Church*, edited by Donna M. Eschenauer and Harold Daly Horell, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 19.

3. the recognition or designation granted by the church.¹²

Recognizing that the important starting point for all ministry is baptism, through which we participate in the mission of the church in the world, Hahnenberg refines what has come to be understood as lay ecclesial ministry as “the call to minister on behalf of the church in a public and professional way. By virtue of their preparation, leadership, close collaboration with the ordained, and authorization, lay ecclesial ministers are called into a new set of relationships, a new position within the ecclesial community: they minister in the name of the church.”¹³ Thus, lay ecclesial ministry is ecclesial in two ways: it is rooted in baptism, *and* “it involves serving formally and publicly in the name of the church.”¹⁴ This new public role within the church brings about an “ecclesial re-positioning,”¹⁵ whether or not that re-positioning is ritualized as it is in the ordained ministries. Richard Gaillardetz points out, for example, that a sign of this ecclesial re-positioning is that lay ecclesial ministers are held to a higher moral standard, and that failure to abide by this standard can be a source of scandal for the community.¹⁶ Hahnenberg agrees with Gaillardetz that the public nature of the ministry is a part of this ecclesial repositioning, and he adds two additional qualifiers: “the lay minister’s commitment to serve and the church’s recognition of her or his ministry.”¹⁷ Thus, the call is both personal and communal.

¹² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 131.

¹³ Edward Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church: The Call to Lay Ecclesial Ministry,” in *In the Name of the Church: Vocation and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, edited by William J. Cahoy (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 47.

¹⁴ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 47.

¹⁵ Richard Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction” in *Irish Theological Quarterly* no. 64 (1999), 135.

¹⁶ Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 135.

¹⁷ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 48. Hahnenberg also discusses this in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 131.

1.2 Laypersons in ecclesial ministry

Lay people have largely been defined by their role outside of the church. The new category of lay ecclesial ministers finds itself in a sort of no-man's-land in this landscape.

It is a sociological given that most lay people spend most of their lives exercising their baptismal priesthood in activities outside of the church. When they are engaged directly in the church community, most lay people provide limited, occasional services such as taking on leadership activities in the parish pastoral council or serving as lectors or Eucharistic ministers. This occasional service does not challenge the tidy categorization of the ordained serving the church *ad intra*, with the laity having as primary task the sanctification of the world outside of the church. The existence of lay ecclesial ministry, on the other hand, challenges the neatly defined categories of laity and clergy. Here we have a group of people who are both lay people and whose primary focus of activity is within the church. The very presence of lay ecclesial ministers, then, forces us to engage in a theological reflection on the church, on the laity, and on the ordering of baptismal ministries.

The existence of the permanent diaconate also forces upon us a reflection on the categories of laity and clergy. Hahnenberg points out that “deacons, whose commitment to church ministry is frequently limited to part-time or occasional assistance, are ordained,”¹⁸ whereas lay pastoral associates, who often make long-term, full-time commitments to ministry are not ordained. This comparison helps us to see that the *reality* of ministry is not necessarily linked to the *official church recognition* of ministry. In other words, “the recognition accorded the permanent deacon is high, though the reality of ministry (the level of vocational commitment,

¹⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 100.

the type of service, etc.) varies widely.”¹⁹ Hahnenberg argues that “ecclesial recognition of ministries, enabled by integration into the church’s ministerial structures, ought to reflect the minister’s ecclesial position, which is based on the centrality of the ministries involved and the degree of commitment the ministers make to these ministries.”²⁰ This comparison helps us to see that there is a need to think through how the church officially recognizes the reality of lay ecclesial ministry, both in its structures and through liturgical commissioning. This reflection has practical consequences, as it could help ensure that the proper structures, training and support are in place to help lay ecclesial ministers better carry out their role within the church community.

Hahnenberg also explores others theological questions which arise as we consider lay ecclesial ministry. For example, studies of lay ecclesial ministers conducted in the United States indicate that many lay ecclesial ministers perceive their work as a call from God. Does this mean that lay ecclesial ministry is a vocation? This is a question which was identified by the U.S. bishops in their study of lay ecclesial ministry. It was subsequently taken up by Hahnenberg, who researched the shifting meaning of “Christian call” or “vocation” through time, as we will explore in Chapter 2.

1.3 The Second Vatican Council: paving the way for lay ecclesial ministry

It would be impossible to talk about lay ecclesial ministry in the Roman Catholic Church without talking about the Second Vatican Council. Avery Dulles highlights that “[a]t the council, the Catholic Church for the first time in history took up in its full scope the question of the status and role of the laity.”²¹ What was significant was that the treatment of the laity in the Council

¹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 128.

²⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 145.

²¹ Avery Dulles. “Can the Word ‘Laity’ be Defined?” *Origins* 18/29 (December 29, 1988), 471.

documents moved from the “pre-conciliar tendency to see the laity as passive recipients of the clergy’s pastoral initiatives”²² toward a positive view of the laity. By highlighting the universal call to holiness rooted in baptism, Vatican II paved the way for the laity to exercise their baptismal priesthood in the world and the church.

The ecclesial underpinnings of Vatican II, made most evident in the placing of the chapter of People of God at the beginning of *Lumen Gentium*, also set the groundwork for lay ecclesial ministry by viewing the church as a dynamic community and not only an institution constituted by its hierarchy. It is the church in its totality, all the baptized, lay and ordained, who are the People of God in mission in the world.

Hahnenberg, Dulles and Gaillardetz identify texts in the Conciliar documents which point to this positive approach to the laity. These include: *Lumen Gentium* nn. 31 and 33 which state that laity have a right and a responsibility to be actively involved in the church’s apostolate; *Lumen Gentium* nn. 34-36 which state that lay persons are equal sharers in the threefold office of Christ who is priest prophet and king; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* n. 14 which calls for the “full, conscious and active participation” of lay persons in the liturgy; *Gaudium et Spes* n. 62 which encourages lay people to pursue study in theology and Scripture; and *Lumen Gentium* n. 31 and *Gaudium et Spes* n. 43 which indicate that lay persons “are to take the initiative in the transformation of the temporal order.”²³ Dulles adds to these a recognition that the laity is invited to participate in the leadership of the church, pointing to He points to *Lumen Gentium* n. 37 which called on the church “to recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of lay persons in the church,”²⁴ to take their advice and to allow them to take initiative within the

²² Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 119.

²³ Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 119.

²⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 37.

church; the introduction of pastoral councils, and in acknowledging the “importance of consulting the laity in matters of doctrine in order to ascertain the ways in which the Holy Spirit is leading the church today.”²⁵ Pointing to *Apostolicam Actuositatem* n. 9, Dulles points out that while recognizing that the laity were to exercise their apostleship in secular affairs, the Council recognized that priests and religious also played a role in secular affairs “and that the laity are actively involved in the church.”²⁶

Although the Council documents did not specifically elaborate on lay ecclesial ministry,²⁷ the term reflects themes which were central to the Council discussions – “the church as the whole people of God, baptism as an initiation into the community and its mission, and an expectation of active participation as the norm.”²⁸ We will now turn to the gradual evolution of language regarding lay ecclesial ministry in the post-conciliar period.

The documents of the Second Vatican Council used the term “apostolate” to speak of the wider contribution to the ministry of the church by both the clergy and lay people.²⁹ In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the term apostolate was gradually replaced with “ministry”, a term which until that point been used primarily in the Protestant tradition.

Hahnenberg notes that by the end of the 1970s, “the term ‘ministry’ had become a pervasive

²⁵ Dulles, “Can the Word ‘Laity’ be Defined?”, 475.

²⁶ Dulles, “Can the Word ‘Laity’ be Defined?”, 471.

²⁷ Richard Gaillardetz cites the work of Elissa Rinere, who found that “[...]while it is commonplace to credit Vatican II with opening the door for the post-conciliar flourishing of lay ministry in the church, the fact is that while the Council used the terms ‘minister’ and ‘ministry’ over two hundred times, only nineteen of those applications appear to apply particularly to the activity of the non-ordained.” Elissa Rinere, “Conciliar and Canonical Applications of ‘Ministry’ to the Laity,” in *The Jurist* n. 47 (1987), 205 and Elissa Rinere, *The Term ‘Ministry’ as Applied to the Laity in the Documents of Vatican II’ Post Conciliar Documents of the Apostolic See, and the 1983 Code of Canon Law* (Washington, D.C.: the Catholic University of America Press, 1986) as cited in Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 127

²⁸ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 45.

²⁹ Hahnenberg points to N. 2 of the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* as evidence of this claim in Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 43.

catchphrase among Catholic religious professionals.”³⁰ The use of the term ministry expanded as growing numbers of lay people took up roles in education and liturgy which had to that point been reserved for priests and religious. The use of ministry as a term to refer to the work of lay people made its way into official church usage as early as 1972 with the establishment of the lay ministries of lector and acolyte by Pope Paul VI.³¹ Hahnenberg describes two phases in lay ministry in the United States: the period of growth in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by a period of critical reflection on the structural and ecclesial implications of lay ecclesial ministry.³² While some people embraced the growth in the use of the term ministry to the activities of laity, others expressed a concern that this would have negative implications on the identity of priests. Hahnenberg notes, for example, the effort to “retract ministry language”³³ in the 1997 Vatican instruction *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Nonordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*.³⁴

Since the Second Vatican Council, there have been two models of ministry which continue to operate in the church. On the one hand, there is a contrastive view of ministry which clearly separates the ordained and the laity along a dividing-line model. On the other hand, there is an ecclesial understanding of ministry which sees all ministries rooted in baptism, and at the service of the baptismal priesthood of all the baptized.

Although both Hahnenberg and Gaillardetz suggest the Council Fathers did not intend to present a contrastive theology of the laity, which would set the identity of the laity in contrast

³⁰ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 45.

³¹ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 45.

³² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 147.

³³ Edward Hahnenberg, “One Priestly People: Ordained and Lay Ministries in the Church,” in *Priests for the 21st Century*, edited by Donald Dietrich, 104-25. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006, 107.

³⁴ Edward Hahnenberg, “One Priestly People: Ordained and Lay Ministries in the Church,” 107.

with the identity of the clergy, "...some postconciliar interpretations have hardened the distinction between a secular laity and a sacred clergy."³⁵ One of the texts which is used to argue that the Council Fathers intended to clarify the differences between the ordained ministries and laity is found in *Lumen Gentium* no. 31 which begins with "What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature."³⁶

Hahnenberg and Gaillardetz suggest that *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31 requires clarification. Gaillardetz points out, for example, that "the *relatio* by Cardinal John Wright introducing *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31, to the full body of bishops at the council noted that the text should not be read as an 'ontological definition' of the layperson (who or what one is at the core of their being) but rather a 'typological description' (how one lives or acts 'typically')."³⁷ In other words, this is not intended to be a *theological fact* but rather a *sociological observation* about the role of the laity. Although Council documents described the role of Christians in the world as a sociological fact rather than a theological limitation, Hahnenberg identifies a gradual shift toward using this language to limit the acceptable roles available to lay people. He points, for example, an apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II which claimed that Vatican II:

opened itself to a decidedly positive vision and displayed a basic intention of asserting the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery. At the same time, it insisted on the unique character of their vocation which is, in a special way, to 'seek the

³⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 13.

³⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, n.31.

³⁷ Gaillardetz, "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction," 123.

Kingdom of God' by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God.³⁸

Rather than a descriptive category, secular vocation here becomes a limit on the appropriate activities of laypersons, even though this was not the intent of the Council Fathers, who intended instead to recognize that the mission to the world is proper to the whole church (and not just the role of lay people). Gaillardetz points to the work of theologian Bruno Forte who clarifies that laicity is not a term which is limited to the baptized who are not ordained – it is the *church in its entirety* which is in the world. This requires an approach which does not set the church *apart from* the world, but rather situates it *within* the world. All the baptized, lay and ordained, participate in the mission of the church in the world.

This stands in opposition to the contrastive view of lay and ordained – with the role of the ordained being in the church and the role of the laity in the world. Gaillardetz also cites the work of Giovanni Magnani, who suggests the conciliar texts were not attempting to offer a formal definition of the laity.³⁹ He points to the fact that n. 31 of *Lumen Gentium* is careful to note that all the faithful are part of the People of God which is the church, by virtue of baptism.⁴⁰ Gaillardetz concludes that “the positive theological content of the laity is best identified by considering the primary identity of the *Christifideles* realised through baptism.”⁴¹ Hahnenberg

³⁸ John Paul II, *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World: Christifideles Laici* (Washington, D.C.: USCC' 1988), n.9 in Edward Hahnenberg “One Priestly People: Ordained and Lay Ministries in the Church,” in *Priests for the 21st Century*, edited by Donald Dietrich, 104-25. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006, 112.

³⁹ Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 123.

⁴⁰ Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 123.

⁴¹ Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 123.

similarly identifies the significance of the twentieth century shift “from ordination to baptism as the primary sacrament of ministry.”⁴²

Some in the church continue to maintain that the role of the laity is in the world while the role of the clergy is in the church (we will leave aside, at this point, the question of how one can make such a distinction, given that the church is *in* the world). Hahnenberg refers to this dividing-line model as a contrastive theology of the laity which sees laity and clergy as complementary categories. Hahnenberg argues that “leaving behind a dividing-line model does not negate distinctions in ministry, but it does abandon a dichotomy based on medieval states of life and the activities proper to each.”⁴³ What is needed, Hahnenberg suggests, is a theology which moves away from a church/world and ordained/laity duality, toward a model which situates the church *in the world*. Rather than a contrastive view of lay and ordained ministries, Hahnenberg suggests a theology which looks at the commitment of service. Such a view moves away from what is “unique, exclusive, or reserved to the priest” toward an approach which sees the priest as living in a more intense way (i.e. “intensive”) that which is common to all the faithful.⁴⁴

Hahnenberg provides a visual illustration of two competing models of ministry in the church: a dividing-line model which emphasizes the differences between clergy and laity (figure 1), and a concentric circle model which situates both lay and ordained ministry in the context of service to the mission of the church (figure 2). This shift from a dividing-line model to a more relational model of concentric circles reflects the shift in Yves Congar's theology of the laity, and

⁴² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 161.

⁴³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 23.

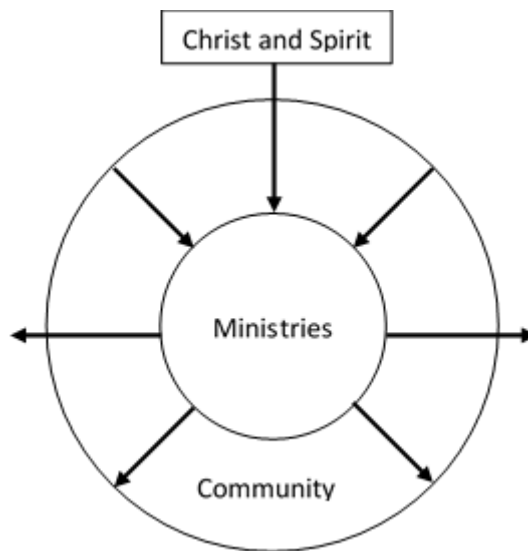
⁴⁴ Edward Hahnenberg, “One Priestly People,” 124.

further developed by Thomas O'Meara.⁴⁵ It reflects the relational aspect of ministry while being deeply trinitarian – Christ and Spirit both ground the community and send it out in mission to the world.

Figure 1: The dividing-line model⁴⁶

<p>Clergy Christ Institution Ordination</p>	<p>Laity Spirit Communion Baptism</p>
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Figure 2: The Concentric-Circles Model⁴⁷



⁴⁵ In presenting these models of ministry, Hahnenberg makes reference to Yves Congar, “My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries,” *The Jurist* 32 (1972); and Thomas O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, Revised Edition (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 10.

⁴⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 37.

Hahnenberg suggests that the concentric circle model makes it possible to view the distinctions between laity and clergy within the context of a common matrix: the Christian community. Such a view is based on the priesthood of all believers, church as the whole people of God, and “baptism a direct commissioning by Christ to active discipleship.”⁴⁸ Laypersons do not merely participate in the apostolate of the bishops and hierarchy (who use the layperson passively to accomplish the mission of the church), but rather, “the mission of the church comes to every Christian directly from Christ through the sacraments.”⁴⁹ Theologians such as David Power, Edward Hahnenberg, and Gaillardetz all suggest that this can be done by situating ministry in its ecclesial context of an ecclesiology with all the baptized participating in its mission. Dulles describes this dynamic as follows:

The council taught that the whole people of God, consisting of clergy and laity together, shares in the threefold office of Christ. From this it follows that the differences between clergy, religious and laity should be discussed only within the framework of their more fundamental unity as fellow members of the one people of God. All alike are called to build up the whole body of Christ in unity.⁵⁰

The concentric-circles model allows us to see how the various ministries can collaborate at the service of the priesthood of all the baptized to carry out that mission in the world.

⁴⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 10.

⁴⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 28.

⁵⁰ Dulles, “Can the Word ‘Laity’ be Defined?”, 475.

1.4 Theology of ministry situated within the context of ecclesial relationships

As we have discussed, the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the post-conciliar period was not anticipated in the Council documents in the way in which it has unfolded, though the retrieval of the importance of the baptismal priesthood opened avenues which paved the way for this development. Hahnenberg points out that in the post-conciliar period, the language of *communion* and *mission* have appeared in official church documents,⁵¹ proving a helpful way to understand the role of the church in gathering and sending forth, calling and commissioning.⁵² He suggests that the theological section of *Co-Workers* situates lay ecclesial ministry within this broader theological context of communion and mission: “The church is called, following the language of John Paul II, ‘a mystery of trinitarian communion in missionary tension.’”⁵³ Hahnenberg points out that this dual movement of communion and mission permeate each section of the theological argument underpinning *Co-Workers*. Lay ecclesial ministry, as one ministry among others, serves communion and mission in the church.

The rapid growth in these ministries since the Council has forced the church to grapple with the theological and pastoral implications of this new development. As we will see in Chapter 3, if we fail to take the community of believers as a starting point for a theological deliberation on ministry, we will invariably fall into an individualism in ministerial forms which will give way to a contrastive view of laity and clergy. We can see the implications of this contrastive view, for example, in the outcome document of the Synod on the Laity which was

⁵¹ These documents include the apostolic exhortations on the laity, on the formation of priests, and on consecrated life.

⁵² Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission,” 20.

⁵³ USCCB, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: a Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 19, citing John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Shall Give You Shepherds), 12.

held in Rome in 1987 to examine the vocation and mission of the laity in the church and in the world, twenty years after the Second Vatican Council. The outcome document, *Christifideles Laici*,⁵⁴ demonstrated an ambivalence toward new lay ministries in the church. Among other things, the distinctions between clergy and laity in this document were largely based on states of life (and the activities proper to each) rather than on the needs of the community, or the level of involvement in church service.

Another example of the contrastive approach is the 1997 Instruction entitled *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of Lay Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*⁵⁵ issued by eight Vatican offices to provide clarification on questions raised by lay ecclesial ministry. Gaillardetz suggests that the goal of this document was “to re-establish the distinction between the clergy and the laity which, in the minds of Vatican officials, has been blurred by recent pastoral initiatives, particularly in western and central Europe.” This document took as a starting point a perceived dichotomy between the lay state and the role of lay persons in the church, as is evident in the following citation from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, and signatory of the *Instruction*:

At the same time, a member of the lay faithful who, over a long period of time over a lifetime, actually exercises the pastoral duties proper to a priest, with the exception of

⁵⁴ John Paul II, Pope, *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World: Christifideles Laici: Post-synodal Exhortation December 30, 1988*. (Washington, D.C.: Office of Pub. and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1989).

⁵⁵ Congregation for the Clergy et al., *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* (Ecclesiae de Mysterio) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997) [online] available: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_con_interdic_doc_15081997_en.html . [Accessed 15 May 2018].

celebrating Mass and sacramental confession, is in fact no longer a true lay person and has lost his true identity in the life and mission of the Church.⁵⁶

Gaillardetz underscores two theological presuppositions at play in the 1997 *Instruction*: “[a] theology of the laity which, while affirming the laity’s full participation in the life and mission of the church, stresses the ultimately secular character of the lay vocation”⁵⁷ and “the distinction between the ministry of the baptized and the ministry of the ordained is conceived in terms of the unique possession of sacred power by the ordained,”⁵⁸ in other words, in overly-christological terms.

1.5 Conclusion

The post-conciliar period has seen a large-scale growth in the numbers of lay ecclesial ministers in parts of Europe and North America. Faced with this increased prominence of lay people in the work of the church, there are two competing frameworks: one which situates the clergy and laity as two separate categories, emphasising and clarifying differences; the other which situates all ministry (by clergy and laity) at the service of all the baptized as they live out their baptismal priesthood. We have seen how post-conciliar teaching has facilitated the theological model of communion and mission which underpins a concentric-circle view of ministry. But this model continues alongside a contrastive view of lay and ordained ministry. This contrastive view emphasises the role of the laity toward the world. The problem with this view is that it is not grounded in the actual lived reality of the church today in the regions which rely on lay ecclesial ministers. By failing to properly recognize this work, the church runs the

⁵⁶ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Reflections on the Instruction Regarding the Collaboration of the lay Faithful in the Ministry of Priests,” in *l’Osservatore Romano*, English ed. (29 April 1998) 18. cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries* 20.

⁵⁷ #Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 118.

⁵⁸ Gaillardetz, “Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction,” 118.

risk of failing to put in place the necessary measures to properly form and support lay ecclesial ministers, many of whom feel called by God to serve in this ministry. This question of vocation arose in the work of the USCCB committee which examined lay ecclesial ministry and was the subject of ongoing investigation by Hahnenberg. It is to this question which we now turn.

Chapter 2

How a Theology of Vocation Can Help Shed Light on the Experience of Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Hahnenberg's Work on a Theology of Christian Call

Most lay ecclesial ministers surveyed in the United States report that they view their work as a vocation, a “response to God’s call”.⁵⁹ Hahnenberg describes how the US bishops on the USCCB Subcommittee on Lay Ministry took note of the fact that many lay ecclesial ministers expressed that they felt called to ministry. The bishops asked themselves whether the experience of call described by lay ecclesial ministers suggested a new vocation in the church, a “fourth vocation alongside the vocations to priesthood, religious life, and marriage.”⁶⁰ The bishops wondered whether this call was comparable to the call to ordained ministry or consecrated life, and how it related to the broader vocation of laity in the world.⁶¹ After his work with the USCCB study on lay ecclesial ministry, Hahnenberg set out to answer these questions.

To understand what we mean by vocation, Hahnenberg compares the insights of Luther, Calvin, and the Roman Catholic church since the Second Vatican Council. He describes how these various interpretations of vocation are intricately linked to the question of nature and grace. He then turns to the role of spiritual traditions such as Ignatian spirituality, which provide helpful avenues for understanding how Christians are invited to respond to God’s call. This chapter will

⁵⁹ David DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2005), 71 cited in Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 36. In this study, David DeLambo reports that 54 per cent of lay ecclesial ministers report that the factor that most influenced them to pursue their ministry is a “call from God” Three quarters of them cite this as one of their top three reasons.

⁶⁰ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 35.

⁶¹ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 35.

describe Hahnenberg's investigation of call or vocation language to see whether these can help contribute to a theology of lay ecclesial ministry.

2.1 Definition of vocation

There are several ways we use the language of vocation in the church, but Hahnenberg breaks it down to three main questions:

- 1) *Who* God calls us to be – which is our self-identity
- 2) *How* God calls us to live – our state of life
- 3) *What* God calls us to do - the way each of us is called to serve God and others.⁶²

In response to the first question, the Second Vatican Council emphasizes the universal call to holiness, most particularly in Chapter 5 of *Lumen Gentium*. Turning to the section of *Lumen Gentium* related to the universal call to holiness, Hahnenberg notes that it is our participation in the church which gives rise to the universal call to holiness. The universal call to holiness is a communal call.

The second question, *how* God calls us to live, is the question which is most commonly associated with the concept of vocation. This is the understanding of vocation which the US bishops were using when they asked whether lay ecclesial ministry was a new vocation in the life of the church, alongside marriage, religious life and the priesthood. Hahnenberg suggests that this question is “constrained by a narrow identification with a few, ecclesiastically approved states of life.”⁶³ Hahnenberg refers to this approach to the question of vocation as a deductive

⁶² Hahnenberg attributes these questions to the work of Kathleen Calahan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 28. cited in Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 42.

⁶³ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 54.

approach. That is, it begins with clearly defined categories and attempts to situate the particular example of ministerial experience within these categories.

Hahnenberg suggests that more fruitful avenue for discussing lay ecclesial ministry is to explore the third question: *what* God calls us to do. For Hahnenberg, vocation is a response to a call. This call has two key features: it comes from outside of us and it requires discernment and decision. It is important here to attend to what Hahnenberg does *not* mean by the term vocation. He does not use the term as an occupational category or to define the roles and responsibilities inherent to any specific vocation. Rather, his work explores vocation as a response to God’s invitation. This includes lifelong decisions as well as other ways people respond to God’s invitation. We can see here a helpful definitional distinction, one which helps us move away from conflating vocation and state of life.

2.2 A historical overview of vocation/call⁶⁴

Hahnenberg provides a historical overview of how the understanding of vocation has changed over time, and how it has differed between various Christian communities. This overview helps to shed light on the way in which the church views the question of vocation today, and to understand the theological concepts at play. This overview makes it possible to see how our Christian tradition holds within it the possibility of approaching vocation through the third question identified above – the question of *what* God calls us to do. We turn now to Hahnenberg’s overview of historical developments in the conceptualization of vocation.

2.2.1 Early church

⁶⁴ This chapter will use the terms “vocation” and “call” interchangeably.

The New Testament indicates that the followers of Jesus received a dual call - to discipleship and salvation. Hahnenberg suggests, however, that there arose a separation in the early church between those who were disciples and those who were not. He points to a first century distinction between laity (Gr *laikos*) and priests, with the laity defined in the negative⁶⁵ (i.e., they are not priests). Hahnenberg sees within this use of language the early beginnings of a hierarchy of holiness. The categories of priests and “not priests” were complicated with the emergence of the desert fathers and mothers, people who wanted to follow Christ closely but who were disillusioned with the accommodation of church to empire.⁶⁶ Whereas the priesthood was associated with leadership, the desert fathers and mothers were associated with holiness. They laity were neither priests nor religious – they were inferior to priests in leadership and inferior to monks in holiness. Hahnenberg suggests that “the result was a significant strain on any positive evaluation of the Christian life in the world.”⁶⁷

Hahnenberg points out that another important influence which marked the hierarchical ordering of vocations within the church was the body/mind dualism in Greek philosophy.⁶⁸ This dualism held praxis (productive and household activities) inferior to the activities of the mind. When this dualism was applied to the various existing vocations – where monks were devoted to prayer; priests to ministry, and lay people to life in the world – it resulted in a spiritual elitism, which reinforced the hierarchy of holiness.

⁶⁵ It is noteworthy here to mention that this negative definition of the laity (i.e. defining laity by what they are not) also appears in the documents of the Second Vatican Council (see *Lumen Gentium* 31 which defines the laity as “all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in a state of religious life.”) and in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. This is discussed in Avery Dulles. “Can the Word ‘Laity’ be Defined?” *Origins* 18/29 (December 29, 1988), 473.

⁶⁶ Edward Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2010), 7.

⁶⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 7.

⁶⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 7.

Over time, the laying on of hands which had expressed the prayer of the community to install a minister in a position of service to the community evolved into an ordination which came to be seen as an exchange of power. Hahnenberg notes that “if in the early church *ordo* evoked a corporate and organic reality, in the Middle Ages *ordo* and ordination meant the possession and transfer of power,”⁶⁹ a power which came to be focused on the power to consecrate the Eucharist, with all other ministries subordinated to the ordained priesthood. What was lost in this development was the rich variety of ministries which had existed in the service of the community in the early church.

2.2.2 Luther

Love of neighbour, for Luther, is at the heart of what we are called to do as Christians. It forms the basis of our Christian vocation.⁷⁰ If we go back to the three ways of viewing vocation (who God calls us to be, how God calls us to live and what God calls us to do), we can see that Luther’s approach is focused on the first and third questions. By answering the question of who we are called to be and what we are called to do with the Gospel imperative to love our neighbour, the emphasis was shifted away from the second question, which relates to states of life. We are called to love of neighbour in many different walks of life. This call to love one’s neighbour, challenges spiritual elitism. If the most important call of any Christian is to the love of neighbour, then every Christian receives this call, whatever state of life they inhabit. All Christians are called to follow Jesus, a call which relates first and foremost to our baptism. We

⁶⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 156.

⁷⁰ Hahnenberg’s overview of Luther’s writing on vocation makes reference to primary sources such as Martin Luther, “Lectures on Galations,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol.26, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1963), 1-561; and Martin Luther, “The Estate of Marriage,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol.45, ed. Walther I.Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 11-49; and secondary sources, particularly Paul Marshall, *A Kind of Life Imposed on Man: Vocation and Social Order from Tyndale to Locke* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

are all called by baptism to a conscious following of Jesus. The implications of this radical call, and our response to it, is more difficult to see in the case of infant baptism, however. As a result, it became less obvious to identify Christian vocation as a conscious following of Jesus, and easier to identify vocation with the more visible act of leaving everything behind to enter monastic life (a personal call from God to abandon everything). This eventually led to a hierarchy of holiness, with the baptismal calling perceived as being inferior to the call to religious life or priesthood.

To challenge the notion of spiritual elitism or hierarchy of holiness, Luther affirmed that “every state of life is a calling.”⁷¹ Luther maintained that life in the world is not a distraction from a life of holiness, but rather *the place where we live out holiness*. In his 1520 treatise “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation”⁷² he argued that the root of the other abuses in the church was the notion that spiritual power is above the temporal.

Luther argued that if love of neighbour is the heart of our vocation, people were “called” to this vocation whatever position they had in life. Wherever you were, whatever you did – that was where you exercised your vocation to love. Luther tried to find redemptive value in the necessity of work by injecting love of neighbour into all work that we do. Hahnenberg points out however, that, over time, vocation came to refer exclusively to the various professions/trades without reference to God, losing the important call common to all Christians – the call to love our neighbour. Hahnenberg refers to this movement as the secularization of vocation.

⁷¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 4.

⁷² Martin Luther, “to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol.44, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 115-217, cited in Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*.

Whereas Luther had defined vocation as the call to love one's neighbour in every work and life context, this eventually evolved into a conflation of vocation with *work context itself*.⁷³ Eventually, vocation took on a purely secular connotation. Obedience to God's call was conflated to *obedience to one's calling*, which eventually led to a form of predestination which equated calling and occupation. By the 17th century, trade/employment/occupation/calling/vocation had become interchangeable terms.⁷⁴

Hahnenberg suggests that the move from Luther to Calvin was a move from "duty to God *within* one's station to *through* one's station"⁷⁵ and eventually to "vocation as duty to one's station."⁷⁶ This created a shift from that an emphasis on the universal call to holiness in all walks of life to an understanding that God predestined people to a certain social standing and occupation. Removed from the call to love of neighbour, one's calling/trade/employment/work became a religion unto itself. Within this system, God became superfluous to a theory of vocation.

2.2.3 Post-Reformation understanding of "call" in the Roman Catholic tradition

Faced with the post-Reformation Protestant understandings of vocation noted above, the Catholic Church responded with hardening of medieval hierarchy of holiness which continued until the Second Vatican Council. In the post-Reformation church, there existed a differentiation between the call to the secular priesthood (which came from the outside through the community and bishops) and the call to religious life which was seen to come from within. Until the 17th

⁷³ In tracing the evolution of Protestant reflection on vocation, Hahnenberg turns to the work of Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol.II/1, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956).

⁷⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol.II/2, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 2 as cited in Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 22.

⁷⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 23.

⁷⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 23.

century, the language used to describe the vocation of priests was juridical and sacramental, linked the duties of the station rather than on spirituality. In contrast, the vocation to religious life was understood to be an inner calling, an attending to the secret voice of God to the soul of an individual.

The priesthood in France until the 17th century had become a “means to political influence, social standing, or material gain.”⁷⁷ Bishops invited people to become priests to forge financial and political alliances. Over time, the clergy came to be viewed as uneducated and immoral. The system of calling by bishops had fallen apart. The question arose, then, of how to discern good candidates for the priesthood. At the same time, religious communities were developing spiritualities focused on inner motivation and the inclination of the soul. These spiritualities introduced a new way of looking at priesthood which focused on interiorization and vocation as an inner call.

2.2.4 The interiorization of Christian call

In mid-seventeenth century France, at a time when the practice of selecting priests for power, privilege and personal gain had led to corruption among the clergy, a spiritual tradition known as the French School⁷⁸ emerged in an effort to reform the French clergy and revitalize the French church. The focus of the French School was personal holiness, particularly among priests. The reformers in the French School brought interiorization to the spirituality of the secular priesthood, bringing a “new sense...vocation as personal direct and inner call from God.”⁷⁹ Whereas the call to holiness had been viewed as the domain of monks and nuns, the French

⁷⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 68.

⁷⁸ The French School of Spirituality is associated with Pierre de Bérulle, Charles de Condren, Madeleine de Saint-Joseph, Jean-Jacques Olier, Jean Eudes, and Vincent de Paul.

⁷⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 63.

School expanded this to the secular priesthood, playing a dominant role in defining the spirituality of the priesthood between 1676 and 1953. Attention was given to whether an individual felt an attraction to the priesthood. The focus on the inner call of God in the French School led to its own distortions, with God's call becoming a mysterious voice acting within the soul of an individual. Whereas Jean-Jacques Olier had identified an attraction to the priesthood as an effect of grace on the soul, that attraction came to be seen as the call itself.⁸⁰ As we will see, the problem arose out of a deficient theology of grace which continued until the Second Vatican Council.

2.2.5 The Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar era

The emphasis in the documents on the Second Vatican Council on the universal call to holiness and the baptismal priesthood both contributed to a new-found affirmation of the role of the laity and “provided an important source for promoting the active contribution of all Christians to the church’s mission.”⁸¹ Hahnenberg suggests that “the most significant shift (at Vatican II) was the council’s recognition that the apostolate of the laity comes not from the hierarchy but from Christ himself”⁸² by virtue of baptism. In part, this emphasis on baptism is due to an understanding of the church as the People of God, a community with a mission.

2.3 Two movements in the history of vocation

Hahnenberg traces the theological underpinnings of the modern view of vocation to the combined effects of the separation of grace from nature and a spiritual inward turn with the

⁸⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 83.

⁸¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 170.

⁸² Hahnenberg points to N. 3 of the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* as evidence of this claim in Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 43-44.

resultant interiorization of Christian call. In this context, vocation came to be seen as something from God placed within one's human nature, a "secret voice."⁸³ We will now examine how these two movements led to our current understanding of vocation.

2.3.1 The separation of nature and grace in a theology of vocation

Hahnenberg addresses the relationship between nature and grace, and the relevance of this for a theology of vocation:

To understand the modern fate of the theology of vocation, we consider the gradual theological separation of God from the world and the subsequent rise of a dualistic understanding of nature and grace. This background offers the theological context within which the neo-scholastic manualists took up the question of vocational discernment in treatises that gave final shape to the modern Catholic theology of vocation.⁸⁴

For early Christians, there remained "a profound sense of the Creator's continuing presence within creation."⁸⁵ Patristic theology held in creative tension the immanence and transcendence of God. Human nature, though fallen, was nonetheless seen to be "constituted by a fundamental orientation toward and openness to God."⁸⁶ This made it possible to consider the work of God *in* creation, and not to set up a dichotomy between grace and nature.

But there eventually arose a perceived dualism between nature and grace. Hahnenberg identifies nominalism and a misreading of Aquinas' incorporation of Aristotelian method as two critical moments which contributed to a new theology of grace which led to a gradual separation between nature and grace in theology. He points to the role of nominalism in the 14th and 15th

⁸³ Hahnenberg, "Serving in the Name of the Church," 80.

⁸⁴ Hahnenberg, "Serving in the Name of the Church," 74.

⁸⁵ Hahnenberg, "Serving in the Name of the Church," 75.

⁸⁶ Hahnenberg, "Serving in the Name of the Church," 75.

centuries. Nominalism took the distinction between what God *can do* and what God *actually does*, making of grace an arbitrary add-on to a nature/world which functioned according to its own rules. As a result, God's action in the world was seen as unpredictable and arbitrary. In contrast to the world permeated with divine grace, grace became an interruption in the nature/world, doled out according to the unpredictable whims of God. Actual grace was not seen to be an integral part of human life, but an artificial add-on to our natural existence. In this context, discerning whether an individual had a vocation meant find ways to see whether an individual had received this arbitrary outside force of grace. Hahnenberg suggests that nominalism led to a situation where "actual grace came to dominate theological debates and pastoral life."⁸⁷

The nominalism described above is the first movement in the separation between nature and grace. The second movement, according to Hahnenberg, began with the question of proportionate ends which came about with the introduction of Aristotle's philosophy into theology during the Middle Ages, and the eventually mis-representation of Thomas Aquinas' insights regarding this question. Hahnenberg provides a quick overview of the Aristotelian notion of proportionate ends, which contributed to this separation:

1. each individual nature has a purpose which is proportionate to its own powers to achieve it (e.g. an acorn becomes an oak);
2. but the ends of human nature, i.e. the beatific vision, is not within the power of the individual to attain it.
3. Thus, the individual is dependent on God's grace to reach this "supernatural" end.

⁸⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 79.

Rather than separating the natural end and beatific end of human nature, Aquinas integrated the two, speaking of the “natural desire for the beatific vision.”⁸⁸ Aquinas’ focus was not *actual* grace but sanctifying or *habitual* grace – “the effect within the human person of God’s saving offer of love”⁸⁹ that helps the non-justified person to do good. Hahnenberg suggests that Aquinas’ effort to explain patristic theology using Aristotelian methods was intended as a *logical possibility*, not as a description of reality. Future misreading of Aquinas lost sight of this, eventually seeing in this logical possibility a *description of reality*. Hahnenberg suggests that it is this conflation of a logical possibility with a description of reality which eventually led to a theology which separates nature and grace even though Thomas Aquinas specifically *avoided* this concept of pure nature existing apart from God’s invitation in grace.⁹⁰

The separation of nature and grace can be traced to later misinterpretations of Thomas Aquinas. Hahnenberg points to the work of Thomas de Vio Cajetan, a prominent Dominican commentator on Aquinas, who “dismissed Aquinas’s notion of humanity’s “natural desire” for a supernatural end.”⁹¹ By setting aside this important qualifier, Cajetan was then able to misread Aquinas’ *logical distinctions* between nature and grace as *actual distinctions*, leading him to interpret Aquinas as proposing that there is “a separation of the human person into two independent orders, nature and grace, each with its own finality.”⁹² Ultimately, this leads to the possibility of conceiving of a human nature without grace.⁹³ Within this duality of nature and grace, God came to be seen as “an external agent and extrinsic force”⁹⁴ and grace as something

⁸⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 76.

⁸⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 79.

⁹⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 76.

⁹¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 78.

⁹² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 78.

⁹³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 78.

⁹⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 79.

which was superimposed on nature. Combined with nominalism, this made it possible to conceive of pure nature outside of the human relationship to God, with pure grace as an arbitrary add-on, and to conceive of nature existing completely outside of the influence of grace.

This misreading of Aquinas was exposed by Henri de Lubac in his 1946 study, *Surnaturel*.⁹⁵ De Lubac was critical of the way Aquinas was being interpreted, noting that the interpretation which was being taught reflected the theology of later interpreters, and not of Aquinas himself. De Lubac called for an incarnational, historical theology. Recognizing that we were created in *imago dei*, he emphasized the importance of holding together the natural and supernatural, nature and grace. De Lubac concluded that “the concept of ‘pure nature’ was a modern innovation that diverged from the patristic and medieval tradition”⁹⁶ noting that rather than protecting the transcendence of God’s grace, this separation led to the domestication of God’s grace, and ultimately, to the separation of faith from life. Ironically, neo-scholastic interpretations which had emerged to protect the element of faith in light of modernism eventually led to the same conclusion. With the separation of grace from nature, “philosophy/anthropology no longer needed the divine to explain the human person.”⁹⁷

This perceived dualism between nature and grace had an impact on how vocation would be understood. Vocation would come to be seen as “an outside force touching the soul of an individual,”⁹⁸ an add-on to the nature of the individual. In the context of a modernity, with its double breakup – a separation of God and humankind, and a separation between humankind and the rest of creation – Olier and Ignatius of Loyola developed spiritualities which were rooted in a

⁹⁵ Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris : Aubier, 1946), cited in Hahnenberg, *Vocation*, 79.

⁹⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 79.

⁹⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 79.

⁹⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 80.

conviction that God is present in the depths of the person,⁹⁹ based on an understanding that human nature is graced nature.

2.3.2 The secret voice

We have seen how there arose in France a spiritual tradition which was intended as an alternative to the institutional call to the priesthood, which had largely broken down. If the sole criteria for calling priests was no longer the call of the bishop, then what were the appropriate criteria to ensure that candidates to the priesthood were called by God? A variety of methods were proposed to do this, most of them attending to a blend of the institutional call (ensuring that the candidate had no canonical impediments, had the necessary education, etc.) and the intention of the candidate.

Here again, a careful return to the sources helps us see that certain exaggerated features of the spirituality are removed from their initial purpose, leading to the hardening of interpretations which were not intended by the original proponents. One of the founders of the French School was Jean-Jacques Olier, who described a key component of the call as the “inner inclination of the soul manifested through a strong and steady attraction to the ecclesial state.”¹⁰⁰ Olier was careful to specify that the attraction to the priesthood was not itself the call, but rather the effect of grace on the soul. In time, however, this came to be interpreted as the inward whisper of God to the soul - the “secret voice” which “came as an extrinsic, supernatural addition to an integral nature.”¹⁰¹ We can see here the combined effects of the separation of grace and nature, and a spiritualization of the attraction to the vocation of priesthood. Over time,

⁹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 74

¹⁰⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 83.

¹⁰¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 84.

this supernatural attraction itself came to be seen as the essential prerequisite for a vocation. Thus, call to the priesthood evolved from an extrinsic call from the bishop into a dual call: an interiorized call from God to the soul as well as an external call from the bishop.

2.4 Twentieth century retrieval of grace in nature – implications for a theology of vocation

Hahnenberg then turns to Vatican II and the retrieval of the universal call to holiness as a retrieval which opens the way for new ways of approaching a theology of vocation. Hahnenberg describes the way in which the changing notion of the relationship between nature and grace in twentieth-century Catholic theology provide a Christian anthropology in which we can consider the question of vocation in a way which moves beyond the choice among states of life:

We need to affirm both God and me, both grace and nature, as deeply intertwined realities in the vocational dynamic. If who I am is infused with God's grace, then can we really separate creation from redemption, the human vocation from the divine summons?¹⁰²

Key to this is the notion of cooperation with God's salvific will. The Council of Trent recognized the possibility of human cooperation in God's plan of salvation. In rejecting the Calvinist claim that God positively predestines some to condemnation¹⁰³ the Council asserted that "God desires the salvation of all, even as God leaves individual human beings free to reject the divine plan."¹⁰⁴ If we are free to reject the divine plan, then we are also free to cooperate with

¹⁰² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 124.

¹⁰³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 108.

¹⁰⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 108.

it. This opened the way for an unfolding of theological enquiry which turned to how the human subject can cooperate with God's salvific will.¹⁰⁵

In this light, vocation is more than a profession, but an invitation to us as a particular person in a particular time and place, "gifted with particular abilities, disabilities, experiences, and associations."¹⁰⁶ In light of this, discerning vocation is about finding the answers to the following two questions: "what are the needs of my particular historical situation?" and "what are my own gifts and dispositions?"¹⁰⁷ The focus is on our participation in God's salvific work through Christ, in a particular place, with our own unique gifts which we have received from God.

Hahnenberg addresses the question of God's plan – for the world and for individuals – using insights from Karl Barth's work on a "theology of vocation through the question of divine providence and predestination."¹⁰⁸ For Barth, the question is not so much "what is the plan of God?" but rather "who is the God of the plan?" This is necessary for Barth (and Hahnenberg's) theologies of vocation, shifting the focus away from the individual and toward the mission of Christ within an ecclesial context.

Both Catholic and Protestant notions of vocation presupposed predestination and providence. For Catholics, predestination was about a call to priesthood and religious life; for Protestants, a call to accept one's status in life. For Barth, what is important is the universal call

¹⁰⁵ Here, Hahnenberg points to the influential role of the Society of Jesus, Francis de Sales, Alphonsus Liquori, Karl Rahner, and Vatican II.

¹⁰⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 119.

¹⁰⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 121.

¹⁰⁸ Hahnenberg's notes the important role which Barth played in naming the weaknesses of both the Catholic and Protestant treatments of vocation. Hahnenberg's overview of Barth is largely based on Karl Barth, "Vocation," in *Church Dogmatics*, vol.III/4, trans.A.T. Mackay et al (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961).

to become Christians. This challenged the Catholic hierarchy of holiness and challenged vocation as limited to the duties of a profession.

Barth points to Paul, to demonstrate that God wants to save humanity through Christ (predestination) and provides what is necessary to do so (providence).¹⁰⁹ This calls us to focus on our participation in God's salvific work and to pay attention to how God is doing this (providence).

2.5 Rahner and the experience of God

Hahnenberg identifies what he refers to as a false dichotomy between vocation as a “miraculous and mystical illumination” (the interior call) and vocation as an institutional call based on the “external recognition of one's aptitude for a particular state of life.”¹¹⁰ He turns to the work of Karl Rahner to find a middle way. Hahnenberg's review of Rahner's theology of nature and grace allow him to draw important insights related to the question of vocation.

We saw earlier that the theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* such as de Lubac had set out to retrieve from Aquinas that grace was not an add-on but rather immanent to us. Karl Rahner's work was also a significant contributor to this movement to overcome the duality between nature and grace “that had handicapped Catholic thought since the Reformation.”¹¹¹ For Rahner, grace is the very self-communication of God.

Rahner provides an Ignatian approach to an important question we must ask for an adequate treatment of vocation: “does God speak *to me*?”¹¹² His transcendental analysis of the human subject begins to answer this question. For Rahner, the mystical experience of God is real

¹⁰⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 103.

¹¹⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 130.

¹¹¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 136.

¹¹² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 128.

and needs to be taken seriously. It is not reserved for mystics but is rather the basic dimension of all our human experience, the horizon against we live and act and decide:

The experience of God is something that we all share – a sense of silent mystery swirling within and around us. It is through this silent swirling that the call of God comes. To put it more directly, for Rahner, the key to vocational discernment is for each of us to grow more conscious of this transcendent presence within ourselves, to sink more deeply into it. The result is that each of us comes to understand ourselves more fully, and to make important decisions more freely.¹¹³

This provides an alternative to the idea of God acting through some miraculous breakthrough in our human condition, and an approach to vocation which is purely based on the suitability for a particular state of life. Viewing vocation as an experience of God in our human nature helps us to overcome the false dichotomy between nature and grace.

Discerning our individual vocation, for Rahner, means finding the unique will of God for an individual which transcends general categories. The practice of discernment should not be limited to a deductive approach to vocation (deciding which ecclesiastical category of vocation suit an individual) but should remain open to a more inductive approach to discerning the will of God for an individual at a given time, based on the realization that “God is lovingly present within each of us in a unique way.”¹¹⁴ This presence of God within us is what Rahner calls the supernatural existential.

How, then, are individuals to attend to the will of God? Given that a clear revelation from God appears to be the exception for a small few (Hahnenberg points to St. Paul as an example), how can we attend to what God wants us to do? Here, Hahnenberg turns to the spirituality of

¹¹³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 132.

¹¹⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 139.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (commonly known as the Jesuits). Like Rahner (who was a Jesuit), Ignatius believed that God called each person to holiness. He developed practices to help people pay attention the will of God.

In Ignatian spirituality, discernment calls on an individual to attend to the consolations and desolations to discern the “inner workings of God.”¹¹⁵ Such an approach “begins with the concrete choices before us, moves through our emotions and affections, and ends at the God who lives at the core of our being.”¹¹⁶ What is important is to discern where these “sources of our affections”¹¹⁷ are coming from. For Ignatius, these feelings can come from ourselves, from good spirits or from evil spirits.

For Rahner, the key to discernment in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola were the references which speaks of consolation without a preceding cause.¹¹⁸ Rahner provides an important exegesis of “consolation without cause” which explains that, in this experience, the transcendent becomes thematic, “an experience of self-awareness in which we ‘see’ ourselves as we really are: children of God, friends of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁹ It is “an experience of pure transcendence emerging into awareness”¹²⁰ which draws us to a greater openness to God. Hahnenberg points out that, “[f]or Rahner...the experience of transcendence that is the root of all mystical experience is fundamental to and coextensive with all human knowing, loving, and acting.”¹²¹ The challenge for us, then, is to “grow in our awareness of our

¹¹⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 142.

¹¹⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 142.

¹¹⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 143.

¹¹⁸ Hahnenberg makes wide reference to Karl Rahner’s essay, “The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola,” *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, (Herder and Herder, 1964) throughout Chapter 4 of *Awakening Vocation*.

¹¹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 145.

¹²⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 145.

¹²¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 147.

transcendental horizon.”¹²² This supernatural existential is both “a receptivity to the God who made me and an openness to the me whom God has made.”¹²³

Rahner suggested that this insight was difficult to retrieve in a theology which had set up a clear demarcation and dualism between nature and grace. Hahnenberg points out that “for Barth, the divine call confronts a fallen creation. For Rahner, this call comes within and through a grace-soaked world: God calls us to respond by carrying forward our deepest identity- to be saints by being ourselves.”¹²⁴ This requires a process of discernment which requires honesty and which is open to ongoing conversion.

Hahnenberg points out that “what Rahner saw in Ignatius was a more inductive approach.”¹²⁵ Going back to the three questions which frame how we understand vocation (who God calls us to be, how God calls us to live, and what God calls us to do) this applies to both the first and third questions. Discernment is not only for deciding which state of life is appropriate, but it deals with the question of what God is calling us to do as we are faced with specific decisions.

2.6 Christian vocation is communal and contextual

Hahnenberg argues that “the human subject remains at the center of a contemporary theology of vocation”¹²⁶ as we saw in the spiritualities of the French School and Ignatian spirituality. But this turn to the subject is done within the context of a Christian community. God

¹²² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 147.

¹²³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 148.

¹²⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 152.

¹²⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 148.

¹²⁶ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 158.

calls us through others and requires an openness to the other. Hahnenberg argues that this calls for an ecclesiology of vocation.¹²⁷

Post-modernity has made us aware that we live in a contextual environment which necessarily shapes our story, in contrast with the Enlightenment claim of self-autonomy. If the transcendent is the horizon against which all human beings live, post-modernity forces us to acknowledge that this universal experience is named differently, based on our unique standpoints. For example, it is understood and named differently within a Christian narrative than it would be within a Muslim or Hindu narrative.

A common narrative is shared by a community of meaning. For a vocational call to become recognizable as vocational call, it requires a context, an attachment to the Christian narrative “no matter how weak that connection might be.”¹²⁸ The community of meaning, i.e. the Christian community, allows us to name the experience, with access to a common narrative. The experience of the transcendent is one thing. The naming of that experience is another. This is where we need a community which shares the same narrative context, and the vocabulary with which the experience can be communicated. This applies to the experience of transcendence which we name *vocation*. Hahnenberg reminds us that “the call of God comes to each of us through the mediation of people – the Christian community, a community both called and calling,”¹²⁹ and he reminds us that that “to be drawn into the narrative of Christ is what marks the first step on the path of discipleship.”¹³⁰ By baptism, we are drawn into this narrative. By journeying with a community, the we are drawn further into this narrative of Christ in a community of others with whom we share that narrative.

¹²⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 161.

¹²⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 165.

¹²⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 174.

¹³⁰ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 167.

Hahnenberg argues that “[o]ne of postmodernity’s most important contributions to ecclesiology is its call to respect the other, its demand that we hold our narratives open to the narratives of others.”¹³¹ Hahnenberg suggests that it is this same openness to others which is the prerequisite of vocational discernment. The encounter with the other has the potential to challenge our perceptions of ourselves, freeing us “from our attachments to a false sense of ourselves, our needs, and our plans.”¹³² Hahnenberg suggests that our openness to others, even as these interrupt our neatly formed perceptions of ourselves and our world views, challenges us to a conversion where we encounter others in their uniqueness “so that, slowly, we might grow more and more open to *the* Other: the God who calls.”¹³³

Hahnenberg calls for an open narrative, one which makes room for alterity. He points to Louvain theologian Lieven Boeve, who seeks “a theological approach to identity that avoids the extremes of fundamentalism or nostalgic traditionalism, on the one hand, and relativism or uncritical adaptation, on the other.”¹³⁴ According to Boeve, each tradition needs to find a way to communicate itself within its own historical and cultural context.

In our postmodern world, we cannot escape the narratives of others. We cannot try to subsume other narratives within our metanarrative. At the same time, we must appropriate and live within our narrative. This narrative must remain open to the narrative of others rather than imposing a metanarrative (which becomes fundamentalism). We need to acknowledge the otherness of God, an otherness which is impossible for us to capture. In Hahnenberg’s words,

¹³¹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 160.

¹³² Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 161.

¹³³ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 161.

¹³⁴ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 168.

“[w]e cannot capture ultimate mystery. We cannot contain ‘the Truth.’ Precisely because Truth transcends our narrative, our story must remain open.”¹³⁵

Using the insights of Lieven Boeve,¹³⁶ Hahnenberg suggests that our Christian narrative, like biblical narratives, are full of the “interruptive otherness” of God. He argues that this interruptive otherness of God is the hermeneutical key for the biblical narrative. Hahnenberg gives the example of Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God – which are themselves open narratives which challenge closed narratives. The God of Scripture is a God who cannot be contained, or as Hahnenberg describes it, “Jesus challenges all those who wish to follow him to abandon their closed narratives and enter into the praxis of the open narrative.”¹³⁷ This is not a post-modern project which denies any determinate claims. It is a narrative which makes a determinate claim, and that claim is to love God by loving our neighbour. We find Christ in the other, in the neighbour. Hahnenberg points out the implication for vocational discernment: “We grow in this openness to God – who is the Other – precisely by growing in openness to others.”¹³⁸

When Barth suggests that the Christian narrative cannot be contained by philosophy and history alone – it is precisely this otherness, this breaking in, this interruptive otherness of God which is the hermeneutical key. This interruptive otherness of God opens the possibility of a theology which is inductive, rather than deductive; a theology which is open to viewing interruptions and, with the tools of the tradition and within the hermeneutical key of disruption, discerning whether it is “of God.” This inductive approach to theology requires discernment. As

¹³⁵ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 171.

¹³⁶ Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2003) cited widely in Chapter 5 of Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*.

¹³⁷ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 173.

¹³⁸ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 173.

we will such an approach begins with the real world and the real community, and not a Platonic ideal. This is what is required as we grapple with a contemporary theology of vocation which can incorporate the new reality of lay ecclesial ministry.

2.7 Conclusion

We started this chapter with three separate ways we can view vocation – who God calls us to be, how God calls us to live, and what God calls us to do. In the modern period, there has been a preoccupation with the second question in discussions of vocation, the question of how God calls an individual to live, and most specifically, to what state of life an individual was called. Hahnenberg’s treatment of vocation puts a greater emphasis on the other two questions.

What emerges in this historical overview of the understanding of vocation is that our current understanding of what is meant by vocation has changed over the time. The Roman Catholic tradition has held different approaches to vocation as they applied to the priesthood and to religious life, with the call to the priesthood being an external call and the call to religious life being an internal call from God. During certain periods, these competing understandings of vocation have co-existed.

Most importantly, the identification of the historical events which led to the spiritualization of the call to the priesthood helps us to see that the vocational discernment as a spiritual practice is not a timeless reality, but rather is itself a response to a historical situation. This challenges our perception of a timeless reality, based on what was known to us within recent memory, and to recognize that there have been various understandings of what “vocation” has meant through time. Our understanding of the concept of “vocation” has been open to

development throughout history. This is an important starting point, forcing upon us a necessary openness to ongoing development.

Hahnenberg suggests that the new reading of Aquinas in the first half of the twentieth century led to a more positive evaluation of the interplay between nature and grace, opening new insights which were influential in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. The retrieval of Aquinas's insight that grace brings nature to its full destiny¹³⁹ made it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to provide a more positive theology of the laity at the Second Vatican Council (as opposed to defining the laity as being defined by that which they are not). This positive definition of the laity recognized that all the baptized have an ecclesial identity by virtue of their baptism. All share in the universal call to holiness, though this is lived through a variety of *states of life* within the church.

Despite its more positive appreciation of the laity, the documents of Vatican II and the post-conciliar discourse continues to be marked by a focus on states of life – priest, consecrated life, and the lay state. The questions are framed in such a way as to consider how people belong to one of these categories.

The question arises then as to how we can conceptualize situations which do not fit neatly within these categories. This is the challenge the church must grapple with in the case of lay ecclesial ministry. As we have seen earlier, Hahnenberg describes this process of starting with clearly defined categories as a *deductive* approach. He provides an example of this approach in the work of the American bishops involved in studying the questions of lay ecclesial ministry. Faced with the near impossibility of fitting lay ecclesial ministry within the clearly defined

¹³⁹ Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 38.

categories of priesthood, religious life and laity, these bishops asked themselves whether lay ecclesial ministry was a “fourth vocation alongside the vocations to priesthood, religious life, and marriage.”¹⁴⁰

Hahnenberg suggests that such a deductive approach frustrates a theological reflection on lay ecclesial ministry. He calls on the need for a renewed theology of vocation that better attends to the mystery of God’s call – a mystery which does not always fit into our neatly organized categories, as a deductive approach would have us do. He proposes an *inductive approach* to a theology of ministry, an approach which could take seriously the personal experience of God, a God who acts in the midst of history in a way which continually “disrupts” the expectations of God’s people. Such an approach takes seriously a God who acts within history, a world where grace is already present. Hahnenberg moves the conversation about vocation into the post-modern discussion which forces us to recognize that our experience exists within a narrative which is carried by a community. The retrieval of a theology of grace allowed us to conceive of a God who speaks to us in the midst of a grace-filled creation, not as a foreign voice, but in our depths. The awareness of contextuality in post-modernism has forced us to recognize that our experiences are mediated by others and in the interruptive otherness of our boundary experiences. Being open to these interruptive moments forces us to continual conversion, challenging us out of complacency and forcing us to appropriate more deeply our personal and collective narratives. This openness to others is at the core of the Christian call to love our neighbour. It creates within us a stance of openness to the other, which Hahnenberg suggests, also makes us open to the Other who is God. As Christians, then, our vocation is a communal one. We are incorporated into a narrative community by our baptism. We journey with that

¹⁴⁰ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 35.

community in an ever-deepening relationship of Jesus, who calls us to love our neighbour. In this way, vocation is more about who we are and what we are to do than about the narrow question of states of life (ordination, religious life or the lay state).

This reflection helps us to reframe the vocational question within an ecclesial context. Our vocations lead us to be more fully ourselves for the glory of God and the salvation of the world, in the same way as the church does not exist for its own sake but also for the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

Chapter 3

A Trinitarian Approach to Ministry

3.1 Introduction

The questions raised by lay ecclesial ministry are often framed in terms of clarifying the lay-clergy distinction, either theologically or pastorally. Hahnenberg argues that, whether we are looking at the ordained ministries (which are often described in a christological fashion) or lay ministries (which tend to be defined in relation to the Holy Spirit), there has been a historical evolution which has moved away from situating ministry in the community to a focus on the individual minister. In this chapter, we will see how Hahnenberg traces the historical evolution of both a christocentric and pneumatological approach to ministry. Hahnenberg argues that an individualistic and decontextualized approach to understanding ministry poses a serious challenge to a theology of ministry which holds together communion and mission. He suggests that a trinitarian approach presents an alternative to this heightened individualism. In this chapter, we will turn to Hahnenberg's work on a trinitarian approach to ministry: one which goes beyond finding the right blend of christological and pneumatological, toward an approach based on the Trinity itself, which is relational in its very essence. Hahnenberg suggests that this relational approach made possible by appealing to the Trinity provides a foundation from which it is possible to explore the diversity of ministerial forms.

3.2 What is the relevance of taking a trinitarian approach?

There exists a large body of scholarship that makes the link between a reflection of the Trinity and a reflection on the church (ecclesiology). This includes, among others, Miroslav Volf, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Walter Kasper, Jean-Marie Tillard, Hans Urs von

Balthasar, Elizabeth Johnson, and Catherine LaCugna.¹⁴¹ In addition, the documents arising out of the Second Vatican Council made links between the Trinity and the church. For example, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* described the church as a Pilgrim People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (*Lumen Gentium* nos. 6, 17). The most explicit reference of the Council documents to the relationship between the Trinity and the church is found in the *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which refers to the church as “a mystery that finds its highest model and source in the unity of the persons in the Trinity.”¹⁴²

If the church is in some way an icon of a trinitarian God, then the way the church organizes its relationships among its members should also reflect who the church claims as its God. This includes the set of relationships in the church which are referred to as ministry. Hahnenberg describes how retrieving a relational understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity has implications for both an ecclesiology and a theology of ministry. Hahnenberg builds on the classical Greek doctrine of the Trinity which maintains that the persons of the Trinity are defined by their relation to one another. He draws two insights from this:

- 1) personhood (which is by definition relational) is the ultimate ontological category, rather than ‘substance’ or ‘being’; and
- 2) “divine personhood is defined in terms of relationship” – i.e., “a divine person (Father, Son, or Spirit) does not exist prior to relationship; rather, a divine person exists only *in and through relationship* with the other divine persons.”¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ See, for instance, Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985) and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991).

¹⁴² *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n.2

¹⁴³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 90.

Hahnenberg goes on to draw on this relationality *within* God to point out the implications for human persons, who are made in the image of God. He claims that if we are created in *imago dei*, and if personhood is the ultimate ontological category, then we also reflect God in our relationality – in being in right relation with one another. This has implications for relations within the church, including ministerial relations. Hahnenberg suggests that “Roman Catholic theologies of ministry presupposed a view of reality (ontology) that focused on particular individuals or things in themselves (substances) abstracted from their relational existence.”¹⁴⁴ He argues that we need to begin our theological reflection on ministry with *relation* not with *substance*.¹⁴⁵ The retrieval of the relational approach to personhood within the Trinity is Hahnenberg’s starting point for proposing a relational approach to ministry, and particularly to ecclesial ministerial relations.

In *Ministries*, Hahnenberg provides the features of both the christological view of ministry (the relation of ministry to Jesus Christ) and the pneumatological view (the relation of ministry to the Holy Spirit) and then proposes as an alternative a trinitarian theology of ministry (which is relational), with a focus on persons in relationship. A trinitarian approach to ministry provides us with the theological language to focus on the *relational* aspect of ministry (with a focus on communion and mission) in contrast to a focus on the minister as an *individual*.

Hahnenberg provides a concrete example which helps to highlight the practical implications of moving toward a trinitarian approach to ministry. He describes a group of students preparing for lay ecclesial ministry and seminarians in a graduate course he was teaching. While they shared much in common after two years of studying together, there was a

¹⁴⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 92.

¹⁴⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 92.

significant difference: lay students were concerned about *doing* ministry, with a focus on effectiveness; seminarians were interested in *being* a minister, with a focus on function. This difference between students preparing for lay ministry and seminarians reflects the dual conversations on the theology of ministry since the Second Vatican Council: a theology of the priesthood with a focus on the christological, and the ontological, emphasizing the priest's ability to act in the person of Christ; and a theology of lay ministry, which is pneumatological and functional, emphasizing the charisms of the Holy Spirit. Hahnenberg suggests that the christological approach reflects "the conversation taking place primarily in seminaries, bishops' committees, and Vatican offices"¹⁴⁶ while the pneumatological approach reflects "the conversation taking place primarily in universities, formation programs, and national ministry associations."¹⁴⁷ The former has a difficulty incorporating new views of ministry, while the latter has a limited ability to address the question of priestly identity. Hahnenberg suggests that both approaches in isolation tend to promote individualism in ministry¹⁴⁸ with the focus on the minister *as an individual* as opposed to defining the minister by the person he or she becomes by virtue of *ecclesial relationships*.

Hahnenberg argues that a trinitarian foundation for a theology of ministry provides a necessary corrective to both (1) an overly christological view of ministry based on individual ontology with an emphasis on who the minister *is* and (2) an overly charismatic view of ministry based on what a minister *does*. Pursuing these two lines of understanding of ministry separately leads to an impasse. On the one hand, those who try to develop a theology to fit the reality of emerging forms of ministry have presented a challenge to the ontological approach to ministry

¹⁴⁶ Hahnenberg, "From Communion to Mission," 22.

¹⁴⁷ Hahnenberg, "From Communion to Mission," 22.

¹⁴⁸ Hahnenberg, "From Communion to Mission," 23.

(with its focus on being). On the other hand, Hahnenberg suggests that “the magisterium fears losing the priesthood in an unqualified functionalism that ignores any special identity for the ordained.”¹⁴⁹ It becomes difficult to find common grounds for dialogue with such different starting points and objectives:

the official magisterium and theologians concerned with affirming the identity of the ordained priest draw on the christological language of representation while theologians addressing the rise of lay ministries and arguing for an expanded notion of ministry rely on the pneumatological language of charism.¹⁵⁰

In contrast, the trinitarian formula – one God and three persons – shows us that God is a relational God. Through the church, we are drawn into this relation of the love of God, and then sent out to live out this love. As St. Irenaeus of Lyons famously described, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the two hands of God. The two ‘missions’ of the triune God are the incarnation of the Word in Jesus of Nazareth and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world. Yet our reflection on ministry is not always rooted in this understanding of God as Trinity. Hahnenberg points out that “[t]he history of Christian reflection on ministry reveals that some individuals and traditions have chosen to emphasize one divine mission (the mission of Christ), while other individuals and traditions have chosen to emphasize the other (the mission of the Spirit).”¹⁵¹ He points out that at times, an over-emphasis on one or another mission has led to an extreme which neglects the other. Hahnenberg suggests that a trinitarian approach steers us away from this artificial separation and division between Christ and Spirit. A trinitarian approach

¹⁴⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 96.

¹⁵⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 79.

¹⁵¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 39.

is more than “...simply balancing references to Christ and Spirit; instead it involves reflecting on the deeper meaning of the Trinity as the mystery of persons in relationship.”¹⁵²

3.3 Evolution of an overly-christocentric approach to ministry

In the current theology of the priesthood individualism manifests itself in the focus on a decontextualized understanding of the priest acting *in persona Christi*.

Hahnenberg argues that an overly-christocentric approach to ministry took root through a series of interpretative moments around the notion of *in persona Christi* which led to a hardening of the representational aspect of priesthood in a way which was removed from the Christian community. Hahnenberg traces how an overly-christocentric understanding of ministry took root in the Roman Catholic church, tracing the evolution of understanding the role of the priest acting *in the place of Christ* to the priests acting as *another Christ*. What had been intended as a relational category came to be seen as an emphasis on the identity of the priest as an individual. We will examine how this shift in meaning took place, and the role which *ressourcement* theology played in retrieving earlier understandings, and the implications of this for a theology of ministry. We will see below how the retrieval of the ecclesial context of the priesthood at the Second Vatican Council has opened the way for us to situate the ordained priesthood within a more trinitarian understanding of communion and mission.

The understanding of *in persona Christi* which was operative throughout the Middle Ages to the beginning of the twentieth century was based on a neo-scholastic reading of Saint Thomas Aquinas. It is helpful, then to see what Thomas Aquinas intended in his writings, and to

¹⁵² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 41.

see how an ahistorical read of his work led to a distortion in the christological foundations of the priesthood which was operative until the Second Vatican Council.

Aquinas was trying to present the Christian faith using the dominant Aristotelian language and categories of his day. In this case of understanding the role of priests presiding over the Eucharist, Aquinas used the Aristotelian categories of *principal* and *instrumental* causes. Understanding these terms is key to understanding what Aquinas was trying to say. For Aristotle “a principal cause is the what or the who that acts to achieve some goal, an instrumental cause is the what or the who used by the agent in achieving that goal.”¹⁵³ Applying these concepts to the priest presiding over the Eucharist meant:

...in the sacraments, the priest (instrumental cause) is radically subordinate to Christ (principal cause). For Aquinas, no created reality can be the principal cause of the uncreated reality of grace. A human being can only be an instrument of grace, an instrument of Christ’s activity. At the central sacramental moments (especially the words of consecration) the acts of the priest are in fact the acts of Christ.¹⁵⁴

What is important here is that the point which Aquinas was making was to highlight the free gift of grace and the power of Christ, *and not* the power of the priest. Removed from its wider philosophical underpinnings, however, Aquinas’ synthesis was hardened into proofs which lost their dynamic explanatory capacity. This hardening applied to many areas of Aquinas’ thought, include this reference to the priest acting *in persona Christi*. The focus in Aquinas and in medieval theology “tended to describe the ordained minister’s relationship to Christ in terms

¹⁵³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 44.

¹⁵⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 44.

of the specific activity of the priest – the priest is like Christ because he acts in the person of Christ, particularly in the Eucharist.”¹⁵⁵ In the late Middle Ages, the focus shifted from the *activity* of the priest (*the priest acting in persona Christi*) to the *person* of the priest, with the priest becoming another Christ (*alter Christus*). Over time, there was a shift from the action of Christ through the priest to the language of representation: “the priest not only acts for Christ, the priest is uniquely like Christ.”¹⁵⁶ The focus was placed on the *person* in ministry rather his *ministry* itself, on the *being* of the priest rather than the *action* of Christ.

This emphasis on representation persisted into the 19th and early 20th centuries. The encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) expressed in a particularly straightforward way the view of the ordained priesthood which had evolved.¹⁵⁷ The encyclical gave “strong papal support to the view that the priest *represents* Christ”¹⁵⁸ during the Eucharistic prayer and absolution in a way which “tended to overshadow the ecclesial dimension of the priest’s ministry, and thus his relationship to the community.”¹⁵⁹ This view of the ordained priesthood, spiritualized by the French School (which was described in chapter 2), gave rise to a spiritual notion of the priest as a man apart, surrounded by an aura of holiness. It made it possible to conceptualize the ordained priesthood as pertaining to the individual ministers apart from any ecclesial, communal and relational dimensions.

In the early twentieth century, certain theologians began to examine the sources of the Christian tradition by returning directly to the source documents (e.g. the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas). These theologians noticed that what was being taught as the

¹⁵⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 44.

¹⁵⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 47.

¹⁵⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 48.

¹⁵⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 48 (emphasis mine).

¹⁵⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 47.

thought of these church Fathers was in fact a hardened interpretive tradition which at times significantly deviated from the original texts. By returning to the sources of the Tradition, these theologians were able to retrieve the theology of these Church Fathers and to bring them into dialogue with the modern world. The work of these theologians contributed significantly to the deliberations and documents of the Second Vatican Council, which retrieved the understanding of the church as the *whole* community, not only the institutional church. For example, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the chapter on People of God is placed before the chapter on the hierarchy. Hahnenberg notes that “the Council did not abandon the traditional identification of the priest with Christ, but placed the ordained priesthood within a broader christological perspective.”¹⁶⁰

3.3.1 The recovery of *in persona Christi capitis*

There has been a move since the early part of the twentieth century, and particularly since the Second Vatican Council, to retrieve the ecclesial, communal and relational dimensions of the ordained priesthood. Since the Second Vatican Council, theologians have emphasized that the “a priest represents Christ by representing the whole Christ, the body of the church with Christ as its head.”¹⁶¹ The relation of the priest is to the *totus Christi*, the body in union with its head, or in the language used by documents of the Second Vatican Council to describe the leadership role of priests and bishops, *in persona Christi capitis*.¹⁶² This is a deeply relational term – Christ is the

¹⁶⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 52.

¹⁶¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 56.

¹⁶² Describing the use of *in persona Christi* and *in persona Christi capitis*, Hahnenberg cites the work of Samuel J. Aquila. *The teaching of Vatican II on “In Persona Christi” and “In Nomine Ecclesiae” in Relation to the Ministerial Priesthood in Light of the Historical Development of the Formulae* (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Anselmianum, 1990) and David N. Power. “Church Order: The Need for Redress,” *Worship* 71 (1997). On page 50 of Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, he indicates the texts which use the term *in persona Christi* and *in persona Christi capitis* as follows: *Lumen Gentium* nn.10,13,21,28; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* n.33; and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* nn. 2,6,12,13.

head of the body, but the head does not exist for its own sake. Just as the Father can only be Father if there is a Son (thus Father is an inherently relational term), also the use of the term “head” only makes sense because it is the head of a body. Hahnenberg indicates that, by including the word *capitis* alongside *in persona Christi* there is an acknowledgement that “acting in persona Christi is not limited within the liturgy to the words of consecration; nor is the priest’s unique relationship to Christ limited to the liturgy. The broader pastoral task of priest...is associated with Christ’s role as head of the church.”¹⁶³ This emphasises the ecclesial and relational aspects of priesthood.

Hahnenberg points out that Pope John Paul II in his 1994 apostolic letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, placed *in persona Christi* in the context of the church community and reiterated the teaching of Vatican II that “the ordained priest exists within and to serve the priesthood of all believers.”¹⁶⁴ Cautious of a functional or utilitarian view of the priesthood – one that would reduce the meaning of the priesthood to what the priest does – John Paul II asserted that through ordination, the priest becomes so intimately united with Christ that this relationship touches the very core of his being (and thus affects him ontologically). But this ontological account has an explicitly ecclesial character: the nature of the priesthood cannot be understood apart from the people to whom and with whom the priest ministers.¹⁶⁵ While Pope John Paul II maintained a priority of the priest’s christological representation in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, this is set within an ecclesial network of relationships.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 50.

¹⁶⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 52.

¹⁶⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 54.

¹⁶⁶ *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, n.12.

For Hahnenberg, the problem arises with a christological priority which sees the priest's relationship to the church as secondary to his relationship to Christ in a way which presents the priest as "existing over the community."¹⁶⁷ He suggests that this perspective continues to exist alongside a theology of priesthood which gives equal weight to *in persona Christi* and *in persona ecclesia*. As an example of the persistence of this representational notion of sacramental priesthood, Hahnenberg points to the 1976 Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, *Inter Insigniores*. Hahnenberg points out that in *Inter Insigniores*, the priest's representation of Christ (externalized such that the priest represents Christ in his maleness)¹⁶⁸ was given priority to the priest's representation of the community (which includes both men and women). While both *Mediator Dei* and *Inter Insigniores* recognize both the Christological and ecclesial aspects of the priesthood, they give precedence to the priest's role of acting *in persona Christi* – "representing Christ comes before representing the church."¹⁶⁹ This contributes to an individualistic understanding of the priesthood.

Hahnenberg argues that it does not make sense to give priority to the priest's representation of Christ. He points to the insights of theologians such as Edward Kilmartin,¹⁷⁰ David Power¹⁷¹ and Susan Wood¹⁷² to conclude that "in making Christ present to the world, Christ is the 'primordial sacrament' of God, the first and fundamental sign of God's self-sharing.

¹⁶⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 55.

¹⁶⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 49.

¹⁶⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 51.

¹⁷⁰ Edward Kilmartin. "Lay Participation in the Apostolate of the Hierarchy," *The Jurist* 41 (1981); Edward Kilmartin. "Apostolic Office: Sacrament of Christ," *Theological Studies* 36 (1975) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 56-67.

¹⁷¹ David Power, "Representing Christ in Community and Sacrament," in *Being a Priest Today*, ed. Donald J. Goergen (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1992); David N. Power. "Church Order: The Need for Redress," *Worship* 71 (1997) as cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 57.

¹⁷² Susan K. Wood. "Priestly identity: Sacrament of the Ecclesial Community," *Worship* 69 (1995) as cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 58.

The church, by continuing Christ's presence on earth, is the 'basic sacrament' of Christ."¹⁷³ The seven sacraments flow from the church: not directly from God, "but rather from God to Christ to the church to the individual sacraments."¹⁷⁴ With this understanding, we can see that the priest cannot act *in persona Christi* without also acting *in persona Ecclesiae*. The priest cannot act *in persona Christi* "apart from the body which is the church."¹⁷⁵

3.4 Relation of ministry to the Holy Spirit

We have seen how an overly-christological approach to ministry leads to an overly-individualized understanding of the role of the priest apart from the community which is the church. Similarly, a conceptualization of ministry which is overly-pneumatological can lead to an understanding of ministry as a particular gift of the Holy Spirit to an individual in a way which similarly can be individualistic and where the application of that gift to the community is seen to be secondary. What is important here is to retrieve a pneumatological approach to ministry which can view charisms as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's pervasive presence in the church, and not as miraculous forces given to the few for their own use.

We saw above how the christological understanding of ministry has been the primary focus as it relates to ordained ministry in the Roman Catholic Church. We will now turn to the foundations of a pneumatological approach to ministry in Scripture, in the Reformed churches, and in the Roman Catholic Church.

Hahnenberg traces the relation of ministry to the Holy Spirit to Saint Paul, who recognized that the members of the community were provided with charisms for the benefit of

¹⁷³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 56.

¹⁷⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 57.

the community. What is important to note is that charisms were not provided for the good and the benefit of the isolated individual, but for the community. As opposed to the Eastern churches, the West developed an understanding of charisms as gifts to and for the individual. Charism lost its ecclesial context and was put in opposition to the church institution. Hahnenberg points out that “the Reformation challenge to church structure and the Reformers’ return to the Pauline notion of charism only hardened the Catholic contrast between the individual charismatic and the community.”¹⁷⁶

Hahnenberg points to the work of Johann Adam Möhler as the first Roman Catholic theologian since the Middle Ages to reintroduce the Holy Spirit into ecclesiology in a systematic way. For Möhler¹⁷⁷, the “church is not a mere association or a static legal entity, rather is a theological reality, a dynamic living organism made possible by God’s indwelling Spirit.”¹⁷⁸ Prior to Vatican II, Catholics viewed charisms as private and isolated, disconnected from ministry, and of little value for the church. This began to change in the mid-twentieth century, when theologians began to challenge the neo-scholastic theologies which had emphasized the institutional church. These theologians helped pave the way for an ecclesiology which was able to incorporate the vital force of the Holy Spirit. We will look at two of these theologians, Yves Congar¹⁷⁹ and Karl Rahner¹⁸⁰, who both contributed significantly to the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

¹⁷⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 62.

¹⁷⁷ Johann Adam Möhler. *Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism: Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*, trans. Peter C. Erb (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 69.

¹⁷⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 69.

¹⁷⁹ Yves Congar. “Pneumatology Today,” *American Ecclesiastical Review* 167 (1973) and Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol.1, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad, 1997) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 69-72.

¹⁸⁰ Karl Rahner, “The Charismatic Element in the Church,” in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964) and Karl Rahner, “Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol.12 (New York: Seabury, 1974) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 70.

Congar understood the church as a structured communion. There is only one God, thus the same Holy Spirit who is at work in the ordained is also at work in the baptized. He argued that it is the same God who acts in harmony between the institutional and the charismatic structures of the church. For Congar, “the church receives the fullness of the Spirit only in the totality of the gifts – i.e., the totality of charisms – given to all its members.”¹⁸¹ The church is a community with a structure (as opposed to a structure which serves a community). Congar understood that the charisms of the Spirit cannot stand in opposition to church.

For Rahner, grace was not related to extrinsic and occasional powers, but a manifestation of God’s ever-present Spirit. Understood this way, charisms are not just an *aspect* of the church, they are foundational: “Institutional structures and ministries exist to serve the reality of God’s self-sharing. Their motivating force is charism.”¹⁸² This understanding of charisms helped “overcome an historical trajectory that had driven a wedge between charism and institution.”¹⁸³

The role of Yves Congar was instrumental in paving way for the Second Vatican Council’s move to accept that because there can only be one Holy Spirit, all charismatic gifts come from the same Spirit. Although the Second Vatican Council opened discussion about the gifts which the Holy Spirit called forth for the building up of the church this was not universally welcomed by Council Fathers. Some felt that a recognition of charisms would be a threat to the priesthood and would lead to pastoral disorder.

Although charisms and ministry went hand-in-hand in the theology of Saint Paul, throughout history, “the free activity of the Spirit has been seen as a threat to the order of

¹⁸¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 70.

¹⁸² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 71.

¹⁸³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 71.

hierarchically established church because the person with a distinctive spiritual charism could claim an independent inspiration, an authority that was based, not in the community, but on God alone.”¹⁸⁴ Yet, Hahnenberg suggests, in line with Congar, that it is possible to develop a theology of ministry which can make room for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the ordained ministries if we let go of an individualist approach to ministry and view ministries within their ecclesial relationships. One way of doing this is to view ministries in a trinitarian way, recognizing that all the baptized are called to participate in the mission of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This common mission can make room for distinct roles which are proper to those who are ordained and to the laity. While there are many charisms required in the church in the service of its mission, the charism which is particular to the ordained ministries of presbyter and bishop are the charisms of leadership.¹⁸⁵ Using this emphasis on leadership as a charism enables a discussion of both the expansion and the diversification of ministry while affirming “traditional and new modes of service.”¹⁸⁶ Thomas O’Meara suggests that the charism of leadership expresses itself not only in administrative and liturgical ways, but also in enabling Christians in their own baptismal ministry – i.e. in calling forth the gifts of others in the church. “While two conversations, the christological and the pneumatological, continue [Hahnenberg] suggest[s] that they can be brought into dialogue with one another. This dialogue will depend on the language of relationship and on framing the theme of ministry within a trinitarian theology.”¹⁸⁷ We now turn to Hahnenberg’s trinitarian foundations for a theology of ministry.

¹⁸⁴ Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission,” 23.

¹⁸⁵ Hahnenberg makes reference to a number of theologians who have made the link between ordination and the charism of leadership, including David Power, Nathan Mitchell, and Edward Schillebeeckx.

¹⁸⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 72.

¹⁸⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 75.

3.5 Trinitarian foundations for a theology of ministry

We have seen that an overly christocentric approach to ministry evolved in an individualistic and ontological theology of priesthood which is focused on the priest's personal identification with Christ. We have also seen how the pneumatological approach to ministry similarly risks viewing ministry as a gift to an individual apart from a community of faith, leading to a functional approach to ministry. Hahnenberg proposes a trinitarian theology of ministry which brings the christological and pneumatological approaches into dialogue in the context of a Christian community. Hahnenberg situates this trinitarian theology of ministry in the renewed attention to the Trinity in the mid-twentieth century.

Hahnenberg proposes two ways of applying a trinitarian approach to a theology of ministry. The first examines the inseparable activity of Christ and the Spirit in complementary relation. The second is based on the trinitarian life of God as persons in relation. Hahnenberg's starting point on the Trinity is important to grasp here: "God's ultimate reality lies not in nature or substance (what a thing is in itself), but in personhood, relationship, love."¹⁸⁸

3.5.1 A trinitarian approach based on the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit

The first way of incorporating a trinitarian approach calls on the need to simultaneously incorporate the christological and pneumatological dimensions, situating ministry as working together in the service of the one mission. A helpful metaphor for this approach is that proposed by Irenaeus of Lyons of the Son and the Holy Spirit as the two hands of God to express the movement of God toward man. All Christian ministries are a participation in the Missions of

¹⁸⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 77.

both the Son and the Holy Spirit, all Christian ministers are called by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Here, Hahnenberg turns to the ecclesiology of Yves Congar, and to Congar's evolution in thinking about the laity and the ordained priesthood.¹⁸⁹ At first, Congar linked the ordained as belonging to the historical mission of Jesus, a mission equated with the church structure. In contrast, the role of the laity was to bear fruit in the world. Congar later came to realize that this dividing-line model of church was inadequate, based on a dualism between Christ/institution and the free intervention of the Spirit. He then drew on scriptural and patristic sources to suggest that all ministry is grounded in both Christ *and* Spirit. Christ and Spirit together are the ultimate source of every ministry, with charism and institution in a position of complementarity rather than opposition.

Such an approach allows for a distinctive role for ordained ministers. Congar suggested that there was "special relationship between Christ and holy orders – a relationship characterized by the theological language of institution by Christ and apostolic succession."¹⁹⁰ Hahnenberg suggests that what distinguishes the presbyteral and episcopal ministries from the lay ministry is the exercise of leadership and coordination within the community, acting *in persona Christi capitis*, empowered by the gifts of the Holy Spirit for that role. This form of leadership is not one of domination. Rather, it is at the service of the priesthood of all the baptized:

...it does not exhaust the Church's ministries. It does not represent the *whole Christ*. The ordained minister, precisely because he acts '*in persona Christi capitis*,' ...calls attention

¹⁸⁹ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol.2 trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad, 1997) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 77-79.

¹⁹⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 78.

to the of the members of the body, to the variety of the gifts and services raised up by the Holy Spirit. A ministry of synthesis, it must not become a synthesis of ministries.¹⁹¹

In this way, all ministry is profoundly relational – drawing ministers into the relation of the Trinity and placed in relation to a living community of faith. Both the ordained and lay ministries participate in the divine Mission of the triune God, with the particularity of ordained priesthood being the charism of leadership and coordination of the charisms present within the community.

3.5.2 The trinitarian approach based on persons in relation

Hahnenberg moves from a discussion of the immanent Trinity (God towards us as experienced in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit) to examine the implications of understanding ministry as a participation in the economic Trinity – in the relation of love of Father, Son and Spirit which is at the core of God. This is based on an understanding that the ontology of God is relational, and that this relationality is inherent to our participation in the life of God in ministry in the church. Christ and Spirit invite us into relationship with God.

Hahnenberg argues that "the crucial move of trinitarian theology is to claim that this *activity* expresses the very *reality* of God. God not only seeks a relationship, God lives as a dynamic of relationships, a communion of persons."¹⁹²

The key to understanding the link between the Trinity and the relational approach to ministry is an understanding of the Trinity as persons in relation, with a focus on the *in relation*:

¹⁹¹ Bruno Forte, *The Church: Icon of the Trinity: A Brief Study*, trans. Robert Paolucci (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1991), 44 as cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 83.

¹⁹² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 83.

According to the Christian view of the Trinity, God is a fundamentally relational reality, a loving communion of persons that spills over, reaching out and drawing us into the divine life. This relational view of God is at the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity, a recognition that opens up new perspectives on reality itself and suggests fresh language for talking about ministry.¹⁹³

In the discussion of the evolution in understanding the representational notion of priesthood, we saw how medieval theology introduced substance ontology, where the reality was focused on the substance of things apart from their relational existence. Hahnenberg presents an overview of the key insights of the trinitarian doctrine which arose in the Greek-speaking world in the fourth century, whereby the persons of Father, Son and Spirit are defined by the relational category of their personhood (*hypostases*) rather than by their nature (*ousia*). Personhood, which is constituted by relationship, is the ultimate ontological category, or in the words of ecclesiologist John Zizioulas, “personhood is not an adjunct to being but the very way in which being exists.”¹⁹⁴

Hahnenberg clarifies the misleading understanding which arises out of the use of the word “person” today. We equate “person” with “a discrete individual, an autonomous centre of consciousness.”¹⁹⁵ In our modern mentality, the subject is *prior* to the relationship. This, however, is not the understanding of “person” that underpins trinitarian doctrine. The Cappadocian conception of person is one where the divine person (Father, Son and Spirit) “does not exist prior to relationship; rather a divine person exists *only in and through relationship*.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 86.

¹⁹⁴ John Zizioulas *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*(Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985),40-41 in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 89.

¹⁹⁵ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 90.

¹⁹⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 90.

In other words, the ontology of God is loving relation. God is love. Hahnenberg then quotes Kasper, who draws the anthropological consequences arising from a personal, relational understanding of the Trinity:

Neither the substance of the ancients nor the person of the moderns is ultimate, but rather relation as the primordial category of reality. The statement that persons are relations is, of course, first of all simply a statement about the trinity of God, but important conclusions follow from it with regard to man as image and likeness of God. Man is neither a self-sufficient in-himself (substance) nor an autonomous individual for-himself (subject) but a being from God and to God, from other human beings and to other human beings; he lives humanly on in I-Thou-We relations. Love proves to be the meaning of his being.¹⁹⁷

Ministers are not primarily isolated individuals whose relationships of service are secondary or nonessential to their existence as ministers. Instead, one becomes a minister by entering into and being established in relationships of service. Hahnenberg suggests that the work of theologians at the end of the 20th century opened new, more relational avenues for talking about ministry. This relational approach to ministry can have a significant impact on addressing practical questions arising out of new forms of ministry today as well as the ministry of the ordained. In developing a trinitarian approach to ministry based on God as relationship, Hahnenberg builds on the work of theologians such as Elizabeth Johnson and John Zizioulas¹⁹⁸ who contend that a proper understanding of the nature of the Trinity grounds a proper Christian

¹⁹⁷ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), FN 290 in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 91.

¹⁹⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1992) and John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 85-90.

understanding of the person, and that this has practical implications for our relationships with one another and with God. Hahnenberg's central argument revolves on this link between the nature of the Trinity and ministry:

Thinking about God as Trinity leads us into the mystery of relationships. Talking about ministry in the language of trinitarian doctrine leads us to a relational approach to ministry.¹⁹⁹

3.6 Conclusion

There are practical implications which arise when we consider that the essence of God is persons in relation. If "God is a fundamentally relational being, a loving communion that spills over, reaching out and drawing us into the divine life"²⁰⁰ and if we are made in the image and likeness of God, then it follows that we are also relational beings. This poses a challenge to the individualism of the western world, including any individualistic approach to understanding ministry. Ministry is a relational category, not a gift to an individual for the purpose of that individual. A trinitarian approach to ministry provides an alternative to individualism:

Ministers are not primarily isolated individuals whose relationships of service are secondary or nonessential to their existence as ministers. One becomes a minister by entering into and being established in relationships of service. Like the three persons of the Trinity, the person in ministry finds her or his identity and purpose in relationship.²⁰¹

As we have seen, both an overly-christological and an overly-pneumatological approach can reflect individualism in ministry, were ministry exists for itself, apart from the church

¹⁹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 76.

²⁰⁰ Hahnenberg, "From Communion to Mission," 25.

²⁰¹ Hahnenberg, "From Communion to Mission," 25

community. For Hahnenberg, a theology of ministry needs to be relational at its very core – rooted in the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and in the context of ecclesial relationships in the church. This chapter has explored how a trinitarian theology of ministry helps to move away from an individualistic approach toward an approach which is inherently relational, in the context of the church community. Hahnenberg explains how this approach can provide a fruitful starting point for situation lay ecclesial ministries:

The choice between Christ-centered ontological accounts and charism-based, functional accounts is not a helpful framework. For it is not in individual status or in specific tasks, but in relationships of service, that the minister finds his or her identity and purpose. All ministers share this common foundation, they minister in relationships and they minister to relationships – a call rooted in the very life and mission of the triune God.²⁰²

In the next chapter, we will turn to how our understanding of church can either facilitate or hinder this relational approach to ministry.

²⁰² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 5.

Chapter 4

Ministries in Their Ecclesial Context

As we have seen, recognizing that God is inherently relational within Godself has important implications for how we see our relationships within the Christian community. It is the entire community which is drawn into the relation of the triune God. The entire community participates in the communion and mission of God. Some models of church are more conducive to expressing this reality than others. In this chapter, we will view how the Second Vatican Council allowed the church to conceive of church in dynamic language which moved beyond a rigid institutional model of church. We will then consider the ecclesiological consequences of a trinitarian approach to ministry. As Hahnenberg points out:

Simply affirming that the church is a communion without articulating structures of communion can empty the concept of meaning, or worse, open the concept to manipulation by a descending, hierarchical model of church. In the realm of ministry, the language of ordered communion prompts the questions: What shape should ministerial order take? On what is this order based?²⁰³

Hahnenberg discusses the development of ecclesiological models and draws out their implications for an actualizing a relational approach to ministry – from the preconciliar view of the church as visible institution, to church as a mystery of union with God and unity among people, and finally to the model of church as an ordered communion.²⁰⁴ He then examines the implications of communion theology to a theology of ministry.

²⁰³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 123.

²⁰⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 100.

4.1 Church as institution

The preconiliar view of the church as a visible institution is epitomized by the definition proposed by Cardinal Robert Bellarmine in the sixteenth century:

The one true Church is the society of men bound together by profession of the same Christian faith, and by communion of the same sacraments, under the rule of legitimate pastors and in particular under the one vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff...and it is as visible as the Kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice.²⁰⁵

This self-understanding of the church, with a focus on its visible structures existed from the post-Reformation period until the time of the Second Vatican Council. In such a church, the participation of the laity in the mission of the church (in movements such as Catholic Action) was described as “a *participation in* the apostolate of the church’s hierarchy.”²⁰⁶ This model of church assumed a passive role for the laity. Ministry within this mode was limited to the ordained.

4.2 Church as mystery

The Second Vatican Council opened the door to new ways of conceptualizing church, recognizing that “all Christians, clergy and laity, share directly in the ministry and mission of Christ.”²⁰⁷ In such a church, visible structures “exist to signify and serve the primary realities of communion with God, unity among believers, and service to the reign of God.”²⁰⁸ In contrast to

²⁰⁵ Robert Bellarmine, *De controversiis*, tom.2, lib.3, cap.2 (Naples: Giuliano, 1857), as cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 101.

²⁰⁶ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 105.

²⁰⁷ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 108.

²⁰⁸ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 109.

the static, hierarchical definitions which had existed, Council documents presented a dynamic, living church, using metaphors such as Body of Christ, People of God, and Temple of the Holy Spirit. Hahnenberg points to text in the *Decree on the Apostolate of Laity – Apostolicam Actuositatem* to support his claim that it would no longer be possible after the Second Vatican Council to talk about the role of the laity as merely a participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy:

Every activity of the mystical body, with this in view, goes by the name of apostolate, which the church exercises through all its members, though in various ways. In fact, the Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well. In the organism of a living body no member is purely passive: sharing in the life of the body each member also shares in its activity.²⁰⁹

Hahnenberg points to the organization of the chapters in *Lumen Gentium* to highlight how the Second Vatican Council attributed a place of primacy to the community, opening with a chapter on “the People of God” before the chapters on either the hierarchy (chapter 3) or the laity (chapter 4). For Hahnenberg, this emphasizes the fact that the church is first and foremost a living community constituted by baptism and in mission to the world, not a static institutional structure: it “extends beyond the institution, beyond the hierarchy, to include the whole community of believers.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* n. 2 as cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 112.

²¹⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 116.

4.3 Implications of communion theology

Hahnenberg recognizes that “there are many approaches to and versions of communion ecclesiology today.”²¹¹ Despite the diversity of communion ecclesiologies, what is significant is the ground which is common to all these ecclesiologies: “all attempt to present the church as participating in the life of the triune God and marked by a set of relationships, a communion, characteristic of God’s very self.”²¹²

Hahnenberg points out how a number of theologians, many of whom have been associated with the international *Communio* movement, including Joseph Ratzinger, have developed a spiritualized ecclesiology, one where “the church becomes an ideal communion, a mystery modeled on a mystery of the triune God, rather than an historical community carrying forward the mission of Christ in the Spirit,”²¹³ based on a pessimistic view of the world, with the church situated above and beyond this reality. In this model, primacy is given to an idealized universal church over the contextually embedded local church. Such a view emphasizes uniformity and conformity, rather than unity in diversity. This makes it difficult for local churches to incorporate local experiences, such as lay ecclesial ministry. This version of communion is based on an idealized vision of church which reflects a “descending, hierarchical model of ministerial activity.”²¹⁴

In order to develop a theological framework which recognizes the new experiences of ministry at the local level, Hahnenberg calls for the need to develop an alternative to this idealized vision of church with its overly-spiritualized ecclesiology of communion. He calls for a

²¹¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 116.

²¹² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 116

²¹³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 118.

²¹⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 121.

communion which takes as its starting point the church as ordered communion. The purpose of this ordered communion is not an idealized structure. Rather, structures and ministries are at the service of communion between God and his people, and the exercise of the community's mission in the world. Hahnenberg illustrates this with a model which builds upon Congar's concentric circles of ministries model.

We have seen that a trinitarian approach to ministry necessarily situates the minister in the context of a Christian community, engaged in the missions of both Christ and the Holy Spirit in a way which draws all into relationship. This ecclesial context, for Hahnenberg is of primary importance. Within this ecclesial context, it is possible to find ways to talk about the distinctions in ministry: distinctions between the baptismal priesthood of all the baptised, the occasional ministry of these in the life of the church, more long-term, professional commitments in the church, and the ordained ministries of deacon, priest and bishop.

Hahnenberg presents the work of various theologians who have reflected on the ordering of the baptismal priesthood. He looks to Richard Gaillardetz, who suggests that the public nature of the work of lay ecclesial ministers brings about an ecclesial re-positioning, which is observable to the public and to those in the church, whether or not the position is recognized in a way which is ritualized²¹⁵. He turns to the work of Richard McBrien, who distinguished between *universal ministry*, which is the work of all the baptised by virtue of their baptism, and *specific ministry*, which is done *in the name of the Church*.²¹⁶ Hahnenberg presents the work of Yves Congar, who proposed a three levels of ministry: a first level of general ministry which is

²¹⁵ Richard Gaillardetz, "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 65 (1999) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 130,

²¹⁶ Richard P. McBrien, *Ministry: A Theological, Pastoral Handbook* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 125.

occasional and spontaneous, a second level of ministry which is more stable, organized and public, and a third level of the ordained ministries of deacon, presbyter, and bishop.²¹⁷ Yet another model, using concentric circles, is proposed by Thomas O’Meara, with ministries of leadership in the centre, moving out to full-time ministries which require professional qualification and a long-term commitment, followed by more occasional ministries.²¹⁸ This leads Hahnenberg to identify three factors which shape the ecclesial position of any ministers: “the minister’s commitment to ministry, the significance and public nature of the ministry itself, and, the recognition accorded by the community and its leaders.”²¹⁹

Hahnenberg builds on the insights of Congar and O’Meara to propose a concentric circle model with categories which provide a more nuanced “interplay of ministerial reality and church recognition”²²⁰ that takes into consideration degree of commitment and coordination.

Hahnenberg’s categories include:

- 1) “Leaders of communities whose task it is to recognize, promote, and coordinate all the various ministries in the church under their care”²²¹;
- 2) “full-time leaders of important areas of ministry within the community”²²²;
- 3) Occasional public ministries;
- 4) General Christian ministry in the church and the world.

²¹⁷ Yves Congar, *Ministères et structuration de l’Église*, » in *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (Paris : Cerf, 1971) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 126.

²¹⁸ Thomas F. O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999) in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 126.

²¹⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 131.

²²⁰ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 126.

²²¹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 126.

²²² Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 127.

This model holds together many of the key insights which Hahnenberg discusses regarding lay ecclesial ministry. It is embedded in an ecclesial community, at the service of the ministry of all the baptized in the world. It recognizes the role of leadership, acknowledging that this role is generated by both the intensity of commitment and the church recognition. As such, it is a normal role for those who have been ordained, as these make a life-long commitment to ministry which is officially recognized in ordination.

4.4 Conclusion

As we try to find common ground and language to discuss lay ecclesial ministry in the church, it becomes important to name our starting points and to be conscious of the models which shape our horizons of understanding. If we take as a starting point a communion which is idealist, then we can continue to hold an ideal model of church which exists outside of the historical reality, holding onto a notion of a timeless model of church. Such a model makes it possible to maintain a dividing-line model of church and ministry which situates a duality between church/world and ordained/laity. This has important implications for lay ecclesial ministry:

If we enter the discussion on church and ministry through the door of the *hierarchical priesthood* and consider the bishop or presbyter as exclusive recipients of a direct call from Christ and as paradigmatic for all ministry, then it is difficult to see the layperson as anything more than a helper or participant in work that properly belongs to the ordained. ...On the other hand, if we enter the discussion through the door of the *community*, then we are better equipped to describe the whole church as receiving a mission from Christ,

and we are able to affirm a diversity of active services within this community: one mission, many ministries.²²³

A communion ecclesiology can be based on the concentric-circle model which situates the church *in* the world with ministries at the service of the baptismal priesthood of all the baptized in a way which affirms distinctions in ministry with unity of mission in the context of a lived, historical reality. Sharing a common baptism, the purpose of all ministers is to serve the community in a common mission. The role of the bishop and presbyter is one of leadership, to coordinate the ministerial activity. What distinguishes the various ministries in this concentric-circles model is ecclesial recognition and commitment of service. These criteria help us to find the language to distinguish between occasional service on the one hand, and life-long commitments of the ordained on the other hand.

²²³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 9.

Chapter 5

The Role of the Anomaly and of Discernment in a Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

The development of lay ecclesial ministries is part of an ongoing movement of diversity and development, a blend of continuation and anomaly. Proper theological understanding of this development requires a detailed understanding of what is happening, and good tools and practices of discernment to understand whether “the new theological insight sparked by an anomaly leads in a faithful direction or down a false path.”²²⁴ We have seen in the preceding chapters that the growth in lay ecclesial ministry was not a well-orchestrated, planned outcome of the Second Vatican Council, but rather an anomaly which emerged in the post-conciliar period to meet needs within the church. In this chapter, we will see how the recovery of historicity in the years preceding the Second Vatican Council has forced our theological methods to deal with historical consciousness and with experience. We will turn to how the anomaly can become the seed of theological insight, and the skills of practical reason and discernment which Hahnenberg suggests are key to the theological project in dealing with anomalies such as lay ecclesial ministry.

5.1 The backdrop of Hahnenberg’s work: Jean-Dominique Chenu and the Second Vatican Council

The theological developments arising from the Second Vatican Council were prepared in the early part of the twentieth century by a movement of theologians who were growing in an awareness of historicity and the need to re-read Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers

²²⁴ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 175.

in light of this historicity. The work of these theologians came to be known as *la nouvelle théologie*, or *ressourcement*. This attention to historicity has changed how we engage in theological reflection, forcing upon us the reality that the church is not simply the repetition of unchanging forms, but is itself subject to the movement of time and interpreted within each historical time and place, allowing theology to move from a “classicist worldview (privileging the eternal and the universal) to a historical worldview (preferring change and particularity).”²²⁵ This makes it possible for the church to engage with change and, as such, it is critical to our question of arriving at a theology of ministry which can engage in the question of lay ecclesial ministry. Before describing Hahnenberg’s method of engaging with the anomaly in church forms, we will briefly look at the work of Jean-Dominique Chenu in attending to the “signs of the times” and in his call for discernment.

For Chenu and for the other theologians of the *Nouvelle Théologie*, Revelation is not a closed set of abstract principles, but following in the line of thinking of Thomas Aquinas, it is in continual and ongoing development of the Word, received in faith as a living community which reads the signs of the times to discern the way that the living Word comes into contact with the historical reality of the church in the world.²²⁶

In the language of the Second Vatican Council, “Reading the signs of the times” is an important way to discern how the living Word encounters the historical reality of the church in the world. While this may seem self-evident over fifty years after the Council, Chenu talks about

²²⁵ Bernard Lonergan, “The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical -Mindedness,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 1-9 in Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 161.

²²⁶ Jean-Dominique Chenu, “Les signes des temps: réflexion théologique,” in Yves Congar and Michel Peuchmard, eds. *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps : Constitution pastorale*, Gaudium et Spes. (Paris : Cerf, 1967), footnote 1, 207.

how the Council turned the way of doing things on its head. The theological method moved from superimposing a pre-established ecclesiology on the world to an inductive method, starting from the current conditions and events to find the seeds of grace within these.²²⁷ Reading of the signs of the times, is an active and ever-changing activity. And as in all actions, it requires practice and discernment.

5.2 Relevance of “signs of the times” for theology and pastoral practice

A recognition of historicity forces us try to understand events within their historical context to draw out the relevance for today. This is what the theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* were doing, and it this continues to be an important method for understanding the development of the Word of God today. This careful read of texts in their historical context to draw meaning for today continues to be an important theological method. Reading the “signs of the times” requires an openness to history and the unfolding of the Kingdom of God within history; a strong incarnational theology which sees elements of grace within nature, and the need for the entire People of God to engage in the ongoing task of discernment. Chenu recognized that the task of discernment of the signs of the times was wrought with ambiguity. He cited the pastor Lukas Vischer who notes that there are no criteria for differentiating in the events of the times that which is the voice of God and that which is not, from destructive forces, from sin.²²⁸

Chenu talks about the need for caution in reading the signs of the times. We can see this call for caution in the documents of the Second Vatican Council as well. *Gaudium et Spes* calls for discernment in reading the signs of the times – a task which is not limited to the hierarchical office of the church, but to the entire People of God:

²²⁷ Chenu "Les signes du temps," 213.

²²⁸ Chenu, "Les signes du temps," 216.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.²²⁹

Because reading the signs of the times becomes an act of the People of God in its entirety, Chenu describes how important it is for Christians to discern what is good. This discernment continues to be our Christian task. This need for discernment also applies for the lived reality within the church, an active engagement with the anomaly to discern, as church, whether it is possible to see within these signs indications of grace at work, a continuation of the salvific will of God, and a reaching toward the Kingdom of God. We will now turn to the way in which Hahnenberg applies this method to the question of lay ecclesial ministry: attending to the sociological fact of this type of ministry; identifying the anomaly, and then engaging in a communal discernment to lead us to better understanding and action.

5.3 Lay ecclesial ministry as an anomaly which can lead to new insights

We have seen that the post-conciliar period has been marked by a greater sense of historicity, and thus an ability to take the anomaly seriously. Hahnenberg suggests that the post-conciliar theology of ministry has moved from a deductive to inductive approach; from a doctrinal approach to an approach which takes experience and historicity seriously. This gives rise to an appreciation that tradition develops over time and is not limited to a repetition of eternal church forms. Tradition responds to changing historical realities, and thus must take experience seriously. Theology, according to Hahnenberg, must similarly take this reality

²²⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 44.

seriously: “The best theology is a theology rooted in reality. It is a theology that starts with the world – one that begins with experience.”²³⁰

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Hahnenberg’s work on the theology of vocation pays close attention to the historical forms and the debates which gave rise to changes over time. Pointing to the theologies of ministry of key theologians such as Thomas O’Meara, David Power, and Kenan Osborne, Hahnenberg notes that an attention to the history of ministry is characteristic of the post-conciliar theology of ministry. Furthermore, he suggests that it is in understanding this history that we can find new insights regarding ministry today. Hahnenberg emphasizes the importance of the retrieval of historical consciousness for a renewed theology of ministry:

I will argue that the most important shift for Catholic theologies of ministry over the past fifty years has been a shift in method – a move away from an approach that was deductive, doctrinal, and universalist to one that is inductive, empirical, and particularist.²³¹

By looking to history, Hahnenberg notes that we can see that “the baroque model of the priest was not an eternal ecclesial form but merely one chapter in an unfolding narrative.”²³² In fact, “the great Christian tradition of ministry is in fact many traditions.”²³³ Different ministerial forms have arisen through time – not as deliberate strategies, but as a response to the needs and historical realities of a given age. Hahnenberg suggests that the same applies to our

²³⁰ Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission,” 19.

²³¹ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 161.

²³² Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 161.

²³³ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 162.

understanding of lay ecclesial ministry. As in other historical moments, lay ecclesial ministry is an anomaly which can give rise to new insights which can advance our theologies of ministry.

Hahnenberg notes that “What does not fit within our present theologies is what inspires future theological development.”²³⁴ Thus the anomaly has the potential to become the seed of future development: “the concrete becomes creative, usually through the unexpected, the anomalous, the distinctive voice in all its messy particularity.”²³⁵ Not all changes and anomalies are movements in a positive or faithful way, however, so discernment becomes essential when we begin with lived experience. An awareness of history and an appeal to experience are two features are key to Hahnenberg’s work regarding lay ecclesial ministry.

5.4 Historical consciousness

Hahnenberg identifies two inherent biases in engaging in a history of ministry: an emphasis on looking at the biblical and patristic periods (neglecting ministerial developments of the Middle Ages through the modern period) and an over-reliance on official documents (and the ministerial ideals which are contained in these) rather than unofficial sources such as letters and diaries (which describe the experience on the ground).

He suggests that when we move away from idealized understandings of what was taking place at any given time, what then emerges is a “diversity of ministerial forms more intense and variegated than at first realized.”²³⁶ The official texts do not always tell the whole story or capture the full reality in its complexity. Sometimes, that which is significant in history is precisely that which is taking place but is not captured in the official texts which form the datum

²³⁴ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 170.

²³⁵ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 170.

²³⁶ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 163.

of history. As an example of this, Hahnenberg cites the work of John O'Malley²³⁷ which shows that the bishops gathered at Trent are silent on the great ministerial innovation and missionary activity which was taking place at that time, such as the growth of mendicant orders (such as the Dominicans), and their ability to serve communities with freedom from the jurisdiction of local bishops; the emergence of new apostolic communities such as the Society of Jesus; and the expansion of women religious in ministry.²³⁸ Though these were significant developments, these were not reflected in the official records of the Council. There is sometimes a discrepancy between the ideal which is reflected in texts and the actual reality. As a result, it is important to recognize that official documents may not provide an accurate picture of what was happening in ministry in a given time. We need to expand our sources and widen our historical vision.

Hahnenberg concludes that "it may very well be those moments and ministerial forms that do not fit within the dominant ecclesiological narratives that offer the most potential for future theological development."²³⁹ The anomaly can become source of theological insight.

5.5 An appeal to experience

Hahnenberg calls for a theology of lay ecclesial ministry which is rooted in the lived experience of the church. He argues that in-depth ethnographical studies can allow us to explore in depth existing ministerial structures to find what is surprising or unexpected, to see "the ways a theory falls short in the face of reality."²⁴⁰ The purpose of this is not to reject doctrine, but to "ask how previous understandings are confronted or complicated by reality."²⁴¹ Hahnenberg

²³⁷ John W. O'Malley, "One Priesthood: Two Traditions," in *A Concert of Charisms: Ordained Ministry in Religious Life*, ed. Paul K. Hennessy (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 17 cited in Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 164.

²³⁸ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 164.

²³⁹ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 165.

²⁴⁰ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 174.

²⁴¹ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 174.

points out that there are strands of theology which have been able to use experience as a starting point for theological reflection, pointing specifically at liberation theology and virtue ethics. But, he suggests, theology of ministry has been more reluctant to start with experience, despite the extensive sociological study of ministry in the United States over the past thirty years. Such studies, Hahnenberg argues, are key to applying an inductive approach to a theology of ministry, which by definition starts from lived experience. This opens up the possibility of using contextual anomalies as the starting point for theological reflection.

As we have seen in the Hahnenberg's historical overview of the evolving understanding of Christian vocation, "such anomalies create a crisis for the theory, sparking a reconsideration or revision of the theory."²⁴²

Hahnenberg presents an example which allows us to see the potential in using the anomaly as a source of theological insight. He describes the emergence of lay ecclesial positions which are known as parish life coordinators. In these positions of leadership, lay ecclesial ministers "preside over the community; but, because they are not ordained priests, do not preside over the Eucharist."²⁴³ He notes that we can try to eliminate the anomaly by other means, such as closing or amalgamating parishes. But we can also decide to allow the anomaly to become a source of theological insight, allowing it to give rise to creative theological reflection on the questions such as the ecclesial community, the celebration of the Eucharist, or the framework for ordered ministries. This, Hahnenberg suggests, would be a way in which the anomaly in the lived reality could give rise to an inductive approach, a theological reflection which begins with the lived reality rather than the ideal. Hahnenberg refers to this as practical reason and discernment.

²⁴² Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 174.

²⁴³ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 173.

Practical reason is not opposed to theoretical reason, but rather another route to travel to arrive at the truth. A theological method which takes praxis as a starting point provides an alternative to a deductive approach. Hahnenberg suggests that “a systematic theology of ministry has much to gain as a systematic theology by attending to the role of practical reason.”²⁴⁴

5.6 The role of discernment

A theological enquiry which begins from the anomaly is not about finding proof, but rather, insight. This gives rise to the question of determining whether “the new theological insight sparked by an anomaly leads in a faithful direction or down a false path.”²⁴⁵ Here, Hahnenberg identifies the need for the development of “the skills, perspectives, and wisdom needed for the proper exercise of practical reason.”²⁴⁶ These skills help us to answer questions such as:

Does this ministerial structure serve the reign of God that Jesus proclaimed? Does it contribute to the evangelizing mission of the church? Does it meet the recurring needs of the community? Does it foster the full human flourishing of women?²⁴⁷

Paying close attention to the reality of ministerial practices on the ground forces theologians to attend to the strands of wisdom within these practices. This requires discernment. Hahnenberg argues that “practical judgement” or discernment is an important method for a theology of ministry. What is needed is not only theoretical knowledge but also practical wisdom, *phronesis*, which like the cultivation of virtues, “develops through practice, the

²⁴⁴ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 176

²⁴⁵ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 175.

²⁴⁶ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 176.

²⁴⁷ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 176.

formation of habits that come through life lived within a particular narratives and particular communities.”²⁴⁸

He suggests that “close, on-the-ground attention to the concrete, local particularities of ministerial experience not only offers a more credible description of that reality; it also provides a kind of formation for the theologian”²⁴⁹ forcing them to cultivate these skills of practical judgement.

Hahnenberg notes that what is being discussed as practical judgement is the Christian practice of discernment: “Discernment is ... the discovery of our response to God’s always unprecedented and unique love for us in this place, at this time.”²⁵⁰

5.7 Conclusion

An awareness of historicity and an appeal to experience are two key features of Hahnenberg’s work on lay ecclesial ministry. An awareness of the past helps us to see that there are many traditions and expressions of ministry in the church’s history. Development arose out anomalies. Hahnenberg suggests that the anomaly holds the possibility of new insight, then it would follow that we should pay careful attention to the anomaly. In the case of lay ecclesial ministry, Hahnenberg calls for detailed ethnographic studies which can help us identify the questions which arise. These questions might challenge our assumptions. They might hold insights for the church. A theological reflection which takes experience seriously presents an alternative to a deductive approach to enquiry.

²⁴⁸ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 179.

²⁴⁹ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 179.

²⁵⁰ Hahnenberg, “Learning From Experience,” 179.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Edward Hahnenberg has made a sustained effort to develop a theology of lay ecclesial ministry both his scholarly work and his work with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In this thesis, I have reviewed his writings to draw out the main themes in his theology. Hahnenberg has contributed to this theological reflection in the following three ways:

1. He calls for a trinitarian theology of ministry which provides a relational rather than an individualistic approach to ministry.
2. He explores the history of a Christian understanding of “vocation” to find that it is broader than the question of “states of life.” He attends to more nuanced questions such as who is called? who does the calling? and what are we called to do?
3. He draws out the significance of “communion” ecclesiology for developing a theology of lay ecclesial ministry, with a focus on the concrete community and the unfolding reality of the church as historic subject.

6.1 The trinitarian foundation of ministry

Karl Rahner famously remarked that “Christians, for all their orthodox profession of faith in the Trinity, are almost just ‘monotheist’ in their actual religious existence. One might almost dare to affirm that if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be erased as false, most religious literature could be preserved almost unchanged throughout the process.”²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Rahner, Karl, *Theological Investigations Volume IV: More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth (London: The Seabury Press, 1974), 79.

The work of Karl Rahner provides a helpful context for understanding why Hahnenberg emphasises the importance of a trinitarian approach to ministry. For Hahnenberg and for Rahner, the immanent trinity is the economic trinity. The God revealed through salvation history is the God. The implication of this is that God is not some abstract notion for philosophers, but rather is actively engaged in history. This means that history and experience matters. Rahner points out the implication of an overemphasis on the unicity of God:

It deals with the necessary metaphysical attributes of God, and not very explicitly with the experiences of the history of salvation which have come from God's freely adopted relations to creation.²⁵²

Though a discussion about God as trinity appears to be a theoretical question with little to contribute to a theology of ministry, Hahnenberg's work demonstrates that it has important practical implications. Hahnenberg suggests that "Roman Catholic theologies of ministry presupposed a view of reality (ontology) that focused on particular individuals or things in themselves (substances) abstracted from their relational existence."²⁵³ Arguing that the ordained priesthood has been defined by an overly christological view of ministry and lay ecclesial ministry by an overly-pneumatological view, he calls for a focus on a trinitarian theology of ministry that requires us to begin with *relation* not *substance*. Turning to the classical Greek doctrine of the Trinity, Hahnenberg suggests that a divine person exists only *in and through relationship* with the other divine persons.²⁵⁴ In other words, personhood (which is by definition relational) is the ultimate ontological category, rather than "substance" or "being".

²⁵² Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 84

²⁵³ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 92.

²⁵⁴ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 90.

A trinitarian approach ensures that the question of ministerial identity is considered within an ecclesial theology of vocation – ministers are called in, through and on behalf of the ordered communion that is the church.²⁵⁵ If we understand that “God is a fundamentally relational being, a loving communion that spills over, reaching out and drawing us into the divine life”²⁵⁶ – if we are made in the “image and likeness of God”, then, we are also relational beings – a challenge to the individualism of the western world. Given this, a trinitarian approach to ministry provides an alternative to an individualist approach to ministry. A retrieval of a trinitarian theology of ministry allows us to find theological language which moves away from a contrastive view of laity and clergy which is based on situating each of these as a dichotomy.

He argues that, at this time, there are separate theologies of ministries for priests and for lay people:

1 – a theology of the priesthood which is Christological, and ontological, “emphasizing the priest’s ability to act ‘in the person of Christ and representing Christ to the community.’”²⁵⁷

2 – a theology of lay ministry which is pneumatological and functional, “emphasizing the charisms of the Spirit flowing out of baptism and toward an individual’s ministry.”²⁵⁸

In both cases, the focus is on the *individual*. A trinitarian approach to ministry allows us to see that ministers are not primarily isolated individuals whose relationships of service are secondary. The retrieval of a trinitarian, relational approach to ministry begins with the

²⁵⁵ Hahnenberg, “Serving in the Name of the Church,” 37.

²⁵⁶ Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission,” 25.

²⁵⁷ Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission,” 22.

²⁵⁸ Hahnenberg, “From Communion to Mission,” 22.

community of believers and only then considers the role of the persons who minister to that community.

He illustrates this with his model of concentric circles of ministry which situates the church *in* the world with ministries at the service of the baptismal priesthood of all the baptized in a way which affirms distinctions in ministry with unity of mission in the context of a lived, historical reality. In such a model, the ministers do not exist for their own purpose but to serve the community in a common mission. The Christian community becomes the common matrix of baptism, lay ecclesial ministry, and the ordained ministries. All ministries exist to be at the service of the mission of the People of God. The role of the bishop and presbyter is to coordinate the ministerial activity, all of which is “shared by Christ through the Spirit withal members of the community.”²⁵⁹ The distinctions in these ministries are only helpful inasmuch they as they can help us to move forward in a pastorally responsible way, putting in place the necessary supports to the various groups of people involved in the ministry of the church.

6.2 Hahnenberg’s treatment of the question of “vocation”

Hahnenberg suggests that the question of vocation is often viewed uniquely from the standpoint of “states of life”. This makes it almost impossible to use the term “vocation” in relation to lay ecclesial ministry, even though many lay ecclesial ministers express that they feel called to ministry. The conflation of “vocation” with “states of life” was made evident to Hahnenberg when the American bishops working on the question of lay ecclesial ministry began to ask themselves whether lay ecclesial ministry could be a fourth vocation, alongside marriage, religious life, and priesthood. Hahnenberg’s historical review of the concept of vocation helps to

²⁵⁹ Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 149.

see that it is possible to expand our understanding of vocation in such a way as to make space for persons who feel called to serve the church as lay ecclesial ministers.

Hahnenberg's points out that there has been much theological reflection and historical diversity related to vocation. He suggests that looking at vocation from the perspective of "who God calls us to be" and "what God calls us to do" provides a more fruitful starting point than the question of "how God calls us to live," which too often is reduced to a question of states of life. By situating vocation in the universal call to holiness and Jesus' command to love one another, Hahnenberg proposes a renewed theology of vocation that better attends to the mystery of God's call, not as an artificial add-on to our creation, or a secret voice, but grounded in a grace-filled world. This re-situates the question of vocation away from an exclusive focus on states of life. We are all called upon to discern our call from God, whether or not that leads us into church ministry.

6.3 Hahnenberg builds on "communion" ecclesiology for developing a theology of lay ecclesial ministry

While it is widely accepted that communion is an important hermeneutical key for understanding the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the post-conciliar period has given rise to two competing interpretations of communion in ecclesiology. One of these is an Aristotelian approach, with an emphasis on concrete historical manifestation of the church at the local level. The other approach is Platonic, giving priority to an idealized concept of the universal church over the particular.

Hahnenberg's theological work focuses on the first of these, with a focus on the concrete pastoral situation and the unfolding reality of the church as historic subject. His contribution has been to draw out the implications of an ecclesiology of communion to the question of lay

ecclesial ministry. He proposes a model of concentric circles of ministry which situates the church *in* the world with ministries at the service of the baptismal priesthood of all the members of the community. This model affirms distinctions in ministry with unity of mission in the context of a lived, historical reality.

An awareness of historicity and appeal to experience are two key features of Hahnenberg's work on lay ecclesial ministry. An awareness of the past helps us to see that there are many traditions and expressions of ministry in the church's history. Development arose out of anomalies. Hahnenberg that "the best hope for advancing theologies of ministry over the next fifty years lies in greater attention to the ministerial anomalies that shaped our past, mark our present, and point toward the future."²⁶⁰ Hahnenberg calls for "a consistent and credible methodology in our appeal to the lived experience of ministry."²⁶¹ His work on the question of lay ecclesial ministry helps pave the way for this work, using the anomaly of lay ecclesial ministry as "a different mode of arriving at insight"²⁶² one which is inductive and which gives rise to the need for good discernment.

6.4 Hahnenberg's contribution

Precisely because it is a theological and historical anomaly, a reflection on lay ecclesial ministry requires a theological method which takes seriously the concrete historical manifestation of the church at the local level. Hahnenberg's theological method starts from there.

All theological models fall short of the grandeur of God, who is greater than all which can be thought. This is why it is so important to have various models in conversation with one

²⁶⁰ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 161.

²⁶¹ Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 167.

²⁶² Hahnenberg, "Learning From Experience," 170.

another. I think that this is precisely what Boeve speaks about when he speaks of God's interruptive otherness. It is that point when the narrative I tell myself confronts a reality which challenges it, forcing me to become clearer about my narrative or to find ways to account for this reality within it. The story of salvation is full of such "interruptions" to the narratives of the People of God, forcing them to reframe their understanding. A striking example of this is the encounter of Jesus with the Canaanite woman asking for healing for her daughter (Matt 15:22-28). Her interruption broke open the possibility of seeing that the Kingdom of God was not limited to the People of Israel – a great interruption in the narrative of the people of Israel. Hahnenberg calls for a theology which remains open precisely to these borders of our narrative. This does not mean that we should embrace any and all forms of novelty, but, as Yves Congar points out in *True and False Reform in the Church* we need to return to the sources by an in-depth appeal to tradition. True reform is not going back to a given point in history, but rather draws on the insights of the full tradition, assimilating useful elements from the modern world after decanting and, if necessary, purifying them.²⁶³ This is precisely the approach which Hahnenberg applies to the question of lay ecclesial ministry, by paying closing attention to the lived reality of lay ecclesial ministry and drawing on insights from the full tradition to find the theological language to speak about this development.

We have seen how the post-conciliar period has been marked by competing models of "communion" ecclesiologies. Hahnenberg is explicit in situating himself in the approach to communion which begins with the historical manifestation of the church at the local level. Hahnenberg's dialogue partners are those who hold the view of communion which places

²⁶³ Yves Congar, OP. *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert, OP (Collegeville, Minn. : Liturgical Press), 302.

priority on the universal church. This universal approach has provided the interpretation key which has guided Church documents regarding lay ecclesial ministry under Popes John Paul II and Benedict. Over the past thirty years, this universal and idealistic approach has given rise to official church documents which have focused on specifying the roles *prohibited* by lay persons and defining the roles of lay ministers and priests in a dichotomy between what properly belongs to the laity and what properly belongs to the ordained.²⁶⁴

Thus, Hahnenberg's dialogue partner, with a focus on the universal church, is more hesitant to acknowledge the role of experience and historicity. It only reluctantly allows itself to be confronted by the anomaly which arises in practice. I would argue this dialogue partner thus becomes the "interruptive other", the partner who helps us to more clearly elaborate our narrative, to become aware of its failures and its strengths. It imposes upon us an important task of discernment. This is the task which Hahnenberg has begun to do regarding lay ecclesial ministry. It remains an incomplete project, requiring others to continue the dialogue.

I set out to see whether Hahnenberg could help identify language to engage in a theological reflection on lay ministry. I conclude that he does this, returning to the tradition find the tools which can help us name and frame our current pastoral situation. This language is more likely to resonate, however, with those who share his theological perspective regarding communion ecclesiology. And this is likely to limit the reception of his work by those hold onto an understanding of the Church as mystery. More work needs to be done to better understand and address the concerns and insights of those who hold a more spiritualized, universal

²⁶⁴ These include Pope John Paul II, *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World: Christifideles Laici* (1988) and the 1997 *Instruction on Certain Questions regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*.

understanding of Church. It will be important to foster dialogue between the two vastly different views of Church in order to adopt a consistent approach to lay ecclesial ministry. Failure to do so will continue to place lay ecclesial ministers in a place of great tension and vulnerability – caught between a church community which calls forth their gifts, an ecclesiology which acknowledges their vocation and a universal church which tells them that they are an anomaly to be tolerated and kept under control.

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