'A TRUTH BEST TOLD THROUGH FICTION: ON DEVELOPING THE CATHOLIC PRESENTATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN AS A MYTHIC PROBE INTO THE POSSIBLE'

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church's stated teachings on the interpretation of scripture provide a mandate for exegetes to interpret the biblical text in light of the historical-critical method, including attention to its literary genres, so as to yield findings that can contribute to the development of doctrine. With particular reference to myth, Catholic exegetes have adopted an understanding of the genre as the symbolic expression of limitations and possibilities that characterize the human experience, rather than a reconstruction, even in figurative terms, of specific historical events involving particular personages. In view of these hermeneutical considerations, this thesis proposes that the Church's presentation of the doctrine of Satan should be emancipated from a historicized interpretation that appeals to mythical narratives as though they affirm the existence and historical misdeeds of Satan as a particular ontological being. The myths that give rise to the doctrine of Satan have long explored possibilities in the relationship between the Creator and free-willed creatures. As such, the doctrine can be developed so as to express the possibility that a person might irrevocably reject God's invitation to friendship, and hence experience the condition traditionally referred to as 'hell', yet still be sustained by God's unconditional commitment to being.

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Nicola McCarthy, a visionary and rigorous scholar, who is possessed of a zest that inspires others to realize possibilities.

Acknowledgements

This work has been a labor of love, rekindling the sense of wonder at life that is often eroded by years. The Irish poet, Patrick Kavanagh, invokes the image of curious children who have sneaked out of bed to spy through the crack of a barely-opened door upon a late-night soirée. Kavanagh proposes, 'through a chink too wide, there comes in no wonder.' Perhaps a task of theology, including the present work, is to create a 'chink', a necessarily narrow slit through which we can catch some glimpse of that which is possible – both in the here and now, and when we close our eyes in final surrender to utter possibility. George Tyrell captures something of this, remarking 'It is neither what we understand about God that feeds our love; nor the fact that he is infinitely beyond our understanding: but the fact that we can ever progress in knowledge and in love, and always with an sense of an infinite beyond. It is at the margin where the conquering light meets the receding darkness that love finds its inspiration.'

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

This dissertation offers a case study in the development of doctrine in light of the Second Vatican Council's vision for a Church in conversation with the modern world, and the vision of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) for the application of the historical-critical method in the interpretation of scripture.

The doctrine of a personal Satan, a particular disembodied, fallen creature, has been presented by the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in a manner that assumes a historicized interpretation of mythical language, and lacks a compelling basis in natural theology. As such, the doctrine seems like a suitable case in point through which to explore the doctrinal implications of the findings of the historical-critical method, and a model of myth as the expression of actualities and possibilities that define the human condition in all times and places. My driving motivation is to disclose levels of meaning that have hitherto remained largely obfuscated by historicized interpretations of mythical language in doctrinal formulations.

1.1 Primary Research Question

What kind of truth is conveyed by the doctrine of Satan, as expressed through mythical language, and, how might the doctrine be developed so as to better express this truth in our time?

1.2 Argument in Brief

The Second Vatican Council mandated the Church to be open to insights derived from modern scholarship, proposing, 'The experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, by all of which the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened, these profit the Church, too.'[1] Indeed, the Council would recognize that the 'progress of the sciences' can help to uncover and convey the 'experience of past ages, rediscovering and developing the wisdom of antiquity.[2]

In particular, the Council affirmed the Church's endorsement of the methods of modern biblical scholarship so that exegetes could contribute towards the continuing development of doctrine.[3] Since 1943, the Church has urged exegetes to adopt the best interpretative methods at their disposal.[4] Fifty years later, in 1993, the PBC explicitly promoted the historical-critical method as 'indispensable' for the correct interpretation of scripture.[5] An integral concern of this method is its attention to the implications of the literary genres.[6] One such genre through which the Word of God is mediated in human words is that of myth.

An approach to myth associated with Paul Ricoeur, and broadly adopted by notable Catholic exegetes in Catholic biblical commentaries, regards the genre as the symbolic expression of ubiquitous actualities and possibilities that characterize the experience of being

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[1] The Second Vatican Council, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Guadium et spes*), #44. (Vatican, 1965), Preface, #3. Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. Accessed on 4.13. 2013.

[2] George Lindbeck, 'How a Lutheran Saw It: a different kind of Reformation,' *Commonweal,* 129/20 (2002): pp. 15-17, at p. 16.

[3] The Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei verbum*) (Vatican: 18 November 1965), # 12. Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #109 – English translation (U.S.A., 2nd edition) (English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica*, 1997.

[4] Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu* (Vatican: 1943), # 37. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_30091943_divino-afflante-spiritu.html**.** Accessed on 3.14.2013.

[5] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church # 34*, (Rome, 1993). http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm Accessed on 1.11.2011.

[6] Ibid., #1.

human in any time and in any place. These actualities and possibilities cannot be explained in an equivalent way through other genres – they are truths that are best told through fiction.[7] As such, Ricoeur endorses a form of demythologization that does not seek to replace the symbolic language of myth with some other register of language, but seeks to liberate it from the expectation that it affirms particular historical events, and delivers causal explanations.[8]

The supra-historical model of myth, envisaging the genre as concerned with universal, supra-historical rather than historical truth, has been largely embraced within contemporary Catholic biblical exegesis. John McKenzie, writing in an approved Catholic biblical commentary, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, that bears the *imprimatur* and *nihil obstat*, shares an understanding of myth as conveying universal rather than historical truth, stating: 'Myth is couched in narrative, but the narrative is not historical. The event of myth is not the singular event located in time and space, but the recurring event of the eternal now.'[9] McKenzie distinguishes between the symbols contained within the narrative arc of myth and particular entities in the world outside the narrative. 'It does not pretend that symbol is the reality, but it proposes the symbol as that which affords an insight into a reality beyond understanding.'[10]

In contrast with the model of myth advanced by Ricoeur, and by a swathe of Catholic exegetes within the pages of approved commentaries, the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* historicizes the mythical motif of the fall of the angels and the Adamic narrative of Genesis 3 so as to regard Satan as a particular person who exercised personal agency through

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[7] Paul Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann,'*Essays on Biblical Interpretation,* Peter McCormick, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 60.

[8] Paul Ricoeur quoted by Alan Olson, 'The Mythic Language of the Demonic,' *Disguises of the Demonic,* Alan Olson, ed. (New York, Association Press, 1975), p. 12.

[9] John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought,' *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, eds. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), p. 1289.

[10] Ibid.

particular historical deeds.[11] The Catechism's insistence on Satan's existence as a specific person stands in tension with the positions of notable Catholic theologians. Joseph Ratzinger asserts, 'If one asks whether the devil is a person, then one must in an altogether correct way answer that he is the Un-Person, the disintegration and corruption of what it means to be a person. And so it is particular to him that he moves about without a face and that his inability to be recognized is his actual strength.'[12] Han Urs von Balthasar, for his part, speaks of the 'non-person-hood' of the devil, suggesting that a propensity for love and relationship is integral to the definition of a 'person' in the full sense.[13] Walter Kasper argues that 'The Devil is not a personal figure, but a self-dissolving mal-figure, an entity that perverts itself into a mal-entity; he is a person in manner of a mal-person.'[14] These Catholic thinkers acknowledge that Satan is real, but exists in some form or other than not that of a particular person.

Richard Bell seeks to demote the devil discovered in myth from a perceived status as a supernatural being, and makes an invaluable contribution to this discussion by proposing an alternative mode of existence for Satan as a noumenal reality.[15] The present work, however, diverges from Bell's position, arguing that Satan does indeed exist on the fringes of consciousness as Bell suggests, but does so in the mode of possibility rather than actuality. Myth, as noted by Paul Ricoeur serves as the 'bearer of possible worlds' and, upon inspection of the

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[11] The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II*, (Vatican City: *Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997*), # 390-421, 2851, 2852 Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM. Accessed on 4.14.2012; John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought', *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 1289.

[12] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey*, eds. Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion (London: T&T Clarke International, 2010), p. 44.

[13] James O'Connor, 'Von Balthasar and Salvation', available at http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=565. Accessed on 7.14. 2014. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope That All Men Be Saved* ?, David Kipp and Lothar Krauth, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), pp.144-146.

[14] Walter Kasper, and Karl Lehmann, eds., *'Teufel, Dämonen, Besessenheit. Zur Wirklichkeit des Bösen'* (Broschier: M. Grünewald, Mainz, 1983) quoted in Wolfgang Beinert, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York: Crossroads, 1995), p. 173.

[15] Richard Bell, *Deliver us from Evil* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 173.

relevant narratives, it becomes apparent that the Satan discovered through myth serves as a probe into possibilities in the Creator-creature relationship.[16]

I suggest but one soteriological and eschatological possibility expressed in the mythic motif of Satan. Even if a person were to finally and irrevocably reject God so as to choose the privation of evil, opting, as it were for nonbeing instead of being, God, the ground of all being would continue to sustain that person in being.[17] The doctrine of Satan envisages that God does not destroy being, or allow it be subsumed by nothingness. As such, the doctrine is a powerful statement of God's unconditional commitment to being.

Since the Church no longer insists that any particular person has finally and irrevocably rejected God so as to experience the state of hell, it is fitting that the narrative of Satan presents this possibility with reference to an inhuman person who exists within the narrative arc of myth.[18] This avoids the suggestion that any human person or category of human persons are necessarily in hell.

If, however, the doctrine of Satan is presented in a manner that historicizes the mythical narratives upon which it is based, then the universal is presented as though it is the particular. A real possibility applicable to all people becomes objectified as though it concerns a particular disembodied person, and its existential implications become obscured.

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[16] Richard Kearney's, 'Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds: An Interview with Paul Ricoeur,' *The Crane Bag Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 2, 1978, pp. 112-118.

[17] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 238.

[18] Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (Minneapolis, Winston Press, 1980), p. 1152. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope That All Men Be Saved* ?, David Kipp and Lothar Krauth, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), pp.65-68.

1.3 Scope

This thesis addresses a perceived disconnect between Catholic teaching on the interpretation of scripture and Catholic teaching on Satan, rather than directly engaging self-professedly literalistic perspectives, according to which it may be entirely consistent to speak of Satan as a particular being, existing beyond the narrative arc of myth. Neither does the thesis deny the possibility that any given disembodied being exists in some corner of creation. Rather, it disputes the capacity of mythical narratives, understood in light of the Catholic Church's teaching on scripture, to affirm such a claim.

More broadly, the thesis explores a tension between the postconciliar Church's stated openness to the insights of modernity and its presentation of the doctrine of Satan. The Council, especially its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, advocated a dialogical relationship on the part of the Church in relation to the modern world. In relation to postmodernity, on the other hand, the Church has not issued a pastoral constitution mandating any particular stance in relation to that paradigm insofar as there is a particular postmodern paradigm - as opposed to a plethora of postmodernities.[19] As such, the implications of postmodernism are only addressed insofar as they are invoked as criticisms of modernity, and, in particular, the historical-critical method.

While the thesis explores influences in the Judeo-Christian tradition that have shaped contemporary Catholic expositions of the doctrine of Satan, it does not endeavor to offer a comprehensive account of the motif as it finds expression in the various strands of Judaism, Islam, Satanism, or even in Christianity more generally, for example, in the Reformed traditions.

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[19] David Tracy remarks, 'There is no such phenomenon as postmodernity. There are only postmodernities.' See David Tracy, 'Fragments, The Spiritual Situation of our Times,' in John Caputo and Michael Scanlon, eds., *God, The Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 170.

1.4 Methodology: Correlational and Historical-Critical

This thesis implements a method of correlation, reflecting the dialogical disposition advocated

by Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.*[20] As such, the thesis

considers a broad variety of perspectives on the being of Satan, and on questions pertaining to

the interpretation of scripture and the nature of doctrine, including the work of non-Catholic

theologians and exegetes.

At points, the attempt to exemplify the correlational openness to the world envisaged by

Fathers of Vatican Two results in a spirited conversation between vastly different sources

ranging from ecclesial documents to peer-reviewed articles, from Patristic classics to

sociological observations, and popular, polemical works.

The methodology of the thesis also seeks to reflect the historical-critical consciousness

that characterized the Council and is most evident in *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine

Revelation.*[21] It offers a diachronic treatment of the question of Satan's being, tracing the

evolution of the question from the mists of henotheism and monism, through the emergence of

ethical monotheism, Patristic attempts to counteract Gnostic dualism, and the reactions of the

Magisterium to modern perspectives on Satan, scripture, myth, and doctrine (or in some cases,

ancient perspectives on these subjects that have been retrieved in modernity)

While holding disparate sources in creative tension, I have endeavored to be attentive to

the significance of context and of genre. Each source conveys meaning in a manner analogous to

its form, and reflects a particular historical context, none of them have fallen directly from the

heavens - or emerging from hell.

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[20] Chapter two, pp. 38 – 60 discusses the dialogical vision of Vatican II. An account of the relationship between the Council's vision and the theological method of correlation is offered on pp. 52-54.
[21] Chapter four discusses the historical-critical method. A working definition is offered on p .94.

1.5 Working Definitions of Key Terms

(i)   Doctrine:

The formulations that express the Church's current understanding of eternal truths. The thesis does, however, note that in some ecclesial documents, the term 'doctrine' can be taken to refer to the eternal truth itself as opposed to the formulae that endeavor to express it. This is evident in Pope John XXIII's reference to the 'irreformability' of doctrine.

(ii)   Development of Doctrine:

The ongoing endeavor, concomitantly informed by reason and by the grace with which reason is infused, to convey the eternal truth revealed in Divine Revelation, employing terms that can express this truth effectively in a given age, and in light of emerging insights that may offer a more complete perspective, albeit a provisional one, open to the possibility of a better formulation in the future.

(iii)   Doctrine of Satan:

The formulations and underlying motifs advanced by the Church so as to represent an underlying reality of Satan. In this sense, a 'doctrine' of Satan is essentially an 'account' of Satan or a 'version' of Satan.

(iv)   Being of Satan

The term, the 'being of Satan' is invoked in this thesis so as to suggest the existence of Satan as a created person or thing. While the term 'being' carries overtones of consciousness and personhood, the category of being applies more broadly to include the ontological reality, that is, the existence of inanimate items as in the contrast invoked by Sartre between being and nothingness.[22]

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[22] Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Hazel B. Barnes, trans. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), pp.73-102.

Satan exists in the form of a literary device that facilitates the exploration of the complex relationship between free-willed beings and the deity. To serve this exploratory purpose, Satan exists as a personal being within the narrative arc of myth. Occasionally, 'satan' may be spelled with a lower case 's' to signify a common noun signifying the general role of adversary, human or otherwise, in the Hebrew Bible.

The thesis also argues that Satan exists in the cosmos in the form of a 'possible being'. In a cosmos wherein creatures are granted free will, the possibility exists that some may use this free will to ultimately reject God. Hence, it might be said that the thesis accepts that Satan exists as a 'possible being' though not necessarily as an actual being.

(v)   Magisterium

The teaching office of the Church as exercised by Ecumenical Councils, papal teaching, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and the Curia. Chapter two acknowledges the narrow sense in which the term 'magisterium' tends to have been employed in ecclesial documents in modernity. The thesis has not sought to rehabilitate the term so as to promote a broader understanding of the teaching Church, though a case for this could surely be argued. Such an endeavor, though arguably laudable, would lie beyond the stated scope of the work. Rather, the thesis has acknowledged the tendency to use the term in a narrow sense to refer to the Holy Office (and its successor, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), and taken advantage of this narrow usage so as to focus its critique on the presentation of the doctrine of Satan by sources in the hierarchy. While his may be taken to tacitly reinforce a narrow and arguably inadequate definition of magisterium, it may be preferable to the practice of referring to 'church teaching' in a manner that reduces the 'church' to the hierarchy, or even more narrowly, the Curia.

(vi)   Myth

Myth is narrative, and motifs derived it, that utilize the symbol of personal agency so as to imaginatively rehearse possibilities in response to the tensions ubiquitously experienced between human aspirations and human limitations.

(vii)   Tradition

My working definition is rooted in Yves Congar's account of Tradition which may be characterized as *the Church's endeavor to both conserve and develop the means through which Divine Revelation is mediated, including the oral traditions that preceded the writing of scripture, scripture itself, its evolving interpretation, liturgy, and doctrine (as previously defined)*.[23] I use an upper-case 'T' to denote this usage of the term, 'Tradition', as opposed to 'traditions' which may be more synonymous with customs in a broad sense. Since the term 'scripture' does not hold the same ambiguity, I have seen no need to capitalize the 'S'. My capitalization of 'C' in 'Church' denotes 'The People of God' in the most inclusive sense as evoked by the Second Vatican Council, as opposed to a denomination or a building.[24]

1.6 Structural Considerations in Guiding the Reader through this Dissertation

- The title of each chapter will take the form of a secondary research question, focusing upon some aspect of the primary research question.

- Each chapter title is followed by a phrase or sentence in italics that encapsulates the most central argument of the chapter as it advances the argument of the overall thesis.

- The conclusion to each chapter begins by stating the distinctive contributions of that chapter, before offering a more general overview of the chapter's arguments.

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[23] Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965), pp. 16, 55.
[24] The Second Vatican Council, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (Vatican: the Holy See, 1965), Chapter Two, Available at. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. Accessed on 10.24.2015.

1.7 Synopsis by Section and by Chapter Stating Research Objectives

SECTION I – A MANDATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN LIGHT OF DIALOGUE WITH MODERNITY

Chapters Two and Three outline historical and ecclesiological issues in relation to the Church's relationship with modern scholarship, and the implications for doctrine. These chapters address the question as to why the Church should be open to the development of doctrine, why the Church has, in modernity, resisted such development, and how the doctrine of Satan became particularly entangled with these questions.

1.7.1 - CHAPTER TWO - WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH BE OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN LIGHT OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP?

This chapter will meet Objective 1 of the research by documenting a compelling mandate for the development of doctrine issued by the Second Vatican Council, rooted in the vision of Pope St. John XXIII, and explicitly affirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in *Mysterium ecclesiae* (1975) which acknowledged that expression of the eternal truth must always be open to the possibility of a more effective articulation in light of new modes of expression, and a more complete understanding in light of new insights.

Chapter Two Synopsis

The chapter opens by acknowledging early attempts to facilitate dialogue between Catholic doctrine and the insights of modern scholarship, and the subsequent Modernist crisis in which the magisterium denied that doctrine should be developed in light of modern scholarly insights. The chapter then proceeds to document the vision of Pope St. John XXIII for the development of doctrine, and the subsequent mandate of the Second Vatican Council for a dialogical disposition in relation the modern world, so that the Church and the broader world could

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benefit from the sharing of wisdom. Openness to dialogue with modernity is ultimately

openness to the possible. If one regards a current articulation of the truth as complete in every

regard, then constructive dialogue is not possible.

The chapter also acknowledges the multivocality of the magisterium, recognizing that

during and since the Council, a minority within the hierarchy feared that the dialogical

disposition of Vatican II smacked of excessive accommodation to modernity, and compromised

the Church's teaching authority.

The argument thus far constitutes the first step in validating my thesis. It demonstrates an

ecclesial mandate for the legitimate development of doctrine in light of the possibility of a better

expression of the eternal truth, and a mandate for a dialogical stance on the part of the Church

towards the modern world, open to the possibility of new insights into eternal truths.

1.7.2 - CHAPTER THREE – HOW DID THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN GAIN PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE

FOR THE QUESTION OF POSTCONCILIAR DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE?

Exploration of this secondary question contributes to the overall argument of the thesis by

showing that Pope Paul VI invoked the doctrine of a preternatural Satan while reacting

defensively to modern challenges to the doctrinal status quo. The chapter accomplishes

objective 2 of this research, showing how, following Pope Paul VI's homily of June 21, 1972,

the doctrine of Satan came to hold particular significance with regard to the question of the

Church's relationship with modern scholarship, and the development of doctrine.

Chapter Three Synopsis

The aftermath of the Second Vatican Council witnessed a clash of expectations as to how the

teaching office of the Church would relate to the modern world. It might be argued that an

expectation for a more dialogical, collaborative model of Church came into conflict with an

exercise of papal authority as it had for centuries been exercised. This clash was epitomized in the conflict surrounding Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae vitae* which, contrary to the recommendations of a papal commission, reaffirmed the Church's ban on artificial birth control.

In 1972, a clearly exasperated Paul VI preached a homily in which he regarded certain modern influences and tendencies as satanic insofar as they challenged certainty in the teachings of the Church. Soon after, the pontiff's public statements on the subject of Satan rejected the challenges of modern scholarship to the doctrine of a personal devil.

Paul VI's ambivalence towards dialogue with the modern world reflected a broader development whereby a cadre of influential Catholic theologians sought to assert a counter-cultural, challenging form of Catholicism, eschewing what they regarded as accommodation to the modern *zeitgeist*. Subsequent pontiffs, it might be argued, did not whole-heartedly adopt the dialogical disposition envisaged in *Gaudium et spes*. Pope St. John Paul II suggested that just as the world itself was changing, so too, the Church needed to change tactics and adopt a more explicitly Evangelical disposition. Pope Benedict XVI, by contrast, argued that Vatican II had been misrepresented by secular and Catholic media so as to overstate its mandate for a new stance in relation to modernity.

SECTION II - A MANDATE TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE IN LIGHT OF ITS LITERARY FORMS, INCLUDING THAT OF MYTH

Turning to the field of biblical exegesis, I outline the process whereby, since 1943, the Church came to embrace modern biblical scholarship, and mandate exegetes to avail of the best modern methods at their disposal so as to contribute to the continued development of doctrine. In 1993, the PBC explicitly regarded the historical-critical method as 'indispensable' for the interpretation of scripture.

Integral to the historical-critical method, as understood by the PBC, is a consideration of the implications of literary genre. This would suggest that texts that are overwhelmingly regarded as mythical in nature should be interpreted as such. It also implies that Catholic interpretation of myth should take seriously a hermeneutics that meets with broad scholarly consensus, as reflected in the approved Catholic biblical commentaries.

Paul Ricoeur's approach to myth regards the genre as a conveyor of existential, universally relevant truths, rather than historical and ontological ones. This is the understanding of myth that is reflected in major English language biblical commentaries approved by the Church: *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* and *The Collegeville Biblical Commentary*. This model of myth suggests that the genre does not recount, even figuratively, particular events and personages. Neither does it offer causal theories as to how things have come to be, so much as it expresses what is true in all times and places. I argue that the Church's presentation of the doctrine of Satan, documented in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is, by contrast, rooted in a historicized interpretation of myth, in particular the mythical narratives of the fall of the angels and the fall of humanity.

1.7.3 - CHAPTER FOUR – WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH'S PRESENTATION OF DOCTRINE TAKE INTO

ACCOUNT THE LITERARY GENRE OF BIBLICAL TEXTS?

The chapter will meet research objective 3, demonstrating that the Church not only allows, but

mandates, the use of the historical-critical method with consideration of the human authors'

intentions, and attention to the implications of the literary genre in use. Furthermore, *Dei verbum*

regards identification of the literary genre as essential for an accurate identification of the kind of

truth at stake.

Chapter Four Synopsis

The central argument of chapter four is that the literary characteristics of the biblical text,

including genre, form an integral concern of the historical-critical method, mandated by the PBC

as 'indispensable' for the interpretation of scripture. The Church cannot then, with any

credibility, interpret scripture without regard for the implications of genre, for example, treating

myth as history. Furthermore, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, in 1943, explicitly mandated exegetes to

contribute, in light of their findings, to the progress of doctrine.

Granted, one cannot credibly appeal to the insights of modern biblical scholarship as

though this represents a unanimous position on the historical-critical method. Luke Timothy

Johnson, Walter Wink, and George Lindbeck, in their definitions of the historical-critical

method, are at some variance with the PBC. These thinkers associate the method with historical

inquiry, not regarding literary considerations, including that of genre, as integral to its concerns.

This dispute is with regard to the parameters of the historical-critical method, however, rather

than with regard to the interpretation of scripture. Indeed, these authors show that they are in

agreement with the PBC regarding the importance of considering the implications of literary

genre in biblical exegesis. This consensus supports a contention of this thesis that myth should be interpreted in light of the best available hermeneutical theory of the genre.

This completes step two in my argument - that the Church has mandated exegetes to interpret biblical texts in view of their particular genres and so contribute towards the development of doctrine.

1.7.4 - CHAPTER FIVE – WHAT IS MYTH AND WHAT KIND OF TRUTH DOES IT EXPRESS WITHIN THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE?

This chapter narrows the focus of the thesis to explore myth as a genre and register of language. It accomplishes objective 4 of this research by documenting the emergence of a modern hermeneutics of myth, associated with Paul Ricoeur and reflected in approved Catholic biblical commentaries, that regards myth as the expression of universal, supra-historical meaning rather than the affirmation of particular events, deeds, and personages. The chapter juxtaposes this view of myth with a low view of myth conveyed in magisterial texts published in 1950 and 1975.

The chapter also meets objective 5 by critically engaging the study, *Christian Faith and Demonology*, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, so as to explore its hermeneutical assumptions. This study, the influence of which is to be seen in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, has hitherto been the subject of little or no commentary in the published literature.

Chapter Five Synopsis

The 'non-explanatory' or 'poetic' view of myth associated with Paul Ricoeur has recognized the capacity of myth to utilize poetic language so as to express deep truths that are otherwise largely inaccessible and inexpressible. Ricoeur understands myth as expressing existential actualities and possibilities, as opposed to proposing causal theories, or affirming historical or etiological

truth. Ricoeur's understanding of myth emphasizes its capacity to convey theological rather than historical truth. As such, this view of myth may be highly conducive to the development of doctrine which points ultimately to eternal realities rather than historical and etiological assertions. This completes step three in my argument: myth does not affirm or deny the existence of particular events, places, or personages, being concerned rather with existential truth that applies to all people.

The Ricoeurian understanding of myth constitutes an example of what the modern world can bring to the table of dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. However, *Christian Faith and Demonology*, a 1975 study commissioned by the CDF, rejecting calls for the development of the doctrine of Satan, operates out of a low view of myth as 'primitive' and 'erroneous.'[25] As such, the study leads to an impression that the question of Satan's existence can be resolved with reference to just two possibilities: either Satan exists as a creature, that is, a particular being, or else Satan is a product of fallacious myths. The study does not consider the possibility that Satan may be a mythical motif that, far from fallacious, reflects spiritual possibilities that are all too real.

*Demonolog*y downplays the possibility that Jesus inherited mythical images of Satan and demons from his wider culture and religious heritage. The study largely ignores the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. It argues that Jesus issued deliberate pronouncements regarding Satan in the most literal sense, dismissively rejecting the possibility that Jesus, informed by a tradition steeped in mythopoeic thought, spoke mythically.

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[25] Anonymous author, *Christian Faith and Demonology* Available at the website of the Holy See: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19750626_fede-cristiana-demonologia_en.html**.** Accessed on 2.24.2013. The study is not structured in terms of numbered articles or paragraphs, nor are page numbers provided.

SECTION III- AN ARGUMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN AS A MYTHIC PROBE INTO POSSIBILITIES IN THE CREATOR-CREATURE RELATIONSHIP

If myth is read as myth, in the sense that Paul Ricoeur understands the genre, it expresses universally-applicable meaning rather than signifying particular historical events or affirming the existence of particular persons. This calls into question the validity of citing mythical narratives as a basis for belief in the existence of Satan as a particular being. Rather, myth expresses existential actualities and possibilities that cannot be expressed to the same extent through other genres, bringing otherwise largely hidden realities to consciousness. I identify one such possibility that is brought to consciousness by mythic discourse concerning Satan: God sustains being unconditionally – even when a being irrevocably rejects God.

1.7.5 - CHAPTER SIX - HOW HAS THE MYTHIC MOTIF OF SATAN DEVELOPED IN THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION?

This chapter meets objective six of the thesis, showing that the motif of Satan has evolved over the centuries from the cross-pollination of mythical narratives and motifs. A common feature of these otherwise distinct invocations of the motif of Satan is their literary purpose in exploring tensions in the relationship between free-willed creatures and their Creator. The chapter then explores the question as to whether the doctrine of Satan as taught by the magisterium can be validated by reference to logical deduction and life experience, that is, a natural Satanology, rather that mythical narratives and motifs. As such, the chapter accomplishes research objective seven of the thesis, considering the possible argument that the doctrine of Satan might be justified by reference to a basis other than that of myth. It asks whether the existence of a

personal Satan could be deduced through reasoning and through critical reflection upon life experience, and then figuratively expressed through mythical language.

 Chapter Six Synopsis

This chapter demonstrates that the doctrine of Satan has evolved through the cross-pollination of a plethora of narratives and motifs. As such, the identikit of the 'Christian' Satan represents significant development beyond any model of Satan familiar to the pre-Christian authors. This is not in itself problematic, and reflects the nature of a dynamic, evolving tradition.

The chapter then explores a possible objection to my contention that the motif of Satan has been discovered through myth and should be interpreted accordingly. It examines the question as to whether the doctrine of Satan as taught by the magisterium can be validated by reference to logical deduction and life experience, that is, a natural Satanology, rather that mythical narratives and motifs.

1.7.6 - Chapter Seven - Can the historicization of myth be justified by canonical exegesis and the *sensus plenior*?

This chapter achieves objective eight of the thesis by demarcating a limit of canonical exegesis and the *sensus plenior* to which it may lead. The chapter argues that canonical exegesis may uncover levels of theological significance unknown to the author of an ancient text, and hence develop its theological significance, leading to a 'fuller sense' or *sensus plenior*. Canonical exegesis may not, on the other hand, disregard the implications of genre for the kind of truth at stake. It may not, for example, derive biology from poetry, or historical facticity from myth.

Chapter Seven Synopsis

The chapter addresses an apparent disconnect between the Church's endorsement of the historical critical method and interpretation of the biblical text with regards for its literary genre

so as to contribute to the development of doctrine. The 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to the narratives in which Satan has been retrospectively discovered, sometimes equivocally implying that the myths represent historical events, and sometimes explicitly advocating such an interpretation. If the narratives in question are interpreted as history rather than as myth, then their protagonists are represented as particular beings that acted in a particular time and place. This, however, stands in tension with a broad swathe of exegetical opinion on the Adamic narrative, including that published in the major approved Catholic commentaries. Such an interpretation seems to contradict the Catechism's own stated position, reflecting fifty years of Catholic teaching, that recourse to the methods of modern biblical scholarship is indispensable for the correct interpretation of scripture.

The chapter explores the question as to whether canonical exegesis, and the *sensus plenior* to which it gives rise, can legitimately derive from myth knowledge of the existence and nature of a particular creature. That is, while a historical-critical exegesis of a given mythical text cannot affirm or deny the existence of a particular Satan, could a theological interpretation of that text in the context of the entire canon of scripture legitimately do so? I argue that interpretation of any given biblical text in the context of the entire canon of scripture, and its reception history, can yield a fuller theological sense or *sensus plenior* that cannot, by definition, be uncovered by the application of the historical-critical method to a single text. This *sensus plenior* consists in theological insights beyond those explicitly expressed in the text, or even known to its author. It cannot, however, overturn the fact that the text instantiates a particular literary form. So, for example, a mythical text, interpreted in the context of the entire canon, its reception history, and an evolving religious tradition, may give rise to a plethora of theological possibilities, that is possibilities that apply to the God-human relationship and that are best

expressed in a figurative manner. Nevertheless, the myth remains myth rather than historical narrative.

The chapter considers the counterargument that the ancient authors did not intentionally choose to adopt the literary form that we call myth, and the genre is a forerunner to propositional philosophical discourse. While this implies an understanding of myth at some odds with that advanced by Ricoeur, and by the present work, a model of myth as primitive philosophy would not support the historicization of the genre, or the literalization of its motifs.

This constitutes step four in my argument. The Catholic Church presents its exposition of the doctrine of Satan as hinging upon the interpretation of texts widely regarded as mythical in nature, including those pertaining to the fall of the angels and of humanity, and while canonical exegesis may uncover layers of theological development unforeseen by the authors of the narratives, it cannot derive history from myth, affirming the existence of the Satan described in the catechism.

1.7.7 - CHAPTER EIGHT- WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT SATAN?

The chapter accomplishes objective nine of this research, showing that New Testament references to Satan, attributed to the lips of Jesus within the narrative arc, cannot be definitively distinguished from polemical invocations of the motif of Satan on the part of the evangelists, embroiled in disputes that erupted after the death of Jesus. Also, Jesus may have referred to Satan and other demons, in a mythical sense, personifying that which is opposed to the values of the *basileia*.

Chapter Eight Synopsis

Chapter eight challenges the assertion of a study published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Christian Faith and Demonology* (1975), that 'Without ever placing Satan at the center of his Gospel, Jesus nevertheless only spoke of him on what were clearly crucial occasions and by means of important pronouncements.' The study refers dismissively to the possibility that Jesus or the evangelists invoked the motif of Satan in a symbolic, that is, mythical, sense. 'Satan, whom Jesus had confronted by his exorcisms, whom he had encountered in the desert and in his Passion, cannot be simply the product of the human faculty of inventing fables and personifying ideas, nor can he be an erroneous relic of a primitive cultural language.'

In particular, the chapter explores the reference to evil, that is *poneros*, in Mt. 6:13. Considering the evidence as to whether the sacred author intended the term to refer to the 'evil one' or evil in a more general sense, the present work proposes that the term, 'evil one' may have been intended as a figurative personification of evil. This is suggested by the broader focus of the Sermon on the Mount on interactions with human adversaries, and by its implied allusions to a Joban, mythical worldview wherein God might conceivably lead a person into temptation at the hands of the Satan.

In relation to the motif of demons more broadly, there exists considerable exegetical opinion that gospel references to demons evoke a holistic, Semitic understanding of the realm of evil locked in a cosmic conflict with the Kingdom of God. Jesus and the evangelists may have understood exorcism as a sign that God is on the side of the poor and afflicted, their ailments being caused by the forces of evil rather than by divine retribution.

1.7.8 - CHAPTER NINE – WHAT KIND OF TRUTH IS CONVEYED BY THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN, AND HOW MIGHT IT BE BETTER EXPRESSED IN OUR TIME?

So far this work has challenged a historicized interpretation of the doctrine of Satan and of the mythic narratives and motifs from which it arises. The present chapter now undertakes the constructive task of proposing the kind of truth that is expressed by the doctrine. The chapter directly addresses my primary research question: 'What kind of truth is conveyed by the doctrine of Satan, as expressed through mythical language, and, how might the doctrine be developed so as to better express this truth in our time?' The chapter also engenders a soteriological question: 'How can the doctrine of Satan serve as a probe into posthumous possibilities in the Creator-creature relationship?'

The chapter accomplishes research objective ten, evaluating Richard Bell's proposal that Satan exists as a noumenal reality, and also research objective eleven, exploring the implications for the motif of Satan of Paul Ricoeur's position that myth serves as the 'bearer of possible worlds.' In essence, it argues that Satan exists in the form of a possibility.

Chapter Nine Synopsis

Several contemporary theologians argue that Satan is not a person, yet exists as a reality beyond the narrative arc of myth. Describing Satan in terms approaching that of a privation masquerading as a positive entity, these thinkers come close to losing sight of the distinction between Satan and an Augustinian model of evil in and of itself. Such a conflation of Satan with evil per se would render the motif incapable of serving as a probe into the complexities of the Creator-creature relationship.

Richard Bell has contributed significantly to the endeavor to deny the ontological existence of a supernatural Satan yet maintain that Satan exists as a reality beyond the narrative

arc of myth and the symbol-system derived from it. With Jungian and Ricoeurian undertones, Bell proposes that Satan exists as a noumenal reality, glimpsed fleetingly on the verges of consciousness and discovered through myth. The present work diverges from Bell's position, arguing that the Satan who lurks on the fringes of knowing may not exist as a noumenal reality, that is, a thing-in-itself prior to representation. Rather, Satan exists as a possibility. This conclusion is informed by our analysis, in chapter five, of the manner in which the mythic motif of Satan has functioned in the Hebrew Bible and in extra-canonical texts, serving as a probe into possibilities in the relationship between the creator-God and free-willed creatures.

Paul Ricoeur has regarded myth as the 'bearer of possible worlds' and the present work applies this insight to the mythic motif of Satan. This leads to the question as to what 'possible worlds' are revealed by the mythic motif of Satan. This thesis expounds upon one possibility borne by the myth of Satan, but by no means suggests that this is the only possibility entailed.

Since the Church no longer teaches that any particular human person or category of persons can, with any degree of certitude, be assumed to have irrevocably rejected God and hence be in the state of being called 'hell', the mythic persona of the inhuman Satan serves as an imaginative probe into this possibility, without besmirching any human or group of humans. If love cannot be coerced, and if persons are genuinely endowed with free will, then the possibility must conceivably exist that a person may ultimately decline to accept God's invitation to a loving relationship. Hence, the truth of the doctrine of Satan relates to a possibility that lingers in the psyche, rather than the identikit of a particular inhuman person that exists beyond the narrative arc of myth.

This completes the final step in my argument, that is, the truth of the doctrine of Satan relates to a possibility pertinent to all persons, rather than the identikit of a particular inhuman person that exists beyond the narrative arc of myth.

Implicit in the dominant Christian account of the doctrine of Satan, significantly influenced by the thought of St. Augustine and broadly represented in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* is the suggestion that even if a creature were to irrevocably reject God, the ground of being, and choose the privation of evil, nonbeing that is, God would continue to sustain that creature in being. Within the framework of classical Christian soteriology, even when being embraces nonbeing, it is not obliterated.

A reformulated account of the doctrine of Satan should acknowledge the mythical nature of its language. It should release mythical discourse about Satan from the obfuscation posed by historicized claims so as to reveal possibilities that apply to all free-willed creatures and their relationship with the Creator.

**SECTION I –A MANDATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN LIGHT OF
DIALOGUE WITH MODERNITY**

CHAPTER TWO

WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH BE OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE

DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN LIGHT OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP?

Openness to the possibility of a more effective and more complete expression of eternal truth

2.1 Introduction

This chapter advances the central argument of the thesis by showing that the teachings of the

Second Vatican Council provide a mandate for the development of doctrine in light of the

insights of modernity. The 1973 declaration, *Mysterium ecclesiae*, published by the

Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith affirms this mandate, arguing that the human words

and constructs used to express a doctrinal truth in any given time are distinct from the eternal

truth itself, and must be open to the possibility of a new formulation that expresses the eternal

truth more completely, and more clearly, so as to be better understood in a given age. As such,

this chapter provides the basis from which later chapters will argue that it is entirely consistent

with the Church's understanding of the nature of doctrine to develop its exposition on Satan in

light of the exegetical and hermeneutical insights of modernity.

2.2 Early Attempts to Set Catholicism in Dialogue with Modernity

Nineteenth German Catholic thinkers such as Johann Mohler, Fredrich Vob Schegel, and Ignaz

Von Doellinger sought to set the Church's doctrine in dialogue with Enlightenment thought. In

England, John Henry Newman and John Acton numbered among their counterparts, as did

Maurice D'Hulst Anton Gunther in France. Such thinkers represented an emerging impetus to

marshal the benefits of Enlightenment thought for the continued progress of Catholic doctrine.

In 1863, Doellinger called a conference in Munich and presented a keynote paper entitled 'The Past and Future of Theology'.[26] Doellinger's paper argued that doctrine needed to develop in light of the insights of modern scholarship (with a heavy emphasis on German scholarship).[27] The paper suggested that scholarly analysis and debate, rather than an appeal to magisterial authority, should drive the ongoing development of doctrine. Doellinger also argued for academic freedom for Catholic scholars, unrestrained by magisterial control.

Richard Schaefer notes that exponents of the Catholic enlightenment did not assert the self-sufficiency of reason.[28] Rather, thinkers such as Doellinger viewed intellectual rigor as holding potential to aid and abet a faith perspective. As Richard Schaefer notes, 'For Döllinger, theology had authority because it joined religious devotion with ideas in the disciplined pursuit of truth (*Wissenschaft*).'[29] Modern Catholic thinkers from Doellinger to Loisy viewed reason, and the methodologies to which it gives rise, as a means through which divine revelation is mediated, and through which its representation in doctrinal formulae can continue to develop.

On hearing of Doellinger's presentation, Pope Pius IX wrote to the Archbishop of Munich, insisting that Catholic scholars needed to be subjugated to the authority of the magisterium.[30] Doellinger's paper was to prove an immediate impetus for Pope Pius IX's publication of the *Syllabus of Errors.*

The fourth article of the *Syllabus* refers to a model of reason that it rejects. It describes this model of reason as an *innate* strength, rather than a gift implanted by God, as Kant had

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[26] Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 313. Cf. Philip Schaff, *The History of the Christian Church, Volume VII. Modern Christianity*. p. 124. Available online at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc7.txt Accessed on 9.4.2014. Accessed on 12.3.2013.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Richard Schaefer, 'True and False Enlightenment: German Scholars and the Discourse of Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Catholic Historical Review* 97/1 (2011): pp. 24-45. *Project MUSE*. Web. 5 Sep. 2014. Available at http://muse.jhu.edu/, p.30. Accessed on 4.14.2013.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

posited.[31] 'All the truths of religion proceed from the innate strength of human reason; hence reason is the ultimate standard by which man can and ought to arrive at the knowledge of all truths of every kind.'[32] By suggesting that modern scholars regarded the truths of religion as proceeding from reason, this article of the *Syllabus* necessitates a distinction that proves crucial to this entire thesis, that is, the difference between truth and the way it is presented, between revelation and doctrine.

Cautioning against the equation of doctrinal formulations with revelation itself, Avery Dulles argues that a model of 'revelation as doctrine' could give rise to the misunderstanding that doctrine comes directly from God.[33] Also, Dulles notes that, if taken in isolation, a model of revelation as doctrine 'forgets God's presence in one's own life and experience' and excludes 'a faith that probes and questions.'[34]

Doctrine is distinct from revelation itself since it is a human endeavor to express revealed truth amidst the limitations of human language. While the eternal truths that doctrines seek to express are not themselves the product of reason, the manner in which these truths are represented in words and other symbols, does, to some extent, proceed from reason. This is not necessarily problematic in the Catholic Tradition wherein Aquinas regarded reason as a divine gift that operates in harmony with divine revelation.[35] However, for those who are unwilling to concede this distinction between the truth and its representation in doctrinal formulae, an argument for the development of doctrine in light of modern insights may appear to be an

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[31] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Allen Wood, George di Giovanni, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 80.
[32] Pope Pius IX, *The Syllabus of Errors* (Vatican, 1864), # 4. Available at http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm. Accessed on 3.30. 2013.
[33] Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Orbis, 1992), pp. 45-46.
[34] Ibid. p. 115.
[35] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.1 – 3.7. Available at http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FP/FP055.html#FPQ55OUTP1, Accessed on 10.17.2013.

arrogant assertion of human reasoning as the ultimate standard to which revelation itself should

be subjugated, in effect, denying its divine authority.

Despite an arguable underestimation of the role of reason in the formulation of doctrine,

it would be simplistic to regard the *Syllabus* and the later anti-Modernist writings as going so far

as to equate doctrine with revelation itself. Rather, these writings seem to reflect the position that

as grace builds on nature, revelation builds upon reason, and transcends it. The dictum, 'Grace

builds on nature', would appear to originate as a corruption of Aquinas' statement in *Summa*

Theologiae, Part 1, 1:8 that 'Grace does not abolish nature but perfects it.'[36]

The notion of grace building upon nature suggests a two-tier structure whereby grace in

some purified form, unmediated by reason, takes over when reason reaches its limits. Doctrine,

from a scholastic viewpoint, is informed by both reason and by grace, that is, by revelation.[37]

Hence, a scholastic perspective may view it as problematic to submit doctrine to rational analysis

that cannot account for the revealed dimension of doctrine that transcends reason's grasp.

The First Vatican Council insisted on such a separation of reason and revelation,

condemning the position of those who viewed revelation as working in and through human

processes for 'utterly confusing nature and grace, human science and Divine faith.'[38]

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[36] Lawrence Cunningham associates the corrupted dictum, 'grace builds on nature' with scholasticism. See Lawrence Cunningham, 'Four American Catholics and their Chronicler,' *Horizons: The Journal of the College Theology Society*, Vol. 31/01 (2004): pp. 113-117. Cunningham makes this association in his abstract.
[37] Simon Oliver, 'The Parallel Journey of Faith and Reason: Another Look via Aquinas's *'De Veritate'*, *Faithful Reading: New Essays in Theology in Honour of Fergus Kerr* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), pp. 113-130. Cf. Saint Anselm, *Proslogium*, in *St. Anselm: Basic Writings* (La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1962), p. 8. [37] John Kent Review of H. D. McDonald 'Theories of Revelation: an Historical Study, 1860–1960' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 18, (1967): pp 123-124. Cf. H. D. McDonald, 'Theories of Revelation: an Historical Study,' 1860–1960 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), pp. 384. 37.
[38] The First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith (*Dei filius*) (Vatican, 1870), Introduction.

2.3 Rejecting Biblical Interpretation Rooted in Secularized Reason

Resenting the application of rational interpretative systems to truths informed by supra-rational

revelation, the *Syllabus* casts its aspersions upon the historical-critical method in scripture

scholarship, and in particular by its reference to literary genres, the method of form criticism.

Article seven denounces the exegetical position that 'prophecies and miracles set forth and

recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are the fiction of poets.'[39] The reference to fiction and poetry

may, arguably, carry dismissive undertones, suggestive of that which is invented and is not true.

The present work, benefiting from the insights of modern biblical exegesis as eventually

endorsed by the Catholic Church, will argue that some truths can only be told through fiction of a

kind. The truth conveyed by poetry and by myth, I will later argue, relates to that which is

universally possible rather that which is particular and actual. Indeed, if doctrine is concerned

with 'eternal', that is, supra-historical truth rather than historical and empirical truth, fiction and

poetry may be among its most adept representations. However, writing some sixty years before

the Church's official endorsement of modern biblical scholarship, Pope Pius IX did not

recognize the capacity of myth, narrative, and poetry to convey eternal truth in a way that

doctrinal propositions cannot do - at least not without borrowing from the language of these

literary genres.[40]

2.4 Rejecting Scholarship that Could Facilitate the Development of Doctrine

In a curious sense, if Enlightenment thought enforced a dichotomy between faith and reason,

ousting faith from the public square to a religious ghetto, it might be argued that scholasticism

also furthered the marginalization of faith by envisaging it as too rigidly strictly segregated from

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[39] Ibid. #7.
[40] Pius XII, Encycl. *Divino afflante Spiritu* (Vatican: 1943), #37.

reason.[41] By contrast, scholars such as Alfred Loisy, regarded by the magisterium as Modernists, advanced a much more integrated model of reason, faith, and revelation.[42]

Loisy was influenced by John Henry Newman's account of the development of doctrine which saw the process of development as entirely compatible with a belief in the inspirational role of the Holy Spirit.[43] Loisy, writing under the pseudonym, 'A. Firmin', posited that the biblical tradition too had developed in and through human processes.[44] For Loisy, the process of development was a means through which divine revelation was mediated.[45] Therefore, Loisy believed that it was entirely appropriate to draw upon a historical-critical method in the interpretation of both scripture and of doctrine.[46]

Loisy was critical of Adolf von Harnack's arguable assumption that the essence of a more pure Christianity had been lost as the Church developed.[47] Harnack's position seemed to play into the hands of a magisterium that equated development with corruption - if such development

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[41] Alfred Firmin Loisy. *The Gospel and the Church*, Bernard Scott. ed., Christopher Home, trans. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976.), p. 211.

[42] Francesco Turvasi, *The Condemnation of Alfred Loisy and the Historical Method* (Rome: Ediz. di Storia e Letteratura, 1979), pp. 148, 167.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Alfred Firmin Loisy. *The Gospel and the Church*, Bernard Scott ed., Christopher Home trans. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), p. 211.
John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th edition (University of Notre Dame Press,, 1989).
Alfred Firmin, '*Le Développement Chrétien d'Après le Cardinal Newman'*, *Revue du clergé français* 17 (1898), pp. 5–20; A. Firmin, 'La Théorie Individualiste de la Religion', *Revue du clergé français* 17 (1899), pp. 202–15; A. Firmin, 'La définition de la religion', *Revue du clergé français* 18 (1899), pp. 193–209; A. Firmin, 'L'idée de la revelation', *Revue du clergé français* 21 (1900), pp. 250–71; and A. Firmin, 'Les preuves et l'économie de la revelation', *Revue du clergé français* 22 (1900), all cited in Jeffrey Morrow, 'Alfred Loisy's Developmental Approach to Scripture: Reading the 'Firmin' Articles in the Context of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Historical Biblical Criticism,'*International Journal of Systematic Theology* Volume 15 (3): p. 326. Cf. John H. Cardinal Newman, 'On the Inspiration of Scripture', *The Nineteenth Century* 15 (1884), pp. 185–99 and John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: James Toovey, 1845).

[45] Morrow, p. 329. Cf. Francesco Turvasi, *The Condemnation of Alfred Loisy and the Historical Method (Rome: Ediz.di Storia e Letteratura*, 1979), p. 148, 167.

[46] Ibid., p 327.

[47] Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), p. 234.

was influenced by contemporary scholarly insight. Loisy, on the other hand, argued that the tradition had always been in flux and there had never been a static, pristine Christianity.[48]

Loisy argued that those who denied the possibility of a legitimate development of doctrine, in fact, corrupted the Tradition.[49] The author defended his insistence upon the possibility and necessity of a legitimate development of doctrinal formulae by offering myriad examples as to how doctrines ranging from Trinitarian to Eucharistic had evolved.[50] Christianity was already, in Loisy's view, a product of development, and this merely needed to be recognized more explicitly. He wrote, 'Christianity is in a very true sense a development from post-exilic Judaism, which is a development of the religion of the prophets which is a development from primitive Mosaic Yahwism.'[51] Given that Christianity was already the product of development, Loisy suggested that 'It is just the idea of development which is now needed, not to be created all at once, but established for a better knowledge of the past.'[52]

Loisy's position that revelation is mediated in and through processes of interpretation and development might be regarded as quintessentially Catholic. His view exemplifies the sacramental vision of Catholicism whereby the grace is mediated in and through creation, not depending upon an extrinsic supplement to creation. Sacramental theologian, Michael Himes captures this dimension of Catholicism when he suggests that 'at its best, Catholicism is shaped by the conviction that grace lies at the root of all reality. And if that conviction is true, all the

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[48] A. Firmin, '*Le Développement Chrétien d'Après le Cardinal Newman'*: Pope Pius X, *Lamentabili Sane Exitu* (Rome: The Holy See, 1907), #1. Available **at** http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10lamen.htm. Accessed on 4.13.2013.

[49] Morrow. Alfred Loisy's Developmental Approach to Scripture.,' p.328.

[50] Firmin, 'Le Développement Chrétien', pp. 16–18, cited in Morrow, p. 329.

[51] Alfred Loisy, *L'Evangile et L'Eglise* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1902), pp.161-162 quoted in CJT Talar, ed., *Prelude to the Modernist Crisis: The Firmin Articles of Alfred Loisy*, Christine Thirlway, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 94.

[52] Ibid., , xiv.

humanities, as well as the sciences, become religious enterprises.'[53] For Loisy, the interpretation and development of revealed truth was a religious enterprise, not a secular enterprise imposed upon religion. However, what Himes purports of Catholicism 'at its best' has not always characterized the attitudes of Catholics. Flannery O'Connor, a Catholic author writing in preconciliar twentieth century era, opined that 'the average Catholic reader... [is] more of a Manichean than the Church permits. By separating nature and grace as much as possible, he has reduced his conception of the supernatural to the pious cliché.'[54]

Loisy's sense that the developmental processes can mediate the divine concurs with the thought of his contemporary, Teilhard de Chardin, who saw no contradiction between the scientific theory of evolution and a belief in God as creator – a position that the Catholic Church has come to accept.[55] If God created humanity through what science describes as the process of evolution, God reveals to humankind through processes of development, processes that are historical, literary, cultural and, yes, sacred, in nature. Just as Teilhard did not think of God's creation of humankind as a process separable from that of evolution, so Loisy did not think of revelation as a process separable from the communication, interpretation and development of the Word of God. For Loisy, it was less the case that grace built on nature than that grace saturates nature. If grace saturates nature, then it can infuse human nature and rational processes, flawed and fallen though they may be.

CJT Talar acknowledges that, since Loisy sought zealously to redress what he perceived as an imbalance whereby the role development in Christian doctrine has been understated or

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[53] Michael Himes, '"Finding God in All Things": A Sacramental Worldview and its Effects,' *As Leaven in the World: Catholic Perspectives on Faith, Vocation, and the Intellectual Life*, Thomas Landy, ed. (Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2001), p. 102.

[54] Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Papers*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957), p. 146.

[55] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975), pp. 218, 220, 223, 227, 228, 277. Pope St. John Paul II, 'Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: On Evolution' http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp961022.htm. Accessed on 7.2.2013.

largely ignored, the mistaken impression might be given that he denied the transcendent

dimension of revelation altogether. 'Loisy's preoccupation with the role of experience in

revelation would lead many of his eventual critics to overlook his effort to maintain a

transcendent dimension.'[56] Loisy did not deny the transcendent but saw it as capable of working

in and through the agency of rational human beings inspired by God.

Loisy jettisoned the notion of literal inspiration. 'There is nothing to indicate, nor has the

Church ever taught, that in those who are the inspired organs of revelation, the movement of

thought takes a totally irregular course . . .'[57] Here lies the heart of the dispute between Loisy and

the magisterium. Loisy saw the 'movement of thought' governed by its regular course, that is by

reason, as a means through which divine inspiration is mediated.

In July, 1907, Pope Pius X issued a decree, *Lamentabili sane exitu,* condemning 65

Modernist positions in relation to the interpretation of the scriptures and of doctrine.[58] The

introduction to the decree decried what it regarded as the regrettable results of the allegedly

immoderate application of modern interpretative methods to the scriptures and Tradition of the

Church, implying a lack of prudence and an irresponsible sensationalism.'With truly lamentable

results, our age, casting aside all restraint in its search for the ultimate causes of things,

frequently pursues novelties so ardently that it rejects the legacy of the human race.'[59]

Lamentabili proceeds to regard the modern age, and its pursuit of novel insights, as

posing a threat to the authority of the magisterium. 'Thus it falls into very serious errors, which

are even more serious when they concern sacred authority, the interpretation of Sacred Scripture,

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[56] Talar, *Prelude to the Modernist Crisis*, xxi.
[57] Ibid., p. 57.
[58] Pope Pius X, *Lamentabili sane exitu* (Vatican, 1907). Available at:
http://papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10lamen.htm. Accessed on 3.13.2013.
[59] Pope Pius X, *Lamentabili,* #1.

and the principal mysteries of Faith.'[60] The decree condemns the attempts of exegetes and

theologians to contribute to the development of doctrine as transgressing non-negotiable

boundaries and nothing short of destructive. 'The fact that many Catholic writers also go beyond

the limits determined by the Fathers and the Church herself is extremely regrettable. In the name

of higher knowledge and historical research (they say), they are looking for that progress of

dogmas which is, in reality, nothing but the corruption of dogmas.'[61] Granted, this statement

does not preclude the possibility of any development of doctrine whatsoever. Such a position

would be untenable in view of the manner in which ecumenical councils had defined dogma and

developed the Church's understanding on subjects such as the Virgin Mother, the person of

Christ, and the Trinity. Rather, *Lamentabili* condemns the prospect of the development of

doctrine impelled by modern scholarship.

2.5 The Difficulty in Defining Modernism

As Michael Morton observes, 'Modernism itself is really very hard to define. Even the name was

conjured up to embrace a whole array of what were considered unacceptable ideas and subjects

of study.'[62] Morton's reference to 'conjuring' up the name is appropriately suggestive of the

manner in which the magisterium, to some extent, constructed the modernist enemy. That is,

modernism is not a specific heresy such as Arianism. It is not a corrupted or deficient account of

some specific doctrine of the Church and could not be counteracted in relation to a specific

question or issue. Rather, it is a worldview which Morton describes in terms of three

characteristics.[63] First, modernism espoused a historical consciousness that views developments

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Michael Morton, 'Catholic Modernism (1896-1914)', Available at
http://www.sofn.org.uk/doctrine/catholic_modernism.html.Accessed on 12.5.2013.
[63] Pope Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, (Vatican, 1907), #2. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-
x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html. Accessed on 12.5.2013.

in Christianity, including doctrine, in the context of their evolution, under the guidance of the

Holy Spirit. Second, and related to this, is modernism's endorsement of a historical-critical

approach to the scriptures, attentive to questions of authorial context and genre. Third,

Modernism offered an unwelcome critique of the excesses of scholasticism that had all but

eclipsed other approaches to Catholic theology. Modernism may also be understood as the

endeavor to hold doctrine accountable to an Enlightenment model of reason, or at least to place

Christian doctrine in dialogue with the sciences, both human and hard.

Pope Pius X referred to the modernists as a hidden danger lurking in the midst of the

Church. 'They lie hid, a thing to be deeply deplored and feared, in her very bosom and heart, and

are the more mischievous, the less conspicuously they appear.'[64] The culprits to which Pope Pius

IX was referring, and who broadly meet the criteria suggested by Morton's description of

Modernism, would include Louis Duchesne, Maurice D'Hulst, George Tyrrell, Herman Schell,

and Baron von Hügel .

2.6 Defining Dogma

Some discussion of the term, 'dogma' seems appropriate at this point, especially since, to post-

Vatican II ears, the term may suggest the highest level of Church teaching, including, but not

limited to the creedal statements. Such an understanding of the term, dogma, however, reflects

article 11 of Vatican Two's *Decree on Ecumenism* which states, 'When comparing doctrines

with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a "hierarchy" of

truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith.'[65] Popes Pius IX and

Pius X, reflecting general usage in their times, did not, however, reserve the term 'dogma' to

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[64] Ibid.

[65] The Second Vatican Council, *The Decree on Ecumenism* (Rome: The Holy See, 1964), #11. Available at
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-
redintegratio_en.html. Accessed on 12.27.2013.

denote the highest level of doctrine, and uses it in a broader sense, largely synonymous with the term, 'doctrine'.[66]

Karl Rahner, writing in the 1950's also utilized the term, 'dogma' in a broad sense. Regarding the authority of dogma, Rahner's position was that dogmatic statements can be true insofar as any human statement can be true.[67] As a human statement, however, a dogmatic statement is not immune from human folly and corruption.[68] Rahner observes the manner in which dogmatic formulations can become intertwined with non-binding assertions and assumptions. 'In the transmission and expression of dogmas properly speaking there may be inseparably mingled ideas, interpretations etc., which are not part of the binding content of the article of faith.'[69]

Rahner cites the example of the dogma of original sin (a reminder that the term, dogma is being used as synonymous with doctrine rather than dogma in a narrow sense[70]). The author notes that while Pope Pius XII considered an assent to monogenism as integral to belief in the doctrine of original sin, many theologians still adhere to the doctrine of original sin but have decoupled it from a belief in monogenism which they clearly consider non-binding.

2.7 The Council That Would Not Condemn

Church councils have, historically, served a corrective function, defining doctrine so as to counteract erroneous understandings.[71] Early councils of the Church had responded to heresies by defining doctrines in relation to the identity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. In more recent

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[66] Pope Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, # 13.
[67] Karl Rahner, 'Yesterday's History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow', *Theological Investigations*, 18: pp.11-12 quoted in Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 39
[68] Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 37.
[69] Karl Rahner, 'Yesterday's History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow', pp.11-12 quoted in Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 39.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, pp. 16, 55.

centuries, the Council of Trent had condemned the Protestant Reformation, and the First Vatican

Council had condemned the position that doctrine can develop significantly in view of scholarly

insights. 'If anyone says: it may happen that to doctrines put forward by the Church, sometimes,

as knowledge advances, a meaning should be given different from what the Church has

understood and understands, let him be anathema.'[72] In calling a council in 1959, St. John XXIII

was not, however, proposing another assault on the Modernists. Yet, as John W. O'Malley,

insightfully observes, there was, in a sense, a crisis to be confronted.[73] The Church appeared to

be thriving in terms of its bulging congregations, thriving convents and overflowing seminaries,

but it was in danger of spiritual and intellectual stultification under the leadership of the

'prophets of gloom'. And so, Pope John proposed a pastoral council, not characterized by a

reaction to heresy but, in a sense, a reaction to orthodoxy - that is, a reaction to the inertia,

triumphalism and complacency, that can typify those hierarchs who become overinvested in the

status-quo.

2.8 John XXIII's Hermeneutic of Continuous Development

In his inaugural speech at the opening of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, Pope

John XXIII exhibits a commitment to both conservation and to progress in relation to doctrine.

The pontiff speaks of the importance of treasuring the deposit of faith as mediated in scripture

and tradition, not by simply preserving it, but by developing it so that it may speak effectively to

the modern era.

> Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with
> antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work
> which our era demands of us, pursuing thus the path which the Church has followed for
> twenty centuries.[74]

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[72] The First Vatican Council, *Dei filius*, Chapter IV.

[73] John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican Two?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 1 – 30.

[74] Pope John XXIII Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962.. Available at
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-

Pope John bestowed a mandate to go beyond antiquarianism so as to continue the development

that had characterized the dynamic tradition at its best – though not consistently – for twenty

centuries. The pontiff, in his exhortation to work fearlessly, appears to anticipate resistance to

the development of doctrine. Yet John XXIII also sensed a widespread readiness for such

development.

> The whole world expects a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of
> consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which,
> however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through
> the literary forms of modern thought.[75]

Pope John envisages modern research methods, and modes of thinking and communicating as

being utilized in service of the tradition.

John XXIII cut a distinction between the eternal truths in themselves, and the doctrinal

formulations that seek to express these truths through a given language for given epoch. 'The

substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is

presented is another.'[76] Giuseppe Alberigo suggests that John was referring to adaptations

necessary for the presentation of doctrine to those whose worldviews were formed by Marxism,

and the liberal institutions of modernity in general.[77] In any case, Pope John's distinction

between eternal truths and the Church's attempts to articulate them, acknowledges that

improvement is conceivably possible in the formulation of doctrine so as to more effectively

mediate divine revelation.

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council_it.html**.** Accessed on 3.35.2013. Cf**.** Walter Abbot ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press
& America Press, 1966), p. 715.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Giuseppe Alberigo, *The Formation of the Council's Identity: First Period and Intersession*, *History of Vatican II*,
vol. 2 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), p. 17.

John XXIII's reference to the importance of adherence to the 'entirety' of Church teaching may be interpreted as a comment upon the selective manner in which the Tradition had, for the most part, been presented in the centuries since the Council of Trent.[78] That is, the Tridentine Church had been selective as to which aspects of the ancient tradition it emphasized. George Lindbeck, a Lutheran observer at the Council, believes that the Council fathers fulfilled Pope John's vision, recognizing the riches of a 2,000 year-old tradition.[79] The Council moved beyond those strands of the tradition that had reacted at the Council of Trent to the Reformation, and in the Modernist crisis to modernity. Lindbeck recalls, 'The renewers argued circles around the traditionalists. They unmasked their opponents as mistaking the post-Tridentine developments, not least the Marian and papal advances of the nineteenth century, for the total Catholic heritage.'[80] Lindbeck's reference to the nineteenth century appears to evoke Pope Pius IX's definition in 1854 of the dogma of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and the First Vatican Council's declaration of papal infallibility.[81] These two pronouncements could be considered instances of the development of doctrine, underscoring the point that the anti-Modernist magisterium was not opposed to the development of doctrine so much as developments of doctrine influenced by Modernism.

John XXIII's references to the entirety of Church teaching, beyond the emphases of Trent and Vatican I, may be read as an endorsement of *ressourcement.* The return to early sources would pose a significant challenge to the Neo-scholasticism that had all but eclipsed other

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[78] Pope John XXIII Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council.

[79] George Lindbeck, 'How a Lutheran Saw It: a different kind of Reformation,' *Commonweal, Vol. CXXIX, Number 20* (Nov. 22, 2002), pp. 15-17, at p. 16.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (Vatican: December 8, 1854). Available at http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ineff.htm. Accessed on 4.12.2014; The First Vatican Council, *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, *Pastor aeternus* (Vatican, 1870); #4,9 (Vatican 1870.) Available at *http://www.inters.org/Vatican-Council-I-Dei-Filius.* Accessed on 4.12.2014.

perspectives within the Tradition. The Council welcomed among its *periti* theologians who advocated a return to the scriptural and patristic sources of theology that has been all but obscured by scholasticism. During the decade before the Council, *ressourcement* theologians, including John Courtney Murray, Edward Schillebeeckx, Henri de Lubac, and Karl Rahner had been held in suspicion by the magisterium while endeavoring to recover the riches of Christian antiquity. Now, in the environs of St. Peter's Basilica, they brushed shoulders with their former detractors. As James Carroll remarks, 'Formally censored and censured scholars were all at once the darlings of Catholic thought.'[82]

The Council would revive ancient practices and ways of thinking as much, if not more, than it inaugurated new ones. As Daniel Donovan observes, 'Although Vatican Two has seemed to many people to represent something new, in many ways what it said . . . . was quite traditional. It represented a return to values and insights that in many cases had been widely held in the early Church.'[83] The Council was more friend than foe to ancient Christianity.

Donovan notes that ancient practices and formulations were not revived so much on the grounds that their antiquity alone made them somewhere more pure and authentic. Rather, the author notes a similarity between the situation of the church in patristic times and in late modernity. 'It was almost as if the bishops, recognizing that the kind of intertwining of church and society that has marked medieval Christendom had come to an end, decided to turn to early Christian experience for insight into how they might renew the life of the church in a pluralistic and increasingly secular world.'[84] This suggests a pastoral pragmatism, reinstituting practices of the patristic era in response to a pastoral context, rather than for the sake of primitivism.

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[82] James Carroll, *Practicing Catholic* (New York: Houghton Miffler Harcourt, 2009), p. 163.
[83] Daniel Donavon, *Distinctly Catholic: An Exploration of Catholic Identity*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), p. 25.
[84] Ibid.

Lindbeck regards the Council's historical consciousness as distinguishing it from previous councils. The author argues that the Council adopted a new view of the world, seeing the Church and the broader world as works in progress, evolving towards the fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.[85] Lindbeck describes this perspective as 'realized futuristic eschatology.'[86] By this term, the author refers to an evolutionary view of the Church and the world, in which the Kingdom of God is a reality experienced as 'already' and as 'not yet', a tension to which Walter Kasper, Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner and JB Metz have been attentive.[87] Lindbeck argues that this perspective is closer to the Hebraic perspective held by many of the biblical authors, than to more static views of the world held by Hellenistic perspectives.[88] Insofar as it reflects the 'already', a realized futuristic eschatology is conducive to an understanding of doctrine as authoritative. Insofar as it reflects the 'not yet', a realized futuristic eschatology is conducive to an understanding of doctrine as provisional, reflecting the 'not yet' status of a pilgrim Church. Hence, realized eschatology can suggest an understanding of doctrinal formulae as provisionally authoritative.

2.9 Mysterium Ecclesiae: Affirming John XXIII's View on the Development of Doctrine

In 1973, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a declaration 'In Defense of the Catholic Doctrines of the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day' (*Mysterium ecclesiae*).[89] The declaration endeavors to address erroneous and ambiguous accounts of the nature of doctrine that had arisen since the Council. As we shall propose in the next chapter, Pope Paul VI was, at this time, deeply troubled by an atmosphere of dialogue and of innovation

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[85] George Lindbeck, 'Vision of a World Renewed', *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican Two – Catalyst for Change* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1970), p. 4. Cf. Walter Kasper, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes*, (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1965), p. 36 quoted in Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity*, p.37.
[86] Ibid. 9.
[87] Lindbeck, 'Vision of a World Renewed,' p. 4. Cf. Walter Kasper, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1965), p. 36 quoted in Sullivan, p. 37.
[88] Lindbeck, 'Vision of a World Renewed', p. 9.
[89] The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium ecclesiae* (Vatican: The Holy See, 1973).

in the postconciliar Church and in academia.[90] However, despite the defensive title of the declaration, it is infused with a humility and realism unknown in previous defenses of the Church's infallibility. The declaration candidly admits 'during her earthly pilgrimage the Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified.'[91] A Church that is always in need for being purified is a Church that had better be open to the possibility of change.

Mysterium ecclesiae is deeply reminiscent of the distinction made by Pope John XXIII between the deposit of faith and the way it is expressed. The declaration affirms his mandate that the best of modernity's insights and methodologies be marshaled so as to accomplish 'a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought.'[92] True to the influence of John XXIII, *Mysterium* recognizes that the effectiveness of any doctrinal formulation is relative to its context.

> . . .the dogmatic *formulas* of the Church's Magisterium were from the beginning suitable for communicating revealed truth, and that as they are they remain forever suitable for communicating this truth to those who interpret them correctly. It does not however follow that every one of these formulas has always been or will always be so to the same extent.[93]

The declaration proceeds to approve a role for theologians in the exegesis and formulation of doctrine at the service of the teaching office. 'For this reason theologians seek to define exactly the intention of teaching proper to the various formulas, and in carrying out this work they are of considerable assistance to the living Magisterium of the Church, to which they remain

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[90] Donald McClarey, 'Pope Paul VI and the Smoke of Satan,' *America*, 12.4.2011.
[91] *Mysterium ecclesiae*, # 6.
[92] Pope John XXIII, Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962.
[93] *Mysterium ecclesiae*, #5.

subordinated.'[94] *Mysterium ecclesiae* notes that while some ancient doctrinal formulae remain effective, others need to be replaced by new ones that present the same meaning.

> For this reason also it often happens that ancient dogmatic formulas and others closely connected with them remain living and fruitful in the habitual usage of the Church, but with suitable expository and explanatory additions that maintain and clarify their original meaning. In addition, it has sometimes happened that in this habitual usage of the Church certain of these formulas gave way to new expressions which, proposed and approved by the Sacred Magisterium, presented more clearly or more completely the same meaning.[95]

The essential meaning of the formulae remains ever-true, however, the Church's expression of the meaning may be more developed so as to be clearer and more complete.[96] The formulae can develop so as to communicate more clearly in the idiom of the age, and more completely so as to take account of new insights into the original deposit of faith.[97] Hence, in *Mysterium ecclesiae*, the case for the development of doctrinal formulations is vindicated. As Francis Sullivan observes, 'This statement of the CDF provides official clarification of the sense in which dogmatic statements can be said to be 'irreformable.' Irreformability is predicated of their meaning . . . On the other hand, the fact that this meaning can be expressed with greater clarity or more developed shows that irreformability is not predicated of dogmatic formulas as such.'[98] Sullivan's interpretation of *Mysterium ecclesiae* signifies the Church's acknowledgment of the possibility of the legitimate development of doctrine based on both the need for an articulation of the ancient deposit that will be better understood in a new epoch, and also on new insights regarding the truth to which the doctrine refers.

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 35.

2.10 The Epideictic Tone of the Council

Cardinal Godfried Daneels recalls that the majority of the Council fathers were quickly won over to John XXIII's dialogical disposition toward the modern world. Noting that most of the fathers were initially suspicious of the 'world', Daneels remarks that, within a few weeks, they displayed a more open and optimistic attitude.'[99] As Oliver Putz notes, 'Regardless of the ideas with which they came to Rome, virtually all of the participants transformed their views.'[100] Putz regards the Council as having facilitated a conversion experience for its participants.[101]

O'Malley argues that the manner in which the Second Vatican Council spoke to the world, its style that is, held massive implications for the way in which Church teaching would henceforth be understood.[102] Unlike previous Councils, the Second Vatican Council did not teach by way of canons. Canons, as exemplified in the anti-Modernist writings, are essentially prohibitions declaring that anyone who holds some stated position should be regarded as 'anathema'. In a sense they are a series of condemnations. However, as Ladislas Orsy notes, 'The fathers of the Council wanted no threats or punishments in their documents; they trusted that faith will persuade by its own beauty and persuasive power.'[103] Thus, Orsy implies the persuasive style of the Council's documents reflects a quality integral to the faith, rather than a persuasive style, extraneous to the faith itself.

In contrast with the canonical style, the Second Vatican Council teaches, as O'Malley observes, in the epideictic style, that is, by presenting a vision of the ideal so as to invite, exhort

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[99] Cardinal Godfried Daneels, 'Vatican II - an Unprecedented Event, A Council Like No Other,'*The Tablet*, October 25, 2012**.** http://www.thetablet.co.uk/blogs/394/24 Accessed on 11.26.2012.
[100] Oliver Putz, 'I Did Not Change; They Did: Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Rahner and the Second Vatican Council,' http://www.academia.edu/470398/_I_did_not_change_they_did_Joseph_Ratzinger_Karl_Rahner_and_the_Second_Vatican_Council**.** Accessed on 12.26. 2012.
[101] Ibid.
[102] John W. O'Malley, 'Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?'*Theological Studies,* 67 (2006): p. 12. Available at http://www.ts.mu.edu/readers/content/pdf/67/67.1/67.1.1.pdf**.** Accessed on 9.24.2013.
[103] Ladislas Orsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), p. 117.

and persuade.[104] When John XXIII referred at the opening of the Council to 'making use of the medicine of mercy rather than severity', this heralded the Council's use of the epideictic style.[105] In the years preceding the publication of the conciliar documents, John's own encyclicals, *Mater et magister* (1961) and *Pacem in terris* (1963) had epitomized the epideictic style.[106] Garry Wills notes the misgivings of the Curia, commenting that 'Those letters' openness towards the world, their call for cooperation with it, were considered naïve by the pope's own staff, as well as his calling of the Council.'[107]

In relation to the question of style, Marshall McLuhan's axiom that 'The medium is the message' is pertinent.[108] That is, the manner in which Church teaching is expressed cannot be neatly separated from the teaching itself.[109] The epideictic style is not merely a question of ancient teachings in new wrapping, a more diplomatic rendition of the party-line. Rather, in a case in point, a document, such as *Gaudium et spes* invites the entire human family to conversation, implying openness to genuine discussion.[110] This need not imply a concession to relativism, an acquiescence to the status quo, or a denial of the Church's authority, rather, it may suggest the possibility of a spirited, constructive dialogue.

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[104] John W. O'Malley, 'Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?, pp. 3-33.
[105] John XXIII, Speech at the opening of the Second Vatican Council.
[106] Pope John XXIII, *Mater et magister* (Vatican, 1961) available at
http://www.papalencyclicals.net/John23/j23mater.htm. Accessed on 4.14.2013.
Pacem in terris (Vatican: 1963). Available at http://www.papalencyclicals.net/John23/j23pacem.htm. Accessed on 4.14.2013.
[107] Garry Wills, *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 82.
[108] Marshall McLuhan, 'The Medium is the Message,' *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet, 1964) , pp. 23-35, 63- 67.
[109] Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 218.
[110] The Second Vatican Council, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* .

2.11 Inviting the Modern World to Dialogue

If the medium had changed, so had the message. O'Malley observes that 'the council took as axiomatic that Catholicism was adaptive even to the modern world.'[111] The author notes that 'this was a shift from the integralism that marked most Catholic thinking from the early 19th century and well into the 20th.'[112]

Vatican Two's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* expresses the Council's desire for dialogue with the contemporary world, including those who are not explicitly followers of Christ. 'This council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation' and again, specifically with regard to non-Catholics, 'We want frank conversation to compel us all to receive the impulses of the Spirit faithfully and to act on them energetically.'[113] Significantly, Pope John XXIII in his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* set a precedent for addressing 'all men of good will', as opposed to Catholics only. This signaled an impetus to persuasively, in the epideictic style, engage contemporary people in dialogue, appealing to their best motives. In a sense, therefore, Pope John XXIII envisaged the modern world as a conversation partner, not merely the incidental background against which the Church taught unilaterally.

It may be fair to suggest that the 'modern world' within the Council's terms of reference is primarily suggestive of the contemporary, global population – first and foremost persons of flesh and blood rather than a paradigm or worldview. This focus on the world's people is

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[111] John W. O'Malley, 'Vatican Two: Did Anything Happen?', p. 12
http://www.ts.mu.edu/readers/content/pdf/67/67.1/67.1.1.pdf Accessed on 11.22.2012.
[112] Ibid.
[113] *Gaudium et spes* (Vatican, 1965), Preface, #3, #92.

apparent when *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* opens with the words, 'The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.'[114] That is, the fathers are primarily interested in the concerns of living people, especially the poor. *Gaudium et Spes*, by its reference to the Council's solidarity with the poor, reinforces the sense that it is the Council's outreach to the modern world is primarily in relation to its people. Many of the poor, inhabiting the developing world, did not in the 1960's and do not now, it could argued, live in the context of the modern paradigm. Many lived in cultures that suffered the effects of colonialism or its aftermath, enjoying few of the benefits of modernity, practical or intellectual. Such contexts may not have been characterized by Western Christianity or the ideals of the enlightenment. Therefore, to some extent, the Council's references to the 'modern world' could have been considered synonymous with the term, 'contemporary' rather than modern in the sense of a paradigm or ideology.

While the Council sought solidarity and dialogue primarily with people, this invitation also extended to those invested in the modern paradigm. For example, *Gaudium et spes* extols the benefits of modernity in separating religion from superstition, and hence militating for a more mature, critical, intentional faith.[115] Similarly, the *Decree on the Media of Social Communications* recognizes, though not uncritically, the benefits to be derived from this aspect of modernity.[116] The Council envisaged the Church learning from the world, from culture, and from the sciences. 'The experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, by all of which the nature of man himself is more

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[114] *Gaudium et spes*, #1.
[115] Ibid., #7.
[116] The Second Vatican Council, *The Decree on the Media of Social Communications* (*Inter Mirfica*) (Vatican: 1963) Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html. Accessed on 12.27.2013.

clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened, these profit the Church, too.'[117] This

statement recognizes the store of wisdom offered by 'past ages' and also the 'progress of the

sciences' that may in some instances serve to illuminate ancient truths that have been obfuscated.

Leo O'Donovan detects in *Gaudium et spes* not only an openness to dialogue with the

modern world, but an affirmation that modernity's efforts for human development are in

continuity with the divine plan. O'Donovan notes that the constitution suggests that modern

humans can, in this regard, 'justly consider that by their own efforts they are unfolding the

creator's work.'[118] O'Donovon remarks that several theologians have detected in *Gaudium et*

spes an optimistic, evolutionary perspective such as that advanced by Teilhard de Chardin.[119]

Henri de Lubac considers that Teilhard's evolutionary theology exerted 'a certain influence, at

least indirect and diffuse on some orientations of the Council.'[120] Otto Spülbeck recalls four

occasions on which the Council fathers, while deliberating on *Gaudium et spes*, discussed de

Chardin's theology, and regards chapter three of that pastoral constitution as particularly

informed by Teilhard's view that all of creation will ultimately say 'Yes' to the divine

invitation.[121]

Vatican II's mandate for dialogue with the modern world is powerfully affirmed by the

Council's dominant model of Church as the 'People of God.' [122] This broad and inclusive

ecclesiology means that the modern voices originating new insights need not be regarded as

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[117] *Gaudium et spes*, #44.

[118] Leo O'Donovan, 'Was Vatican Two Evolutionary?,' *Theological Studies*, 36 (1975): pp. 494-502 at 497.
http://www.ts.mu.edu/readers/content/pdf/36/36.3/36.3.5.pdf. Accessed on 5.1.2013.

[119] Ibid., p. 495.

[120] Henri de Lubac, *Athéisme et sens de l'homme: Une double requête de 'Gaudium et spes'* (Paris, 1968), p.130.
Quoted in O'Donovan, p. 495.

[121] Otto Spülbeck, '*Teilhard de Chardin und die Pastoralkonstitution*' in Johann Christoph Hampe, ed., *Die
Autorität der Freiheit* 3 (Munich, 1967), pp. 86-97, at 86-87. See also Spülbeck's essay '*Fortschrittsglaube und
Evolution*' in Ulrich Schöndorfer, ed., *Der Fortschrittsglaube—Sinn und Gefahren* (Graz, 1965), pp. 85-107.
Giovanni Caprile notes seven references to Teilhard in the Council aula: *Il Concilio Vaticano II* 4 (Rome, 1966) pp.
257, 263, 265, 278; (Rome, 1966) 76, 105, 153. Quoted in O'Donovan, p. 494.

[122] The Second Vatican Council, 'The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (*Lumen genium*), (Vatican: 1964),
Chapter two.

operating outside the Church. The Church's dialogue with the modern world need not, therefore, be understood as a conversation between the magisterium and extra-ecclesial perspectives, so much as an exchange of views within the bounds of Church, the People of God. The designation of the Church as the 'pilgrim' People of God in *Lumen gentium*, with overtones of the realized futuristic eschatology detected by Lindbeck, suggests a Church that is still making its way, and open to progress.[123]

While inviting the modern world to partake in dialogue, however, the Council fathers were not in naïve denial regarding the fallen state of humankind. On the contrary, *Gaudium et spes* states that humanity was influenced by the 'evil one' at the very start of history.[124] The reference to the evil one is reminiscent of the Greek term *poneros* (poneroß) as invoked in the seventh petition of the Our Father as related in Mt. 6:13 (the term is also utilized in Mt.5:37, 39).[125] But *Gaudium et spes* makes no explicit argument for a personal Satan. *Gaudium et spes,* in its ruminations upon the topic of evil, acknowledges the role of human experience in confirming that which is made known through revelation. 'What divine revelation makes known to us agrees with experience.'[126] This affirmation of the importance of life experience reflects a theology of correlation that underlies the document, and an affirmation of the life experience of modern people.

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[123] Ibid., Chapter seven; George Lindbeck, 'Vision of a World Renewed,' p.4.
[124] Ibid., #13.
[125] John McKenzie, 'The Gospel according to Matthew,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pp. 62-114 at 65. Cf. Raymond Brown, 'The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer,' *Theological Studies* 22 (1961): pp. 175-208 at 208. http://www.ts.mu.edu/readers/content/pdf/22/22.2/22.2.1.pdf. Accessed on 4.14.2013.
[126] Ibid.

2.12 Vatican Two and Theology of Correlation

Gaudium et spes, in its mandate for the Church to engage in conversation with the contemporary world, exemplifies the concerns of a correlational theology. A theology of correlation, as understood by Paul Tillich, is one that seeks to mediate between historical Christianity and contemporary culture.[127] Widely regarded as the father of an explicitly correlational approach to theology, Tillich was Lutheran by denomination. However, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza notes that the Catholic pioneers of the *nouvelle théologie* could also be regarded as exponents of a theology of correlation.[128] David Tracy concurs, suggesting 'that several of these theologies do not call themselves "correlational" is less important than the methodological-as-correlational character of the theologies themselves.'[129]

The *nouvelle théologie* pioneered by authors such as Rahner, Congar, and Schillebeeckx had helped blaze an intellectual trail for Vatican Two, challenging the position that all Catholic theology must be done within the framework of scholasticism. These thinkers observed a correlational method by recognizing the revelatory potential of life experience in the modern world, and by harnessing insights derived from modern philosophies.

Karl Rahner's method, for example, is informed by a correlation between the search for meaning in, on the one hand, German idealist philosophy, and on the other, the Roman Catholic Tradition.[130] Rahner's recourse to idealist philosophy signified his position that neo-scholasticism is not the only philosophical system that can profitably inform Catholic theological

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[127] John Powell Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of Mediating Theology* (Berlin/ New York: de Gruyter, 1980), p. 8.

[128] Karl Rahner, *Spirit and the World* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968) cited in Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (New York: Fortress Press, 2011), p. 41.

[129] David Tracy, 'The Uneasy Alliance,' *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): pp. 548 – 570 at 553.

[130] Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, John Galvin, ed., *Systematic Theology: Task and Method* (New York: Augsburg-Fortress Press, 1991), p.40. http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/0800662911Chapter1.pdf Accessed on 8.5.2013.

methodology. Thematically, Rahner's theology is characterized by a correlation between nature and grace.

While Tillich's use of the term, correlation, suggests the manner in which theologians and the Church envisage their relationship with the broader culture, and strive to proclaim the kerygma, the author also views divine revelation as inherently correlational. George Kendall posits that 'Paul Tillich's theology of revelation and, by extension, of salvation, has as its center his principle of correlation. This principle affirms that God's revelation to His creatures must, in its form, be correlated to the conditions under which creatures have their being, that is, the conditions of existence.'[131]

Dei verbum, Vatican Two's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* affirms the inherently correlational nature of revelation when it states that the interpreter of scripture in order to discern what God sought to reveal 'must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture.'[132] Hence, *Dei verbum* affirms Tillich's view that divine revelation is the word of God in human words, and, more broadly, that revelation transpires when the Word of God engages with a particular culture and way of life. By recognizing that God reveals in a human fashion, working through human authors, their cultures, their historical contexts, and the literary forms associated with their contexts, legitimizes the use of the historical-critical method of biblical exegesis. A theology of correlation, in Tillich's use of the term, views revelation as occurring in and through culture, and recognizes the value of the historical-critical method of exegesis in biblical interpretation.

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[131] George Kendall, 'Existence and Revelation in the Theology of Paul Tillich,' Eternal Word Television Network, http://www.ewtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/FR90303.HTM Accessed on 8.5.2013.
[132] *Dei verbum*, #12.

Rigby, Hengel and O'Grady regard the method of correlation as central to liberal thought. 'Rational progress and truth are at the heart of the liberal enterprise. Its method is one of mutually critical correlations.'[133] The authors imply that the degree to which a method of correlation constructively engages our current reality may depend upon the accuracy or veracity with which it characterizes the present situation.

> Certain correlations can be shown to be . . . more rationally progressive, and therefore, to disclose more truth for the theological enterprise . . . Some social science theories and some interpretations of doctrine offer us more authentic possibilities of life than others because they present us with a more accurate redescription of our present reality.[134]

The reference to a 'more accurate redescription of our present reality' implies an inductive methodology, beginning with a candid examination of life experience, rather than a deductive approach. Some degree of correlation, whether acknowledged or not, is inherent to the theological enterprise, arguably as soon as the theologian adopts language, and with it cultural mores and assumptions that must be related to the kerygma. In this sense, perhaps no theology, however apophatic or radically orthodox, simply by virtue of its use of human language, is correlation-free.

2.13 Contrasting Attitudes at the Council towards Dialogue with Modernity

Neither the Council fathers nor the worldwide church since the Council unanimously endorsed a dialogical, correlational stance in relation to the modern world. Even before an agenda was made known for the Council, opposition was mounting. As Greg Tobin remarks, 'While the direction the Council might take was unclear. . . it was clear that anything could happen. And the Curia, as well as other cardinals of the Church, did not like it at all.'[135] Cardinal Spellman of New York opined, 'I do not believe that the pope wanted to convoke a Council, but that he was pushed into

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[133] Paul Rigby, John Van Den Hengel, Paul O'Grady, 'The Nature of Doctrine and Scientific Progress,' *Theological Studies 52* (1991): pp. 669- 688 at 688.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Greg Tobin, *The Good Pope: John XXIII and Vatican II* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), pp. 112 -113.

it . . .'[136] This remark of the New York prelate reveals a suspicion, even before the Council, that some ominous agenda was at work behind the scenes. Tobin notes that Giovanni Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, recently incardinated by John, and well-disposed towards him, confided, 'This holy old boy doesn't seem to realize what a hornet's nest he's stirring up.'[137] Thirteen years later, Montini in his role as Pope Paul VI would use terminology far more damning than his allusion to a hornets' nest to describe the situation stirred up by the Council. John XXIII, in the most convivial sense, did indeed stir up the episcopacy, writing to 2,598 bishops and ordinaries of religious orders soliciting agenda items for discussion at the Council and receiving a 77% response rate representing some 1,800 cardinals, bishops and superiors or religious orders.

Having remarked upon the manner in which the majority of Council fathers were won over to St. John XXIII's dialogical disposition toward modernity, Cardinal Daneels adds, 'There remained a minority – privileged by the bishops and the cardinals of the Curia – who suspected the majority of disloyalty and betrayal of the tradition.' [138] Daneels hence asserts that this conservative minority of Council fathers was favored by the Curia. This brings us to the role of Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, Prefect of the Holy Office, tasked with chairing the Theological Commission and preparing an agenda of theological topics for discussion at the Council.

Ottaviani's motto read *Semper Idem,* 'always the same', and the cardinal was faithful to it, resisting the prospect of progress within the Church. Such intransigence, it could be argued, characterized the ethos of the Roman Curia more broadly. James Carroll recounts

> Ahead of the council, numerous schemata or outlines, were prepared by member of the Roman Curia, the conservative Vatican Bureaucracy that was determined to thwart change. These documents reiterated the traditional propositions on revelation, morality, family life, chastity, the liturgy, and the exalted place of Mary.[139]

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] James Carroll, *Practicing Catholic*, p. 110.

Thus, Carroll characterizes the body of clerics charged by John XXIII with preparing the schemata as intransigent, with overtones of integralism. Hindsight suggests that the John XXIII was not entrusting the direction of the Council to the Curia, but rather, in a pragmatically effective move, using an existing infrastructure to do the preparatory work required. Furthermore, whether by the pope's design or not, the paternalistic behavior of the Curia would jolt the Council fathers into action, impelling them to find their voice. Essentially, the Curia provoked the Council fathers, each one the leader of a diocese or religious institute and accustomed to being heeded, to take ownership of the Council and revise its agenda, albeit within parameters. It might stretch the point to say that Pope St. John XXIII allowed a paternalistic Curia to do what it did best in in hope that it would ignite the ire of some 2,000 prelates who would not allow themselves to be controlled like 'schoolboys' as one hierarch put it.[140] However, for one who knew the intransigent nature of the 'prophets of doom', and who was aware that some 1,800 prelates had felt strongly enough about the Council to submit agenda items, a clash could not have been completely unforeseen.[141]

If Cardinal Ottaviani and the Curia can be characterized as resistant to change, Cardinal Augustine Bea, and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity could be broadly characterized, as open to development. Tobin suggests that John XXIII instituted this secretariat and appointed Bea, its leader, so as to counterbalance the culture of the Curia.[142] It would be too stark and sadly ironic to suggest that the establishment of the Secretariat for Christian Unity demarcated clear battle-lines in the Church. This endorsement of ecumenism must, however, have occasioned

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[140] Tobin, *The Good Pope*, p. 175.
[141] Pope John XXIII Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council.
[142] Tobin, *The Good Pope,* p.146.

concern, or even disdain, on the part of those who feared for the preservation of the status quo and attenuated existing tensions between conflicting ecclesiologies.

An early indication that the majority of Council fathers were prepared to challenge the Curia became evident on October 13, 1962, when the Curia presented the Council with a slate of possible candidates to chair the Council's various commission, and Cardinal Lienart, bishop of Lille, argued that the fathers needed three days to consider the matter.[143] Upon discovering that the slate prepared by the Curia stacked the decks in favor of ultra-conservatives, the bishops compiled their own list of candidates, in a move dubbed 'The Revolt of the Bishops.'[144]

The theological differences that existed between, on the one hand, Ottaviani's Curia and, on the other, Bea and the majority of Council fathers, bubbled to the surface once more in relation to the reform of the liturgy. O'Malley notes that this was the first substantive issue facing the Council, whereby the fathers would show whether they were prepared to challenge the status quo. Carroll recounts that 'The Ottaviani-inspired decree on the liturgy was immediately put before the bishops, as a final draft, ready to be voted on.'[145] O'Malley notes that the fathers upturned the status quo by permitting the use of the vernacular as an alternative to Latin in the celebration of the liturgy. Still, the most dramatic liturgical developments associated with Vatican Two, it might be argued, are not micro-prescribed by the texts themselves, so much as the spirit of innovation inspired by the Council. This dynamic may be illustrated with reference to the 1973 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* which advanced the trajectory of Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* so as to mandate as a goal of all Catholic liturgy, the 'full, active, conscious participation of all the faithful, motivated by faith, hope and charity.' [146] The

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[143] Ibid., p. 175.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Carroll, *Practicing Catholic*, p. 111.
[146] O'Malley quoted in Tobin, *The Good Pope*, p. 177.

epideictic style of the documents seems to have suggested that they were more a beginning than

an end, a springboard for progress, rather than a ceiling to constrain it.[147]

The divide between the Curia and the Council majority became evident once more when,

on November 14, 1962, the fathers rejected *De fontibus*, the draft schema on the sources of

revelation as presented by Cardinal Ottaviani. The dispute was in large part concerned with the

relationship between magisterial authority and the freedom of exegetes to utilize the best

interpretive methods at their disposal in open, intellectual inquiry. Adrian Graffy recalls that

> . . . during the morning no fewer than twelve of the fifteen Council Fathers who spoke
> were against the draft. While Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo and Cardinal Siri of Genoa
> approved it and emphasised the need to draw up rules for Catholic biblical scholars, such
> opinions were not shared by Cardinals Frings of Cologne, Alfrink of Utrecht, Suenens of
> Malines-Brussels, and Cardinal Bea, head of the newly formed Secretariate for Christian
> Unity.[148]

The proposal that rules should be drawn up for scripture scholars must have rattled Cardinal Bea,

himself a scripture scholar, who had served as rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute for

nineteen years and had assisted in the preparation of the 1943 encyclical, *Divino afflante Spiritu*

which sought to emancipate exegetes to use the best methods at their disposal.[149]

Ottaviani insisted on the primacy of Tradition over scripture, a position deplored by the

peritus, Joseph Ratzinger, and that, if adopted by the Council, would have placed a stranglehold

The Second Vatican Council, 'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy', #14.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

[147] Pope Benedict XVI would, as we shall later see, vociferously disagree, as evidenced by his *Address to the Roman Curia*, The Vatican, December 22, 2005.Available at
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html. Accessed on 6.2.2013.

[148] Adrian Graffy, 'The Story of *Dei Verbum* Part Two: Drama in the Council,' *The Pastoral Review*, March/ April 2013, http://thepastoralreview.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=116:the-story-of-dei-verbum-part-two-drama-in-the-council&catid=42:marchapril-2013&Itemid=66 Accessed on 8.4.2013.

[149] Ibid.; Cf. Pope Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu,* # 37. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_30091943_divino-afflante-spiritu.html. Accessed on 8.4.2013.

on scripture scholarship.[150] Tradition, notoriously difficult to pry apart from the magisterial pronouncements that mediate it, could then have been invoked to veto any new insight or clarification with regard to the significance of the biblical text.

Cardinal Joseph Ritter urged the Council fathers to reject the draft. Cardinal Bea suggested that the draft represented a particular theological agenda, and one not associated with good theology, contending that 'the schema represents the work of a theological school, and not what the better theologians think.'[151] Bea called for a more pastoral alternative. 'What our times demand is a more pastoral approach, demonstrating the love and kindness that flow from religion.'[152] Tobin notes that Cardinals Maximus IV Saingh and Joseph De Smelt of the Secretariat of Christian Unity, and Cardinal Lineart of France called for a more pastoral and less dogmatic tone.[153] The Council fathers sought a new style that would characterize the Church's interaction with the world, in effect, the epideictic style.[154] Edward Hannenberg comments, 'Those who criticized the text wanted a new start. They wanted to free the Council from the anti-modern mentality that had hung over the Church in recent decades.'[155] Hannenberg identifies not only the impetus on the part of the majority of Council fathers to reject the mentality that has impelled the modernist crisis, but also their desire to recover aspects of the ancient tradition that had been suppressed in Tridentine Catholicism. 'They saw, paradoxically, that the key to moving forward was to recover the deeper wisdom of the past.'[156] Tobin posits that the Council's rejection of *De fontibus* was so pivotal as to change the course of the Council from the rubber-

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[150] Jared Wicks, trans, ed., *Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as Peritus Before and During Vatican Council II, Gregorianum* 89, (2008), pp. 269-279.
[151] Graffy, 'The Story of *Dei Verbum* Part Two: Drama in the Council'.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Tobin, *The Good Pope*, p.191.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Edward Hannenberg, '*Dei Verbum*' in *Vatican Two: The Essential Texts* (New York: Image, 2012), p. 81.
[156] Ibid.

stamping that it might have been.[157] Similarly, O'Malley views the affair as effectively removing power from the doctrinal commission. The bitter disappointment of the Curia, and a minority of Council fathers with regard to the Council's teaching on revelation and scripture would continue to haunt the Church, arguably leading to a disconnect between the insights of biblical scholarship and the presentation of doctrine.

2.14 Conclusion

A distinctive contribution of this chapter lies in its suggestion that, far from a concession to secular modernity, the case for the development of doctrine and the unpacking of the significance of divine revelation in light of the insights of modernity is entirely consistent with the sacramental worldview of Catholicism, open to the possibility that the divine many be mediated through any part of creation. From a sacramental perspective, the divine can be mediated through bread, wine, oil, and religious artifacts, 'fruit of the earth and work of human hands', so then why not also through other forms of human ingenuity such as processes of expression, interpretation and development? Grace not only builds on nature as a distinct and separate layer, as supposed by some forms of scholasticism. Rather, grace infuses nature, including human nature, and human processes of expression, interpretation, and development. If one takes seriously the inherent goodness of creation and its capacity to mediate the divine, then reason and the processes derived from it may be more difficult to cleanly distinguish from revelation itself. Indeed, as we shall later note with reference to Augustine of Hippo, even the being of Satan, should such a creature exist, is fundamentally good insofar as it is a component of God's sacred creation.[158]

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[157] Ibid.
[158] Augustine of Hippo, *Confession*s, RS Pine-Coffin, trans. (London: Penguin, 1961), p.160.

Pope St. John XXIII at the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council proposed a vision for the development of doctrine whereby ancient insights might be better expressed, and new insights derived from modern methodologies and modes of thought.[159] The 1973 declaration, *Mysterium ecclesiae* endorsed Pope John's position, stating that there always exists the possibility of a better formulation of any given doctrinal truth. As Yves Congar observes, the Church has historically defined doctrine so as to correct erroneous understandings.[160] Understood in this sense, doctrine is defined so as to reject error rather than to positively and exhaustively define the truth. Doctrine points towards the possible, in the process rejecting that which is not possible within the broad framework of Christian beliefs. Such an understanding avoids the extreme of over-identifying the doctrinal formulae with the eternal truth itself, and on the other hand, indifferentism whereby the limitations of human language are invoked in a defeatist manner so as to imply one formulation is as good as another, merely fingers pointing to the moon, as it were.[161] The present work will develop the position that doctrine may be understood as pointing toward the possible, perhaps even more so that pointing to the actual.

The Second Vatican Council, especially its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* signaled a dialogical stance on the part of the Church in relation to modernity. The Council invited the entire human family to engage in conversation regarding its concerns, and recognized that the modern paradigm could help to distinguish mature faith from superstition. However, the Council was polarized, and an ultra-conservative element among the Fathers resented what it saw as unwarranted accommodation of the modern zeitgeist. This

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[159] Pope John XXIII Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council.

[160] Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, pp. 16, 55

[161] Anthony de Mello, *One Minute Nonsense* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), p. 134. The analogy of the finger and the moon was invoked by de Mello, not to negate the possibility of a correspondence between doctrinal formulae and the eternal truth, but, rather, as hyperbolae, challenging the literalization and absolutization of the formulae as though they are the eternal truth itself.

polarization and resentment would hold great implications for the development of doctrine – or the lack thereof. Openness to dialogue with modernity is ultimately openness to grace – and to the possible. On the other hand, if one believes that one's current understanding of the truth is complete in every regard, then constructive dialogue is not possible.

This chapter acknowledges that polarization during the Second Vatican Council, notably in relation to the freedom of exegetes to pursue their craft according to the best available methods resulted in resentment on the part of the conciliar minority - resentments that would fester and frustrate the implementation of the Council's vision.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW DID THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN GAIN PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE QUESTION OF POSTCONCILIAR DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE?

Paul VI associates modernity's challenges to the doctrinal status quo with the influence of a preternatural Satan, and rejects calls to update the presentation of the doctrine of Satan itself.

3.1 Introduction

The chapter advances the central argument of the thesis by showing the manner in which the doctrine of Satan became entangled with resistance to the development of doctrine in light of modern insights. In 1972, a clearly exasperated Paul VI preached a homily in which he regarded certain modern influences and tendencies as satanic insofar as they challenged certainty in the teachings of the Church. Perhaps not surprisingly, the pontiff's subsequent reflections on the subject of Satan did not embrace modern scholarship on the theological and scriptural underpinnings of the doctrine.

Paul VI's ambivalence in this regard reflected a broader development whereby a cadre of influential Catholic theologians sought to assert a counter-cultural, challenging form of Catholicism, eschewing what they regarded as accommodation to the modern zeitgeist. This consideration of the perspectives of Popes St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and their ambivalence to dialogue with the modern world, adds a degree of self-reflexivity to the work by examining objections to my argument that the Second Vatican Council has authoritatively mandated the Church to engage in dialogue with the modern world.

3.2 Humanae Vitae and the Questioning of Authority

Following the death of Pope St. John XXIII in 1963, his successor, Pope Paul VI supported the continuation of the Second Vatican Council, three out of the four sessions taking place during his papacy. However, in 1964, between the third and fourth sessions of the Council, Pope Paul insisted that four issues were not open for discussion: Priestly celibacy, the reform of the Roman Curia, papal infallibility, and artificial birth control.[162]

James Carroll views Paul VI's exercise of papal authority in relation to birth control, as a 'dark line' that appeared on the blue horizon of Vatican II.[163] Carroll notes that when Pope Paul precluded the Council's discussion of artificial birth control, 'The conservative minority of the fathers welcomed this abrupt manifestation of papal power, but most bishops were deeply unsettled by it.'[164] Carroll proceeds to recount that 'episcopal protests were openly lodged in the nave of the great basilica. These mitered men knew better than anyone what was at stake, both in the pope's violation of the implicit contrast of co-responsibility, and in the now proscribed issue itself.'[165]

Cardinal Suenens likened the Pope's decision to a great tragedy in the history of the Church. 'I beg you my brother bishops, let us avoid a new "Galileo affair". One is enough for the Church.'[166] Pope Paul, however, sought to honor a precedent set by the 1930 encyclical, *Casti connubii* which had pitted the modern phenomenon of the rubber condom against what it considered timeless truth.[167] While the newly available rubber condom may have brought the

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[162] Carroll, *Practicing Catholic*, pp. 163-191.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid. p.164.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 394 quoted in Carroll, p. 164.
[167] Pope Pius XI, 'On Christian Marriage,' (*Casti Connubii*) (Vatican: 1930) Available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121930_casti-connubii.html. Accessed on 4.11.2012.

issue of artificial birth control to the fore, *Casti connubii* had condemned all forms of artificial birth control.[168] As Carroll puts it, 'Birth Control became a point of institutional loyalty, like devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.'[169] Artificial birth control, it might be argued, represented for the magisterium, a clearly identifiable way in which science and the modern world in general posed a threat to its authority.

The birth control controversy exacerbated differences between the ecclesiology that had been represented by the relatively progressive majority of Council Fathers and the ecclesiology represented by the ultra-conservative minority. Avery Dulles, writing in 1968, acknowledged the polarization that was occurring, and the potential for long-term damage.

> As every thinking Catholic is aware, the present polarization of opinion regarding the encyclical *Human Life* has created a dangerous situation in the church. Enthusiastic proponents of the papal position, using repressive measures in order to enforce a consensus, might unwittingly detonate a widespread revolt among intellectual Catholics, both clerical and lay. On the other hand, opponents of the encyclical, by speaking in an intemperate way, might undermine the respect that ought to be given to the teaching office in the church. In the long run, both these courses of action would produce harmful effects.[170]

Dulles regards both heavy-handed enforcement, and rash rebellion as destructive in their effects upon the Church.

The dispute concerned process as much as substance. The epideictic tone of the Council seems to have given rise to an expectation of greater collegiality in relation to the exercise of magisterial authority. Germain Grisez, a moral theologian who remains committed to the ban on artificial contraception, believes that false expectations had arisen regarding the advisory role of the largely lay commission on birth control. 'It would help the Church now if people had a more sound notion of what actually did happen – an understanding of Paul VI's actual mentality,

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[168] Garry Wills, *Papal Sin*: *Structures of Deceit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) p. 77.
[169] Carroll, *Practicing Catholic,* p.166.
[170] Avery Dulles, 'Karl Rahner on *Humanae Vitae,' America* Magazine, September 28, 1968.
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10722 Accessed on 12.4.2012.

wanting to study the question without wanting to hand over his authority.'[171] Grisez suggests that

Paul's appointment of a commission to study the issue of birth control evolved into something

that the pontiff had never intended. Grisez asserts, regarding a leak of the commission's draft

recommendations, that, 'when the documents were leaked in 1967, Paul VI was extremely upset

about it. He sent a letter to all the bishops and cardinals who were on the commission, about the

documents. It wasn't what he had in mind at all.'[172] What transpired was a clash of expectations.

The epideictic style of Vatican Two had created a climate in which it would be more difficult to

effectively exercise unilateral papal authority.

Even before the publication of *Humanae vitae,* F.X. Murphy observed the troubled

disposition of the pope.

> The Pope was a man obviously torn by doubts, tormented by scruples, haunted by
> thoughts of perfection, and above all dominated by an exaggerated concern - some called
> it an obsession - about the prestige of his office as Pope. His remarks on this score at
> times displayed an almost messianic fervor, a note missing in the more sedate utterances
> of his predecessors. His innumerable statements on the subject were made on almost
> every occasion, from casual week-day audiences or Sunday sermons from the window of
> his apartment to the most solemn gatherings in season and out of season.[173]

Murphy detects a preoccupation, not so much with birth control or the other reproductive issues

to be addressed in *Humanae vitae,* as with the issue of papal authority. The author alludes to a

strategy on the part of the minority of ultra-conservative Council fathers to leverage issues, so as

to accuse the more progressive majority of disloyalty towards the pope. 'Since it was part of the

strategy of the [conciliar] minority to accuse the majority of disloyalty toward the Holy Father,

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[171] Germain Grisez quoted by Benjamin Mann, 'New Documents Reveal Inner Workings of Papal Birth Control Commission,' Catholic News Agency, 3.16.2011 http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/new-documents-reveal-inner-workings-of-papal-birth-control-commission/ accessed on 12.02. 2012.
[172] Ibid.
[173] F.X. Murphy, *Vatican Council II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 429 quoted in Wills, p. 94.

Paul's constant harping inevitably caused the majority to think that he perhaps did share these misgivings, at least to a certain extent.'[174]

This alleged strategy on the part of those who had been the embittered minority did not lack a probable motive. In 1964, Paul VI had appointed Cardinal Ottaviani as prefect of the birth control commission. Ottaviani's plans for the Council had been consistently rebuffed by the majority of Council Fathers. During the debate on liturgy, the cardinal exceeded this allotted fifteen minutes to speak, and his microphone was turned off. (The installation of an electronic sound system in St. Peter's Basilica could be regarded as quite symbolic of the endeavor for the Church to benefit from modernity so that its message could be heard anew.) Ottaviani walked out of the Council and did not return for two weeks.[175] As prefect of the commission on birth control, Ottaviani was again in a minority position, greatly outnumbered by those laity, theologians and bishops on the commission who advocated an end to the ban on artificial contraception.

Kenneth Whitehead reproaches the bishops who, he believes, 'tolerated dissent thus fostered widespread disloyalty within the Church.'[176] Many of these bishops had numbered among the Council majority that had resisted attempts by the Curia to constrain conciliar discussions. In a similar vein, Vincent Foy condemns the positions of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan who were critical of the encyclical.[177] Cardinal Journet in Switzerland wrote, 'It does

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[174] Ibid.

[175] Glen Argan, 'Vatican II: When Cardinal Ottaviani's Microphone was "Turned Off" During Debate on the Liturgy', *Western Catholic Reporter*, November 1, 2012. http://catholicismpure.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/vatican-ll-when-cardinal-ottavianis-microphone-was-turned-off-during-debate-on-the-liturgy. Accessed on 12.09.2012. Tobin, p. 190,

[176] Kenneth Whitehead, 'How Dissent Became Institutionalized in the Church in America', *The Homiletic & Pastoral Review,* July 1999, pp. 20-18.
http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view. Accessed on 12.09.2012.

[177] Vincent Foy, '*Humanae Vitae* and Canada: Forty Years After,' *CatholicCulture.org*
http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library Accessed on 12.09.2012.

not make sense for a son of the church to oppose the authority of the church.'[178] While it was

clearly not the only divisive issue in the postconciliar Church, Andrew Greely, regarded the

papal ban on artificial birth control as a watershed event.[179] Greeley asserts

> The encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, issued in the summer of 1968, is the most important
> event of the last twenty-five years of Catholic history . . . Unlike the changes of the
> Vatican Council, which had only marginal impact on the lives of the Catholic laity, the
> encyclical endeavored to reach into the bedroom of every Catholic married couple in the
> world.[180]

Greeley suggests that the encyclical made a greater impact on married Catholics, than had the

entire proceedings of the Council, observing in a US context that 'Many of the most devout

Catholics (especially of Irish and Polish backgrounds) for the first time deliberately disobeyed

the pope.' [181] Their disobedience and that of priests, bishops, medics and scientists, to the nostrils

of Paul VI, reeked of the smoke of Satan.

3.3 Paul VI's Modernist Crisis and the Smoke of Satan

On June 29, 1972, the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, Pope Paul VI delivered a

homily in which he asserted that, 'from some fissure, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple

of God.'[182] The Holy Father characterized the Church of 1972 as plagued with doubt. He argued

that trust in the teaching office of the Church seemed to have been replaced with trust in new

theories and movements. In a remark, poignantly reminiscent of the image of the Council as

'opening the windows to the world', Paul VI commented that 'Doubt has entered our

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[178] *National Catholic Reporter*, October 16, 1968. Quoted in John Seidler and Katherine Meyer, *Conflict and Change in the Catholic Church* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 99.
[179] Andrew Greely, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait* (New York: Basic Books, 1977) quoted in Seidler and Meyer, *Conflict and Change*, p. 104.
[180] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), p. 91.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Pope Paul VI, Homily on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, Vatican, June 29th, 1972 , Website of the Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/homilies/1972/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19720629_it.html Accessed on 1.27. 2011. Cf. Donald McClarey, 'Pope Paul VI and the Smoke of Satan,' http://catholicstand.com/109/, 12.4.2011.

consciences, and it entered by windows that should have been open to the light.'[183] George

Weigel approvingly attributes a comment to Michael Novak, appropriating the image of the

windows opened to the world. 'The blinds were raised and the windows opened just as the train

entered a dark tunnel full of toxic gases.'[184] It is not quite clear whether the poisonous gases

correspond to the modern world, elements within it, or otherworldly, satanic influences as

identified by Pope Paul VI.[185]

Weigel polemically dismisses the Council's desire for conversation with the entire human

family, implying that there is something sinful about a desire to open the Church to dialogue

with secular modernity. Criticizing what he calls 'Catholic Presentitus', that is, a postconciliar

concern for relevance in the modern world, Weigel charges that 'Its originating image, some

might say it's original sin – was to imagine Vatican II as the Council that "opened the Church's

windows to the modern world" in order to initiate a dialogue with secular modernity.'[186] Granted

the analogy of opening the windows to the world, though apocryphally attributed to Pope John

XXIII, evades attempts to source it precisely. However, when Weigel implies it is sinful, or even

misguided, to imagine that the Council opened the Church's proverbial windows to the modern

world in order to initiate a dialogue with secular modernity, his position is difficult to reconcile

with the manner in which *Gaudium et spes* explicitly seeks conversation with the 'entire human

family', and to benefit from 'the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various

forms of human culture.'[187]

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[183] Ibid.
[184] George Weigel, *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st Century Church* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), p. 11.
[185] Pope Paul VI, homily of June 29, 1972.
[186] Weigel, *Evangelical Catholicism*, p. 102.
[187] *Gaudium et spes, #*3, #44.

Paul VI's 'smoke of Satan' homily proceeded to chide contemporary science for undermining faith. 'Science exists to give us truths that do not separate from God, but make us seek him all the more and celebrate him with greater intensity; instead, science gives us criticism and doubt.'[188] The uncritically acquiescent role that Paul VI prescribes scientists is strikingly similar to the one that Pius X in his anti-Modernist writings had mandated for philosophers who he cautioned, were 'not to scrutinize the depths of the mysteries of God but to venerate them devoutly and humbly.'[189] Hence, Pope Paul essentially asserts that the purpose of science is to bolster positions that do not challenge faith in God as currently articulated. Pope Paul complains that scientists have fomented incertitude, exclaiming in a tone approaching mimicry, 'I don't know, we don't know, we cannot know.'[190] Paul's grievance appears to be that science has called into question that which has previously been assumed to be true. His characterization of the situation is ambiguous since there is a world of difference between the two stances he invokes, 'we don't know' and 'we *cannot* know.'

In a remark suggesting deep cynicism towards purported progress, Paul VI exclaimed, 'Progress is celebrated, only so that it can then be demolished with revolutions that are more radical and more strange, so as to negate everything that has been achieved, and to come away as primitives after having so exalted the advances of the modern world.'[191] The reference to primitives suggests pessimism, as though the progress is question is illusory and leads to degeneration rather than advancement. The pontiff does not appear to be speaking of apparent destruction that is ultimately constructive, that is, the Schumpeterian notion of 'creative

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[188] McClarey, 'Pope Paul VI and the Smoke of Satan'.
[189] Pius X. *Pascendi,* #17.
[190] McClarey, 'Pope Paul VI and the Smoke of Satan'.
[191] Ibid.

destruction' whereby new insights and developments render older ones obsolete.[192] Neither does Pope Paul's rhetoric seem to reflect Thomas Kuhn's argument in his 1962 work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* with regard to the manner in which a new paradigm can supplant the assumptions of a previous one.[193] Rather, Paul's words are suggestive of the fear of the integralist - that if threads of the tradition are picked at, the entire tapestry might come undone.[194]

Poignantly, Pope Paul lamented, 'There was the belief that after the Council there would be a day of sunshine for the history of the Church. Instead, it is the arrival of a day of clouds, of tempest, of darkness, of research, of uncertainty.'[195] The statement carries apocalyptic undertones in its imagery of light, darkness and clouds. Notably, the pontiff associates research with darkness and turbulence.

The 'smoke of Satan' homily expresses a yearning for the consoling effects of a faith whereby the interpretation of scripture is harmonized with the exercise of reason. 'Faith gives us the certainty and security, when it is based on the word of God accepted and found consenting with our very own reason and with our own human soul.'[196] This harmonization of our reading of scripture with our reasoning could amount to either a well-reasoned approach to scripture, or else, a restricted exercise of reason that never challenges prevailing interpretations of scripture. In context, Paul VI is extoling the 'certainty and security' offered by faith, rather than its searching, questioning dimension, so it may be the latter that the Pope wistfully endorses.

Paul VI identifies what he believes to be the underlying cause of the wave of postconciliar doubt that he detects, stating that 'there has been an intervention of an adverse

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[192] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1975), pp. 82-85.
[193] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
[194] Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence,* p. 141.
[195] Pope Paul VI, Homily on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, Vatican, June 29th, 1972.
[196] Ibid.

power. Its name is the devil.'[197] Pope Paul expounds upon this assertion, stating, 'We believe in

something that is preternatural that has come into the world precisely to disturb, to suffocate the

fruits of the Ecumenical Council, and to impede the Church from breaking into the hymn of joy

at having renewed in fullness its awareness of itself.'[198] The pontiff suggests that the

implementation of Vatican II, as he would like to have seen it unfold, had been sabotaged by the

devil.

Pope Paul VI's 'smoke of Satan' homily of June 29th, 1972 does not imply that the

Second Vatican Council itself was in any sense a satanic ploy. When Paul VI laments that

darkness entered the Church through windows that should have admitted light, the pontiff

regards the smoke of Satan as something that counteracts the benefits offered by the Council.

Paul viewed the smoke of Satan as distinct from, and opposed to the fruits of the Council,

implying that certain postconciliar trends were not so much a valid implementation of the

teachings of the Council as diabolical sabotage. As we shall later see, Pope Paul's vitriol reflects

a long tradition of evoking the motif of Satan in response to perceived treachery, polarization and

apostasy.[199] Polarization in this life, to some religious sensibilities, reflects a cosmic conflict.

On November 15, 1972, some fourteen weeks after his 'smoke of Satan' homily

associating modern scholarly research and debate with Satanic influences, Pope Paul VI asserted

with regard to the doctrine of Satan that 'evil is not simply a force in the background but rather

truly present, a living being who is spiritual, perverse and who renders perverse.'[200] Having

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[197] Pope Paul VI, Homily on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, Vatican, June 29th, 1972.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 48.
[200] Giandomenico Mucci, *Civiltà Cattolica* Available at http://www.laciviltacattolica.it/it/chi-siamo/ Accessed on 12.19.2013. Cf Andrea Tornielli, 'To What Extent does the Pope Acknowledge the Devil?,' Available at http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/francesco-francis-francisco-27230/ Accessed on 12.19.2013.

described Satan as a 'living being', the pontiff situates this assertion in the context of a biblical and Christian worldview.

> It is a departure from the picture provided by biblical and Church teaching to refuse to acknowledge the Devil's existence; to regard him as a self-sustaining principle who, unlike other creatures, does not owe his origin to God; or to explain the Devil as a pseudo-reality, a conceptual and fanciful personification of the unknown causes of our misfortunes.[201]

Kevin O'Shea raises a question to whether Pope Paul intended to make an ontological claim, observing that the holy father's remarks are, on the face of it, concerned with the 'picture provided by biblical and Church teaching' that is, with faithfulness to a particular tradition rather than a first-order truth claim.[202] O'Shea writes with reference to Pope Paul VI.

> He said that the devil was a Christian interpretation of the power of evil. He thus established a hermeneutically capital difference between the reality to be interpreted and its interpretation in a given cultural context. (Devils are not then presented as realities, but as interpretations of the experienced reality of evil.)[203]

The distinction suggested by O'Shea's is reminiscent of the manner in which Pope St. John XXIII distinguished between the eternal truths that constitute doctrine, and the way in which these truths are formulated so as to speak to a given age. 'The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another.'[204] In this instance, O'Shea proposes that Pope Paul is lamenting a departure from a worldview informed by biblical and traditional imagery, rather than directly asserting the ontological existence of Satan as a particular creature.

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[201] Pope Paul VI in his address, 'Deliver us from Evil' given at the General Audience of 15 November 1972. Quoted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Christian Faith and Demonology', Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19750626_fede-cristiana-demonologia_en.html Accessed on 1.17**.** 2013.

[202] Pope Paul VI, Address to a General Audience November 15, 1972.

[203] Kevin O'Shea, Conference notes on eschatology, http://203.10.46.30/mre/oshea/eschatology.html. Accessed on 1.17.2014.

[204] Pope John XXIII Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962.

In support of O'Shea's point, it might be argued that Paul VI's allusion to the 'smoke' of Satan is clearly figurative – at least in its invocation of smoke. However, the pontiff's November 15th reference to Satan as a 'living being' suggests a first order, ontological assertion as opposed to adherence to the traditional aesthetics of a particular tradition. Some months before, in his June 29 'smoke of Satan' homily, he had asserted that something 'preternatural' had come into the world to disturb faith. Pope Paul's use of the term 'preternatural' suggests something other than evil in its human, social and systemic forms, being more consistent with the evocation of a spiritual entity. Furthermore, Paul VI's assertion that Satan owes 'his' existence to God arguably suggests a creature, and by extension, a being – an implication heightened by the use of the possessive personal pronoun, 'his'. On balance, it would seem as though Pope Paul VI, on November 15, 1972, asserted the existence of Satan as a particular being. Reinforcing this first order truth claims, Pope Paul's reference to 'fanciful personification' would set the tone for subsequent ecclesial statements on Satan, dismissing figurative language to the realm of the imaginary (as opposed to the imaginal), and the mythical to the realm of the fallacious.

3.4 The Rise of Postliberal Catholic Theology

Pope Paul VI's homily on June 29th, 1972 was particularly explicit in its demonization of modernity, yet it may have signaled a more widespread discontent in response to what some regarded as accommodation to modernity. David Tracy notes that some of the theologians who had spear-headed the drive for *ressourcement* prior to the Council grew ambivalent regarding the conciliatory thrust of Catholic theologies of correlation. These thinkers feared that such theologies would damage the relationship between Catholicism and Vatican II itself.

> Led by some of the theologians who also helped bring Vatican II about (de Lubac, Balthasar, Bouyer, and Ratzinger), this reading, in effect, claims that the alliance between modernity and Catholicism forged by theologians like Rahner, Lonergan, Schillebeeckx, Küng, and others had not yielded a new Catholic unity-in-diversity; rather, these kinds of

correlational theologies threaten to destroy even the earlier uneasy alliance between Catholicism and modernity of Vatican II itself.[205]

Tracy suggests that this cadre of theologians was concerned that theologies of correlation could misrepresent the Council and bring it into disrepute as it were, within the tradition, and hence have a counterproductive effect upon the Church's newfound and delicate rapport with the modern world.

Robert Barron sympathizes with Balthasar, Ratzinger and de Lubac in their rejection of *Concilium's* commitment to perpetuate the spirit of Vatican II, remarking, 'The perpetuation of the spirit of the Council, they concluded, would be tantamount to a Church in a permanent state of suspense and indecision.'[206] Alternatively viewed, however, to perpetuate the spirit of the Council might sustain openness to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reform, purification, and conversation with humankind.

It would not be accurate to classify all those who were critical of early attempts to implement the spirit of the Council as more conservative than their counterparts who were better disposed towards dialogue with modernity. J.B. Metz regarded Vatican Two as a 'bourgeois revolution', implying Metz's yearning for a more radical upheaval.[207] Rather than a conservative-liberal division, such as might be said to have characterized the Council, what was at stake for Metz was a tension between the prophetic, countercultural role of the Church versus its accommodation of modernity.[208] To be countercultural and prophetic may involve stances that

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[205] Tracy, 'The Uneasy Alliance,' p. 554.

[206] Robert Barron, 'Yves Congar and the Meaning of Vatican II,' Word on Fire Publications, http://www.wordonfire.org/Written-Word/articles-commentaries/June-2012/Yves-Congar-and-the-Meaning-of-Vatican-II.aspx Accessed on 1.20. 2013.

[207] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976); Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emergent Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), Quoted in Tracy, pp.553-554.

[208] Ibid., p. 554.

are regarded as either liberal or conservative, and may offend any given modern political category.

Thomas Joseph White notes that, by 1972, two conflicting schools of interpretation of the Council were, to a large extent, represented by two journals of Catholic theology, *Concilium* and *Communio*. White characterizes *Concilium*, founded in 1965 by Hans Kung and Edward Schillebeeckx, as advancing 'a progressivist reading of the Council.'[209] The term, 'progressivist' suggests a perception of the Council as a launching pad for future progress, a springboard much more than a cap on development. White characterizes a progressivist interpretation of the Council as advocating 'engagement with modernity, liberation of women, dialogue with world religions, liberalization of sexual mores, laicization of the mission of the Church, and liberal political advocacy.'[210] White contrasts the *Concilium's* progressivist agenda with that of a school of postconciliar Catholic theology associated with the journal, *Communio*, founded between 1970 and 1972 by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, and Joseph Ratzinger. White describes this school of thought, asserting:

> It reads the Council as a bold new vision of a distinctly Catholic way of being in the midst of modernity. The agenda is inevitably counter-cultural: the Church as a sign and instrument of salvation in Christ, nuptial theology that stresses the importance of gender complementarity, Eucharistic communion and sacramental marriage as the core of a healthy society, teaching and evangelization as the heart of the Christian mission in the modern world.[211]

White ascribes to the *Communio* vision a zeal for evangelization, seeing the Church as a moral beacon, and sign of salvation. This evangelical drive does not, of course, necessarily contradict the dialogical disposition envisaged by *Gaudium et Spes*. To be counter-cultural and challenging

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[209] Thomas Joseph White, 'The Tridentine Genius of Vatican II,' *First Things* (November 2012), pp. 25- 26.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., p. 26.

is not to necessarily reject dialogue with modernity. Indeed, a clearly articulated, challenging

agenda can make dialogue all the more productive for all concerned.

The editors of *Communio* explicitly eschew 'accommodation to the zeitgeist', the term,

'accommodation' suggesting an uncritical acquiescence.[212] De Lubac objected to a 'false idea of

'openness to the world,' shamelessly preached as if it were the thought of the Council.'[213]

Nicholas Healy argues that

> The founders of *Communio* were concerned to preserve the authentic message of the
> council from a capitulation to that feature of modernity that Alisdair MacIntyre and
> David Schindler identify as "liberalism," a capitulation that would rob the gift of
> universal communion carried in the Church of its distinctiveness and, therefore, of its
> power to be a light to the world.[214]

Healy suggests that a Church immersed in the world cannot, by definition, be a light to the world,

offering the benefit of a distinctive perspective at some remove from the status quo. In this view, for

the Church to become immersed in the world is to do the world no favors. The impetus to update the

Church and its teachings could, it might be argued, run the danger of absorption into the status

quo so as to become indistinguishable from it. George Weigel, for his part, suggests that the

endeavor to update, if not held in balance with the ancient tradition, can lead to uncritical

absorption of contemporary mores. Weigel argues that 'The problems came, in Ratzinger's view,

when *aggiornamento* lost its tether to *ressourcement* — when the 'updating' of the Church did

not begin with a return to the sources of Catholic intellectual and spiritual vitality.'[215]

The theologians associated with *Communio* were by no means anti-Vatican II. Both the

Concilium and *Communio* schools believe that their mission is consistent with that of the

Council. The issue is more productively framed in terms of competing interpretations of what

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[212] Website of *Communio*, http://www.communio-icr.com/about.htm**,** accessed on 1.5.2013.

[213] Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Namur: Culture et Verité, 1989), 153.

[214] Nicholas J. Healy, '*Communio*: A Theological Journey ,' *Communio* 33 (2006), pp. 117-130.

[215] George Weigel,'The Making of a New Benedict', Available at
http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/catholic_stories/cs0155.html, accessed on 1.5.2013.

Vatican II taught regarding the Church's relationship with modernity and how this teaching should be implemented in the postconciliar Church.

3.5 St. John Paul II Reassesses the Church's Relationship with the Modern World

Popes St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI each, in their own distinct way, challenged the dialogical vision of the Second Vatican Council. St. John Paul II, having observed a time of debate and turbulence during the postconciliar papacy of Paul VI, recognized that the modern world was dynamic and changing. So too, he would suggest, the Church's disposition towards the world needed to be dynamic, not stuck in a dialogical mode associated with *Gaudium et spes*.

John Wilkins suggests that, as Archbishop of Krakow, Karl Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, had witnessed the manner in which bishops' conferences around the world had responded to Paul VI's exercise of papal authority in reaffirming the Church's ban on artificial birth control.[216] Wilkins opines of John Paul II, 'he lost no time in reminding the bishops where they stood: he was in charge.'[217] In his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, (1979) Pope John Paul praised Paul VI remarking, 'I keep thanking God that this great Predecessor of mine, who was also truly my father, knew how to display ad extra, externally, the true countenance of the Church, in spite of the various internal weaknesses that affected her in the postconciliar period.'[218] John Paul implies in the encyclical that the Council and its aftermath were characterized by excessive criticism of the ecclesiastical status-quo, and an insufficiently critical stance in relation to modernity.

> . .The Church that I - through John Paul I - have had entrusted to me almost immediately after him is admittedly not free of internal difficulties and tension. At the same time, however, she is internally more strengthened against the excesses of self-criticism: she can be said to be more critical with regard to the various thoughtless criticisms, more

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[216] John Wilkins, 'Bishops or Branch Managers: Collegiality after the Council,' in *America*, October 12, 2012, p.18.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* (Vatican: 1979), #4. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html. Accessed on 4.5.2013.

resistant with respect to the various 'novelties', more mature in her spirit of discerning, better able to bring out of her everlasting treasure 'what is new and what is old'.[219]

John Paul's comment regarding that which is old and that which is new imply the restoration of a balance between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento.* In *Redemptor hominis,* John Paul II commits to a correlational, adaptive stance towards the contemporary world, attentive to the 'signs of the times', though not necessarily the same form of correlation envisaged in 1965 by the Council.

> . . . while keeping alive in our memory the picture that was so perspicaciously and authoritatively traced by the Second Vatican Council, we shall try once more to adapt it to the "signs of the times" and to the demands of the situation, which is continually changing and evolving in certain directions.[220]

John Paul regards the situation of the modern world as one characterized by flux. He wryly implies that the Council's dialogical stance towards the world may itself need to be updated. In counterpoint to St. John Paul II's argument that the postconciliar Church should evolve its relationship with the modern world so as to counter a more challenging *zeitgeist*, Daniel Donovan has suggested that the Council had sought to reclaim elements of the early Church and its disposition precisely because it foresaw the decline of the institutionalized, cultural Catholicism of Western Europe, and had had adopted a dialogical disposition towards the world, specifically in response to this challenge.[221]

In a 1996 encyclical, *Redemptoris missio*, John Paul II identifies a pastoral consequence of the change 'in certain directions' that characterized modernity, that is, many of the baptized in culturally Catholic regions and more recently established dioceses have ceased to participate in

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[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid.,#15.

[221] Daniel Donavon, *Distinctly Catholic: An Exploration of Catholic Identity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), p. 25.

the life of the Christian community.[222] The situation is 'intermediate' since it may, John Paul II

implies, lead to a further transition whereby the next generation will not be baptized.

> . . . there is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a "new evangelization" or a "re-evangelization."[223]

This statement envisages the new evangelization as a re-evangelization intended to counteract

disengagement from the sacramental and communal life of the Church, and offer moral

remediation so as to challenge lives 'far removed from Christ and his Gospel.'[224] Avery Dulles

identifies this realignment in the Church's envisaged relationship with the world with reference

to an 'evangelical turn', opining, 'In my judgment, the evangelical turn in the ecclesial vision of

Popes Paul VI and John Paul II is one of the most surprising and important developments in the

Catholic Church since Vatican II.'[225] Ralph Martin notes that, since 1983, John Paul 'began to

refer frequently to a "new evangelization"', denoting a mandate to re-evangelize individuals and

cultures to whom the gospel had been proclaimed but who have lost a living commitment.'[226]

This evangelical effort would focus primarily upon traditionally Catholic countries where a

significant portion of the population was nominally Catholic but not practicing. Evangelization,

although by no means inherently opposed to dialogue, suggests a tone that may be more assertive

than conversational.

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[222] Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Vatican, 1990), Chapter 2. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html. Accessed on 3.3.2015.
[223] Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, # 33
[224] Ibid.
[225] Avery Dulles, 'John Paul II and the New Evangelization', *Church and Society* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 96-100.
[226] Ralph Martin, 'What is the New Evangelization? Why is It Important for Priestly Formation?', http://www.renewalministries.net/files/freeliterature/what_is_the_new_evangelization_ipf_symposium_2010_4_07_10.pdf. Accessed on 8.11.2013.

3.6 Pope Benedict XVI Downplays the Transformative Vision of the Council

Benedict XVI, rather than calling for a change of focus in the postconciliar Church's engagement with the world, denied that the texts of the Council had ever in the first place justified a dramatic change in the Church's disposition towards the world. He viewed the council as an incremental corrective rather than a revolutionary event in the life of the Church.

On December 22, 2005, as Joseph Ratzinger prepared to celebrate his first Christmas as Pope Benedict XVI, he asked 'What was the outcome of the Council? Has it been implemented in the right way? What, in the implementation of the Council has been good and what has been inadequate or mistaken? What remains to be done?' and 'Why is the implementation of the Council, in large parts of the Church, thus far been so difficult?'[227] Benedict regards the difficulties as emerging from the mutual opposition to two starkly contrasting hermeneutics of the Council: a 'hermeneutic of reform' of which he approves, and a 'hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture' which, Benedict warns, 'risks ending in a split between the pre-and post-conciliar Church.'[228] Benedict associates the hermeneutic of discontinuity or rupture with a misguided view that the 'true spirit of the Council' is not fully reflected in the conciliar texts.[229] Those who embrace the hermeneutic of discontinuity, Benedict suggests, argue that the conciliar texts were compromised for the sake of consensus at the Council, believing that 'it was found necessary to keep and reconfirm many old things that are now pointless.'[230] Adherents of this erroneous hermeneutic, according to Benedict, seek to 'go courageously beyond the texts.'[231] Benedict further characterizes the hermeneutic of continuity as suggesting, 'In a word, we should

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[227] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*, The Vatican, December 22, 2005.Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html. Accessed on 6.2.2013.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.

not follow the texts of the Council but its spirit.'[232] Such an argument, Benedict remarks, raises 'the question as to how this spirit should subsequently be defined.'

Benedict XVI fears that reliance on the undefined 'spirit' rather than the texts of the Council 'gives space for every whim.'[233] Benedict's position hence places great store by formal ecclesial texts and seems ambivalent towards the 'spirit'. The Church at its inception, it might however be argued, relied precisely on spirit from which the earliest Christian texts emerged. The question arises as to whether Benedict's suspicion of the 'spirit' might impede openness to *the Spirit*. If Catholics had always adhered rigidly to the letter of ecclesial texts, how, one wonders, could the Tradition ever develop?

So far, Benedict castigates an appeal to the spirit of the Council rather than to its texts. The question remains, however, as to whether the texts themselves mandate real change, as opposed to incremental improvement, in the Church's relationship with the modern world.

3.7 Pope Benedict XVI's Hermeneutic of Continuity

Addressing the question as to whether the Council mandated substantial change, Benedict states that a Church Council is not a constitution that is adopted to replace a previous constitution. Benedict argues that change of this kind requires a mandate that the Council Fathers did not have. 'The Fathers had no such mandate and no one had ever given them; anyone, for that matter, could have done so, because the essential constitution of the Church comes from the Lord and was given to us so that we may attain eternal life, and from this perspective, we are able to illuminate life in time and time itself.'[234] Without denying that the Church has inherited its mission from Jesus, it might be argued that Jesus did not leave the Church a written constitution to be followed according to its letter. Rather, he left a spirit, the Holy Spirit, that is, and

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[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.

memories preserved and developed through an oral tradition. Hence, there is no constitution given directly by Christ that the Council Fathers could have changed.

Benedict's position raises the question as to what constitutes legitimate change in doctrine and the life of the Church more generally. St. Vincent of Lerins had, in the fifth century, asked 'Is there to be no progress of religion in the Church?'[235] Vincent answered his own question by drawing a distinction, 'There is, certainly, and very great ... But it must be a progress and not a change.'[236] The question then arises, however, as to how 'progress' is to be demarcated from 'change' within a Catholic tradition, that Loisy and, later, Congar showed to have been dynamic and evolving from the start.[237] As Carl Trueman observes, continuity is 'so often in the eyes of the beholder' rather than objectively distinguishable from fundamental change.[238] Herbert McCabe proposes that Tradition may be defined in terms of a continuous engagement with questions rather than continuity in terms of particular answers. McCabe suggests '. . .we do not just have to know what people said in the past, but we have to be in continuity with their wrestling and with their problems.'[239] This suggests that the continuity can lie in an ongoing grappling with mystery rather than in imaging that our forebears had achieved a static understanding of the faith that we are obliged to preserve.

In support of this hermeneutic of reform over and against a hermeneutic of discontinuity, Benedict XVI engages the remarks of St. John XXIII at the opening of the Council, the speech

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[235] Edward Hanahoe, 'Ecclesiology and Ecumenism', Part II, *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, November 1962, p. 328.

[236] St. Vincent of Lerins, 'The Commonitory,' T. Herbert Bindley, trans. (London: SPCK, 1914), book 1, chapter 2, no. 6-8, pp. 26-28.

[237] Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, pp. 16-55. Cf. Alfred Loisy, *The Birth of the Christian Religion,* Lawrence Jacks, trans. (New York: University Books, 1962), Introduction. Available at http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/loisy/chapter4.html. Accessed on 12.8.2014.

[238] Carl Trueman, 'Traditional Troubles', *First Things*, May 2014, p. 59. Review of Thomas Guarino, *Vincent of Lerins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Baker, 2014).

[239] Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 206. Quoted in Mary McCaughey, 'Reason, Reality, and the Re-personalization of Being: A Response to Taylor's Characterization of the "Impersonal Order"', Religion, Education, and the Arts, Issue 7. Available at http://rea.materdei.ie/media/Issue%207/REA%20Issue%207%20-%20McCaughey.pdf. Accessed on 9.1.2014.

that the present work has regarded as offering a mandate for the legitimate development of doctrine. Benedict characterizes St. John XXIII's speech as an endorsement of the hermeneutic of reform as opposed to that of discontinuity.

> I would like to here mention only the well-known words of John XXIII, which unequivocally express this hermeneutic when he says that the council "wants to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion", and continues: "Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us ... It is necessary that this certain and unchangeable doctrine, which must be faithfully respected, both in-depth and presented in a way that meets the needs of our time."[240]

A translation of Pope John's speech as it appears on the website of the Holy See does indeed use the phrase, 'unchangeable doctrine', that is, *dottrina certa ed immutabile*.[241] This translation may, at first glance suggest that John XXIII was, in this instance at least, supportive of a hermeneutic of continuity in the sense proposed by Benedict XVI. However, upon closer inspection, in its given context, Pope John seems to be using the term, 'doctrine' to refer to the eternal truths themselves rather than the formulae through which they are presented.[242] John XXIII very deliberately distinguished between the deposit of faith which is one thing, and the 'way in which it is expressed' which is quite another.[243] Indeed, Pope John cannot have regarded doctrinal formulae themselves to be unchangeable while advocating that they should be 'presented in a way that meets the needs of our time', in a world that 'expects a step forward

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[240] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia* (Vatican, December 22, 2005) Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20091221_curia-auguri.html. Accessed on 3.3.2013.
[241] Pope John XXIII Inaugural Speech at opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962. Available oat http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council_it.html. Accessed on 4.16. 2013.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid.

toward a doctrinal penetration expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought.'[244]

Benedict's address proceeds to confront directly the question of the relationship between the Church and the modern world. 'The Council had to find a new way to define the relationship between the Church and the modern age.'[245] Benedict recounts low-points in the Church's relationship with modernity, asserting that 'radical liberalism' had provoked the anti-Modernist writings that the pontiff recognizes to have been a 'bitter and radical condemnation of this spirit of the modern age.'[246] This characterization of the anti-Modernist writings sounds distinctly unsympathetic as Benedict distances himself from the reactionary, anti-Modernist perspective.

Pope Benedict proposes that the Second Vatican Council faced a question concerning the relationship between the Church and the sciences, suggesting that as the sciences matured so did the Church's reaction to them. 'Natural sciences began, more and more clearly, to reflect on their own limitations imposed by their own method which, while achieving great things, was not able to comprehend the totality of reality. Thus, both sides were gradually beginning to open up to each other.'[247] A form of the scientific method, of particular significance to the Church is the historical-critical method in exegesis.

> First, it was necessary to define in a new way the relationship between faith and modern science; this concern, moreover, is not only the natural sciences but also historical science because, in a certain school, the historical-critical method claimed to have the last word on the interpretation of the Bible and, demanding total exclusivity for its understanding the Holy Scriptures, was opposed to important points in the interpretation that the faith of the Church had developed.[248]

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[244] Ibid.
[245] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.

It is not clear as to what representative of the historical-critical method made the totalizing claim that Benedict cites. Indeed, as we shall see, the magisterium has unequivocally mandated the use of the historical critical method, and regarded it as highly compatible with other interpretative approaches.[249]

Summarizing the Second Vatican Council's vision of the relationship between the Church and the modern world, Benedict asserts, 'The Second Vatican Council, with the new definition of the relationship between the faith of the Church and certain essential elements of modern thought, has reviewed or even corrected certain historical decisions, but in this apparent discontinuity it has actually preserved and deepened her inmost nature and his true identity.'[250] Hence, Benedict suggests that what may have appeared discontinuous actually affirmed what has always been at the core of the Church's mission. It might indeed be argued that Vatican Two and the *nouvelle théologie* that had paved the way for it were characterized by *ressourcement*, the recovery of ancient truths and practices. This does not in itself, however, mean that the Council should be regarded more in terms of continuity than transformation. The teachings and practices recovered by the Council had, in many cases, been suppressed for centuries, especially since the Council of Trent. To restore continuity with elements of the mission of Jesus and of the early Church hence required discontinuity with the more questionable emphases of the Tridentine legacy. At the end of his papacy, Benedict would, however offer a more damning perspective yet on interpretations of the Council at variance with his own.

In his final address to the clergy of Rome on February 14, 2013, Pope Benedict XVI suggested that the Second Vatican Council has been misrepresented by the mass media, and the world had in large part been deluded. Benedict juxtaposes in stark terms, two greatly contrasting

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[249] Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, # 37, 30; PBC *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, #* 34, (Rome, 1993). Available at http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.htm. Accessed on 3.3.2012.
[250] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*.

interpretations of the Second Vatican Council: the 'council of faith' and the 'council of the journalists'. Benedict asserts, 'There was the Council of the Fathers – the real Council – but there was also the Council of the media. It was almost a Council apart, and the world perceived the Council through the latter, through the media.'[251] Hence, Benedict argues that the actual Ecumenical Council was accompanied by a fabricated 'council', as it were, a false impression of the Council, disseminated by the media. Furthermore, this 'council' conjured up by the media served as the lens through which the world perceived the actual Council. Benedict asserts, 'Thus, the Council that reached the people with immediate effect was that of the media, not that of the Fathers.'[252] Benedict attributes a host of ecclesial problems to the Council of the media.

> We know that this Council of the media was accessible to everyone. Therefore, this was the dominant one, the more effective one, and it created so many disasters, so many problems, so much suffering: seminaries closed, convents closed, banal liturgy … and the real Council had difficulty establishing itself and taking shape; the virtual Council was stronger than the real Council.[253]

Hence, Benedict blames an array of the Church's problems on a distorted view of the Second Vatican Council, as opposed to the Council itself. Benedict charges the journalists with accommodating positions that seemed less challenging in relation to the modern world. 'It was obvious that the media would take the side of those who seemed to them more closely allied with their world.'[254] Hence, Benedict implies that a more reconciliatory stance on the part of the Church towards the modern world was, at least in part, a deceitful delusion conjured up by the media. The letter of the conciliar texts themselves, and in particular *Gaudium et spes*, may however, tell a different story.

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[251] Pope Benedict XVI, Address of his holiness to the parish priests and clergy of Rome, (Vatican, February 14, 2013). Available at the website of the Holy See:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2013/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130214_clero-roma_en.html. Accessed on 1.2.2014.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.

Again a concern may arise as to whether Benedict's zeal for the letter of the conciliar texts and his ambivalence towards 'spirit' underestimates the agency of the Holy Spirit within a dynamic, evolving Tradition. When Benedict asserts that 'the virtual Council was stronger than the real Council', it cannot be forgotten that the pontiff is speaking of an ecumenical council of the Church carrying supreme teaching authority with the highest level of ecclesiastical infallibility.[255] Yet, Benedict suggests, the ecumenical Council was less effective than media propaganda.[256]

3.8 Conclusion

A contribution of the present chapter lies in its identification of what may be an underestimated moment in the Church's relationship with modernity when a modern pope decried that the modern world, the sciences, and critically questioning voices within the Church were influenced by a preternatural Satan. Pope Paul VI's 'Smoke of Satan' homily of June 29, 1972, and the Pontiff's remarks on Satan on November 15 of that same year, pitted the Church's current teachings on Satan against modern voices that called for doctrinal development.

Pope Paul VI's smoke of Satan homily, with its negative view of research and innovation, serves as a reminder that, while the Second Vatican Council ideated a dialogical stance in relation to the modern world and its insights, in a sense, the Modernist crisis had not been finally resolved. Pope Paul's concerns reflected those of Cardinal Ottaviani, the Council minority, as well of those of his predecessors, Popes Pius IX and Pius X. These men feared that dialogue with the modern world would lead to unwarranted accommodation and would compromise the prophetic spirit of the gospel. This is, essentially, an anti-Modernist concern. It represents a mentality that views dialogue as laden with threats rather than possibilities. A

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[255] *Lumen gentium* 22, Cf. Francis Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), pp.56-57.
[256] Pope Benedict XVI, Address of his holiness to the parish priests and clergy of Rome.

commitment to dialogue is a commitment to the possible. To close off dialogue is to reject the possible and absolutize one's current perspective.

The dialogical tone of the Council, for better or for worse, had empowered the faithful to speak out in the face of a magisterial pronouncement. The dissidence that followed the publication of *Humanae vitae* signified a clash of expectations. Subsequent pontiffs, without directly rejecting the dialogical stance of the Council, did not, for the most part, promote it. St. John Paul II, noting the difficulties faced by Pope Paul VI argued that just as the modern world changes, so must the church's stance in relation to it. John Paul guided the Church from a dialogical stance to a more assertive, Evangelical one. Pope Benedict XVI, for his part, rejected interpretations of the Council that view it as transformative, instead asserting a hermeneutics of reform with more emphasis on continuity than discontinuity. Nonetheless, no authoritative pronouncement of the Church has ever rescinded the teaching of the ecumenical Council that the Church is called to engage in frank conversation with the entire human family.

SECTION II - A MANDATE TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE IN LIGHT OF ITS

LITERARY FORMS, INCLUDING THAT OF MYTH

CHAPTER FOUR

WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH'S PRESENTATION OF DOCTRINE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LITERARY GENRE OF BIBLICAL TEXTS?

The Magisterium regards the historical-critical method as indispensable for the interpretation of scripture, and the progress of doctrine, recognizing that the various literary genres of the Bible express different forms of truth.

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three noted Pope Benedict XVI's allegation that proponents of the historical-critical method have come into conflict with the Church's interpretation of scripture, and ought to defer to the authority of the magisterium.[257] This chapter will accomplish research objective four by showing that the Church not only allows, but mandates, the use of the historical-critical method as 'indispensable' for the interpretation of scripture. It argues that the literary characteristics of the biblical text, including that of genre, form an integral concern of the historical-critical method as described by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. The Church cannot then, with any credibility, interpret scripture without regard for the implications of its genre, for example, treating myth as history. The chapter contributes to the evolving argument of the thesis by providing a basis from which to insist, that according to the Church's own teachings, myth must be interpreted as myth and not as history, etiology, biography, or any other literary form.

Luke Timothy Johnson, Walter Wink, and George Lindbeck are at some variance with the PBC, in their characterization of the historical-critical method. These thinkers associate the method with historical inquiry, not viewing literary considerations such as genre as featuring among its integral concerns. This dispute is with regard to the parameters of the historical-

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[257] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*.

critical method, however, rather than with regard to the interpretation of scripture per se. These authors are essentially in agreement with the PBC regarding the importance of considering the implications of literary genre in biblical exegesis. This consensus supports a contention of this thesis that myth should be interpreted in a manner that takes into account the theological implications of the genre.

Finally, with reference to George Lindbeck's postliberal intratextuality, the chapter suggests that it is problematic for Catholics thinkers to reject the historical-critical method in favor of an intratextual approach to scripture, while maintaining a cognitive-propositionalist approach to doctrine.

4.2 The Catholic Church's Acceptance of the Historical-Critical Method

Robert Murray notes that for most of the Church's historical existence, indeed until the closing years of the nineteenth century, the judgments of scripture scholars in the catechetical schools, monasteries and universities were generally trusted by the Popes and bishops, including those at the Council of Trent.[258] However, Murray observes that around the time of the modernist crisis, use of the term, 'magisterium' seemed to narrow so as to exclude theologians and exegetes and refer more exclusively to the Holy Office.[259] The author supports his observation by pointing to the fact that six sevenths of the ecclesial documents regarding scripture, as contained in the *Enchirdion Biblicum,* originate in the period 1893 – 1953 with less a seventh originating before, and little since.[260]

The Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC), founded in 1902 in the midst of the Modernist crisis, rigorously enforced the magisterium's oversight of Catholic exegesis issuing

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[258] Robert Murray, 'Further Reflection on magisterium and "Magisterium"' in *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), pp. 34-35.
Enchiridon Biblicum: Documenta Ecclesiasita S. Scripturam Spectantia, 2nd ed, (Naples, Rome 1954).
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.

decrees on the interpretation of virtually every passage of scripture. However, the publication of Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical, *Divino afflante Spiritu,* in the view of Raymond Brown, constituted the *magna carta* for Catholic biblical scholarship.[261] The encyclical includes an open acknowledgment that biblical writings require interpretation that is attentive to both historical and literary factors. This acknowledgment, later to be affirmed in Vatican Two's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* and in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* states:

> …no one, who has a correct idea of biblical inspiration, will be surprised to find, even in the Sacred Writers, as in other ancient authors, certain fixed ways of expounding and narrating, certain definite idioms, especially of a kind peculiar to the Semitic tongues, so-called approximations, and certain hyperbolical modes of expression, may, at times, even paradoxical, which even help to impress the ideas more deeply on the mind.[262]

This statement notes the manner in which inspired writing is subject to the particularities of its authorial context with its linguistic and stylistic mores. Hence, by implication, the meaning of inspired texts, often translations, may not be self-apparent and the texts do not utterly transcend the assumptions of the cultures within they arise.

Given this acknowledgment that the inspired Word of God is mediated by human words, languages, genres and mores, the encyclical proceeds to mandate exegetes to use the most reliable interpretative means at their disposal:

> Hence the Catholic commentator, in order to comply with the present needs of biblical studies, in explaining the Sacred Scripture and in demonstrating and proving its immunity from all error, should also make a prudent use of this means, determine, that is, to what extent the manner of expression or the literary mode adopted by the sacred writer may lead to a correct and genuine interpretation; and let him be convinced that this part of his office cannot be neglected without serious detriment to Catholic exegesis.[263]

Thus, the encyclical goes so far as to censure as neglect any failure on the part of scripture scholars to use the most effective means available to interpret the Word of God mediated in

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[261] Raymond Brown, *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Doubleday Religion, 1965), p. 49.
[262] Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, #37.
[263] Ibid, #38.

human words. The methodology to which the encyclical alludes, while including several distinct approaches, may be broadly referred to as the historical-critical method. Notably, *Divino afflante Spiritu* emphasizes the importance of interpreting scripture in light of the 'literary mode adopted by the sacred writer.'[264]

In a 1993 report entitled *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,* the PBC explicitly mandates recourse to the historical-critical method.[265] The report affirms that the historical-critical method is 'the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts.'[266] It posits that the approach is a historical method, both because it studies the significance of ancient texts 'from a historical point of view', and also because 'it seeks to shed light upon the historical processes which gave rise to biblical texts.'[267] The PBC asserts that it is a critical method, because 'it operates with the help of scientific criteria that seek to be as objective as possible.'[268] Hence, the historical-critical method may be defined as an approach to the interpretation of scripture that is informed by historical research, literary criticism, and the human sciences, so as discover the theological, social, economic, political, and cultural context and intent of the author(s). The PBC's explicit reference to the historical-critical method in 1993 is significant because in previous ecclesial affirmations, including the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published one year before, the approach is clearly described but not explicitly named.[269]

A further watershed in the magisterium's gradual acceptance of the historical-critical method was a 1950 statement by the PBC in the *Enchiridion Biblicum*, in which the commission undertook to allow exegetes full freedom to reach their own scholarly conclusions.[270] Once more

[264] Ibid.
[265] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,* #1, 34.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid, #37.
[269] Catechism, #109- 112.
[270] PBC, *Enchiridon Biblicum,* M. D'Auria Pontificius Editor (Vatican,1954).

in 1964, the PBC's *Instruction on the Historicity of the Gospels* urged exegetes to freely exercise

the best method at their disposal:

> There are still many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion and explanation of which the Catholic exegete can and must freely exercise his skill and genius, so that each may contribute his part to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine. . . [271]

While mandating exegetes to freely pursue their craft and influence the development of doctrine,

the instruction also reiterated a demand, exhorting the exegete to 'always be disposed to obey the

magisterium of the Church' and 'never to depart in the slightest degree from the common

doctrine and tradition of the Church.'[272] Hence, a mixed message was conveyed to exegetes who

were encouraged to use the best methods at their disposal, provided these methods yielded

results that were agreeable to the magisterium.

Dei verbum, Vatican Two's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,* reinforces the

mandate for exegetes to work 'toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of

Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature.'[273]

While signaling openness to the possibility of maturation in the Church's understanding of

scripture, this statement also issues a reminder that the magisterium possesses ultimate authority

to interpret scripture:

> For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church which exercises the divinely commission of watching over and interpreting the Word of God.[274]

While fully appreciating that the canon of scripture is a work of the Church to be interpreted by

the Church, it would seem that those members of the Church best equipped to interpret it are

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[271] PBC, *Sancta Mater Ecclesial*; *Instruction on the Historicity of the Gospels* (1964), 386-408. http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_HistTruthFitzmyer.htm#PBCText Accessed on 11.01.20.11.
[272] Ibid.
[273] The Second Vatican Council, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei verbum)* (Vatican: 18 November 1965), #13.
[274] Ibid, # 21.

those skilled in the science of exegesis. Yet *Dei verbum* envisages that exegetes and theologians are to work under the supervision of the magisterium

> Catholic exegetes and other workers in the field of sacred theology should zealously combine their efforts. Under the watchful eye of the sacred magisterium, and using appropriate techniques, they should set about examining the sacred texts in such a way that as many as possible of those who are ministers of the divine word should be able to distribute fruitfully the nourishment of the scriptures of the People of God.[275]

The reference to exegetes as a body that stands apart from the magisterium seems to reflect Murray's observation concerning a widening chasm since the late nineteenth century between Catholic scholars and the official teaching office of the Church.[276]

At first glance, *Dei verbum's* reference to the 'watchful eye' of the magisterium may seem like an infringement of open academic inquiry. Extending hermeneutical charity, however, the 'watchful eye' might suggest attentiveness and interest rather than oppressive supervision. At best it may be a reminder of the ecclesial vocation and accountability of the Catholic exegete rather than a subjugation of exegetes to the authority of non-exegetes in the hierarchy. Such an interpretation might be supported with reference to *Dei verbum's* subsequent remarks on the pastoral applicability of the work of the exegete who performs 'an ecclesial task, for it consists in the study and explanation of holy Scripture in a way that makes all its riches available to pastors and the faithful.'[277] If the work of exegetes is to be pastorally enriching for Catholic communities, it stands to reason that it must be responsible to the Church. Responsibility in this pastoral sense is, however, a very different matter from being overruled in relation to technical expertise.

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[275] *Dei Verbum*, # 23.
[276] Robert Murray, 'Further Reflection on magisterium and "Magisterium",' pp. 34-35.
[277] PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,* http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm Accessed on 1.11.2011.

The 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms the endorsement of the historical-critical method as conveyed in *Divino afflante Spiritu* and in *Dei verbum*, admittedly without identifying the approach by name:

> In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.[278]

This suggests that a correct interpretation of scripture cannot bypass what its human authors sought to convey, just as it cannot bypass what God sought to reveal. The Catechism outlines the considerations that must be taken into account in order for the reader to uncover what the human authors endeavored to convey. Attention must be paid to the historical factors that influenced the authorial context. Also, the literary form in question must be taken into consideration:

> In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current.[279]

This statement, although it does not explicitly name the historical-critical method, clearly describes it. This is the understanding of the historical-critical method that underlies my reference to the term through this work, a necessary step in the interpretation of that which 'God speaks to man [sic] in a human way.'[280]

The Catechism proceeds to acknowledge the manifold ways in which truth can be conveyed. Truth need not be expressed in a historical or empirical manner. 'For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetical and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.'[281] Essentially the Catechism in this section recounts Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* #38 which

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[278] Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* #109.
[279] Ibid, #110.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.

mandates Catholic exegetes to utilize the most effective methods at their disposal, and *Dei verbum* #12 that exhorts the interpreter of scripture to take into account historical context and literary forms so as to discover what the sacred authors sought to convey and what God seeks to reveal through their words, and hence contribute 'to the continued progress of sacred doctrine. . .'[282] Granted, the magisterium cannot uncritically endorse each novel, revisionist, and possibly conflicting theory by every exegete, and theologian. However, in order for exegetes to contribute 'to the continued progress of sacred doctrine', the magisterium must be open to the possibility of development, embracing a dialogical rather than oppositional disposition in relation to the guild of biblical scholars as a whole.

4.3. The Consideration of Genre in the Historical-Critical Method as Mandated by the PBC

The PBC in *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* views the historical-critical method as concerned with both historical and literary analysis.[283] In the view of the PBC, the method approaches the biblical text in the same manner as it would approach any ancient text.[284] As such it is cognizant that it is as text – an expression of human discourse.[285]

> As an analytical method, it studies the biblical text in the same fashion as it would study any other ancient text and comments upon it as an expression of human discourse. However, above all in the area of redaction criticism, it does allow the exegete to gain a better grasp of the content of divine revelation.[286]

When the PBC regards the biblical text as 'an expression of human discourse', this effectively acknowledges that it is a work of literature. The commission proceeds to describe the role of literary criticism in determining the form and coherence of a text.

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[282] PBC, *Sancta Mater Ecclesial*; *Instruction on the Historicity of the Gospels* (1964), 386-408. http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_HistTruthFitzmyer.htm#PBCText Accessed on 11.01.20.11.
[283] Ibid, 37.
[284] PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.

> The text is then submitted to a linguistic (morphology and syntax) and semantic analysis, using the knowledge derived from historical philology. It is the role of literary criticism to determine the beginning and end of textual units, large and small, and to establish the internal coherence of the text. The existence of doublets, of irreconcilable differences and of other indicators is a clue to the composite character of certain texts. These can then be divided into small units, the next step being to see whether these in turn can be assigned to different sources.[287]

This statement shows that the PBC regards literary criticism, with close attention to genre, linguistics and semiotics, as constituting an integral part of the historical-critical method. The commission encourages exegetes, especially those with a penchant for effectively popularizing insights otherwise native to the academy, to clearly distinguish the language of myth from that of history.

> This requires that exegetes take into consideration the reasonable demands of educated and cultured persons of our time, clearly distinguishing for their benefit what in the Bible is to be regarded as secondary detail conditioned by a particular age, what must be interpreted as the language of myth and what is to be regarded as the true historical and inspired meaning.[288]

Granted, there is some ambiguity here regarding the implied relationship between 'the true historical' and 'inspired meaning' with the possible implication that the inspired meaning is necessarily historical in nature. Further ambiguity may also exist in relation to a possible equation of the language of myth with secondary, cultural assumptions. Also, there is an arguably elitist undertone in the reference to 'educated and cultured persons of our time', raising a question as to how education and culture are to be defined for these purposes. Someone with a stellar education in the hard sciences or business may have ceased all religious education as a child and have a stunted level of religious understanding. There is even an implied connotation that those less cultured and educated, however this is to be assessed, rather not so much be educated as left to languish with a literalist interpretation of scripture. Such a situation might not

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[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid., #34.

bode well for the Church in the developing world. These criticisms and ambiguities noted, however, the relevance of the PBC statement for our present purposes is that it mandates that exegetes should distinguish between genres, and between the expression of the various kinds of truth, so as to counteract both literalism, and a dismissal of the scriptures as fallacious.

Joseph Fitzmyer, with an evident regard for the importance of acknowledging genre, asserts, 'Since the truth he has enshrined in his text is analogous to the form used, historical criticism teaches us that we cannot read an ancient text without the sophistication that the form calls for.'[289] This same regard for the theological implications of the literary genres is evident in the application of the method by exegetes such as Fitzmyer, Brown and Murphy.[290] These exegetes, far from assuming that the biblical text always seeks to record historical truth, explore the historical origins of the text and its literary character so as to ascertain what kind of truth the sacred authors sought to convey and, what God sought to reveal through their words.

4.4. Literary Considerations within the Historical-Critical Method.

As Luke Timothy Johnson observes, the term, 'historical-critical method' can carry a degree of ambiguity.[291] In particular, the prominence of the term, 'historical' in the name of the method may overshadow the 'critical' dimension in the sense of literary criticism and there appears to be divergence of opinion as to what extent the method takes literary considerations into account. 'In biblical scholarship', Johnson laments, 'critical has come to be associated with historical.'[292] Johnson suggests that the method has been implemented so as to be excessively critical of

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[289] PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican City, 1993), #2. Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2008), p. 66.
[290] Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*.
[291] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: Harpercollins, 1996), pp. 81-82.
[291] Catechism, #390.
p. 171
[292] Ibid.

Tradition and rather uncritical of its own assumptions.[293] What Johnson identifies, however, seems to be an incomplete and skewed application of the method, rather than a flaw in the method itself. When Johnson calls for a 'more inclusive sense of "criticism"', this could be regarded as a plea for a more rigorous application of the method, attentive to literary concerns, and to hermeneutical considerations.

Walter Wink has also associated the historical-critical method with historicism. Wink segues from a discussion of the ambiguity entailed by the term 'the historical Jesus' into a critique of the historical-critical method without any clear differentiation between the former and the latter. Wink remarks with regard to the term, 'historical Jesus', 'It would help immeasurably if we would make clear which meaning we intend when we use the expression.'[294] Immediately following this appeal for terminological clarity, Wink makes the unacknowledged leap from a discussion of the term 'historical Jesus' to an expression of agreement with Luke Timothy Johnson's assessment of the historical-critical method, announcing, 'I agree with Johnson that the historical-critical approach, despite its undeniable contributions, is inadequate as the central or sole means of interpreting scripture.'[295] Notably, the PBC regards the historical-critical as an indispensable, but not the *sole* means of interpreting scripture.[296] Rather, it establishes the literal sense as a basis for subsequent canonical exegesis which seeks out the *sensus plenior*, and other forms of interpretation, all of which must begin with a solid grasp of the literal sense. However, the more pertinent point for the issue at stake is that use of the historical-critical method in no way implies sympathy for any particular form of historical-Jesus scholarship which is itself a heterogeneous amalgamation of specialisms and perspectives.

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[293] Ibid.
[294] Walter Wink, 'Response to Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Real Jesus', Bulletin for Biblical Research 7*(1997), pp. 233- 248 at 239.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Fitzmyer, *In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, p. 81.

Wink decries a form of historicism that he believes to be dominant in modern biblical scholarship, lamenting that 'Only those events that can be described as "historical", as having "really happened", are true. Only facts have verity.'[297] However, the historicist mindset described by Wink is not inherently related to the adoption of the historical-critical method. In fact, insights derived from the application of the historical-critical method have helped emancipate believers from the impression that faithful Catholics should hold the myths of Genesis to recount historical facts, and have proposed more existential interpretations. In a case in point, Eugene Maly, a contributor to the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, and exponent of the historical-critical method asserts, 'No scholar today would hold that Gn [sic] presents history in the modern sense of that term.'[298] John McKenzie, Pauline Viviano, and Daniel Harlow number among the historical-critical exegetes who explicitly reject historicist assumptions and urge readers to interpret the text in light of its literary form.[299] Proponents of the historical-critical method cannot be fairly attributed a position that 'Only those events that can be described as "historical", as having "really happened", are true. Only facts have verity.'[300] While the PBC and Joseph Fitzmyer regard literary considerations as integral to the historical-critical method, Luke Timothy Johnson, Walter Wink, and George Lindbeck believe that the method places a high premium on historical reconstruction but neglects literary considerations. This divergence of opinion indicates the potential for talking at cross-purposes concerning the historical-critical method. For working purposes, however, this thesis adheres to the version of the method described and mandated by the PBC in *The Interpretation of Scripture in the Church* and

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[297] Walter Wink, 'Response to Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Real Jesus',* p 239.

[298] Eugene Maly, 'Genesis' in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 40.

[299] John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought', *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 740-741. Cf. Pauline Viviano, 'Genesis', p. 43. Cf. Eugene Maly, 'Genesis' in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 40. Cf. Daniel Harlow, 'After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science', in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 62/10 (2010), pp. 179-195. On-line at:
http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2010/PSCF9-10Harlow.pdf Accessed on 1.15. 2012.

[300] Wink, 'Response to Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Real Jesus' ,*p. 240.

reflected in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary, The New Jerome Biblical Commentary,* and the *Collegeville Bible Commentary.*[301]

We turn now to George Lindbeck's critique of the historical-critical method in relation to the literary concerns of the bible. Lindbeck is another thinker who rightly holds that truth is not always to be equated with facts. Lindbeck shares with Wink and with Johnson a concern that the historical-critical method is excessively fixated on facticity, and neglectful of literary considerations. However, as we shall see, Lindbeck's proposed alternative operates in relation to an understanding of doctrine that stands in stark contrast with Roman Catholic truth claims so that it is not a viable alternative for Catholics who are ambivalent regarding the historical-critical method, however they understand it.

4.5 Lindbeck's Postliberal Criticism of the Historical-Critical Method

4.5.1 Intratextual Hermeneutics

George Lindbeck proposes an intratextual hermeneutics whereby, instead of viewing the biblical text through the lens of the modern world, that is, through a modern hermeneutical system such as the historical-critical method, the world is viewed through the lens of the text. The term, intratextual, draws upon a metaphor from literary theory in which the interpreter enters the world woven by a given text and seeks meaning within this world of the text. Lindbeck contends that 'a scriptural world is able to absorb the whole universe', providing its own interpretative framework which the believer extends to all of reality.[302] Lindbeck seeks to interpret from the Bible to the world and not vice versa.[303] Hence, Lindbeck does not view his approach as

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[301] Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, p. 66.
[302] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (*Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1984*)*, p. 118.
[303] Ibid., p. 117.

beginning with a modern perspective, modern assumptions as to what constitutes sound scientific practice, and modern judgments as to what is and is not possible.

Lindbeck characterizes the historical-critical method as preoccupied with facticity, emphasizing its concern with historical reconstruction and regarding it as insufficiently attuned to literary considerations.[304] Lindbeck laments that in modernity, 'The primary literary approaches of the past, and their affinities to informal ways of reading the classics on their own terms were replaced by fundamentalist, historical-critical, and expressivist preoccupations with facticity or experience.'[305] It seems, however, a broad stroke to list expressivist, that is, broadly speaking inclusivist, liberal theologies and the historical-critical method in the same breath as fundamentalism, and to so closely associate a preoccupation with facticity with an acknowledgment of the revelatory potential of life experience.

The term, 'expressivist' broadly denotes Lindbeck's characterization of theologies of correlation that view life experience as revelatory and regard religious traditions as varying interpretations of an underlying common experience.[306] Experience in this sense, however, can reflect a symphony of levels of knowing, many of which have little to do with facticity.[307] Also, an obsession with facticity is a very different matter from an acknowledgment of the importance of identifying the historical context within which the biblical authors wrote, their concerns, and the literary genres they adopted, so as to discern how the Word of God is mediated through the words of the authors. History is always the context but, relatively seldom, the genre of the biblical text.

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[304] Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 39. Quoted in Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine,* p. 117.
[305] *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 117.
[306] Ibid., p. 54.
[307] Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost,* p. 61. Cf. Bernard Lonergan *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978; Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Electronic Classics Series Publication, http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/wjames/varieties-rel-exp.pdf. Accessed on 2.18.2014.

Lindbeck appears to assume that the historical-critical exegete regards the literal meaning of narrative as concerned with historical reconstruction. Lindbeck asks, 'Is the literal meaning of the story the history it is on some readings supposed to record and if so, is this history that of the fundamentalist or of the historical critic?'[308] Suggesting the existence of contradictory models of the historical-critical method, we have noted that the historical-critical method, in the PBC's account of that approach, does not assume that the literal sense of the text amounts to a historical narrative.[309] Lindbeck implies that historical-critical considerations do not inherently include literary concerns, arguing that an intratextual approach is distinctive from this historical-critical method in this regard, since for it, 'literary considerations are more important than historical-critical ones.'[310] Lindbeck suggests that the 'real meaning' is to be uncovered by an intratextual reading that pays close attention to genre. 'The intratextual way of dealing with this problem relies heavily on literary considerations.'[311]

4.5.2 Intratextuality as Meaning-Making within the Bounds of a Community

Lindbeck suggests that the literal sense of the text must be 'consistent with the kind of text it is taken to be by the community for which it is important'.[312] Curiously, Lindbeck regards the way in which a particular community of readers receives and categorizes the text, rather than the intention of the author, as the decisive factor in determining the genre of the text and the meaning that is hence implied. Since any given text is important to multiple communities, this suggests the possibility of multiple literal senses of a given text. The Last Supper accounts may be a good case in point as they give rise to contrasting interpretations of the institution narratives and the Eucharist.

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[308] Lindbeck, 'The Nature of Doctrine,' p. 117.
[309] PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church # 34.*
[310] Lindbeck, 'The Nature of Doctrine,' p. 117.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.

When Lindbeck suggests that it is the community of readers that decides what kind of text is under consideration, this position should be considered in the context of the author's cultural-linguistic model of doctrine. While Lindbeck argues that the community decides what kind of text is in question, he equally well argues that truths derived from the community's interpretation of the text provide a regulative framework for living and thinking within that community, rather than universally-binding propositions of ontological truth.

While Catholic critics of the historical-critical method may concur with Lindbeck's concern that the method emphasizes historical considerations at the expense of literary ones, they must ultimately part company with Lindbeck on the basis of the kind of truth that he envisaged as disclosed by the interpretative process. In a case in point, Cardinal Ratzinger in a 1996 address to the chairs of Latin American Bishops' Conferences committees for doctrine asserted that the historical-critical method, while an important tool for establishing the historical relevance of a text, is so laden with modernist assumptions, and a concern for historical reconstruction as to obstruct an encounter with the living Word of God. [313] While Ratzinger may find common ground with Lindbeck in his critique of the historical-critical method, Ratzinger delivered his critique while railing against the dangers of relativism and critiquing the theologies of John Hick and Paul Knitter. Lindbeck would not share Ratzinger's position that the interpretation of scripture yields doctrines that necessarily amount to universally valid, absolute truth-claims.

Just as Lindbeck proposes that intratextual hermeneutics are preferable to the historical-critical method, so too he suggests that his cultural-linguistic model of doctrine is preferable to a

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[313] Joseph Ratzinger, 'Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today'. Address given during the meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the presidents of the Doctrinal Commissions of the Bishops' Conferences of Latin America, held in Guadalajara, Mexico, in May 1996. http://saints.sqpn.com/pope0265004.htm Accessed on 6. 1. 2012.

cognitive-propositionalist one.[314] Lindbeck seeks to circumvent modern hermeneutics, regarding the text as constituting whatever genre a community takes it to be, and then interpreting the world through the lens of the text. However, just as the starting point is rooted in a kind of inter-subjectivity within the bounds of a given community, so is the meaning yielded by the process. By proposing a cultural-linguistic approach to doctrine, Lindbeck rejects the assumption that doctrinal formulae must necessarily correspond to ontological truths. Lindbeck's approach to doctrine is cultural insofar as doctrine is concerned with life within a given community of faith, with its mores, symbols and rituals. It is linguistic insofar as doctrine functions as a kind of language or grammar. Lindbeck distinguishes his approach from a preliberal propositionalist approach to doctrine that views doctrine as signifying ontological realities. Rather, Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic stance, views doctrine as signifying rules of thought and behavior within a specific community of faith.

To be religious, for Lindbeck, is to interiorize a set of skills, behaviors and thought-patterns developed within a particular community.[315] From this cultural-linguistic perspective, the task of systematic theology is to explain what a religion means within its community of faith, for the benefit of those who have made a commitment prior to understanding.[316] As such, the author is concerned with internal coherence for the community of initiates privy to the internal grammar of a community of faith. In a sense, the cultural-linguistic perspective holds that doctrine is validated by a way of life rather than by some pre-existing fact.

In a case in point, Lindbeck remarks with reference to the biblical doctrine of God, 'The primary focus is not on God's being in itself, but how life is to be lived, and reality construed in

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[314] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp.18-20.
[315] Ibid, p. 35.
[316] Ibid., pp.18-20.

light of God's character as an agent as this is depicted in the stories of Israel and Jesus.'[317] If

Lindbeck can speak of the doctrine of God in such terms, it may be reasonable to propose that he

would not hesitate to do so with reference to the doctrine of Satan, regarding the doctrine as

concerned with 'how life is to be lived' rather than the being of a particular creature.

4.5.3 The 'Satan of Satanism': Doctrine Misunderstood Outside its Community of Origin

At one point in *The Nature of Doctrine,* Lindbeck remarks that beliefs about the Satan of

Satanism may be horrendously 'nonsensical.[318] 'On a categorial interpretation, . . . , beliefs about

the Satan of Satanism might be neither true nor false, but like those regarding a square circle,

nonsensical (though horrendously so).'[319] Categorial truth, in Lindbeck's terms, refers to the

adequacy of a doctrine to order behavior and attitudes.[320] If by 'beliefs about the Satan of

Satanism', Lindbeck means popular impressions of what Satanists believe, as opposed to the

beliefs of Satanists themselves, then there may be considerable validity to his remark, given the

Hollywood-fueled, sensationalized, caricatures perpetuated by popular culture.

The Church of Satan founded by Anton LaVey, arguably the most formalized and public

expression of Satanism in the US, views the doctrine of Satan precisely as a regulative lens

through which to order behaviors and attitudes in what amounts to a cultural-linguistic approach

to religion rather than an assertion of ontological truth.[321] Within that particular community, the

doctrine of Satan would appear to function in a distinctly categorial rather than propositionalist

manner. Indeed, the website of the Church of Satan encourages people who claim to have

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[317]Ibid., p. 121.
[318] Ibid., p. 51.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid., p. 35, 52.
[321] The website of the Church of Satan. 'The Eleven Satanic Rules of the Earth' available at
http://www.churchofsatan.com/eleven-rules-of-earth.php. Accessed on 2.12.2015.

encountered a supernatural, ontological Satan or other demons to seek psychiatric treatment.[322]

Furthermore, 'Satanism' may encompass a wide category of contrasting belief systems, behaviors and communities, and Lindbeck is on record as insisting that various religious cultures use language in unique ways so that outsiders may not be privy to the incommensurable 'grammar' of a particular community's language-game.[323]

4.5.4 Intratextuality and Ontological Truth: An Ambiguous Correspondence

Because Lindbeck's emphasis on the regulative function of doctrine distinguishing it from both the cognitive-propositionalist and experiential-expressivist one, it would be easy to caricature his approach as denying that doctrinal propositions correspond to any particular ontological truth whatsoever, beyond the doctrinal formulations or narratives themselves. At times, Lindbeck comes extremely close to saying as much. 'Meaning is constituted by use of a specific language, rather than being distinguishable from it.'[324] David Cheetham recognizes this impression but clarifies that Lindbeck is not completely rejecting a correspondence theory of truth. Cheetham observes, in relation to Lindbeck's intratextual approach to religion that

> . . . to assume that it presupposes a rejection of any kind of correspondence theory of truth, or that a full-blown anti-realism is being advanced, is a misrepresentation. Instead, the intra-textual position seems to be a form of critical realism, maintaining that reality is mediated more *thickly* through a particular tradition's conceptual scheme.'[325]

Consistent with Cheetham's interpretation, Lindbeck states that 'there is nothing in the cultural-linguistic approach that requires the rejection (or the acceptance) of the epistemological realism and the correspondence theory of truth.'[326] Nonetheless, Avery Dulles sounds a note of caution

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[322] The website of the Church of Satan. http://www.churchofsatan.com/faq-possession-dreams-destiny.php. Accessed on 2.12.2015.

[323] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp.68, 69; Cf. David Cheetham, *Ways of Meeting and the Theology of Religions*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 20; Cf. Rigby *et al.*, 'The Nature of Doctrine and Scientific Progress', p. 687.

[324] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 113-114.

[325] Cheetham, *Ways of Meeting,* p. 20.

[326] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p.68 -69.

as to the implications of emphasizing a regulatory role for doctrine, functioning as the rules of a wittgensteinian language game, while being evasive as to its ontological claims, ' . . .the depiction of language as a set of convenient symbols used according to the conventional rules of a 'language game' is deceptive . . .To substitute grammatical debates about the things meant is to obfuscate the necessary connection between meaningful language and reality.'[327] Dulles develops this criticism with relation to the doctrine of Christ. 'If we are to worship, speak and behave, as though the Son of God is God himself, is this not because the Son really and ontologically is God, whether anyone believes it or not?'[328] Dulles' implied criticism serves as a reminder that the intratextual perspective does not *necessarily* regard either scripture or doctrine as corresponding to ontological realities. This leads us to an unlikely, and I would argue, unsustainable, alliance whereby thinkers who are committed to Pope St. John Paul II's New Evangelization appeal to a postliberal (as opposed to a preliberal, literalist) critique of the historical-critical method.

4.5.5 A Catholic Endeavor to Circumvent Modern Hermeneutics

It is not unknown for Catholic champions of the New Evangelization to appeal to a hermeneutics suggestive of intratextuality so as to reject the historical-critical, viewing the world through the bible rather than viewing the bible through any modern hermeneutic. Robert Barron indicates ambivalence towards the historical-critical method and proposes what might be broadly classified as a postliberal hermeneutic in its stead. In *The Priority of Christ,* Barron proposes that Christ, the eternal logos should be the lens through which Christians view the world.[329] Otherwise, Barron argues, some interpretative system, such as the historical-critical method, is

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[327] Avery Dulles, 'Postmodernist Ecumenism,'*First Things*, August, 2008. Cf. Justin Lieber, 'On What Sort of Speech Act Wittgenstein's *Investigations* Is and Why It Matters', *The Philosophical Forum*, XXVIII, no. 3, 1997. Cf Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922).

[328] Avery Dulles, 'Postmodernist Ecumenism.'

[329] Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Towards a Postliberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

given priority over Christ. Barron's objection to the use of an interpretative system, inevitably infused with some philosophy or other, applying such a system to the Word of God, is reminiscent of Joseph Ratzinger's concerns for the philosophical bias of the method, but also of George Lindbeck's intratextuality. While Barron may share Lindbeck's ambivalence towards modern interpretative categories, in favor of a thick, symbolic, counter-cultural tradition, his doctrinal commitments as a Catholic are not compatible with the conclusion to which Lindbeck's intratextuality leads. The intratextual interpretation of scripture leads Lindbeck to the internal grammar of a particular form of life, that is, meaning that is valid within the bounds of a particular community, as opposed to universally-binding, absolute, ontological truths as promulgated in Roman Catholicism. Lindbeck is consistent, not offering any pretense of totalizing objectivity either in the process of interpretation or in the nature of the truth derived from the process. By contrast, the attempt to circumvent the historical-critical method so as to derive universal, ontological truth from the scriptures (that is, in Lindbeck's terms, a cognitive-propositionalist approach to doctrine) may lead to fundamentalism. Arguing for the necessity of the historical-critical method so as to uncover the meaning of ancient texts, Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders suggest that "attempts to minimize or avoid the necessary steps involved will produce fundamentalist confusion."[330]

4.6 Conclusion

A contribution of the present chapter lies in its discussion as to what exactly constitutes the 'historical-critical method'. While some voices including Luke Timothy Johnson, Walter Wink, and George Lindbeck, criticize the method for an overemphasis on attempts at historical reconstruction, and lack of attention to literary considerations, the historical-critical method as

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[330] Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders, 'Hermeneutics,' *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 1146-1165 at 1149.

endorsed by the PBC includes attention to literary as an integral consideration. Hence, even these thinkers who express ambivalence with regard to a perceived application of the historical-critical method that is overly concerned with historical reconstruction, would seem to agree that the scriptures should be interpreted in light of their literary genres, however the genre is identified. The PBC has mandated recourse to the historical-critical method as indispensable for the correct interpretation of scripture, and a consideration of the implications of literary form constitutes an integral part of the method as endorsed by the PBC, so as to grasp the kind of truth conveyed by a given text: historical, poetic or moral, for example.

Offering a further contribution to the ongoing discussion of the benefits of the historical critical method, I have argued it proves problematic for Catholic thinkers, particularly those committed to Pope St. John Paul II's New Evangelization, to appeal to an intratextual, postliberal hermeneutics in the sense proposed by George Lindbeck, so as to circumvent the historical-critical method. While Lindbeck envisaged communities interpreting the world through the lens of the text, not overtly drawing upon modern interpretative systems, Lindbeck does not view the doctrinal positions to which such interpretation leads as any more objective than the method through which they were derived. Rather, in Lindbeck's vision, doctrine offers norms for the life of the community, more than ontological truth-claims. Lindbeck's model of doctrine is not therefore commensurate with the Roman Catholic position that doctrine conveys, albeit in an incomplete, provisional manner, eternal, universal truth.

Advancing the larger argument of the thesis, the chapter documents an ecclesiastical mandate for the application of the historical-critical method to the scriptures, and the PBC's account of this method as integrally concerned with literary as well as historical considerations.

It is not therefore tenable for the Church to present doctrine without regard for the genres that define its scriptural underpinnings.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT IS MYTH AND WHAT KIND OF TRUTH DOES IT EXPRESS WITHIN THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE?

Myth as a narrative form, symbol system, and register of language that poetically expresses existential meaning that evades other forms of literary expression

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contributes towards the central argument of the thesis by outlining Paul Ricoeur's approach to myth as the expression of universal, supra-historical truths rather than the affirmation of the particularity and historicity of events, deeds, and personages. Hence, the chapter establishes the hermeneutical basis for the central argument of the thesis that the doctrine of Satan, presented in mythical language, points to a reality other than that of a particular being. The genre of myth, as understood by Ricoeur, cannot affirm, or for that matter deny, the ontological existence of any individual creature in the world beyond its narrative arc. Notable Catholic exegetes, published in approved Catholic commentaries endorse this view of myth as the expression of supra-historical, universal truth – as opposed to the facticity associated with particular events and personages.

The chapter contrasts the Ricouerian model of myth with a low view of myth implied in ecclesial documents that regard the genre as fanciful and fallacious, rather than as a symbolic expression of the experience of being human in the world, with the actualities and potentialities this entails. This low view of myth led the magisterium to deny the mythical nature of biblical texts and motifs invoked in relation to the doctrine of Satan. By misidentifying the genre at stake, the magisterium has also misidentified the kind of truth at stake.

5.2 Hermeneutical Implications of Dialogue with Modernity

Vatican Two expressed a willingness on behalf of the Church to learn from advances in the sciences and in culture that could contribute to the pursuit of truth. 'The experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, by all of which the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened, these profit the Church, too.'[331] This statement of the Council would seem particularly applicable to the area of hermeneutics wherein progress in the interpretative sciences can unlock the wisdom of past ages, 'treasures' hidden in the texts of various cultures. The hermeneutics of myth, in particular, balances *ressourcement* with *aggiornamento* as new interpretative approaches are applied to ancient narratives, and a dialogue transpires between the ancient and the modern.

Magisterial writings since 1943 including *Divino afflante Spiritu*, *Dei verbum,* the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* and *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* all emphasize the importance of interpreting scripture in view of its literary genres.[332] It is with this in mind that we now focus upon the literary genre of myth and the supra-historical view of the genre to which modern hermeneutics has given rise.

The 'supra-historical', 'non-explanatory' or 'poetic' view of myth associated with Paul Ricoeur has recognized the capacity of the genre to express deep truths that are otherwise largely inaccessible to conscious thought and inexpressible through propositional discourse. Riceour understands myth as expressing universal actualities and possibilities, as opposed to proposing causal theories, or affirming historical or etiological truth. As such, this view of myth may be

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[331] *Gaudium et spes*, #44.
[332] The Second Vatican Council, *Dei verbum*, # 12; PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,* #1, #3, #4.

highly conducive to a development of doctrine which points ultimately to universal realities rather than historical and etiological assertions.

The Ricoeurian understanding of myth constitutes an example of what the modern world can bring to the table of dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. However, *Christian Faith and Demonology*, a 1975 study commissioned by the CDF, rejecting calls for the development of the doctrine of Satan, effectively dismisses the capacity of myth to express truth, equating the genre with fallacy. Nonetheless, because the study does not offer any consideration to a view of myth as the expression of supra-historical religious truth, it has not explicitly precluded development of the doctrine of Satan in light of such an understanding of the genre.

5.3 Models of Myth

Robert Segal proposes four distinct ways of understanding myth. While Segal categorizes these three approaches in relation to science, what is true of their relation to science, is also, I suggest, true of their relation to history.[333]

(i) Myth as True Science/ True history: This model of interpretation is literalistic and regards mythical texts as accurately conveying scientific or historical truth.[334] This approach would regard the deeds of Adam, Eve, Satan, or Noah within the narrative arc as recounting events as historical as the Battle of Hastings.

(ii) Myth as Modern Science/ Modern History: This approach seeks to reconcile mythical texts with the insights of modern science and modern history.[335] Segal cites editorial comments in the *Oxford Annotated Bible* (1977) as typifying this model.[336] The editors of that

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[333] Robert Segal, 'Myth and Ritual' in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion,* John R. Hinnells ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 355 – 379 at 355.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Herbert May, Bruce Metzger, eds. *Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) Not to be confused with the 2001 or 2010 *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha.*

volume seek to scientifically explain the plague in Exodus 7:14-24 asserting a scientific and historically viable possibility that the Nile can turn red and hence blood-like in the summer due to pigmentation from soil or micro-organisms.[337] This model is characterized by its own brand of literalism, differing from the 'true science' model in its acknowledgment of natural causes as opposed to supernatural intervention.[338] It might be invoked, for example, to associate the woes of Job with some individual who lost his family to a particular plague. The 'myth as modern history' approach would, however, differ from the 'myth as true history' approach insofar as it would seek to explain references to Satan in some form compatible with the Enlightenment paradigm, rather than asserting the direct interventions of a supernatural being.

(iii) Myth as primitive science/ primitive history: This model views myth as a pre-scientific and flawed attempt to fill gaps in humanity's understanding of causation.[339] However, the expansion of scientific knowledge plugs the gaps in human understanding of the world and eventually no gaps remain so that myth becomes redundant. Yesteryear's acts of God have become explicable as scientific phenomena. This model would challenge the monogenism advocated by a literal reading of Genesis 3, regarding the myth as scientifically erroneous. As archeological evidence is uncovered, increasing our knowledge of the Ancient Near East, myth as primitive history becomes increasingly redundant.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer identifies the tendency for this approach to myth to lead to a form of religion that is invoked only to fill in the gaps in knowledge and dispensed with, as soon as the gaps are addressed with reference to empirical causation. With reference to images of God, Bonhoeffer laments 'How wrong it is to use God as a stop-gap explanation for the incompleteness of our knowledge. If in fact the frontiers of knowledge are being pushed further

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[337] Robert Segal, 'Myth and Ritual,' p. 355.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid, p. 356

and further back (and that is bound to be the case), then God is being pushed back with them, and is therefore continually in retreat. We are to find God in what we know, not in what we don't know.'[340]

Carl Jung challenges the position that myth is a kind of primitive science when he proposes that 'No science will ever replace myth, and a myth cannot be made out of any science. For it is not that "God" is a myth, but that myth is the revelation of a divine life in man. It is not we who invent myth, rather it speaks to us as a Word of God.'[341] Jung posits that myth is a medium of divine revelation, expressing the presence of the divine, rather than a figurative way to describe causal relationships.

(iv) Myth and the expression of supra-historical, universal truth regarding the experience of being human: By way of contrast with the three approaches to myth that have been outlined thus far, Segal describes the emergence of interpretative models that do not assume an explanatory purpose for myth.[342] The non-explanatory models recognize that myth has co-existed with primitive science and with the historical writings of antiquity, and is hence distinct from both.[343] Myth, upon this understanding, serves to reconcile humans to realities of life, including death, that are beyond their control. Exponents of this approach, including Bronislaw Malinowski, Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Claude Lévi -Strauss, Mircea Eliade, and Paul Ricoeur wrote for the most part during an era in the early twentieth century as the science of modern biblical interpretation was coming into its own and meeting opposition in the form of Protestant fundamentalism and Catholicism's condemnation of Modernism.[344]

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[340] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberharde Bethge (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 311.
[341] Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflection* (London: Routledge & K.Paul, 1963), p. 373.
[342] Segal, 'Myth and Ritual,' p. 236.
[343] Ibid., p. 239.
[344] Ibid, p. 357.

One exponent of the non-explanatory approach to myth is Claude Lévi-Strauss who characterizes myth as a dynamic form of language that exceeds the explanation of phenomena or the reconstruction of events. The author posits that, 'Myth is language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at 'taking off' from the linguistic ground on which it keeps rolling.'[345] Lévi-Strauss's remarks suggest that myth possesses the capacity to liberate meaning from a limited attachment to particular referents as would the case in allegory wherein particular terms correspond to realities outside the world of the text. Myth, according to this view, is not a vehicle for the delivery of predetermined meaning that could be equally-well expressed in propositional statements. Rather, it empowers truth to roll where it may. This cannot be the case for historical narrative, in a modern sense, the task of which is to reconstruct and interpret a particular event or chain of events.

David Tracy's concept of the 'classic' may help to further explicate the superabundance of meaning to which Levi-Strauss refers. By the term, 'classic', Tracy means 'a text(s), event(s), or person(s) that bear an excess of permanence of meaning, yet always resist definitive interpretation.'[346] Because myth is concerned with all of history rather than a particular historical event, its universal significance resists reductionist interpretations. Tracy proposes that the classic claims authority by virtue of its own persuasive merits, that is, by its innate capacity to captivate the imagination. Tracy writes that, 'It claims authority because of the intensification of meaning and value that occurs in this work.'[347] Lévi-Strauss's assertion of the dynamic surplus of meaning unleashed by myth and Tracy's assertions regarding the classic find synergy in Jean-Luc Marion's notion of 'saturated phenomena', that is, phenomena that exceed the interpretive

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[345] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth' in *Critical Theory Since 1965,* H. Adams and L. Searle eds., (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), p. 808.

[346] David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company), p. 100.

[347] Ibid.

capacity of reason.[348] Saturated phenomena point infinitely beyond themselves and their meaning

cannot be exhaustively stated. They are pregnant with possibility rather than a means to recount

that which has actually transpired.

Tracy's ruminations on the 'classic', and Marion's concept of the saturated phenomenon,

raise the question as to the parameters for authentic interpretation of myths. As non-explanatory

models of myth rose to prominence in the twentieth century, debates concerning the

interpretation of myth began to focus upon the dialectical relationship between the reader and the

text, rather than a debate between literalist and figurative interpretations.

A central question in modern hermeneutical debates concerns the relationship between

the relative roles of, on the one hand, reader-response, and on the other hand, the "Otherness" of

the text in determining meaning. Grant Osborne identifies this tension, associating Hans-Georg

Gadamer with an emphasis on reader-response, and Jürgen Habermas with an emphasis on the

alterity of the text.[349] Hence, modern thinkers in the area of hermeneutics seek to negotiate a

balance between the extremes of excessively subjective interpretation versus excessive rigidity

that neglects the active role of the reader. In a case in point, Paul Ricoeur detects a mimetic

relationship between the reader and the narrative, so that the interaction between the two creates

'possible worlds.'[350] We turn now to Ricoeur's hermeneutics of myth that may serve as a fair

representation of the model of myth that informs much of the exegesis found in modern Catholic

biblical commentaries bearing ecclesiastical approval.

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[348] Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Erotic Phenomenon,' Stephen E. Lewis trans. *Ethics* 118 (1): 164. Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*. Thomas A. Carlson trans (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 22.
[349] Grant Osburne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 1991), pp. 368-369 cited in GD Robinson, 'Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion: A Brief Overview and Critique', *Premise* 2 (8): pp.1-13 at 1.
[350] Richard Kearney's interview with Paul Ricoeur, 'Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds,' *The Crane Bag Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 2, 1978.

5.4. Paul Ricoeur and the Supra-Historical Model of Myth

Paul Ricoeur suggests a non-explanatory, supra-historical understanding of myth when he

proposes

> Myth is something else than an explanation of the world, of history, and of destiny. Myth expresses in terms of the world – that is, of the other world, or the second world – the understanding that man has of himself in relation to the foundation and the limit of his experience.[351]

This statement encapsulates the understanding of myth that is advanced in the present work.

Myth is not concerned with theories of causation or history. Rather, it expresses existential

truths, actualities and possibilities that pertain to the experience of being human. Myth is not

even a figurative account of history. Rather, it is supra-historical, expressing universally relevant

truths 'in terms of the world – that is, of the other world, or the second world.' Myth expresses

truth that is of universal significance in the world outside the narrative with reference to a

particular characters and events within the constructed world of the narrative.

The sense in which Riceour refers to a 'second world' is of great importance to the

distinction between myth and history. An individual reader's or a community's engagement with

myth constructs a narrative world so as to express truths about the situation of the human person

in this 'space' constructed between the text and its recipient. As Ricoeur states, 'Myth consists in

giving worldly form to that which is beyond known and tangible reality.'[352] It is the

'universifiable' meaning engendered by myth that applies to the world beyond the text.

Distancing the genre of myth from history, Ricoeur argues that time and space within the

narrative arc of myth 'cannot be coordinated with the time and space of history and

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[351] Paul Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann,'*Essays on Biblical Interpretation,* Peter McCormick, trans (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 60.
[352] Ibid., p. 7.

geography.'[353] Its times, spaces and, by extension, its characters, do not directly correspond to particular times, spaces, and characters in the world outside the myth, precisely because they correspond to the situations of all human beings in all times and spaces. This is especially important with regard to the motif of the 'beginning of time' within the narrative world of the myth. Reference to space and to time, including the 'beginning' of time, within the narrative arc of a myth is reference to time and space to the 'second world'.[354] This is important to bear in mind when Ricoeur speaks of myth seeking to 'explain the genesis of evil in terms of the genesis of the cosmos.'[355]At first glance, Ricoeur's reference to the 'genesis of the cosmos' appears to imply an etiological understanding of myth. However, the cosmos in question is that of the narrative world of the myth and should not be equated with the cosmos beyond it. This must be the case if Ricoeur does not regard myth as concerned with causation, etiology or history.

5.4.1 Myth and Supra-Historical Truth

It might be objected that the supra-historical model of myth espoused by Ricoeur represents a modern interpretation of the genre, and it cannot be assumed that the ancient authors shared this understanding. What evidence, after all, is there to show that the ancient writers of mythical narrative did not seek to figuratively represent particular events and personages? Who is to say that Cain is not modeled upon some prehistoric murderer, or that the Noah narrative does not recall some actual deluge? After all, the second century BC mythologist, Euhemerus proposed that myths are inflated, figurative reconstructions of particular events and personages.[356] This argument calls for a distinction between, on the one hand, the influence of the particular and, on the other hand, the reconstruction of the particular. Mythical narrative, like narrative of any kind,

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[353] Ibid., p. 18.
[354] Ibid., p. 60.
[355] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), p. 250.
[356] Truesdell Brown, 'Euhemerus and the Historians,' *Harvard Theological Review* (39): 259-274.

is unavoidably influenced, or even inspired, by particular experiences enshrined in individual or group memory. This does not, however, mean that it is the intention of the author or the purpose of the text to figuratively reconstruct these influential events, experiences or personages. Experience is always particular, and narrative cannot but be influenced by experience. However, myth points to the universal and existential significance of experience and is not concerned with the historical veracity of the particular.

It is central to the argument of the present work that the genre of myth does not recount history, even in figurative terms. The characters and events of its narrative arc are not directly identifiable with particular characters and events in the world outside the text. Otherwise, the genre of myth becomes a way of figuratively expressing historical truth – falling into one of the first three models of myth earlier identified.[357] From the point of view of biblical interpretation, such a situation would diminish the importance of distinguishing historical writings from the other genres, mitigating the importance of the Church's teaching since *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943) to *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1994).[358] The genre of myth as evoked in the present work is distinct from etiological stories that explain a current situation or a name with reference to particular historical situations. Mythical narrative can be distinguished from etiology by its literary characteristics that suggest universal significance. A classic example is to be found in the names of Adam ('man of earth') and Eve ('mother') that suggest everyman characters.[359]

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[357] Robert Segal, 'Myth and Ritual,'.355.
[358] Pope Pius XII *Divino afflante Spiritu*, # 37; The PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, #2.*
[359] Pauline Viviano, 'Genesis,' p. 41.

5.4.2 Distinguishing Myth from Legend

Figurative narrative that reflects a particular kernel of historicity, greatly amplified and stylized by the narrative form, might be better classified as legend than as myth. This suggestion reflects Hermann Gunkel's use of the term 'legend' in relation to the Book of Genesis. Gunkel, a pioneer of form criticism, recognized that the narratives of Genesis do not constitute history in a modern sense. However, he allowed for the possibility that the legend might reflect specific historical events and personages, immortalized in the oral traditions. 'Other legends reflect historic events or situations, and in such cases it was the duty of the narrator to bring out these references clearly enough to satisfy his well-informed hearer.'[360] Because of his stance that the narratives may recount particular events, Gunkel's model of legend is quite distinct from Ricoeur's model of myth.

5.4.3 Myth Adapted to Henotheism and Monotheism

Ricoeur's definition of myth does not confine the genre to stories about a multiplicity of gods and goddesses. As Pauline Viviano notes, myth need not be so narrowly defined, and can hence be recognized in the henotheistic and monotheistic contexts of the Hebrew scriptures.[361] Similarly, John Hayward comments that in rejecting polytheism, Israelite religion by no means rejected myth.[362] Rather, according to Hayward, writing from a confessional, Christian perspective, the ancient Jews 'advanced it, and from the point of view of our own worldview, they purified it.'[363] In the Judeo-Christian Tradition, myth is primarily concerned with the

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[360] Hermann Gunkel, 'The Literary Form of the Legends,' *The Legends of Genesis* (Chicago: Open Court, 1901), p. 75. Available at http://sacred-texts.com/bib/log/index.htm. Accessed on 8.3.2014.
[361] Pauline Viviano, 'Genesis', p. 37.
[362] John Hayward, 'The Uses of Myth in an Age of Science,' *New Theology No. 7* (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1970), pp. 59-77 at p.67.
[363] Ibid.

expression of truth that applies to the lives of human beings rather than gods, goddesses, or, for that matter, demons.

5.4.4 Myth and the Subconscious

In Ricoeur's view, myth utilizes poetic language so as to open us to consciousness of that which is usually subconscious. Endorsing this poetic view of myth, James Dunn concurs that myth can open access to otherwise submerged levels of awareness. Dunn posits that myth enables the 'expression of a whole area of human experience and awareness of universal values and truths , that can only be presented in symbolic language.'[364] Dunn identifies the kind of truth that only myth can relate as truth that is known, for the most part, subconsciously. 'Myth is the natural and indispensable intermediate stage between unconscious and conscious cognition.'[365] This suggests that myth is not an option so much as a necessity in order to express realities that make their presence felt beneath the threshold of consciousness. Myth, according to this poetic view, can evoke and express what other genres cannot. Ricoeur asserts

> My deepest conviction is that poetic language alone restores to us that participation in or belonging-to an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject. Hence the function of poetic discourse is to bring about this emergence of a depth-structure of belonging-to amid the ruins of descriptive discourse.[366]

This once more emphasizes Ricoeur's position that myth is not a figurative way to explain causes or recount history. It is, rather, an expression of that in which we are saturated and otherwise unable to objectify in thought or word. It allows us to pounce upon ourselves, so as to fleetingly grasp, and express our deep relatedness to the world before the critically-conscious self objectifies the world in opposition to itself. Critical consciousness objectifies the world largely

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[364] James Dunn, 'Demythologizing – The Problem of Myth in the New Testament,' I. H. Marshall ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Principles and Methods* (Exeter: Paternoster Press), p. 287.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Paul Ricoeur, 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', *The Harvard Theological Review, 70* /2 (1977): pp. 1-37.

by positing causal relationships. Hence, in order for myth to function as the kind of expression envisaged by Ricoeur, it cannot be an account of causal relationships.

Ricoeur does not regard recourse to myth as a substitute for rational thought, proposing that 'The symbol gives rise to thought.'[367] Lewis Mudge, paraphrasing Riceour, proposes, 'Symbolic, metaphorical, mythological language *gives* us the capacity to bring experiences of a certain kind to awareness . . .'[368] Mythical language can dredge up from the depths a sense of 'belonging' or interrelatedness in the world. Significantly, Riceour states that mythical language does its work amidst the 'ruins of descriptive discourse.'[369] It functions where descriptive, propositional prose fails. Myth can express that which philosophical propositions cannot. As Mudge remarks, 'Myth contains more than philosophy can comprehend.'[370] Mythical language and motifs articulate experiences that may be largely inexpressible in other registers of language. That which is beyond the comprehension of philosophy, and which usually evades conscious thought must be something other than the history of particular events and persons. Once more emphasizing the capacity of myth to dredge up that which is usually unconscious, Richard Bell proposes, 'Myth is, so to speak, the vertical going down into the layers of reality.'[371] Also, suggesting a distinctive role of myth, far from that of historical discourse, Joseph Campbell regards the genre as operating on the very limits of language, at the point beyond which words can no longer function. 'Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth - penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words.'[372] Campbell's reference to 'penultimate' truth alludes to

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[367] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Emerson Buchanan trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 15.
[368] Lewis Mudge ed., *Essays on Biblical Interpretation by Paul Ricoeur* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), iv.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid., iii.
[371] Richard Bell, *Deliver us from Evil* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) p. 172.
[372] Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 163.

the sense in which myth may come closer than other genres to expressing ultimate truth, but even myth cannot ultimately do so in an exhaustive fashion.

5.4.5 Mythical Language Engages the Mystery of Evil

One existential reality that towers defiantly over the 'ruins of descriptive discourse' is that of evil.[373] Propositional discourse lies in ruins in the sense that it cannot adequately explain evil. Richard Kearney characterizes Ricoeur as arguing that the distinctive capacity of myth to express the otherwise inexpressible is particularly pronounced in relation to evil. 'From the beginning, Ricoeur recognized evil as an experience which could not be adequately dealt with by the human cogito or intentional consciousness.'[374] Rather than suggesting that we cannot think rationally about evil, Riceour suggests that the symbolism of myth can allow us access to a level of consciousness from which our critical thinking can proceed. That is, we may proceed from myth to phenomenological and analytical thinking. 'When confronted with evil', Kearney proposes, 'we are reminded that there are meanings and experiences that defy the transparency of consciousness and contravene our will.'[375] Kearney's reference to meanings and experiences that 'defy the transparency of consciousness' suggests an epistemological opaqueness that defies conscious thought. Ominous experiences resist the light that thinking, at the level of our usual consciousness, might otherwise shed upon them. The reference to their contravention of the will seems to suggest that these meanings and experiences operate at a level of consciousness below that of waking consciousness and volition. Thus, Kearney characterizes Ricoeur's sense of evil as a liminal experience, on the cusp of language and consciousness, or perhaps, below the cusp and beyond the direct grasp of either.

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[373] Paul Ricoeur, 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', p. 37.
[374] Richard Kearney, 'On the Hermeneutics of Evil,' *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale* 2 (2006): pp. 197-215 at 197.
[375] Ibid, p.198.

5.4.6 Myth as a Symbolic Worldview and 'Species of Symbols'

At this point, it may be important to note that the present work will follow a well-established

precedent in utilizing the term 'myth' so as to denote a worldview and particular motifs as well

as the narratives from which these arise. Ricoeur speaks of myth, not only with reference to

particular narratives such as that of Gilgamesh, Enuma Elsish, or Adam, but more broadly with

reference to a 'species of symbols' derived from such narratives.[376] These mythical symbols

color a worldview and pervade texts that would properly be characterized as instantiating genres

other than myth. Hence, mythical motifs may be found at work in apocalyptic texts, gospels,

poetry, and, as we shall see, in catechetical texts.

A biblical text of any genre may be influenced, implicitly or explicitly, by a worldview

colored by other narratives that are themselves mythical by genre. In a case in point, when in

Luke 10:18-19, Jesus is depicted as saying 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven', this

invokes a mythic motif. Jesus, it might be said, is portrayed as speaking mythically, possibly

appropriating texts such as Isaiah 14, Psalm 89 and the *Book of the Watchers* which themselves

appear to appropriate fall myths.[377] This is not however to say that the author of Luke's gospel

employed the literary genre of myth.

This broad use of the term myth signifies what some authors denote by *mythos*, often

contrasting this worldview and symbol-system with *logos*, a paradigm rooted in causal

relationships. Karen Armstrong, for example, explores this distinction in her account of the

development of images of God.[378] Armstrong suggests that it is a hallmark of fundamentalism

that it tends to interpret *mythos* as though it were *logos.* Armstrong effectively suggests that

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[376] Paul Ricoeur*, The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 15.

[377] Miguel de La Torres, Albert Hernandez, *The Quest for the Historical Satan* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), p. 767. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 55.

[378] Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Ballantines, 2001) xvi, xvii, pp. 49, 447.

fundamentalism confuses the symbolic for the explanatory. Such confusion may be exemplified

when the Adamic myth is interpreted as an etiological account of a particular event whereby sin

and death entered the world thanks to the particular deeds of particular persons.

One further remark may be appropriate concerning a use of the term 'myth' to denote

more than a narrative genre. Jean-François Lyotard defined the postmodern condition as one

characterized by 'incredulity to metanarratives.'[379] Lyotard's reference to metanarratives implies

totalizing worldviews. If a 'metanarrative' is a totalizing worldview that does not allow for the

coexistence of alternate accounts, then it might be said that a worldview may more generally be

referred to as a 'narrative'. Indeed, the idea of narrative as worldview is implicit in Lindbeck's

account of intratextuality whereby a text, perhaps a text that is narrative in nature, can serve as a

lens through which the world is interpreted.[380] This notion of narrative as lens is on a par with

the use of the term 'myth' to describe a worldview. In both cases, a literary form is invoked in a

sense that is allegorical to a perspective.

5.4.7 Myth as a Medium of Revelation

Richard Bell proposes that myth serves as the primary literary form through which divine

revelation is mediated, though its implications clearly prevail beyond the narrative arc of

myth.[381] 'Now Christian Revelation comes to us primarily *via myth* though it is not contained *in*

it.'[382] Bell's use of the term "myth", in this regard appears to denote a register of language as

well as a particular literary form since it would difficult to defend the assertion that the majority

of texts in the bible and the Christian tradition are mythical by genre. Most notably, the gospels

are not generally regarded as mythical by genre, if for no other reason than that 'gospel' is itself

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[379] Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport Sur Le Savoir* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), p. 67.
[380] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 117.
[381] Bell, *Deliver us from Evil,* p. 172.
[382] Ibid.

a genre, although they may reflect a mythic worldview, infused with the symbolism of the Hebrew Bible. Supporting our point that myth represents a worldview, symbol-system, and register of language as well as mythical narratives per se, Bernard Batto remarks 'Myth permeates virtually every layer of the Biblical tradition from the earliest to the latest.'[383]

5.5 The Magisterium Underestimates the Sophistication of Mythical Narratives and Worldviews

We turn now to magisterial texts promulgated in the modern era, that suggest a low view of myth, standing in stark contrast with the supra-historical view of myth associated with Ricoeur and reflected in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* and the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* .

Pope Pius XII in his 1950 encyclical, *Humani generis* suggests a dismissive view of myth. While admittedly distinguishing the narratives of Genesis 1 – 11 from history in the classic sense, the encyclical insists that these chapters still in some manner convey history. 'This letter, in fact, clearly points out that the first eleven chapters of Genesis, although properly speaking not conforming to the historical method used by the best Greek and Latin writers or by competent authors of our time, do nevertheless pertain to history in a true sense, which however must be further studied and determined by exegetes . . .'[384] While insisting that these texts convey history, Pius recognized that there remained more to be understood with regard to the genre at stake, and that the matter lay within the competence of the exegetes.

In a curious assessment of both the Ancient Near East, and of the degree of sophistication entailed by metaphor, the encyclical suggests that metaphorical language is well suited to the needs of an unsophisticated audience:

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[383] Bernard Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, p. 1.
[384] Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (Vatican, 1950), #38. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html. Accessed on 7.1.2013.

> …the same chapters, (the Letter points out), in simple and metaphorical language adapted to the mentality of a people but little cultured, both state the principal truths which are fundamental for our salvation, and also give a popular description of the origin of the human race and the chosen people.[385]

In fairness to Pius XII, a view of myth as pre-critical and primitive was widespread in the early twentieth century as evidenced in the work of James Frazer and Lucien Lévy-Bruh.[386] Bernard Batto suspects that this view of myth was influenced by Darwinism, and a form of evolutionary thought that regarded antiquity as primitive and undeveloped.[387]

Hermann Gunkel, the 'father' of form criticism, writing in 1901, also offered a low estimation of the cultures from which the Genesis texts arose. Gunkel who regarded the Genesis narrative as constituted more by 'legend' than history, believed that the ancient authors did not consciously choose a literary form so as to convey a particular kind of truth. Rather, Gunkel argues that they 'had not yet acquired the intellectual power to distinguish between poetry and reality.'[388] Gunkel's remark suggests an assumption that reality can be considered apart from the symbols through which humanity attempts to represent it. The point is that while Pius' estimation of the original audience of Genesis, and of metaphor as a literary device, seems highly dismissive, so too, Gunkel, a leading exponent of modern biblical criticism was similarly disparaging in relation to the abilities of the ancient authors. Neither Pius nor Gunkel regarded the genre of the Genesis narratives as a consciously chosen literary form, intended to express a form of truth other than history of some kind.

As a further illustration of early twentieth century views of myth, CS Lewis, in 1931, regarded myth as not only primitive and misguided but as deceptive. Perhaps surprisingly, the

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[385] Ibid.

[386] Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, p. 7; James Frazer, ed. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Wordsworth, 1993) Available at http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/ Accessed on 3.12.2015; J. Cazeneuve, *Lucien Lévy-Bruhl* (New York: Harper, 1972).

[387] Bernard Batto, *Slaying the Dragon,* p. 7.

[388] Hermann Gunkel, 'The Literary Form of the Legends', p. 2.

author who would two decades later craft the *Chronicles of Narnia*, infused with mythical motifs, in 1931, allegedly referred to myth as 'lies breathed through silver.'[389] JRR Tolkien responded in a poem that came to known by the title, 'Mythopoeia', in which he sought (successfully it would seem) to persuade Lewis that myth conveys deep truth, elevating our perspective on the world beyond grim empiricism so as to glimpse the divine. Tolkien suggests that myth-making on the part of humans ultimately reflects the creative capacity of God, 'the little maker has his maker's art.'[390] These considerations illustrate the lively debate concerning myth as it played out in the first half of the twentieth century and help situate Pope Pius XII's rather dismissive references to myth in historical context, as good interpretation should do.

5.6 The Question of Myth in the Bible

Humani generis concedes that the human authors of Genesis may have drawn upon oral or textual sources but insists that divine inspiration rendered any such use of sources inerrant.

> If, however, the ancient sacred writers have taken anything from popular narrations (and this may be conceded), it must never be forgotten that they did so with the help of divine inspiration, through which they were rendered immune from any error in selecting and evaluating those documents.[391]

The encyclical regards myth as an imaginative indulgence rather than a means of expressing truth:

> Therefore, whatever of the popular narrations have been inserted into the Sacred Scriptures must in no way be considered on a par with myths or other such things, which are more the product of an extravagant imagination than of that striving for truth and simplicity which in the Sacred Books, also of the Old Testament, is so apparent that our ancient sacred writers must be admitted to be clearly superior to the ancient profane writers.[392]

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[389]Jonathan Himes, Joe Christopher, Salwa Khoddam, eds, *Truths Breathed Through Silver: The Inklings' Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008). Available at http://www.mythsoc.org/reviews/truths-breathed-through-silver/. Accessed on 8.14. 2014.
[390] JRR Tolkine, 'Mythopoeia' available at http://home.ccil.org/~cowan/mythopoeia.html, http://home.agh.edu.pl/~evermind/jrrtolkien/mythopoeia.htm.Accessed on 7.5.2014.
[391] *Humani Generis*, #38.
[392] Ibid, #39.

While acknowledging that the biblical authors drew upon earlier texts and traditions, the

encyclical is at pains to distinguish between the biblical text and 'myths or other such things ,

which are more the product of an extravagant imagination than of that striving for

truth . . .'[393] This distinction implies that once material was incorporated into the scriptures, it

ceased to be mythical. This may reflect the position that the narratives of Israelite religion are

predominantly historical, standing in contrast with the narratives of other ancient peoples. [394]

James Barr, for example, has argued that a hallmark of the Judeo-Christian tradition has been the

belief that God acted and spoke in *history*. However, both Barr and Langdon Gilkey have

wondered what becomes of the tradition's foundational faith in the deed of God, acting in

history, if modern biblical theology no longer regards the narratives in question as historical by

genre.[395]

JJM Roberts challenges the extent to which the narratives of Israel have been regarded as

more historical and less mythical than other ANE texts, remarking that 'the contrast between

myth in the extrabiblical ancient near east, and history in Israel has been overstated.'[396] The

henotheistic and monotheistic worldviews give rise to narratives in which the agency of human

characters is more dominant than that of gods, goddesses and other supernatural beings, though

such beings are by no means entirely absent from the narratives.

The relatively anthropocentric nature of Israel's narratives, and an ongoing concern for

the political theme of nationhood, may have contributed to an underestimation of the role of

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[393] Ibid.

[394] Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1999.

[395] James Barr, 'Revelation in the Old Testament and in Theology' in *New Theology No. 1*, Martin Marty, Dean Peerman eds. (New York: MacMillan, 1964), p 68. Cf. Langdon Gilkey, 'Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language,' *The Journal of Religion*, The University of Chicago Press, 41/ 3 (1961): 194-205.

[396] JJM Roberts, 'Myth versus History: Relaying the Comparative Functions,' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976): pp. 1- 13.

myth in Hebrew narrative. John McKenzie, writing in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* acknowledges that 'The use of mythical language and imagery in the OT has long been recognized.'[397] Bernard Batto concurs, arguing that even the ostensibly historical narratives of the Hebrew Bible are characterized by mythical elements, so that the Exodus narrative, for example, is infused with mythical symbolism.[398] McKenzie views the denial of the existence of myth in the OT as indicative of too close an association of the genre with polytheism. 'It has become clear that the denial of mythology in the OT implies a questionable definition of myth as essentially polytheistic and false.'[399]

In fairness to Pius XII, however, while his 1950 encyclical, *Humani generis,* may not recognize myth in the Genesis text, and the capacity of the myth to mediate theological truth, his 1943 encyclical, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, had encouraged, even mandated, Catholic exegetes to adopt the methods of modern biblical scholarship. Also, as noted, *Humani generis* recognized that much remained to be discovered through exegesis in relation to the first eleven chapters of Genesis.[400] As we shall see, the Catholic biblical commentaries testify to the extent to which exegetes took Pius XII at his word.

5.7 Catholic Biblical Commentaries and Hermeneutics of Myth

The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* and the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* both carry the *imprimatur*, a statement from a Catholic bishop or the major superior of a religious order, assuring the reader that the contents are not in contradiction with the Church's teaching.[401] In

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[397] John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought,' *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, eds. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), p. 740-741.
[398] Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, p. 1.
[399] John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought', p. 740.
[400] Pope Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu* #37*; Humani generis* # 38.
[401] The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (1968) was granted the imprimatur by Lawrence Cardinal Sheehan, Archbishop of Baltimore. The *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (1990) was granted the imprimatur by Reverend William J. Kane the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Washington.

both volumes, McKenzie acknowledges the presence of myth in the canon of scripture and offers

an understanding of the genre that is consistent with that proposed by Ricoeur. McKenzie quotes

Ernst Cassirer who regards myth as a 'symbolic form of expression together with art, language

and science.'[402] McKenzie identifies the manner in which narrative serves as a symbol. 'The

symbol easiest to employ and to grasp is the symbol of personal activity.'[403] Stories and the

agency of personal characters serve as symbols. Yet, myth is not history and its symbols,

including characters are not historical. McKenzie asserts, 'Myth is couched in narrative, but the

narrative is not historical. The event of myth is not the singular event located in time and space,

but the recurring event of the eternal now.'[404] The narrative world of the myth creates an eternal

now, that is, not limited to a representation of any particular time and place. McKenzie

distinguishes between the symbols employed in myth, and the transcendent reality to which the

symbol points. 'It does not pretend that symbol is the reality, but it proposes the symbol as that

which affords an insight into a reality beyond understanding.'[405] Hence, McKenzie concurs with

Ricoeur's understanding of myth as symbolic narrative that seeks to express deep, universally-

applicable truths that evade other forms of expression rather than a figurative means to recount

historical particularities. The subsequent chapter will present the findings of Catholic exegetes in

relation to specific mythical texts, and further substantiate the assertion that a non-explanatory,

poetic view of myth has been widely adopted by Catholic bible scholarship.

Now we turn to a 1975 anonymously-authored study endorsed by the Congregation of the

Doctrine of the Faith on the topic of Satan and demons. We find in this study little evidence of a

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[402] E. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, Susan Langer, trans. (New York: Harper & Brother 1946), p. 8ff quoted in John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pp. 740-74, also quoted in John McKenzie, 'Aspects of Old Testament Thought,' *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary,* p. 1289.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid.

serious consideration of a modern hermeneutics of myth as the medium of supra-historical truth. Rather, the study's low view of myth as something delusory or primitive, implies a false choice, so that either Satan exists as a particular creature, or else Satan is just a figurative construct with no corresponding reality.

5.8 Denying the Mythical Character of Gospel References to Satan

In 1975 the CDF published the anonymously authored study, *Christian Faith and Demonology* rejecting scholarly appeals for a reformulation of the doctrine of Satan in light of the insights of modern biblical scholarship.[406] The study asserts

> Satan, whom Jesus had confronted by his exorcisms, whom he had encountered in the desert and in his Passion, cannot be simply the product of the human faculty of inventing fables and personifying ideas, nor can he be an erroneous relic of a primitive cultural language.[407]

This statement dismisses the possibility that the motif of Satan can be explained as the residue of a misguided, primitive worldview. The author also rejects the position that Satan may be explained as the figurative personification of ideas. This seems to imply that, having eliminated these two possibilities, Satan must therefore exist as a particular ontologically extant creature that Jesus encountered. However, this statement neither considers nor rejects the possibility that Satan is real, but exists as a reality other than that of a particular being. Such a possibility is not the same thing as equating Satan with the personification of ideas, since it implies the existence of Satan as a corresponding reality beyond the idea itself.

Much depends upon what one means by the term 'idea'. It might be argued that the representation of any being in narrative is mediated by an idea of that being, and that the idea is hence personified. That is to say, the persona within the narrative represents a phenomenal

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[406] Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in *Christian Faith and Demonology*, (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1975). http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19750626_fede-cristiana-demonologia_en.html. Accessed on 2.13.2013. Henceforth referred to as *Demonology*.
[407] The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Demonology*.

reality, a representation, more immediately than it does a noumenal one, the 'person-in-themselves', as it were, prior to any mental representation. However, the disapproving context in which the author of *Demonology* invokes the term, and the preceding phrase 'cannot simply be', suggests a whimsical connotation to the term 'ideas' as though they may not necessarily correspond to any reality beyond the subjectivity of their originator.

Regarding *Demonology's* reference to 'fables', the author's loose association of that genre with myth becomes evident in a later reference to 'fables to be demythologized.'[408] *Demonology* does not consider anything close to a Ricourian, supra-historical hermeneutics of myth. Hence, the study does not explicitly reject the possibility that scriptural references to Satan point to a poetic rather than an ontological truth.

In defense of the author of *Demonology*, it could be argued that the New Testament itself is, at points, informed by a model of myth as fallacy, and is hence dismissive of myth as an expression of truth. As James Dunn notes, the term myth arises five times in the New Testament (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:16). Each time, the biblical authors essentially refer dismissively to myth as though it is unsuited to the mediation of divine revelation. However, as Dunn clarifies, the understanding of myth that is being rejected is that of fallacious stories associated with non-Christian religion. 'For these writers myths are invented and untrue stories, whether Hellenistic speculations about divine emanations or more Jewish speculative interpretations of OT stories. . . What is rejected here, however, is only one genre of myth. The question of whether other levels of myth and of mythological thinking are present in the NT is neither posed nor answered.'[409] Hence, the sacred authors are not rejecting the presence of myth in the sense envisaged by Ricoeur's supra-historical model.

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[408] Ibid.
[409] James Dunn, 'Demythologizing – The Problem of Myth in the New Testament', p. 288.

Related to this antipathy towards myth as exhibited by New Testament writers, Jeffrey

Burton Russell identifies a similar suspicion of the genre of myth on the part of the Patristics.

Russell notes the unwillingness of Patristic thinkers to admit the presence of myth within the

canon of scripture, or the influence of extracanonical myths upon the biblical text. Justin Martyr,

on Russell's reading, regarded myths as 'inspired by demons to mock Christ and to make people

believe that pagans were merely copying the pagan gods.'[410] Russell's insight identifies a

perceived connection between myth and the demonic. A mindset that subscribes to such an

association might be predisposed to reject challenges to the assertion of a personal Satan rooted

in the hermeneutics of myth. Appeals to myth would, according to such a mindset, seem

inherently objectionable – and particularly devious given the topic at hand.

The negative disposition of New Testament authors towards myth, as they understood it

to be, and the disdain of the Patristics in relation to the genre as identified by Russell may, to an

extent, have persevered so as to influence the hermeneutical position of Christian Faith and

Demonology. The study rejects the views of contemporary scholars who propose that

> . . . the names of Satan and of the devil are only mythical or functional personifications, the significance of which is solely to underline in a dramatic fashion the hold which evil and sin have on mankind. They are only words, which it is up to our times to decipher, even at the cost of having to find another way of inculcating into Christians the duty of struggling against all the forms evil in the world.[411]

The use of the word, 'only' before the adjective, 'mythical' prejudices the positions subsequently

outlined as though they are inadequate as they 'underline in a dramatic fashion the hold which

evil and sin have on mankind.' Ironically, the undermining use of the term, 'only' in this

statement only goes to prove how powerful mere words can be. On the other hand, the word

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[410].Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan*, p. 70.
[411] *Demonology*.

'only' serves to restrict the scope of the implied criticism to scholars who deny any underlying Satanic reality whatsoever, other than a figurative personification of evil.

Demonology states that some scholars may regard scriptural references to the devil as something that is it 'up to our times to decipher, even at the cost of having to find another way of inculcating into Christians the duty of struggling against all the forms of evil in the world.'[412] The implication is that modern interpreters might find more efficient ways to express an underlying truth, having decoupled it from ancient, mythical terms. However, the endeavor to decode myth does not necessarily reflect an intention to replace it with non-mythical formulations. Rather, it can be motivated by the endeavor to clear away the obfuscation of historicized misinterpretations so as to discover the poetic truths engendered by the text.

Paul Ricoeur implies demythologization of this kind when he remarks that 'We must never speak of demythization, but strictly of demythologizing, it being well understood that what is lost is pseudo-knowledge, the false logos of myth, such as we find for example in the etiological function of myth. But when we lost the myth as immediate logos, we rediscover it as myth.'[413] Ricoeur argues that in order to interpret myth as myth, we must cease interpreting it as history, science or etiology. While the term *logos* carries an array of meanings, Aristotle used it to denote reasoned discourse whereas he used the term, mythos to denote plot.[414] This implies a distinction between narrative and propositional statements. Similarly, Jungian scholars have drawn a distinction between mythos and logos to contrast mythical and logical thinking.[415]

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[412] Ibid.

[413] Paul Ricoeur quoted by Alan Olson, 'The Mythic Language of the Demonic,' *Disguises of the Demonic,* Alan Olson, ed. (New York, Association Press, 1975), p. 12.

[414] Christof Rapp, 'Aristotle's Rhetoric,' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* , Edward Zalta, ed. (Spring 2010) Available at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/. Accessed on 9.27. 2014.

[415] Walter Shelburne, *Mythos and Logos in the Thought of Carl Jung* (Albany: SUNY, 1988) Introduction. Cited by Randy Hoyt, 'Journey to the Sea' Available at http://journeytothesea.com/mythos-logos/. Accessed on 9.27.2014.

Whereas Ricoeur regards demythologization as freeing myth of historicist expectation so that it can function as myth, the author of *Demonolog*y implies a 'slippery slope' argument, fearful as to where demythologization may lead. 'Those . . . who are knowledgeable in the biblical and religious sciences wonder where this demythologizing process entered upon in the name of hermeneutics will lead.' In defense of the author of *Demonology*, while some of Ricoeur's work as cited in this chapter had been published by 1975, some had not. The author therefore had limited access to Riceour's insights on myth. The author of *Demonology* would, however, at the time of publication, have had greater access to Rudolph Bultmann's work on demythologization.

It might be argued that Bultmann alienated the stewards of orthodoxy, Catholic and otherwise, in relation to the topic of Satan, famously quipping that 'It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of daemons and spirits.'[416] Bultmann's comment however, may be interpreted with regard to a concern for the credibility of the kerygma in modernity, and an endeavor to liberate existential truth from language that reflects a specifically first century, that is 'New Testament' understanding of demon and spirits. Interpreted as such, Bultmann's statement would not necessarily negate *all* understandings of demons and spirits – just obsolete ones, rooted in an ancient paradigm, that cannot speak effectively to the modern paradigm.

Elsewhere, Bultmann referred to Satan as a 'Persian intrusion into Judaism.' The language of 'intrusion' as opposed to 'influence', implies that there is something inherently

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[416] Rudolph Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology' in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate,* Hans Werner Bartsch ed, Regina Fuller trans (London: SPK, 1960), p. 5.

suspicious in any syncretic influence in the development of a religious motif.[417] This suspicion of development may reflect Bultmann's low view of history. Curiously, Bultmann, like Harnack before him, shares with his more orthodox critics a suspicion of historical development as though it necessarily compromises authenticity.[418]

What follows next is resounding evidence of the low view of myth that is at work in *Demonology*. The author proposes that if gospel references to Satan can be regarded as anything other than literal references to an historical encounter with a particular creature called Satan, then Jesus was not thinking clearly. 'Otherwise one would have admit that in those critical hours the mind of Jesus, whose lucidity and self-control before the judges are attested to by the Scripture accounts, was a prey to illusory fantasies, and that his word was devoid of all firmness.'[419] The author does not distinguish between the New Testament texts as we inherit them, and Jesus' words as he uttered them – but this is a matter to be addressed in chapter eight. The important point in relation to the magisterium's view of myth is that the study implies that recourse to mythical language is indicative of 'illusory fantasies.' An alternate diagnosis, reflecting the remarks of Walter Wink, for example, might portray Jesus as someone deeply attuned to the imaginal realm and to the mythic tradition of his heritage, articulating deep truth in the language of myth.[420] Ironically, a study sponsored by the magisterium of the Catholic Church, resorts to the argument that one must be deluded who employs figurative speech in order to express religious truth.

Demonology's harsh judgment regarding the use of figurative language in the ancient world is inimical to exegetical clarity as well as charity. Todd Klutz decries the tendency to

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[417] Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the World*, (New York: Scribners, 1958), p. 8 quoted in Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, New Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 136.
[418] Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), p. 234.
[419] Ibid.
[420] Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Son of Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), pp. 40-41.

interpret bible texts through the lens of pejorative, modern assumptions, regretting the 'tendency to use a particular set of abstract categories of classification – ideas such as 'superstition', 'magic', and 'primitive mentality' – which, though employed in a spirit of scholarly analysis, carry a heavy load of ideological baggage that puts the interpreter in a position inimical to interpretative clarity.'[421] The difficulty highlighted by Klutz is that a category such as 'primitive mentality' is so pejorative as to bias all subsequent exegesis. Myth, however, does not have to be approached from the perspective that it is pre-science, pre-history, or superstition. The non-explanatory option offered my Ricoeur regards it as anything but primitive as it grapples with realities that confound conscious thought and propositional discourse.

5.9 Conclusion

A contribution of the present chapter lies in the contrast it strikes between, on the one hand, the poetic, supra-historical model of myth, advanced by Paul Ricoeur, that has gained currency among scholars, including those published in Catholic biblical commentaries carrying the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*, versus, on the other hand, the dismissive view of myth adopted in the 1975 CDF study, *Christian Faith and Demonology*. The study, which has largely evaded theological scrutiny, is characterized by a low view of myth, regarding it as delusional, rather than as a medium of truth. It rejects calls for the development of the doctrine of Satan, equivocally implying that the only two available options are that Satan exists as a particular being, or that Satan is the product of fiction and delusion. The study does not allow for the possibility that Satan might be a reality that exists in a mode other than that of a particular creature.

The author of *Demonology* does not extend any consideration to a hermeneutics of myth such as that proposed by Paul Ricoeur, and cannot hence preclude a model of myth that it did not

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[421] Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories*, p. 6.

even consider. *Demonology* rejects the possibility that Jesus was speaking mythically in his references to Satan. Its low view of myth is evident in the implication that either Satan is a particular living being, or else Jesus was delusional when he referred to Satan.

On another note, though one also related to the question of genre, *Demonology* was commissioned by the CDF as a 'study', and lacks the authoritative gravitas of other genres of magisterial teaching such as, for example, Vatican II's constitutions on divine revelation and on the church in the modern world.[422] Still, positions proposed in the study are, as we shall see, echoed in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and hence represent for millions the 'official Catholic stance'.[423]

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[422] Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 46.
[423] Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith*, Catechism,* #109, 2851, 2852.

SECTION III- AN ARGUMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN AS A MYTHIC PROBE INTO POSSIBILITIES IN THE CREATOR-CREATURE RELATIONSHIP

CHAPTER SIX

HOW HAS THE MYTHIC MOTIF OF SATAN DEVELOPED IN THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION?

The Catholic presentation of the doctrine of Satan reflects an evolving interplay of distinct mythic motifs, originating within the Judeo-Christian heritage and beyond, rather than a reality that was rationally deduced and then expressed figuratively with recourse to mythical language. As such, the doctrine expresses the kind of truth that myth is equipped to convey.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contributes to the central argument of the thesis by tracing the evolution of the Christian motif of Satan, showing that the motif has evolved over the centuries from the cross-pollination of mythical narratives and motifs. The chapter appeals to modern exegesis to show that the texts and tropes from which the doctrine of Satan has arisen are widely regarded by biblical scholars as mythical and figurative in nature. These various tropes of Satan tend to share a commonality insofar as they serve to probe into possible scenarios in relation to the God-human relationship. This discussion shows that the doctrine of Satan is the product of the development of various mythical narratives and motifs, and can continue to develop.

The chapter then explores the question as to whether it could it be argued that the existence of a personal Satan has been rationally deduced through critical reflection upon experience, and then figuratively represented through myth. Our attempts to construct a natural satanology fail to affirm the existence of a singular Satan resembling that described in the Catechism and the First Braga and Fourth Lateran councils. Our efforts do, however, suggest that super-human beings, should they exist, would carry a higher propensity than mere humans to

perpetrate the worst evil. At this point an attempted natural theology can segue into angelology and, more broadly, myth.

6.2 The Evolution of the Mythic Motif of Satan

Richard Bell argues that the Christian imagination discovered Satan through myth.[424] While biblical and extracanonical myths allude to Satan, however, the central thrust of these narratives does not seem to be the affirmation of Satan's existence as a particular person, disembodied or otherwise. Rather, Satan, as invoked in a variety of biblical narratives, has functioned as a motif enabling the exploration of possibilities in relation to the Creator-creature relationship. As Almut-Barbara Renger observes, 'myth thematises the relationship between a human being and superhuman powers.'[425]

6.2.1 From Literary to Literal Personification

It may be significant in this regard that the Christian tradition came in time to regard Satan as a fallen angel. As Pauline Viviano notes with reference to the motif of the Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible, 'There is no clear distinction between Yahweh and the messenger of Yahweh.'[426] While the Christian tradition developed an understanding of angels as distinct beings and creatures rather than hypostases of the Creator, the more ancient biblical tradition did not necessarily grant them ontological existence in this sense. Rather, angels may have served as a means through which to explore the interaction of the deity with humanity. Sometimes the Angel of the Lord seems to serve as an indirect manifestation of God, distancing the deity from arguably shoddy treatment of humans.[427]

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[424] Richard Bell, *Deliver us from Evil* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 173.
[425] Almut-Barbara Renger, 'The Ambiguity of Judas: On the Mythicity of a New Testament Figure,' *Literature and Theology* (2013) 27 (1), pp. 1-17 at 8.
[426] Pauline Viviano, 'Genesis', p. 56.
[427] David Wolpe, 'Angels in the Jewish Tradition' Available at http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Judaism/2002/04/.aspx?p=1, Accessed on 10.31.2010.

In the Hagar narrative of Genesis 16, the slave girl, Hagar, is impregnated by Abram so as to secure offspring (Gen. 16:3). Abram's wide, Sarai grows to resent Hagar who flees into the wilderness only to encounter the 'angel of the Lord.' (16:6) The angel tells Hagar to not only return to her mistress but to submit to her. (16:9) Although it is an angel that Hagar has ostensibly encountered, she asks, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?' (16:13) Eugene Maly suggests that an older Yahwist version of the narrative may have depicted Hagar conversing with the deity and that Elohist redactors, wary of anthropomorphic imagery of God, inserted the motif of the angel so as to mediate Hagar's discourse with the deity.[428] The relevance to our current purpose is that a motif, now widely assumed to denote a distinct being may have originally served a functional purpose in negotiating the manner in which a human could relate to the divine.

While, references to angels in the Hebrew Bible may not always indicate distinct personages, exegetes have also questioned whether the New Testament authors necessarily regarded demons as individual creatures. Dunn and Twelftree interpret New Testament references to demons as pointing to a unified power of evil, rather than particular beings. 'The absence of any fixed designation indicates that the New Testament writers had no clear conception of particular entities.'[429] Rather such entities seem to reflect exploratory forays into humankind's relationship with its maker, and the mystery of suffering.

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[428] Eugene Maly, 'The Book of Genesis' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, eds (Englewood Cliffs, NJ : Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 1- 46 at 20.
[429] James Dunn, Graham Twelftree, 'Demon Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament', *The Churchman*, http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/churchman/094-03_210.pdf. Accessed on 1.22.2013.

6.2.2 Satan as a By-Product of Ethical Monotheism

With reference to 1 Chron. 21:11, Walter Brueggemann suggests that the reference to Satan may serve to distance YHWH from the act of inciting David to sin by taking a census. Brueggemann proposes that the invocation of Satan as the agent directly responsible for this entrapment is a 'functional split' that may 'permit God to enjoy plausible deniability.'[430] Brueggemann implies that Satan's alleged role may be invoked to defend God, perhaps implying that God is blissfully ignorant of the actions of his agent.

It might be said that the motif of Satan emerged in large part as a by-product of the evolution of ethical monotheism in ancient Israelite religion. Kirsten Nielson offers a reminder that the henotheistic worldview, the backdrop against which much of the Hebrew Bible was authored, envisaged both good and evil proceeding from YHWH.[431] The deities, according to such a worldview, were partisan, tribal entities that would readily smite enemies of the tribe, or tribal members who broke covenant. Nielson and Paul Volz propose that YHWH was once regarded as possessing a demonic dimension.[432] Such an understanding may be reflected in 1 Samuel 16: 14 wherein YHWH is depicted as sending an evil spirit to trouble Saul. Prior to the emergence of a doctrine of the fall of the angels, it may have been conceivable to imagine spirits perpetuating evil in service of the deity, or serving as a hypostasis to mediate the agency of the deity itself as it ratified its inscrutable and, at times, ostensibly harsh dictates. This morally complex image of God is implied by the plight of Job whom God allows to be tempted by Satan, saying 'Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.' (Jb 1:6) Indeed, the image of Satan as

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[430] Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louiseville: John Knox Press, 2002), p. 188.

[431] Kirsten Nielson, *Satan, The Prodigal Son: A Family Problem in the Bible* (Sheffield Academic, 1991), p. 55.

[432] Paul Volz, *Das Daimonische in Jahwe* (The Demonic in YHWH), (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1924); Cf. Kirsten Nielson, *Satan, The Prodigal Son* 55.

a divinely authorized tempter and tester may persevere into the New Testament. As James

Allison observes, Jesus is led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan in the desert.[433] (Mt. 4:1-11)

The motif of Satan as tempter and tester serves as a probe into what might transpire in the

relationship between humans and their Maker if a given scenario were to transpire. If, for

example, Job were to encounter a sequence of calamities, how might he then regard God? Satan

exercises such as role in the New Testament as well as the Old. In Matthew 4, Satan presents

Jesus with a series of contingent possibilities along the lines of 'if you were to do this, then the

following might happen.' Hence, Satan invites Jesus to command stones to turn to bread, to

worship Satan and hence inherit the kingdoms of the earth, to throw himself off the parapet of

the temple and be saved by the angels. In Matthew 16:23, Satan is once more presented as a

purveyor of tempting possibilities when Jesus chides Peter, detecting the Satanic at work in the

thought that Jesus might avoid the Passion. Granted, the Satan of the Hebrew Bible is depicted as

obstructing possibilities as well as suggesting them. This may be seen most clearly in the Balaam

narrative of Numbers 22. Yet, even Satan's role as an obstacle, a blocker of paths, points by

negation to possibilities. To obstruct one path is to divert the would-be traveler towards other

possibilities.

Henry Ansgar Kelly suggests that it is in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 12:10) that a

biblical author first offers an explicit indication that Satan has exceeded his divinely imparted

brief and breached his service contract with God so as to be 'thrown down.'[434] Satan's demotion

may have been inevitable as ethical monotheism emerged from monism. As God was no longer

regarded as the source of both good and evil, an imaginative void ensued. Kelly outlines the

manner in which imagery of Satan was adapted to represent the evil that could no longer be

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[433] James Allison, 'Deliver us from Evil,' http://www.jamesalison.co.uk/texts/eng04.html. Accessed on 11.2.2014.
[434] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University, 2006), p. 155.

attributed to the agency of the morally purified deity.[435] To achieve this end, Satan, a member of

the divine court, served as a scape-goat as it were, so as to exonerate God of the charge of having

created evil. If God is the one and only God, and hence is God for all people, it is less plausible

that God would unleash angels of destruction upon Egyptian first-borns, Assyrian soldiers, or

goyim in general. From a monotheistic perspective, it is difficult to imagine that evil, cruel or

destructive spirits could enjoy a divine mandate. As David Cook posits, 'The nature of God is

that He is good. He is also the standard of goodness.'[436]

6.2.3 Satan and the Dualistic Worldview

Charles David Isbell attributes a growing sense of cosmic dualism to the exilic and postexilic

influence of Persian religion.[437] Zoroastrianism may have influenced the imagination of ancient

Israel by delineating a dualistic arrangement, whereby God increasingly represented goodness

and Satan represented evil.[438] The Zoroastrian worldview envisages the existence of a benign

deity, Ahura-mazda, and a malevolent deity, Ahrimam, implying clearly defined forces of good

and evil. When King Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon, the Jews in exile there may

have been exposed to Zoroastrianism with its cosmic dualism, envisaging reality as existing in

tension between a principle of goodness and a principle of evil.[439]

The question as to what extent Zoroastrianism has influenced Judeo-Christian

conceptions of God and the devil is a complex one. While Ahrimam could be regarded as a

possible antecedent for Christian concepts of Satan, Zoroastrianism is not a monotheistic faith

and considers Ahrimam to be an uncreated rival of the benign deity, rather than an originally

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[435] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* 17 - 30. Cf. David Wolpe, 'Angels in the Jewish Tradition'.

[436] David Cook, 'Can God Take Responsibility for Evil and Still be Good?', *Testamentum Imperium*, Vol. 2 – 2009. http://www.preciousheart.net/ti/2009/14-026_Cook_God_Responsibility_Evil.pdf. Accessed on 7.25. 2013.

[437] Charles David Isbell, 'Zoroastrianism and Biblical Religion,' *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, available at http://jbq.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/343/343 persian11.pdf. Accessed on 2.14.2014.

[438] Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the World*, p.8. Quoted in Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, p.136.

[439] John Kronen, Sandra Menssen, 'The Defensibility of Zoroastrian Dualism,' *Religious Studies*, 46/2 (2010): pp. 185-205.

good creature that turned bad. Raymond Brown notes that the influence of Zoroastrian dualism may be most evident in the writings of the Qumran community which views reality as gripped by a cosmic struggle between a spirit of light and a spirit of darkness also referred to as the spirit of perversion or Belial.[440] The Qumran literature however differs from the Zoroastrian account by regarding both spirits as creations of the one Creator God.[441]

6.2.4 The Church Counteracts Exaggerated Notions of Satan

Christianity would, in time, crystalize the image of a God from whom only goodness can proceed, as epitomized by the assertion of 1 Jn 4:16 that 'God is love.' The apologetic Patristics including Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagorus, Irenaeus, and Origen sought to refute models of Satan advanced by various forms of Gnosticism that identified Satan as the demiurge who created the physical world, or as a creature of the demiurge.[442]

Rejecting such Gnostic Satanology, Justin Martyr, in the mid-second century, associated Satan with the snake of the Adamic myth, hence situating Satan within the Garden of Eden created by YHWH-Elohim, rather than existing as a co-eternal principle or as the creature of such a principle.[443]

Justin's disciple, Tatian, pioneered the classification of the fallen angels as demons, an association that had not hitherto been widely assumed. Tatian also advanced the view that Satan is a fallen angel, that is, a demon.[444]

Athenagorus and Tertullian built on Tatian's position so as to emphasize that Satan, as a fallen angel, was a creature of God, with an inherently good nature. Consistent with this,

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[440] Raymond Brown, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles,' *New Testament Essays* (New York: Paulist, 1965), pp. 110-111. Cf. Philip Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* (New York: Cornell University, 2014), pp. 19 - 20.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 27, 47, 227.

[443] Ibid., p. 65

[444] Ibid., p. 73

Clement of Alexandria advanced the model of evil as a privation, and hence distinct from the being of Satan.[445]

Origen, for his part, suggested that Satan's inherently good being might be redeemed since it is separable from the privation of from evil.[446] Origen's distinction between the privation of evil and the inherently good being of Satan, assumed and reinforced the position that Satan exists as a being.

While refuting the idea of a co-eternal evil principle, God's 'opposite number' who is the cosmic source of evil, the Patristics also sought to exonerate God of having directly created evil.[447] In rejecting depictions of Satan as a creator-demiurge, or as a creation of the demiurge, the Patristics emphasized that Satan was a creature of the one God, and used its free will to choose evil.[448] On the face of it, only a free-willed sentient being, a person, that is, could make this choice. Still, the driving motivation of the Patristics seems to have been 'negative', that is, a corrective one. They sought to correct the exaggerated notion of Satan that arose in Gnosticism.

Jeffrey Burton Russell proposes that, while their initial motivation was by and large apophatic in nature, the Patristics proceeded too far down the *via positiva* and their positive assertions became so speculative as to succumb to incoherence. Patristic zeal to counteract a model of Satan as a demiurge may have, as a secondary effect, perpetuated misplaced certainty about the existence of Satan as a creature, an angel, and hence, a person. Russell's position is that we are incapable of knowing whether the devil exists 'objectively' or 'transcendentally'.[449] Nonetheless, the Patristics broadly managed to preserve Christian monotheism while simultaneously absolving God of responsibility for directly creating evil.

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[445] Ibid., p. 188.
[446] Ibid., p. 147.
[447] Ibid., pp. 27 -28.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Ibid., pp. 220, 225

Consistent with the Patristics, the First Council of Braga and the Fourth Lateran Council invoked Satan's abuse of free-will as an explanation of the origin of evil, exonerating God of any charge of having created it.[450] The Fourth Lateran Council rejected the Albigensian/ Cathar heresy that the physical world was created by the devil, thus defending the essential holiness of the physical creation.[451] Paul Quay notes that the Council also counteracted the heresy that demons were not created by God, in effect defending the status of even these damned spirits as a part of the sacred creation. Taken as a whole, these teachings of Lateran IV emphasized that God is the creator of all things, physical and spiritual, and that all creatures are essentially good, however perverted they may have become due to the abuse of free-will.

Despite the massive differences in their respective versions of Satan, the Catholic Church and the Cathars both agreed that Satan existed as a person of some kind.[452] Quay hence asks whether it could thus be argued that the Council assumed rather than formally defined the existence of Satan and other demons, '. . . since no one doubted that angels or demons exist, on what grounds could the Council have intended to define this?'[453] Quay, however, regards the existence of demons as a truth of the faith, defined by Lateran IV, asking wryly whether any Council explicitly stated that Jesus or God existed, as opposed to defining positions that assume their existence.[454]

Given the exaggerated role that the Cathars afforded Satan as creator of matter and of the demons, Quay suggests that it would have been expedient if the Council Fathers could have avoided attracting any attention whatsoever to the doctrine of Satan, and that the fact they did

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[450] The First Council of Braga, 561AD, Canon 7, http://www.raphael.netchurch/Braga/htm. Accessed on 6.9. 2013. The Fourth Lateran Council, Canon I, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp Accessed on 7.25. 2013.
[451] Ibid.
[452] Paul Quay, 'Angels and Demons: The Teaching of IV Lateran,' *Theological Studies*, 42/1 (1981): pp. 20 – 45 at 42.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Ibid., p. 35.

indicates that they are consciously making a theological assertion.[455] Quay is, in effect, invoking a criterion of embarrassment, suggesting that it would have been more convenient for the Council to have said nothing that might encourage speculation concerning Satan. On the other hand, the Council's position seeks to relegate Satan, demoting it from its status as demi-god and creator of matter as argued by the Albigensians. The Council's assertion of Satan's creaturely status cut the devil down to size, as it were. This raises a question as to whether modern challenges to the existence of Satan as a particular being, may, in a sense, be in continuity with the trajectory set by the First Council of Braga and the Fourth Lateran Council, as they continue to relegate Satan. The First Council of Braga rejected any impression that Satan is God's 'opposite equal.' In modernity, as we shall see in chapter nine, several theologians further 'demote' Satan, denying Satan the designation of 'person' with its implications of the *imago Dei* and of eligibility for *theosis* with the divine persons.

6.2.5 The Motif of Satan Reflects Earthly Adversaries

While Henry Ansgar Kelly tends to trace the evolution of the motif of Satan in relation to a gradual disassociation of God from evil, Elaine Pagels emphasizes another, though not at all contradictory, strand of development. Pagels highlights the role of Israelite nationalism, conflict and treachery in the evolution of the concept of Satan.[456] This author regards intertestamental references to fallen angels as a formative phase in the evolution of a Christian model of Satan that could not have been in any sense known to the intertestamental authors.

The authors of *The Book of the Watchers* in First Enoch interpreted the treachery of those Israelites who sided with Greek invaders and opposed the Maccabean revolt as reflecting cosmic

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[455] Ibid.
[456] Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, p. 49.

treachery and the fall of supernatural persons.[457] *The Book of the Watchers* does not identify

Satan by name. Instead the text speaks of demonic figures such as: Semihazah, Azazel, Mastema

and Belial.[458] With reference to these mythic personas, Philip Almond comments that 'The

Prince of Demons went by many different names.'[459] Almond traces the development of the idea

of Satan, not suggesting that the Enochean demon motifs are all manifestations of a single being.

Still, the suggestion that Satan went by numerous names should be qualified by the caveat that

only in retrospect were these once-distinct motifs blended into the composite motif of Satan.

Later, Essene separatists would specifically invoke the name of Satan to demonize Jews

who embraced Hellenistic culture.[460] 'More radical than their predecessors', Pagels observes,

'these dissidents began increasingly to invoke the *satan* to characterize their Jewish opponents;

in the process they turned this rather unpleasant angel into a far grander – and far more

malevolent – figure.'[461] Pagels proposes that the invocation of satanic motifs so as to vilify

earthly adversaries seems to have contributed towards the evolving perception of a Satan who

was God's enemy rather than God's unpopular henchman.[462]

6.2.6 Satan as a Role

While the Hebrew Bible refers to a divinely appointed office or person called Satan, scripture

also utilizes the term *satan* in a more general sense to suggest a role, rather than an individual

person, that serves in an adversarial, obstructionist role.[463] Pagels notes that, in the Old

Testament, the term *satan* in its Hebrew form, for the most part denotes adversaries in general,

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[457] Pagels 48.
[458] Ibid., p.55. Cf. Philip Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 8.
[459] Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography*, p. 22.
[460] Ibid. 47.
[461] Ibid.
[462] Pagels, p. 49.
[463] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

rather than a particular being.[464] Even in relation to Satan as a member of the divine court, it might be argued that the term related to the office rather than the person who held it. This may be implied when the author of 1 Chron. 21:1 asserts that 'the satan' (*ha Sheytan*) incited King David to conduct a census (In an earlier account in 2 Sam. 24:1, God directly incited David to do so)

A variety of myths and strands of tradition have been conscripted, melted down, and mixed so as to form what might be broadly considered the 'Christian' Satan. The individual strands of tradition were not, as we have seen, primarily concerned with the assertion of the ontological reality of Satan so much as with the exploration of humanity's relationship with the deity as the sacred authors reflected upon experiences of suffering, adversity, and all the complexities entailed by free-will.

The development continued in postbiblical times. In the second century, Origen identified Satan with the 'Morning Star' of Isaiah 14, an association popularized in St. Jerome's Vulgate in 382 AD, and further reinforced by Milton's *Paradise Lost* in 1608.[465] Justin Martyr in the mid-second century identified the talking snake in the Adamic narrative as Satan.[466] Motifs as disparate as the 'son of God' in the Book of Job, the fallen star of Isaiah 14, the fallen angels of the extracanonical *Book of the Watchers,* the talking snake of Genesis 3, the gods of the gentiles, the dragon, serpent, and beast of Revelation, the chaos monsters of the psalms, and the antichrist of the first letter of John have contributed towards the discovery of the 'Christian' Satan popularly imagined in Western culture, its pedigree very much that of a mongrel.[467]

Bell's suggestion that the Christian imagination discovered Satan through myth does not, in itself, pose a threat to Christian doctrine insofar as myth and the other literary forms can

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[464] Ibid.
[465] Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography*, p. 46.
[466] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, pp.176 - 179.
[467] Jean Louis D'aragon, 'The Apocalypse,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 482.

mediate the Word of God in human words. Neither does it pose any necessary threat to the authenticity of Christian doctrine to acknowledge the cross-pollination of symbols, and syncretism that have contributed to its development. A hermeneutically-conscious account of the development of the doctrine of Satan does, however, challenge the conclusion that the narratives in question illustrate the existence of a particular being called Satan.

6.3 Satan Discovered through Reason and Symbolized through Myth?

I have argued that the Catholic Church's presentation of the doctrine of the personal Satan is presented as hinging upon a historicized reading of myth. I now consider an objection to my argument, asking whether the magisterium's exposition on the personal Satan might be founded upon rational deduction and then expressed with recourse to the language of myth. Our brief excursus will test this objection by exploring the viability of a natural satanology, independent of myth and revealed religion.

6.3.1 Could the Christian Satan be Discovered through Natural Satanology?

Could it be argued that the Christian imagination discovered Satan through a means other than myth, drawing upon myth so as to express figuratively that which it discovered elsewhere?
If natural theology can construct an argument from creation, suggesting the existence of a creator of some kind, then natural satanology might reflect an argument from violation or violence, indicating the existence of a person or persons whose agency can be deduced in view of the damage inflicted upon creation. This in part reflects the harmatology proposed by Marjorie Suchocki when she defines sin as 'rebellion against creation.'[468] Karl Raher too, posits that a human being's ultimate decision regarding God is made in and through decisions regarding

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[468] Marjorie Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), pp. 16-17,162.

created things – and by extension, we might argue, created persons.[469] It is of course conceivably possible that evil might take the form of a more direct attack upon the creator as imaginatively expressed in the '*Non serviam!*' of Milton's defiant and arguably heroic Satan.[470] Such manifestations of evil would exist, however, beyond direct observation, and hence beyond the scope of a natural satanology.

6.3.2 Life Experience and the Worst Evil

It may ring true in our life experience that the greatest evil is instantiated by intentional violations rather than as the result of an accident or blind force of nature. Intentionality presupposes sentience, free will and, it might be argued, personhood. Hence, an assault entails greater evil than does slipping on ice, arguably a consequence of what might be deemed natural evil. The *Shoah* entails greater evil than the eruption of a volcano, and a destructive act by an intelligent adult entails greater evil than the playful actions of a mischievous toddler. Evil, at its worst, is calculated and hence must be informed by knowledge, and perpetrated freely. In this sense, it might be argued that the most evil component of creation is likely to be a free-willed, intelligent, knowledgeable being, and, in the Christian tradition among others, such a being is called 'Satan'.

This argument associates evil with acts and choices, considered in context, rather than with being itself, concurring with St. Augustine that being itself is inherently good, reflecting its divine origin.[471] Granted, it might be argued that a person may have an evil 'character.' Character, however, is defined through acts and choices so that an evil character does not denote

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[469] Karl Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man,' *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) pp. 223- 263 at 246. Quoted in Ron Highfield, 'The Freedom to Say "No"? Karl Rahner's Doctrine of Sin,'*Theological Studies*, 56 (1995): pp.485 – 505 at 487.

[470] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*. *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1957), pp. 206-469.Cf. Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2003).

[471] Augustine of Hippo, *Confession*s, trans. RS Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 8.

an inherently evil being. Character is formed, and in some instances corrupted, whereas being is given as a divine gift that cannot be similarly corrupted. It always remains good per se.

Evil acts and choices amount to sin. The greatest evil in creation must be rooted in mortal rather than venial sin. Therefore, according to traditional criteria invoked to delineate mortal sin from venial sin, the greatest evil in creation must reflect full knowledge of the grave matter at hand, and be freely committed.[472] The possession of free will and full knowledge carries with it a proportionate culpability for the perpetration of an evil act. If a sane and cunning person skillfully executes a plan to push a man underneath a moving train so as to usurp his wealth, his wife, or some other benefit, this entails a greater degree of moral evil than if a mentally ill person, while hallucinating, and imagining himself to be fighting off extra-terrestrial monsters, commits the same act. On the other hand, if someone who had neither a premeditated plan to commit murder, nor suffered from delusions caused by mental illness, were, in a fit of temper, to commit the lethal offence, their culpability would seem to fall somewhere between the extreme culpability of the cold-blooded, calculated killer, and the diminished culpability of the deranged, mentally ill person who had no idea what he was doing. As such, degrees of culpability reflect degrees of knowledge, and of freedom to act. Hence, we might argue, beings with superhuman intelligence and knowledge are better equipped to perpetuate the worst evil.

6.3.3 The Limits of Natural Satanology

A natural satanology can suggest that the worst evil is likely to be perpetrated from within the ranks of free-willed, knowledgeable, intelligent beings rather than a natural force. It fails, however, to establish the distinctive singularity of a devil insofar as it cannot categorically distinguish a particular devil from the midst of other fallen beings, also endowed with knowledge and intelligence. Also, while we may hypothesize that beings possessed of superhuman

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[472] Catechism, #1857.

capacities are better equipped to perpetrate the worst evil, it by no means follows that the most

capable being is the most evil being.

The problem of individuating a particular Satan from among fallen beings is attenuated

by an increased acknowledgment in Catholic harmatology of the social dimension of sin.

Whereas the tradition once defined sin almost exclusively in terms of original and personal sin,

Catholic harmatologies now recognize that sin may gather a momentum impelled by structures,

systems and social mores.[473] This would call into question whether the entrance of sin into the

world can be attributed to the choice of some villainous individual as opposed to more insidious,

social and psychological processes.

Liberation and other self-consciously contextual theologians have argued that sin exists

in social structures as well as in the personal realm. Gustavo Gutiérrez acknowledges that 'In the

liberation approach sin is not considered as an individual, private, or merely interior reality –

asserted just enough to necessitate a "spiritual" redemption which does not challenge the order in

which we live. Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in

relationships among men . . . . Sin is evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of man

by man, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races and social classes.'[474] Similarly,

Marjorie Suchocki acknowledges the personal and systemic dimensions of sin arguing that

> Sin is both individual and systemic: individually, the human condition is radical
> alienation from one's true relationship to self, nature, and God; systemically, this
> translates into structures of domination and subordination that are enforced by the group
> in power.[475]

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[473] See for example, Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame, 1965) and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988).

[474] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* pp.175-176.

[475] Marjorie Suchocki, 'Original Sin Revisited,' *Process Studies* 20/4 (1991): pp. 233 -243 at 233.

Catholic Social Teaching has also recognized the reality of social sin.[476] Pope St. John Paul II proposed that in order to gain insight into the evil that afflicts the world, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of 'structures of sin'. Sin' and structures of sin are categories which are seldom applied to the situation of the contemporary world. However, one cannot easily gain a profound understanding of the reality that confronts us unless we give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us.'[477] Elsewhere, the pontiff remarks, 'The mystery of sin is composed of this twofold wound which the sinner opens in himself and in his relationship with his neighbor. Therefore one can speak of personal and social sin.'[478] Furthermore, even if the agency of a particular being could be ascribed responsibility for the first sin in the cosmos, who is to say, in light of centuries of genocide and starvation, that the first sin was the worst sin?

The attempt to construct a natural satanology cannot provide a compelling basis to affirm the specific characteristics or agency of Satan as described in myth, that is, in revealed religion. It cannot, with any degree of certitude, affirm the existence of the instigator of a rebellion among the angels in heaven, a tempter of a prototypal human couple, the personal adversary of Jesus of Nazareth, and a being damned beyond all hope. This is somewhat akin to the inability of natural theology to prove the existence of the immanent Trinity as opposed to inferring a 'creator' or 'first cause' in more general terms.

In sum, a natural Satanology can suggest that the most grievous evil is likely to be perpetuated by free-willed, intelligent and knowledgeable beings, as opposed to beings more limited in knowledge, intelligence or freedom or by blind forces. Such a line of reasoning cannot,

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[476] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All* (USCCB: Washington, 1996), #77.
[477] Pope St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Vatican: 1987), #36.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.
[478] Pope St. John Paul II, *Reconciliation and Penance*, (Vatican: 1984), #15.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia_en.html**.**

however, compellingly affirm the ontological reality of Satan as the 'person' described in the catechism and recognized in the imagination of Western Civilization and popular culture.[479]

6.4 From Natural Satanology to Angelology and Myth

Our endeavor to construct a natural satanology suggested that the worst evil would seem to be informed by free will, and by superior knowledge and intelligence. Within a classical Christian framework, such as that envisaged by Aquinas, this conclusion casts suspicion upon that classification of persons that the Christian imagination has referred to as angels. The angelology of the Catholic Tradition and its speculations regarding the superhuman abilities of angels are rooted in myth (though as earlier noted, Christian models of angels as particular beings have departed significantly from the model of angel evident in the Hebrew Bible) As such, our attempt to construct a natural satanology segues into the symbol-system of revealed religion and myth. Future research beyond the scope of the present project may one day venture into something approaching a natural angelology, taking its lead from Thomas O'Meara's reflections on the possibility of intelligent extra-terrestrial life and its implications for soteriology and Christianity in general.[480] For now, however, an attempted natural satanology leads us to the brink of angelology and revealed religion.

Catholic doctrine affirms the existence of angels, and teaches that these spirits are endowed with free will, and with superior capacities to those possessed by humans.[481] 'As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures,

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[479] Catechism, #391, 2851-2852; Cf. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, pp. 176 0 - 179. Tertullian: *Adversus Marcionem,* Ernest Evans, ed., trans. (London: Oxford University, 1972) available at: http://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_marc/evans_marc_00index.htm. Accessed on 5.5.201. Cf. Jeffrey Burton Russell, 'The Early Christian Tradition,' *Medieval Academy of America*, 60/2 (1985): pp. 458-461.

[480] Thomas O'Meara, 'Vast Universe and Extraterrestrials: Threat or Mystery for the Christian Faith?**',** *New Theology Review* 27 (1): pp. 1-7. Available at http://newtheologyreview.org/index.php/ntr/article/view/1037. Accessed on 3.12.2015.

[481] Catechism, #328.

surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness.'[482] As such, the CFatechism suggests that the abilities of the angels surpass those of visible creatures such as human beings.

Aquinas holds that there are ranks of angels and that their degrees of knowledge vary.[483] Still, Aquinas speculates that, at any given time, an angel possesses the 'full knowledge' allotted to it by God. In this sense, angels possess full knowledge, insofar as God allows it.[484] According to Aquinas, angels do not learn or gradually grow in knowledge. Thus, the angels are free-willed, and, 'surpassing in perfection all visible creatures', may have a greater capacity for 'full knowledge' of a situation than do human beings.

The Catechism suggests that angels surpass human beings in knowledge of God. With reference to Lk 2:8-14 and Mk 16:5-7, the Catechism asserts that the angels perpetually enjoy the beatific vision, that is, they 'always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.'[485] If this is the case, angels possess a knowledge of God that is not usually, if ever, directly accessible to finite humans. This immediate access to the face of God, and the knowledge of God this would yield, would entail a heightened moral obligation for angels. When human beings say that they are rejecting God, they are usually rejecting particular images of God, some of which may deserve to be rejected. Michael Paul Gallagher remarks that many atheists reject a 'solitary and unrelating' God, a 'Christian Zeus' that has little in common with the Triune Godhead professed by Christians. [486] Granted, Rahner's point might be put forward so as to suggest that the ultimate decision for or against God is played out in decisions about the creation in which God is

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[482]Ibid., #330.

[483] St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica,* Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans. (New York: Benziger, 1947) Q55. I a http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/FP/FP055.html#FPQ55OUTP1, Accessed on 10.17.2013.

[484] Ibid.

[485] Catechism, # 339.

[486] Michael Paul Gallagher, 'A Reflection on Rublev's Icon of the Trinity: Show Atheists the Trinity,' *The Tablet* 24/1 (1998): p.104.

mysteriously present, so that one could conceivably reject God without having access to the beatific vision.[487] Still, humans, at least this side of the grave, are not in an epistemological position to reject God in Godself, as opposed to images of God that may fall far short of the beatific vision. Our excursus into natural satanology suggests that beings with superior knowledge and intelligence are better equipped to commit the greatest evil. A foray into angelology affirms this argument, implying that beings who gaze upon the beatific vision are in a position to reject God in Godself as opposed to the images of God known to humans. Once more, however, there is no logical reason to propose the existence of a singular being who first rejected God and facilitated the fall of the angels and of humankind, and who holds singular significance in the obstruction of God's saving designs.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter offers an account of the evolution of Christian motifs of Satan, through the cross-pollination of mythical narratives and motifs. Its first distinct contribution lies in its detection of a common characteristics shared by the strands of Satan tradition. That is, the motifs tend to serve as probes into the relationship between free-willed persons and God, exploring the implications for that relationship of scenarios characterized by adversity.

The second contribution of this chapter lies in its hypothetical attempt to construct a natural satanology and hence challenge my assumption that the Catholic presentation of the doctrine of Satan relies upon an interpretation of mythical narrative, rather than upon reason and life experience.

Our foray into an attempted natural satanology suggested that the beings best equipped to perpetuate the worst evil in the universe are those endowed with superior intelligence and knowledge in addition to free will. In the context of Christian theology, this line of argument

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[487] Karl Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man,' p. 246.

may segue into a discussion of fallen angels as super-human beings, a construct conveyed through mythology and revealed religion. At that point, we are no longer dealing in natural Satanology but in the framework of myth, and even then, there is no logical reason to single out one fallen being, ascribing to it the cosmic significance that the tradition has attributed to Satan amidst the other demons.

A natural satanology cannot affirm or deny the existence of the Satan whose identikit is inscribed upon the Western imagination and described in ecclesial documents such as *Christian Faith and Demonology* and the 1992 Catechism.

<div align="center">**CHAPTER SEVEN**</div>

<div align="center">**CAN THE HISTORICIZATION OF SATAN BE JUSTIFIED BY CANONICAL**</div>

<div align="center">**EXEGESIS AND THE SENSUS PLENIOR?**</div>

7.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the argument that while a historical-critical exegesis of mythical narratives cannot yield truth regarding historical events and personages, when these narratives are read in the context of the entire bible, a new level of insight becomes possible that can yield such truth. By considering this suggestion that the fuller sense or *sensus plenior* of scripture may affirm the ontological reality of a personal Satan, the chapter tests the robustness of the argument advanced by this thesis that the doctrine of Satan is rooted in mythical narratives and motifs, and thus cannot affirm or deny the existence of Satan as a particular being.

I propose that the *sensus plenior* can indeed uncover theological insights that are not explicit in the text or even known to its author. So, for example, a mythical text, interpreted in the context of the entire canon, its reception history, and an evolving religious tradition, may give rise to a plethora of theological possibilities, for example, Christological ones unknown to the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, myth remains myth, as opposed to history or any other genre. Myth can no more be transposed into history than parable into biography.

Focusing upon a particular text that bears significance for the development of the motif of Satan, the second part of this chapter shows that while a broad swathe of commentators interpret the Adamic myth in light of the findings of the historical-critical method and modern hermeneutics of myth, the 1992 Catechism adopts a historicized interpretation, suggesting the agency of a particular Satan in a particular time and place.

7.2 Satan and the Fall of Humanity: The Catechism's Historicized Interpretation

In a subsection entitled, 'How to read the account of the fall', the catechism's interpretation of the Adamic narrative sets a trajectory for its exposition of the doctrine of Satan.

> Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil".[488]

The reference to the seductive voice in the Adamic myth implies Justin Martyr's second century identification of the serpent of Eden with Satan, while the reference to Satan as a fallen angel, reflects the position of Justin's contemporary Tertullian, as reiterated at Braga I and Lateran IV.[489] (In chapter eight, we will explore an apparent association in Revelation 12:9 of Satan and the Adamic snake.)

The catechism alleges that Satan, a fallen angel facilitated the fall of humanity in what it regards as a particular 'event' or 'deed' in history: 'The account of the fall in *Genesis* 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man.*'[490] The catechism's acknowledgement of the use of figurative language concedes that not every detail in the narrative is to be read as history in the modern sense. The designation of figurative language may hence extend to the motif of a talking serpent representing Satan. The catechism does not, however, offer an indication as to the extent to which the language of the Adamic myth may be regarded as figurative. In any case, the authors of the catechism regard the fall event itself as historical occurrence, rather than one than a mythical symbol. The catechism's historicized interpretation of the Adamic myth implies that characters in the narrative should be

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[488] Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #391.

[489] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, pp. 176 0 - 179. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, IV. 38. 2. http://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_marc/evans_marc_00index.htm. Accessed on 5.5.2013. Cf. Cf. Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'Adam Citings before the Intrusion of Satan: Recontextualizing Paul's Theology of Sin and Death,' *Biblical Theology* Bulletin, 44(1): pp. 13-28 at 13; Cf. Almond, *The Devil: A New Bibliography*, p. 34.

[490] Catechism, #390.

associated with particular personages such as a historical Adam and Eve, and in some form, a historical manifestation of Satan.

As noted in chapter four, the catechism's section on divine revelation reflects some fifty years of Church teaching, endorsing the implementation of the methods of modern biblical scholarship.[491] The catechism, in that section, exhorts all who approach the biblical text to be sensitive to questions of authorial context and literary genre. 'In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.'[492] This statement acknowledges the necessity of interpreting scripture in light of what the biblical authors sought to teach so as to gain access to that which God reveals. It implies that one cannot circumvent the intentions of the human authors and skip directly to that which God revealed.

The catechism reflects *Dei verbum* #12 in recognizing a distinction in the manner in which historical writings, and other literary forms, including the poetic, mediate truth. 'For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetical and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.'[493] This distinction would be redundant if the other literary genres such as myth mediated historical truth. Granted, the precise wording of this statement in the catechism is curious. It states that 'truth is differently presented and expressed' rather than saying that the different genres present different kinds of truth such as historical truth and metaphysical truth, for example. The implication might be drawn that different genres are ways to express the same kind of truth through different means. If this were simply the case, however, the purpose of this injunction in the catechism would be questionable. If, for example, 'poetic' writing were simply another means to express historical

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[491] Catechism, #109-112.
[492] Ibid., #109.
[493] Catechism, #109-112.

truth, then the question would arise as to why it is important to be attentive to the genres. They would simply be various routes to the same end. Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders remark, 'We approach forms of literature with different expectations and we profit from them differently. A history or a novel may treat the same person or event, but we expect different degrees of fact or fiction from them.'[494] With reference to poetic language, the authors argue that 'the issue of fact and fiction is irrelevant', concluding that historical writing, a novel, and poetry can each convey truth, and that each genre 'can sometimes convey a truth that the others cannot.'[495]

The catechism's historicist interpretation of the Adamic narrative reflects Pope Pius XII's approach to the first eleven chapter of Genesis as conveyed in his 1950 encyclical, *Humanae generis*, but does so selectively. In that encyclical, we have seen, Pius XII insisted that the first eleven chapters of Genesis convey history, though not history in the classical sense.[496] Pius had seven years earlier published *Divino afflante Spiritu*, and mandated exegetes to use the best possible interpretative methods at their disposal, censoring them that it would be neglectful to fail to do so.[497] In *Humani generis*, Pius recognized that it remained for the exegetes to determine precisely what form of literature is to be found in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.[498] Forty-two years later, however, the catechism reflects Pius' assertion that Genesis 3 reflects history of some sort but, in this instance, largely ignores the intervening decades of biblical exegesis and the progress that Pius had envisaged.

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[494] Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders, 'Hermeneutics', p. 1151.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis*, #38.
[497] Pope Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, # 37.
[498] Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* , #38.

Based upon its historicized reading of Genesis 3, the catechism attributes to the devil responsibility for the temptation of humanity. 'Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command.'[499] This indictment of Satan as responsible for facilitating the fall of humanity helps to establish the being's particular identikit, a rap-sheet that distinguishes Satan from the other fallen angels. The reference to 'man's first sin' suggests that the catechism's authors are referring primarily to the sin of a historical Adam.[500] Granted, in extending hermeneutical charity, it might be argued that ultimately all temptation, including the temptation of prototypal humans, figuratively represented by Adam and Eve, can be attributed to the devil, in whatever sense the devil exists – even if the sacred authors lacked a fully developed concept of the devil as known to modern interpreters. On the other hand, the catechism suggests that the event recounted by the Adamic myth reflects a direct and unambiguous intervention by Satan, beyond that which might be arguably associated with temptation in general, and of singular, indeed, cosmic significance in salvation history.

The catechism recounts a litany of broken relationships at the end of the Adamic narrative.

> The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject 'to its bondage to decay'.[501]

The catechism's authors do not view the existential reality of broken relationships as constituting the fall itself but, rather, as the consequences of a 'fall event', an act of disobedience at the dawn of history. 'Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience.'[502] Despite the

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[499] Catechism, # 397.
[500] Ibid., # 401.
[501] Ibid., #400.
[502] Ibid., #399.

catechism's focus on the act of disobedience, it might be argued that the blaming sequence is even more destructive of relationships than was the act of theft itself, as the human characters dig themselves deeper into postlapsarian mire.

Reinforcing its historicized view of the fall as a particular event, the catechism suggests that death entered the world at a particular point, early in human history, as though death had not previously figured in natural processes. 'Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will 'return to the ground', for out of it he was taken. *Death makes its entrance into human history*.'[503] This claim underscores the historicized manner in which the catechism interprets the Adamic myth. The implication is that, were it not for the historical deed of disobedience, humans would be immortal. Furthermore, the catechism teaches that a personal Satan facilitated the introduction of death '. . . Through him sin and death entered the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be "freed from the corruption of sin and death".'[504] In a later section, the catechism's treatment of the Our Father asserts that Satan is a

> '"murderer from the beginning", . . ."a liar and the father of lies", Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world." Through him sin and death entered the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be "freed from the corruption of sin and death".'[505]

This passage implies that in some previous period there was no sin or death in the world, heightening the historicism with which the myth is interpreted. What A.S. Kapelrud posits in relation to ANE myths such as those of Gilgamesh and Adapa could also be argued in relation to the Adamic myth. What is lost, it might be argued, is not an original immortality (if actual

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[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid., # 2852.
[505] Ibid., #2851 -2852.

immortality could, by definition, be lost) but rather an aspiration for immortality.[506] Understood

as such, these myths rehearse possibilities – and impossibilities.

7.3 Models of History

In defense of the authors of the catechism, their allusions to history, it could be argued, may not

intend the term in its modern, secular sense. After all Pius XII asserted that the first eleven

chapters of Genesis represented history, though not in the classical sense.[507] Theologians speak

of 'salvation history' with reference to God's interaction with Israel, a narrative that is not

primarily concerned with dates and cold, hard facts, as it were. James Barr notes that there may

be in fact be less agreement than supposed as to what theologians routinely mean by the term

'history', from *Gehschichte* to *Heilgeschichte,* from *Weltgeshcichte* to *Urgeshschichte,* from

Historie to *Sage*, Barr suggests that models of history are often constructed to serve the

theological purpose at hand.[508] Luke Timothy Johnson points to the sense in which the term,

'history' can denote something other than recounting sequences of events.

> The term, *history* manifestly cannot be used simply for "the past", or "what happened in
> the past" any more than *historical* can be used simply as a synonym for "what was real
> about the past." History is, rather the product of human intelligence and imagination. It is
> one of the ways in which human beings negotiate their present experience and
> understanding with reference to group and individual memory.[509]

While conceding that the term, 'history', especially in relation to the bible and theology, may

suggest an interpretative narrative that goes well beyond chronology, I propose that the

catechism's references to history in relation to the fall of humanity and the mystery of death are

still problematically historicist. In contrast with the nuanced views of history invoked by

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[506] A.S. Kapelrud, 'You Shall Surely Not Die', in *History and Traditions of Early Israel: Studies Presented to Eduard Nielson* (Leiden, VTA, 1993), pp. 50-61. Cf Alan McGill, 'The Vassal's Lament: The Vocation of Humankind in the Adamic Myth and the Fall to Authoritarianism in Its Reception History,' *Glossolalia*, Spring 2011, p. 111. Available at http://glossolalia.sites.yale.edu/ Accessed on 4.14.2014.
[507] Pius XII, *Humani generis*, #38.
[508] James Barr, 'Revelation in the Old Testament and in Theology,' p 68.
[509] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, pp.81-82.

Johnson, the catechism interprets the Adamic narrative as recounting 'what happened in the past', whereas the mystery and enormity of the fall and of mortality lies in their sheer ubiquity, their inescapable universality.[510]

Ricoeur's work on the development of history is highly nuanced in this regard. Ricoeur suggests that the process of writing history passes through a documentary stage of gathering evidence, a comprehensive stage of seeking to understand and explain what the sources reveal, and a literary stage at which point, facticity and meaning-making can become vexingly intertwined.[511] Ricoeur detects in the literary stage of historiography, a tendency towards 'exclusion of the real past from the linguistic realm', suggesting that the literary enterprise eventually dehistoricizes the narrative. Whereas, as we have noted, Ricoeur has argued that myth is not history, he does, in effect, suggest, that historical narrative can be infused with mythical symbolism. To detect the emergence of a mythical symbol-system, a mythical register of language, or a mythical worldview in historical narrative, however, is a different matter than arguing that mythical narrative is a figurative way of recounting history (in a manner similar to what Gunkel has called 'legend').[512] To illustrate the distinction, it would be a different matter to detect mythical symbolism at work in the Exodus narrative (for example the 'angel of death'), than to argue that the Adamic myth reflects a particular kernel of history rather than all of history.

If the term 'history' is to be employed so broadly as to denote interpretations of current experience that do not to some extent reflect particular events, then the distinction between

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[510] Catechism, #390.

[511] Paul Ricoeur, 'Humanities between Science and Art.' Speech by Paul Ricoeur at the opening ceremony for the 'Humanities at the Turn of the Millennium' conference, University of Århus, Denmark (June 4, 1999). Available at http://www.hum.au.dk/ckulturf/pages/publications/pr/hbsa.htm. Accessed 2.15.2014. Cf. Jens Bruun Kofoed, "Adam *what* are you? The Primeval History Against the Backdrop of Mesopotamian Mythology,' Available at http://www.see-j.net/hiphil] Published March 7, 2006. Accessed on 2.28.2015.

[512] Gunkel, Hermann, 'The Literary Form of the Legends', p. 75.

historical narrative and other forms of narrative, including myth, becomes blurred. Having

blurred such distinctions, the importance of acknowledging the implications of literary form in

the interpretation of the biblical text would then be questionable.

To summarize, the catechism unequivocally states that the Adamic narrative in Genesis

recounts a 'deed' and 'event' that transpired early in human history. Historical deeds and events

are perpetrated by historical characters, specific beings that is, as opposed to mythical personas.

Hence, the historicization of the Adamic myth leads to the assertion of an Adam, an Eve and a

serpent, who, although they may be figuratively represented in the text, correspond to particular

beings that acted in history. Given Justin Martyr's identification of the serpent with Satan, the

historicization of the Adamic myth provides support for the position that Satan exists (or at least

existed) as a particular being, responsible for particular historical misdeeds.

7.4 The Catechism's Identikit of the Satan

In its reflections upon the fall of the angels, the fall of humanity, and the Our Father, the

catechism, in effect, offers an identikit of Satan as described in Catholic doctrine. This is the

model of Satan critiqued in my thesis. The thesis is not making a first-order truth claim so as to

deny the existence of demons, that is, disembodied evil spirits in general. Neither is it denying

that some such spirit might be called 'Satan', insofar as such beings might have names

constructed from human language. Rather, the thesis denies the capacity of the Church's account

of the doctrine of Satan, hinged upon a framework of mythic motifs, to convincingly affirm the

ontological existence of a particular being that fits the identikit cited in the catechism.

The Satan whose particular being the Church's current formulation cannot affirm is the

one identified as a fallen angel, a free-willed, intelligent being who personally interacted with a

prototypal human couple, influencing them to commit the original sin, and by doing so

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personally facilitated the entrance of death into the human experience, and who is beyond all hope of reconciliation with God.[513] It would be impossible to disprove some level of correspondence between doctrine and some malign, incorporeal being or beings, but it is the ontological reality of this particular model of Satan that, I propose, the current doctrinal formulae cannot compellingly affirm.

7.5. Contemporary Exegesis of the Adamic Myth

The PBC has stated that historical-critical exegesis is indispensable for the interpretation of scripture.[514] Furthermore, it has mandated exegetes to use the best modern methods at their disposal so as to contribute to the continued development of doctrine.[515] Therefore, it would not seem consistent for the Church's presentation of doctrine to ignore the broad thrust of exegetical opinion. With this in mind, what follows is an overview of the views of contemporary exegetes, including those who have published in Catholic commentaries bearing the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat*, regarding the historicity and genre of the Adamic narrative.

Daniel Harlow asserts that the overwhelming thrust of biblical scholarship regards these the first 11 chapters of Genesis as 'story' rather than history:

> The vast majority of interpreters take the narratives in these chapters as story, not history, because their portrait of protohistory from creation to, flood to Babel looks very stylized—with sequences, events, and characters that look more symbolic than "real" events and characters in 'normal' history.[516]

Harlow's use of inverted commas with reference to the term, 'real', evokes the sense in which modern readers of the Genesis narrative may tend to glibly equate reality with historicity. On this

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[513] Catechism, #391, #2851-2852.

[514] Pius XII, Encycl. *Divino afflante Spiritu*, # 37, 30 September 1943. Cf. PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church # 34*, Rome, 1994.

[515] Pope Pius XII, *Divino afflante spiritu* Cf. PBC, *Sancta Mater Ecclesial*; *Instruction on the Historicity of the Gospels* (Vatican, 1964), 386-408.

[516] Daniel Harlow, 'After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science,' in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, Vol 62, No. 3 September 2010., pp. 179-195. On-line at: http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2010/PSCF9-10Harlow.pdf Accessed on 1.15. 2012.

note, let us now explore the insights of modern biblical scholarship with regard to the Adamic myth.

The Adamic narrative of Genesis 2 and 3 exhibits the literary hallmarks of myth. Lévi-Strauss detects in the Adamic narrative a tension between binary forces that is characteristic of the genre, in this case a tension between obedience and disobedience, innocence and knowledge, life and death.[517] Kapelrud posits the influence of the Gilgamesh and Adapa myths, all three addressing the theme of finitude.[518] Lyn Bechtel notes the prevalence of 'trees of life' in Ancient Near Eastern Myths.[519] Within the narrative, God acts as a potter and surgeon who walks in a garden, a snake speaks and a cherubim is appointed to sentry duty. The literary characteristics of the text suggest that the authors of the Adam and Eve narrative wrote in a genre that moderns and postmoderns most closely approximate as 'myth'.

Eugene Maly, writing in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary,* states 'No scholar today would hold that Gn [sic] presents history in the modern sense of that term.'[520] Maly's remark implies that the equivocal sense in which the term, 'history', alludes to the point made by Barr, citing the multiples German words that correspond to the English term, 'history'.[521] Michael Guinan posits: 'The overall narrative of Genesis 2—11 reflects a 'creation-flood story' that was well known in the Ancient Near East; several examples have come down to us from Mesopotamia.[522] Guinan proceeds to explicitly deny the historicity of the narrative, 'The biblical authors used this familiar (to them) story to teach their own distinctive view of God, the world

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[517] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 556.
[518] A.S. Kapelrud, 'You Shall Surely Not Die' in *History and Traditions of Early Israel: Studies Presented to Eduard Nielson* (Leiden, VTA, 1993), pp.50-61.
[519] Lyn Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4 (B) – 3:24' in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis.* Athayla Brenner ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 87.
[520] Eugene Maly, 'Genesis,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* p. 40.
[521] James Barr, 'Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology', in *New Theology* No. 1, Martin Mart, Dean Peerman, eds (New York: MacMillan, 1964), pp.67- 68.
[522] Michael Guinan, 'Adam, Eve and Original Sin', *Catholic Update.*
http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0507.asp Accessed on 12.29. 2011.

and human beings. In other words, to read the story of Adam and Eve as a historical account is to misinterpret the text. Like a parable, it teaches a profound truth.'[523] Guinan hence decouples the truthfulness of the text from the question of historicity, implying that 'profound truth' need not be historical truth, in the modern sense of 'historical'.

Monika Hellwig asserts with reference to the Adamic myth, 'It has become more generally acknowledged that the original story-tellers, scribes and compilers of the Book of Genesis were not relating the story of two people in the dim distance of pre-history but were interpreting the human situation in which each of us is placed.'[524] Hellwig's remarks acknowledge an increased tendency on the part of exegetes to interpret the text as pointing to universal truths concerning the human condition.

James Connor detects in the Adamic myth a didactic intention to explain the universality of sin in ancient Israel.[525] As we shall see the symbolism of the serpent may indeed suggest a situation that is quite particular to Israel in a given milieu. Connor regards the narrative as a 'symbolic and imaginative account, in which Adam, the talking serpent, the tree of life, and the four rivers are all of a piece.'[526] While focusing upon the narrative's significance for Israel, Connor notes that the name, 'Adam' means 'man' and does not reject more universal significance for the human condition.[527]

Raymond Brown regards the purpose of the Adam and Eve story as to teach that humanity is endowed by God with the breath of life, that humanity was created good and humanity's tendency towards corruption does not come from God.[528] Brown's interpretation is

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[523] Ibid.
[524] Monika Hellwig, *What Are the Theologians Saying Now?* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1992), p. 101.
[525] James Connor, 'Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches,'*Theological Studies* 29, June, 1968, No. 2, 215.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Ibid, 217.
[528] Raymond Brown, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 34.

hence attentive to a theodicist function served by the narrative, a function also served by the doctrine of Satan as defined at Braga I and Lateran IV.

Gabriel Daly warns that the catechism's insistence upon a historicized interpretation of the Adamic narrative may well lose credibility for the doctrine of original sin so that the doctrinal formulations in question become an embarrassment to the preacher and the catechist. A historicized interpretation of the myth may hold similar implications for the credibility of the doctrine of Satan. In reference to the doctrine of original sin, Daly remarks, 'As long as the doctrine continues to be expressed in the language of a dead anthropology, and a fundamentalist reading of sacred scripture, a vitally important truth of Christian revelation will go by default in many pulpits and classrooms.'[529]

When Daly asserts that the catechism's interpretation of the Adamic myth is fundamentalist in character, he is not wielding the term, fundamentalist, in a loose or pejorative fashion. Rather, several of the pamphlets entitled *The Fundamentals*, from which the term fundamentalism is derived, refute the insights of the historical-critical method and propose a historicist reading of the Aadamic narrative as though the text witnesses to the fall as a historical event. These include Dyson Hague's essay on 'The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis', and James Orr's essay on 'The Early Narratives of Genesis'.[530] Orr asserts, 'It is clear that the narratives of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, are not myths, but narratives enshrining the knowledge or memory of real transactions.'[531] Orr concedes, as the catechism does, that the language employed by the Genesis texts is not that of modern science. 'The language used was

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[529] Gabriel Daly, 'Creation and Original Sin (paragraphs 268-421)' in *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Michael J. Walsh, ed. (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1994), p. 97.
[530] James Orr, 'The Early Narratives of Genesis,' The Fundamentals Homepage *The Fundamentals*, vol. iv (Los Angeles: BIOLA Book Room, 1917) .
[531] Dyson Hague, 'The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis', The Fundamentals Homepage *The Fundamentals*, vol. iv (Los Angeles: BIOLA Book Room, 1917).

not that of modern science, but, under divine guidance, the sacred writer gives a broad, general picture which conveys a true idea of the order of the divine working in creation. Man's fall was likewise a tremendous fact, with universal consequences in sin and death to the race.'[532] The catechism's insistence upon the fall as a 'deed' or 'event', and its concession that the narrative used figurative language, is reminiscent of Orr's insistence upon a 'fact'.

Offering further support for Daly's charge that the catechism's reading of Genesis 3 is rooted in a fundamentalist perspective, its interpretation suggests dispensationalism, a defining characteristic of Christian fundamentalism. Dispensationalism views history in terms of historical epochs, each of which descends into moral degeneration and ends in catastrophe. In this mode of interpretation, a text that a proponent of the historical-critical method would regard as mythical or otherwise figurative literature is viewed as historical reconstruction. The dispensationalist may hence depict the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, the destruction of the Tower of Babel or the great flood on a chronological timeline, in the extreme, surmising dates.

Paul Ricoeur refutes a historicist interpretation of the Adamic myth that he believes to have caused undue spiritual angst for the faithful. 'The harm that has been done to souls, during the centuries of Christianity, first by literal interpretation of the story of Adam, and then by the confusion of this myth, treated as history, with later speculations, principally Augustinian, about original sin, will never be adequately told.'[533] Ricoeur's remarks lament the conflation of the biblical text itself with its reception history, rather than to allow the text to speak on its own terms. The reception history in question is largely one of historicization.

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[532] James Orr, 'The Early Narratives of Genesis.'
[533] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 239.

7.6 Retrospectively Discovering Satan in Myth

Noting the absence of the Satan motif from the Adamic narrative in Genesis, Pauline Viviano notes that 'nowhere in this text is the serpent identified as the devil; this interpretation does not come about until the first century BCE.'[534] Richard Clifford and Roland Murphy concur, stating, 'The snake is not Satan, though later traditions so interpreted it.'[535] With reference to the conflation of later speculation with the biblical text itself, Ansgar Kelly asserts, 'When we look at the beginning of Genesis with unblinkered eyes, we see that there is no creation or fall of angels, but only a very clever talking serpent.'[536] Kelly regards the tendency to detect a devil in the Genesis narrative as 'retro-fitting of past data with later ideas.'[537] Maly regards the serpent as evocative of the idolatrous fertility cults that posed a competitive threat to Israelite religion.[538] Viviano suggests that the source of evil in the world is, in the Adamic myth, left a mystery.[539] The designation of the snake as *arum,* translated as cunning, does not necessarily imply the diabolical ones imposed by the reception history of the text.

It is post-biblical speculation (exemplified by Justin-Martyr) that regarded the talking snake as a manifestation of Satan. This raises the question as to whether Justin Martyr and later interpreters, through canonical exegesis, legitimately uncovered a layer of significance in the Adamic narrative, not accessible to earlier readers, especially those who lacked access to the New Testament. Is it possible that such Christian readers validly detected reference to a particular ontological Satan, where earlier audiences saw a symbol of the fertility cult and a warning against forsaking covenant with YWHW? In response, it might be suggested that the

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[534] Pauline Viviano, 'Genesis,' p. 43.
[535] Richard Clifford and Roland Murphy, 'Genesis,' *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 8-43 at 12.
[536] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, p.3.
[537] Ibid.
[538] Eugene Maly, 'Genesis,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* p. 40.
[539] Viviano, 'Genesis', pp. 44-45. Cf. Alan McGill, 'The Vassal's Lament,'p. 112.

New Testament is awash with motifs that first arise in the Hebrew Bible but are attributed new layers of significance in the Christian mindset. The *Ruach*/ Holy Spirit, the Suffering Servant, and the Messiah may be cases in point. While the Church has indeed held up the historical-critical method as an indispensable tool for the interpretation of scripture, it has also regarded this method as one that can and should be used in concert with other methods, as the PBC notes, it 'may even in some respect be corrected by other approaches.'[540] We turn now to the question as to whether an interpretation of a myth in the context of the entire canon can disclose the kind of truth that affirms historical events and personages that cannot be detected through a historical-critical exegesis of the individual text.

7.7 The Sensus Plenior and the Historicization of Myth

Through the application of canonical exegesis, interpreting a text in the context of the full canon of Scripture and Tradition, and in the context of the matrix of doctrines, the 'fuller' sense or *sensus plenior* of the text may be discerned. Raymond Brown defines the s*ensus plenior* or 'fuller' sense of scripture as '…the deeper meaning intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, that is, seen to exist in the words of scripture when they are studied in the light of further revelation or of development in the understanding of revelation.'[541] By definition, meaning of this kind cannot be uncovered by the application of the historical-critical method to a given text in isolation since it goes beyond the intention of the author and requires attention to the canon as a whole.

The catechism defends its interpretation of the Adamic narrative as a case of the *sensus plenior* or 'fuller sense' of the narrative that can only be detected in light of the gospel:

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[540] PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican City, 1993). Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), p. 81.
[541] Raymond Brown, 'Hermeneutics', *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, Raymond Brown, eds. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 616.

> With the progress of Revelation, the reality of sin is also illuminated. Although to some extent the People of God in the Old Testament had tried to understand the pathos of the human condition in the light of the history of the fall narrated in Genesis, they could not grasp this story's ultimate meaning, which is revealed only in the light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.[542]

Perhaps in an attempt to explain the apparent absence of the doctrines of the fall and original sin in ancient Israelite religion and the Jewish faith, the catechism asserts that the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures did not know the ultimate meaning of that which they wrote. As Daniel Harrington observes, there is surprisingly little reference to the sin of Adam in the Old Testament.[543] This could appear problematic if Adam's sin constituted a historical event with catastrophic implications for all of human history. The catechism's response is that, without the benefit of the Christ event, the implications of a historical fall were not understood. 'We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam as the source of sin.'[544]

Maly distinguishes the likely intention of the Genesis authors from the later Christian interpretations of the serpent in Genesis 3.[545] The ancient authors may have intended the serpent to imply a polemic against the fertility cults which posed a competitive threat to Israelite monolatry, the worship of only one god while believing in the existence of others, but, as Maly, notes '*later revelation* [my italics] will go far beyond this.'[546] Maly's reference to later revelation, suggests that the development of the Christian understanding of Satan and its association with the snake in the Adamic myth.

In support of Maly's point that later revelation may reveal significance in a text beyond the historical author's intent, the catechism exhorts the reader to be attentive to the 'analogy of

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[542] Catechism, # 388.

[543] Daniel Harrington, 'Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans', Conference paper presented at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry Presented at Boston College, March 15, 2009 at the Conference. Available at: ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr/article/download/1536/1390 accessed on 1.20.2012.

[544] Catechism, # 388.

[545] Maly, 'Genesis', p. 12.

[546] Ibid.

faith', that is, to the manner in which truths of the faith are interrelated and systematically

cohesive.[547] This implies that early formulations may be profitably read in light of later ones.

Through the application of canonical exegesis, interpreting a text in the full canon of scripture

and Tradition, the 'fuller' sense or *sensus plenior* of the text may be discerned. The *sensus*

plenior could hence include theological truths that develop the intentions of the sacred authors.

As in our earlier discussion of Pope Benedict XVI's position on the development of

doctrine, and the canon of St. Vincent of Lerins, the question arises as to what constitutes

development as opposed to discontinuous change.[548] Old Testament models of Satan included

human adversaries in general, and a member of the divine court who served as a tester and

tempter.[549] The talking snake in the Adamic myth was regarded by its earliest audiences as

cunning and seductive but hardly the instigator behind a fall of the angels and of humanity,

catastrophes unimagined by the authors of Genesis. So does it constitute development or

discontinuous change to get from these concepts to the Christian Satan? For two reasons, I must

concede that this may be a case of legitimate development (as opposed to misinterpretation or

corruption) once it is clear that we are speaking of the evolution of mythical motifs.

My first reason is that the development may not be as radical as it first appears if one is

mindful that Satan in the Christian tradition, however sinister and distanced from God's good

graces, remains a mere creature, and is not an evil equivalent of God. The *De Trinitate* attributed

to Eusebius of Vercelli states the orthodox position with canonical candor, 'If anyone professes

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[547] Catechism, #114. .
[548] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*, The Vatican, December 22, 2005. St. Vincent of Lerins, *The Commonitory*, T. Herbert Bindley, trans. (London: SPCK, 1914), book 1, chapter 2, no. 6-8, pp. 26-28.
[549] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, p. 3.

that in the nature in which he was made the apostate angel is not the work of God, but that he

exists of himself, going so far as to attribute to him his own beginning, let him be anathema.'[550]

Second, the development of the concept of Satan is no more radical and arguably

discontinuous than is the development of the concept of God in the Judeo-Christian heritage.

While an ancient Israelite, monist, henotheistic image of God from whom evil as well as good

was imaged to proceed seems eons removed from a Christian one, yet we view this contrast in

terms of development.[551] This may provide a fair precedent for drastic developments in the

concept of Satan. However, while even drastic development in the mythical motif of Satan may

legitimately reflect the *sensus plenior* uncovered through canonical exegesis, the historicization

of myth, and the literalization of its motifs, cannot be justified in this manner.

7.8 The Limits of the Sensus Plenior: Respect for Literary Form

Raymond Brown notes the objection of J.M. Robinson that the *sensus plenior* could be abused to

justify doctrines that have no basis in scripture and adamantly concludes that Church authority is

not the originator of revelation. Brown responds that the magisterium is the medium, not the

originator of divine revelation.[552] The author proposes that the *sensus plenior* is not a license by

which the Church can justify claims that have no basis in the literal sense of the biblical text.[553]

Rather, the *sensus plenior* must be 'a development of what the human author wanted to say.'[554]

If the *sensus plenior* is a level of significance that was inaccessible to the author and

original audience of a scriptural text, could it be that fall stories, contrary to the intentions of

their pre-Christian authors, actually refer to particular, historical events? Might this not be a case

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[550] Eusebius of Vercelli, *De Trinitate*, VI, 17, 1-3, quoted in *Christian faith and Demonology,* 1975.
[551] David Cook, 'Can God Take Responsibility for Evil and Still be Good?,'*Testamentum Imperium*, 2 (2009)
http://www.preciousheart.net/ti/2009/14-026_Cook_God_Responsibility_Evil.pdf. Accessed on 7.25. 2013.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Brown, 'Hermeneutics,' p. 616.
[554] Ibid, p. 617.

of the *sensus plenior*? James Kelly suggests not, arguing that 'metaphysical interpretations must respect the historical data, and cannot create or change them.'[555] By extension, I propose that interpretations must also respect the literary data. In a sense, the fact that the biblical author wrote with recourse to a particular genre and worldview, whether or not by conscious choice, is itself a historical datum. If Jesus told a parable or the Yawhist authors wrote a text that reflects the hallmarks of what we would now call myth, these are historical facts. The establishment of the genre of a text as intended by its authors is a matter that lies firmly within the competence of the historical-critical method, as described by the PBC, rather than canonical exegesis.[556] *Dei verbum* makes clear that in order to detect what God wants to reveal, the exegete must identify the genre through which the human author sought to communicate. 'However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.'[557]

Granted, identifying the intentions of an ancient author is a matter fraught with difficulty. John McKenzie, generally a bulwark of support for the central argument of this thesis, suggests that biblical authors did not choose to draw upon the genre of myth so as to express truths that evade other genres. Rather, McKenzie suggests, 'Mythopoeic thought in the OT or elsewhere, is not deliberately chosen as a mode of poetic expression in preference to logical discourse. Myth arises in cultures in which logical discourse has not yet been achieved."[558] In this instance McKenzie may appear, at first glance, to adopt a model of myth as pre-history or pre-science,

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[555] James Kelly, 'The Hermeneutical Debate Within Modernism: Loisy, Blondel, and Von Hügel,' *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 71/3-4 (2006): 288.
[556] The PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church.*
[557] *Dei verbum*, #12.
[558] John McKenzie, 'The God of Israel,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 741.

rather than the poetic, supra-historical model of myth adopted by Ricoeur.[559] However, as previously noted, McKenzie has clearly rejected the position that myth is a primitive form of historical narrative when he stated that 'Myth is couched in narrative, but the narrative is not historical. The event of myth is not the singular event located in time and space, but the recurring event of the eternal now.'[560] The expression of truth concerning the eternal now is not so much a matter for history as for philosophy. Hence, when McKenzie argues that the authors of myth did not so much choose the genre but resorted to it for lack of more rational approaches, the author may be viewing myth as pre-philosophy more than as pre-history or pre-science. In this instance, it must be admitted that on this occasion, McKenzie appears to deny the level of symbolic sophistication that Ricoeur recognizes in myth, regarding the genre as capable of expressing levels of meaning that escape philosophical discourse.[561] Nonetheless, the model of myth as pre-philosophy, as implied by McKenzie, would not support the historicization of the genre so as to marshal support for the existence of a particular Satan.

Bernard Batto would firmly reject McKenzie's remark that 'Myth arises in cultures in which logical discourse has not yet been achieved.'[562] Batto comments that '. . .mythopoeic thought was commonly assumed to be characteristic of "primitive" societies where abilities to think had not progressed beyond a certain "prelogical" stage.'[563] In a stinging assessment of this position, endorsed by McKenzie, Batto adds, 'Fortunately, except in uninformed circles, this line of thought is now recognized for what it was, the product of a biased "first world" mentality that regarded the rest of humanity as inferior in culture to itself.'[564] In Batto's view, the assumption

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[559] Robert Segal, 'Myth and Ritual,'p. 355.
[560] Ibid.
[561] Lewis Mudge, ed., *Essays on Biblical Interpretation by Paul Ricoeur,* iv.
[562] John McKenzie, 'The God of Israel,' p. 741.
[563] Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, p. 7.
[564] Ibid.

that *mythos* is in relation to *logos* may reflect cultural imperialism, and one might add, the worst excesses of modernity, elevating one narrow model of reason as though any worldview that did not confirm to is was culturally inferior.

As noted in chapter four, George Lindbeck offers another challenge to the position that myth was authored as myth and must be interpreted as such. Lindbeck essentially denies that the text should necessarily be interpreted according the genre within which the ancient author worked. Lindbeck argues that the literal sense of the text must be 'consistent with the kind of text it is taken to be by the community for which it is important'.[565] In actuality of course, a given community may well choose to read myth as history. However, this revisionist move will not make the supposed history true on historical grounds. If the *sensus plenior* could contradict the literal sense, this would largely negate the importance of employing the historical-critical method and seeking to understand the context and intent of the human authors, as exhorted by the catechism itself, and Catholic teaching since 1943 on the interpretation of scripture.[566]

If the human authors were seized by the Holy Spirit as a quill, serving as unconscious instruments rather than as thinking beings, their intentions would be non-existent or irrelevant. *De fontibus*, the draft constitution on revelation prepared by the Curia and rejected by the vast majority of Council Fathers at Vatican II, had proposed a model of literal revelation that largely dismissed the agency of the human authors in cooperating with the Holy Spirit. Joseph Ratzinger, a *peritus* at the Council eloquently declaimed the Curia's stance on the matter.[567] Ratzinger argued that the sacred authors are inspired by God and are not primarily the collective

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[565] Ibid., Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), p. 81.
[566] Catechism, #109 – 112.
[567] Jared Wicks, trans, ed., *Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as Peritus Before and During Vatican Council II, Gregorianum* 89 (2008): pp. 269-285 at 278. Available at http://www.scotthahn.com/download/attachment/3459. Accessed on 7.3. 2013.

voice of the community. Equally well, Ratzinger decried the position that the human author and

his thoughts are completely overwhelmed by God, a theory derived from Middle Platonic

mysticism that St. Augustine, to some extent accepted.[568] Ratzinger argues that the historical

consciousness of the human author is maintained since God seeks to reveal precisely in the

context of human history.[569]

History is always the context, if somewhat rarely the genre of biblical texts. While the

sensus plenior can be rightfully evoked to justify developments in the perceived theological

significance of the Adamic narrative, in light of the Christ event, it cannot justify the

historicization of mythical narrative or the literalization of mythical motifs. It cannot thus

transform a literary persona into an ontological person who exists beyond the narrative arc of

myth, any more than it can transpose the Genesis 3 cherubim with a flaming sword into a subject

for cryptozoology.

7.9 Conclusion

The contribution of the present chapter lies in its identification of the extent to which the 1992

Catechism of the Catholic Church has historicized the Adamic myth and literalized the mythic

motif of the snake so as to assert the agency of Satan in particular, even at the dawn of human

history. Related to this contribution, the chapter demarcates the limits of the *sensus plenior* as

attained through canonical exegesis. The concepts of Satan that have developed in the Judeo-

Christian tradition are not necessarily inauthentic because they bring new layers of significance

to more ancient ones. Canonical exegesis can legitimately develop the theological significance of

a text beyond the intentions of its authors. However, canonical exegesis, and the *sensus plenior*

to which it gives rise, cannot legitimately contradict the findings of the historical-critical method

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[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.

in the identification of literary genre. Otherwise the counsel of *Dei verbum* # 12 regarding the implications of literary form (as paraphrased in the 1992 catechism) would be redundant.[570] Canonical exegesis cannot turn a myth into a historical account, or a mythical persona into a historical character, a particular being exercising their free will in the events of history. This does not discount similarities between the personas of myth and ontological persons, including disembodied persons should they exist. Rather, it is to refuse to restrict the correspondence to a particular person or persons, recognizing the universality of the meaning expressed in myth.

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[570] *Dei verbum*, #12; Catechism, #109-112.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT SATAN?

New Testament references to Satan as developments of Old Testament ones, mythically

signifying human and cosmic opposition to the Kingdom of God

8.1 Introduction

The chapter advances the central argument of the thesis by problematizing the assumption that

Jesus unambiguously asserted the existence of Satan as a particular person. I show that that New

Testament references to Satan, attributed to the lips of Jesus, cannot be cleanly distinguished

from polemical invocations of the motif of Satan on the part of the Evangelists, embroiled in

disputes that erupted after Jesus' death. Furthermore, even if he referred to Satan and other

demons, there is a strong possibility that Jesus, whose religious heritage and worldview were

likely to have been influenced by the Hebrew Bible, spoke mythically, personifying that which

was opposed to the values of the *basileia*. As such, this chapter supports the central argument of

the thesis that the motif of Satan should be developed so as to explore the possibilities it

indicates in the God-human relationship, rather than to insist that it points to the existence of a

particular creature.

'Without ever placing Satan at the center of his Gospel, Jesus nevertheless only spoke of

him on what were clearly crucial occasions and by means of important pronouncements.'[571] So

states *Christian Faith and Demonology*, the 1975 study authored anonymously and sponsored by

the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Demonology* suggests that all of Jesus' references

to Satan constituted 'important pronouncements.' Furthermore, the study insists that these

pronouncements relate to a particular adversary, asserting 'It was again against this adversary

that he put his listeners on their guard in the Sermon on the Mount and in the prayer which he

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[571] *Demonology*.

taught to his followers, the "Our Father", as is admitted today by a good many commentators, who are supported by the agreement of several liturgies.'[572]

The present chapter appeals for a more circumspect stance in relation to the question of what Jesus may have thought and taught regarding Satan, bearing implications for our images of Satan, but more importantly, for our images of Jesus. The gospels do, however, offer some inference that Jesus appropriated motifs from his Jewish tradition, including those of kingdom, baptism, Messiah, and Passover, so as to figuratively express ideas. With reference to the motifs of Satan and demons, Jesus may have personified all that is opposed to the Kingdom of the God who does not inflict sickness or other ill-fortune as retribution for sin.

8.2 The Satan of the Gospels and the Demonization of Jewish Adversaries

As Philip Almond notes, 'it would be wrong to seek a unified view of the Devil in the collection of works that make up the New Testament.'[573] Without imposing an unwarranted homogenization, it might, however, be observed that gospel references to Satan reflect the adversity experienced by the sacred authors and their communities. Indeed, the word, 'Satan' itself is derived from a Hebrew term, s*heytan,* translated as 'enemy' or 'adversary'.[574] In some instances, this adversity reflected the increasingly acrimonious relationship between the Jesus movement, composed in large part of Messianic Jews, and the broader Jewish community after the destruction of the temple in 70AD. Tension between the Jesus movement and the wider Jewish community, of which it was for half a century a part, stemmed from disagreements concerning the messianic identity of Jesus, the Resurrection, liturgical disputes, and the admission of gentiles into the ecclesial communities.[575] Also contributing to the estrangement,

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[572] Ibid.
[573] Philip Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* , p. 23.
[574] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, p. 3.
[575] Marianne Dacy, *The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism* (New York: Cambria, 2010), pp. 20-50.

during the siege of Jerusalem, Messianic Jews had not fought alongside their coreligionists against the Romans.[576] Many commentators agree that by 80AD, members of the Jesus movement had, in most places, been expelled from the synagogues.[577]

The gospel writers may have regarded their conflicts with the broader Jewish community as symptomatic of a cosmic struggle. Wilfred Harrington identifies an apocalyptic tendency to interpret strife on earth as a 'repercussion of something already determined in a heavenly world.'[578] On a similar note, Jon Levenson observes, 'the enemies cease to be merely earthly powers . . . and become, instead or in addition, cosmic forces of the utmost malignancy.'[579] It is one thing, however, to regard a human conflict as symptomatic of a cosmic or spiritual one, and quite another to attribute it to the agency of a particular disembodied being as Pope Paul VI did on June 29, 1972 in his 'smoke of Satan' homily, in relation to modernity's challenges to the doctrinal status quo.[580]

8.2.1 Mark's Gospel

Mark's Gospel reflects the conflict between the Jesus movement and elements within the wider Jewish community. To modern readers, it can seem as though the gospel indicts a large and undifferentiated Jewish mob for pressurizing the Romans to execute Jesus. That said, what may appear to modern readers as references to a large crowds of Jewish people that represented dominant opinion among their co-religionists, may have sounded less generalized to early

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[576] Richard Bauckham, 'Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War, with Special Reference to the Apocalypse of Peter,' *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, eds. G. N.Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 228–38.

[577] Daniel Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity Teach Us Today* (Oxford: Sheed &Ward, 2001), 123. Cf. David Rensberger, Johannine Faith and Liberating Community (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), p. 26.

[578] Wilfred Harrington, 'Understanding the Apocalypse,' *Scripture from Scratch*, http://www.americancatholic.org/newsletters/SFS/an1199.asp.Accessed on 10.23.2012.

[579] Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 44 cited in Pagels, p. 38.

[580] Pope Paul VI, homily of June 29th, 1972.

audiences more au fait with inter-Jewish conflicts of the time. As Dennis Hamm observes, when

the passion narratives are read on their own terms, it is not all Jews but a certain stratum of

Jewish leadership that is indicted for the killing of Jesus.

> . . .a careful reading of the four gospels shows that it is not the people as a whole but
> certain religious leaders joined by a few others who are complicit in the Romans'
> execution of Jesus. There is no historical reason to doubt that this picture reflects reality.
> Pilate and certain Jewish leaders were flawed men, each party acting according to their
> own notion of "homeland security."[581]

Without reading into the gospels a mass condemnation of all Jews, these observations

nonetheless offer some indication of the adversity that impacted the contexts within which the

gospel authors operated.

8.2.2 Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel, reflecting Mark and additional sources unknown to Mark, portrays the

Pharisees, in particular, as opponents of the mission of Jesus. 'But the Pharisees went out and

took counsel against him, how to destroy him.' (Mt.12:14) Matthew depicts the Pharisees and

Jesus trading accusations of association with the demonic. Matthew portrays the Pharisees as

slurring Jesus saying, 'It is only by Be-el′zebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out

demons.' (Mt. 12:24) and Jesus, for his part, as responding in kind, calling the Pharisees

'children of hell.' (Mt.23:15)

Elaine Pagels observes that Matthew's account of the temptation of Jesus in the desert

depicts Satan engaging in a mode of proof-texting associated with the Pharisees.[582] Such

polemics may reflect post-diaspora competition between the Jesus movement and the Pharisees

for the hearts and minds of Jews.[583] Matthew 13:39 speaks of the devil as sowing weeds in an

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[581] Dennis Hamm, 'Are the Gospel Passion Accounts Anti-Jewish?,' *Journal of Religion and Film* 8/1 (2004).
Available at http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/2004Symposium/Hamm.htm**.** Accessed on 1.2.2014.
[582] Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, p. 81.
[583] Ibid. pp. 38-39, 46-47.

apparent slur on those who, from the perspective of the sacred authors, compete with the sowing

of the seed of the Word of God. Granted, this does not mean that the Pharisees did not, in fact,

oppose Jesus during his earthly ministry, but it highlights the difficulty in identifying

pronouncements made by Jesus regarding Satan, distinguishing them from the later-breaking

concerns of the gospel writers.

8.2.3 Luke's Gospel

Luke's Gospel is yet more explicit than Mark's or Matthew's in forging an association between

Satan and the Jewish people in an apparently broad, undifferentiated sense.[584] A literal reading of

Luke could suggest that a large assembly of Jews, shares collectively in responsibility for Jesus'

death. 'They all cried out together, "Away with this Man".' (Lk. 23:18) The author of Luke's

Gospel wrote in the 70s AD, while the followers of Jesus were gradually expelled from the

synagogues. Luke portrays Jesus himself being ejected from synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30)

and in Capernaum (4: 31 - 44), offering some inkling of the neuralgic issues at stake.

8.2.4 John's Gospel

John's Gospel, authored after most Messianic Jews had been expelled from the synagogues,

more overtly associates Jews with Satan. In Jn. 8:4, Jesus is cited as referring to the Jews as

children of the devil. 'You are of your father, the devil; and you want to accomplish your father's

desires.' John also depicts Jesus calling Judas a devil (Jn. 6:70-71). So, for example, when

Demetrius Dumm remarks 'There is no doubt about the identity of the evil one in John's Gospel:

It is Satan or the devil', this need not be assumed to denote the existence of Satan as a distinct

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[584] Ibid., p. 89.

being.[585] As suggested by chapter six, for one steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures, the term, 'Satan' may have evoked a variety of motifs that denoted a mythical character, and a role.

It is noteworthy that even as they maligned other Jews outside of the Jesus movement, with whom they were entangled in conflict, the gospel writers do so with recourse to the motif of Satan. They draw upon terms of their Jewish, mythical heritage, showing that their critique, quite apart from aspects of its reception history, is deeply Semitic, not anti-Semitic.

While the evangelists may have invoked the motif of Satan so as to demonize the Pharisees, or Israel more generally, this does not, of course, preclude the possibility that Jesus spoke of Satan during his earthly ministry. These later-breaking developments do, however, raise a question as to whether we can regard gospel references to Satan as originating on the lips of Jesus, and how we could disentangle Jesus' pronouncements on the matter from post-Resurrection, authorial concerns. These considerations challenge an assumption on the part of the author of *Demonology* that we have access to pronouncements issued personally by Jesus on the subject of Satan.

8.3 A Pronouncement about Satan in the Lord's Prayer?

Demonology asserts that the Sermon on the Mount includes important pronouncements by Jesus on the subject of Satan.[586] The study interprets the seventh petition of the Our Father as one such pronouncement on the matter. This interpretation was to be reinforced, and more widely disseminated, in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which states, 'In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God.'[587]

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[585] Demetrius Dumm, *A Mystical Portrait of Jesus: New Perspectives on John's Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 79. Cf. Raymond Brown, 'The Gospel according to John,' *Anchor Bible Commentary* 29 (Garden City: Anchor Bible Publishing, 1966), pp. 364-376 cited in Pagels, p.100.
[586] *Demonology.*
[587] Catechism, # 2851.

The reference to Satan as an angel suggests a disembodied person, a pure spirit.[588] While it could

be argued that hermeneutical charity should allow for the possibility that the catechism invokes

the motif of the angel in a figurative sense, a more literal intent is implied by the catechism's

explicit rejection of the possibility that the petition might regard evil as an 'abstraction'.[589]

The author of *Demonology* argues that Jesus only speaks of Satan by means of 'important

pronouncements.'[590] This raises a question as to the extent to which the petition for deliverance

from evil is, in fact, a pronouncement. The Our Father is first and foremost a prayer of petition.

In Matthew 6, this prayer is preceded by an injunction issued by Jesus on the subject of prayer.

'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they

will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you

need before you ask him. Pray then in this way.'(Mt. 6:7 – 9a) This injunction might be said to

include a pronouncement on the nature of God, the divine Father who already knows our needs.

By implication, the Our Father offers insight, not so much into the nature of Satan, but, rather, a

God who is attentive to prayers of petition, and may be envisioned as a loving, attentive father.

If it conveys pronouncements, they are in relation to God and intercessory prayer – not the devil.

This, it might be argued, is consistent with allusions to Satan in the Hebrew Bible. Such

references always allude to some truth about God and God's relationship with humanity, more

than they affirm the existence of a personal Satan.

The petitions, 'deliver us from evil' and 'lead us not into temptation' are presented as an

antithetic parallelism. The implication is that deliverance from evil is the alternative, perhaps the

opposite, of being led into temptation. This, as we will see, seems to reflect the residual influence

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[588] Ibid., #328.
[589] Augustine of Hippo, *Confession*s, trans. RS Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 8 Cf. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 4.
[590] *Demonology.*

of ancient images of God. The idea that God might lead someone into temptation evokes an

ancient image of YHWH from whom evil, as well as goodness, was imagined to proceed.[591] This

is reminiscent of the plight of Job whom God allows to be tempted by Satan, saying 'Very well,

he is in your power; only spare his life' (Jb 1:6) or, as James Allison observes, Jesus led by the

Spirit to be tempted by Satan in the desert (Mt. 4:1-11).[592] If the petition for deliverance from

evil implies traces of the Joban worldview, the Satan associated with this view is a tempter, tester

and prosecutor who serves God's inscrutable will.[593] It may also reflect the residual influence of

a morally complex image of God. This model of God was one that utilized Satan as an unsavory

henchman, giving Satan permission to inflict horrendous suffering upon Job and his loved ones.

To the extent that Mt. 6:13 invokes a Joban model of Satan, it might be argued that the

Satan in question inhabits the narrative arc of myth, rather than the cosmos beyond. As R.A.F.

MacKenzie notes, 'the greater part of Jb [sic] is in poetic form.'[594] Its genre is not that of

historical writing. Given the poetic register of language that characterizes the Book of Job, its

invocation of Satan the tempter and tester seems to be intended as a figurative personification

rather than reference to a particular person. It may be disingenuous to assume that Jesus and the

gospel writers would not have recognized figurative writing and speech. Bernard Batto remarks,

'I doubt that any society in the historical period – and this includes not only the ancient Israelites

but also the ancient Babylonians, Canaanites, Egyptians, and Greeks – has been so

unsophisticated that it accepted its myths in an unreflective and preconscious *naïveté*.'[595]

Furthermore, MacKenzie cites the existence of 'forerunners' to Job in Egyptian and

[591] Paul Volz, *Das Daimonische in Jahwe*; Kirsten Nielson, *Satan, The Prodigal Son: A Family Problem in the Bible* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), p.55.

[592] James Allison, 'Deliver us from Evil,' http://www.jamesalison.co.uk/texts/eng04.html. Accessed on 11.2.2014.

[593] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* , pp. 22-23.

[594] RAF MacKenzie, 'Job,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* eds. Joseph Fiztmyer, Roland Murply, Raymond Brown (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 511.

[595] Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, p. 11.

Mesopotamian literature, suggesting possible syncretism.[596] This might also imply that the narrative exemplifies a subgenre, perhaps identifiable as theodic narrative, rather than historical reconstruction.

Matthew's reference in the seventh petition of the Our Father to the *poneros* or 'Evil One' may be further explored with reference to the other instances in which the gospel-writer utilizes the term in his account of the Sermon on the Mount. The Matthean author's uses of the term, and the overall thrust of the sermon, suggest an allusion to enemies in a general sense. *Demonology,* on the other hand, asserts that Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, put his listeners 'on guard' against Satan.[597] Matthew's use of the term *poneros* elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount may thus shed further light upon the sense in which the author employs the term in Mt. 6:13, and whether its invocation signifies an important pronouncement regarding Satan.

Mt. 5:39 reads, 'But I say to you, 'Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also''. Timothy Jackson observes that the term denoting 'one who is evil' or 'evil doer' in this verse is again *poneros*.[598] In this instance, the *poneros,* is depicted as striking the cheek - suggesting the act of an embodied human rather than a disembodied spirit. Furthermore, the injunction not to resist the 'evil one' seems more likely to be intended to discourage retaliation against human adversaries than to advocate non-resistance in relation to Satan as later envisaged in the Christian Tradition.

Matthew's use of the term, *poneros*, in 5:39 suggests the same ambiguity as in 6:13, begging the question as to whether we can, with any degree of certainty, insist that in Mt. 6:13 the term denotes a particular disembodied being whereas in Mt. 5:39, it refers to human enemies.

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[596] MacKenzie, 'Job,' p. 511.
[597] *Demonology*.
[598] Timothy Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.124, n.37.

Matthew's reference in 5:39 to 'one who is evil' paves the way for Jesus' command to enemy-love in Mt. 5:44, a command usually associated with human enemies. Hence, it might be argued that the term *poneros* personifies adversaries, or, even more broadly, adversity in general. While the Hebrew Bible speaks of a particular servant of God called Satan, it also utilized the term *satan* as a common noun denoting one who serves in an adversarial, obstructionist role.[599] If the term Satan can denote such broad applicability, so too could the term, 'Evil One' in the midst of a sermon on how to treat others, including one's enemies.

Noting that the commentators in the East have, for the most part, historically, translated *poneros* in Mt. 6:19 as a masculine noun, while translators in the West have typically translated it in neutral form, Gerhard Kittle, and Gerhard Fredrick, propose that 'The petition then is probably a request for delivery from all evil, according to Jewish models.'[600] The reference to Jewish models suggests the holistic, Semitic model of evil identified by Donald Senior, encompassing sickness and all that stands as an affront to human dignity.[601] Surely it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Jesus, immersed in a Semitic, holistic worldview, when confronted with the specter of sick, impoverished, and excluded people prayed for deliverance from evil in a holistic sense.

8.4 What was Jesus' Understanding of Satan?

While we cannot assume that every gospel reference to Satan represents an utterance on the part of Jesus, we can propose some inference into how Jesus may have understood the motif of Satan insofar as Jesus was most likely steeped in the traditions of the Hebrew Bible and other, extracanonical texts. As such, Jesus may have been familiar with models of Satan as a 'son of

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[599] Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, p. 450.
[600] Gerhard Kittle, Gerhard Fredrick, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Erdman, 1985), p. 914.
[601] Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait,* 2nd ed. (Dayton: Pflaum, 1992), p.107.

God', tempter and tester, (Jb. 1:6-8), accuser (Zec. 3:1), obstacle (Num. 22:22), and adversary (2 Sam. 24). These models of Satan depict a persona or role that is adversarial towards humanity, but not towards the Deity, whom it serves. There is, however, evidence in the gospels to suggest that Jesus and the Evangelists were also aware of the motif of a Satan fallen from God's good graces.

Jesus is likely to have been familiar with the strands of tradition found in the Hebrew Bible and intertestamental literature as identified in chapter six, including the motifs found in Is.14, and Ps. 89, both of which envisage the demotion of what were formerly heavenly beings, and the 'Book of the Watchers' in *First Enoch* that refers to the fall of supernatural beings called Semihazah, Azazel, Mastema and Belial but, again, does not mention Satan. As Migeul de la Torre and Albert Hernandez suggest, Jesus may have been familiar with these *Enoch* narratives.[602] As such, he may have numbered the mythic Satan, whether an ontological person or a literary persona, among the fallen servants of YHWH.

Luke depicts Jesus asserting, in response to the success experienced by the apostles in driving out demons, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven: Behold I have given you power to tread on snakes and scorpions, and upon every power of the enemy.' (Lk. 10:18-19) Simon Gathercole contextualizes this remark by the Lucan Jesus, noting that the disciples have just reported to Jesus their success as exorcists.[603] Gathercole doubts that the Lucan Jesus is seeking to trump their successes by saying that he witnessed the more impressive primordial fall of Satan. Such bragging would imply a reference to the pre-existing Logos, and would be more

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[602] Miguel de La Torre and Albert Hernandez, *The Quest for the Historical Satan* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), p. 767.

[603]Gathercole, Simon, 'Jesus' Eschatological Vision of the Fall of Satan: Luke 10,18 Reconsidered,' *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94, 3/4 (2003):pp. 143-63 at 149.

Johannine than Lucan in character. Rather, Gathercole regards the reference to Satan's fall in Lk. 10:18 as bolstering faith in the final defeat of evil at the *eschaton*.[604]

8.5 An Objection Based Upon a High Christology

It might be argued that my emphasis on Jesus' Jewishness, and the influence of Old Testament models of Satan, fails to account for a high christology. Why could it not be argued, that is, that Jesus, fully divine as well as fully human, had access to supernatural knowledge of the existence of a supernatural Satan and demons, in a manner inaccessible to mere humans? Within the scope of the present work, I do not deny this as a possibility. We can never be certain as to what other minds know - even those that are human and not divine. However, it would be one thing for Jesus to have had access to such knowledge of supernatural beings, another thing for Jesus to have communicated this to his followers, and yet another thing yet for his followers to have, in turn, conveyed this to later generations. Without presuming to place any limitations upon the mind of Christ, the present work merely observes that when the New Testament texts present Jesus as referring to Satan, broadly speaking, these references reflect motifs drawn from the Hebrew Bible and extracanonical literature, or relate to conflicts between the Jesus movement and other groups within the heterogeneous fold of first century Judaism. The thesis interprets the biblical text – not the mind of Christ.

8.6 Did Jesus Teach a Distinctive Doctrine of Satan?

Demonology insists that Jesus circumvented the limitations of his culture so that his teaching on Satan and demons is not influenced by it. 'Jesus transcended his milieu and his times: he was immune from their pressure.'[605] The influence of Jesus' religious tradition and of his culture, need not be thought of in terms of pressure to conform so much as a rich heritage of motifs upon

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[604] Ibid.
[605] Ibid.

which Jesus may have drawn and the gospel writers certainly drew. In a case in point, when Mt. 16:23 depicts Jesus addressing St. Peter as Satan, this suggests the model of the satan as one acting in an obstructionist role, rather the devil in a later Christian sense.[606] Matthew's reference to Satan is reminiscent of Num. 22:22 wherein the Angel of the Lord serves as a Satan in this regard, blocking Balaam's path.

Having noted the probable influence of Jesus' religious and cultural heritage, it might equally well be said that, in relation to popular cultural assumptions regarding suffering, Jesus did indeed fly in the face of the doctrine of divine retribution, rejecting the cultural assumption that suffering is a divine punishment for one's personal sins or for the sins of one's parents.[607] When Jesus healed afflicted people and told them that God forgave their sins, this was courageously countercultural, as was the radical assertion that the poor are not cursed by God, but rather blessed. Hence, Jesus transcended the assumptions of his culture in relation to suffering, raising the question as to whether he also did so in relation to presuppositions regarding the nature of evil and the perceived causes of suffering.

As the author of *Demonology* rightly states, there was not a unanimous consensus in Jesus' culture regarding the existence of demons.[608] While the Pharisees believed in the existence of spirits, the Sadducees did not, and Jesus could conceivably have adopted their views. With an implicit appeal to the criterion of novelty, James Kallas suggests that Jesus did not uncritically adopt the position of the Pharisees. The author argues that the Pharisees regarded demons as weak, disunited and fickle, suggesting that they roamed the world less like lions than rats.

> Jesus becomes aware that while he and the Pharisees talk about the reality of the devil, they mean different things by that reality. For them, Satan and his forces are disunited. One can be used against another. And they are weak; they can be resisted by man's

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[606] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, p. 3.
[607] Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*, p. 105.
[608] *Demonology.*

personal diligence, and the person who does end up in their grip is one who brought it on himself.[609]

Demonology alludes to this disunity that the Pharisees imagined to prevail among the demons, citing the manner in which the Pharisees accused Jesus of 'casting out devils with the help of the prince of the devils' (Mt. 9:24, 12:25). Jesus responds that 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand' (Mt. 12:27). This is interpreted by Kallas as referring to the coordinated unity of the demons. Jesus, in Kallas' view, recognized the threat posed by a unified kingdom of Satan.

> In direct opposition to that view, Jesus, however, must break with the Pharisees. He insists that Satan's power is not divided. There is no group of unrelated, fratricidal demons, one working against the other. On the contrary, he insists, Satan's hordes are welded together into a lethal kingdom. One cannot throw out another.[610]

Kallas suggests that whereas the pharisaic view regarded demoniacs as rogues who must have done something to open themselves to possession by parasitic, scavenging demons, Jesus recognized their undeserved suffering in the grip of powerful entitles that could possess people against their will.[611] Hence, for Kallas, the personal Satan is a theological assertion of the Gospels, and not merely a cultural assumption. On the other hand, Jesus' reference to a divided house of Satan is not unanimously interpreted as referring to a distinctive vision of a united kingdom of darkness. It may equally well be read so as to contrast the unity of the Kingdom of God with the disunity brought about by evil's self-consuming nature.

In view of Pagel's assertion that the evangelists were engaged in intense competition with the Pharisees, the criterion of embarrassment might be invoked. That is, the gospel writers had a disincentive to affirm a belief of the Pharisees (just as the later Church had nothing to gain by

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[609] James Kallas, *The Real Satan: From Biblical Times to the Present* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1975), p. 66.
[610] Ibid.
[611] Ibid.

affirming the existence of Satan when heretical groups such as the Manicheans and Albigensians were deeply invested in exaggerated notions regarding Satan, crediting the devil with creating the physical world).

Another train of thought in relation to the criterion of embarrassment interprets gospel references to Satan and demons as holding potential to alienate a Jewish audience. Richard Bell points to the manner in which the gospels depict Jesus performing exorcisms on gentiles and breaking with the accepted Jewish ritual, utilizing pigs in lieu of a scapegoat.[612] Similarly, Todd Klutz, with reference to Lucan exorcism accounts, reinforces this point, viewing Jesus' exorcisms as 'anti-rites' that flaunted Jewish conventions.[613]

In response to the debate as to whether Jesus adopted cultural assumptions with regard to the question of demons or taught a distinctive satanology, it may be worth considering that this is not a zero sum game. *Demonology* rightly suggests that Jesus exhibited both 'respect for the past' and 'intellectual freedom'.[614] In his way, it might be said that Jesus balanced *aggiornamento* with *ressourcement*. It need not be the case that either Jesus completely transcended his culture and was immune from its pressures, or that, on the other hand, he blindly adopted its assumptions. Rather, it might be argued, Jesus, and the evangelists for that matter, innovatively adapted elements of their heritage, attributing to them a new level of significance. As Ricoeur puts is, 'the Christian fact is itself understood by effecting a mutation of meaning inside the ancient scripture.'[615] Jesus may not have been rigidly limited by the contents of the Hebrew Bible, but his worldview was in large part formed by it, and he added new layers of significance to its motifs.

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[612] Richard Bell, *Deliver us from Evil*, pp. 72 - 73.
[613] Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories*, pp. 144 – 148.
[614] *Demonology*.
[615] Ricoeur, 'Preface to Bultmann'.

The gospels indicate that Jesus often retained use of terminology drawn from his culture, ascribing it new meaning as is the case in relation to the Passover meal, baptism, the concept of 'kingdom' and, arguably, demons and Satan. Hence, Jesus engaged creatively with his culture and furthered the dynamic development of mythical motifs. When the gospels place allusions to demons upon the lips of Jesus, this does not necessary endorse extant notions about demons, prevalent in his time, any more than Jesus' references to the messiah, the kingdom or baptism were identical with previous understandings. Neither does it necessarily denote a new demonology as such. Rather, in the absence of any specific propositions regarding the nature of demons, Jesus' references to demons would appear to serve another end. Jesus' concern seems to lie in relation to the scandal of suffering, assuring afflicted people that God loves them, forgives them, and longs to make them well. Hence, Jesus expels the afflictions that torment the reviled, marginalized people of his milieu, evoking the mythic motif of 'demons' so as to show that maladies and social exclusion are not punishments from God, but, rather, are opposed to God's plan.

8.7 New Testament References to Demons

It may be helpful to expand our discussion of gospel references to Satan so as to explore whether Jesus issued clear pronouncements on the subject of demons more generally.

8.7.1 Demons as Symbols of Opposition to the Basileia

Donald Senior regards the exorcism stories as more concerned with the existential experience of suffering and God's healing power made manifest in Jesus than with an assertion of the ontological existence of demons. Senior advises against the retrojective imposition of modern assumptions upon the biblical text. 'Americans in recent years have become curious about the world of the occult. . . but we should be careful not to too easily equate Jesus' exorcisms with

our modern blend of superstition and fantasy.'[616] In contrast to the sensationalized imagery of

exorcism, purveyed by Hollywood, complete with special effects, Senior notes the miserable

banality of evil as confronted by Jesus. 'The biblical mindset . . . acknowledged that the power of

evil had nudged its way into daily life. The biblical mind regarded sin and suffering and death as

differing manifestations of the fundamental evil that afflicted the human world and set it in

opposition to God.'[617] Senior deglamorizes evil by relating it to the scandal of abject suffering.

> To get some sense of what the bible means by such evil, one has only to think of the
> impact of such chronic expressions of evil in our world today as the problem of drugs or
> violence, or the inequalities that have left millions starving throughout the world, or
> homeless and despairing people on the streets of the world's richest cities.[618]

Granted, Senior does not deny the possibility of phenomena associated with evil that defy the

ordinary, but the author emphasizes that the gospels document Jesus's exorcisms as the liberation

of the most miserable and marginalized of wretched people as Jesus took this proclamation of the

kingdom into the darkest of cesspits beyond comfort-zones and cultural boundaries. Jesus hence

rejected smug assumptions that the most wretched of people were being punished for their own

sins or the sins of their parents.

Far from asserting propositions about what we might now regard as supernatural demons

or the devil, Jesus delivered a powerful message of divine compassion for suffering people.

Raymond Brown observes that 'Some of the cases that the synoptic gospels describe as instances

of demon possession seem to be instances of natural sickness. The symptoms described in Mark

9:17, 18 seem to be those of epilepsy, while the symptoms in Mark 5:4 seem to be those of

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[616] Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait,* p. 107.
[617] Ibid.
[618] Ibid.

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dangerous insanity.'[619] What Brown asserts of some illnesses, Joachim Jeremias asserts more

broadly, noting the terror that may have resulted from exposure to disturbed individuals who in

the developed world would now most likely be institutionalized.

> Illnesses of all kinds were attributed to demons, especially the different forms of mental
> illness . . . We shall understand the extent of the fear of demons better if we note that the
> absence of enclosed mental hospitals meant that illnesses of this kind came much more
> before the public eye that they do in our world . . . There is nothing surprising in the fact
> that the gospels, too, portray mental illness as being possessed by demons. They speak in
> the language and conceptuality of their time.[620]

The 'language and conceptuality' of the time does not have to be regarded as primitive and

superstitious, that is as a form or pre-science. Rather, it can instead be regarded as mythical,

expressing the dark experiences that seem to defy propositional statements and causation.

8.7.2 Demons in the mythological struggle between binary forces

If the mythical motif of demons served in ancient Israel as an expression of the dark experiences

of sickness, insanity, and alienation, for the New Testament writers, the exorcism accounts also

represent a power that opposed and conquered demons. Claude Lévi-Strauss posits that a

characteristic of myth is its juxtaposition of binary opposites.[621] Raymond Brown identified the

juxtaposed binaries of the gospel, asserting, 'In Jesus' ministry, two kingdoms are pitted against

one another. This is the logic of Mk. 3:22-27: Jesus' expulsion of demons is not a case of Satan's

kingdom divided against itself, but of God's kingdom versus Satan's.'[622] John McKenzie notes

such a juxtaposition of the power of Jesus and that of demons, and Jesus' triumph over them.

> The important feature of this and other exorcisms performed by Jesus is not whether he
> accepted the common belief; those who formed the Gospel traditions could not have
> represented him as speaking in terms other than those familiar to them. The important

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[619] Raymond Brown, 'Attitude towards Demons,' *Introduction to New Testament Christology*, (New York:
Associated Sulpicians of the US, 1994), p. 41. Quoted in Duncan Heaster, *The Real Devil: A Biblical Exploration*
(South Croydon: Carelinks Publishing, 1977), p. 244.
[620] Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1972), p. 93. Cf. Carelinks Ministries
http://carelinks.net/doc/dbb-en/30. Accessed on 1.25.2013.
[621] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) p. 556
[622] Raymond Brown, 'The Gospel Miracles', *New Testament Essays*, p. 172.

fact is that Jesus liberates men [sic] from the fear of demons; demons have no real power and are instantly subdued by a word from him.[623]

McKenzie argues that the important point is not so much Jesus' stance on the existence of demons as particular entities. It is rather that Jesus liberates people from the *fear* of demons. The gospel narrative does not, upon most readings, liberate its hearers from susceptibility to experience of suffering, but, as McKenzie suggests, it can liberate people from a fear of those forces, natural, supernatural or whatever their nature, that underlie suffering.

Todd Klutz cautions against the imposition of modern categories in relation to the equivocal language of ancient text, where a boundary between the symbolic and the reconstructive is virtually impossible to clearly define and 'whose vocabulary. . . was designed less for facilitating historical understanding than for winning ideological contests.'[624] In a sense, the gospel texts are concerned with winning an ideological contest, as Klutz puts it, insofar as they are written from a perspective of faith to further a theological agenda, on the part of those who are zealously convinced of Jesus' messianic identity and Resurrection, and who are engaged in competition with the pharisaic brand of Judaism. The Evangelists are more concerned with the identity and significance of Jesus, and his victory in the cosmic struggle, rather than with the historical details, in the modern sense.

Commenting on the Lucan account of the Gerasene exorcism, Stuhlmueller notes some ambiguity regarding the alleged location of the event and remarks, 'This fluctuation of the name of the locality and other details in the story should caution the reader against trying too hard to reconstruct what really happened.'[625] This suggests that the author is more concerned with the expression of theological meaning than with historical accuracy.

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[623] John McKenzie, 'The Gospel According to Matthew,' *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 78.
[624] Tod Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories*, p. 6.
[625] Carroll Stuhlmueller, 'The Gospel According to Luke', *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* p. 139.

James Dunn and Graham Twelftree also view the exorcism narratives as indicative of the struggle between the power of God and the power of evil, that is, 'hostility to God', which the authors regard as 'unified' rather than categorized within the framework of the biblical text.[626] Dunn and Twelftree regard New Testament references to demons as pointing to a broader power of evil, rather than disembodied spirits. 'The absence of any fixed designation indicates that the New Testament writers had no clear conception of particular entities.'[627] Hence, Dunn and Twelftree deny that the New Testament teaches the ontological existence of demons in the manner developed by the later tradition. 'A clear conceptuality of demons, therefore, does not emerge from the gospel evidence.'[628]

Similarly, De La Torres and Hernandez note with regard to the New Testament, 'The full concept of demons developed only later in the Christian faith tradition.'[629] These authors support their position, pointing to the absence of any specific term for evil spirits in the Hebrew bible, and the connotations of the Greek term, *daimonian* as a derivative of *daimon*, that is 'god'. De La Torres and Hernandez note in this regard that the New Testament epistles tend to demonize all non-Christian images of God. 'In short, early Christians regarded all other gods as being in fact, demons, in league with the prince of lies, Satan.'[630] De La Torres and Hernandez regard this as having been a 'very dangerous dichotomy' between Christian faith and the faith of other communities.

Carroll Stuhlmueller notes a precedent in Israelite religion for this demonization of the gods of the nations, whereby, for example, the ancient Israelites had corrupted the name of the Philistine god, Baʻal-zebul, meaning 'lord of the divine abode' or 'Baal the prince' to

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[626] James Dunn, Graham Twelftree, 'Demon Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament'.
[627] Ibid.
[628] Ibid.
[629] Miguel de La Torres, Albert Hernandez, *The Quest for the Historical Satan*, p. 57.
[630] Ibid.

Ba 'al-zebub, meaning 'lord of the flies', with undertones of a dung heap.[631] This demotion of deities to the status of demons reflects the process whereby monotheism emerged from henotheism, and violent, tribal deities were relegated.

Daniel Harrington regards the miracle accounts of the gospel, and by extension, that which modern readers may regard as the supernatural events related by the gospel, as signs that the Kingdom of God was overtaking creation. The sacred authors were not, in Harrington's view, asserting the occurrence of what today's readers would regard as supernatural phenomena. Harrington posits, 'Those who preach and teach about Jesus' miracles need to help people today to appreciate the inclusive and flexible approach of the Bible towards 'signs and wonders' as opposed to the Enlightenment idea of the miracle as the suspension of the laws of nature.'[632] Harrington's remarks underscore that the miracles of Jesus were written in a world that was imagined to be governed not by 'laws of nature', but by God. In the absence of such laws of nature that would be absolutized, as it were, sixteen hundred years later by rationalists, the miraculous was conceived in terms of a mastery of creation that could reflect only the power of the creator.

8.7.3 From Semitic Holism to Greek Dualism

Eugene Drewerman differs with those authors who do not regard New Testament references to demons as referring to particular entities. Rather, Drewermann regards Mark's Gospel as presenting the devil and demons as persons. In Drewermann's view, Mark presents as persons what the Yahwist school of authors had regarded as spiritual forces, suggesting movement from a figurative to an ontological personification of demons.[633]

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[631] Carroll Stuhlmueller, 'The Gospel according to Luke', p.145.
[632] Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: Order of St. Benedict, 1991), p. 187.
[633] Matthias Beier, *A Violent God-Image: An Introduction to the Work of Eugen Drewermann* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 215.

Dunn and Twelftree concede a possible sense in which demons more generally may have been regarded as persons by the New Testament writers, noting that Hellenistic thought in the first century regarded 'daimons' as ghosts of the human dead. In contrast with this Hellenistic conception of daimons, the authors posit that Semitic thought regarded 'spirits' as manifestations of evil rather than as intelligences.[634]

This juxtaposition of Semitic and Hellenistic perspectives points to the difficulties entailed by the fact that the gospels were written in Greek but reflect preaching and a subsequent oral tradition that was most likely initially mediated through Aramaic. Whereas Jesus' ministry of preaching is likely to have been delivered in Aramaic, and inevitably drawn upon Semitic, holistic assumptions associated with the language, New Testament texts authored in Greek inevitably, by their very terms of reference, at times carry dualistic overtones.

The overriding consensus to be drawn from this survey of gospel references to Satan and to demons is that the New Testament authors envisaged the cosmos as locked in a struggle between the forces of good and evil. In the exorcism accounts of the gospels, Jesus shows that God is on the side of the sick, poor and marginalized. As such, the gospels may invoke the motif of demons in a mythical sense. In light of Ricoeur's model of myth as a means of bringing to consciousness that which otherwise evades reflection, it might be said that demons serve as symbols expressing dark realities that totter on the verge of the unthinkable and inexpressible.

These considerations beg the question as to what extent we can look to the gospels as a source of theological pronouncements made by Jesus on the existence of Satan. The Second Vatican Council regards divine revelation as primarily the revelation of a personal God rather

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[634] Dunn, Twelftree, 'Demon Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament'.

than the revelation of pronouncements.[635] 'In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4).'[636] New Testament texts that refer to demons may first and foremost reveal truth about God and God's saving will. These texts reveal God's will that people be healed and made whole, distancing God's will from the theories of divine retribution that had further marginalized the sick and the poor. This may be the kind of truth conveyed by New Testament references to demons and exorcism.[637] In order to represent a cosmic struggle, the opposition had to be depicted in some manner. Gospel references to demons, however, may tell us little about Jesus' views on the existence of Satan or other disembodied beings. This would be consistent with the central argument of this thesis that the motif of Satan (later classified as a demon in Catholic doctrine) serves to explore possibilities in the God-human relationship.

New Testament references to demons constitute examples of mythical motifs functioning in an expressive rather than an explanatory manner. That is, the mythical motif of demons expresses existential truth in relation to the experience of suffering, madness and marginalization. This is not to deny the reality of Satan and demons per se. Rather, it is to suggest that, in Semitic worldviews, unlike Western perspectives heavily influenced by Greek dualism and by the Enlightenment, reality is not necessarily to be confined to the categories of the historical, empirical, and ontological. Neither is it to say that New Testament texts referring

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[635] Jan Michael Joncas speaks of revelation in such terms in his formation of liturgical ministers, emphasizing that divine revelation is God's self-revelation more than it is the revelation of pronouncements.

[636] *Dei verbum*, #2.

[637] Alan McGill, 'Diagnosing Demons and Healing Humans: The Pastoral Implications of a Holistic View of Evil and Collusion between Its Forms,' *New Theology Review* 27/2 (20015): pp. 70-80. Available at http://newtheologyreview.com/index.php/ntr/article/view/1081/1738**.** Accessed on 5.6.2015.

to demons are themselves mythical by genre. Rather, it is to suggest that they draw upon mythical motifs, that is, in Ricoeur's terms, 'a species of symbols developed in the form of narration and articulated in a time and space that cannot be coordinated with the time and space of history and geography.'[638]

While there is broad scholarly support for the position that gospel references to demons imply a cosmic conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the ungodly, demons also serve another, though not all contradictory, literary purpose. While the Jesus depicted in the gospels may not have made important pronouncements about demons, it might be said that they made important pronouncements about him. As Daniel Saunders observes, the demons of the synoptic gospels announce the messianic identity of Jesus.[639] For example, in Mark's gospel, the first creatures to imply that Jesus is the Son of God are the 'mob' or 'legion' of demons who possess the Gerasene demoniac (Mk. 5:9). Within a literalistic mindset, a denial that demons existed as particular beings, and recognized the true identity of Jesus, could be regarded as a blow to the testimony of the gospels concerning Jesus' identity. In another sense, this helps to explain the decision of the evangelists to include demons in their narrative.

8.8 The Book of Revelation: The Conflict Intensifies

I have argued that gospel references to Satan reflect, at least to some extent, the adversity experienced by the Evangelists and their communities, and that this complicates the assumption that the gospels present pronouncements uttered by Jesus on the subject of Satan. Rather, this may reflect the situation identified by Elaine Pagels, Jon Levenson, and Wilfred Harrington

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[638] Ibid., p. 18.
[639] Daniel Saunders, 'The Devil and the Divinity of Christ', *Theological Studies*, December 1948. http://www.ts.mu.edu/readers/content/pdf/9/9.4/9.4.2.pdf Accessed on 6.26.2013.

whereby conflict in the ancient world was thought to reflect cosmic conflict.[640] If this is the case

for the gospel writers, it is more intensely the case for the author of the Book of Revelation.

The book is apocalyptic in genre, authored in the midst of intense persecution by the

Roman Empire, and envisaging a final standoff between the forces of good and evil. As

Catherine Keller and Candida Moss argue, the Book of Revelation, and apocalyptic literature

more generally, seeks to encourage the righteous, often the persecuted and bereaved righteous, to

stand firm to the end, and to envisage the obliteration of their persecutors.[641] In the Book of

Revelation, it is the Roman Empire rather than Jewish opposition that is vilified. There exists

broad scholarly consensus that the motif of '666', the mark of the beast, alludes to the Greek

spelling of the name of the Roman Emperor, Neron Caesar (Nero).[642]

While Ansgar Kelly asserts that Justin Martyr was the first on record to explicitly identify

the Adamic serpent as Satan, the Book of Revelation seems to preempt such an association.[643]

Verse 12:9 states, 'The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the

Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his

angels were thrown down with him.'[644] Modern readers may be tempted to assume that this verse

constitutes an identification of Satan and the Adamic serpent. However, as Jean Louis D'Aragon

shows, the verse equates Satan with the dragon, and would seem to invoke the chaos monster,

Leviathan, as described in Ps. 74:13 or Rahab as mentioned in Job 26:12 and Psalm 89:10,

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[640] Wilfred Harrington, 'Understanding the Apocalypse'. Cf. Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 44 cited in Pagels, p. 38.
[641] Catherine Keller, 'Dis/ Closing 'the End" in *Apocalypse Then and Now: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 1.Cf. Candida Moss, 'Roman Imperialism and the Political Context of the Early Christian Apocrypha,' *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha* Andrew Gregory, ed. Christopher Tuckett, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013**).**
[642] D'aragon, 'The Apocalypse,' p. 482.
[643] Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'Adam Citings before the Intrusion of Satan: Recontextualizing Paul's Theology of Sin and Death,' *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 44(1): pp. 13-28 at 13.
[644] Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, pp. 176 0 - 179. Tertullian: *Adversus Marcionem,* IV. 38. 2.

serpents in the first century being virtually synonymous with dragons.[645] If this is the case, Revelation 12:9 may be an antecedent to, rather than an instance of, the association of the Adamic serpent with Satan. The imagery of the verse certainly connects the imagery of the fall from heaven with reptilian imagery, perhaps forming a basis for the later identification of Satan with the serpent of Genesis. While the Book of Revelation could not have been known to Jesus, this situation illustrates the complex development of mythical imagery, and the manner in which we can often, at best speak in terms of likelihood with regard to its possible evolution and cross-pollination.

Revelation's references to the serpent and the dragon exemplify the manner in which the apocalyptic mindset appropriates mythical imagery in relation to some particular historical situation. As such, it is an early indication of the manner in which the motif of Satan would be particularized and historicized in response to adversity. Indeed, Paul VI's homily of June 29th, 1972, may, in its references to the 'smoke' of Satan reflect the incendiary imagery of Revelation 20:10 '. . . and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' The pontiff's concern, it could be argued, related to false prophecy, that is, modern insights that challenged trust in the Church's teachings.[646] In a further indication of the apocalyptic tone of the 'smoke of Satan' homily, the pontiff evoked apocalyptic imagery of light and darkness, exclaiming, 'There was the belief that after the Council there would be a day of sunshine for the history of the Church. Instead, it is the arrival of a day of clouds, of tempest, of darkness, of research, of uncertainty.'[647]

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[645] D'Aragon, 'The Apocalypse', p. 482.
[646] Pope Paul VI, Homily on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, Vatican, June 29th, 1972.
[647] Ibid.

The assessment in Revelation 12:9 that the 'entire world' is deceived by Satan may indicate a step in the gradual emergence of the Christian motif of Satan as the entity whose agency indirectly facilitates all evil. Equally well, the reference to the 'whole world' may not carry cosmic overtones so much as an indictment of the Roman Empire.[648] As Catherine Keller notes, that 'world' may be a social construct, that is, the 'known world' of the Roman empire.[649] Hence, this statement may be a grim assessment of the moral status of a particular regime rather than a pessimistic view of the state of creation as a whole.

The First letter of John 5:19 makes a similar claim that 'the whole world is in the power of the evil one.' In the case of 1 John 5:19, however, Luke Timothy Johnson detects exasperation on the part of the author with internal disputes about doctrine rather than persecution from the 'outside world'.[650] In this letter, the term anti-Christ appears to refer to those preaching unorthodox doctrine rather than a particular being.[651]

Revelation's reference to a fall from 'heaven' (and of a war in heaven for that matter) highlights the vast differences between the manner in which terms may be evoked in myth as compared with later doctrinal formulae. That is, the notion of expulsion from heaven is essentially incompatible with a contemporary Catholic understanding of heaven as eternal friendship with God - a state of being that is eternal cannot end. The catechism teaches that those who are in heaven 'live forever with Christ.'[652] The motif of expulsion from heaven seems closer to the 'loss of paradise' associated with classic Christian interpretations of the Adamic myth. This point underscores the sense in which terminology used in the context of mythical narrative

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[648] D'Aragon, 'The Apocalypse', p. 469.
[649] Keller, 'Dis/ Closing 'the End''', p. 13
[650] Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament,* p. 502.
[651] Ibid.
[652] Catechism, #1023.

can hold connotations very different from that associated with its homophones in propositional discourse.

Apocalyptic literature such as the Book of Revelation emerges from situations of conflict and persecution, encouraging the underdog to stand firm and anticipating the ultimate conquest of the enemy. It regards conflict on earth as symptomatic of conflict in the invisible realm. It need not, however, be interpreted as an oracle that provides a privileged glimpse of details of the end of time or of the world hereafter. It is exhortative and consoling rather than descriptive. In this sense, John's Revelation heightens the agenda of the gospel writers who also sought to console persecuted Christians and to inspire faith in the midst of adversity.

8.9 Conclusion

A contribution of the present chapter is its proposal that Jesus' Jewishness, the rich mythical heritage of Jesus' people, and his dexterity with symbol may have influenced anything he uttered with regard to Satan and demons. The same consideration may be applied to invocations of Satan on the part of the Evangelists. Whatever we believe about Satan, there is little reason to believe that Jesus and the gospel-writers were literalists who historicized and particularized the mythical motifs and narratives of their milieu.

This contribution is developed in relation to the assertion in *Christian Faith and Demonology* that the seventh petition of the Our Father (Mt. 6:13) constitutes a pronouncement regarding Satan, and that the Satan in question exists as a creature rather than a symbolic personification. *Demonology* asserts that Jesus issued 'important pronouncements' regarding Satan, and dismisses the possibility that might have used the term in a sense influenced by the mythology of his culture. Given that the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, a document read far more widely and more influential than *Demonology*, argues that the petition is a

reference to a particularized, preternatural Satan, this chapter's discussion on the term, *poneros*, may be a significant contribution.[653]

When we examine the evidence, it is not at all clear what important pronouncements Jesus issued on the subject of Satan. This is not to deny that Jesus may have taught on the subject, but, rather, to question whether the gospels offer access to Jesus' any such teachings. Gospel references to Satan are bound up with the polemics of their authorial contexts, particularly with regard to the demonization of the Pharisees, and the Jews more generally. Consistent with reference to Satan in the Hebrew Bible, the term Satan and derived innuendo can suggest human enemies. *Demonology* seems to assume that New Testament references to Satan and to demons can be traced directly to the lips of Jesus, and constitute pronouncements by him. If the statements in question do not originate on the lips of Jesus, however, this in and of itself by no means renders them invalid. After all, the Catholic Church believes in a dynamic, evolving Tradition, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Gospel references to the broader realm of the demonic also reflect a theme of conflict, invoking the kingdom of malady and misery that is opposed to the kingdom of God. The exorcism narratives assert God's will that wretched, marginalized people be made well. These healing stories hence reject the doctrine of divine retribution. They also identify Jesus as one who embodies God's will and God's power to heal. The Jesus portrayed by the gospels seems more interested in ministering to suffering people than in issuing pronouncements on Satan.

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[653] *Catechism*, #2851-2852.

CHAPTER NINE

WHAT KIND OF TRUTH IS CONVEYED BY THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN, AND HOW MIGHT IT BE BETTER EXPRESSED IN OUR TIME?

Satan as a real possibility rather than a known actuality

9.1 Introduction

This chapter completes the central argument of the thesis, proposing that the mythical motif of Satan, rather than affirming the existence of a particular demonic creature, has long served to mediate theological truth concerning possibilities in the God-human relationship, and that Catholic articulations of the doctrine of Satan can be reformulated so as to continue to facilitate this purpose more effectively in our time. The motif of Satan has expressed the poetic truth of what might come to be in humanity's interaction with the deity, informed by various images of God, ranging from the monist to the ethical monotheistic. The present chapter, however, identifies a modern development that could endanger the capacity of the motif of Satan to continue to serve its exploratory function in relation to humanity's relationship with the Godhead.

The traditions reflected in the Hebrew Bible did not directly equate Satan with evil in and of itself, instead reflecting moral complexity as Satan served the inscrutable will of God, in some instances reflecting monist images of God from whom both good and evil could proceed. Neither has the Christian Tradition flatly equated Satan with evil, as illustrated by St. Augustine's distinction between evil as a privation and Satan as a being who, since it was created by God, is inherently good by virtue of its creaturely existence, however corrupt it had become as a consequence of its choices. In Augustine's thought, reflected to a large extent at the First Council

of Braga, and the Fourth Lateran Council, Satan remained distinct from evil because of its positive existence as a divine creation. However, when modern theologians insist that Satan exists as a reality of some kind beyond the narrative arc of myth, yet reject Satan's personhood, and by implication, Satan's ontological existence as a particular being, they have dispensed with that which, in Augustine's thought, distinguished Satan from the epitome of pure evil. This is especially the case when Satan is described in terms approaching that of a privation. Satan, understood as a figurative or illusory personification of pure evil, can no longer serve to probe into the complexities of the creator-creature relationship.

Having critiqued the remarks of theologians who stray close to an equation of Satan with the privation of evil itself, the chapter explores the viability of Richard Bell's proposal that Satan exists as a noumenal reality. Ultimately, I diverge from Bell's position, concluding that the existence of a mythic motif or archetype does not compellingly indicate the existence of a particular, corresponding noumenal reality. Rather, the chapter argues, Satan exists as a *real possibility* in the creator-creature relationship.

If, as theologians including Han Urs von Balthasar and Richard McBrien suggest, the Church does not say for certain that any human person has irrevocably rejected God so as to experience the state of being traditionally referred to as hell, the motif of Satan may serve as a bearer of that 'possible world.'[654] Satan may hence be said to exist as a mythical motif expressing a real possibility that, for free-willed creatures, looms on the fringes of consciousness.

The doctrine of Satan, emancipated from the historicized misinterpretation of myth, should be reformulated so as to express the possibility that even if a free-willed person might ultimately reject God, the deity would nonetheless sustain that person in being in the state

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[654] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope That All Men Be Saved* ?, David Kipp and Lothar Krauth, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), pp. 144-146.

referred to as hell.[655] For all the punitive connotations associated with hell, the motif of Satan suggests that even if a creature were to use its free-will so as to irrevocably reject God's offer of friendship, God would still sustain that creature in being, neither actively destroying it, nor allowing it to be annihilated as a consequence of its choices. As such, the doctrine of Satan may offer a powerful representation of the possibility of enemy-love, and of God's unconditional sustenance of being.

9.2 Satan Distinguished from Pure Evil by Its Being

Our overview, in chapter six, of the evolution of the motif of Satan showed that the narratives of the Hebrew Bible depict a Satan who is adversarial towards the humans it tests, tempts, obstructs, and incites, but who ultimately serves the will of God, and cannot be simply designated as pure evil. Neither can the Christian Satan be flatly identified with the personification of evil - as may be explicated with reference to the thought of St. Augustine.

'Evil is nothing', proposed St. Augustine, 'since God makes everything that is, and God did not make evil.'[656]Augustine parted ways with both Manichean and Neo-Platonist influences by insisting that creation, though fallen, is essentially good.[657] Having rejected Plotinus's position that matter is evil, Augustine identifies the original choice for evil as arising from the angelic rather than the human realm.

For Augustine, no created thing or being is inherently evil. Evil, for Augustine, is the void of *no-thing*. Yet, Augustine does affirm the ontological existence of demons, including Satan. Frederick Coplestone observes, 'With evil non-existent and only a privation of goodness, it would seem that an invisible world of spirited beings such as demons and angels would also be

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[655] Alan McGill, 'In What Sense Does the Devil Exist? Satan as a Mythic Probe into the Creator-Creature Relationship,' working paper, under review at *Theological Studies.*
[656] Augustine of Hippo, *Confession*s, RS Pine-Coffin, trans. (London: Penguin, 1961), p.8.
[657] John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), p.4.

non-existent, lacking a positive existence.'[658] As Peter Finney notes, Augustine alleviates the apparent contradiction between his model of evil as a privation, and his acceptance of the ontological existence of the devil by insisting that Satan cannot be flatly reduced to the personification of pure evil.[659] Rather, in Augustine's view, affirmed by Braga I and Lateran IV, Satan retained a nature that was created good by God and is shared in common with the angels. 'Not even the devil himself is evil, so far as its nature; but perversity makes it evil.'[660] For Augustine, the devil is not the embodiment of pure evil, since, no matter how perverse it has become by its exercise of free-will, its being, created by God, is inherently good. In Augustine's thought, it is Satan's very being, that is, its status as part of the inherently good creation that distinguishes Satan from evil itself.

9.3 Denying that Satan Exists as a Particular Person

Several contemporary theologians suggest that Satan does not exist as a person but as a non-personal reality of some kind, existing beyond the narrative world of myth. Their remarks, as we shall see, imply that Satan exists in the form of a void, masquerading as positive existence – or a void that cannot, by definition, be represented in the mind except by recourse to positive imagery so that the mind is tricked into thinking in terms of the existence of Satan as a 'thing'. Such a description of Satan, now by implication devoid of the inherent goodness of created things, begins to blur the distinction between Satan and an Augustinian model of evil as a privation. Daniel Day Williams, for one, asserts that 'Satan . . . is not a person. We personalize him as we participate in the demonic powers. He is the mask of the plunge toward annihilation.'[661] Day Williams implies that the personal Satan is a façade that conceals a descent into oblivion. Also,

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[658] Fredrick Coplestone. *A History of Philosophy: Volume II* (Westminster: Newman, 1962), p.76.
[659] Peter Finney, 'Empty Evil and the Positive Devil in Augustinian Philosophy,'
http://www.theologicalclowning.org/pete1.html, accessed on 2.17. 2013
[660] Augustine, *Confession*s, p.160.
[661] Daniel Day Williams, *The Demonic and the Divine* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, Fortress, 1990), p. 5.

drawing upon the metaphor of the mask, Luther Link detects the nothingness that lies behind the faces we attribute to the devil, remarking, '. . . the Devil is not a person. He may have many masks, but his essence is a mask without a face.'[662]

Paul Tillich regards the demonic principle as the destructive forces at work in history, that mimic creation in a kind of creative destruction.[663] Tillich distinguishes the demonic from the satanic which the author regards as an abyss of negativity, utterly devoid of positive existence. For Tillich, Satan is sheer nothingness.[664]

Walter Wink regards Satan as the 'world-encompassing spirit of the domination system.'[665] By 'spirit', Wink means the ethos or inner life of an institution.[666] The author interprets the references to the 'angels' of churches in the Book of Revelation as an allusion to their 'spirit' in this sense.[667] As such, Wink offers a fresh perspective on the position that Satan is a 'spirit' and a fallen 'angel'.

Wink argues that St. Paul's references to the 'powers' are allusions to the 'spirit' of human authorities and structures. Wink believes that the powers exist only within human structures, not as 'angelic or demonic beings fluttering about in the sky.'[668] Consistent with his view of the powers, Satan, for Wink, is neither a being nor pure evil in and of itself, but rather, the spirit or ethos of corrupt human structures that dominate persons and render violence to all who resist.[669]

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[662] Luther Link, *The Devil: A Mask without a Face* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), p.15.
[663] Paul Tillich, 'The Demonic' T*he Interpretation of History*, Available at http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=377&C=47. Accessed on 7.3.2015.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Galilee, 1993), p. 27.
[666] Ibid. pp 24-25.
[667] Ibid. p. 3
[668] Ibid., p. 3: Cf. Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 105.
[669] Ibid.

On Wink's reading, 'The myth of Satan's rebellion and expulsion from heaven symbolically depicts the fate of any creature that lusts after ultimate power and authority.'[670] Interpreting the myth as referring to *any* creature, Wink does not regard it as a reference to one particular creature. Indeed, the thrust of Wink's argument suggests that the myth of Satan's fall expresses the fate of structures (that is, powers) as well as that of creatures who seek to impose totalizing authority.

Notable Catholic theologians too have rejected Satan's existence as a person. Joseph Ratzinger asserts, 'If one asks whether the devil is a person, then one must in an altogether correct way answer that he is the Un-Person, the disintegration and corruption of what it means to be a person. And so it is particular to him that he moves about without a face and that his inability to be recognized is his actual strength.'[671] Ratzinger is by no means denying the reality of Satan. Rather, he denies the devil's personhood while defending the doctrine of Satan against Herbert Haag's broad assertion that it is untenable for moderns to believe in Satan.[672] Ratzinger questions the mode rather than the fact of Satan's existence. The comment that Satan lacks a face may imply a ubiquitous quality - a lack of particularity and personality.

Han Urs von Balthasar, for his part, speaks of the 'non-person-hood' of the devil, suggesting that a propensity for love and relationship is integral to the definition of a 'person' in the full sense.[673] Walter Kasper argues that 'The Devil is not a personal figure, but a self-dissolving mal-figure, an entity that perverts itself into a mal-entity; he is a person in the manner

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[670] Ibid., p. 68.
[671] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey*, eds. Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion (London: T&T Clarke International, 2010), p. 44.
[672] Herbert Haag, *Abschiedvom Teufel* (*Farewell to the Devil*), (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1969), p. 45. Cf. Joseph. Ratzinger, "*Abschiedvom Teufel*?" in *Dogma und Verkündigung*, David Kirchhoffer trans (München/Freiburg: Wewel, 1973) 221–234, 223–224, 226, 227, 228–230. Originally appeared as: J. Ratzinger, '*Abschiedvom Teufel*?', in Bistumsblatt Aachen (Aachen: Einhard-Verlag), pp. 11, 12.
[673]James O'Connor, 'Von Balthasar and Salvation', available at http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=565. Accessed on 7.14. 2014. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope That All Men Be Saved,* pp. 144-146.

of a mal-person.'[674] Granted, Kasper refers to Satan as an entity, implying positive existence. On the other hand, Kasper's reference to a 'self-dissolving mal-figure' suggests an entity that fades from being.

Alenka Zupancic identifies a broader impulse to represent evil as a person. This tendency may be epitomized in the doctrine of a personal Satan. Zupancic argues that the designation of others as evil 'lends a face' to a disturbing void 'beyond representation' that captures the imagination in ways that the good cannot.[675] Zupancic's reference to a 'disturbing void beyond representation' suggests a nothingness that defies representation yet seductively engages the imagination.[676]

9.4 Personhood as a Relationship with the Divine Persons

When contemporary theologians deny the personhood of Satan, their position may be supported by reference to theological anthropologies that propose a high view of personhood. Ian McFarland proposes a model of personhood that could not apply to a Satan that is beyond any hope of redemption, as the Christian Tradition has, for the most part, upheld. McFarland suggests that personhood is defined by an ongoing and potentially salvific relationship with the persons of the Godhead. The Christian Tradition has broadly assumed that Satan, whether by its own choice or because of an external judgment, has lost all hope of such a salvific relationship.[677]

McFarland contends that the classification of personhood should not be contingent upon possession of cognitive abilities, biological viability, independence, or, indeed, any other

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[674] Walter Kasper, and Karl. Lehmann, eds., *'Teufel, Dämonen, Besessenheit. Zur Wirklichkeit des Bösen'* (Broschier: M. Grünewald, Mainz, 1983) quoted in Wolfgang Beinert, ,Francis Schüssler Fiorenza*Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York: Crossroads, 1995), p. 173.

[675] Alenka Zupancic, *Ethics of the Real* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 95. Cf. Christof Cox, 'On Evil: An Interview with Alenka Zupancic,' *Cabinet Magazine* 5 (2001/2002) Available at http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/5/alenkazupancic.php), Accessed on 12.19. 2012.

[676] Ibid.

[677] Ian McFarland, *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), x.

attribute. McFarland proposes that 'the basis of our "personhood" is not any quality that we possess (whether in equal or in different measure), but simply the fact that God in Christ addresses us *as* persons – speaking to us in time the same Word spoken eternally within the Trinity.'[678] McFarland suggests that Christ regards us as persons, and, in doing so, endows us with personhood, speaking to us as to the persons of the Trinity. Personhood thus might be understood as Christ's invitation for us to participate in the community of the Triune Godhead, that is, an invitation to *theosis*.[679] In this sense, the possibility of salvation is integral to personhood. If personhood is defined by a potentially salvific relationship with Christ, then it cannot be attributed to a Satan whose relationship with Christ is beyond the possibility of reconciliation, as the Christian Tradition has, for the most part, upheld. It would make even less sense, in light of McFarland's model of personhood, to argue that a person can be directly equated with evil itself. Evil itself could not, by definition, be rehabilitated so as to participate in the community of the Trinity.

Granted, the argument might be offered that Satan, prior to becoming evil, derived his personhood from Christ, and retains it just as he retains the nature of a 'pure', that is, disembodied, spirit.[680] However, McFarland regards personhood as bestowed by Christ's ongoing address to us as persons, 'Christ addresses us *as* persons – speaking to us in time. . .'[681] McFarland's position suggests that a being is sustained in personhood by Christ's ongoing invitation to relationship, not an invitation that has expired.[682] McFarland's model of personhood

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[678]Ibid. x, pp. 106, 1152.

[679] Ibid.

[680] Norman Tanner, ed., 'The Fourth Lateran Council,' *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* , vol. 1. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), p. 245.

[681] McFarland, *In Adam's Fall*, x.

[682]Catechism, # 392.

could not apply to evil in and of itself, as opposed to fallen beings that are influenced by evil, but fundamentally good insofar as they are created by God and called by Christ to relationship.

9.5 A Modern Tendency to Conflate Satan with the Void of Evil

A denial of Satan's personhood may, by extension, call into question Satan's ontological existence. Granted, it could be argued that Satan positively exists as some kind of created 'thing' but not as a person. However, if nothing God created is inherently evil, it is difficult to explain how a non-personal thing, incapable of choice, became perverse. A related argument might develop the suggestion implied by Ratzinger, Balthasar, and Kasper that Satan exists as some kind of aberration of personhood, a 'non-person', as it were. This might be understood as a creature that has lost its status as a person but is nonetheless capable of exercising free will. That said, the theologians to whom we have referred associate Satan with annihilation, facelessness, and dissolution, their language suggestive of a privation rather than positive existence. A privation is a reality in the sense that a lack of food or compassion or justice, for example, can be painfully real. However, a privation lacks the inherent goodness that would characterize an ontological Satan and distinguish such a Satan from evil in and of itself, so that the motif of Satan can continue to serve as a probe into the moral complexities of the human experience.

As we have noted, for Augustine, it is Satan's being, that is, its status as part of the inherently good creation that distinguishes Satan from evil itself. This thesis, however, has challenged the hermeneutical basis for asserting the ontological existence of Satan. Still, one can deny Satan's existence as an ontological person beyond the narrative arc of myth, and still regard the motif as figuratively signifying the situation wherein a creature is inherently good, a divine creation but exercises its free-will in an irrevocable rejection of God. Understood thus, the motif of Satan, even without reference to a corresponding being, existing beyond the narrative arc of

myth, sustains its characteristic complexity, holding in tension the inherent goodness of Satan's being, as it exists within the mythic world, and, on the other hand, Satan's ultimate choice for evil.

Rejecting an account of Satan as either an ontological person or as the figurative personification of evil in itself, we now turn to the work of Richard Bell who proposes an alternative account of the reality of Satan.

9.6 Demoting Satan from Personhood to a Noumenal Reality

Seeking to denote Satan from a perceived status as a supernatural person, Richard Bell argues that Satan exists as a noumenal reality that the Christian imagination has discovered through myth.[683] The author adopts a high view of myth, regarding it as the primary means through which divine revelation is mediated.[684] Bell's position thus suggests that the doctrine of Satan is rooted in revelation rather than in natural theology.

Bell's perspective on myth suggests a Jungian and Ricoeurian influence, regarding the genre as a means of expressing that which is otherwise largely subconscious. Bell classifies the Satan discovered through myth as a noumenal reality, a 'thing in itself', prior to conscious representation a phenomenon. The author draws upon Schopenhauer's idealist aesthetics so as to argue that the Satan revealed through myth does not exist as a person, but as a noumenal reality.[685] The significance of Bell's contribution is that while other theologians have proposed that Satan exists as something other than a person, Bell develops a constructive alternative. The author adopts a Kantian-Schopenhauerian model of the noumenon as the realm of 'things in themselves', distinct from representations, phenomena that is, created by the mind. As such, the

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[683] Richard Bell, *Deliver us from Evil*, p.173. On his website, Bell speaks of 'demoting the devil' from a perceived status as a supernatural being. https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/theology/people/richard.bell. Accessed on 3.4.2013.
[684] Ibid., p.173.
[685] Ibid., pp. 174, 175.

noumenon cannot be known through the senses. Bell concedes that the noumenon can be known *subliminally*, glimpsed on the very limits of knowing, and described through myth.[686]

Bell does not regard the noumenal Satan as existing within a narrative world constructed by myth, but as a reality beyond the text, best described through the medium of myth. 'In a sense, it would be good to say that we invented the devil through our mythology. But I do not think that will do.'[687] Myth, in Bell's view, serves as a kind of portal through which the noumenal can be 'discovered'.[688] Bell asks, suggestively, '. . . could one say that 'Satan' has a reality in the narrative of the myth but also a reality (. . . of a somewhat different nature) in the noumenal?'[689] Bell hypothesizes 'regarding the ontological status of demons and the devil, there is some form of correspondence between the devil of myth, and the devil of the noumenal world.'[690] It is not immediately clear, however, as to how the existence of a noumenal reality, undetected by the senses, corresponds to a mythical motif. Myths, while they reflect universal questions, tensions and themes, are, after all, the constructs of particular traditions. The connection between the noumenon and representations (phenomena) such as myth may be the archetypes.

9.7 The Archetypes as the Psychological Representation of the Noumenal

Carl Jung regards archetypes as a priori and universal, the psychic equivalent of instincts. They are pictures or patterns of behavior embedded in the subconscious. Jung asserts, 'All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes.'[691] Jung holds this to be especially true in relation to religious constructs, but applies also to scientific, ethical, cultural, and philosophical

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[686] Ibid.
[687] Ibid., p. 173.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid.
[690] Ibid.
[691] Anthony Storr , ed. *The Essential Jung: A Compilation* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983), p.16.

ideas. 'The archetype concept derives from the often repeated observation that myths and universal literature stories contain well-defined themes which appear every time and everywhere. We often meet these themes in the fantasies, dreams, delirious ideas and illusions of persons living nowadays.'[692]

Richard Stromer posits that 'Satan - or the devil as he is alternatively known - has remained among the most popular of archetypal figures of Western Civilization for more than two millennia.'[693] While Stromer refers to Satan as an archetype, that is, a universal image, historical and cultural factors have influenced particular models of Satan. In what sense then, can the motif of Satan meet the criterion of universality so as to be regarded as an archetype? The authors of the Book of Job, for example, could not have been privy to the construct of Satan as later conceived by St. Augustine, or by the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Clearly, no particular model of Satan appears 'every time and everywhere.' This poses a compelling argument against overstating the degree to which any particular mythic image of Satan, as depicted in a given tradition, can be equated with the archetype. Indeed, Stephanie De Voogd argues that the archetype is 'contentless', and should be distinguished from images and representations.[694]

Voicing cynicism regarding the correspondence of the archetype with any reality beyond itself, Jean Knox is unconvinced that the collective subconscious reveals a glimpse of the noumenon. Knox argues that Jung has an inadequate grasp of Kant's model of the noumenal, and

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[692] Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Vol. 9, RF Hull, trans. (Philadelphia: Princeton University, 1981) pp. 153, 154. Cf. Carl Jung Resources. http://www.carl-jung.net/archetypes.html
[693] Richard Stromer, 'On Satan, Demons and Daimons: An Archetypal Exploration,' Available at http://www.soulmyths.com/archetypploration.pdf Accessed on 2.17.2013.
[694] Stephanie de Voogd, C. G. Jung: *Psychologist of the Future, "Philosopher"of the Past* (New York, Spring, 1977), pp. 175–182.

has redefined Kant's categories as 'a mere product of psychic functions.'[695] The collective

subconscious is, after all, a form of representation and is not things-in-themselves.

It may be an unwarranted leap to designate the realities dredged up by myth as noumenal

realties. In what sense are they 'things in and of themselves'? Specifically how does myth affirm

the existence of a noumenal Satan, a thing in and of itself, distinguishable from the

corresponding mythic motif? Archetypes are not in and of themselves proof of the existence of

any particular corresponding noumenal reality. That is to say, the fact that children from

medieval Munich to twenty-first century Manhattan have feared the nightmarish archetype of the

crone does not prove the existence of some corresponding noumenal hag, as though the

noumenal realm contains Plantonic 'forms' that correspond to phenomena.

It would be especially problematic to argue that the noumenal reality that corresponds to

the mythical Satan is that of 'evil in and of itself', in the Augustinian sense. Noumenal evil in

this sense would be 'nothingness in itself' and would doubly defy representation. It is notable

that Jung did not regard the archetype of Satan as a representation of evil per se. Jung suggests

that the archetype of Satan exists within the psyche of each human person, representing the

internal conflict of binary forces.[696] When Lévi-Strauss posits that a characteristic of myth is its

juxtaposition of binary opposites, it makes all the more sense that the motif of Satan has been

expressed in terms of that genre.[697] Jung's evocation of the archetype of Satan refers essentially

to the shadow-side of each of us.[698] As we embark upon a quest to actualize our God-given

potential, forces within us, as well as those outside of us, impede our growth. Jung insists that

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[695] Jean Knox, *Archetype, Attachment, Analysis: Jungian Psychology and the Emergent Mind* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), p. 32.

[696] Les Oglesby, *C. G. Jung and Hans Urs Von Balthasar: God and Evil - A Critical Comparison* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 63.

[697] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 556.

[698] Laurens van der Post, 'Jung's Understanding of the Meaning of the Shadow,' *Jung and the Story of Our Time* (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 205-229.

these forces cannot be obliterated, only integrated. The reconciliation within, an internal *apokatastasis* as it were, enables us to build reconciliation with others. Sallie Nichols suggests that, as Christianity essentially rejected the morally complex image of God with the *ha-shatan* operating on its behalf, it cast Satan as an enemy of God.[699] Perhaps, in exorcising any trace of Satan or darkness from its dominant image of the Godhead, Christianity also exorcised Satan from the *imago Dei*, that is, the self-image, instead objectifying Satan as Other, even as another person. As we shall see however, the motif of Satan may denote possibilities from which we cannot complacently distance ourselves.

9.8 Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds

While Ricoeur essentially concurs with Bell regarding myth as a kind of portal through which otherwise subconscious realities, such as that of Satan, can be discovered, Ricoeur suggests that myth can express both potentialities and actualities that characterize the experience of being human in the world, expressing this world in terms of a narrative world. Ricoeur recognizes in myth a capacity to express the 'possible' as well as the actual. David Stewart regards Ricoeur's approach to the interpretation of narrative as discovering 'a world in front of the text, a world that opens up new possibilities of being.'[700] Richard Kearney identifies Ricoeur's fascination with the 'possible', remarking that 'Ricoeur identifies a rich plurivocity of "possibles" – epistemological, moral, historical, practical, poetical, ontological, and eschatological.'[701] In this regard, Ricoeur is concerned with the identification of what Aristotle refers to as 'poetic truth'. Distinguishing between historical and poetic truth, Aristotle states that 'it is not the poet's

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[699] Sallie Nichols, *Jung and Tarot: An Archetypal Journey* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1980), pp. 269, 270.
As discussed in chapter three, ethical monotheism equated goodness with the will of God and besmirched the image of Satan so as to distance God from evil, and destruction.
[700] David Stewart, 'The Hermeneutics of Suspicion', *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989):pp.296-307 at 306.
[701] Richard Kearney, *A Passion for the Possible: Thinking with Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 50.

function to describe what has actually happened, but the kinds of thing that might happen.'[702] This is the kind of truth that Ricoeur detects in myth.[703]

Aristotle regarded poetic truth as of greater philosophical import than historical truth because it holds universal relevance, dealing with what might happen to any person, as opposed to what actually happened to particular persons. 'For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts.'[704] If myth can be regarded as an expression of that which is universally possible, this may hold implications for the manner in which mythic language is adopted in doctrinal formulations.

Walter Wink captures this sense in which the imagination of the possible is crucial to the religious sensibility. With reference to Feurbach's dismissal of religion as the product of imagination, Wink remarks, ' . . .he was unable to grasp the positive meaning of his insight . . . the realm of imagination, or what I prefer to call, following Henry Corbin, the imaginary realm, produces a third kind of knowing, intermediate between the world of ideas, on the one hand, and the world of sense perception, on the other.'[705] Wink regards this imaginal realm, situated between the realm of ideas and the realm of action, as an arena in which the possibilities may be rehearsed. In myth, possibilities are actualized within an imaginal world so that, as Wink suggests, 'We perceive the action as if it were staged on the physical plane but it is not.'[706] Myth might be regarded as narrative that stages possibilities, as well as actualities. 'This intermediate

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[702]Aristotle, *Poetics* Part IX, S. H. Butcher, trans. Internet Classics Archives, Available at: http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html**.** Accessed on 7.13.2014.
[703] Ibid.
[704] Ibid.
[705] Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of Man,* pp. 40-41 quoted in D. Seiple, Frederick Weidmann, eds. *Enigmas and Powers: Engaging the Work of Walter Wink for Classroom, Church and World* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2008), pp. 105-106. Wink refers to Henry Corbin, *Creative Images in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 174.
[706] Seiple and Weidmann, *Enigmas and Powers,* p. 106.

world of images and archetypes can be known only by the "transmutation of inner spiritual states into outer states, into vision-events symbolizing these inner states".'[707] Myth is rooted in 'vision-events', but these are events that are played out in the forum of the possible, and have necessarily transpired in the realm of actuality, and of the particular.

One might object to the argument that myth facilitates an envisioning of possibilities, countering that myths have long been regarded as an expression of human limitations – the maddening disconnect between our aspirations and our abilities. As Bronislaw Malinowski observes, the myths of the ANE seek to reconcile human beings to the limitations inherent in their human condition, such as being mortal and fallible, and with the tension between these limits and human aspirations to transcend them.[708]

In a case in point, the Yahwist school of authors, whose influence may be detected in the Book of Genesis, for example, display a concern for the limitations of human capacities in relation to the rightful role of the deity.[709] The Adamic narrative, the Babel narrative, and the non-biblical myth of Gilgamesh reinforce the boundaries that define the experience of being human. These texts seek to reconcile readers to their bounded reality, offering cautionary tales regarding attempts to transgress the boundaries that define what it means to be human. While, at first glance, this concern for limits may appear to stand in tension with myth's rehearsal of the possible as identified by Ricoeur, these are two sides of the same coin. The juxtaposition of aspiration and restriction points precisely to the possible. The possible is identified in terms of its delineation from the impossible. If a narrative reminds the reader of their mortality, it also

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[707] Ibid.

[708] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Redfield (Glencoe: Free Press, 1948), pp. 72-124 cited in Segal, p. 358.

[709] David Melvin, 'Divine Mediation and the Rise of Civilization in Mesopotamian Literature and Genesis 1- 11' *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 10 (17) pp. 2- 15 at 10. Available at http://www.jhsonline.org. Accessed on 4.14.2014.

provokes a wistful pondering of what it might be like to be immortal. To gaze upon the horizon is to let one's view rest upon a limit, granted not an ultimate one, a line beyond which we can see no further. If, as CS Lewis famously quipped, all things were translucent and our view encountered no limits, then we could see nothing at all.[710] Hence, it might be said, Malinowski's insight that myth expresses the experience of human limitations is the corollary of Riceour's insight that myth serves as a probe into the possible.

Ricoeur's characterization of myth as a bearer of the possible, suggests that the genre is particularly suited to engage the mystery of evil. Karl Simms notes that Ricoeur regards evil as a possibility rather than as an external force, much less an ontological Satan. 'Evil is not an external metaphysical force that is presented to God as an object. It is not, for example, a "Satan" if Satan means a kind of other person who brings evil into the world. Evil is a possibility which man is born with – whether he realizes this possibility or not is up to him.'[711] The present work proposes a model of Satan that is not 'a kind of other person' so much as the real possibility that any person might actualize the inherent possibility of evil so as to irrevocably reject God.

9.9 Satan as a Real Possibility

Our exegesis, in chapter six, of satanic motifs in the Hebrew Bible and extracanonical literature suggests possibilities in the God-human relationship, potentialities that may or may not exist in actuality as things in themselves. When Bell proposes that the mythic motif of Satan facilitates the discovery of a reality that lurks on the fringes of consciousness, could it be that this reality is not so much a noumenal one as a *possibility*? Possibilities, particularly those concerning death, the unknown, and evil, it might be said, loiter ominously on the shadowy fringes of

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[710] CS Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: MacMillan, 1944), pp. 80-81. Available at https://archive.org/details/TheAbolitionOfMan_229. Accessed on 5.7.2014.

[711] Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 16 Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles Kelbey (Chicago: Regnery, 1965), p.203,

consciousness, very much the hoodies of our psychic neighborhood. The present work, at this point, diverges from Bell's account of Satan as a noumenal reality. I propose that if Satan exists on the fringes of consciousness as Bell suggests, it may exist there in the form of a *possibility* rather than a noumenal reality in the sense of an actual thing-in-itself.

The suggestion that Satan exists as a possibility rather than an actuality or noumenal reality, is by no means to suggest that Satan is impotent and innocuous. The power of that which *might* be is all too evident in the airports of the world as millions of passengers are subjected to security procedures driven by what a tiny percentage of passengers might do. The power of the possible may be painfully apparent in the reactions of other passengers when a group of Muslim men in ostensibly Middle-Eastern attire board a plane at JFK or Heathrow airports, and when it becomes public knowledge that an Ebola victim may be at large in a city. To speak of Satan as existing in the realm of the possible is not to relegate Satan to the realm of the unreal. The possible exerts powerful influence over the actual.

9.10 A Soteriological possibility: God's Unconditional Sustenance of Being

If myth is characterized by a capacity to depict possible worlds, and if the mythical motif of Satan has long served to probe possibilities in the Creator-creature relationship, the motif may continue to do so with regard to soteriological possibilities. The doctrine of Satan has provided a means of speaking about the condition of hell that may exist as a potentiality rather than an actuality.

Hans Urs von Balthasar contends that it falls short of the salvific will of God, and hence of Christian hope, to pray only for one's own salvation or that of certain individuals.[712] On the other hand, von Balthasar rejects the presumptuousness of universalism, identifying such thought

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[712] Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Thomas Aquinas,' *Dare we Hope?*, p.74.

as a form of predestination.[713] For von Balthasar, it remains a possibility, rather than a foregone conclusion, that any human person is actually damned for all eternity. Citing Hans Jurgen Verweyen, von Balthasar argues that if we love unreservedly as Christ calls us to, we should not despair of anyone, fatalistically accepting their condemnation.[714]

The Church does not presume that it can know with certainty that any given human person is in the state of being known as hell. As Richard McBrien interprets it, 'Neither Jesus, nor the Church after him, ever stated that persons actually go to hell or are there now. He - as does the Church - restricts himself to the *possibility*.'[715] McBrien's assertion regarding the Church's teachings on hell may be substantiated by reference to the documents of Vatican Two, among other ecclesial sources. The Council's *Declaration on the Church's Relations with the Non-Christian Religions* asserts the possibility that non-Christians may be saved, and Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris missio* argues that Christ wills the salvation of all people, and that this is a realistic possibility.[716] Even in the cases of those villains of history, reviled by humanity, the Church cannot say for certain that God's love has not ultimately prevailed. It is one thing to reject images of God, mediated through human language and concepts. It would be quite another thing to reject the Beatific Vision. Still, if humanity has been endowed with genuine free will, it must be conceivably possible to do so, and hell must remain a real possibility.

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[713] Ibid., 'The Personal Character', p. 93.
[714] Ibid. 'Thomas Aquinas', p. 78.
[715] Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (New York: Harpercollins, 1994), p. 1152.
[716] The Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on the Church's Relations with the Non-Christian Religions (Nostra aetate)* (Vatican, 1965)*, #1. Available at:*
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html**. Accessed on 3.3.2015. Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* (Vatican, 1990), Chapter 2. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html**. Accessed on 3.3.2015.

Paragraph 1035 of the 1992 catechism affirms that humans who die in a state of mortal sin are dispatched to hell, but the Church cannot assume that anyone has died without repenting, or has possessed the knowledge, freedom to act, and by extension, the sanity required in order to be culpable for mortal sin.[717] The only 'persons' that the Church could say, with certainty are in hell, are Satan and the other demons. If, however, Satan and the demons do not exist as beings in the cosmos beyond the narrative arc of myth, then they may serve as imaginal probes into the possibility of hell. Hence, the mythical motif of Satan, and of the other demons, would serve to illustrate a prospective situation, a logical possibility in view of the reality of free will, and of the reality that love cannot be coerced, even by God. Reference to damnation, in this sense, signifies what Wink calls a 'vision event' rehearsing possibilities.[718]

Hell, it might be said, exists as a possibility to the extent that a genuinely free creature could refuse God's invitation to friendship. The 1992 catechism speaks of hell as the natural consequence of freely choosing to reject relationship with God, our neighbor, and significantly, the poor.[719] Our capacity to freely love God and neighbor must entail the possibility of rejecting this option – even forever. This is a very different prospect to that of a punishment externally imposed by God. Von Balthasar cites Maurice Blondel's conviction, that Christ condemns no one – rather we condemn ourselves.[720] Rahner too proposed that hell is not externally imposed by God but could be a natural consequence of the cumulative effects of sin.[721] Ron Highfield characterizes Rahner's position, remarking, 'Hell's gate is locked from the inside.'[722] Similarly,

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[717] Catechism, #1035.
[718] Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), pp. 40-41, quoted in D. Seiple, Frederick Weidmann, eds. *Enigmas and Powers: Engaging the Work of Walter Wink for Classroom, Church and World* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2008), pp. 105-106. Wink refers to Henry Corbin, *Creative Images in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), p. 174.
[719] Catechism, #1033.
[720] Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Blondel's Dilemma,' *Dare we Hope that "*, p.114.
[721] Karl Rahner, 'The Punishment of Sins'.
[722] Ron Highfield, 'The Freedom to Say "No"?' p. 494.

Joseph Ratzinger writes, 'Christ inflicts pure perdition on no one. In himself he is sheer salvation. Anyone who is with him has entered the space of deliverance and salvation. Perdition is not imposed by him, but comes to be wherever a person distances himself from Christ.'[723]

Significantly, von Balthasar rejects the possibility of the *apokatastasis*, that is, the redemption of Satan and the other demons.[724] It might be argued that it is integral to the Christian motif of the fallen Satan (as opposed to its forerunners) that it represents the scenario wherein there is no possibility of a creature repenting so as to receive God's mercy. It is precisely the hopeless intransigence of the mythic Satan that illustrates the ultimate expression of God's unconditional love, sustaining in being that creature that will never accept God's mercy and friendship. To hope for an *apokatastasis*, on the other hand, is to presume that at least one actual being is actually experiencing the state of hell.

So too, the 1992 catechism suggests that the plight of the demons, devoid of hope of salvation, is an inherent consequence of their choice rather than a punishment imposed by God. 'It is the *irrevocable* character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy that makes the angels' sin unforgivable. "There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death".'[725] The situation of Satan and the demons, as ideated with reference to mythical language, hence illustrates a possibility for human persons. We speak of the mythic persona of Satan in a situation in which we should not speak of any particular human person – that is, the situation of having irrevocably refused friendship with God. The truth of the doctrine of Satan may hence represent a potentiality rather than an actuality – a poetic truth that could potentially pertain to any creature capable of mortal sin.

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[723]Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1977), xxi.
[724] Von Balthasar, 'Origen and the Apokatastasis,' *Dare We Hope*, pp. 174-190.
[725] Catechism, #393.

In a curious sense, the doctrine of Satan as often presented in Christian discourse, is a statement of faith in God's unconditional love. Even if a creature were to reject God, with utterly no hope of recanting and seeking reconciliation, God would continue to sustain that creature in being. As soon as a God of unconditional love endows creatures with genuine freedom, there must then be the possibility of Satan – a creature that chooses to forever turn its back on God but whom God will not surrender to oblivion.

Interpreted in this way, the Satan that Bell locates on the cusp of consciousness may not be an ominous reality so much as an assurance that God's grace will always stand between persons and oblivion. The Augustinian account of evil and of Satan suggests the possibility that a being might finally opt for the void of nonbeing rather than the Ground of Being itself. Paul Tillich, who identifies Satan as nonbeing, chillingly proposes that our relationship with nonbeing may be more intimate than we care to acknowledge. Tillich remarks that nonbeing exists within us proposing that 'nonbeing is a part of one's own being . . .'[726] Tillich suggests that we experience anxiety as the prospect that our being might one day be subsumed by nonbeing.[727] Whereas fear is an anticipation of specific phenomena, that is representations in the mind, anxiety, according to Tillich, is the anticipation of something vague, awful and formless. 'Anxiety has no object, or rather in a paradoxical phrase, its object is the negation of every object.'[728] Ultimately, all anxiety reflects the prospect of losing our very being. 'The only object is the threat itself, but not the source of the threat, because the source of the threat is "nothingness".'[729] Tillich's insight may express an existential implication of Augustine's model of evil as nothingness. The concept of nothingness evokes anxiety in the face of the ultimate

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[726] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University, 1952), p. 38. Cf. Tillich, 'The Demonic'.
[727] Ibid., p. 36.
[728] Ibid.
[729] Ibid., p. 35.

unknown. It also illustrates the influence that a possible scenario may exert upon our actual situation in the present. The figure of Satan, perhaps counter-intuitively, suggests an assurance that God will sustain a creature in being even if that creature willfully rejects God in favor of nonbeing.

9.11 Conclusion

The contribution of the present chapter completes the argument of the thesis that the Church's presentation of the doctrine of Satan, conscious of the theological implications of the genre of myth, should allow the doctrine to continue to develop as it serves the 'bearer of possible worlds', expressing possibilities in relation to the Creator-creature relationship. The Satan revealed by myth exists as both a literary probe into the soteriological possibility known as 'hell', and as a potential reality – that is, the real possibility that a creature might use its free will to irrevocably reject God, yet still be sustained in being by God. Ultimately, the doctrine of Satan may express a truth concerning God's unconditional sustenance of being.

A second contribution of the chapter is its recognition that a Satan stripped of ontological existence, albeit within the narrative arc of myth, is a Satan stripped of the grace that infuses being. Such a Satan is close to a uni-dimensional avatar, denoting evil in and of itself, and devoid of the moral complexity that has long allowed the motif to function as an exploratory device, probing into the complexities of humanity's relationship with the Creator.

The chapter offers a critical evaluation of Richard Bell's account of Satan as a noumenal reality. Bell proposes that the Christian imagination discovered Satan in and through myth, and that this mythical Satan may be as close as we can come to representing a noumenal reality of Satan as it exists on the fringes of consciousness. Bell views myth as a genre capable of bringing to consciousness that which is otherwise largely subconscious. The author makes an invaluable

contribution to the theology of Satan by emphasizing the crucial role of myth in discovering the devil, and by demoting Satan from a perceived ontological, personal existence. However, the identification of a mythic motif or an archetype does not necessarily affirm the existence of a particular, underlying noumenal reality. Furthermore, the evolution of the mythical motif of Satan reveals possibilities – eschatological, soteriological, and moral – that may not exist as actualities, noumenal or otherwise.

The possibilities denoted by the mythic Satan relate to dimensions of the Creator-creature relationship rather than to the existence of a particular, supernatural being. They express figuratively the complexities and ambiguities faced by human characters from Job to Jesus as they face the mysteries of suffering, evil, and divine providence. As the Catholic Tradition develops in its thinking about hell, the mythic motif of Satan is well-poised to serve as a hypothetical device, probing into the implications of a possible scenario whereby a free-willed being ultimately rejects God.

While the state of hell has been associated with punishment, it can also be viewed as a natural and self-inflicted consequence of the exercise of free-will. Love of God cannot be forced and if free-will is genuine, there must be the possibility of rejecting God. Walter Brueggemann invoked the concept of plausible deniability so as to suggest that 1 Chron. 21:11 invokes the figure of Satan so as to perform the deity's dirty work and spare the deity direct involvement and obvious knowledge of the misdeed in question.[730] Perhaps, the concept of plausible deniability can also be invoked in a quite different sense in relation to the doctrine of Satan. That is, the doctrine can denote the plausible possibility that a free-willed creature can reject God and endure to tell the tale. It is only in view of such a possibility that love for God is truly voluntary, and is

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[730] Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament*, p.188.

hence genuine love. If God extends unconditional love for creatures, and endows them with genuine free will, then, by necessity, Satan must exist as a possibility.

CHAPTER TEN – CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis proposes a central argument that the Church's presentation of the doctrine of Satan should be emancipated from an anachronistic, historicized interpretation of mythical narratives and motifs that regards them as affirmations of the existence and historical misdeeds of Satan as a particular being, so as to instead serve a probe, exploring possibilities in the relationship between the Creator and free-willed creatures. In pursuing this argument, the thesis offers several distinct contributions as follows:

10.1 Paul VI's 'Smoke of Satan' homily as an underestimated moment with implications for dialogue between the Church and the modern world

This thesis identifies the underestimated extent to which the doctrine of Satan became entangled, more than most doctrines, in the debate as to the degree to which the Church should be open to the development of doctrine in light of the insights of modernity. It highlights the significance of Pope Paul VI's invocation, in his homily of June 29, 1972, of the influence of a 'preternatural' Satan, exuding an atmosphere of uncertainty, questioning, and doubt. The pontiff exclaimed, 'From some fissure, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God.' [731]

Pope Paul VI's further reflections in his audience of November 15, 1972 upon the doctrine of Satan affirmed the position that Satan is a creature rather than an abstraction or figurative device: 'It is a departure from the picture provided by biblical and Church teaching to refuse to acknowledge the Devil's existence; to regard him as a self-sustaining principle who,

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[731] Pope Paul VI, Homily on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, Vatican, June 29th, 1972 , Website of the Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/homilies/1972/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19720629_it.html Accessed on 1.27. 2011. Cf. Donald McClarey, 'Pope Paul VI and the Smoke of Satan,' http://catholicstand.com/109 12.4.2011.

unlike other creatures, does not owe his origin to God; or to explain the Devil as a pseudo-reality, a conceptual and fanciful personification of the unknown causes of our misfortunes.'[732] The doctrine of Satan was becoming a watchword in the endeavor to resist the updating of doctrine in light of modern insights. The pontiff's remarks of November 15, 1972, are quoted in the 1975 study, *Christian Faith and Demonology* which once more rejects attempts to present the doctrine of Satan in reference to something other than a particular creature. The 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* would, in turn, closely reflect the position of *Demonology,* insisting that the reference to evil in the seventh petition of the Our Father refers to a personal Satan, rather than evil in a more holistic sense. [733] In this manner the doctrine of Satan became a kind of line in the sand and a metonymy, signifying resistance to the possibility of the development of doctrine in light of the insights of modernity.

10.2 Satan as a mythical probe into possibilities in the God-human relationship

It might be argued that Paul VI's invocation of the doctrine of Satan with regard to new and challenging theories was, in one sense, quite consistent with the invocation of the doctrine of Satan in the biblical tradition. The motif of Satan has long served as a probe into possibilities in the God-creature relationship. As images of God evolved from henotheism and monism to ethical monotheism so too did images of Satan. As such, Paul VI, albeit in a defensive manner, invoked the motif in relation to attempts to probe into new possibilities, new temptations, new obstacles, new tests, new conflicts and new ways of thinking about God and the Church.

On a related note, with reference to St. Augustine's distinction between evil as a privation and Satan as a being that is inherently good, but perverted through its exercise of free-will, the doctrine of Satan can witness to the essential goodness of all of creation, and support a

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[732] Pope Paul VI in his address, 'Deliver us from Evil' given at the General Audience of 15 November 1972. Quoted in *Christian Faith and Demonology*.
[733] Catechism, #2851 - 2852.

sacramental perspective whereby all of reality can potentially mediate the divine. This can apply to modern processes of interpretation, communication and development just as it applied to such processes in ancient Israel and later biblical settings. The 'smoke of Satan' could, in this sense, be reinterpreted to denote the essential goodness of creation that can, at times, be difficult to recognize.

When the mythical narratives and motifs that underpin the doctrine of Satan are interpreted as myth, rather than misinterpreted as history or biography, it becomes apparent that the motif of Satan has long functioned as a device through which to probe the relationship between free-willed creatures and their creator. Hence, the motif has been associated with the scriptural themes of free will, temptation, providence, suffering, conflict, theodicy, and the mystery of evil.

Paul Ricoeur regards myth as an expression of the possibilities as well as the existential actualities that confront all people. Myth for Ricoeur is the 'bearer of possible worlds.'[734] Our exploration of the evolution of the mythic motif of Satan reveals the cross-pollination of various strands of tradition, giving rise to a composite motif of Satan that invokes possibilities in the relationship between free-willed creatures and their Creator. Thus, our survey of the development of the mythical motif of Satan affirms Ricoeur's view of myth as a purveyor of the possible.

10.3 The importance of hermeneutical consciousness in the formulation of doctrine and the hermeneutical limits of the 'sensus plenior'

Myth does not reconstruct particular events or recount the agency of particular beings, even when it is interpreted in the context of the canon of scripture, so as to detect a fuller meaning or *sensus plenior*. The catechism's interpretation of the Adamic myth invokes the *sensus plenior*,

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[734] Richard Kearney's interview with Paul Ricoeur,"Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds." Cf. p. 225.

arguing that the full significance of the narrative only becomes apparent in light of the Christ event. The present work proposes that, while the interpretation of biblical myth in the context of the entire canon can uncover theological significance beyond that known to the ancient myth-makers, canonical exegesis cannot change the kind of truth at stake so as to derive historical or biographical details from myth. No amount of canonical exegesis can derive historical reconstruction from the narrative of the fall of the angels, any more than it can do so from the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Canonical exegesis can no more derive historical data from myth than it can derive biography from parable. Myth cannot affirm, or for that matter preclude, the existence of any particular creature.

The thesis addresses John McKenzie's argument that the ancient writers of myth did not deliberately choose a poetical, supra-historical genre, but rather, it was all they had available to express what later be regarded as philosophy. Whereas *Dei verbum* and the 1992 catechism exhort interpreters of scripture to seek out the intentions of the sacred authors so as to discover what God sought to reveal through their words, it might be argued that the sacred authors did not consciously intend to employ the genre of myth in the poetic, supra-historical sense such as that advanced by Paul Ricoeur. McKenzie's argument does not, however, lend any support for the historicization of myth. Myth understood as a primitive form of narrative philosophy would be a very different prospect to myth understood as primitive historical narrative that recounts particular events and personages.

The thesis holds implications for the use of mythical language in the presentation of doctrine in general. If Marion, Tracy, and Lévi-Struass are right concerning the surplus of meaning rendered by myth, irreducible to any particular doctrinal stance, then myth serves as a kind of 'hyperlink' in the midst of a catechetical text, transporting the reader God-knows

where.[735] This is not to preclude references to myth in doctrinal and catechetical texts, but to acknowledge its power and nuance. Myth is always far more than a vehicle for a given doctrinal position.

10.4 Bringing theological scrutiny to bear upon the study, 'Christian Faith and Demonology'

The study, *Christian Faith and Demonology,* anonymously authored, and published by the CDF, argues that gospel references to Satan should be interpreted as instances wherein Jesus uttered important pronouncements regarding the devil. The study allows for little or no hermeneutical distance between the utterances of Jesus and the words of the gospel writers.

Demonology argues that Jesus transcended the pressures of his culture so as to intentionally present distinctive pronouncements on the subject. In particular, it interprets the seventh petition of the Our Father as a reference to a personal Satan. The study dismisses the possibility that Jesus may have spoken mythically in relation to the motif of Satan, going so far as to associate mythical speech with mental infirmity.

The present work engages *Demonology* on several fronts, but most significantly, it asserts the significance of Jesus' Jewishness, and argues that we have good grounds to believe that Jesus would, to some extent, have been influenced by a mythopoeic worldview that featured mythical narratives and motifs concerning Satan. Without dismissing the possibility that Jesus sought to convey new teachings regarding Satan, this thesis insists that gospel references to Satan should be read in light of the development of motifs of Satan in the Hebrew Bible and extracanonical narratives. It credits Jesus with a propensity to creatively adapt motifs from his culture, adding to them new layers of significance. In doing so, it rejects the low view of myth adopted in *Demonology,* which virtually equates the genre with fables, fallacies, and delusion.

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[735] Marion, 'The Erotic Phenomenon,' p. 22; Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination,* p. 100; Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth,' p. 808.

While challenging *Demonology* for its neglect of the Hebrew Bible and Jesus' heritage, the present work also acknowledges that the evolution of the motif of Satan may have been influenced by the Zoroastrian dualism encountered by Jewish exiles in Babylon. Hence, the motif of Satan reflects the influence of another world religion. Perhaps counter-intuitively, given the well-proven potential of the motif to be utilized in the demonization of the Other, the motif of Satan stands in testimony to the creative potential engendered by the interplay of strands of religious tradition, and even the interplay of world religions. None of this development is acknowledged in *Demonology* which seeks to distance Jesus' alleged teachings about Satan from pre-existing traditions. The study effectively denies the development that has led to Christian models of Satan, just as it discourages future development.

10.5 The significance of Satan's creaturely being within the narrative arc of myth, and the modern risk of conflating Satan with the privation of evil

Having offered a critique of *Christian Faith and Demonology* and its disparagement of attempts to develop the manner in which the doctrine of Satan might be more effectively presented for our time, the thesis is also critical of remarks by contemporary theologians, including Ratzinger, von Balthasar, Day Williams and Link, who argue that Satan exists as a reality other than a person and describe this reality in terms suggestive of a privation: 'annihilation', 'dissolution', and facelessness. Such descriptions of Satan would seem to blur the distinction between on the one hand, the creature, Satan and, on the other, an Augustinian model of evil as a privation. The creature, Satan, as variously presented in myths, bears a capacity to facilitate the exploration of the moral complexities of creature-hood and its relationship to the Creator-God in a way that personification of pure evil, whether figuratively illusory, could not do. While disputing the capacity of myth to affirm the ontological existence of Satan beyond the narrative arc, this thesis

acknowledges the importance, *within* the narrative world, of Satan's identity as a free-willed creature of God.

10.6 A Critical evaluation of Richard Bell's account of Satan as a noumenal reality

Having rejected Satan's existence as a supernatural being, Richard Bell proposes a constructive alternative by thinking of Satan as a noumenal reality, the liminal experience of which is figuratively expressed through myth. Chapter nine considers the possibility that the archetypes, embedded in the collective subconscious, serve as a bridge between mythic motifs and corresponding noumenal realities. Ultimately, however, I call into question the assumption that a mythic motif corresponds to a particular noumenal reality. The motif and archetype of the hag does not, for example, prove the existence of a noumenal hag. Therefore, I concur with Bell, that Satan exists as a reality looming on the fringes of consciousness, but diverge from Bell's account, proposing that Satan's mode of existence is that of an impending possibility.

10.7 Satan as the possibility that a being might irrevocably reject God, yet God would unconditionally sustain the existence of that being in the ultimate expression of enemy-love

Several Catholic theologians, including Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Richard McBrien, have argued that the Church no longer teaches that any particular human person is, for certain, in hell.[736] If hell is a mode of relationship, or lack thereof, a condition rather than a place, and if it is unknown as to whether any human person is experiencing this condition, then in what sense can it be said to exist? One possibility is to envisage a category of inhuman damned, demons, that is, as currently experiencing the condition of hell so that it can be said to exist in actuality. Since, however, as Richard Bell argues, the motifs of Satan and the demons are derived from myth rather than from historical texts that affirm the existence of particular personages, one

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[736] Balthasar, 'Thomas Aquinas,' *Dare We Hope?"*, p. 1152.

might adopt a more critical stance on the question of the ontological existence of demons.[737] In

this case, hell might be said to exist as a 'possible world.' As such, the mythical motif of Satan

serves as a mythic probe into the possible world of hell, and Satan might be said to exist as a real

possibility.

The present work expounds upon this position, arguing that the possible world of hell can

be viewed in terms other than the traditional fixation on eternal punishment. Blondel, Rahner,

and Ratzinger propose that hell is a possible consequence of the exercise of free will, rather than

a punishment externally imposed by God.[738] If this is the case, then it might be argued that the

doctrine of Satan expresses the possibility that a being might irrevocably reject God, yet God

would continue to sustain that creature in being, in the ultimate expression of enemy love.

10.8 An Updated Exposition on the Doctrine of Satan

In closing then, it might be argued that the doctrine of Satan should be presented with the

hermeneutical candor sought by the PBC, and in light of the teaching of *Mysterium ecclesiae* that

doctrinal formulations never preclude the possibility of a more effective and more complete

reformulation for a given age.[739] Far from an attempt to purge doctrine of its mythical language,

this is an endeavor to allow the mythical language reveal the kind of truth it is poised to convey.

As such, it may not be beyond the bounds of reason that future presentations of the doctrine of

Satan in catechetical and other ecclesial texts might teach something to the effect of the

following:

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[737] Bell, *Deliver Us From Evil*, p. 173.
[738] Balthasar, 'Blondel's Dilemma,' *Dare We Hope?"*; Rahner, 'The Punishment of Sins'; Highfield, 'The Freedom to Say "No"?', p. 494.
Ratzinger, *Eschatology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1977), xxi.
[739] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, #* 34. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium ecclesiae, #5.*

The Church teaches that the Triune God is a community of loving, divine persons who, in their desire to disseminate love, called creation into being.[740] According to the divine plan, God would share in human nature through the incarnation, and humanity would come to share in the divine nature through *theosis*.[741] The Triune Godhead endows the sentient creatures, humans and angels, with free will so that they may love God and one another with the volition that is essential to love. Genuine love must be freely given and hence it always presupposed free will, with the inherent possibility that love will be rejected. As such, as soon as God created free-willed beings, there existed the possibility, not only that free-willed persons might err and repent, but that, conceivably, a free-willed creature might resolutely and ultimately reject God's love. This possibility is expressed in Christian theology, among others, with reference to the motif of Satan, the creature who has forever turned its back on God but is still sustained in being by God who, in the ultimate act of enemy-love, refuses to annihilate it. The Tradition has spoken of Satan through the language of myth, envisaging a free-willed, inhuman person in a situation that we cannot be certain applies in actuality to any human person. It has spoken of Satan with recourse to the mythical motif of an angel, created good by God, who has exercised its free will so as to introduce evil into creation.[742] In this manner, the Tradition has held that all that God creates is inherently good, though open to the possibility of corruption in an evolving universe created free by God. Mythical language, including the mythical motif of Satan, has, from ancient times, empowered the exploration of possibilities in the Creator-Creature relationship, serving as a probe into the unknown, delving ever deeper into the mysteries of suffering, evil, free-will, providence, and divine compassion. Therefore, the biblical and cultural motif of Satan serves as a probe into aspects of the God-human relationship and, furthermore, Satan, the creature that irrevocably rejects God, exists as a possibility – even if not in actuality.

A presentation of the doctrine of Satan formulated along these lines may not find unanimous support. Counter-intuitively, it may be the case that belief in the existence of a disembodied ontological Satan provides a certain reassurance that ontological existence is not dependent upon physical embodiment. The disembodied Satan may hence represent hope in life after death. Indeed, the imagery of Satan and of hell may be far less terrifying than the prospect of oblivion. The reformulation I propose does not, however, demand that such hope be abandoned. It in no way involves a denial of life after death. It does, however, suggest that the existence of the irrevocably fallen being is a possibility rather than an actuality known with certainty.

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[740] John Duns Scotus, III Sent., d. 7, 4. Quoted by Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience of July 7, 2010.
[741] Catechism, 460. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc*. 57, 1-4; Cf.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100707_en.html
Accessed on 11.1.2013.
[742] Lateran Council IV, Canon 268 (1215).

The perspective on Satan advanced in this thesis raises a question with broad applicability to doctrine. Is doctrine ever ultimately concerned with ontological truth, ultimately hinging upon the existence of *things*? After all, to speak of the existence of God is to resort to an analogy of being, rather than to count God as one thing that exists alongside all other, albeit lesser things. Could it be that all doctrine is ultimately concerned with universal possibilities – even when the narratives of a particular tradition illustrate these truths with reference to particular persons, times, and places? Experience is always particular, yet it can yield a glimpse of ultimate possibility. As Rigby *et al.* argue, doctrines need not be assumed to refer to referents that exist in the world as it is.[743] Rather, these authors propose, 'They do not describe the world as it is, but as it could be. Doctrines project practical possibilities of life and of being in the world.'[744] As such, doctrinal statements may each be starting points for the exploration of the mysterious co-presence of the divine in all persons, all times, and all places, that is, forays into the possible.

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[743] Paul Rigby, John Van Den Hengel, Paul O'Grady, 'The Nature of Doctrine and Scientific Progress,' *Theological Studies 52* (1991), pp. 669-688 at 687.
[744] Ibid.

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