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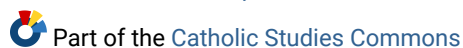
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Multilayered Agency and Religion: A Study of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (1986–1998)

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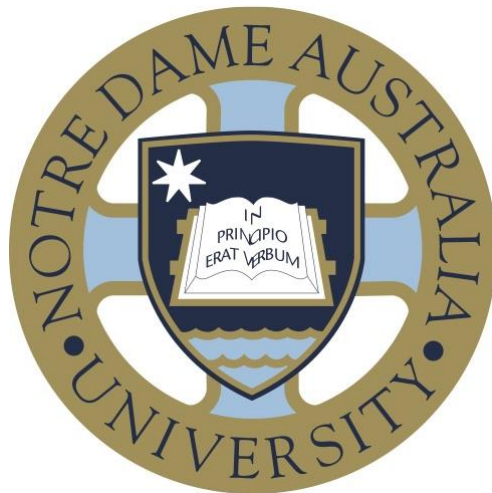
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Multilayered Agency and Religion:
A Study of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines
(1986–1998)

Christian Joseph Santos
LLB BA (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Notre Dame Australia



Principal Supervisor: Professor John A. Rees

Co-Supervisor: Dr Matthew Tan

National School of Arts and Sciences
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Sydney Campus

February 2022

Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the PhD thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Signature:

Name: Christian Joseph Santos

Date: 2 February 2022

Abstract

The present thesis examines the core issue of how to understand and situate the agency of a religious actor in International Relations (IR). This is investigated through a case study of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in two comparative policy contexts: agrarian land reform and family planning. The CBCP is a permanent institution within the Catholic Church as a collective of the bishops of the Philippines. The research employs analytic eclecticism as the method to integrate select works from four principal scholars: Colin Wight, Adrian Pabst, Atalia Omer and Mariano Barbato. Wight's tripartite multilayered framework of agency structures the analysis of the case study; Pabst's metaphysical political realism is employed to supplement the engagement with the religious traditions of the CBCP; the approach to religious traditions and agency is further strengthened by the adoption of Omer's arguments for a religious self-identification and non-reductionist approach; and Barbato's seminal concept of multilayered actorhood is repurposed in select instances to show the varied kinds of actor the CBCP occupies within and between policy contexts. The constructed analytically eclectic framework is operationalised in the second part of thesis via the Philippine case study. The present thesis makes several original contributions to research knowledge: a) a new application of analytic eclecticism to the study of religion in IR, b) understanding of a particular religious actor in its local and global dimensions and c) an IR analysis of the CBCP in a time of political transition in the Philippines. Taken together, these contributions advance the IR discourse on religion and agency in new ways.

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Ora et Labora (prayer and work). This journey with the thesis has been, without doubt, years of equal parts of faith and work.

I did not know what the journey would be in front of me when I started my undergraduate degree at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney, in 2012. Little did I know at the time that I would spend close to 10 consecutive years at this university and complete a PhD. The university community feels like a second home to me after all these years. I have met and worked with so many wonderful peers and staff in service to the university on the Student Association, and on the many committees and boards I been involved with. I will always be grateful to the university for giving me that initial ‘yes’ that started this whirlwind of a journey. I am grateful for receiving financial support from the Australian Government under the Research Training Program (RTP) through the Fee Offset Scholarship for the duration of the PhD and, in 2020, a RTP Stipend Scholarship. The opportunity to undertake this PhD and the Research Fellowship at San Beda would not have been possible without this financial support.

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Contents

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Research Question and Core Definitions	2
1.3 The Discourse on Religion in IR	5
1.4 Conceptual Origins—Critical Realism and Analytic Eclecticism.....	7
1.5 Theoretical Framework: The Principal Scholars	11
1.6 Site of Analysis.....	16
1.7 Contributions of the Thesis.....	24
1.8 Structure of the Thesis	26
1.9 Thesis Scope and Boundaries	29
Chapter 2: IR Discourse on Religion	31
2.1 Introduction	31
2.2 Driving Questions.....	31
2.2.1 The Research Question and the Case Study	31
2.2.2 Theoretical Plurality in International Relations	33
2.3 Contests Within International Relations on Religion	34
2.3.1 Mode of Engagement	34
2.3.2 Mode of Interrogation	36
2.3.3 Mode of Accommodation	37
2.3.4 Forward Direction: Constructing a Framework	39
2.4 Critical Realist Approach to Religion and Agency	40
2.4.1 Religion Qua Religion—A Critical Realist Reading	44
2.4.2 Agency Via the Agent—Critical Realism on Agency	46
(a) <i>Causation and Agency</i>	47
(b) <i>Co-Constitutive Dynamic Between Agent and Structure</i>	49
2.5 The Value of Analytic Eclecticism.....	50
2.5.1 Analytic Eclecticism as an ‘Intellectual Stance’	50
2.5.2 Critiques of Analytic Eclecticism	54
(a) <i>Clarifying Theoretical Choices</i>	54
(b) <i>Making Analytic Eclecticism Inclusive of Metatheoretical Reflection</i>	55
Chapter 3: Analytically Eclectic Framework and Philippine Site of Analysis	57
3.1 Introduction	57
3.2 The Principal Scholars of the Framework	58
3.2.1 Colin Wight—A Multilayered Understanding of Agency.....	60
3.2.2 Adrian Pabst—Bringing the Metaphysical to IR Theorising.....	63
3.2.3 Atalia Omer—A Self-Identified Approach to Religious Actors.....	65
3.2.4 Mariano Barbato—Multilayered Actorness.....	67
3.3 Integration of the Scholars.....	69
3.4 Application of the Framework in the Case Study.....	74

3.5 Site of Analysis: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (1986–1998).....	76
3.5.1 The Philippines as the Catholic Nation.....	77
3.5.2 Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines	80
3.5.3 The Philippine Political Landscape from 1986 to 1998: New Hope or More of the Same?	84
(a) <i>Corazon Aquino: Restoring Democracy to a Burdened Philippines</i>	85
(b) <i>Fidel Ramos: A Philippines on the Turn?</i>	90
3.6 Scope of the Constructed Framework	94
3.7 Summary.....	95
Chapter 4: Agrarian Land Reform	96
4.1 Introduction	96
4.2 Agrarian Land Reform in the Philippines 1986–1998.....	97
4.2.1 Aquino and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.....	98
4.2.2 Ramos Refines CARP.....	102
4.3 Agency of the CBCP in Agrarian Land Reform.....	104
4.3.1 CBCP Statements on Agrarian Land Reform	104
4.3.2 Agency 1—‘Self’	108
(a) <i>Function and Purpose of Episcopal Conferences</i>	109
(b) <i>Who is the CBCP?</i>	113
4.3.3 Agency 2—CBCP and the Sociocultural System.....	114
(a) <i>Catholic Social Teaching Tradition and Agrarian Land Reform</i>	116
(b) <i>More than Just Moral Imperatives—A ‘Really Existing’ Natural Order</i>	121
(c) <i>Second Plenary Council of the Philippines 1991 (PCP II)</i>	128
(d) <i>Liberation Theology in the Philippines and the Communist Insurgency</i>	131
4.3.4 Agency 3—The Position and Practice of the CBCP in Agrarian Land Reform	136
(a) <i>Magisterial Authority, Episcopal Conferences and the CBCP</i>	136
(b) <i>Pastoral Letters and Statements</i>	140
4.4 Applying the Framework to the CBCP and Agrarian Land Reform	144
Chapter 5: Family Planning Policy.....	150
5.1 Introduction	150
5.2 Family Planning Policy 1986–1998	151
5.3 Corazon Aquino 1986–1992.....	151
5.3.1 Fidel Ramos 1992–1998	154
5.4 Agency of the CBCP in Family Planning Policy 1986–1998	157
5.4.1 CBCP Statements from 1986 to 1998 on Family Planning	159
5.4.2 Agency 1—The Self of the CBCP	165
5.4.3 Agency 2—CBCP and the Sociocultural System	166
(a) <i>Global Catholic Church—Papal Encyclicals on Contraceptives, the Family and Sexuality</i>	166
(b) <i>The Family and Salvation in the Natural Order of God</i>	173
(c) <i>The Family in the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines</i>	178
(d) <i>The Influence of Pope John Paul II</i>	182
5.4.4 Agency 3—The Position and Practice of the CBCP in Family Planning Policy	186
(a) <i>Magisterial Authority of Bishops and the Teaching on the Family</i>	187
(b) <i>Practice of Pastoral Letters and Statements</i>	188
5.5 Applying the Framework to the CBCP and Family Planning Policy	191
Chapter 6: Conclusion	198
6.1 Key Findings of the Philippine Case Study.....	199
6.2 Evaluating the Application of the Constructed Framework	206
6.3 Implications of the Research Findings	208

6.4 Avenues for Future Research	209
Bibliography	212

List of Tables

Table 1. Comparison of CBCP Statements on Agrarian Land Reform and Family Planning	107
Table 2. McGoldrick’s Findings of the Six Major Themes of Episcopal Conferences in Each Region and Ranked in Order of Frequency.....	117
Table 3. Multilayered Agency of the CBCP in Agrarian Land Reform.....	145
Table 4. CBCP Statements in Francisco’s Cluster Classification	160
Table 5. Agency of the CBCP in Relation to Family Planning Policy.....	193
Table 6. The Agency of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines 1986 to 1998.	200

List of Figures

Figure 1. Colin Wight's Tripartite Concept of Agency.....	61
Figure 2. Demeterio's Three-Cornered Circuit of Power and Communication Diagram	158

List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CARL	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law
CARP	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program
CBCP	Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CWO	Catholic Welfare Organisation
EDSA	Epifanio de los Santos Avenue
GNP	Gross national product
HV	Humanae Vitae
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NCCB	National Conference of Catholic Bishops
NCCB	National Conference of Catholic Bishops
NDF	National Democratic Front
NPA	New People's Army
PCP II	Second Plenary Council of the Philippines
RAM	Reform the Armed Forces Movement
RCT	Rational choice theory
SCS	South China Sea
UN	United Nations
US	United States
Vatican II	Second Vatican Council

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The discourse on religion in International Relations (IR) is constantly evolving. Throughout this evolution of the discourse, multiple approaches to studying and analysing religion have sprouted and formed within the discipline. Each approach within the discourse on religion developed its interests and focuses on religion, such as the resources religion can provide, the motivations and interests of religious actors and the influence of religion in IR. Within this varied and large IR discourse, this thesis explores the way the agency of the CBCP can be understood within the discipline of IR. In particular, the study will consider the influence of the religious traditions and specificities on the dynamics of the CBCP publicly engaging through its statements and letters with governmental policies in the comparative contexts of agrarian land reform and family planning. The influence of religious traditions on the agency of religious actors can add a distinctive element. Thomas Merton, the Cistercian monk named by Pope Francis as one of ‘four representatives of the American People’ in a 2015 speech to the United States (US) Congress,¹ wrote in the introduction to his series of essays on spirituality in the book, *No Man is an Island*:

The mediations in this book are intended to be at the same time traditional, and modern, and my own. I do not intend to divorce myself at any point from Catholic tradition. But neither do I intend to accept points of that tradition blindly, and without understanding, and without making them really my own. For it seems to me that the first responsibility of a man of faith is to make his faith really part of his own life, not by rationalizing it but by living it.²

Merton points to the dynamic relationship between religious traditions and the bearer of those traditions. Making sense of this dynamic between religious tradition and the concept of agency within IR will become an important area to consider as the study progresses towards the case study. It can raise several questions: how does religious agency inform IR? What is the role of religious tradition in IR? How might religious tradition influence the religious actor to act? Answers to such questions may depend on the approach adopted by the scholar. I will be constructing an analytical framework through which to understand the CBCP case study. The

¹ Pope Francis, ‘Visit to the Joint Session of the United States Congress: Address of the Holy Father’, Vatican, published 24 September 2015, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150924_usa-us-congress.html.

² Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), xiv.

case study will also serve as a site of analysis through which to examine the conceptual value of the proposed approach to understanding the agency of a religious actor within IR. Again, making sense of the description presented by Merton of a person of faith, and we may extend that to the religious actor, this study is confronted by the multitude of approaches available to offer its own answers to these questions. While we acknowledge the influence of religion and look to the motivations of religious actors in acting, what does it tell us about their agency? The concept of agency is one such area to be revisited, considering the directions within IR discourse on religion. The task is to increase the rigour of our theoretical frameworks to advance our understanding in IR of the agency of religious actors. As a primer to the study, the sections to follow in this introductory chapter briefly introduce the core components of the thesis. The discourse on religion in IR, the guiding principles, the principal scholars forming the theoretical approach in the thesis and the site of analysis in the case study will be discussed in further depth in the chapters to follow.

1.2 The Research Question and Core Definitions

This thesis aims to explore the dynamics in the agency of a religious actor. I ask the following research question: *‘How can the agency of the religious actor be understood and situated in IR?’* The broad question is intended to allow the complexities of contextual and theoretical analysis to be acknowledged and not bracketed out of our understanding. The value of pursuing research on the concept of agency in relation to a religious actor is the contribution to improving engagement and analysis of the dynamics of religious actors. Agency as a concept is explored in the broader context of the agent–structure debate in IR. It has not been the focus of IR discourse on religion to pursue a theoretical exploration of the concept of agency in the same depth as the agent–structure writers.³ The present thesis will apply insights on agency to aspects of the IR discourse on religion. The research question in this study has two components—first, the ‘religious’ aspect of the actor, and second, conceptualising agency. I adopt an approach and construct an analytical framework in this thesis to address these two components I have identified in the research question. To provide control and the space to test the constructed framework of the thesis, a Philippine CBCP case study is used to answer the research question to apply the

³ See for example, Alexander Wendt, ‘The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory’, *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987); Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory (RLE Social Theory)* (New York: Routledge, 2014) on structuration.

proposed framework. It is a case study on the official public statements and letters of the CBCP on agrarian land reform and family planning policy between 1986 to 1998 in Chapters 4 and 5.

The terms ‘religion’ and ‘agency’ are defined in multiple and diverse ways within IR and across the various disciplines of the social sciences. Understanding what counts as ‘religious’ is unavoidably connected to the broader question, ‘What is religion?’ The answer to this question is difficult because the definition of religion is contested. Indeed, there is no universally valid and generally accepted definition of religion within the social sciences.⁴ In IR, there are several definitions of religion that scholars have offered. For example, there are two common approaches to defining religion, either in functionalist terms or substantive terms. A functionalistic perspective defines religion according to the problem for which it is the solution: what religion does and achieves.⁵ A substantive approach commonly defines religion through identifying its primary characteristics by specifying the object religion refers to and characterising it their reference to God or gods, or something transcendent.⁶ Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta combined both approaches towards a definition of religion a: ‘functional approach [is used] to identify the problem that religion addresses ... [and] adopt a form of substantive analysis to determine the manner in which it deals with the problem’.⁷ According to Pollack and Rosta, religion addresses the ‘problem of contingency, in the problem of the uncertainty to existence’.⁸ This is addressed by first distinguishing between immanence and transcendence to transform what is indeterminable in the world into something determinable, and second, by making the transcendent accessible, open to experience and communicable.⁹

Other scholars have defined religion by identifying the conceptual boundaries of the term. For example, Berma Klein Goldewijk identifies eight different but interrelated elements of religion: otherness and the ultimate, the sacred and the profane, passion and mystery and spirituality and transcendence.¹⁰ Martin Marty identifies five features of religion that point to and put boundaries around the complex term: focuses our ‘ultimate concern’, builds community, appeals to myth

⁴ Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta, *Religion and Modernity: An International Comparison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 34.

⁵ Pollack and Rosta, *Religion*, 39. See, for example, Robert N. Bellah, ‘Religious Evolution’, *American Sociological Review* 29, no. 3 (1964): 359; Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965); Clifford Geertz, ‘Religion as a Cultural System’, in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (New York: Praeger, 1966), 4.

⁶ Pollack and Rosta, *Religion*, 37. See, for example, Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1958).

⁷ Pollack and Rosta, *Religion*, 43.

⁸ Pollack and Rosta, *Religion*, 44.

⁹ Pollack and Rosta, *Religion*, 45–46.

¹⁰ Berma Klein Goldewijk, *Religion, International Relations and Development Cooperation* (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Press, 2007), 34.

and symbol, is enforced through rites and ceremonies and demands certain behaviour from its adherents.¹¹ Linda Woodhead, a sociologist, argues that a more self-conscious and self-critical study does not necessarily need to begin with a definition but rather a critical awareness of what concepts of religion are involved.¹² This may have advantages to moving beyond the definitional debates on religion. The alternative, Woodhead suggests, is viewing religion through five concepts of religion as culture, identity, relationships, practice and power.¹³ Woodhead argues that definitions attempt to choose essential characteristics, while concepts derive meaning from the wider frameworks in which they are embedded.¹⁴

The definition of agency is also important for the present thesis. Agency as a word or concept is often used in the literature of political science and the social sciences more broadly.¹⁵ An example of a definition of agency is from O’Neil, Balsiger and Van Deveer. They define agency as ‘entail[ing] a degree of conscious or unconscious choice, the ability to reflect on the situation at hand, the capacity to use reflexive knowledge to transform situations and to engage in learning as a result’.¹⁶ Buzan sees agency as the ‘faculty or state of acting or exerting power’.¹⁷ These are two different approaches to agency with different implications to how research might analyse an actor. From these differing definitions, we could ask questions like what or who has agency? The term agency is more prominently explored by scholars engaged with questions about the nature of agents and structures. This theoretical debate in IR is not new, nor are its origins in the discourse on religion in IR. In response to the differing definitions of religion and agency, I have adopted approaches to each concept. As will be discussed later, I adopt a multilayered understanding of agency from Wight, who has adopted the theoretical foundations of critical realism.

¹¹ Martin E. Marty, *Politics, Religion and the Common Good: Advancing a Distinctly American Conversation About Religion’s Role in Our Shared Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 11–14.

¹² Linda Woodhead, ‘Five Concepts of Religion’, *International Review of Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2011): 122.

¹³ Woodhead, ‘Five Concepts’, 121–43.

¹⁴ Woodhead, ‘Five Concepts’, 122.

¹⁵ See, for example, Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, ‘The Gordian Knot of Agency-Structure in International Relations: A Neo-Gramscian Perspective’, *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001); Walter Carlsnaes, ‘The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis’, *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1992); Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, ‘Two Stories About Structure and Agency’, *Review of International Studies* 20, no. 3 (1994); Wendt, ‘Agent-Structure Problem’; Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992).

¹⁶ Kate O’Neil, Jorg Balsiger and Stacy D. Van Deveer, ‘Actors, Norms, and Impact: Recent International Cooperation Theory and the Influence of the Agent-Structure Debate’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 7, no. 1 (2004): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.7.090803.161821>.

¹⁷ Barry Buzan, ‘Structural Realism and the Agent-Structure Debate’ in *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*, ed. Barry Buzan, Richard Little and Charles Jones (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 103.

1.3 The Discourse on Religion in IR

The study of religion in IR has grown into a field of inquiry with different approaches and practices towards religion as a category. IR discourse on religion has been perceptively observed as a ‘current wave of studies struggl[ing] with a dilemma over the way religion matters; religious contention appears to be both principled and strategic’.¹⁸ It will be an important inflection point in the discipline in IR that this study intends to contribute towards. What is the current state of the scholarship on religion in IR? There are three different modes of engaging with religion and foreign policy, as described by Rees. I suggest that Rees’ framework can be valuable for studying religion within the broader IR religion discourse. I adopt Rees’ three logics of religion and foreign policy framework as part of a more detailed review of the literature in Chapter 2 on religion in IR.

First, the mode of engagement operates with a substantivist definition of religion and holds that ‘religious traditions carry unique ethical and instrumental capabilities. Religion is therefore viewed as a catalyst for understanding the ideational and social contexts ... as well as providing strategic resources for ... policy makers’.¹⁹ The logic of the mode of engagement can be seen in the area of peacebuilding. Appleby, for example, argued that there are at least five resources for conflict transformation, diplomacy and peacebuilding available within religious traditions, religious communities and religious actors. This leads to the following recommendations:

1. Identify the genius of each religious tradition and cultivate ways to evoke its distinctive strengths in conflict resolution and peacebuilding...
2. Provide access to the mystical, experiential, and syncretistic dimensions of the faith traditions...
3. Engage scholars, theologians, hierarchs or other officials, and prominent lay leaders who believe conflict resolution to be a normative commitment of their religious communities.²⁰

In this approach, religious traditions are seen as an influential factor for engagement in research.

Second, scholarship in the mode of interrogation, according to Rees, sees ‘religion’ as highly problematic as a term because it is ‘understood as the product of historicized and politicized processes of identity formation that are often encased within structures of hegemonic interest, an

¹⁸ Peter S. Henne, ‘Religious Statecraft: The Politics of Islam in Iran’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 6 (2020): 1365.

¹⁹ John A Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, in *Handbook on Religion and International Relations*, ed. Jeffrey Haynes (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), 41.

²⁰ Scott Appleby, ‘Religious Faith in the Service of Peacebuilding’, in *Faith-Based Diplomacy Trumping Realpolitik*, ed. Douglas Johnston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 243–52. As cited in Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 42.

assumption embedded in the anthropological skepticism of Talal Asad'.²¹ Hurd is a good example of this mode of scholarship. According to Hurd, 'secularism identifies something called 'religion' and separates it from the 'secular domains of the state, the economy and science'.²² Hurd argued that secularism and 'religion' are politicised products of a particularly Western and Judeo-Christian framework.²³ Hurd also argued that '[IR] is anchored in modern social theory, which has taken the terms of the Western delineation of 'religion' and its separation from 'politics' as the natural starting point for social science'.²⁴ This type of scholarship is interested in the power discourse existing in the construction of religion.

Third, according to Rees, scholarship in the mode of accommodation 'affirm[s] the need to engage religion *qua* religion whilst also acknowledging the negative effect that can occur through misreading' and uses insights from the modes of engagement and interrogation.²⁵ In this scholarship, the agency of religious actors and the influence of religious traditions are acknowledged compared to the mode of interrogation. This accommodative mode of scholarship is reflective of a critical realist approach to religion and method of analytic eclecticism later discussed and adopted in this study.

Where a lacuna may exist in the study of religion in IR is the mode of accommodation scholarship. This thesis will be situated within the mode of accommodation to scholarship as defined by Rees. How can such an understanding be advanced in the multidimensional state of the study of religion in IR? The plurality in IR discourse can provide a smorgasbord to choose from to inform our understanding. Any approach that uses multiple theoretical insights to investigate a concept in IR, like religion, agency or secularism, will need to be certain of the reasons for each contribution's inclusion. This sees the potential value of overlapping various and porous theoretical approaches together. Siloing theoretical approaches in IR can be a limitation for research. For example, on the fact that 'authors feel the need to begin by defining and distinguishing' the term secularism,²⁶ Bown stated:

we do this because we often are discussing not different aspects of the same object—
how beliefs, practices, and political arrangements change with respect to one another—

²¹ Rees, 'Religion and Foreign Policy', 43.

²² Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 'The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 2 (2004): 235.

²³ Hurd, 'Political Authority', 240–52.

²⁴ Hurd, 'Political Authority', 240.

²⁵ Rees, 'Religion and Foreign Policy', 45.

²⁶ John R. Bown, 'Secularism: Conceptual Genealogy of Political Dilemma?', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 3 (2010): 680.

but rather quite different *types* of objects. Failing to understand this, we talk past one another, or slip from studying one object to discussing another.²⁷

The same could be said about agency in the study of religion in IR. Are we talking past one another? Are we discussing something else when using the term agency? The different approaches pose this problem. Then, are the approaches in the study of religion so different that they cannot be compared to each other? This concern is similar to the longstanding interparadigm debates in IR among the often-cited theoretical paradigms of realism, liberalism, constructivism and critical theory. The different IR paradigms ‘could not be tested against each other, since they basically did not speak the same language’.²⁸ This argument is encapsulated in the idea of incommensurability. The multiple and different approaches to religion in IR could lead us to say the same thing. That is, can the study of religion in IR, like the interparadigm debates, be said to suffer from incommensurability? The question of incommensurability looms over the study of religion in IR. In the present thesis, and in the context of the collapsing of paradigms in IR, I suggest that an accommodative approach is necessary to advance the research agenda beyond this impasse. The value of stepping beyond the traditional IR theories is to encompass a much more holistic conceptualisation of agency and understanding of religious actors. This will be briefly outlined in the next section.

1.4 Conceptual Origins—Critical Realism and Analytic Eclecticism

I approach the problem of incommensurability in the study of religion in IR through the guiding influences of critical realism on the definition of religion and the accommodative approach of analytic eclecticism to theory. The contribution each of these two influences bring to the current study is outlined in the following.

Critical Realism: Agency, Causation and Religion

I approach the problem of conceptualising religion through the premises of critical realism. Critical realism is not itself a theory of IR but is instead a philosophy of science.²⁹ Religion is

²⁷ Bown, ‘Secularism’, 680.

²⁸ Ole Waever, ‘The Rise and Fall of the inter-Paradigm Debate’, in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 158.

²⁹ Chris Brown, ‘Situating Critical Realism’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 415; Jonathan Joseph, ‘Philosophy in International Relations: A Scientific Realist Approach’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 345; Milja Kurki, ‘Critical Realism and Causal Analysis in International Relations’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 367–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298070350021501>; Colin Wight, ‘A Manifesto for Scientific Realism in IR: Assuming the Can-Opener Won’t Work!’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007).

seen in critical realism as having an existence independent of the structures, ideologies and political and scholarly discourses. The significance of this stance lies in its engagement with religion. A critical realist engagement with religion can be aligned with the mode of accommodation identified by Rees. For instance, as Schilbrack stated, ‘the patterns in human behavior that scholars of religion study ... can operate whether or not they are noticed, conceptualized, or named by scholars or by the participants themselves’.³⁰ This can be contrasted with the view that religion is a fictitious and hermeneutical device created by powerful elites or Western colonialism.³¹ Further, for example, the critical realist framework that Schilbrack presented can be recognised as ‘critical by participating in the reflexive, genealogical, and deconstructive turn in the study of “religion”’ and as realist by holding that religion ‘exist independent of the scholar’s theorizing about them’.³² The critical realist is arguably agnostic about religious traditions. For the critical realist, the truth of the religious claims in each religious tradition is not the concern in analysis. In adopting this view of religion, I will not be concerned about debates in the social sciences about ‘what is religion?’ but rather ‘how is religion significant?’ and ‘where is religion?’ I take the actor’s self-identified view of what constitutes the religious and their religious traditions. In the current thesis looking at the CBCP, I look to the Catholic traditions of this actor as part of the analysis in the case study.

The approach of critical realism will have its views about agency and structure, including how to understand causation in the dynamics between agents and structures. I will discuss aspects of this in further detail in Chapter 2. Critical realism will have a guiding influence on some of the principal scholars adopted in this thesis. The value of critical realism for this thesis is seen in its dual influence on the two components I identified as important to the research question: conceptualising the religious and conceptualising agency.

Analytic Eclecticism

The pedagogical challenges of teaching religion and IR have similar issues for the theoretical discussion of religion in IR. In a 2019 forum published in the *International Studies Perspectives* journal, several IR scholars of religion, including Gregorio Bettiza, David Buckley, Jeffrey Haynes and Nukhet Sandal, shared their disciplinary, pedagogical and personal reflections on

³⁰ Kevin Schilbrack, ‘A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion: A Critical Reading of Russell McCutcheon’, *Critical Research on Religion* 8, no. 1 (2020): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050303219900229>.

³¹ See, for example, Hurd, ‘Political Authority’, 235–62.

³² Schilbrack, ‘A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion’, 88–89.

teaching religion and IR.³³ Bettiza noted in the introduction to that forum that one of the pedagogical challenges ‘revolves around the category of and knowledge produced about religion’.³⁴ He continued by asking:

In what ways, therefore, do we as teachers go about addressing, if at all, the continued and at times acrimonious debates about what constitutes “religion” (and, potentially, also its antonym the “secular”)? Moreover, this very same subject and object of inquiry requires bridging multiple disciplinary boundaries, including bringing into our classes insights from sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, theologians, and religious studies scholars who have thought longer and harder about religion than political scientists/international relations scholars have. This inevitably begets the question: how do we go about navigating the challenges of the interdisciplinary in the context of a disciplinary age?³⁵

We can similarly ask: how do we go about navigating the challenges of theoretical plurality in the context of a paradigms age? The approach forward suggested in the thesis is that the mode of accommodation is the lacuna space to be further developed. From situating this study within a mode of accommodation scholarship, I will develop a theoretical framework affirming aspects of critical realism and analytic eclecticism.

The issue of incommensurability and the plurality of theoretical approaches in the discourse on religion in IR is not a new phenomenon in the discipline. The old theory debates set around paradigmatic lines, such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, and critical theory, are familiar features in IR. On these paradigmatic divisions, Lake says that ‘we organize ourselves into academic “sects” that engage in self-affirming research and then wage theological debates between academic religions’.³⁶ Interestingly, Lake characterises the paradigmatic debates based on terms in and images of religion. Perhaps even the idea of ‘wag[ing] theological debates between academic religions’ is an allusion to the secularist narrative of the wars of religion preceding the Peace of Westphalia. However, if the pluralism in IR must remain ‘academic sects’, advancing the research agenda encounters the obstacle of incommensurability. According to Lake, a variety of competing theories in the interstices of the Great Debates never came to the prominence of the Great Debates but contributed to improving our understanding of IR.³⁷ One

³³ Gregorio Bettiza et al., ‘Teaching Religion and International Relations: Disciplinary, Pedagogical, and Personal Reflections’, *International Studies Perspectives* 20, no. 4 (2019): 301–43.

³⁴ Bettiza et al., ‘Teaching Religion’, 304.

³⁵ Bettiza et al., ‘Teaching Religion’, 304.

³⁶ David A. Lake, ‘Why “isms” are Evil: Theory, Epistemology, and Academic Sects as Impediments to Understanding and Progress’, *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2011): 465, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00661.x>.

³⁷ David A. Lake, ‘Theory is Dead, Long Live Theory: The End of the Great Debates and the Rise of Eclecticism in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 568.

strain of theory is called mid-level theory, which Lake states forms today ‘the basis for a more progressive and eclectic approach’ in IR. As Lake continues saying that mid-level theory is ‘eclectic and focuses on what ‘works’, [it] does not inflame the passions like allegiance to this or that paradigm’.³⁸ This thesis employs the mid-level theoretical approach of analytic eclecticism to critically engage with the issue of pluralism.

I take inspiration from the analytic eclecticism of Sil and Katzenstein. According to Sil and Katzenstein, analytic eclecticism ‘scholarship *pays close attention to several scholarly traditions that have generated different theories or narratives* that bear on some real-world problem’ (emphasis added).³⁹ In a 2013 article, Sil and Katzenstein argued that while they are sympathetic to and join Lake in trying to decentre paradigms in IR, they have ‘no wish to discard [the paradigms] altogether’.⁴⁰ This is because analytic eclecticism ‘requires engaging, not discarding, the research products associated with existing paradigms’.⁴¹ The plural approach can provide this study with a framework rich with theoretical resources to investigate the agency of the CBCP in a complex political context. As will be briefly outlined in this chapter, I use analytic eclecticism to combine the varied approaches of Wight, Pabst, Omer and Barbato to answer the research question. While analytic eclecticism can provide a useful approach, it is not immune from critiques. Critiques about the clarity of each theory’s contribution and the bracketing out of metatheory are instructive to how I apply the method of analytic eclecticism to construct the theoretical framework in this study. This will be further elaborated across Chapters 2 and 3.

The guiding influences of critical realism and analytic eclecticism align with scholarship according to the mode of accommodation identified by Rees. As mentioned previously, the critical realist can engage with religion as an existing phenomenon independent of the scholar’s theorising and, concurrently, acknowledging and ‘be[ing] critical by participating in the reflexive, genealogical, and deconstructive turn in the study of “religion”’.⁴² This reflects the mode of accommodation approach of ‘engag[ing] religion *qua* religion whilst also acknowledging the negative effect that can occur through misreading’.⁴³ The mode of accommodation also uses insights drawn from other competing modes like the modes of

³⁸ Lake, ‘Theory is Dead’, 568.

³⁹ Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘De-Centering, Not Discarding, the “Isms”’: Some Friendly Amendments’, *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2011): 482–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00657.x>.

⁴⁰ Sil and Katzenstein, ‘De-Centering’, 483.

⁴¹ Sil and Katzenstein, ‘De-Centering’, 484.

⁴² Schilbrack, ‘A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion’, 88–89.

⁴³ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

engagement and interrogation as identified by Rees.⁴⁴ Analytic eclecticism is not merely the eclectic amalgam of various theoretical approaches for the sake of pluralism. The eclectic amalgamation is a method geared towards, according to Sil and Katzenstein, the ‘bear[ing] on some real-world problem’.⁴⁵ Accommodationist scholarship is similarly ‘framed around a question and key sources as a means of provoking further enquiry’.⁴⁶ These aspects of the theoretical grounding of the thesis can also provide a practical contribution to IR. The mode of accommodation can have the valuable capacity to translate theory into its practical applications. The utility of this grounding in the thesis will be tested in the case study chapters to examine the agency of the CBCP.

1.5 Theoretical Framework: The Principal Scholars

The culmination of our conceptual exploration of the discourse in IR on religion will be the construction of an analytical framework as an answer to the research question asked. The four principal scholars guiding the construction of the theoretical framework of this study are Colin Wight, Adrian Pabst, Atalia Omer and Mariano Barbato. I foreshadowed earlier at 1.2 that the research question has two components: first, the conceptualisation of agency, and second, engagement with the religious. The principal scholars identified above have been chosen because each can contribute to addressing either of the two components of the research question. Each component brings to the study a distinct and valuable contribution to understanding the agency of the CBCP. These sources together reaffirm aspects of the method of analytic eclecticism previously described. The method of analytic eclecticism being adopted here in the construction of a framework is more than an attentive focus to multiple theoretical approaches but the ‘real-world problem’ of the CBCP on specific state policies.⁴⁷ The case study will examine the CBCP on agrarian land reform and family planning policy from 1986 to 1998 and the question of agency. Below is a synopsis of each principal scholar and their contribution to this thesis.

As the first principal scholar used in the study, Wight emphasises elements of an actor that informs how agency can be understood. The conceptual understanding of agency in this thesis will be adopted from Wight. It is a contribution situated within IR’s broader agent–structure debate. That said, I do not intend to enter the agent–structure debate within this thesis. According to Wight, ‘[w]hat is lacking is a theoretical discussion of what the term agent means, and who

⁴⁴ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

⁴⁵ Sil and Katzenstein, ‘De-Centering’, 482–83.

⁴⁶ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

⁴⁷ Sil and Katzenstein, ‘De-Centering’, 482–83.

and what can be an agent'.⁴⁸ One aim of Wight is to create an account of agency that attempts to avoid falling into two theoretical extremes of structuralism or individualism. That is, Wight seeks to:

to develop accounts of agency that do not repeat the errors of methodological individualism—here agents seemingly construct their world unfettered by any structural enablements or constraints—or those of methodological structuralism—where the agents appear to be nothing more than automata.⁴⁹

Another aim of Wight is to 'elaborate a more rigorous critical realist theory of agency in International Relations theory and to delineate a theoretical role for the state that does not ascribe to it attributes which are best located at the level of the individual'.⁵⁰ The contribution of Wight's arguments is to provide a multilayered perspective of agency. Wight constructs a multilayered view of agency that will provide 'a sense of balance to the agent-structure relationship ... because agency refers to *both* individual and social predicates' (original emphasis).⁵¹ That is, the attribute of agency involves elements of the agent and the influence of social structures. It is a co-constitutive view of agents and structures.⁵² The agent is not completely free from structures, nor are structures determinants of agents. Wight developed a nuanced non-reductive approach to the concept of agency, who argued for at least a three-layered approach to agency. This tripartite framework of agency consists of the following. The first layer (agency₁) recognises the existence of a self independent from the structures of the world. According to Wight, it is a 'recognition that the 'self' is never automatically or deterministically instituted'.⁵³ The agent is a subject 'in relationship to the world by which it is constructed' and 'capable of reflecting upon, and constantly renegotiating, the forces of construction'.⁵⁴ The second layer (agency₂) views the agent as the bearer of the structures of the context and groups to which it belongs. According to Wight, the agent 'reproduce and/or transform their individual and collective identities as part and parcel of maintaining or transforming the socio-cultural structures that they inherit at birth'.⁵⁵ The social groups and collectives of the agent, according to Wight, 'crucially affect the potential

⁴⁸ Colin Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses Don't They? Locating Agency in the Agent-Structure Problematique', *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 1 (1999): 126.

⁴⁹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 129.

⁵⁰ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 128.

⁵¹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 129.

⁵² Other examples include, Giddens, *Social and Political Theory*, on structuration; Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics'; Alexander Wendt, 'On Constitution and Causation in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 24 (1998); Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998); Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'The Constructive Turn in International Relations Theory', *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (1998).

⁵³ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 130.

⁵⁴ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 130.

⁵⁵ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

of [the agent] to mobilize resources embedded in the social field'.⁵⁶ Then the third layer (agency₃) focuses on the formal position, practices and placement the actor inhabits on behalf of its context or groups.⁵⁷ For Wight, this layer can be thought of as referring to those 'roles' that agents occupy on behalf of their context and groups.⁵⁸ He argued that the 'positioned-practices' are structural properties that persist irrespective of the agent that occupies them. As such, they cannot be reduced to the occupying agent because the agent is enabled and constrained according to the specific modalities of the 'role'.⁵⁹ As a co-constitutive approach to the agent–structure problem, Wight maintains the independence of agents and structures without reducing either to the other. A three-layered approach to agency provides a means to view individual elements and the important overall relational dynamic between those different elements involved in the concept of agency. Although, as Wight notes, the proposed three layers of agency are not an exhaustive list of all possible layers that can be present.⁶⁰ This understanding of agency will aid this thesis to organise the explanation and analysis of the agency of the CBCP in the case study. I use Wight's framework to structure the case study chapters on the CBCP.

The engagement and centrality of religious traditions can have an appreciable influence on the subsequent understanding of agency. Pabst develops a theory he terms 'metaphysical political realism' to construct an understanding of how to theorise religion to help revive grand theory in IR. The conceptual depth of this theoretical understanding can provide a distinctive approach to engage with the religious in examining agency in this thesis. It will suffice in this introductory chapter to briefly identify the elements of Pabst's theory of metaphysical political realism. Pabst argued that 'mainstream IR theory is characterised by ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments to secularism, above all subordinating agency to structure and subjecting both faith and intentionality to secular reason'.⁶¹ It is this 'secular bias' in this discipline, according to Pabst, that 'explains why mainstream IR theory struggles to incorporate faith in international affairs'.⁶² To address this problem, Pabst argued that the 'overcoming of secularism in IR requires the recovery of metaphysics and not its abandonment'.⁶³ The theory developed by Pabst charts an approach to theorising religion IR. There is a linkage between the

⁵⁶ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

⁵⁷ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

⁵⁸ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

⁵⁹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133–34.

⁶⁰ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 129.

⁶¹ Adrian Pabst, 'The Secularism of Post-Secularity: Religion, Realism, and the Revival of Grand in IR', *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 5 (2012): 998, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210512000447>.

⁶² Pabst, 'Secularism', 999.

⁶³ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1009.

immanent and transcendent because, as Pabst argues, ‘immanent reality bears the trace of its transcendent source and in part reflects the divine warrant’.⁶⁴ He presents a linkage between two realms previously thought as separate: the secular and the sacred. In this conception, Pabst considers the inclusion of the ‘mutually corrective and augmenting’ relationship of faith and reason in IR theorising as important.⁶⁵ The theory developed by Pabst does not treat religious faith as the ‘other’ but rather as a normal phenomenon. Engaging with religious faith is presented as normal in understanding faith in international affairs and not the exception. Through these elements, Pabst argues for the notion of a ‘“corporate association” of peoples and nations bound together by the flow of ideas and practices embodied in religions, customs and traditions rather than abstract rights and commercial contracts’.⁶⁶ This shifts our understanding in IR of a world system of states to transnational communities of peoples and nations. Pabst further argues:

different world religions alert us to the existence of a social order that precedes and underpins the modern system of national states and transnational markets, which have become increasingly disembedded from the religious practices, cultural habits and social ties within and across nations.⁶⁷

Pabst challenged the supremacy of states and the liberal market system, who instead sees religious and cultural traditions and community as fundamental to our understanding of IR. This is an embedding of IR within a different focal point. The importance of these theoretical principles for the study, emphasising the engagement and centrality of religious traditions, will influence the understanding of agency in the thesis.

Omer’s engagement with religious self-identification is an approach to religion that can accord well with religion in critical realism. It is instructive of the type of engagement with religious actors this thesis will attempt to adopt. Omer’s approach is drawn from her broader critiques of a form of critical scholarship in IR. This critical scholarship is what Omer has called the ‘phenomenologists of the secular’.⁶⁸ It is a scholarly interrogation with a theoretical lineage to the work of Talal Asad and his historicist and genealogical critique of ‘religion’.⁶⁹ According to Omer, it is ‘“phenomenological” because [the scholars] ... explain and describe divergent manifestations of the secular globally as traceable to the big bang of secular modernity and the

⁶⁴ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011.

⁶⁵ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1013.

⁶⁶ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1017.

⁶⁷ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

⁶⁸ Atalia Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves: The Phenomenology of the Secular and the Limits of Critique as an Instrument of Change’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83, no. 1 (2015): 29.

⁶⁹ Omer, ‘Modernists’, 29.

project of Western empire'.⁷⁰ Then, as Omer continues, the “religious” and “secular” are fictitious and manufactured classifications, whose invention is due to the disruptive forces of secular modernity with its particular normative presumptions and, crucially, its political agenda and interests'.⁷¹ We can call these ‘phenomenologist of the secular’ as critical non-foundationalists. This is another example of the mode of interrogation scholarship identified by Rees and referred to previously at 1.3. Omer has argued that ‘state-centric theorizing of religion that attributes agency only to state actors and to discursive formations, strip[s] ... agency and hermeneutical coherence away from self-identified religious actors whose religiosity meaningfully informs their actions on their own terms’.⁷² This is a critique of the focuses on material factors and historicised and politicised structures rather than of religion itself. Omer argues that religion cannot be reduced to the power of state actors controlling what religion is, but rather, that we engage with the specificities of religious actors themselves. I intend to engage in this thesis with the Catholic traditions and specificities of the CBCP. This non-reductionist engagement is combined with the approach from Pabst to add greater explanatory capacity to the thesis.

Finally, this thesis will repurpose Barbato’s concept of ‘multilayered actorness’ to understand the religious actor in different contextual settings. The concept of multilayered actorness is used by Barbato in his 2013 article in relation to the Holy See. In this article, Barbato examines the increasing influence and persistence of the Holy See as an actor on the international stage.⁷³ Barbato uses multilayered actorness to hone on the multiplicity of ‘roles’, for instance, that actors can simultaneously perform and hold. Through the example of the Holy See, Barbato argued there are three capacities in which the Holy See acts: as a transnational Church, a territorial state and a diplomat.⁷⁴ For Barbato, these are the multiple ‘roles’ that the Holy See can be said to perform and hold on the international stage. The concept has a further noteworthy aspect that fits with the direction taken in this thesis. Multilayered actorness not only highlights the multiple ‘roles’ of religious actors, it is also non-reductive in its focus on religious actors. As Barbato argued, ‘The Holy See is thus at the same time both less and more than the Catholic Church’.⁷⁵ That is, as an actor, the Holy See cannot be reduced to either a transnational Church, a territorial

⁷⁰ Omer, ‘Modernists’, 30.

⁷¹ Omer, ‘Modernists’, 30.

⁷² Atalia Omer, ‘When “Good Religion” is Good’, *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 1 (2018): 132, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2017.1396089>.

⁷³ Mariano Barbato, ‘A State, a Diplomat, and a Transnational Church: The Multi-layered Actorness of the Holy See’, *Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (2013): 28.

⁷⁴ Barbato, ‘A State’, 28.

⁷⁵ Barbato, ‘A State’, 27.

state or a diplomat because the Holy See is collectively always all these personas. Barbato concludes that the ‘Holy See’s influential agency is backed by the actorness of a diplomat, a territorial sovereign, and a church leader’.⁷⁶ Adopting this element, in the case study of this thesis, we can consider what multiple ‘roles’ are being performed by the religious actor. I will argue that multilayered actorness is the key outcome of the dynamics of agency. These dynamics need further explanation.

In sum, the chosen four principal scholars and their selected works will each add value to the overall framework of the thesis. I have mentioned contributions that accord with the arguments in critical realism on religion and agency. The multilayered framework of agency from Wight, the metaphysical political realism from Pabst, the religious self-identification approach from Omer and the multilayered actorness from Barbato have been chosen because together these insights address the two components of the research question. Through analytic eclecticism, this integration will equip the thesis to address the problem of understanding the agency of the CBCP in the Philippine case study.

1.6 Site of Analysis

A period of field research, based in the Philippines at San Beda University Manila in 2020, contributed to solidifying the theoretical framework and contextual understanding in the case study. Informing my understanding of the CBCP and the Philippines were insights gained from informal discussions with key ecclesiastical leaders and scholars. These included Fr Marvin Mejia (Secretary-General of the CBCP), Feorillo P. A. Demeterio (Professor of the Department of Filipino, College of Liberal Arts and the Director of the University Research Coordination Office, De La Salle University), Nassef Manabilang Adiong (Associate Professor in Religion and IR, University of the Philippines Diliman), Fr Ranhilio Aquino (Dean of the Graduate School of Law, San Beda), Christian Bryan Bustamante (Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, San Beda) and many more. These discussions were held in February 2020 when the researcher was granted a Research Fellowship with San Beda. The content of the discussions during the Research Fellowship is not detailed in the thesis. The case study on the CBCP in the Philippines draws on open access and documentary-based research rather than analysis based on the observations and substance of discussions during preliminary field research. In this way the field

⁷⁶ Barbato, ‘A State’, 43.

research provides an important contextual understanding to the case study, CBCP documents and solidifies the choices made in the constructed theoretical framework.

The constructed theoretical framework from the four principal scholars will be applied and tested in a case study related to the field research, namely, a Philippine-based case study focusing on the CBCP and its statements in two select policy contexts: agrarian land reform and family planning. I have limited my focus to the period of 1986 to 1998 as a control. I will briefly expand on the reasons for selecting the above as a site of analysis. First, the Philippines is a location with a strong Catholic presence. The Pew Research Centre Survey in 2011 showed that the Philippines had the fifth-largest number of Christians globally, or four per cent of the world's Christian population.⁷⁷ Concerning Catholicism, the Philippines is ranked as the third-largest population of Catholics or containing 6.9 per cent of the world's Catholics.⁷⁸ These facts are insightful for situating the Philippine religious landscape globally.

More interesting is the emphasis placed on this religious character of the Philippines. It is not uncommon for the Philippines to be conflated with Catholicism and be perceived as a Catholic nation. It would be interesting to see this conflation within the agency of the CBCP in the case study.

At the time of writing, the Philippines was celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Christianity to the Philippines. Therefore, this present thesis provides a very timely study of the agency of a Catholic actor in the Philippines, namely, the CBCP. The theme of the five-hundred-year celebration approved by the Permanent Council of Bishops was 'Gifted to Give', taken from the Gospel of Matthew.⁷⁹ It is a theme also reflected in the homily of Pope Francis on 14 March 2021 at the celebration Mass for the five hundredth anniversary of the evangelisation of the Philippines. Pope Francis said:

Five hundred years have passed since the Christian message first arrived in the Philippines. You received *the joy of the Gospel*: the good news that God so loved us that he gave his Son for us. And this joy is evident in your people. We see it in your eyes, on your faces, in your songs and in your prayers. In the joy with which you bring your faith to other lands. I have often said that here in Rome Filipino women are "smugglers" of faith! Because wherever they go to work, they sow the faith. It is part of your genes, a blessed "infectiousness" that I urge you to preserve. Keep bringing the

⁷⁷ Pew Research Center, 'Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population', last modified 19 December 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Pew, 'Global Christianity'.

⁷⁹ CBCPNews, 'CBCP Release Logo, Theme for "500YOC"', Gifted to Give, 2021, <https://500yoc.com/cbcpr-releases-logo-theme-for-500yoc/>.

faith, the good news you received five hundred years ago, to others.⁸⁰ (original emphasis)

Pope Francis' homily is noteworthy because it reflects the very theme for the five-hundredth-anniversary celebrations, 'Gifted to Give'. Indeed, the idea that the Catholic faith is, in the words of Pope Francis, 'part of your genes' adds to the common idea of the Catholic nation of the Philippines.

Second, within the Catholic context of the Philippines, the thesis focuses on the CBCP. The CBCP is an institution within the Philippine Catholic Church and the wider global Catholic community. It is a national collective of all Catholic bishops in the Philippines and facilitates the cooperation and coordination of various dioceses and territories of the Catholic Church. The significance of the CBCP will be further discussed in Chapter 3. Some points can be made as a primer to the discussions to follow on the context of the case study.

The global prevalence of Bishops conferences as permanent institutions in the Church emerged as a result of the Second Ecumenical Council, or simply known as Vatican II. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World from Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1965. *Gaudium et Spes* was significant in outlining the reorientation of the role of the Church in the modern world. Some points can be briefly highlighted relevant to the current research. In the introductory statement of *Gaudium et Spes* it was noted that 'the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel'.⁸¹ It also states that

It is only right, however, that at all time and in all places, the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgement in those matters which regard public order when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it.⁸²

It is interesting to consider how this freedom of passing of 'moral judgement' in the post-Vatican II Philippine Catholic Church might manifest itself. As will be argued and seen in the case study chapters, there is a nuanced difference that is manifested in the Catholic theological imaginary

⁸⁰ Pope Francis, 'Holy Mass for the 500th Anniversary of the Evangelization of the Philippines: Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis,' Vatican, published 14 March 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2021/documents/papa-francesco_20210314_omelia-cristianesimo-filippine.html.

⁸¹ Pope Paul VI, 'Gaudium et Spes', Vatican, accessed 28 November 2022, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

⁸² Pope Paul VI, 'Gaudium et Spes'.

of the CBCP on agrarian land reform policy and family planning policy. Leading to a preference for intervention in the family planning policy debate because of the directness of the effect of the policy to salvation and the natural order. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reflected on Vatican II in a letter to the President of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Fr Dave Pivonka TOR, in relation to an international symposium dealing with Benedict XVI's ecclesiology. Benedict wrote that 'there were many doubts as to whether [Vatican II] would be meaningful, indeed whether it would be possible at all, to organize the insights and questions into the whole of a conciliar statement and thus give the Church a direction for its further journey'.⁸³ However, Vatican II 'proved to be not only meaningful, but necessary'.⁸⁴ Further,

the need to reformulate that question of the nature and mission of the Church has gradually become apparent. In this way, the positive power of the Council is also slowly emerging...But the complete spiritualization of the concept of the Church, for its part, misses the realism of faith and its institutions in the world. Thus, in Vatican II the question of the Church in the world finally became the real problem.⁸⁵

While some may point to the significance of *Gaudium et Spes* to the Church, there are other documents from Vatican II adding substance to the pastoral constitution. As discussed later in the context of the case study chapters there are Vatican II documents which have provided substance to the role and function of bishops' conferences as a permanent institution in the global Catholic Church. A notable example is the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. *Lumen Gentium*, among other themes, discussed the role of bishops within the Church. According to *Lumen Gentium*, the bishops are 'vicars and ambassadors of Christ' who 'govern the particular churches entrusted to them by their counsel, exhortations, example, and event by their authority and sacred power'.⁸⁶ It is emphasised that bishops are not 'to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiffs, for they exercise authority that is proper to them, and are quite correctly called "prelates," heads of the people whom they govern'.⁸⁷ In this context, the Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 28 October 1965. As will be seen, *Christus Dominus* decreed the establishment of episcopal conferences in order that 'when the insights of prudence and experience have been shared and views exchanged, there will emerge a holy union of energies

⁸³ Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Benedict XVI Letter to Fr Dave Pivonka TOR, 7 October 2022, <https://franciscan.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Benedict-XVI-Letter-to-Fr-Dave-Pivonka-TOR.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Benedict XVI, Benedict XVI Letter to Fr Dave Pivonka TOR.

⁸⁵ Benedict XVI, Benedict XVI Letter to Fr Dave Pivonka TOR.

⁸⁶ Second Vatican Council, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*', Vatican, published 21 November 1964, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

⁸⁷ Second Vatican Council, '*Lumen Gentium*'.

in the service of the common good of the churches'.⁸⁸ Through this document the establishment of episcopal conferences as a permanent institution around the globe was made. The influence and application of Vatican II in local Catholic communities will have reverberations across the globe, and in the case study, one example of this is the plenary council that would be held in the Philippines.

The CBCP will be seen as embedded not only in a post-Vatican II global Catholic context but in a developing Philippine context in relation to the developments emerging from the 1991 Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II). PCP II has had a similar role and significance for the Catholic Church in the Philippines as Vatican II was for the global Catholic Church. It was significant because the purpose of the PCP II was to set the renewal and direction of the Philippine Catholic Church. A Plenary Council is distinct from an episcopal conference like the CBCP. This is because plenary councils are 'a meeting of churches' as opposed to episcopal conferences which are 'assembly of bishops'.⁸⁹ This distinction means that the plenary council would be significant event for Philippine Catholic actors and institutions.

Like the reorientation of the global Catholic Church in the pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, the PCP II was intended to define the renewal and direction of the Philippine Catholic Church in the next period of history. It is also significant as 'the first national gathering of Catholic church leaders – bishops, priests, religious and lay people – in the country that consciously aimed to chart the path for the Philippine Church in the spirit of Vatican II'.⁹⁰ As Dionisio states, the Acts and Decrees of PCP II have 'been the official guide for the Church's engagement with the problems of Philippine society since 22 August 1992, a month after its promulgation'.⁹¹ There have been numerous subsequent reviews and reflections on PCP II, such as the 2015 edited book by Eric Marcelo, Agnes Brazel and Daniel Pilario, *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Quo Vadis?*, with its article contributions emerging from a

⁸⁸ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus', Vatican, published 28 October 1965,

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html.

⁸⁹ Ian Waters, 'The Plenary Council and Canon Law', *The Australasian Catholic Record* 95, no. 4 (2018): 400; see also, *The Code of Canon Law*, 439, 431, 447.

⁹⁰ Daniel Franklin Pilario, 'Introduction', in *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Quo Vadis?*, eds. Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, Agnes M. Brazel and Daniel Franklin Pilario (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), vii.

⁹¹ Eleanor R. Dionisio, 'Introduction', in *Becoming a Church of the Poor: Philippine Catholicism After the Second Plenary Council*, ed. Eleanor R. Dionisio (Quezon City, Philippines: John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues, 2011), 1.

conference commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the PCP II.⁹² Indeed, critiques of the PCP II or the progress after PCP II have also been made, including the Philippine Catholic Church yet to become the Church of the Poor as enunciated by the PCP II, the strategies of the PCP II to strengthen the family as an evangelising agent are weak and inadequate, or the PCP II's forgetfulness of the local church where communion is experienced and must be fostered.⁹³ Nonetheless, the PCP II is a significant moment in the history of the Philippine Catholic Church and will provide some of the structures influencing the Filipino bishops and the CBCP as will be seen in the case study chapters in 4 and 5.

The third reason for the reasons for selecting the CBCP as a site of analysis related to the timeframe chosen for the study. The period 1986 to 1998 period represents a time of change after the 1986 People Power Revolution. The 1986 People Power Revolution was a watershed moment in the political history of the Philippines that ousted the dictator, President Ferdinand Marcos, and brought a return to democracy. The religious overtone of the People Power Revolution against the Marcos regime was epitomised by potent images of nuns and priests in the frontlines of the human barricades.⁹⁴ While this period is illustrative of the ability of the Church to effect participatory change, it may also obscure the more complex place of religion that developed in the post-Marcos Philippines.⁹⁵ The particular presidential contexts chosen for this research are focused on because sufficient time has passed to allow a review with the benefit of hindsight by applying new frameworks of understanding in IR.

Importantly, this is time of dual transitions. On one level, as noted, there is the political transitions of the Marcos regime to the restoration of democracy after the People Power Revolution. On another level there is a transition for the CBCP. The PCP II coincides with the period in the history of the CBCP labelled as 'the renewal of vision for the Church and society'.⁹⁶

⁹² See for example a non-exhaustive list from, James H. Kroeger, 'Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) Compendium of Resources', in *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines; Quo Vadis?*, eds. Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, Agnes M. Brazal and Daniel Franklin E. Pilario (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 156-68;

⁹³ See for example, Bishop Teodoro C. Bacani Jr, 'Church of the Poor: An Unfinished Agenda', in *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines; Quo Vadis?*, eds. Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, Agnes M. Brazal and Daniel Franklin E. Pilario (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 67-73; some other critiques are noted by, Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, 'Looking Back, Looking Forward: Revisiting PCP II', in *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines; Quo Vadis?*, eds. Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, Agnes M. Brazal and Daniel Franklin E. Pilario (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 5-6.

⁹⁴ Julius Bautista, 'The Rebellion and the Icon: Holy Revolutions in the Philippines', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 34, no. 2 (2006): 300.

⁹⁵ David T. Buckley, 'Duterte's Tough Talk: Can the Church Work with the Philippines' New President', *America* 215, no. 1 (2016): 22.

⁹⁶ Lope C. Robredillo, 'The Challenges of the Times and the CBCP's Response: An Historical Essay on the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines', accessed 9 April 2020, <https://cbcponline.net/history-of-cbcp>.

This is because the shift in the ecclesiological framework of the CBCP.⁹⁷ A deeper examination into the Acts and Decrees of the PCP II will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5 in relation to the embedded context of the CBCP in the respective policies. It will be seen in the discussion on the PCP II that each policy area is treated differently in the Acts and Decrees of the PCP II, which again could be linked to directness of the effect of the policy to salvation and the natural order within the Catholic theological imaginary being engaged with in the thesis.

Fourth, the research will examine the CBCP on two policy areas: agrarian land reform and family planning. The rationale of employing a comparative policy context is to add value to our understanding of the agency of the religious actor beyond assumed static and binary categories of political labels, such as left–right and progressive–conservative. An immediate reaction may be that such a case study is problematic because a comparison cannot be readily made between an economic policy (i.e. agrarian land reform) and a social policy (i.e. family planning). However, the distinction between economic and social in these policies may not be so clear. Indeed, it could be argued that each policy addresses both social and economic issues in the Philippines. For example, agrarian land reform addressing the economic issue of alleviating the material resources of the rural poor but also addressing the social issue of an imbalanced land tenure structures in the Philippines. Equally, family planning would address the economic issue of controlling the population levels while addressing the social issue of family size and financial burden. Nonetheless, having no direct comparative similarity between the policies is not a barrier to obtaining valuable insights and testing the constructed framework in the case study. As will be seen later, the research has attempted to work within the theological imaginary of the CBCP when applying the constructed framework to discuss aspects of agency. Through doing so, the distinction between economic and social is not the focal point but rather it is all understood within the interconnected Catholic worldview, which I later term as the ‘natural order’. The CBCP then in the case study would approach the policies of governments through the Catholic lens in which it is embedded and thus, adding its flavour to the agency of the Catholic bishops within the CBCP.

Let us return to the notable political labelling examples of the ‘left–right’ binary and the associated ‘conservative—progressive’ binary. For the latter binary, we can ask the comparative questions: ‘progressive to what?’ and ‘conservative to what?’ The Catholic Church as a religious institution is popularly seen in society as conservative. However, can this labelling truly

⁹⁷ Robredillo, ‘The Challenges of the Times’.

represent the Catholic Church's position on all issues? Indeed, should such a label be applied to all Catholic actors? Homogenising religious actors may overlook the complex dynamics and nuanced contextual differences. In this study's two chosen policy contexts, there is arguably an often-associated label attached. For instance, in family planning policy, the Catholic Church is often seen as conservative. In contrast, support for agrarian land reform could be seen as a progressive move. In politics, especially in the policy domain, schemas such as 'left-right' and 'conservative-progressive' are often employed as a mode of comparison on a given subject.

The value of these political labels is to create an imaginary binary on a political spectrum that reduces complex information in a simple form. Jou stated that '[the binary] provides an efficient way to understand, order, and store information, reducing the complexity of politics and serving the functions of both orientation for individual voters and communication for the political system'.⁹⁸ Laponce has said that the schema of left and right permeates because it creates a continuum containing a centre position, which can be visualised and is thus understandable and translatable across cultures.⁹⁹ Further, according to Inglehart, 'the Left-Right image is an oversimplification, but an almost inevitable one, which in the long run tends to assimilate all important issues'.¹⁰⁰ Simplicity can be beneficial. However, overreliance on simple binaries to wholly characterise an actor can be misleading and avoid the nuances. Engagement with the CBCP in two complex policy contexts will be limited by relying on these binary political labels. The research agenda can be moved forward beyond these binaries by the framework constructed in the thesis that applies greater nuance to the religious actor.

The Philippine-based case study on the CBCP in chapter 4 and 5 will be seen and analysed through a constructed framework in this thesis in response to the research question. An IR mode of analysis is used in the present study. As a discipline in the social sciences, IR can offer its distinct contributions in its mode of analysis. One such example is IR's situating and explanation of the global and local nexus of the political, social, cultural, and economic system. The distinction between the global and the local is blurry, especially where religion is an element. The Philippine-based case study on the CBCP, though a local/state-based context, has implications and interactions from the global community to the Philippines and vice versa. An

⁹⁸ Willy Jou, 'The Heuristic Value of the Left-Right Schema in East Asia', *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 3 (2010): 366.

⁹⁹ J. A. Laponce, *Left and Right: The Topography of Political Perceptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 24-27.

¹⁰⁰ Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 292.

example explored in the case study chapters is the transnational flow from the global centre of the Catholic Church to the Philippine Catholic Church and the CBCP in the form of papal encyclicals. Episcopal conferences also being attentive to international responses from other episcopal conferences and within the global Catholic Church, such as liberationist theologies in relation to the poor. While IR may draw from other disciplines, such as sociology, history, and philosophy, and find agreement with them on conceptual points, IR will bring those insights together to offer analysis and explanation of the dynamics within the world system. This porous boundary of IR is a strength that can be used to add to the Philippine case study. Engagement for policymakers is also enhanced by such a holistic theoretical offering and understanding from IR.

1.7 Contributions of the Thesis

There are several contributions this thesis may provide to the scholarship in IR on religion and the Philippine case study and, more broadly, the study of Catholic actors. First, as far as the researcher is aware, analytic eclecticism has received little application in the study of religion in IR.¹⁰¹ Eclectic scholarship has primarily focused on ‘real-world problems’, such as policy development, security and conflicts and disputes.¹⁰² As will be discussed in Chapter 2, analytic eclecticism will be a guiding influence in this thesis to create a theoretical framework from multiple scholars. This framework will then be applied to analyse the agency of the CBCP.

Second, in terms of the case study on the Philippines and CBCP, it sheds light on understanding some of the CBCP’s agency dynamics in comparatively different contexts. This may lead to interesting future studies for how actors in the Catholic Church may respond to contemporary

¹⁰¹ For example, Gregorio Bettiza, *Finding Faith in Foreign Policy: Religion & American Diplomacy in a Postsecular World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 24. Bettiza references analytic eclecticism scholars Sil and Katzenstein in association with his own eclectic methodology. This is an example of awareness of analytic eclecticism within IR scholarship on the study of religion.

¹⁰² See, for example, Linnea Gelot and Martin Welz, ‘Pragmatic Eclecticism, Neoclassical Realism and Post-Structuralism: Reconsidering the African Response to the Libyan Crisis of 2011’, *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 12 (2018); Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, ‘Japan, Asia Pacific Security, and the Case for Analytic Eclecticism’, *International Security* 26, no. 3 (2011); Sint Sint Myat, ‘Explaining Myanmar’s Policy of Non-Alignment: An Analytic Eclecticism Approach’, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421992068>; Benjamin Pohl and Niels Van Willigen, ‘Analytic Eclecticism and EU Foreign Policy (In)action’, *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations* 29, no. 2 (2015); Filippus Proedrou, ‘Ukraine’s Foreign Policy: Accounting for Ukraine’s Indeterminate Stance Between Russia and the West’, *Journal of Southeast Europe and Black Sea Studies* 10, no. 4 (2010); Salvador Santino F. Regilme, ‘Beyond Paradigms: Understanding the South China Sea Dispute Using Analytic Eclecticism’, *International Studies* 55, no. 3 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020881718794527>; Sil and Katzenstein, ‘De-Centering’, 482–83; Srdjan Vucetic and Erico Duarte, ‘New Fighter Aircraft Acquisitions in Brazil and India: Why Not Buy American?’, *Politics & Policy* 43, no. 3 (2015).

Philippine politics and elsewhere. Additionally, it deepens our understanding of a time of political transition in the Philippines and for the CBCP.

Third, the findings of this research may provide another contribution in the scholarship to understanding the CBCP in its ‘glocal’ (i.e., global and local) dimensions and Catholic specificities beyond questions of power dynamics. More broadly, it can contribute to a deeper understanding of bishops conferences in IR scholarship by engaging with these multiple dimensions.

Fourth, as will be seen through the theoretical influences underlying the constructed framework used, the thesis offers a different take on Filipino Roman Catholicism compared to prominent historical works that tend to affirm the role of power and discursive formations in the cultivation of religious and political agency. The works of Reynaldo Ileto is a notable example of a prominent historical account of Filipino Roman Catholicism compared to that offered by the present research, especially Ileto’s seminal work *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*.¹⁰³ According to Wurfel, Ileto’s major thesis in *Pasyon* is that ‘peasant revolts have had a special meaning for participants that defy western scholarly categories’.¹⁰⁴ In this case, the retelling of Christ’s suffering and death, the *Pasyon*, becomes, as Beckett states of Ileto’s work, ‘‘a master text’, generating meaning for the whole of society’.¹⁰⁵ It is a history ‘from below’ approach that Ileto uses to present the historical account of Filipino Roman Catholicism.¹⁰⁶ Ileto’s findings in this historical account is based on perceptions and a phenomenological approach to provide interpretations and a narrative about the psychological life and poetic ethos of the masses.¹⁰⁷ The present research by contrast undertakes an approach different to the works like Ileto. The thesis draws on critical realism in its approach. The thesis takes an approach contrary to the tendency in prominent constructivist, poststructuralist and positivist approaches that conflate the world with the knowledge we have of it. The constructed framework affirms the existence and ontological weight of the structures behind the unobservable influences on the CBCP. Also, recognising the independent and socially

¹⁰³ See Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

¹⁰⁴ David Wurfel, ‘Pasyon and Revolution. Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910 by Reynaldo Clemena Ileto’, *Pacific Affairs* 55, no. 2 (1982): 346.

¹⁰⁵ Jeremy Beckett, ‘Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910 by Reynaldo Clemena Ileto’, *Oceania* 55, no. 1 (1984): 77.

¹⁰⁶ Ooi Kee Beng, ‘Revisiting Two Classics: Charting the Mental World of the Oppressed’, *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 24, no. 1 (2009): 47.

¹⁰⁷ Beng, ‘Revisiting Two Classics’, 50.

conditioned properties of those structures in the complex overlapping layers of the world. The thesis then offers a different account on Filipino Roman Catholicism.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

A brief overview of the structure of this thesis follows. The research can be grouped into two parts. The first, consisting of Chapters 2 and 3, establishes the conceptual and methodological foundation of the thesis. The second, consisting of Chapters 4 and 5, applies the concepts and theoretical framework established in Part One to the case study. These chapters will analyse the CBCP from 1986 to 1998 with specific attention to the comparative policy contexts of agrarian land reform and family planning. A summary of each chapter follows below.

Chapter 2: IR Discourse on Religion and Agency

In Chapter 2, the thesis begins with identifying the multiple approaches to religion in the IR. I argue that the plurality of approaches in IR could lead us to consider the differences and potential tensions among the different voices in the discipline. The incommensurability argument becomes a consequential result. This suggests that advancing the research agenda will need to address the problem of incommensurability in the study on religion in IR. In identifying pluralism and the issue of incommensurability, the study takes conceptual guidance from two approaches, namely, critical realism and analytic eclecticism. Critical realism as a philosophy of science opens the discussion on concepts of religion, agency and causation. While analytic eclecticism, as a theoretically plural and accommodative ‘intellectual stance’ with a conceptual lineage to the mutual serviceability concept of Weaver, provides a method to integrate the adopted elements of the principal scholars: Wight, Pabst, Omer and Barbato. The construction of these principal scholars is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Framework and Site of Analysis

In Chapter 3, I construct the theoretical framework of the present thesis as guided by the influences of critical realism and analytic eclecticism. As already discussed briefly in this chapter, the analytic eclecticism of the constructed framework will be based on the contributions of four principal scholars, namely, Wight, Pabst, Omer and Barbato.¹⁰⁸ This eclectic selection of scholars is discussed in relation to the contribution and value each adds to the theoretical

¹⁰⁸ See, Barbato, ‘Multi-layered Actorness’; Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’; Omer, ‘Good Religion’; Pabst, ‘Secularism’; Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’; Colin Wight, *Agent, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

framework in this thesis. These scholarly contributions can be divided into two groups. First, the explicit theoretical framework is based on the multilayered agency of Wight and the metaphysical political realism of Pabst. While providing the conceptual approach to engage with the agency of the CBCP, the Wight framework will also importantly provide the structure to organise the case study in Chapters 4 and 5. Pabst is introduced to engage with the religious components in the second layer of agency in the Wight framework. Second, implicit in the theoretical approach is the religious self-identified approach of Omer and the multilayered actorness of Barbato. The power reductionism critique from Omer will guide engagement with the CBCP. In combination with the contribution from Pabst, the thesis will attempt to avoid power reductionism and engage with the Catholic specificities and the self-understanding of the CBCP. I turn to Barbato to show the multiple external roles a religious actor can occupy. Before applying the framework to the case study chapters that follow, I revisit Catholicism in the Philippines and the significance of the CBCP in the case study of the thesis to provide an initial contextual background.

Chapter 4: Agrarian Land Reform Policy

Chapter 4 is the first case study chapter in this thesis where the analytic eclecticism of the constructed interpretive framework will be applied and tested. Wight's multilayered framework of agency will be used to structure the chapter and analysis of the case study. I look at the statements of the CBCP concerning the state's agrarian land reform policy. The lack of quantity of CBCP statements on agrarian land reform compared to family planning statements is problematised in this chapter. This problem is examined by identifying the dynamics involved in the agency of the CBCP in relation to the state's agrarian land reform policy. Agrarian land reform was a constitutionally mandated state policy. Yet, it was a very politically contested legislative process. The first layer of the agency framework is the conception of the 'self'. I engage this layer through identifying the *ration d'etre* of the CBCP as identified in the construction of bishops conferences in documents of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and other documents of the Catholic Church, such as the Code of Canon Law. I follow with the second sociocultural layer of the agency framework, where I identify four important points: papal encyclicals and Catholic social teachings, the Catholic conception of natural order, the vision in the acts and decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II), and the local rise of communist rebellions and the reception of liberation theology in the global Catholic Church. This second layer establishes the Catholicity of the CBCP and provides the context to how the CBCP may engage with the dynamics of agrarian land reform. I engage with these layers through

the arguments of Omer that would argue for engaging with the Catholic actor's understanding of its teachings. This leads to the conception of a natural order, where Pabst is engaged to understand the implications of such an existing reality. Each of these points within the second layer of the agency framework will influence the third layer of the agency framework. I look at two areas in the third layer: a) the contested notion of the magisterial authority of bishop conferences and b) the practice of issuing bishop conference letters and statements. In particular, agrarian land reform as a new social issue written down in a Bishops' Conference statement raises questions about whether the CBCP can espouse a teaching on the policy. The modality of issuing statements in this policy context is influenced by the dynamics in the second and third layers in the framework of agency.

Chapter 5: Family Planning Policy

Chapter 5 is similarly structured using the Wight framework of agency. Here, the theoretical framework will be applied to family planning policy. I revisit the self-understanding of the CBCP found in Vatican II and Catholic Church documents as the base to explore agency in this policy context. Family planning policies on contraception, abortion and sterilisation are grouped in the political context of the Philippines with questions around economic development and population control. The CBCP has engaged in more public interventions in terms of statements in this policy area than on agrarian land reform. Some differences lead to this, which I discuss in the two other layers in the agency framework. Similarly, in the second sociocultural layer of the agency framework, I identify four important points: the teachings in papal encyclicals in which the CBCP statements are embedded, the Catholic conception of natural order and centrality of the family, the vision in the acts and decrees of PCP II confirming the centrality of the family and the influence of Pope John Paul II. I similarly engage with these layers through the argument of Omer that would argue for engaging with the Catholic actor's understanding of its teachings. This leads to the conception of a natural order, and Pabst is engaged in understanding the implications of such an existing reality. Importantly, the centrality of the family for the Catholic Church both in its teachings and the Catholic cosmivision adds to the impetus to publicly intervene. Each of these points within the second layer of the agency framework influence the third layer of the agency framework. In the third layer, I examine two areas: a) the contested notion of the magisterial authority of bishop conferences and b) the practice of issuing bishop conference letters and statements.

In contrast to agrarian land reform, the issue of whether Bishops' Conferences exercise magisterial authority does not seem to have affected the CBCP in issuing statements on Church teachings and criticisms of government policy. This may come from the already specific teaching for a specific issue in the Catholic Church. Finally, the modality of the CBCP in issuing statements in the family planning policy context is increased by the central importance of the family for the salvific mission of the Church and the CBCP.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by examining some of the key findings of the case study. The key findings from agrarian land reform in Chapter 4 and family planning policy in Chapter 5 will be summarised in this chapter. In discussing the key findings of the CBCP, I link this with the idea of multilayered actorness that the CBCP occupied within and between the different state policies. Clarity also emerges on how a religious actor can be analysed through the glocal (i.e., global and local) particularities and religious traditions. This engagement will have yielded useful insights for the broader study of religion in IR. I also evaluate the analytic eclecticism of the constructed framework from its application in the case study chapters. The present thesis concludes by proposing several avenues for future research that emerge, including applying the framework to other contexts and religious actors and applying the analytic eclecticism of the framework to other Philippine Catholic actors.

1.9 Thesis Scope and Boundaries

Several boundaries shape the scope of the present thesis. First, the study will only focus on the religious traditions of Catholicism in the Philippines to maintain control. This means the findings of the agency of the CBCP, as detailed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, will be embedded within the religious traditions of Catholicism. I will not be claiming that the findings concerning the CBCP constitute an overall understanding of the agency of religious actors. It would be inappropriate to claim a universal conclusion from the specific actor focused within this thesis.

The premise of this thesis to the research question is about understanding the agency of religious actors. This will be about the analytic eclecticism of the constructed framework in the thesis. The case study, which can also provide its contribution, is intended to test the application of the analytically eclectic framework proposed in this thesis. Second, as a case study-based thesis, engagement with the context of the Philippines will be used to inform my engagement with the CBCP. Any discussion about the contextual dynamics of the CBCP and the state's policies will

be specific to the Philippines. However, this thesis is not intended to present a historiography or ethnography of the Philippines or the CBCP. Such approaches would be beyond the objectives and scope of the current thesis.

Third, engagement with the Catholic religious traditions in the case study will remain embedded within the discipline of IR. I engage with the statements of the CBCP as the primary source for analysis about what can be learned about the agency of the CBCP. This engagement will necessarily contain a large quantity of Catholic theology. While the thesis will engage with Catholic concepts and teachings, it does not intend to make theological arguments or enter into theological debates in the Catholic Church. This thesis also does not participate in apologetics about any of the teachings of the Catholic Church or the actions of the CBCP. Engagement with Catholic concepts and teachings will not be deep. Conclusions based on the analysis of the Catholic concepts and teachings will remain embedded within the discipline of IR. While valuable contributions from other cognate disciplines may add depth to the analysis, I keep the conclusions embedded within IR. Fourth, the state policies of agrarian land reform and family planning in the case study are used to analyse the agency of the CBCP in different contexts. The case study is not a policy analysis case study as such because the focus remains primarily on the CBCP. Fifth, I acknowledge the scope of the current thesis is unable to comprehensively analyse or engage with all actors and manifested interactions in the case study. To maintain control in this thesis, I have focused primarily on the CBCP because the research agenda is designed to have an actor focus. This stems from agency being an attribute of the actor. CBCP also has great significance as an institution of the collective of all bishops of the Philippines. The value of the present research through its findings and insights may be transferable to other contexts.

Chapter 2: IR Discourse on Religion

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will situate the present research within the existing scholarship on religion and agency. The research question, ‘*How can the agency of religious actors be understood and situated in IR?*’, will guide how the research will be situated. Two important elements in the research question will be explored: a) the significance of the religious in the dynamics of agency and b) the conceptualisation of agency in the IR discourse on religion. These two elements are explored in anticipation of the framework constructed in Chapter 3 in response to the research question. First, I will review the driving questions and requirements of the present study. This will establish the conceptual requirements of the review of the literature. The scholarship on religion will be engaged through a review of three different modes recently constructed by Rees: a) engagement, b) interrogation and c) accommodation.¹ More specifically, the present research will be situated among scholarship engaged through the lens of accommodation. From this location, I adopt the conceptual influence of critical realism to the approach to religion and agency. A critical realist approach accords well with the accommodationist mode of scholarship on religion. I will conclude the chapter by discussing the value of the analytical eclecticism methodology towards constructing a framework situated within an accommodationist mode of scholarship. This chapter will therefore provide a foundation for the discussion of the principal scholars to be adopted in the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 and operationalised in the case study that follows.

2.2 Driving Questions

The present research will be influenced by several driving factors shaping the approach to answering the core research question. This section will discuss some of those influences shaping the research, the particularities of the case study and the choice from a plurality of theoretical approaches found in IR.

2.2.1 The Research Question and the Case Study

As previously identified, the question to be explored considers how the agency of the religious actor can be understood and situated in IR. I intend to investigate this issue using a case study to

¹ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 38–51.

apply and evaluate the constructed analytical framework. Specifically, the study focuses on the CBCP and its official statements from 1986–1998 in the Philippines on the comparative policies of agrarian land reform and family planning. The research should consider the particularities of the actor (CBCP) and the context (the Philippines) analysed in the study. The research engagement with the CBCP includes the particularities of episcopal conferences generally and particularities of the CBCP itself as a contextually embedded organisation within the social and political context of the Philippines from 1986–1998. The agrarian land reform and family planning policies are contexts involving identifiable historic, social and political dynamics.

For the purposes of this research, the exploration of religion focuses on Catholicism as identified by the CBCP because the research is not principally concerned with making evaluations of what is deemed as religious in a broader sense. I will later detail a self-identified approach to engage with the actor's accounts of their religiosity, its meaning and influence on their actions. These foregoing points are important in shaping the resulting analysis in the research.

An objective of the present study can be summarised from the editors' view in the 2013 special edition of the *European Journal of International Relations*. The special issue posed the question, 'The end of International Relations theory?' This question asked by the editors Dunne, Hansen and Wight, is made within the context of the plurality of research traditions and raised questions about the future of theory-driven work. Dunne, Hansen and Wight have argued there is an interplay between 'deriv[ing] theory from the real world' and 'the real world ... derived from some or other theory'.² The first quotation is an inductive investigation, and the second is a deductive investigation. The project intends to use the CBCP case study to contribute inductive insights to understanding agency in the study of religion and IR. The concurrent challenge is to deductively apply an approach to observe, in the words of the editors, 'the real world'. The editors rightly identified a reciprocity needed in research between these approaches. The present study intends to obtain findings about the case study and IR in general as inferred from the research undertaken. The broad research question driving the present research, and the specific case study to which it is applied, will address the need for embracing a plurality of theoretical approaches in IR.

² Tim Dunne, Lene Hansen and Colin Wight, 'The End of International Relations Theory', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 407, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066113495485>.

2.2.2 Theoretical Plurality in International Relations

The findings in this study will be influenced by the theoretical framework used to engage with the case study. The plurality of differing theoretical perspectives is not the danger; rather, it can offer other possibilities to add value to a research project by giving different angles of analysis. The danger in IR is the possibility of schools of theory becoming, in Lake's words, 'academic sects'.³ Lake argued that the problem is not the plurality of research traditions itself but the existence of 'five pathologies' in the behaviour of scholars that can lead to insular 'sects' in the discipline of IR.⁴ Lake has identified these five pathologies as: 'reify[ing] each [research tradition], reward[ing] extremism, fail[ing] to specify research designs completely, apply[ing] epistemologies selectively where they are most likely to work, and then claim universality'.⁵ Dunne, Hansen and Wight have also argued 'the best kind of theory both helps us to see the world in particular kinds of ways ... [but] we should take care to avoid the kind of dogmatism that leads us to believe our theory is immune from revision when it interacts with that world'.⁶ The attempt in this thesis will be to construct a framework to understand the agency of a religious actor. However, I do not claim that this is the better approach to the exclusion of other approaches in IR. I seek instead to deepen an understanding of the value obtainable from multiple theoretical contributions.

I will combine insights drawn from several scholars as the basis of the theoretical framework to be used in the case study. Such an approach emerges from situating the current research in the accommodationist mode of scholarship on religion in IR. I will discuss this further in the next section. The intention is to validate and challenge existing and emerging scholarship pertaining to the agency of religious actors. As discussed earlier, receptiveness to the interplay between theory and the object studied will be achieved through this plural approach. The different perspectives in a plural approach will allow the present research to answer the broader research question and analyse the Philippine case study in each of their particularities. In turn, the different perspectives used will contribute valuable insights for this study of religion broadly in IR and the Philippine context. The case study, in turn, will provide an evaluation of the constructed framework. I turn now to discuss the plurality in the engagement and analysis of religion in IR.

³ Lake, 'Why "isms" are Evil', 471.

⁴ Lake, 'Why "isms" are Evil', 467.

⁵ Lake, 'Why "isms" are Evil', 476.

⁶ Dunne, Hansen and Wight, 'The End of International Relations Theory', 407–8.

2.3 Contests Within International Relations on Religion

The study of religion in IR forms a multivocal field of inquiry informed by different approaches and practices towards engaging religion. Henne has perceptively observed the study of religion as a ‘current wave of studies struggl[ing] with a dilemma over the way religion matters; religious contention appears to be both principled and strategic’.⁷ The various approaches in the literature will have their own way with which religion matters. This will be an important inflection point in the discipline in IR to which this study intends to contribute.

The approach to engaging with the religious will have an important influence on the way the research question, ‘*How can the agency of religious actors understood and situated in IR?*’, will be answered. Rees suggests three different logics at work in the IR discourse on religion and foreign policy, described as the modes of engagement, interrogation and accommodation.⁸ I proffer that Rees’ framework holds promise for studying religion within the broader IR religion discourse and that this has relevance to how agency can be explored. Therefore, I will define each mode below according to the Rees framework and discuss the value of situating the present research within the accommodationist mode.

2.3.1 Mode of Engagement

The first type of approach towards religion and foreign policy as constructed by Rees is called the mode of engagement. This mode of scholarship operates with a substantivist definition of religion and holds that ‘religious traditions carry unique ethical and instrumental capabilities. Religion is therefore viewed as a catalyst for understanding the ideational and social contexts ... as well as providing strategic resources for ... policy makers’.⁹ Rees argues that the logic of engagement ‘begins with a focus on religious traditions and asks whether and how the resources found within them influence state behaviour and play a role in assessing geopolitical theatres of foreign policy’.¹⁰ In this context, ideas, identity, traditions and norms are privileged over material power and lead to a tension wherein religious tradition and practice are prioritised rather than the interests of the state.¹¹ This sees religion as a primary focus in IR discourse on religion and foreign policy.

⁷ Henne, ‘Religious Statecraft’, 1365.

⁸ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’.

⁹ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 41.

¹⁰ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 41.

¹¹ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 42–43.

Beyond Rees' immediate application, aspects of the mode of engagement scholarship can arguably be seen in the literature concerning discussions about the religious roots of the modern international system and the concept of sovereignty. Philpott, for instance, argued that 'religious ideas ... are at the root of modern international relations' because 'had the [Protestant] Reformation not occurred a system of sovereign states would not have arrived, at least in the same form or in the same era'.¹² For Philpott, the 'Reformation's indispensability emerges most saliently through the correlation: those polities that experienced a Reformation crisis were the same ones that adopted an interest in Westphalia; those that saw no such crisis did not'.¹³ This is because 'for out of the religious wars wrought by the Reformation came the hollowing of the Holy Roman Empire, the rise of the eighteenth-century balance of power, the Enlightenment, and the increased separation of religion and politics'.¹⁴ The central premise in Philpott's connection of the Reformation and the emergence of modern international relations is that 'the Reformation not as a sole cause but as a central cause'.¹⁵ This argument ascribes to Protestantism a causality in transforming and understanding the modern system of states.

Pabst, in turn, argued that the emergence of the modern concept of sovereignty lay in a series of shifts within Christian theology around the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁶ In contrast to Philpott, Pabst traces the religious roots of the modern system further back in history, beyond the Reformation. Pabst argued that a theological shift began with Ockham, from metaphysical realism and intellectualism to nominalism and voluntarism.¹⁷ The significance of this nominalist and voluntarist theology, for Pabst, is that it 'establishes the primacy of the individual over the universal and posits a radical separation between the infinite eternal and the finite temporal "realm"'.¹⁸ A similar argument is made here because the shift in religious traditions has resulted in it being a catalyst for changing international relations.

The influence of religious traditions is understood in these two contrasting views as carrying important weight in the study of religion. Philpott and Pabst both argue that religious traditions provide a catalyst to transform the social context into what is commonly seen as the modern system of sovereignty and states. The religious traditions examined by Philpott and Pabst have

¹² Daniel Philpott, 'The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations', *World Politics* 52, no. 2 (2000): 206, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100002604>.

¹³ Philpott, 'Religious Roots', 207.

¹⁴ Philpott, 'Religious Roots', 215–16.

¹⁵ Philpott, 'Religious Roots', 214.

¹⁶ Adrian Pabst, 'Modern Sovereignty in Question: Theology, Democracy and Capitalism', *Modern Theology* 26, no. 4 (2010): 575, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2010.01633.x>.

¹⁷ Pabst, 'Modern Sovereignty', 575.

¹⁸ Pabst, 'Modern Sovereignty', 576.

the unique capability to create broad structural changes in international relations. In a perceived dichotomy between religion and politics, the religious is given greater emphasis in the mode of engagement. This understanding will have a similar effect on engagement with the research question if applied as the approach in this thesis. However, as mentioned earlier, the framework of the thesis will be used in a Philippine-based case study on the CBCP, with other material factors influencing religious actors and their religious traditions. The means of the study to factor in those driving questions discussed in the previous section would be limited here.

2.3.2 Mode of Interrogation

The second type of approach towards religion and foreign policy constructed by Rees is called the mode of interrogation. Rees argues this interrogationist mode of scholarship views ‘religion’ as a highly problematic term and instrument because it is ‘understood as the product of historicized and politicized processes of identity formation that are often encased within structures of hegemonic interest’.¹⁹ In this context, Rees writes that the logic of interrogation, in general, focuses on ‘“religion” as a construction of control, with particular reference to “secular settlements” as a means to classify “religion” so that it serves the declared and undeclared norms of the Western (Christian) secular state’.²⁰ This critical view of the material power dynamics in the structures, motivations and interests involved sees the ‘co-option of religion at work in the international system ... [as] ineffective in preventing violence, persecution, and discrimination’.²¹ Accordingly, the interests of the state in the logic of interrogation are prioritised in IR discourse. For example, Fitzgerald has argued ‘the concept of religion and religions as genuine objects of knowledge in the world, and religious studies as a distinct set of methodologies, is an ideological assertion which strives to recreate the Other in its own image’.²² In this sense, ‘religion’ does not have an independent existence from those processes that define and analyse it. Religion then takes a secondary role in this IR discourse on religion.

A broader consequence of this argument is seen in the multivocal debate in the literature on religion in IR, where Westphalianism has been readily contested. Literature from this contestation of Westphalia has displayed aspects of an interrogationist mode of scholarship. Osiander argued that the Westphalian narrative is a concept of the past that is ‘largely imaginary’,

¹⁹ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 43.

²⁰ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 43.

²¹ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

²² Timothy Fitzgerald, ‘A Critique of “Religion” as a Cross-Cultural Category’, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9, no. 2 (1997): 98.

‘a figment of the imagination’ and mythic.²³ The narrative for Osiander is ‘really a product of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century fixation on the concept of sovereignty’.²⁴ Agensky has similarly argued that ‘IR has largely neglected the transformative impact of the long 19th century’.²⁵ For Agensky, religion and international political order developed in relation to liberal state-building and empire such that the universal application of European categories and concepts like religion to colonial governance normatively shaped non-European settings.²⁶ Eurocentric criticism is argued by Kayaoglu as ‘the Westphalian narrative allow[ing] for the continued imagination and invention of European intellectual and political superiority, treating the West as a perennial source of political and religious tolerance in international society’.²⁷ The hegemonic interests of European colonialism and the normative construction from a particular contextual period create the by-product known as ‘religion’.

These examples emphasise the historicised and politicised processes shaping our modern understanding of religion and politics. This can be contrasted with the logic of engagement that prioritises the influence of religious traditions and practices over the interests of states. In the case study, the mode of interrogation would emphasise the material factors present in the Philippine context and relegate the religious traditions of the CBCP to a secondary role. While this view provides invaluable insight, it may reflect the opposite limitations of the mode of engagement, namely, to deny or dissolve the particularities of religion altogether. Such a limitation may be significant when analysing the agency of the CBCP. In sum, the modes of engagement and interrogation have provided useful contributions relevant to the present study but may also have limitations compared to the third mode of Rees’ framework.

2.3.3 Mode of Accommodation

The third type of scholarship observable in the study of religion as constructed by Rees is the mode of accommodation. In this third mode of scholarship, the present study will be situated. According to Rees, scholarship in the accommodationist mode ‘affirm[s] the need to engage religion *qua* religion whilst also acknowledging the negative effect that can occur through misreading’ and employs valuable understandings from the modes of engagement and

²³ Andreas Osiander, ‘Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth’, *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 251, 260, 266, <https://doi.org/10.1162/00208180151140577>.

²⁴ Osiander, ‘Sovereignty, International Relations’, 250.

²⁵ Jonathan C. Agensky, ‘Recognizing Religion: Politics, History, and the “Long 19th Century”’, *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 4 (2017): 740, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116681428>.

²⁶ Agensky, ‘Recognizing Religion’, 740–44.

²⁷ Turan Kayaoglu, ‘Westphalian Eurocentrism in International Relations Theory’, *International Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (2010): 195–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2010.00928.x>.

interrogation.²⁸ An example of the accommodationist mode can be seen in the approach taken by Hibbard. He first differentiates between an essentialist and a materialist approach to the study of religious politics. According to Hibbard, ‘the materialist perspective is helpful in explaining the socioeconomic context in which religious revival movement emerge, while the essentialist view sheds light on the concerns of religious activists’.²⁹ These approaches described by Hibbard have comparative similarities to the modes of engagement and interrogation described by Rees. The alternative to the two approaches described by Hibbard is what he calls an integrative approach. This integrative approach taken by Hibbard ‘ascribes to religion a degree of causality and autonomy, even if particular expressions of religious politics are shaped by other, material factors’.³⁰ The approach ‘is premised on the notion that religion and politics are fundamentally similar endeavours’.

Rees, in earlier work, created a framework he called the ‘dynamics of religion model’ and is another example of an accommodationist approach to the study of religion. The constructed framework has an ‘integrated structure comprised of secular and sacral elements in world politics, [as] the model is intended to differentiate elements within the whole’.³¹ Rees states that ‘the model is designed to uphold the complexity of religion whilst providing a clearer picture of where this complexity situates interests (and the actors that may coalesce around those interests) throughout the political landscape’.³² This captures the value of an accommodationist approach to religion. Both Hibbard and Rees acknowledge the complexity of the dynamics between religion and politics. In acknowledging this complexity, each approach from Hibbard and Rees can provide a deepened engagement with the nuances of the contexts being examined.

An added value of situating the thesis in the mode of accommodation is that it can overcome the problem of theoretical plurality in IR discussed earlier in this chapter by not necessarily being exclusivist in examining phenomena. That is, the approaches of Hibbard and Rees do not provide a lens to see religion and politics through one perspective only, an implicit danger presented by the modes of engagement and interrogation. These points raise an avenue for the thesis to address the requirements and driving questions discussed earlier. I argue that where a lacuna may exist

²⁸ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

²⁹ Scott W. Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India and the United States* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 26. Rees’ own work draws extensively from Hibbard. See, for example, John A. Rees, ‘Religion, Populism, and the Dynamics of Nationalism’, *Religion, State and Society* 49, no. 3 (2021): 195–210.

³⁰ Hibbard, *Religious Politics*, 26.

³¹ John A. Rees, *Religion in International Politics and Development: The World Bank and Faith Institutions* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011), 32.

³² Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 32.

in the study of religion in IR, it will be found within this mode of accommodation scholarship. Therefore, through the research question and the framework applied in the Philippine case study, the present study intends to contribute to accommodationist scholarship in the study of religion in IR.

2.3.4 Forward Direction: Constructing a Framework

As suggested above, I will be situating the current study within the mode of accommodation scholarship identified by Rees. The research question of the present study is, '*How can the agency of religious actors be understood and situated in IR?*' The question is intentionally broad to incorporate the complexities of the diverse constitutive dynamics of religion and politics, the case study of the CBCP as a religious actor and the contextual dynamics influencing the CBCP. May et al. have argued that 'being less reflexive contributes to the inability of many scholars to achieve nuanced analysis of the religious and the political, frequently *missing the multiple ways in which religion and politics are mutually constitutive*' (emphasis added).³³ Hibbard similarly argued that 'the prevalence of religion in modern political life is very much intertwined with the discourse and policies of the nation-state'.³⁴ This means that religion and politics intersect in complex and diverse ways. I agree with this view because the complexity of understanding religious actors means there will be multiple influences on the exercise of agency.

I suggest, after Rees, that arguments presented in the modes of engagement and interrogation are important. However, they do not explain or provide an entire view of the agency of religious actors on their own. In this context, the mode of engagement emphasises the primacy of the religious actor. The influence of the religious traditions of the religious actor provides an efficient cause for action. The mode of interrogation, in comparison, emphasises influences of political structures and material factors in the social context in shaping religion. From an exclusively interrogationist perspective, the concept of agency is limited as the religious actor is determined solely by the historicised and politicised structures. Each approach offers important insights about religious actors, but as Rees has written, 'implicit in this argument is that secular and sacral perspectives cannot be universally sustained'.³⁵ In this context, however, what Rees calls the 'integrated discourse' on religion in IR is 'not necessarily the "better discourse" and it is not

³³ Samantha May et al., 'The Religious as Political and the Political as Religious: Globalisation, Post-Secularism and the Shifting Boundaries of the Sacred', *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15, no. 3 (2014): 332, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2014.948526>.

³⁴ Hibbard, *Religious Politics*, 19.

³⁵ Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 19.

presented as an ideal type over the others'.³⁶ Distinctive to this integrated discourse is the normative assumption that the secular and sacral spheres overlap in the formation of political reality.³⁷ The mode of accommodation similarly does not attempt to sustain a singular emphasis on religious factors or material factors. Rather, it offers a balanced engagement with both and thereby creates a third framework.

I have foreshadowed in the introduction to this thesis that the framework of the study will be constructed from selected works of four principal scholars: Colin Wight, Adrian Pabst, Atalia Omer and Mariano Barbato. The integration of these principal scholars into the framework of this thesis will approach religion through an accommodationist frame. This will be achieved by establishing further conceptual principles underpinning the integrated framework. The first is situating the understanding of religion of this thesis within critical realism. A critical realist reading of religion accords with the accommodationist argument 'need[ing] to engage religion *qua* religion whilst also acknowledging the negative effect that can occur through misreading'.³⁸ Critical realism will also offer a view of agency that helps ground the value of the views of Wight in the framework. The second principle is using analytic eclecticism to construct the framework, leading to the choice of the four principal scholars as discussed in Chapter 3. The next sections in the remainder of this chapter will build on this discussion by outlining the conceptual origins of the framework in critical realism and the methodology of analytic eclecticism.

2.4 Critical Realist Approach to Religion and Agency

Situating the thesis within the mode of accommodation in the study of religion accords with the approach to religion found in critical realism. The sources I draw from in this section do not derive their arguments from exclusively IR sources but from larger philosophical debates, and I apply them within IR. Drawing from these sources will provide a valuable contribution to form my arguments of the conceptual understanding of this study. Several scholars have noted that critical realism is not a social theory and so not a theory of IR.³⁹ Instead, it is a philosophical system developed by Roy Bhaskar, collaborating with several British social theorists, including Margret Archer, Mervyn Hartwig, Tony Lawson, Alan Norrie and Andrew Sayer.⁴⁰ Gorski notes

³⁶ Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 19.

³⁷ Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 19.

³⁸ Rees, 'Religion and Foreign Policy', 45.

³⁹ Brown, 'Situating Critical Realism', 415; Joseph, 'Philosophy in International Relations', 345; Kurki, 'Causal Analysis in International Relations', 367–68; Wight, 'Manifesto for Scientific Realism in IR', 381.

⁴⁰ Phillip S. Gorski, 'Review: "What is Critical Realism? And Why Should You Care?"', *Contemporary Sociology* 42, no. 5 (2013): 658.

critical realism ‘appeals to the real ontological distinctions between the various layers or “strata in the natural and social worlds”’.⁴¹ That is, it ‘insists that the social is an emergent reality with its own specific powers and properties’.⁴² This philosophy of science starts with the assumption that reality exists independent of human observers.⁴³ This means the emphasis is not confined to those observable phenomena but can include the unobservable. Such an assumption will have important implications for understanding religion. The primary value of the critical realist metatheory is that it provides a coherent reconciliation of the epistemic and the ontic aspects of knowledge.⁴⁴ In other words, for the epistemic or critical side, the knowledge produced is ‘always a historically located social construction’.⁴⁵ For the ontic or realist side, ‘critical realism seeks to do full justice to the fact that culturally derived concepts always shape human thinking and perceiving, but it rejects the idea that those concepts *create* all of reality’ (original emphasis).⁴⁶ The value a critical realist perspective provides is that it ‘challenge[s] some of the core assumptions theorists hold on the nature of explanation and science in IR theoretical inquiry’.⁴⁷

The importation of Bhaskar’s philosophy of science into the social sciences has made several methodological and conceptual shifts, particularly to IR for this thesis. Some of these contributions are briefly mentioned.⁴⁸ Critical realism as a philosophy of science framed in terms of research practices and causality has today, according to Bukowska, been ‘approached in a universal way, which means that it is used in all special sciences, despite the apparent difference in their specific methods and subject of research’.⁴⁹ It has, as Frauley and Pearce state, ‘offer[ed] us an alternative strategy for investigating social phenomena, as it provides an alternative mode of reasoning and set of developed concepts through which to craft descriptions and explanations’.⁵⁰ For the social sciences and IR, the assumptions of critical realism emerged from

⁴¹ Gorski, ‘Review’, 659.

⁴² Gorski, ‘Review’, 659.

⁴³ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 364.

⁴⁴ Schilbrack, ‘A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion’, 88.

⁴⁵ Schilbrack, ‘A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion’, 88.

⁴⁶ Schilbrack, ‘A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion’, 88.

⁴⁷ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 361.

⁴⁸ See for example, Jonathan Joseph, ‘The Impact of Roy Bhaskar and Critical Realism on International Relations’. Accessed 27 November 2022. <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/12/11/the-impact-of-roy-bhaskar-and-critical-realism-on-international-relations/>.

⁴⁹ Monika Bukowska, ‘Critical Realism: One of the Main Theoretical Orientations of the Social Sciences in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century’, *Journal of Critical Realism* 20, no. 4 (2021): 441.

⁵⁰ Jon Frauley and Frank Pearce, ‘Critical Realism and the Social Sciences: Methodological and Epistemological Preliminaries’ in *Critical Realism and the Social Sciences: Heterodox Elaborations*, eds. Jon Frauley and Frank Pearce (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 15.

a time when the long-dominant theory of positivism was widely criticised.⁵¹ A contribution of critical realism, as noted above, is the argument that the world exists independent of our knowledge of it.⁵² This is opposed to the positivist conflation of the world itself with the knowledge we have of it.⁵³ It also follows that the critical realist holds onto the primacy of ontology because if knowledge is meaningful it must be about something other than understanding and be the world itself rather than the theoretical framework.⁵⁴ This position goes beyond the constructivist and positivist approaches of reducing the real world to the knowledge we have of it.⁵⁵ Another shift is on causation and the issue of causal analysis. The critical realist approach is ‘not the sort of causal approach as understood by the IR mainstream’.⁵⁶ The account of causation in critical realism is noted by Kurki as ‘suggest[ing] that the positivist model of causal analysis is not the only way to engage with the complexity of causal relations in world politics’.⁵⁷ The same could be said as a shift more broadly in the social sciences. Causation has been understood predominantly with an empiricism in which causality is identified through studying general patterns of observed events.⁵⁸ Critical realism sees causality not in the linear ‘when A, then B’ manner this is because causes exist as ontologically real forces in the world, many causes are unobservable and always exist in complex causal contexts and social causes are of many kinds requiring interpretation to undertake causal analysis in social science.⁵⁹ It follows that a further shift is, as noted previously, the critical realist argue for a stratified ontology in which reality is understood as comprising of complex overlapping layers that have their own distinctive properties and characteristics but are part of an interacting whole.⁶⁰ Following on from this, critical realism argues for emergent powers approach, which rather than the ‘level of analysis’ approach found in mainstream IR, sees international phenomena as having distinctive qualities but also emergent out of specific socially located conditions.⁶¹

These shifts in the social sciences and IR brought by critical realism will be valuable in the case study on the CBCP in chapters 4 and 5. Perhaps, arguably, the underlying influence of critical realism in the social sciences generally and IR more specifically might be seen in the later

⁵¹ Bukowska, ‘Critical Realism’, 441.

⁵² Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁵³ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁵⁴ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁵⁵ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁵⁶ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁵⁷ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 362.

⁵⁸ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 362.

⁵⁹ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 364.

⁶⁰ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁶¹ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

discussed analytic eclecticism methodology in IR. According to Joseph, critical realism takes a pluralistic approach to research methods by challenging the primacy of methods in that methods are but one of the tools to gain knowledge of the world.⁶² The unobservable character of social structures and generative mechanisms requires theoretical abstractions and conceptual analysis to be essential to the process.⁶³ Thus, different methods reveal different aspects of the world and so, should be chosen on the basis of appropriateness and fit with the conceptual arguments about the nature of processes they assist to investigate.⁶⁴ The critical realist influence allows for a macro theoretical understanding of agency through the shifts in method and concepts. Through the positions of critical realism, agency is not reducible to, for example, power, or the primacy of structures or the agent over the other. This allows the complexity of the reality of agency to be acknowledged and engaged with overall while recognising the individual causes or dynamics present at different layers. As will be seen, in chapters 4 and 5 the concept of an existing natural order is recognised because the thesis attempts to work within the Catholic theological imaginary of the CBCP. In this engagement the theological nuances in the agrarian land reform and family planning policy contexts adds to the dynamics of the CBCP because of the different effect of the policy would have to salvation in the Catholic theological imaginary. This engagement with the religious components of the CBCP is enhanced since the unobservable as ontologically real forces in our causal analysis to follow in the case study.

In 2007, the journal *Millennium* published several articles on scientific and critical realism in IR.⁶⁵ Concerning the contribution from Kurki and Wight, Brown seems to dismiss engagement with metatheoretical debates. According to Brown, Kurki and Wight seem to:

become bogged down in—or rather bog themselves down in—what is ultimately a series of not very interesting meta-theoretical debates. What we have here are sophisticated and intelligent contributions to debates in the epistemology and ontology of the social sciences, but it is much less clear (at least to me) that these are debates that ordinary practising social sciences need to get too worked up about.⁶⁶

I concede that metatheoretical debates may not be widely appealing to the ‘ordinary practising social sciences’, as Brown terms it, or rather at least a particular perception of the ‘ordinary

⁶² Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁶³ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁶⁴ Joseph, ‘Impact of Roy Bhaskar’.

⁶⁵ See, Brown, ‘Situating Critical Realism’, 409–16; Fred Chernoff, ‘Critical Realism, Scientific Realism, and International Relations Theory’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 399–407; Joseph, ‘Philosophy in International Relations’, 345–59; Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 361–78; Wight, ‘Manifesto for Scientific Realism in IR’, 379–98.

⁶⁶ Brown, ‘Situating Critical Realism’, 415–16.

practising social sciences’. If Brown suggests that metatheoretical debates do not provide ‘practical’ solutions to the real world to be of interest, then I do not agree with Brown. I agree instead with Herboth, who said, ‘any field of study needs to systematically address its basic theoretical and methodological presumptions’.⁶⁷ This reflexivity will be important even to the ‘ordinary practising social sciences’. Our employment of frameworks and concepts to describe, interpret and analyse phenomena is linked to those metatheoretical debates on ontological, epistemological and methodological conceptions. Analysing the CBCP within the selected policy contexts will be affected by the theoretical leanings on how to engage with the religious and the conception of agency. In this section, I will explore some aspects of critical realism in relation to religion, causation and agency. This exploration of critical realism will shape the theoretical framework constructed in Chapter 3 and the subsequent application of the theoretical framework in the case study in Chapters 4 and 5 on the CBCP in specific policy contexts. I turn now to discuss a critical realist reading of the concept of religion before moving to explore the critical realist view of agency.

2.4.1 Religion Qua Religion—A Critical Realist Reading

A critical realist (foundationalist) and a critical non-realist (non-foundationalist) view of religion can be distinguished to clarify the compatibility of critical realism with accommodationist scholarship. In 1997, McCutcheon argued ‘the discourse on sui generis religion deemphasizes difference, history, and sociopolitical context in favour of abstract essences and homogeneity’.⁶⁸ Thus, according to McCutcheon, ‘religion per se or private religious experience in particular ... [as] sui generis, unique, and sociohistorically autonomous, is itself a scholarly representation that operates within, and assists in maintaining, a very specific set of discursive practices ... [and] institutions’.⁶⁹ This means that ‘the category of religion is portrayed, understood, and represented—in a word manufactured—throughout an academic discourse as sociopolitically autonomous’.⁷⁰ For McCutcheon, ‘sui generis religion is a constructed, analytical tool with an occluded manufacturing history and disguised material implications’.⁷¹ This approach to religion would be compatible with an interrogationist mode of scholarship on religion. In a critical

⁶⁷ Benjamin Herboth, ‘Theorising Theorising: Critical Realism and the Quest for Certainty’, *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 235, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41485500>.

⁶⁸ Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

⁶⁹ McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, 3.

⁷⁰ McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, 4.

⁷¹ McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, 5.

reading of McCutcheon's work on religion, Schilbrack broadly outlined a critical realist approach to religion. According to him:

the framework I recommend seeks to be critical by participating in the reflexive, genealogical, and deconstructive turn in the study of "religion," while also being realist by holding that theories of religion can be legitimately used to describe patterns of human behavior that exist independent of the scholar's theorizing about them.⁷²

The above summarises the position of Schilbrack's critical realist approach. Two elements in Schilbrack's above statement comprise his critical realist view of religion. First, Schilbrack accepts the critical view of religion as a constructed concept. Second, and this is an important differentiating point to the critical non-realist, despite the constructed nature of the concept of religion, it 'exist[s] independent of the scholar's theorising about them'. In this sense, there is an ontological weight to the concept of religion. This existence is held to be so since, as Schilbrack stated, 'the patterns in human behavior that scholars of religion study ... can operate whether or not they are noticed, conceptualized, or named by scholars or by the participants themselves'.⁷³ This does not treat religion as a complete construction without existence beyond the linguistic device called 'religion'. Schilbrack has argued that 'if a scholar adopts this view that there is no reality apart from language, then the scholar would never be able to claim that their scholarship is "accurate"'.⁷⁴ Based on the critical realist view of the dialectical relationship between social structure and agency, Schilbrack reasoned that 'as thoughts and actions predicated on alleged superempirical realities become shared practices, as those practices generate social roles, and as those roles get institutionalized, a concept-dependent social structure emerges'.⁷⁵ Schilbrack further states:

The set of relations in those practices, roles, and institutions ... will shape the agency and subjectivity of the participants ... [and] will have these effects whether or not the participants or scholars call this religion, and these effects are exactly the criterion for saying that a religion is "an anthropological and psychological reality".⁷⁶

By engaging with religion as having an independent existence from our theorising and not as a linguistic device of 'religion', we are not bogged down in debates about what constitutes religion itself. This shifts our focus instead to engage with the significance and implications of religion. In relation to post-secularism, Rees has argued it can be understood as a shift from the analysis

⁷² Schilbrack, 'A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion', 88–89.

⁷³ Schilbrack, 'A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion', 89.

⁷⁴ Schilbrack, 'A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion', 90.

⁷⁵ Schilbrack, 'A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion', 96.

⁷⁶ Schilbrack, 'A Metaphysics for the Study of Religion', 96.

of ‘morphology’ (i.e., *what* is religion) to the ‘syntax’ of religion (i.e., the political functions of religion or the question: *where* is religion?).⁷⁷ This focus will be with what Omer has argued as engaging with the ‘religiosity [which] meaningfully informs ... [the religious actor’s] actions on their own terms’.⁷⁸ I agree with Schilbrack, who argued above that religion as having an ontological existence will shape the agency of the actor. Kurki noted that critical realism’s contributions to IR theory are ‘as a consequence of its ontological, epistemological and methodological leanings ... tend to prefer certain kinds of substantive explanations of world political processes over others’.⁷⁹ The critical realist conceptualisation of religion will also shape the understanding of agents and agency.

2.4.2 Agency Via the Agent—Critical Realism on Agency

Agency is a capacity attributable only to agents or actors rather than sociopolitical structures. This argument raises questions about what can properly be regarded as an actor and the properties attributable to actors and structures. In appropriating the definition of accommodationist scholarship by Rees, as noted earlier in the chapter, we affirm the need to use agency via the agent whilst acknowledging the multicausal context in which the agent is embedded. This section will unpack this further by discussing two concepts that influence how agency will be understood in critical realism: a) the conceptualisation of causation in relation to agency and b) the co-constitutive dynamic between the agent and structures.⁸⁰

Debates and differing views exist as to what precisely constitutes an actor, or more precisely, an international actor.⁸¹ Sibeon, for example, intends to avoid a reification where agency is illegitimately attributed to entities that are not actors.⁸² I agree with Sibeon on this point as I see agency as a capacity of actors as opposed to structures. Sibeon argued ‘it is appropriate to define actor as an entity that, in principle, has the means of formulating and acting upon decisions’ or,

⁷⁷ John A. Rees, ‘Religion in the Syntax of Power: A Postsecular Perspective on International Relations’, *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15, no. 3 (2014): 457, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2014.943360>.

⁷⁸ Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 132.

⁷⁹ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 387–68.

⁸⁰ Rees suggests the multiple dynamics of religion in IR are best harnessed within a new ‘religious structure’ of world politics, see Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 28f.

⁸¹ Edith Drieskens, ‘Golden or Gilded Jubilee? A Research Agenda for Actorness’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 10 (2017): 1535, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1225784>; See, for example, Gunnar Sjostedt, *The External Role of the European Community* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1977), 13–14, 16; Stephan Klose, ‘Theorizing the EU’s Actorness: Towards an Interactionist Role Theory Framework’, *Journal of Common Markets Studies* 56, no. 5 (2018): 1145, 1149; Jodok Troy, ‘The Catholic Church: An Underestimated and Necessary Actor in International Affairs’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2008): 67.

⁸² Roger Sibeon, ‘Agency, Structure, and Social Chance as Cross-Disciplinary Concepts’, *Politics* 19, no. 3 (1999): 141, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00097>.

in other words, an actor is ‘a locus of decision and action where the action is in some sense a consequence of the actor’s decision’.⁸³ This definition sees people and social organisations, such as committees, local tenants’ associations and other organisations of various kinds, as actors.⁸⁴ Entities not considered as actors include society, the state, social movements and taxonomic collectivities because they have no causal powers.⁸⁵ In the present research, the CBCP is constituted as a collective of the bishops of the Philippines. The individual bishops would be considered actors, and the CBCP as a social organisation. How agency or actor is defined will influence the methodology adopted and the resulting findings. A critical realist view of agency will be considered given the adoption of a critical realist view of religion.

Agency as a concept has been contested in the existing agent and structure debate in IR. The agents–structure debate is fundamentally an ontological problem concerned with the nature of agents and structures and their interrelationships.⁸⁶ Questions around agency and structure are significant but, according to Sibeon, these terms have unfortunately remained largely undefined.⁸⁷ Doty has argued instead that ‘more ink has been used in [IR] literature discussing the nature of structures than has been used discussing the nature of agency’.⁸⁸ As such, Doty argued that ‘it seems that the meaning of agency is presumed to be self-evident ... that we already know what agency is and where it is located’.⁸⁹ Analysing actors shaped by religious traditions can be impacted by one notion of agency, which Pham has argued ‘in late modern democracies corresponds to a “fully secularized” responsibility for oneself and one’s world’.⁹⁰ It is not within the scope of the present thesis to provide an in-depth analysis of this debate when considering the critical realist view.

(a) Causation and Agency

The critical realist conception of agency does not limit causation to observable phenomena, patterns or outcomes. Another usage of the word agency has been to denote influence in the sense of the exertion of power leading to a causally linked outcome. This conception leads to ‘how much’ questions, which seek evidence of agency based on a linkage to an action of an

⁸³ Sibeon, ‘Agency, Structure’, 141.

⁸⁴ Sibeon, ‘Agency, Structure’, 141.

⁸⁵ Sibeon, ‘Agency, Structure’, 141.

⁸⁶ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 125.

⁸⁷ Sibeon, ‘Agency, Structure’, 140.

⁸⁸ Roxanne Lynn Doty, ‘Aporia: A Critical Exploration of the Agent-Structure Problematique in International Relations Theory’, *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 372.

⁸⁹ Doty, ‘Aporia’, 372.

⁹⁰ Quynh N. Pham, ‘Enduring Bonds: Politics and Life Outside Freedom as Autonomy’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 38, no. 1 (2013): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375412465676>.

actor. A monocausal conception of agency leads to ‘either/or’ statements, such as where there is no discernible effect, then the actor lacked agency. If agency is intrinsically part of the actor and agency should always be present, then our conception of causation should be clarified. How causation is understood in relation to agency will also affect how the religious is understood.

Consider the examination of critical realism and causal analysis from Kurki. In the last 300 years, causation has been understood predominately with an empiricism that studies causality through observed patterns of facts.⁹¹ This type of positivist causal analysis, as Kurki argued, entailed the prioritisation of methodology and has been largely unquestioned.⁹² In contrast, according to Kurki, critical realism ‘opens up important new avenues in IR theorists’ and researchers’ conceptions of causal analysis’, which were ‘previously hidden from view by the dominance of a positivist view of science in IR’.⁹³ The critical realist starts with the assumption that reality exists independently of human observers.⁹⁴ It is believed all events, processes, objects and agents arise out of some conditions and influences or a pre-existing causal context.⁹⁵ Engaging in causal explanation requires a ‘deep ontological’ inquiry involving the conceptualisation of the nature of the unobservable structure that lies beneath observable patterns.⁹⁶

A relevant example to the current study would be the unobservable religious component behind the action of episcopal statements from the CBCP, such as the Catholic teachings. Kurki states that critical realism emphasises that causes always exist in open systems where multiple causal forces interact and counteract in complex ways, which cannot be reduced to an individual cause.⁹⁷ Critical realism critiques monocausal understandings of causation in world politics, such as a singular material or normative factor leading to a specific outcome.⁹⁸ The idea of multicausal forces is carried into the critical realist approach to understanding agency.

⁹¹ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 362.

⁹² Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 363.

⁹³ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 361.

⁹⁴ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 364.

⁹⁵ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 365.

⁹⁶ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 365.

⁹⁷ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 366.

⁹⁸ Kurki, ‘Causal Analysis in International Relations’, 368.

(b) Co-Constitutive Dynamic Between Agent and Structure

A critical realist conception of agency considers the co-constitutive dynamics between agent and structure. Using critical realism, Lewis critiqued the 1999 article from Sibeon on the ‘ontological turn’ in political science.⁹⁹ Lewis stated the following:

At the heart of critical realism lies its account of the relation between social structure and human agency ... [It] seek[s] to avoid the polar extremes of voluntarism and determinism. Social structure and agency are held to be recursively related. Each is both a condition for and a consequence of the other. Actors constantly draw on social structures in order to act and in acting they either reproduce or transform those structures. Consequently, neither agency nor structure can be reduced to the other.¹⁰⁰

This means that the critical realist will avoid the reduction of causal forces in the social world to either the individual or structure. Lewis argued ‘all social activity takes place within the context provided by a set of pre-existing social structures’.¹⁰¹ Social structure then is not merely the voluntaristic creation of the agent, and so, there is a degree of autonomy. However, it does not also mean structure determines the behaviour of actors.¹⁰² The levels involved in this interplay between social structure and human agency shows the multicausality understanding in critical realism. Lewis uses the example of a sculptor to demonstrate the multicausal understanding. According to Lewis:

The sculptor is the *efficient* cause—the agentic source or driving force—of such artistic activity. However, while the medium in which the sculptor works clearly does not initiate activity (it does not mould itself of its own accord) and hence does not qualify as an efficient cause, it does affect the final outcome by influencing the sculptor’s actions ... By making a difference to the sculptor’s actions, the material exerts a causal influence over the final outcome ... described as a *material* cause of that outcome.¹⁰³ (emphasis original)

There is a distinction in the example above from Lewis between the properties of the agent and structure. The agent by exercising agency is the efficient cause in the multicausal sequence. While structure, which does not consciously initiate action, has a material cause to shape, constrain or enable the efficient cause of the agent. Agency is viewed as the capacity of conscious decision-making entities to intentionally initiate activity. As Lewis states, ‘critical realists can

⁹⁹ Paul A. Lewis, ‘Agency, Structure and Causality in Political Science: A Comment on Sibeon’, *Politics* 22, no. 1 (2002): 17.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, ‘Agency, Structure and Causality’, 18–19.

¹⁰¹ Lewis, ‘Agency, Structure and Causality’, 19.

¹⁰² Lewis, ‘Agency, Structure and Causality’, 19–20.

¹⁰³ Lewis, ‘Agency, Structure and Causality’, 20.

without tension or contradiction claim that intentionality and the capacity to initiate activity characterise actors without anthropomorphically attributing such properties to social structure'.¹⁰⁴ The multicausality between agency and structure in social and political events can be appreciated. In the case study of the present thesis, the different properties of the bishops in the CBCP and the structures like context and religious traditions are distinguished. This approach removes assumptions about religious traditions as automatically determining the actions of the agent, instead showing the complexity of the actor in the political space. Critical realism has provided a theoretical insight similar to religion within accommodationist scholarship. This also has influenced the thesis' application of agency in the study and will feature in the choice of theoretical insights applied in the case study. An accommodationist scholarship appropriates contributions from other modes of scholarship. The next step is to discuss the method of framing this plural approach to religion.

2.5 The Value of Analytic Eclecticism

This section will introduce the method of analytic eclecticism to approach the construction of the framework that will then be applied in the case study chapters of the thesis. In providing examples of using analytic eclecticism to analyse political phenomena, the value of analytic eclecticism will be appreciated given the accommodationist stance of the thesis towards the study of religion. Before proceeding to construct the framework of this thesis based on the method of analytic eclecticism, there are two areas of critique worth considering: a) upfront clarity on reasons for theoretical choices and b) the expansion of analytic eclecticism to be inclusive of metatheoretical considerations. I begin first by explaining what analytic eclecticism is.

2.5.1 Analytic Eclecticism as an 'Intellectual Stance'

The approach in this study takes its lead from and appropriates forms of analytic eclecticism. This is an approach articulated by Sil and Katzenstein that builds upon Waever's concept of mutual serviceability. According to Sil and Katzenstein:

[Analytic] eclecticism scholarship *pays close attention to several scholarly traditions that have generated different theories or narratives* that bear on some real-world problem. Analytic eclecticism begins with research questions that are framed so as to capture, not bracket, the complexity of interesting political phenomena.¹⁰⁵ (emphasis added)

¹⁰⁴ Lewis, 'Agency, Structure and Causality', 21.

¹⁰⁵ Sil and Katzenstein, 'De-Centering', 482–83.

This statement displays some of the features of eclectic scholarship: it draws from multiple scholarly traditions, focuses on concrete problems and attempts to deal with the complexity of political phenomena rather than simplifying it. From Sil and Katzenstein's above quote, I have emphasised that eclectic scholarship '*pays close attention to several scholarly traditions that have generated different theories or narratives that bear on some real-world problem*'. I will be adopting elements from different approaches, including the multilayered framework of agency from a critical realist background from Wight, the metaphysical political realism from Pabst, the non-reductionism from Omer and the concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato. This plural approach will be used to construct the theoretical framework in this study discussed in Chapter 3.

Analytic eclecticism is an 'intellectual stance' requiring an attentive understanding of the epistemological principles and ontologies at the core of the paradigms to be combined through selected elements.¹⁰⁶ That is, the scholar is not merely embracing an attitude of intellectual pluralism. While Sil and Katzenstein are sympathetic to the argument by Lake to decentre paradigms, their aim is not to discard the paradigms altogether in analytic eclecticism.¹⁰⁷ Further, the analytic eclecticist aims to address concrete problems having implications for the 'problems facing policy makers and ordinary social and political actors' as opposed to the metatheoretical analytic problems, such as epistemic principles.¹⁰⁸ The analysis and combination of the analytic eclecticist occur with an 'open-ended ontology' approach.¹⁰⁹ That is, the eclecticist has an 'aversion to excessively abstract or rigid foundational principles in favour of a focus on the *consequences* of truth claims in relation to different strategies for addressing social problems' (original emphasis).¹¹⁰ This means the analytic eclecticist 'bypass[es] or suspend[s] irresolvable metaphysical debates for the purpose of exploring substantively important problems'.¹¹¹

To show the usefulness of analytic eclecticism, I will discuss two examples where this method is used as an approach to analyse political phenomena. Myat used the methodology of analytic eclecticism to explore the causal factors to explain the choice and practice of non-alignment foreign policy in Myanmar. The multiple causal factors, including geopolitical, domestic and

¹⁰⁶ Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms Across Research Traditions', *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (2010): 412; Sil and Katzenstein, 'De-Centering', 482.

¹⁰⁷ Sil and Katzenstein, 'De-Centering', 483.

¹⁰⁸ Sil and Katzenstein, 'Analytic Eclecticism', 418.

¹⁰⁹ Sil and Katzenstein, 'Analytic Eclecticism', 417.

¹¹⁰ Sil and Katzenstein, 'Analytic Eclecticism', 417.

¹¹¹ Sil and Katzenstein, 'De-Centering', 484.

ideational, are informed by neorealist, neoclassical realist and social constructivist insights. Myat argued from a geopolitical perspective that Myanmar has historically been a strategic location for foreign powers, making the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity vulnerable to attack.¹¹² Conversely, an ideational factor included Buddhism's promotion of the principle of the 'middle way' as the path between two extremes influencing policymakers' choices.¹¹³ According to Myat, 'the purpose is not to test any of the theories in terms of their explanatory power; rather, the aim is to make the explanation as comprehensive and robust as possible'.¹¹⁴ Myat concluded that 'a single factor explanation of a case is hardly complete and a single case explanation for the purpose of theory-testing could be counterproductive both theoretically and empirically'.¹¹⁵ As Myanmar is a weak power, Myat found that 'IR need to pay more careful attention to weak powers, or non-great powers' because 'existing theoretical frameworks, developed out of great power politics in the Western tradition, are often inadequate for us on weak powers'.¹¹⁶

Regilme similarly uses the methodology of analytic eclecticism to explain the recently increased militarisation activities of claimant states in the South China Sea (SCS) dispute.¹¹⁷ From an analysis of domestic politics, Regilme argued three points explaining the increased military assertiveness of China in the SCS dispute. First, Regilme argued broad domestic change, including the military viewing itself as a guarantor to China's safety and national interest, saw the top Communist Party leadership experiencing fundamental challenges to domestic legitimacy. In response, officials began asserting Chinese interests beyond its territory to bolster nationalist credentials and authority.¹¹⁸ Second, Regilme argued the framing of the assertive military strategy by China is motivated by the need of Xi Jinping to consolidate his power.¹¹⁹ Further, the increased nationalist rhetoric on the SCS dispute is to divert the attention of the domestic population from internal issues, such as corruption, pollution and slowing economic growth.¹²⁰ Third, Beijing's disinterest in working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is because China has preferred to deal bilaterally with claimant states—the claimant states are also members of ASEAN, and China is not a member of ASEAN.¹²¹ These

¹¹² Myat, 'Explaining Myanmar', 8.

¹¹³ Myat, 'Explaining Myanmar', 11.

¹¹⁴ Myat, 'Explaining Myanmar', 3.

¹¹⁵ Myat, 'Explaining Myanmar', 16.

¹¹⁶ Myat, 'Explaining Myanmar', 16.

¹¹⁷ Regilme notes the term 'South China Sea' is used because it is the most widely known name for the region and does necessarily indicate a position on the rightful claimant of the disputed area.

¹¹⁸ Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 219–20.

¹¹⁹ Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 220–23.

¹²⁰ Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 220–23.

¹²¹ Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 221–22.

factors leading to the increased military assertiveness of China has, in response, led to new or renewed strategic military partnerships by other states.¹²² Regilme argued that the entrenched pro-US norm socialisation of political and military elites and the continued favourable view of the US in the general domestic public in Southeast Asia positively reinforced US strategic relations with China's neighbouring countries.¹²³ However, simultaneously and from a liberal perspective, Regilme argued that while the US and China might appear to have conflicting interests in the SCS dispute, other areas of bilateral cooperation remain crucial to both, notwithstanding the diplomatic rancour.¹²⁴ The explanation of the SCS dispute from Regilme shows the complexity and multiple factors involved in the increased militarisation in the region. Myat and Regilme both show the value of a multifactorial approach to explaining complex political phenomena.

Analytic eclecticism engages in a multifactorial way to explain and analyse complex problems like the critical realist view of causation and agency. From the perspective of IR, analytic eclecticism shifts the focus of research and analysis from the conceptual niches of theoretical debate to an attention of explaining real-world problems. The collapse of paradigms and the innate tendency within IR to borrow from other disciplines, such as sociology, makes analytic eclecticism akin to an interdisciplinary methodology of research.¹²⁵ As we have already indicated, critical realism itself is not a social theory nor an exclusive product of IR. However, its compatibility with various social science disciplines shows that going beyond a monodisciplinary or mono-paradigmatic approach is a valuable endeavour. This is because the insights can be gained from other sources to enrich a discipline's analysis and theoretical understanding.

Agency can also benefit from the macro theoretical understanding that can be obtained from an analytically eclectic approach to research. The layers in the dynamics of agency can be further understood from recourse to the additional insights from other disciplines, paradigms, or theoretical approaches. Resulting in a much more rounded and holistic understanding of agency. As will be seen in the chapter to follow, the scholars used to construct the framework applied in this study will each provide their own contribution. They are not all from within IR. The selection

¹²² Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 224–25.

¹²³ Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 227–30.

¹²⁴ Regilme, 'Beyond Paradigms', 230.

¹²⁵ See the methodology for interdisciplinary research framework as example, Hilde Tobi and Jarl K. Kampen, 'Research Design: The Methodology for Interdisciplinary Research Framework', *Quality & Quantity* 52 (2018): 1209-1225.

is influenced by the needs of the study and the problem being addressed in the research question. The research question problematises the understanding and situation of agency in IR in relation to religious actors. While there may be similarities in arguments from other disciplines, the porous boundaries of IR allows access to these insights to benefit analysis and explanation in IR while providing its own contribution. In the case study discussed in chapter 4 and 5, I have attempted in applying the constructed framework to work within the Catholic theological imaginary of the CBCP. In doing so, I have also borrowed insight and analysis from such disciplines as religious studies and theology to inform the resulting understanding through the framework applied. The significance of this, as will be seen, is to grapple with a necessary issue in IR, which is the ‘dilemma over the way religion matters’.¹²⁶ I turn now to consider critiques of analytic eclecticism before using this method to construct the thesis framework.

2.5.2 Critiques of Analytic Eclecticism

This section will explore two critiques of analytic eclecticism as a method: a) the need for upfront clarity on why certain theories and approaches are adopted, and b) making analytic eclecticism inclusive of metatheoretical reflection.

(a) Clarifying Theoretical Choices

A framework based on the methodology of analytic eclecticism should be clear of its appeal to using multiple theories and approaches. Cornut is clear in this regard by identifying two critiques about analytic eclecticism worth considering in this context. First, according to Cornut, ‘it should be explicitly clear why certain theories or approaches are used in a problem-driven analysis while others are excluded’ because ‘without such justification, the choices ... could be seen as arbitrary at best or a “hegemonic”, “exclusivist”, or “assimilationist”’.¹²⁷ Second, ‘the contribution of each theory or approach must be clarified *within* the combination’ because the explanations from each theory could be contradictory.¹²⁸ As Cornut further states, ‘it is vital that pragmatic scholarship emphasizes the ways in which various analyses might explain a phenomenon in conjunction with one another’.¹²⁹ These are important critiques to consider when using multiple theories or approaches and are similar to the framework constructed in this thesis. The examples of scholarship based on analytic eclecticism from Myat and Regilme can be used as a good

¹²⁶ Henne, ‘Religious Statecraft’, 1365.

¹²⁷ Jérémie Cornut, ‘Analytic Eclecticism in Practice: A Method for Combining International Relations Theories’, *International Studies Perspectives* 16, no. 1 (2015): 53.

¹²⁸ Cornut, ‘Analytic Eclecticism’, 53.

¹²⁹ Cornut, ‘Analytic Eclecticism’, 54.

illustration of the method. While I find the explanations from the multifactorial complexity of each topic to be insightful, unfortunately, I see the two critiques noted by Cornut to be applicable. It is not clear in contributions from either Myat or Regilme why certain theories have been chosen, nor do they address the inconsistency issue. The theoretical approaches chosen by Myat or Regilme do not seem explicitly clear from the outset. It seems that Myat and Regilme have concluded which particular phenomena correspond to a theoretical approach. I will need to be aware of making the approaches adopted explicit in the current study and why, and clarify within the combination of the contribution from each theory or approach. The question of incommensurability and explanation of each element in the theoretical framework and its integration in the study will be addressed in the next chapter. A framework will be constructed using Wight's multilevel concept of agency from a critical realist background, Pabst's metaphysical political realism developed from Christian realism of the English School, Omer's non-reductionism and Barbato's concept of multilayered actorness. Each scholar and the contribution of their selected work will be discussed later.

(b) Making Analytic Eclecticism Inclusive of Metatheoretical Reflection

The problem-driven approach of analytic eclecticism should, despite the aversion of Sil and Katzenstein, contribute to broader theoretical insights in IR. The earlier mentioned interplay of theory and context argued by Dunne, Hansen and Wight is not achieved by bracketing metatheoretical considerations. Reus-Smit argued for a more inclusive and expanded form of analytical eclecticism than the form proposed by Sil and Katzenstein. Reus-Smit notably critiques the bracketing of metatheory in analytic eclecticism. The call to bracket metatheoretical reflection has been a persistent feature of debate in IR.¹³⁰ According to Reus-Smit, analytic eclecticism is 'an approach distinguished by a willingness to bypass metatheoretical debates and adopts a pragmatist approach'.¹³¹ Reus-Smit argued that Sil and Katzenstein's pragmatism remains deeply structured by metatheoretical assumptions.¹³² He further argued that analytic eclecticism is epistemologically an empirical-theoretic project.¹³³ That is, it is intended to address empirical, not normative problems and the theoretical insights combined are explanatory, not normative.¹³⁴ Analytic eclecticism remaining an empirical-theoretic project

¹³⁰ Christian Reus-Smit, 'Beyond Metatheory?', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 593, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066113495479>.

¹³¹ Reus-Smit, 'Beyond Metatheory', 594.

¹³² Reus-Smit, 'Beyond Metatheory', 596.

¹³³ Reus-Smit, 'Beyond Metatheory', 591.

¹³⁴ Reus-Smit, 'Beyond Metatheory', 591.

produces knowledge in empirical-theoretic form.¹³⁵ Further, Reus-Smit argues that it is ontologically ‘structured by its relationship to the standard paradigms ... realism, liberalism, and constructivism’, which are considered a necessary precursor.¹³⁶ This means the ontology of analytic eclecticism has a ‘finite set of pre-packaged assumptions and propositions’.¹³⁷ These are very persuasive critiques. The objective of Reus-Smit in these critiques is not to reject the need for eclectic scholarship in IR but to argue for IR scholars to break established theoretical and analytical boundaries to produce new practical knowledge in a more expansive form of analytic eclecticism.¹³⁸ The consequence of the theoretical choices adopted by the eclecticist will have theoretical implications.

Following on from Reus-Smit’s critique of analytical eclecticism, we can advance the form of analytic eclecticism beyond the approach conceived by Sil and Katzenstein. I intend to proceed on a methodology of analytic eclecticism that is problem-driven, open to deriving insight from multiple theoretical approaches, attempts to engage with the complexity in political phenomena and engages with not just the empirical but also the normative. The last point stems from Reus-Smit’s critique about bracketing the metatheoretical in analytical eclecticism. I suggest it remains pragmatic because the construction of the combined theoretical framework is driven by the investigated problem’s requirements. The research inquiry in this study could be seen as attempting to explain why the CBCP acts or is motivated to act in a certain policy context. This inquiry can also include implications for normative or metatheoretical principles about agency and religious actors. If I were to take inspiration from analytic eclecticism in its originally conceived form, then I would need to bracket any possible metatheoretical reflection that may arise. However, as discussed in the next chapter, I agree with Pabst, who argued that the recovery of metaphysics is required in IR to deepen our understanding of religion. I then heed Reus-Smit’s critiques on the analytical eclecticism of Sil and Katzenstein. Based on an analytic eclecticism outlined above, I discuss the constitutive elements of the theoretical framework I will use in the case study in the next chapter.

¹³⁵ Reus-Smit, ‘Beyond Metatheory’, 591.

¹³⁶ Reus-Smit, ‘Beyond Metatheory’, 597.

¹³⁷ Reus-Smit, ‘Beyond Metatheory’, 597.

¹³⁸ Reus-Smit, ‘Beyond Metatheory’, 603.

Chapter 3: Analytically Eclectic Framework and Philippine Site of Analysis

3.1 Introduction

This chapter constructs an interpretative framework from the method of analytic eclecticism in response to the research question of this study. The constructed framework will then be applied in a Philippine case study on the statements of the CBCP on agrarian land reform and family planning policy from 1986 to 1998. I have situated the present research within the mode of accommodation scholarship as identified by Rees.¹ A methodologically inclusive and open approach is adopted to cater to the research question and case study. Critical realism has been used to provide the study's understanding of religion because it reflects the accommodationist approach to religion. This compatibility means critical realism will influence the understanding in the present thesis towards causation and agency. Sayer points out that 'critical realism endorses or is compatible with a relatively wide range of research methods, but it implies that the particular choices should depend on the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it'.² This compatibility of critical realism to a methodologically inclusive and open approach accords with analytic eclecticism. Analytic eclecticism provides a method to construct an interpretive framework following an accommodationist study of religion and a critical realist understanding of religion and agency.

The framework constructed in this thesis is attentive to both providing insights for IR to understand the agency of religious actors and to analyse the particularities of the Philippine case study. This chapter will construct the framework from elements of the agency framework from Wight, the metaphysical political realism of Pabst, the non-reductionism and religious self-identified approach from Omer and repurposing the multilayered actorness concept from Barbato. By adopting elements of each scholar's approach in the framework of this thesis, I will be affirming aspects of the conceptual origins of the research in analytic eclecticism and critical realism. First, I appropriate the framework of agency developed by Wight as the organising conceptual structure in this study. This framework will provide a basis for understanding what is meant by agency and organising how components in the case study are situated within the concept of agency. Second, I add the explanatory value Pabst offers in his proposed metaphysical

¹ Rees, 'Religion and Foreign Policy', 45.

² Andrew Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, 1st ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 19.

political realism to engage with the religious traditions of the CBCP. As will be seen in the following case study chapters, I employ Pabst to understand the natural order within the Catholicity of the CBCP. Third, I will adopt elements of Omer's arguments to approach the religious actor through the framework of agency. Fourth, I will repurpose the salient concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato to conclude the external roles emerging from the dynamics of agency. These elements of the research framework will then be discussed in anticipation of the application of the framework later in Chapters 4 and 5. The choice of principal scholars reflects this thesis as situated in the mode of accommodation.

The plural nature of the endeavour being undertaken will need to contend with the problem of incommensurability. Incommensurability between theoretical approaches can range from conceptual incommensurability where linguistic elements are not mutually translatable or communicable without the meaning being lost to observational incommensurability, where there are differing assumptions about the nature of evidence and methodological incommensurability where there are differences over the methods that comprise the scientific investigation.³ The problem of incommensurability is not fatal to prevent the research from adopting a theoretically plural approach. After setting out the contribution of each of the four principal scholars, I will outline the integration of these scholars and their application to the case study in response to the issue of incommensurability. As a primer to the case study chapters to follow, I then introduce the site of analysis of the case study by briefly discussing Catholicism in the Philippines, the significance of the CBCP and the political landscape of the Philippines from 1986 to 1998.

3.2 The Principal Scholars of the Framework

For this study to understand the agency of a religious actor would require us to uncover the ontology of the religious actor. The concept of the 'ambivalence of the sacred' introduced by Appleby has made important and lasting contributions to IR and other disciplines. While the breakdown of the myth of religious violence is important, the sole focus on the binary that religion can be good and bad is, in the words of Omer, 'unfortunately a diminished lesson indeed'.⁴ This is because, according to Omer, 'this binary misses the complexities and more robust potentialities of Appleby's legacy'.⁵ For example, in 2020, the journal *Review of Faith*

³ Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, 'Paradigmatic Faults in International-Relations Theory', *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2009): 910.

⁴ Atalia Omer, 'Prophets versus Religiocrats', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 115, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2020.1753961>.

⁵ Omer, 'Prophets', 115.

and *International Affairs* published a collection of essays from a symposium honouring Appleby's contributions and the significance of his 'ambivalence of the sacred'.⁶ Jakelić made a noteworthy observation relevant to the present study about agency in Appleby's concept of ambivalence. According to Jakelić, 'the "ambivalence of the sacred" becomes particularly important because it does not merely recognize the agency of religious actors; it also gestures towards their responsibility'.⁷ This contribution to the discourse on religion in IR can be contrasted with an approach like rational choice theory (RCT).

An RCT approach on religious actors is premised on the idea of competition and based on a religious market analogy as a determinant of action.⁸ It silos religious actors from the responsibility for their action or lack of action because it is predetermined in the theoretical approach. According to Jakelić, similarly premised approaches, 'by a priori limiting the scope of religious agency, such approaches also negate the responsibility of religious actors to reframe and reconfigure the domain of politics rather than merely constitute it'.⁹ The direction forward requires that 'all examinations of religion are contextualised and historicized, and by remaining attentive to religion in terms of their singularities'.¹⁰ It is an argument that echoes the mode of accommodation. As Jakelić further argued, Appleby's notion 'expands analytic and interpretive lenses: it allows scholars ... to identify multiple configurations of religious traditions in the same context, and to explore the complex ways in which religious subjectivities are inhabited and enacted'.¹¹ This understanding can provide an important gateway for the discourse on religion in IR and the framework in the present study. It is 'uncovering the connections between agency

⁶ See, for example, Monica Duffy Toft, 'R. Scott Appleby and the Power of Framing', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 112–14; Scott M. Thomas, 'R. Scott Appleby's The Ambivalence of the Sacred, Two Decades On: A Postsecular Reading for the Religious World of the 21st Century?', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 92–98; Scott M. Thomas, 'Introduction: Essays in Honor of R. Scott Appleby', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 80–82; Fabio Petito, 'R. Scott Appleby, Pioneer of the Ambivalence of the Sacred and Religious Engagement', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 87–91; Omer, 'Prophets', 115–18; Maryann Cusimano Love, 'Strategic Peacebuilding', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 104–7; Vendulka Kubálková, 'R. Scott Appleby: From a Footnote to a Distinguished Scholar Award Winner', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 83–86; Douglas M. Johnston, 'A Scholar for All Seasons', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 119–20; Slavica Jakelić, 'Engaging R. Scott Appleby's The Ambivalence of the Sacred in the Time of Confident Religions', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 99–103; Pasquale Ferrara, 'What the Farnesina Learned from R. Scott Appleby', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2020): 108–11.

⁷ Jakelić, 'Confident Religions', 100.

⁸ See, for example, Matthew Isaacs, 'Faith in Contention: Explaining the Salience of Religion in Ethnic Conflict', *Comparative Political Studies* 50, no. 2 (2017); Rodney Stark and James C. McCann, 'Market Forces and Catholic Commitment: Exploring the New Paradigm', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32, no. 2 (1993).

⁹ Jakelić, 'Confident Religions', 100.

¹⁰ Jakelić, 'Confident Religions', 100.

¹¹ Jakelić, 'Confident Religions', 101.

and responsibility of religious actors in political life’ (original emphasis).¹² The noteworthy observation of the ‘multiple configurations of religious traditions’ as contextualised and historicised, and the link between agency and responsibility of religious actors, draws our attention back to the religious actor. As a first step, I will discuss and adopt the elements of a multilayered approach to agency in the next section.

3.2.1 Colin Wight—A Multilayered Understanding of Agency

The first principal scholar is Wight, who proposes a framework of agency emphasising the elements of an actor that inform how agency can be understood. Wight constructs a tripartite concept of agency, which I call ‘multilayered agency’. This will allow us to focus on the different elements of the CBCP in this research. Wight is broadly situated within the continuing agent–structure debate in IR. The agent–structure debate centres on the nature, priority and relationship of agents and structures. However, I do not intend to enter a substantive engagement with this debate as part of the research because it would be beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, the contributions emerging from this debate may provide some useful theoretical insights.

The framework of agency constructed by Wight is also situated in his critique of the post-structuralist approach used by Doty to address the agent–structure problem. According to Doty, the agent–structure writers ‘draw attention to the undecidable nature’ of the debate.¹³ Doty argues, ‘despite their attempts *not* to decide on side of either agent or structure ... their frameworks require that at any one instant one must in fact decide that either agent or structure have priority’ (original emphasis).¹⁴ Doty characterises the agent–structure problem as centred on an impasse or, the term Doty uses, *aporia*. This leads Doty to suggest that an ontology of practices should replace the ontology of agent and structure. Wight critiques this step because Doty is ‘not actually deal[ing] with the agent–structure relationship, but with the issue of practices’, which is completely different.¹⁵

Wight does welcome Doty’s contribution ‘since it raises fundamental questions about the nature of agency’ and is an ‘explicit recognition of the fact that the agent–structure problem is an issue with which all approaches must grapple’.¹⁶ Wight does argue, however, that Doty has

¹² Jakelić, ‘Confident Religions’, 101.

¹³ Doty, ‘Aporia’, 374.

¹⁴ Doty, ‘Aporia’, 375.

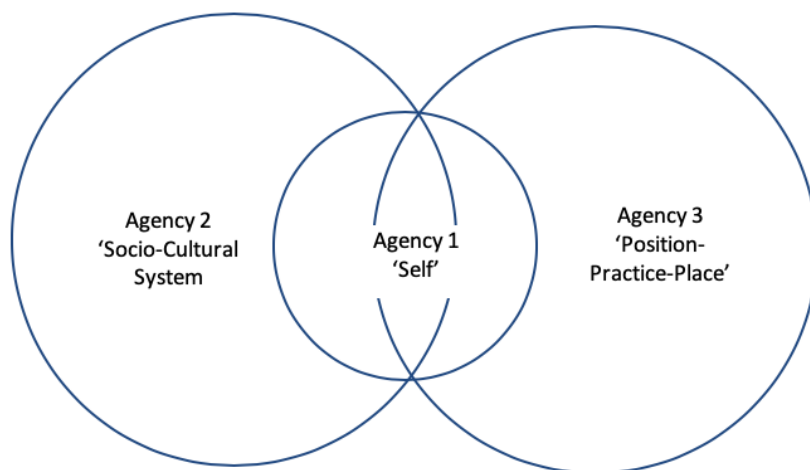
¹⁵ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 112.

¹⁶ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 110.

mischaracterised the agent–structure writers she examines. According to Wight, ‘Doty’s treatment of the idea of resolution of the agent–structure problem is problematic’ because she formulates resolution in either/or terms.¹⁷ That is, the problem is ‘*either* totally resolved *or* there is no resolution’ (original emphasis).¹⁸ Instead, Wight argued for the problem to be viewed in terms of better or worse.¹⁹ As such, for Wight, agent–structure writers do not intend their articulations as *the* solutions to the problem but are instead advancing alternatives.²⁰ This background leads to the construction of Wight’s framework for understanding agency.

The framework of agency Wight constructed from his critique of Doty is intended to ‘facilitate a more nuanced non-reductive understanding of the agent-structure relationship’.²¹ Wight attempts to create a co-constitutive approach that includes both agents and structures. According to Wight, agency is always structurally embedded and yet remains distinct from those structures that enable and constraint it.²² For Wight, agency refers to both individual and social elements.²³ I suggest, contrary to Doty, this approach by Wight deals with the agent–structure problem in both/and terms. I propose Wight’s framework of agency described below could be illustrated with the diagram created in Figure 1. I will now describe each layer in Wight’s tripartite framework for agency.

Figure 1. Colin Wight’s Tripartite Concept of Agency



¹⁷ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 111.

¹⁸ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 111.

¹⁹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 111.

²⁰ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 111.

²¹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 112.

²² Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 110.

²³ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 129.

First Level of Agency (Agency₁)

The first level of agency is the idea of the existence of a ‘self’ that is never automatically or deterministically instituted, has the freedom of subjectivity and is held in relation to the world by which it is constructed.²⁴ This is dependent on a subject capable of reflecting upon and constantly renegotiating the forces of construction.²⁵ In other words, it could be viewed as agency as ‘doing something’, which could answer questions like how much subjective freedom of action is being exercised and what is it that agents are doing with the freedom of subjectivity.²⁶

Second Level of Agency (Agency₂)

The second level of agency refers to how the ‘self’ becomes an agent or bearer of something, which is the context or sociocultural system a person originates.²⁷ This dimension includes a broad category of enablement and constraints on agency, such as the social groups and collectives one is born into, which crucially affect the potential of the ‘self’ to mobilise the resources embedded in the social field.²⁸

Third Level of Agency (Agency₃)

Finally, the third level refers to the ‘position-practice-places’ or the subject positions that the ‘self’ inhabits on behalf of their context, such as diplomats, office juniors, et cetera.²⁹ Wight stated one way of initially understanding this third level is that it ‘refers to those “roles” that agents₁ play for agency₂’ (their context).³⁰ The ‘position-practices’ are continuing structural properties regardless of the occupying agents.³¹ As such, they cannot be reducible to ‘the properties of the agents₁ that occupy them, but these “positioned-practices-places”, when occupied by agents, enable and constrain the agent according to the specific modalities of the “positioned-practice-place” ’.³² In a sense, as Brown stated, it is a more formal view of agents

²⁴ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

²⁵ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

²⁶ William Brown, ‘A Question of Agency: Africa in International Politics’, *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 10 (2012): 1895.

²⁷ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²⁸ Brown, ‘Question of Agency’, 1895; Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²⁹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

³⁰ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

³¹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133–34.

³² Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133–34.

‘positioned within particular roles, which may or may not be formally ascribed and which themselves may empower or constraint their choices’.³³

A multilayered conception of agency focuses our analytic and interpretative approach to the question, what is agency? As such, a multilayered framework of agency would allow engagement with the complexities of our actor while maintaining the nuance in analysis. We can begin to isolate specific elements and draw connections about the CBCP in the individual policy contexts of the subject of this study. The conceptual framework used in this study will take Wight’s multilayered agency and the later discussed valuable foundational concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato. However, there are additional elements from our principal scholars to be considered. In the next section, I will discuss an approach in relation to engaging with the religious aspect of the CBCP.

3.2.2 Adrian Pabst—Bringing the Metaphysical to IR Theorising

The framework in this research will rely on Pabst’s proposed metaphysical political realism to fill a gap within the Wight framework of agency on engaging with the religious component in the study. A framework beginning to be constructed has not discussed how the religious aspect could be approached. This contribution will be explained later in this section. There is a present and real danger of the religious being subsumed within another category or treated as secondary within the dynamics of the concept of agency. In the broad discourse on religion in IR, this kind of treatment has been well documented and critiqued in the literature. Henne describes IR as now being at a ‘crossroads’.³⁴ According to Henne, ‘the current wave of studies struggle with a dilemma over the way religion matters’.³⁵ The present work must face the same problem in understanding the agency of religious actors. Recalling the particularities of this study, how might the framework constructed so far explore the religious element of the CBCP? There is a gap in the framework currently articulated by Wight. A scholar could potentially subsume the religious within another category at the level of agency₂. The framework being constructed needs to make the religious more explicit in exploring the CBCP.

The contribution from Pabst can provide the research with a greater explanatory capacity in the framework to engage with the religious traditions of the CBCP. It can be recalled from the previous section that Wight introduces a tripartite concept of agency. The agency₂ layer in

³³ Brown, ‘Question of Agency’, 1895.

³⁴ Henne, ‘Religious Statecraft’, 1365.

³⁵ Henne, ‘Religious Statecraft’, 1365.

Wight's framework refers to how the 'self' becomes an agent or bearer of the context or sociocultural system the agent originates.³⁶ There can be a gap at this level of the concept of agency concerning how religious traditions and the cosmovision of the religious actor are engaged. Wight seems to suggest that a full understanding of agency is a culmination of the multiple layers present. This means that agency as a concept is not reducible to one dimension, such as the attributes and influence a formal position enables within an institution. In this circumstance, we return to the dilemma of how to engage with the religious aspect of our religious actor. Wight's agency₂ does not seem to clearly indicate how the religious can be engaged. Religion within the Wight framework could be approached from the perspective that religion forms part of the 'collectives and groups with which [the agent] identify'.³⁷ According to Wight, the social groups and collectives that one is born into crucially affect the potential to mobilise the resources embedded in the social field.³⁸ There is the opportunity to enhance the concept of agency₂ from the discourse on religion in IR. This leads to the valuable contribution from Pabst.

Pabst attempts to develop an approach to IR that better accommodates religion more explicitly through what he calls 'metaphysical political realism'. This approach is developed through his critique of the exclusion of metaphysics, or simply the transcendent, in IR theory. Pabst argues that a commitment to secular reason characterises IR theory.³⁹ As a result, 'subordinating agency to structure and subjecting both faith and intentionality to secular reason'.⁴⁰ To address this, according to Pabst, there is a need for the 'recovery of metaphysics and not its abandonment'.⁴¹ As Pabst calls it, this would be the end of the 'end of metaphysics' in IR.⁴² Pabst is interested in constructing a way to include the religious in a broad approach to IR. To do this, Pabst further develops the English School's Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (not to be confused with Colin Wight, used in this study's framework). The latter develops his approach from these scholars because Butterfield and Wight shift the focus back on the social nature of mankind and the idea of a thing holding societies together nationally and internationally that is transcendent in nature.⁴³ Pabst then argues for the inclusion of both faith and reason as being necessary components. According to Pabst, the current conception that 'only reason is universal and can

³⁶ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

³⁷ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

³⁸ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

³⁹ Pabst, 'Secularism', 998.

⁴⁰ Pabst, 'Secularism', 998.

⁴¹ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1009.

⁴² Pabst, 'Secularism', 1009.

⁴³ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1012.

mediate between rival worldviews ... does not so much neglect the role of religion in politics as it undermines the relationship between faith to rationality'.⁴⁴ In this regard, Pabst argues for both faith and reason as mutually corrective and augmenting, which means that without the other's import, both can be distorted and instrumentalised. Elements of Pabst's metaphysical political realism will guide a deepened engagement with the CBCP because principally, Pabst's premise about the essential relationality between faith and reason accords well with the Catholic tradition in which the CBCP is embedded. This will bring depth to our engagement with the CBCP that may otherwise be insufficient if I solely rely on the Wight framework of agency developed outside the discourse on religion in IR. Research grappling with the religious traditions of the CBCP will also need to understand the significance of these traditions from the perspective of the religious actor. In the next section, I will discuss this by adding elements from Omer.

3.2.3 Atalia Omer—A Self-Identified Approach to Religious Actors

In engaging with the religious traditions and transcendent component in the world and IR theory, there is an important element of grappling with the religious actor in a self-identified conceptualisation. For instance, Omer's critique of Hurd's 'two faces of faith paradigm' provides a useful opening. Hurd argued that the 'two faces of faith' paradigm has become a way of perceiving religion and global politics, especially among experts and officials.⁴⁵ This 'two faces' approach, which Hurd critiques as the new commonsense replacing the secularisation thesis, views 'good' religion as something to be restored and 'bad' religion to be reformed or eradicated.⁴⁶ The distinction between 'good' and 'bad' religion is based on how religion acts. 'Good religion' is peaceful and promotes the common international good—it is then the job of government and other public authorities to facilitate it.⁴⁷ In contrast, 'bad religion' is dangerous, violent and intolerant of manifestations of politicised religion.⁴⁸ In critiquing Hurd, Omer argues that we must not become reductionist by solely focusing on the state and attributing agency to state actors because it reduces religious, ethical and political meanings to mere instruments of a historical narrative that is not theirs.⁴⁹ Omer further argues that 'a refusal to engage with religious actors' own accounts of their motivations and work is a limitation'⁵⁰ and that we should be

⁴⁴ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1012.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 'Politics of Religious Freedom in the Asia-Pacific: An Introduction', *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 1 (2018): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2017.1393172>.

⁴⁶ Hurd, 'Politics of Religious Freedom', 14.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 24.

⁴⁸ Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom*, 24.

⁴⁹ Omer, 'Good Religion', 130–32.

⁵⁰ Omer, 'Good Religion', 130.

engaging with ‘self-identified religious actors whose religiosity meaningfully informs their actions on their own terms’.⁵¹ Accordingly, Omer argues that we must not overlook a whole array of practices, actors and meanings constructed through the praxis of interfaith and intertradition/communal grassroots efforts to understand the complex way religion and religious actors participate.⁵²

Omer’s critique of Hurd can be traced to her wider critique of Asad and scholars following Asad’s approach. For instance, in dealing with the discourse of religious freedom, Omer critiques what she calls the ‘phenomenology of the secular’. This is grounded in Asad’s approach and critique of religion.⁵³ According to Omer, such an approach views the ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ as ‘fictitious and manufactured classifications’, which are created by secular modernity and the political agendas and interests traceable to the Western empire.⁵⁴ Thus, according to Omer, such scholars argue that ‘to define diverse phenomena as ‘religious’ ... amounts to the imposition of [a] particularly located cultural, intellectual and political agendas’, which ‘is always suspect as political manipulation and hegemonic in scope’.⁵⁵

Omer is a critical scholar of decoloniality operating within critical realist assumptions.⁵⁶ The arguments I adopt from Omer have a good synergy with the critical realist approach of Wight in his framework of agency. It will provide the bridge to transfer the framework of agency into the IR study on religion. She challenges the critical claims of religion as grounded as a construction of the state and Western colonisation. Omer argues that these scholars are wedded to a narrative of the state that excludes consideration of the grassroots integration and mixing of different narratives.⁵⁷ Omer further argues that these scholars ‘easily succumb to [a] power reductionism’ based on ‘the pivotal agency of the liberal secular state’.⁵⁸ For Omer, this account of the state:

precludes the necessary, contextually specific scrutiny of what makes the “state” work, namely the “nation”, and how the always-contested indices such as “religion”, “ethnicity”, and “culture” might interfere with authorizing, imagining, and reimagining the subjective boundaries of the nations behind the state.⁵⁹

⁵¹ Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 132.

⁵² Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 134.

⁵³ Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’, 29.

⁵⁴ Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’, 30.

⁵⁵ Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’, 30.

⁵⁶ Omer, ‘Prophets’, 116.

⁵⁷ Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’, 57.

⁵⁸ Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’, 57.

⁵⁹ Omer, ‘Modernists Despite Themselves’, 57–58.

A noteworthy element from Omer is the idea of engaging with religious actors' accounts of their motivations and work and seriously engaging with how their religiosity meaningfully informs their actions within a critical realist approach to agency. A way to further explain and include this into the theory in the conceptual framework is needed.

3.2.4 Mariano Barbato—Multilayered Actorness

The culminating element in the framework being constructed is the repurposing of the concept of multilayered actorness proposed by Barbato. Emerging from an increasingly contextualised and historicised mode of analysing religion, I argue that the agency of a religious actor can be best understood in a multilayered way. A religious actor, or any actor broadly, can have multiple and different roles. As such, actors are seen not as being fixed to one particular role or persona. A religious actor like the CBCP may prove to be a good example to show this quality. The CBCP is potentially more than just an actor concerned with and competent in religious matters. An example of this element can be observed in the analysis offered by Barbato on the Holy See.

Barbato has constructed the seminal concept of multilayered actorness in the study of Catholicism in IR. He foreshadows the idea that religious actors are more than their religious tradition by saying, 'The Holy See is ... at the same time both less and more than the Catholic Church'.⁶⁰ But what does Barbato mean when he says this? Barbato argues the Holy See can act as a different type of actor on different levels.⁶¹ As such, Barbato identifies the Holy See as being able to be a church with one billion faithful within a transnational hierarchical structure, a territorial base with the status of a state, an accepted sovereign and special peer among states in diplomatic respects.⁶² What makes this approach by Barbato interesting is the importance of these different level roles to the actor as a whole. Barbato's central claim is that the Catholic actor, the Holy See, cannot be reduced to just one actor type, whether as a transnational Church, a state or a diplomat. This is because of, as Barbato argues, 'the Holy See's ability to act in a multi-level game'. In the individual and combined layers of the Holy See, Barbato argued that 'through the lens of the Holy See one can gather crucial insights about continuation and change in world politics and particularly the transnational governance from pre-Westphalian to the post-Westphalian order'.⁶³ He further asserts that 'the Holy See has a unique position in the

⁶⁰ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 27.

⁶¹ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 29.

⁶² Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 27.

⁶³ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 42.

transformation of diplomacy'.⁶⁴ The non-reductionism of Barbato's proposed multilayered actorness can come to these important insights because the concept simultaneously acknowledges the examination of individual layers and the whole actor. Religious actors can be seen beyond their religious roles without discarding the importance of their religious particularities. This concept of 'multilayered actorness' is a matter of ontology as it can direct our attention to the nature and being of the CBCP as an actor. Multilayered actorness can be usefully repurposed to have wider contributions for the study of religion in IR.

The contribution of multilayered actorness from Barbato is significant for opening an avenue for engaging with the complexities and particularities of a Catholic actor. Barbato argues, 'The Holy See's influential *agency* is backed by the actorness of a diplomat, a territorial sovereign, and a church leader' (emphasis added).⁶⁵ This raises the question of the relationship between agency and multilayered actorness, and a further question can be what this affirms about agency. An interesting further argument from Barbato holds that:

The Catholic Church is the most important layer ... the backbone of its actorness. The other two layers—territory and diplomacy—are back by this dominant layer. However, the other layers do not only express the influence of the papacy as the leader of the Catholic Church but they also foster its power by their own means. The layers are thus mutually reinforcing.⁶⁶

We might ask ourselves: How are the layers mutually reinforcing? Or why is the Catholic Church a dominant layer? If agency is to be drawn out of this concept of multilayered actorness further, I argue, this opens a compatibility with the framework of agency proposed by Wight. The quotation above from Barbato may reveal the potential within the dynamics of the Wight framework of agency to be influenced by other actor types inherent to the principal subject and the possibility of differing actor types of the principal subject between policy contexts because of the dynamics of agency. The agency framework from Wight will be used to structure the case study chapters to draw out the multilayered actorness of the CBCP. In this study, I equate actor and agency as close parallel concepts. The concept of multilayered actorness proposed by Barbato adds depth to the agency framework from Wight. I argue this on the basis that agency is a component of actorness.

⁶⁴ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 42.

⁶⁵ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 43 (emphasis added).

⁶⁶ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 37.

3.3 Integration of the Scholars

This chapter has so far outlined the principal scholars informing the constructed framework to be applied later in this thesis. Before discussing how the framework will be applied to the primary source of analysis in the current study, we must address the question of compatibility and incorporation. By drawing from several scholars, I acknowledge that the present study will not be immune from the argument of incommensurability. In response, I will argue it is possible within the discipline of IR to undertake a combined scholarly approach without necessarily leading to incommensurability.

In the context of pluralism within IR and the reified ‘academic sects’, incommensurability becomes a plausible critique. In what has been dubbed the ‘inter-paradigm debates’, it was ‘the image of three competing paradigms’ of realism, liberalism and, broadly, radicalism that defined the boundaries of disagreement among IR scholars.⁶⁷ However, more important than the number of paradigms is the form and content of the debate regarding ‘the meeting of incommensurable paradigms’.⁶⁸ It is a methodological debate because the different IR paradigms ‘could not be tested against each other, since they basically did not speak the same language’.⁶⁹ If it is accepted that pluralism in the discipline of IR is the plurality of incommensurate approaches, then it is reasonable to conclude that we face a serious problem in combining elements from different approaches. However, can we overcome this idea of incommensurable paradigms?

The incommensurability argument should not lead to the end of cross paradigm exploration. In the words of Wight:

If incommensurability entails that meaningful communication across paradigms is in principle impossible, then any form of multi-paradigm inquiry would seem to be futile. Uncritical acceptance of the incommensurability thesis can all too quickly become a legitimisation of apartheid for paradigms, a dialogue of the deaf which precludes any exploration of the possibility of synthesis, integration, or some other mode of unification among meta-theoretical approaches.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Waever, ‘Rise and Fall’, 154.

⁶⁸ Waever, ‘Rise and Fall’, 154.

⁶⁹ Waever, ‘Rise and Fall’, 158.

⁷⁰ Colin Wight, ‘Incommensurability and Cross-Paradigm Communication in International Relations Theory: ‘What’s the Frequency Kenneth?’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1996): 292.

Wight rightly critiques the use of incommensurability as an argument to end further exploration and development. Importantly, as Wight states, it legitimates the ‘apartheid for paradigms’. This would lead to the gladiatorial battles of the ‘academic sects’ mentioned earlier in this thesis.

Like the analytic eclecticism discussed in the previous chapter, the earlier concept of mutual serviceability from Ole Waever is an example of a move beyond incommensurability. It is important, as Waever argues, that ‘the concept of incommensurability is not the problem, [rather] the problem is the concept of commensurability’ conceived as a total understanding and communication.⁷¹ Waever proposes a cooperative approach through this idea of ‘mutual serviceability’. According to Waever, the IR paradigms ‘do not compete for explaining the “the same” ... [rather] they each do different jobs’ and can be thought of as a “division of labour”’.⁷² This can have considerable value in approaching the complexities of investigating a particular phenomenon, such as the agency of a religious actor. The cooperative approach of mutual serviceability is one where differentiation and integration coexist: ‘The theories can only be linked externally, when one theory reaches out on its own terms for another theory to exploit it, which it can then only do by grasping the inner logic of this other theory and its material’.⁷³ For instance, Rees has incorporated Waever’s mutual serviceability into his constructed dynamics of the religion model. According to Rees, ‘there is a present danger for IR research in religion that the languages (and interests) of secular and sacral ‘paradigms’ are held to be so different that a ‘standoff’ exists within the discipline rather than an ‘open conversation’’.⁷⁴ Through Waever’s mutual serviceability, Rees sees the ‘considerable value for IR religion research’ because ‘the secular need not collapse into the sacral in order to accommodate the perspectives of religion, but rather, secular and sacral dimensions can mutually service the analytical task’.⁷⁵ This results in, according to Rees, ‘mutual serviceability link[ing] secular and sacral perspectives whilst maintaining the integrity of each view. What is “serviced” becomes tested by context and by a comparative analysis that is concerned to situate religion within an integrated secular-sacral framework’.⁷⁶ Informed by these theoretical considerations, the discussion will turn to consider the ability of the chosen scholars to be integrated into the conceptual framework.

⁷¹ Waever, ‘The Rise and Fall’, 171.

⁷² Waever, ‘The Rise and Fall’, 173–74.

⁷³ Waever, ‘The Rise and Fall’, 174.

⁷⁴ Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 23–24.

⁷⁵ Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 24.

⁷⁶ Rees, *Religion in International Politics*, 24.

The concept of multilayeredness has been obtained from two different scholars, Barbato and Wight. As noted earlier, Wight will form the structure to organise the case study's components in this thesis. The concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato is constructed from specific approaches. This would entail using certain assumptions and concepts as part of Barbato's analysis and argument towards multilayered actorness. Barbato uses the theoretical framework of constructivism and the English School and their interest in historically rooted praxis.⁷⁷ In particular, Barbato specifies the kind of constructivism he is interested in applying in his analysis. Barbato acknowledged the criticisms on the suitability of constructivism to analyse religion.⁷⁸ However, Barbato instead argues that religion can be better analysed by a type of constructivism termed by Fierke as 'consistent constructivism'.⁷⁹ According to Barbato, consistent constructivism, like the English School, 'offers a focus on the historical process of communities and societies reproducing and changing themselves and others by their rule guided praxis'.⁸⁰ However, as will be seen, the idea of a multilayered approach can equally emerge from an ontologically different approach.

Wight initially stated in his article that 'I do not feel I can identify my 'subject position' with ... certitude'.⁸¹ However, according to Wight, 'if labels must be attached', he would accept the label 'critical realist' or scientific realism.⁸² This would contrast with the constructivist and English School-influenced approach used by Barbato. Compared to Barbato, Wight is more concerned with agency rather actorness. This is clearly observed in the different terminology used by Barbato and Wight. However, as mentioned earlier, I believe that actor and agency are close parallel terms. This is because I view the actor or agent as the repository of this concept of agency. The three-level framework of agency, introduced in Wight's article critiquing Doty's arguments on the agent-structure problem, was further expanded in 2006 in his book, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology*. In this book, Wight breaks down the dominant place of positivism in IR as a science. This will break down the idea of science being equated with positivism. According to the scientific realist approach applied by Wight:

scientific realism makes no concrete claims about any particular entities in the world.
Scientific realism does not legitimate the existence of any particular unobservable

⁷⁷ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 29.

⁷⁸ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 32.

⁷⁹ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 32.

⁸⁰ Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness', 32.

⁸¹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 112.

⁸² Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 113.

social structure, but merely legitimates, inter alia and contra positivism, the existence of unobservable entities as legitimate objects for scientific inquiry.⁸³

This description of Wight's approach leading to his multilayered agency framework would not accord to a positivist position. This is particularly the case that the unobservable is a legitimate object for scientific inquiry. However, Wight's approach is more clearly understood in the context of his understanding of science and positivism. That is, 'science and positivism are not synonyms for one another'.⁸⁴ Positivism, according to Wight, 'in attempting to limit the legitimate boundaries of knowledge claims, took an anti-realist metaphysical position and privileged the methodological elements of knowledge construction'.⁸⁵ This leads to a particular view of what constitutes scientific method or science. Contrary to this account, Wight views science as denoting an attempt to provide 'depth explanations of phenomena'.⁸⁶ It 'must be the case that differing phenomena will require differing modes of investigation and perhaps different models of explanation'.⁸⁷ In other words, for Wight:

scientific knowledge is not the method of knowledge acquisition, nor the immutable nature of the knowledge produced, but the aim of the knowledge itself. Scientific knowledge is explanatory and as such a great deal of knowledge of the social world is deserving of the label of science even if it does not deserve the label positivism.⁸⁸

This is a significant claim made by Wight; no doubt it contains important implications for studying agency. Wight applies a non-positivist scientific realism in his inquiry into his conception of agency and the broader agent–structure problem. Arguably, one implication is that our inquiry into agency does not necessitate the demonstration of causation in the sense of showing cause, action and effect in an observable manner.

Conversely, Pabst introduces the 'metaphysical-political realism' approach. Briefly, as Pabst states, 'it is an international theory that develops the Christian Realism of the English School', which binds together reason and faith, envisions a 'corporate' association of peoples and nations and links immanent values to transcendent principles.⁸⁹ Pabst draws 'in part on the foundations of the English School' and differs fundamentally from the realist school of IR by rejecting 'the primacy of nation states and transnational markets in favour of a 'corporate' association of

⁸³ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 116.

⁸⁴ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 17.

⁸⁵ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 19.

⁸⁶ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 19.

⁸⁷ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 19.

⁸⁸ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 61.

⁸⁹ Pabst, 'Secularism', 995.

peoples and nations in which religiously framed ideas and practices are central'.⁹⁰ A particularly important contribution drawn from Pabst is his idea on metaphysics. As mentioned earlier, Wight's multilayered framework of agency is not religion-focused. As such, the role and importance of the religious may be subsumed into other categories. The integration of Pabst in the Wight framework is to add to Wight's agency₂ layer. This is where the actor or agent becomes the bearer of the context or sociocultural system from where they originate.

The principles of Pabst's approach have important epistemological and methodological implications. Epistemologically, through his synthesis of reason and faith, Pabst brings in normative explanations of the nature of the world as equally valuable components to analysis in IR. It allows unobservable and material ideas, principles and concepts as objects of analysis. Accordingly, it does not stress the centrality of reason as the only source available for theory and analysis. The self-identified approach to religion argued by Omer emerges from within critical realist assumptions. Omer recognises the ontological weight of religion as an existing phenomenon compared to the view that religion is epiphenomenal as a creation of power dynamics and the state. This would have some parallel with Pabst's rejection of the primacy of states in favour of a corporate association of peoples and nations 'bound together by the flow of ideas and practices embodied in religions, customs and traditions rather than abstract rights and commercial contracts'.⁹¹ As a non-reductionist approach to religion, Omer would parallel the non-reductionist approach in Wight and Barbato. These contributions widen our engagement, expanding how our methods should accommodate the metaphysical elements in the analysis. There seem to be parallels between this metaphysical addition and the scientific realism used by Wight because there is a shift beyond positivism to include the unobservable in theory and analysis.

While the eclectic leanings of this study can raise questions about compatibility, in this section, I have argued that using multiple concepts and principles as part of the framework of the study can be permissible. This is contrary to the often-used critique of incommensurability. Uncritical acceptance of the incommensurability argument quickly separates the disciplines into paradigm sects. Following the mutual serviceability argument from Waever, I have proposed an eclectic combination of four different approaches. First, the multilayered framework of agency from Wight. Second, the metaphysical political realism to approaching religion in IR from Pabst. Third, the self-identified religious actor approach from Omer. Fourth, the repurposing of

⁹⁰ Pabst, 'Secularism', 997.

⁹¹ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1017.

multilayered actorness from Barbato. These approaches are part of the ‘division of labour’ that Waever speaks of as each contributes to an important element to the present study.⁹² Again, the two important constitutive elements in this study are the religious component and the conceptualisation of agency. I have adopted the framework of agency from Wight as the organising conceptual structure in this study. Ideas about agency from Wight will provide a foundational understanding to apply to the CBCP and structure the case study chapters later in the thesis. In contrast, the addition of Pabst to the framework integrates the metaphysical and sacred dimensions into IR. It informs how actors are bonded locally and transnationally through relational and mutual shared traditions, ideas and practices. This, in turn, forms the basis of how Pabst conceives the social order. This would allow engagement with the specific Catholic traditions of the CBCP, embedded in the Philippines and the global Catholic community. Deepening the use of Omer’s understanding and non-reductionism in the self-identified religious approach to religious actors. Barbato’s multilayered actorness then brings the religious aspect into the multilayered framework of agency. These two dimensions to the framework of the present study will inform the basis of the findings from the case study. The next section will discuss using the episcopal conference statements as the primary source of this study, to which the framework outlined in the preceding sections will be applied.

3.4 Application of the Framework in the Case Study

This study focuses on the CBCP in the comparative policy contexts of agrarian land reform and reproductive health policies from 1986 to 1998 as the site to apply the constructed framework. This case study aims to address the research question, ‘*How can the agency of religious actors be understood and situated in IR?*’ This question is more concerned about the ontology of the religious actor. In this sense, the study is concerned with the CBCP as an actor in relation to the particular policies. However, it should be emphasised that the claim in this thesis in response to the research question is the constructed framework. At the outset, it is important to note that the study is not primarily concerned with causation. It will not be concerned with whether the CBCP has effected any change or lack of change in government policy or law. Therefore, while there are multiple actors to focus on in relation to the CBCP (e.g., the state, political parties, movements and organisations) the focus is primarily on the CBCP as an actor.

⁹² Waever, ‘The Rise and Fall’, 173–74.

The framework will be applied to the CBCP in Chapters 4 and 5. The analysis focuses on the official statements of the CBCP relevant to the policy, such as pastoral letters, pastoral exhortations and statements. These statements will be the primary source of analysis for the project. Additionally, the research will also draw upon relevant ecclesiastical documents in the Catholic Church to understand the religious tradition the CBCP is embedded. The official statements of the CBCP are a result of the collective members within the CBCP as an institution. As described by Esparagoza, ‘one of the most important institution [*sic*] and significant agent [*sic*] of communion among Catholics’ in the Philippines is the CBCP.⁹³ The CBCP serves as ‘a guide and conscience not only to all members but also to the people of the entire nation’ and helps to ‘see things not only the spiritual component of our faith but also in analysing and promoting social change in the light of truths of the Gospel’.⁹⁴ In Esparagoza’s 2020 article on CBCP statements on the death penalty, the statements are examined since the role of the CBCP ‘as a vital instrument of communion and unity in the Church’ is usually expressed in the statements and grounded in Church teachings.⁹⁵ Arguably, in Esparagoza’s descriptions of the CBCP, there are subtle hints at multilayeredness. For instance, the CBCP is a guide not only to Filipino Catholics but also the nation. Equally, the idea of CBCP statements shows more than the spiritual component of faith.

Similarly, the usefulness of examining CBCP statements is conveyed in articles from Francisco. In 2014 and 2015 articles in the *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* journal, Francisco adopts a similar approach by focusing on the collective Bishops’ statements. First, in the 2014 article, ‘People of God, People of the Nation: Official Catholic Discourse on Nation and Nationalism’, Francisco examines the collective Bishops’ statements understood broadly as pastoral letters, statements, exhortations, appeals, special messages and norms since these texts constitute the official discourse of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.⁹⁶ Further, Francisco notes that these kinds of texts ‘neither [have] comprehensive editions nor critical studies’.⁹⁷ Again, in the 2015 article by Francisco, a similar rationale is given. Francisco succinctly gives a further elaboration of his approach:

⁹³ Christopher Esparagoza, ‘A Reading of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines’ Pastoral Statement on Death Penalty and its Communion with the State’, *Scientia: The International Journal on the Liberal Arts* 8, no. 2 (2020): 81.

⁹⁴ Esparagoza, ‘A Reading’, 81.

⁹⁵ Esparagoza, ‘A Reading’, 81.

⁹⁶ Jose Mario C. Francisco, ‘People of God, People of the Nation: Official Catholic Discourse on the Nation and Nationalism’, *Philippines Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 62, no. 3–4 (2014): 342.

⁹⁷ Francisco, ‘People of God’, 342.

What this article undertakes is a close reading of official CBCP discourse without extratextual considerations of authorship or context ... A textual archaeology of reading the lines of the CBCP statements as well as between them seeks to discover the CBCP's perspective on church teaching ... in the Philippine context. It does not interrogate church doctrine itself but examines how it is articulated.⁹⁸

Similarly, Francisco repeats that 'no comprehensive critical edition of CBCP statements exists'.⁹⁹ Following the rationale presented by Francisco, an examination of CBCP statements becomes an enriching insight into a section of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. However, it should be noted that the project does not necessarily take the same view as Francisco in examining the CBCP statements. That is, the multilayered framework will not exclude, as Francisco termed, 'extratextual considerations'. This would seem appropriate for Francisco, who undertakes a discourse analysis of the CBCP statements. Comparatively, this project does not undertake a discourse analysis of the statements. Instead, it focuses on a proper understanding of the CBCP through the idea of agency. Arguably, the statements of the CBCP can be conceptualised as a product of the interaction and combination of its multiple layers. Then, applying the conceptual framework in the policy contexts aims to uncover the multiple layers of the CBCP, in which the statements are embedded. Therefore, in the case study, we will begin with the statements and then merge out, breaking down the layers of the CBCP.

3.5 Site of Analysis: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (1986–1998)

Given the focus of the current study, how might one choose to assess and deepen our understanding of the agency of a religious actor? In the present study, I employ a focused case study on the Philippines and the CBCP. However, to maintain control in this study, I employ a defined period of 1986 to 1998 in the Philippines as the focus of our analysis. This is a critical juncture in the political history of the Philippines. From 1986 to 1998, the country navigated the post-Marcos and post-1986 People Power Revolution political landscape. Importantly, the period is one of transition for the country and its political actors, especially the CBCP. The Philippines offers us a valuable site to analyse Catholic agency. From the long historical association of Catholicism in the country to key Catholic players in the People Power movement and post-Marcos landscape, this can be a fruitful location for the study. In this section, I intend to expand on the constitutive elements of the case study. This will lay the foundations to

⁹⁸ Jose Mario C. Francisco, 'Letting the Texts on RH Speak for Themselves: (Dis)Continuity and (Counter)Point in CBCP Statements', *Philippines Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 2 (2015): 224.

⁹⁹ Francisco, 'Letting the Texts', 224.

venturing into the analysis of the agency of the CBCP in the comparative policy contexts situated in the case study.

3.5.1 The Philippines as the Catholic Nation

As an introduction to the Philippine case study, several scholarly contributions on the Philippine Catholic Church will provide a useful background to the analysis in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. It is important to note that this section on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Philippines does not intend to carry out a comprehensive historical examination of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. The historical relationship between the Catholic Church and the State in the Philippines shows a lasting dynamic that continues to shape Philippine life.

There has been a long history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Catholicism was first brought to the islands' inhabitants, which now constitute the Philippines, by the Spanish after Ferdinand Magellan's landing in Cebu and claiming the archipelago on 28 March 1521.¹⁰⁰ As mentioned earlier, at the time of writing this thesis, the Philippines is celebrating its five hundredth anniversary of Christianity. There was a close alignment between the Catholic Church and the State, or the Spanish colonial power more accurately. Francisco notes, among other things, two interesting facts: first, a transformation of the political space occurred following usage of the Spanish grid pattern in town-building.¹⁰¹ This created a central plaza where the Church, civil buildings and residences of the prominent elite were contiguous.¹⁰² Second, Augustinian missionaries alone founded over 100 towns by the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰³

Further, and maybe, more importantly, Francisco notes that due to the inadequate number of colonial personnel, the parish priest, usually a friar from a religious order, became the de facto representation of the Church and colonial authority.¹⁰⁴ A similar assertion to Francisco is made by Richer, who stated, '[Catholicism] had has a political role in Philippine life at least since the Spanish colonization in 1521. In fact, Spain seldom had over a few thousand Spanish officials

¹⁰⁰ Damien Kingsbury, *South-East Asia: A Political Profile*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2005), 291.

¹⁰¹ Jose Mario C. Francisco, 'The Philippines', in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. Peter C Phan (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 99.

¹⁰² Francisco, 'The Philippines', 99.

¹⁰³ Francisco, 'The Philippines', 99.

¹⁰⁴ Francisco, 'The Philippines', 101.

in the islands, but its political influence spread with the spiritual and economic conquest of the Catholic Church'.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, the Catholic Church in the Philippines did experience a schism. The schism was headed by Gregorio Aglipay, a duly ordained secular priest, and developed shortly after the beginning of American control in 1902.¹⁰⁶ The founding of the Aglipay or Independent Filipino Church resulted from the longstanding institutional discrimination of Filipino clergy and the hegemony of the friars.¹⁰⁷ This seems to be an attempt at nationalising the religion. Interestingly, Aglipay asserts that the movement would preach Catholic doctrine in its purity, which points to this nationalisation of religion and may reflect the 'Philippinisation' of Catholicism in comparison to the Catholicism as espoused by the Spanish clergy.¹⁰⁸

The contemporary political setting of the Catholic Church and the Philippines sees the Catholic Church continue to have a presence in Philippine political life. In 1970, the CBCP quoted two popes' statements about the Philippines:

[Pius XII said] the map of Southeast Asia and Oceania reveals strikingly ... in which Providence has placed this people ... it has assigned them in the community of nations.

[Paul VI said] as a great Catholic nation you are truly a city set upon a mountain ... The geographical position and historical destiny of your country in the Extreme Orient ... are calls ... to give your sincere Catholic profession a wider missionary expression.¹⁰⁹

The CBCP recalled these words in a *Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Visit of the Holy Father* on 22 September 1970. The words of Popes Pius XII and Paul VI reflect an interesting imaginary of the relationship between the Philippines as a nation and Catholicism. This is interesting to note as the analysis progresses in the subsequent

¹⁰⁵ Linda K. Richter, 'Symposium on Religion and Politics in the Philippines: Introduction', *Pilipinas* 13, no. Fall (1989): 41.

¹⁰⁶ James A. Robertson, 'Catholicism in the Philippine Islands', *The Catholic Historical Review* 3, no. 4 (1918): 385–86.

¹⁰⁷ Adrian Hermann, 'The Early Periodicals of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (1903–1904) and the Emergence of a Transregional and Transcontinental Indigenous-Christian Public Sphere', *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 62, no. 3–4 (2014): 552.

¹⁰⁸ Robertson, 'Catholicism', 383–85; James A. Robertson, 'The Aglipay Schism in the Philippine Islands', *The Catholic Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (1918): 328; Fred R. Von Der Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia: Burma, Indoesnia, the Philippines* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 24–25.

¹⁰⁹ CBCP, 'Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Visit of the Holy Father', accessed 15 July 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/joint-pastoral-letter-of-the-catholic-hierarchy-of-the-philippines-on-the-visit-of-the-holy-father>.

chapters, particularly the conflation in the representations of the Philippines by the Catholic Church as a ‘Catholic nation’.

According to Huntington, the third wave of democratisation in the 1970s and 1980s can be dubbed ‘overwhelmingly a Catholic wave’.¹¹⁰ In this regard, Huntington’s ‘Catholic wave’ thesis included the Philippines and the 1986 People Power Revolution as one of its exemplars. Some have observed the 1986 People Power Revolution as a prime example of the influence of the Catholic Church in Philippine political life. This will be further discussed later in this chapter. It may be said that the revolution revealed ‘the intimate relationship of the [Catholic] church and state in the Philippines’.¹¹¹ Indeed, the Catholic Church had representatives on the 1986–1987 Constitution Commission, which creates the image of deep involvement in national policymaking processes.¹¹²

In their comparative study of the Philippines and the US, Buckley and Wilcox characterised the Philippines and the Catholic Church as a ‘durable religious-secular cooperation’.¹¹³ In the context of reproductive health policy debates, tensions have strained religious and secular elite ties, but this has not eliminated broader religious–secular cooperation in public life.¹¹⁴ Buckley and Wilcox argued that cooperation continues in the Philippines because of a low religious change, which mitigates the need for outbidding and competition. This premise for durable cooperation seems to resonate with RCT considered in the previous chapter. Additionally, following the power reductionism critique of Omer, we could say there should be more to this form of durable cooperation beyond power or hegemony. However, despite rational-choice critiques that may apply to the premises of Buckley and Wilcox, the concept of ‘durable religious–secular cooperation’ is a practical description of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Philippines.

Conversely, Buckley has elsewhere also argued that the Catholic Church in the Philippines faces a ‘democratic dilemma’. According to Buckley, ‘the [Catholic] Church has substantial social influence, yet struggles to turn that influence into a unified voice in political life ... Catholic leaders, like other religious elites, face a dilemma in entering democratic life. How can they play

¹¹⁰ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 76.

¹¹¹ David Lim, ‘Church and State in the Philippine 1900–1988’, *Transformation* 6, no. 3 (1989): 29–30.

¹¹² Lim, ‘Church and State in the Philippine 1900–1988’, 30.

¹¹³ David T. Buckley and Clyde Wilcox, ‘Religious Change, Political Incentives, and Explaining Religious-Secular Relations in the United States and the Philippines’, *Politics and Religion* 10, no. 3 (2017): 550.

¹¹⁴ Buckley and Wilcox, ‘Religious Change’, 544.

a role in public life when they neither directly command votes nor run for office themselves?’¹¹⁵ The democratic dilemma and durable religious–secular cooperation are two important observations. If considered together, it could be argued that both occur simultaneously. That is, the democratic dilemma continues in the background to the durability of religious–secular cooperation. Then it could be asked, why is this so? As the subject of this research, agency becomes a curious area to examine. Therefore, the political changes and the historical relationship between the Philippines and the Catholic Church present a dynamic context for the research into religious actor agency. In the next section, the CBCP as the actor focus of the research will be considered.

3.5.2 Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines

To provide a control in the study, I focus on a singular actor within the Philippines, namely, the CBCP. The CBCP is itself a creature of Vatican II. In short, according to Canon 447 of the Code of Canon Law, an episcopal conference is:

a permanent institution, [of] a group of bishops of some nation or certain territory who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions for the Christian faithful of their territory in order to promote the greater good which the Church offers to humanity, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place, according to the norm of law.¹¹⁶

In an apt summation, Robredillo states the history of the CBCP can be captured in terms of transformation.¹¹⁷ Robredillo marks out four periods: defensiveness (1945–1965), difficult transition (1966–1975), awakening and prophesying (1976–1986) and the renewal of vision for the Church and society (1987–1995).¹¹⁸ So, what existed in the Philippines prior to the CBCP? Indeed, Catholic Bishops Conferences as a permanent institution are a relatively recent development. The Catholic Welfare Organisation (CWO) was the official voice of the Catholic hierarchy in an independent Philippines after the Second World War and predecessor to the CBCP. The CWO spoke in defence of its extensive involvement in education and opposed nationalist views from Masons, Communists and other non-Catholic groups.¹¹⁹ According to Robredillo, the ecclesiological framework of the CWO, largely influenced by the ecclesiology

¹¹⁵ David T. Buckley, ‘Catholicism’s Democratic Dilemma: Varieties of Public Religion in the Philippines’, *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 62, no. 3–4 (2014): 314.

¹¹⁶ *The Code of Canon Law*, Vatican, accessed 30 October 2021, <https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>, 447.

¹¹⁷ Robredillo, ‘The Challenges of the Times’.

¹¹⁸ Robredillo, ‘The Challenges of the Times’.

¹¹⁹ Francisco, ‘Lettig the Texts’, 226.

of the Council of Trent and baroque theology, meant that it looked primarily inwardly and was principally concerned with the defence, protection, strengthening and furtherance of the vital interests of the Catholic Church as a social institution and of supernatural values.¹²⁰ This characterised the period of defensiveness.

However, is there continuity of this framework in the CBCP? Robredillo stated that the shift in the ecclesiology of the collective bishops was not immediate in the year after Vatican II.¹²¹ Similar to the pre-Vatican II CWO, the early years of the CBCP tended to be inward-looking, focused on intra-church renewal and a social-charity model in the initial stages of its mission in society.¹²² Accordingly, there was continuity between the CBCP and the CWO. The transition to the CBCP's ecclesiological framework had not so far come to fruition. From 1966 to 1975, the CBCP 'slowly changed its focus from defensiveness to an awareness of the role of social apostolate in the mission of the Church', 'awakened to its mission of liberation' and the assumption of the role of 'prophet of the nation'.¹²³ Robredillo stated that 1977 may be considered 'a turning point in the ... history [of the CBCP]' because it no longer engaged in general principles about political problems but made moral judgements, especially in the case of the Marcos regime.¹²⁴ After the end of the Marcos regime, the CBCP was in a period of renewal of vision for the Church and society.¹²⁵ From 1987 to 1995, the bishops considered it the right time to renew the Philippine Church, and so, a plenary council was held from 20 January to 17 February 1991.¹²⁶ Robredillo conveyed the significance of this plenary council for the CBCP. He stated, '[the Council] define[d] what the Philippine Church ought to be in light of ... Vatican II and the post-conciliar theologies and ecclesial praxis vis-à-vis the contemporary historical experience of the Filipino people'.¹²⁷

Returning to the issue of progressive–conservative labelling, which was noted in relation to the policy contexts, the institutional Catholic Church is often conceived as politically and socially conservative. Again, I emphasise the questions raised earlier in chapter 1 in relation to the Catholic Church popularly seen in society as conservative: can this labelling truly represent the Catholic Church's position on all issues? Should such a label be applied to all Catholic actors?

¹²⁰ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²¹ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²² Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²³ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²⁴ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²⁵ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²⁶ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹²⁷ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

Similar to the institutional Church, the CBCP as an institution is not a monolith. On one level, a pastoral statement, letter or document from a bishops' conference is meant to reflect the collective view of the bishops. The resulting document is often a conservative document compared to those who may have more liberationist views. On another level, there is diversity between bishops' conferences around the world. Finally, however, there is diversity among the bishops comprising the bishops' conference like the CBCP. This is important to bear in mind when engaging with the CBCP.

The issues during martial law in the Philippines is a good example to show the diversity of views among the Filipino Bishops. For example, in a 1982 article Youngblood notes several of the divisions among the conservative and progressive bishops.¹²⁸ According to Youngblood, the CBCP membership can be divided into three major groups based on attitudes and behaviour towards martial law, Marco's New Society Programs and the Church's role in the modern world: a) conservative, who are most supportive of martial law and government reforms and if critical of the Marcos regime, it is done in moderate terms; b) moderates, who criticise government programs that threaten vital Church interests but reserve the right to criticise specific injustices while not going to the extent of attacking martial law in principle; and c) progressive or liberal, who defend Church interests against undesirable government programs but speak repeatedly against a wide array of abuses by the government and military and condemning martial law as immoral.¹²⁹ In Youngblood's analysis, it was found that at the time conservative and moderate bishops not only dominated the CBCP numerically by 'comprising 80% of the conference, but they also occupy the highest positions in the Catholic hierarchy'.¹³⁰

Shoesmith in a 1979 article also notes the divisions like Youngblood within the CBCP in the continuing debate on martial law in the Philippines.¹³¹ According to Shoesmith, the spokesperson for the conservative bishops had been Cardinal Julio Rosales, who was Archbishop of Cebu. He notes that Cardinal Rosales 'assumed the leadership of the "traditionalists" on the death of Cardinal Santos, Archbishop of Manila'. Shoesmith also identifies that,

the previous President and current Vice-President (1978-1979) of the CBCP, Archbishop Teopisto Alberto and the other members of the Administrative Council (with the exception on some issues of Bishop Fortich of Bacolod) are sympathetic to the right rather than the left wing

¹²⁸ Robert Youngblood, 'Structural Imperialism: An Analysis of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines', *Comparative Political Studies* 15, no. 1 (1982): 29-56.

¹²⁹ Youngblood, 'Structural Imperialism', 35.

¹³⁰ Youngblood, 'Structural Imperialism', 39-41.

¹³¹ Dennis Shoesmith, 'Church and Martial Law in the Philippines: The Continuing Debate', *Southeast Asian Affairs* 6, (1979): 246-257.

of the CBCP and have evaded demands by liberal and radical bishops for a collective condemnation of martial law itself as well as specific abuses.¹³²

While the liberal or radical bishops are identified by Shoemith as including ‘Bishops Arliss, Capalla, Laayen, Morelos, Nepomuceno, Perez, Purugganan, Tudit, Varela, and the outspoken Francisco Claver’.¹³³ In relation to these bishops, Shoemith argues that while they have been unable to win the necessary support from moderate bishops to move the CBCP to a more progressive position, the ‘minority has wielded considerable national influence on the Church through the social action programmes sponsored by the CBCP’s National Secretariat for Social Action’, which was previously headed by one of their own, Bishop Julio Labyen, and through their links and support from the grassroots from members of religious orders and younger diocesan clergy.¹³⁴ These progressive bishops, who were informally led by Bishop Claver, dissented from the CBCP’s stance of collaboration with the dictator President Marcos and encouraged the laity, religious, and clergy of their dioceses to continue working for social justice.¹³⁵ In contrast to these two groups, the moderate group of bishops was made up of a majority of the Philippine bishops at the time.¹³⁶ The position chosen by these moderate bishops, which included the Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Jaime Sin, was one of “critical collaboration” where the Church does not oppose the state but is prepared to speak out on specific issues.¹³⁷ However, such a position quickly became untenable and with the assassination in 1983 of Benigno S. Aquino Jr the hierarchy began to provide moral leadership for the opposition.¹³⁸ Most of the Philippine bishops would eventually join the progressive Church in what would become the People Power Revolution.¹³⁹ The point to be noted in this brief discussion is the diversity within the CBCP itself. It is not simply a matter of the content of the Catholic teachings as a determinant of the bishop. Other factors may exist in the dynamics present in the social location. Nevertheless, the product of the pastoral letters, statements and documents published by the CBCP is a product of the bishops of the Philippines. The outcome in these documents may have to yield to the dynamics of these divisions within the CBCP.

Additionally, according to Francisco, official Catholic discourse on the nation conflates the body Catholic and the body politic to construct and promote the imaginary of the Philippines as a

¹³² Shoemith, ‘Church and Martial Law’, 251.

¹³³ Shoemith, ‘Church and Martial Law’, 251.

¹³⁴ Shoemith, ‘Church and Martial Law’, 251.

¹³⁵ Dionisio, ‘Introduction’, 2.

¹³⁶ Shoemith, ‘Church and Martial Law’, 252.

¹³⁷ Shoemith, ‘Church and Martial Law’, 253.

¹³⁸ Dionisio, ‘Introduction’, 3.

¹³⁹ Dionisio, ‘Introduction’, 3.

‘Catholic nation’.¹⁴⁰ The imaginary of the Philippines as a ‘Catholic nation’ before the 1960s served as the defence of the Catholic Church in the Philippines against perceived nationalist threats against the Church’s involvement in education.¹⁴¹ However, as Francisco argues, the Catholic Church will have to re-examine the imaginary in the face of current challenges in the Philippine and global contexts.¹⁴² This may include the democratic dilemma that Buckley argues the Catholic Church faces in the Philippines. As such, among other Catholic actors, the CBCP will have to face this challenge of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Indeed, as mentioned, the CBCP has an important place within the broader local community of the Catholic Church. Therefore, while there are multiple and worthy Catholic actors to examine, in the interest of maintaining analytical focus, the research will be driven by examining the CBCP as our primary actor.

3.5.3 The Philippine Political Landscape from 1986 to 1998: New Hope or More of the Same?

The Philippines from 1986 to 1998 offers a contextually rich time to situate the present study. It was a time filled with a great deal of initial hope; however, instability and conflict soon turned to disappointment. Importantly, this is a period of political and social transition—a transition from authoritarian rule to the promised restoration of democracy in the post-Marcos era. Political transitions are very potent sites for analysing political dynamics because these are moments of immense contestation. Many actors in this space are vying for their vision and interests in cementing their place in this new political landscape and the future of the Philippines. The work for Aquino and Ramos as the immediate presidencies after Marcos had an uphill battle to face. This included dealing with the problems of centralised power, restoring democratic institutions and processes, a politicised military, the communist insurgency, the Muslim insurgency in Southern Philippines, corruption and cronyism, servicing a huge international loan debt and numerous social inequality issues like, notably, agrarian land reform. This presents us with a rich context to situate our analysis of CBCP agency. I intend to overview some of the political developments occurring within each of the presidencies that this case study covers. This by no means is intended to be a detailed historical examination of the period. It is to provide the background to the two case study chapters that follow.

¹⁴⁰ Francisco, ‘People of God’, 341–75.

¹⁴¹ Francisco, ‘People of God’, 343.

¹⁴² Francisco, ‘People of God’, 367.

(a) Corazon Aquino: Restoring Democracy to a Burdened Philippines

The period of 1986 to 1992 that included the February 1986 People Power Revolution and the presidency of Corazon Aquino was an unstable and difficult political landscape from the restoration of democracy, several coup attempts, insurgency, natural disasters, economic stagnation and growing government debt.¹⁴³ The beginnings of the Aquino presidency emerged from the context of challenging the Marcos regime and the resulting People Power Revolution in February 1986. At Cardinal Sin's, Archbishop of Manila, urging, Aquino accepted the nomination as the opposition's presidential candidate in the 1986 snap election.¹⁴⁴ However, this election was marred with violence, intimidation, corruption and fraud. For example, President Marcos gave loyal warlords weapons to deploy into opposition stronghold areas, which saw 264 Aquino supporters assassinated and 227 injured during the campaign period.¹⁴⁵ During the 1986 snap election, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) ordered its members and legal organisations to boycott the elections, a costly mistake.¹⁴⁶ On 15 February 1986, President Marcos and his running mate were proclaimed the winners of the election by the *Batasang Pambansa* (the parliament of the Philippines) after a rushed examination of the Certificates of Canvass.¹⁴⁷ The CBCP released a pastoral letter denouncing the election as 'unparalleled in the fraudulence of their conduct' in response.¹⁴⁸ The pastoral letter continued by judging the Marcos Government. It said, 'a government that assumes or retains power through fraudulent means has no moral basis ... and cannot command the allegiance of the citizenry'.¹⁴⁹ Then, the CBCP said that if the government 'does not freely correct the evil it has inflicted on the people then it is our serious moral obligation as a people to make it do so', which is through 'the way of non-violent struggle for justice' and the 'active resistance of evil by peaceful means'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Bernardo M. Villegas, 'The Philippines in 1986: Democratic Reconstruction in the Post-Marcos Era', *Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (1987); Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Philippines in 1987: Challenges of Redemocratization', *Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (1988); Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Philippines in 1988: Reaching Out to Peace and Economic Recovery', *Asian Survey* 29, no. 2 (1989); David G. Timberman, 'The Philippines in 1989: A Good Year Turns Sour', *Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (1990); David G. Timberman, 'The Philippines in 1990: On Shaky Ground', *Asian Survey* 31, no. 2 (1991); Alex B. Brillantes, 'The Philippines in 1991: Disasters and Decisions', *Asian Survey* 32, no. 2 (1992).

¹⁴⁴ Sharon Erikson Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 116.

¹⁴⁵ Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions*, 117.

¹⁴⁶ Paticio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017), 224.

¹⁴⁷ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 195.

¹⁴⁸ CBCP, 'Post-Election Statement', accessed 14 July 2021, <http://cbcponline.net/post-election-statement/>.

¹⁴⁹ CBCP, 'Post-Election Statement'.

¹⁵⁰ CBCP, 'Post-Election Statement'.

An unexpected event occurred on 22 February 1986. Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos, Armed Forces of the Philippines Vice Chief of Staff, announced their resignation and withdrawal of support for Marcos in a press conference at Camp Aguinaldo.¹⁵¹ This had a flow-on effect in the Philippines. The Aquino Coalition and the Catholic Church called on its supporters to surround the military camps along Manila's 'EDSA' ring road and protect the rebels.¹⁵² Three days following the announcement from Enrile and Ramos saw more defections from the Marcos regime.¹⁵³ On 25 February 1986, both Aquino and her running mate, Salvador Laurel, took their oaths of office as Marcos and his running mate took their scheduled induction and oaths.¹⁵⁴ In the evening of that same day, Marcos fled the presidential palace, Malacañang.¹⁵⁵

As president of the Philippines after the ousting of Marcos, Aquino now needed to tackle the issues plaguing the Philippines and deliver on her promises. I will briefly mention some of the issues emerging from this context. The first task for Aquino was to restore the democratic system in the Philippines. In March 1986, the Constitutional Commission was created to draft a new constitution for the Philippines.¹⁵⁶ The new constitution was completed by 15 October 1986, and the plebiscite for its ratification was to be held in February 1987.¹⁵⁷ The opponents of Aquino in Marcos' old party, *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (New Society Movement), argued in the plebiscite that a vote for the constitution was a vote for Aquino's mandate as president because, in their view, Aquino was not duly elected and proclaimed under the previous constitution.¹⁵⁸ The constitution was overwhelmingly voted for in the plebiscite. It appeared that the ratification was accomplished more by Aquino's personal charisma than the actual merits of the proposed constitution.¹⁵⁹ However, it is noteworthy that 60 per cent of the military voters cast their ballots against the draft constitution.¹⁶⁰ On 11 May 1987, elections for both houses of Congress were held, and Aquino's candidates won overwhelmingly in both.¹⁶¹ The lack of coordination among the coalition of parties under Aquino meant several candidates were nominated to the same congressional seats, effectively splitting Aquino's supporters' votes and enabling opposition

¹⁵¹ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 196.

¹⁵² Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 224.

¹⁵³ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 195.

¹⁵⁴ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 196.

¹⁵⁵ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 196.

¹⁵⁶ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 202.

¹⁵⁷ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 202.

¹⁵⁸ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 230.

¹⁵⁹ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 231.

¹⁶⁰ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 231.

¹⁶¹ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 232.

candidates to win.¹⁶² A law was passed in the new Congress prohibiting the candidacy of relatives of high-ranking government officials within the second degree of consanguinity.¹⁶³ However, the law was to take effect after 1988, allowing relatives of powerful political actors to contest the 1988 local elections.¹⁶⁴ Another significant legislative development was the passage of Republic Act 7160, or the 1991 Local Government Code. The act aimed to address the fundamental problem in the Philippines of too much centralisation of government.¹⁶⁵

The Aquino Administration attempted to bring peace to the Philippines by seeking to end various conflicts with communist insurgents and Islamic secessionists. After her accession to the presidency, Aquino immediately reiterated her peace offer to the communist insurgents. On 5 June 1986, she recognised Satur Ocampo and Antonio Zumel as the official negotiators for the communist group.¹⁶⁶ In November, the Communists offered a 100-day ceasefire, but the talks were stalled when militant labour leader, Roland Olalia, was murdered.¹⁶⁷ On 27 November 1986, a 60-day ceasefire was finally signed between the Philippine Government and the communist insurgents.¹⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the ceasefire would not last. The ceasefire taking effect from 10 December 1986 between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF), the umbrella organisation for the Communists, collapsed on 22 January 1987 when disagreements emerged on key issues during peace talks.¹⁶⁹ In 1988, Aquino adopted a ‘total war’ approach to the insurgency, believing that a comprehensive counterinsurgency program was the only viable option to the communist challenge.¹⁷⁰ Problems for the momentum of the communist movement were caused by economic improvements, the military’s counterinsurgency campaign, anti-communist vigilante groups, internal disputes and a distrust and decline in public support.¹⁷¹ By 1990, more than 100 top leaders and functionaries of the CPP had been captured in the preceding three years, causing a toll on the movement.¹⁷²

The Aquino also sought to end the conflict with various secessionist groups, including the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army of renegade priest Conrado Balweg and the Moro National

¹⁶² Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1987’, 232.

¹⁶³ Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1987’, 233.

¹⁶⁴ Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1987’, 233.

¹⁶⁵ Brillantes, ‘Philippines in 1991’, 142.

¹⁶⁶ Villegas, ‘Philippines in 1986’, 196.

¹⁶⁷ Villegas, ‘Philippines in 1986’, 197.

¹⁶⁸ Villegas, ‘Philippines in 1986’, 197.

¹⁶⁹ Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1987’, 236.

¹⁷⁰ Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1988’, 158.

¹⁷¹ Timberman, ‘Philippines in 1989’, 171–72.

¹⁷² Timberman, ‘Philippines in 1990’, 157.

Liberation Front (MNLF).¹⁷³ On 4 September 1986, Aquino signed a peace accord with the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army and a few days later with the MNLF.¹⁷⁴ Peace with the MNLF would not last in 1987 because disagreements during negotiations emerged between it and the government on the conditions of granting an autonomous region in Mindanao.¹⁷⁵ Aquino adopted a hard-line approach in reaction to the failure of the peace initiatives by the government with the MNLF and, at this time, the Communists.¹⁷⁶

The military would be a source of instability and threat to the newly instituted Aquino Government. Between 1986 and 1989, the Aquino Administration faced a series of coup d'état attempts by a faction within the military known as Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM).¹⁷⁷ During the martial law period under Marcos, the military was politicised as it became a partner of the government and enjoyed an expanded role and influence in society and politics.¹⁷⁸ A section of the military broke away from Marcos and triggered the People Power Revolution, this involvement fed into a sense that it shared a place in the governance of the post-Marcos period.¹⁷⁹ The RAM was the power base of former Defence Minister Enrile and shared his view about the futility of ceasefire talks.¹⁸⁰ A coup d'état plot was discovered in November 1986 involving disenchanted RAM officers and politicians, and military persons loyal to Marcos.¹⁸¹ The response from Aquino to the coup was calm and firm by removing the general involved in the first coup attempt, warning the plotters of the second attempt and pre-empting the third attempt by retiring Enrile.¹⁸² The December 1989 coup attempt was the biggest, best-executed and bloodiest of the six coup attempts since 1986 and came close to succeeding were it was not for US intervention.¹⁸³ According to Timberman, the 1989 coup attempt had several consequences for the Philippines: it severely undermined the image of stability and authority of the Aquino Government, dangerously divided and politicised the military, damaged the Philippines' attractiveness to tourists, investors and bankers, and with the government's response to such problems, it reduced the ability to focus on other important issues.¹⁸⁴ In the aftermath of the 1989 coup attempt, Aquino had her fourth major Cabinet reshuffle, with Congress in January

¹⁷³ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 197.

¹⁷⁴ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 197.

¹⁷⁵ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 236.

¹⁷⁶ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 236.

¹⁷⁷ Kingsbury, *South-East Asia*, 307.

¹⁷⁸ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 237.

¹⁷⁹ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 238.

¹⁸⁰ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 198.

¹⁸¹ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 198.

¹⁸² Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 198.

¹⁸³ Timberman, 'Philippines in 1989', 176.

¹⁸⁴ Timberman, 'Philippines in 1989', 177.

1990 passing legislation to create an official fact-finding commission to investigate the cause of the coup.¹⁸⁵

The state of the Philippine economy was hampered by corruption and cronyism during the Marcos era and the government's severe ballooning foreign debt. In April 1986, the Philippine Government began negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new standby trade facility and performance targets.¹⁸⁶ The last tranche of \$325 million of the new money facility from international commercial bank creditors was made available up to the end of 1986, subject to the finalisation of a standby facility arrangement with the IMF.¹⁸⁷ The IMF Managing Director, Jacques de Larosiere, endorsed the new standby facility to its executive board on 15 September 1986, who granted it on 24 October 1986.¹⁸⁸ In a US state visit, Aquino met with Jacques de Larosiere and World Bank President Barber Conable.¹⁸⁹ They assured their support for the Philippines' effort to restructure its \$3.5 billion in government debts inherited from the previous regime.¹⁹⁰ Then-US President, Ronald Reagan, approved a \$100 million grant under the Economic Support Fund, \$50 million in military assistance and a \$20 million medical package.¹⁹¹

In 1987 the external debt of the government exceeded \$28 billion.¹⁹² In July of that year, the Philippine Government signed an agreement with 438 creditor banks to reschedule \$13.2 billion in commercial loans due between 1987 and 1992.¹⁹³ The foreign debt of the Philippines continued to be a problem. Considering the Philippines in 1988, whose foreign debt totalled \$28.2 billion, Hernandez wrote in 1989:

The high growth rate for 1988 is in danger of decline in 1989 due to the country's foreign debt problem ... the debt service burden could grow heavier in the coming years ... Interest on the foreign debt will average \$2.4 billion a year for the next four years, an amount roughly equivalent to 20% of total exports ... [which is] over half of [the Philippines'] 1989 budget to service its debt.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁵ Timberman, 'Philippines in 1990', 154.

¹⁸⁶ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 201.

¹⁸⁷ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 201.

¹⁸⁸ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 201.

¹⁸⁹ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 201.

¹⁹⁰ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 201.

¹⁹¹ Villegas, 'Philippines in 1986', 201.

¹⁹² Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 235.

¹⁹³ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 235.

¹⁹⁴ Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1988', 160–61.

This forecast by Hernandez was not an optimistic outlook for the Philippines. In 1989 the foreign debt of the Philippines totalled \$28.5 billion, and it paid interest of \$2.4 billion annually, equalling approximately one-third of the Philippines' export earnings.¹⁹⁵ The Aquino Government claimed that the economy would have a 'financial gap' in 1989 and 1990, variously calculated between \$1.4 and \$1.9 billion.¹⁹⁶ The IMF agreed, in principle, to provide \$1.23 billion in new credits together with a three-year economic program, including liberalising imports, accelerating privatisation and reforming the financial sector.¹⁹⁷ The Philippines in the post-Marcos period would still have a long path to building a nation reeling from authoritarianism and the political, economic and social issues that continued to plague it. According to Brillantes in 1993, Aquino:

served as a rallying point in the efforts that successfully overthrew the incredibly corrupt Marcos dictatorship, and restored the structures and processes of democracy ... She did not have the political will to spearhead efforts to dismantle the elite-dominated oligarchic structures ... and bring about a social transformation anchored in state-led efforts to redistribute wealth (i.e., land reform). But these were, understandably, beyond her in terms of both capability and class.¹⁹⁸

The next Ramos Administration would inherit the problems plaguing the Philippines and need to tackle them to continue building the Philippines in the post-authoritarian period.

(b) Fidel Ramos: A Philippines on the Turn?

The 1992 to 1998 period covering the presidential administration of Fidel Ramos saw the Philippines progress on the peace process with various insurgent and rebel groups, liberalisation, privatisation and economic development.¹⁹⁹ The election of Ramos to the presidency at the 1992 elections saw the Philippines' first Protestant president.²⁰⁰ President Aquino had endorsed the

¹⁹⁵ Timberman, 'Philippines in 1989', 174.

¹⁹⁶ Timberman, 'Philippines in 1989', 173.

¹⁹⁷ Timberman, 'Philippines in 1989', 173–74.

¹⁹⁸ Alex B. Brillantes, 'The Philippines in 1992: Ready for Take Off?', *Asian Survey* 33, no. 2 (1993): 225.

¹⁹⁹ Brillantes, 'The Philippines in 1992', 225; Jeffrey Riedinger, 'The Philippines in 1993: Halting Steps toward Liberalization', *Asian Survey* 34, no. 2 (1994); Jeffrey Riedinger, 'The Philippines in 1994: Renewed Growth and Contested Reforms', *Asian Survey* 35, no. 2 (1995); Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Philippines in 1995: Growth Amid Challenges', *Asian Survey* 36, no. 2 (1996); Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Philippines in 1996: A House Finally in Order?', *Asian Survey* 37, no. 2 (1997); Segundo E. Romero, 'The Philippines in 1997: Weathering Political and Economic Turmoil', *Asian Survey* 38, no. 2 (1998); Gabriella R. Montinola, 'The Philippines in 1998: Opportunity Amid Crisis', *Asian Survey* 39, no. 1 (1999).

²⁰⁰ Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, 'The Catholic Church and the Reproductive Health Bill Debate: The Philippine Experience', *Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 6 (2014): 1045.

candidacy of Ramos, who was her former Defence Secretary.²⁰¹ Still, some conservative members and leaders of the Catholic Church had feared a Ramos presidency because he was a key enforcer of martial law in the 1970s, as chief of the Philippine Constabulary.²⁰² Ramos is similar to Aquino because both were non-politicians thrown into the political arena.²⁰³ Aquino and Ramos were also exposed to politics early because they came from political families.²⁰⁴ However, unlike Aquino, Ramos did not belong to an oligarchic family.²⁰⁵

The Ramos Administration seemed to have more success in brokering peace with the rebel military faction that attempted coup d'états during the presidency of Aquino, the communist insurgents and the Islamic secessionist groups. In September 1992, the newly created National Unification Commission led Ramos' peace efforts to unite the various rebel and insurgent groups.²⁰⁶ The first law passed was Republic Act 7636, which, among other things, repealed the 35-year-old anti-subversion law and effectively legalised the CPP.²⁰⁷ In December of 1992, Ramos released 65 detained communist leaders and 68 rebel soldiers.²⁰⁸ Negotiations with the Communists were complicated by a major factional split between the regional committees of Manila Rizal, Visayas and Mindanao, and the faction loyal to CPP founder, Jose Maria Sison.²⁰⁹ The complication of factionalism among the Communists continued in 1994 and 1995.²¹⁰ In October 1994, preliminary negotiations with the NDF held in The Netherlands collapsed at the NDF demands, including a total review of government policies on agrarian reform, repayment of international debt and the expanded value-added tax.²¹¹ In 1995, the strength of the New People's Army (NPA) declined to less than 5,000 armed members compared to its peak of 26,000 in 1985.²¹² In 1997, the Philippine Government unilaterally suspended peace talks held in The Netherlands with the Communists after a series of NDF attacks against military and police installations.²¹³

²⁰¹ Antonio F. Moreno, 'Engaged Citizenship: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in the Post-Authoritarian Philippines', in *Development. Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. Gerard Clarke and Michal Jennings (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 122–23.

²⁰² Moreno, 'Engaged Citizenship', 123.

²⁰³ Wilfrido V. Villacorta, 'The Curse of the Weak State: Leadership Imperatives for the Ramos Government', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 1 (1994): 80.

²⁰⁴ Villacorta, 'The Curse', 80.

²⁰⁵ Villacorta, 'The Curse', 80.

²⁰⁶ Brillantes, 'Philippines in 1992', 226.

²⁰⁷ Brillantes, 'Philippines in 1992', 226.

²⁰⁸ Brillantes, 'Philippines in 1992', 227.

²⁰⁹ Riedinger, 'Philippines in 1993', 140–41.

²¹⁰ Riedinger, 'Philippines in 1994', 211; Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1995', 145.

²¹¹ Riedinger, 'Philippines in 1994', 211.

²¹² Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1995', 146.

²¹³ Romero, 'Philippines in 1997', 199.

There were no ongoing formal negotiations with the military rebels from RAM and the Young Officers Union because these groups were not engaging in military action against the government at that time.²¹⁴ According to Pinches, ‘by the time Ramos came to power, rebellious elements within the military had all but given up their coup plotting, and most soldiers appear to have seen in Ramos—himself a former general, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and Defence Secretary—a figure broadly sympathetic to their interests and experiences’.²¹⁵ In the end, the Ramos Government succeeded in signing a peace agreement with RAM in 1994.²¹⁶

The Ramos Government negotiations were also complicated by factionalism among the Muslim rebels.²¹⁷ In 1994, the 1993 MNLF ceasefire appeared to be holding.²¹⁸ However, a series of hostilities occurred from two breakaway groups, Aby Sanyaf and the Moro Islam Liberation Front, to which the Ramos Government responded with major military offensives.²¹⁹ A second round of talks between the government and the MNLF to be held in Indonesia in May 1994 was cancelled due to a diplomatic rift between Indonesia and the Philippines.²²⁰ In 1996, peace was finally achieved between the MNLF and the Ramos Government with the assistance of Indonesia and the Organisation of Islamic Conference.²²¹ The agreement’s impact with the MNLF made the Moro Islam Liberation Front decide to enter negotiations with the government.²²² The MNLF forces were integrated into the Armed Forces of the Philippines in 1997, and, as Romero noted, ‘the peace agreement with the government is holding’.²²³

The development of the Philippine economy still had to grapple with its huge foreign debt. For example, midway through 1993, the Philippine foreign debt was \$33.348 billion.²²⁴ Following pressure from the World Bank and IMF, the Philippines established *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* in June 1993 as the new central monetary authority, with the liabilities of its predecessor, the Central Bank of the Philippines, to be retired over the next 25 years.²²⁵ Unfortunately, the Philippine foreign debt had increased to \$33.87 billion by October 1993.²²⁶ To improve the state

²¹⁴ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 141.

²¹⁵ Michael Pinches, ‘Elite Democracy, Development and People Power: Contending Ideologies and Changing Practices in Philippine Politics’, *Asian Studies Review* 21, no. 2–3 (1997): 113.

²¹⁶ Romero, ‘Philippines in 1997’, 198.

²¹⁷ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 141.

²¹⁸ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 211.

²¹⁹ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 211.

²²⁰ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 211.

²²¹ Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1996’, 205.

²²² Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1996’, 206.

²²³ Romero, ‘Philippines in 1997’, 198.

²²⁴ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 143.

²²⁵ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 143.

²²⁶ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 212.

of the Philippine economy, Ramos undertook to implement several policies and measures, including an anti-monopoly campaign, economic liberalisation and privatisation. According to Riedinger, ‘economic competition and state neutrality in economic affairs are constrained in the Philippines by predatory behav[our] of the socioeconomic elites, the concentration of wealth, and the oligopolistic and monopolistic natures of the private sector’.²²⁷ An example of Ramos’ policy commitment to liberalisation was the deregulation of the Philippine telecommunications market to challenge PLDT’s monopoly.²²⁸ Ramos mandated interconnection among networks, requiring international gateway operators and cellular telephone companies to offer regular telephone service in urban and rural markets.²²⁹ In May 1994, Republic Act 7721 was passed into law to liberalise the entry and scope of operations of foreign banks.²³⁰ However, due to pressure from domestic banks, the legislation also included a series of conditions for entry, including restricting the number of branches that could open.²³¹ In 1994, the Ramos Administration also managed to sell its share in several companies as part of its privatisation efforts, including Manila Electric Company (Meralco, ₱13.6 billion), Oriental Petroleum and Mining Company (OPMC, ₱1.5 billion), and the Philippine Shipyard and Engineering Corporation (Philseco, ₱2.1 billion).²³² Taxation is a weak area in the Philippines because, as Riedinger notes, taxation revenue is less than 15 per cent of the gross national product (GNP)—low by developing country standards.²³³ The government introduced several new tax measures in 1993; however, few received congressional approval, and several measures were given debilitating amendments.²³⁴ By 1996 the Philippine economy advanced to a GNP growth of 6.8 per cent, which Hernandez stated was ‘only 0.2% less than the magic number 7 that is seen as a symbol of the status of a newly industrialising economy’.²³⁵ Still, the economy did take a hit during the East Asian currency crisis in 1997, which saw the peso drop 44 per cent from ₱26 in July 1997 to ₱40 to the dollar by the end of the year.²³⁶ It is noteworthy that while the Philippines has long been under the IMF’s Extended Fund Facility, by the end of 1997, the country was poised to exit from IMF control at a time when East Asian countries were starting to come under IMF regulation.²³⁷ Montinola concluded that by 1998, Ramos had ‘turned the Philippines, once

²²⁷ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 143.

²²⁸ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 144.

²²⁹ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 144.

²³⁰ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 215.

²³¹ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 215.

²³² Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1994’, 215.

²³³ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 142.

²³⁴ Riedinger, ‘Philippines in 1993’, 142.

²³⁵ Hernandez, ‘Philippines in 1996’, 209.

²³⁶ Romero, ‘Philippines in 1997’, 199.

²³⁷ Romero, ‘Philippines in 1997’, 200.

the “sick man of Asia”, into a “tiger cub” through his liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of key industries ... the business-friendly environment that his policies created restored both domestic and foreign investors’ confidence’.²³⁸

3.6 Scope of the Constructed Framework

Before proceeding to apply the conceptual framework to the case study, it is important to lay out some boundaries of this project’s scope. First, the limitation on the reach of the project’s research question. Recall the research question: ‘*How can the agency of religious actors be understood and situated in IR?*’ This is quite a broad question. Indeed, the chosen phrasing of ‘agency of religious actors’ can confuse the context of this study. This is because the case study does not generally examine actors from different religious traditions. Instead, to maintain control in the research, the project focuses on the CBCP, a Catholic actor. It would be beyond the scope of this study to claim a definitive conclusion about the agency of all religious actors. Then the findings will necessarily come from a specific actor and religious tradition. The point to be expanded upon in relation to the research is that this project intends to contribute to the wider understanding of the agency of religious actors in IR. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the research intends to be embedded in the interplay identified by Dunne et al. of ‘deriv[ing] theory from the real world’ and ‘the real world ... derived from some or other theory’.²³⁹

The second limit is on engagement in the contested definitional debates on the concepts ‘religious’ or ‘religion’. This research project does not intend to engage in the continuing definitional debates in the social sciences because there is no universally valid and generally accepted definition of religion in the social sciences.²⁴⁰ I adopt a self-identified approach to religion for present purposes, as discussed by Omer earlier in this chapter. That is, engaging with ‘self-identified religious actors whose religiosity meaningfully informs their actions on their own terms’.²⁴¹ In the context of the current case study, ideas about the religious can be reduced to Catholicism, given the actor focus.

The third limit relates to the number of layers the multilayered conceptual framework can discuss and engage. The multilayered framework offers the possibility of engaging with and discussing the various layers and their connections. However, it would be beyond the capacity of this

²³⁸ Montinola, ‘Philippines in 1998’, 68.

²³⁹ Dunne, Hansen and Wight, ‘The End of International Relations Theory’, 407.

²⁴⁰ May et al., ‘Religious as Political’, 355.

²⁴¹ Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 132.

research to explore all possible layers and combinations individually. In the interest of maintaining control, I intend in this project to discuss aspects that can be considered key to understanding the CBCP in a particular policy context.

Finally, a fourth limitation is the extent to which the research will engage with the Catholic documents and teachings. A level of engagement with the documents and teaching will be essential to understanding the CBCP. However, this research does not intend to undertake apologetics or make theological conclusions. To that end, I intend to draw and discuss relevant teachings from the Catholic Church that assist in understanding the CBCP or are contained in the documents from the CBCP. Indeed, aspects within Catholic teachings may form the subject of ongoing discussion. In those contexts, I intend to draw insights that may be useful to understanding the CBCP and acknowledge the continuing debates. Therefore, I will apply the framework in the case study with these boundaries in mind.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has in response to the research question constructed a framework from elements adopted from four principal scholars: Wight, Pabst, Omer and Barbato. I intend to construct an approach that is holistic and pragmatic to the needs of the study. This includes considerations about the Philippine case study, the directions in the scholarship on religion within IR and the theoretical plurality in IR. This is not to say that what I have adopted addresses all the possible issues. While the framework will structure and guide the approach to analysing the case study, I am also aware of the context informing the framework of the study. In constructing the framework, I have focused on two components of the research question: the significance of the religious and the conceptualisation of agency. A holistic and instrumental decision was to use analytic eclecticism as a method to combine elements from the approaches of four principal scholars. I have proposed to adopt a framework based on the framework of agency from Wight, the theoretical approach to religion in IR from Pabst, the self-identified approach to religious actors from Omer and appropriating the concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato. These approaches are used to create the framework of the current project to analyse and observe findings in the case study chapters. The first case study chapter follows. It operationalises the constructed framework to the CBCP and agrarian land reform.

Chapter 4: Agrarian Land Reform

*I will not discredit the idea of reform by simply proclaiming it when we do not have the means to make it work. The ultimate aim of the land reform I envision is a country whose people are at peace with themselves, which means a land reform program with justice for all: farmer and landowner.*¹

President Corazon Aquino, 3 March 1987.

4.1 Introduction

The topic of agrarian land reform has had a long and contentious history in the Philippines. As a reminder the research question of this thesis is: *How can the agency of the religious actor be understood and situated in IR?* The aim of this thesis is to answer this question by the constructing the analytical framework. It is the next task in this thesis to test the analytical framework. This chapter then employs the analytical framework constructed above to critically analyse the agency of the CBCP concerning the official statements on agrarian land reform from 1986 to 1998 during the presidential administrations of Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos. From the present research between the two policy contexts, it will emerge that CBCP statements on agrarian land reform seem rare. This is an intriguing absence given the significance of agrarian land reform for the Philippines. As Abellanosa stated, ‘as a moral force, the CBCP has shown different levels and intensities of criticism against the government and is unified and more passionate when it comes to issues that have something to do with human life, sexuality, and the family’.² This chapter will attempt to uncover the various layers of CBCP agency to understand its actions on agrarian land reform.

In the first section, I will briefly explore the policy context of agrarian land reform in the administrations of Aquino and Ramos. This will set the contextual background to discussing the CBCP operationalising the constructed framework discussed in the previous chapter. The second section will apply the eclectic framework to understand the agency of the CBCP. The overlapping interaction of the identified layers in this chapter will show the dynamics involved in the agency of the CBCP. I do not intend to correlate the official statements of the CBCP with any appreciable effect in the policy context to understand agency. The first layer identified as agency₁ is situating the ‘self’ of the CBCP within the broader understanding of episcopal

¹ Corazon Aquino, ‘Speech of President Corazon Aquino on New Perspectives in Land Reform’, Official Gazette, accessed 15 August 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1987/03/03/speech-of-president-corazon-aquino-on-new-perspectives-in-land-reform>.

² Rhoderick John S. Abellanosa, ‘Discursive Detours and Weak Gatekeeping: The Deficit of the Philippine Bishops’ Church of the Poor Discourse’, *Political Theology* 16, no. 3 (2015): 239.

conferences in the Catholic Church. I will argue that while the Bishops' Conference has national significance, it does not form part of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The CBCP is instead an institution within the Catholic Church with the purpose and function to further the evangelising mission and pastoral responsibility of the Church. This layer then interacts with and is shaped by the layers examined in agency². First, the CBCP statements on agrarian land reform represent the application and continuity with Catholic social teaching tradition. Second, bearing its Catholicity, the CBCP also embeds itself in a conception of and participation in a 'really existing' natural order. Third, I will discuss that the PCP II was an important transitioning moment for the CBCP and the Philippine Catholic Church as a whole. It set the stage for the vision of the Philippine Catholic Church for itself in the new political time. I will argue that the place of agrarian land reform is brought under the broader categories of concern for the rural poor. Finally, fourth, the CBCP would have at least been indirectly influenced by the concerns of liberation theology in the global Catholic community and the Philippines. I will situate this within the historical problem of the communist insurgency in the Philippines. Finally, I examine in agency³ the magisterial authority of the position of bishop and the practice of issuing pastoral letters. I will infer potential reasons for the practice and position of the CBCP from preceding dynamics of agency¹ and agency².

4.2 Agrarian Land Reform in the Philippines 1986–1998

Establishing effective agrarian land reform program was not only an election promise but also an important feature to establish equity and peace in the post-Marcos Philippines. Enacting agrarian land reform mandated by the new Constitution would prove more difficult. This period saw competing bills from the Senate and House of Representatives, politicians with self-interests in preventing radical land reform or reform at all, watered-down legislation and the slow implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Land Reform Law (CARL). This section does not intend to evaluate the appropriateness of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) or evaluate the specific details of CARP concerning other reform proposals. Nor is it intended as a historically detailed overview of all the events occurring between 1986 and 1998 on agrarian land reform. I intend to only give an overview of the political landscape in the Philippines as a foundation to understand the policy context within which we will examine the agency of the CBCP. This section of the chapter will then follow with a section analysing and delving into the layers of CBCP agency.

4.2.1 Aquino and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program

The need for agrarian land reform is one of the most urgent policy areas in the Philippines and one of the most controversial areas of policy. Successive attempts have been made to implement agrarian land reform in the Philippines, but they have still failed to adequately address the skewed land ownership patterns. The 1986 People Power Revolution provided renewed hope at the prospect of achieving a program of effective agrarian land reform. Instituting agrarian reform in the Philippines was, according to Aquino, ‘one of the most important pledges of the campaign’.³ The progress to establishing the CARP would not be an easy task.

The CARP establishment emerged out of the debates from three different forums, namely, the Constitutional Commission, Cabinet and Congress. The Constitutional Commission was the first significant consideration of agrarian land reform under the Aquino Government.⁴ Once the Constitutional Commission began its deliberations, Aquino adopted a hands-off policy and refused to use it to push through a specific economic, political or social agenda.⁵ According to Riedinger, this silence and that of Aquino at other critical junctures raised serious questions about the depth of Aquino’s commitment to agrarian land reform.⁶ Pursuant to Article III, section 21 of the resulting Constitution, ‘the State shall promote comprehensive rural development and agrarian reform’.⁷ This seems to be a broad statement on the functions of the state concerning agrarian land reform. This constitutional provision is qualified in Article XIII of the Constitution, with ‘comprehensive’ agrarian reform subject to limitations such as the ‘priorities and reasonable retention limits as Congress may prescribe’, ‘the payment of just compensation’.⁸ In determining retention limits, ‘the State shall respect the right of small landowners’.⁹ However, these limitations are not defined in the Constitution and remain to be defined by either the Executive or Legislature.

³ Corazon Aquino, ‘Speech of President Corazon Aquino on her 1,000 Days of Presidency’, Official Gazette, accessed 16 July 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1988/11/21/speech-of-president-corazon-aquino-on-her-1000-days-of-presidency>.

⁴ Jeffrey Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform in the Philippines: Democratic Transitions and Redistributive Reform* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 126.

⁵ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 114.

⁶ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 126.

⁷ Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987 art. III, § 21.

⁸ Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987 art. XIII, § 4.

⁹ Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987 art. XIII, § 4.

According to Richter, the Constitution was not a ‘radical document’, but ‘once ratified, [was] a foundation on which land reform policies could be continued and expanded’.¹⁰ In a sense, this is true: while it may provide a state policy to enact a comprehensive agrarian land reform, it is not entirely new, nor do the provisions of the Constitution make sweeping detailed interventions into land tenure patterns in the Philippines. In comparison, consider Article XIV of the 1973 Constitution. It provided that ‘the State shall formulate and implement an agrarian reform program aimed at emancipating the tenant’.¹¹ There is a clear difference in the wording between the 1973 and 1987 versions, especially with the addition of ‘comprehensive’ as a descriptive requirement of agrarian land reform. The resulting ‘comprehensive’ description emerged out of a divided Constitutional Commission. The Constitutional Commission was divided on the precise scope of ascribing agrarian land reform in the Constitution. For example, an early draft of Article XIII section 4 reflected Commissioner Jamie Tadeo’s input, who can be characterised as a tenant and farmworker sector representative by originally providing ‘*genuine* agrarian reform founded on the *basic* right of farmers’.¹² For Commissioner Teodoro Bacani, a Catholic bishop, the phrase ‘basic right’ implied an ‘unqualified and plenary right’ of landless tillers to receive the specific parcel they then cultivated.¹³ Including and excluding the words ‘genuine’ and ‘basic right’ would have significant legal implications. According to Reidinger, had the phrase ‘genuine agrarian reform’ and interpreted according to the proposal of Commissioner Tadeo been retained, the Constitution would have mandated a program of radical redistribution unparalleled in Philippine history or that of other democratic polities. In the end, the Constitutional Commission decided landless agriculturalists were to have a preferential right to the land they were then cultivating but refused to make that right absolute.¹⁴

Aquino was empowered under the new Constitution to ‘continue to exercise legislative powers until the first Congress is convened’.¹⁵ There remained the possibility and hope that Aquino could establish agrarian land reform by decree under her executive powers without Congress enacting such reforms. However, this would not necessarily be the case. It would not be until after the Mendiola Massacre, where rallies marching to Malacañang ended with the police and military forces opening fire on the demonstrators, causing at least 13 farmers to be killed and

¹⁰ Linda K. Richter, ‘Changing Directions in Philippine Policy Formation and Implementation: Land Reform and Tourism Development Under Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos’, *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1995): 42.

¹¹ Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987 art. XIV, § 12.

¹² Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 144.

¹³ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 144.

¹⁴ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 144.

¹⁵ Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987 art. XVIII, § 6.

more than 90 others wounded, that a reform decree from Aquino would be made.¹⁶ Despite the pro-reform rhetoric, Aquino's Cabinet was divided on the issue, and there was some opposition. For example, Jamie Ongpin, Secretary to the Department of Finance, urged the reform program to be subject to serious cost-cutting and its beneficiaries made to understand that the land and accompanying financial support were not an 'unconditional gift'.¹⁷ Ongpin also argued that it might be 'impractical to break up some large estates'.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Trade and Industry Secretary, Jose Concepcion Jr, warned against a seven-hectare retention limit as discouraging foreign and domestic investment.¹⁹ Further, Justice Secretary, Sedfrey Ordonez, argued that the Constitution precluded the Executive from setting retention limits or determining just compensation by decree.²⁰ After the Mendiola Massacre, most of Aquino's Cabinet members agreed she should not wait for Congress to save the administration's political reputation.²¹ According to Magadia, the Cabinet was divided into two groups: first, those who wanted a presidential legislative initiative to set reform direction in a generic way, and second, those who insisted on a truly comprehensive and effective Executive Order going into substantial areas, such as coverage, timing and other details of implementation.²² Aquino would issue Executive Order 229 on 22 July 1987, five days before the reopening of Congress.²³ The Executive Order instituted the CARP and the mechanisms for the program.²⁴ However, the new decree left the new Congress to determine the most important and controversial issues, such as the implementation priorities and retention limits.²⁵

Several scholars note and critique the timing of Aquino's Executive Order that established CARP. According to Magadia, a conservative position won out in both the Constitutional Commission and Cabinet because the best that resulted from these two forums were general statements of principles.²⁶ Although Magadia admitted these principles were important and critical, he further argued that both bodies, particularly Aquino herself and her Cabinet, could

¹⁶ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 148.

¹⁷ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 149.

¹⁸ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 149.

¹⁹ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 149.

²⁰ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 149.

²¹ Jose Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics: Policy Making in a Restored Democracy* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003), 64.

²² Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 64.

²³ Corazon Aquino, 'Executive Order No. 229, s. 1987', Official Gazette, accessed 17 July 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1987/07/22/executive-order-no-229-s-1987>; Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 44.

²⁴ Aquino, 'Executive Order No. 229'.

²⁵ Aquino, 'Executive Order No. 229'; Hernandez, 'Philippines in 1987', 235.

²⁶ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 44.

have legitimately instituted a more radical reform.²⁷ Instead, they ‘abdicated their prerogatives to the legislature’, who ‘had complete authority to enact a new comprehensive law’.²⁸ Magadia characterised this as essentially ‘pay[ing] lip service to reform and to a major extent merely restat[ing] the general provisions already provided by the Constitution’.²⁹ Richter agreed that the critics may be correct that had Aquino insisted on sweeping reform early in her administration, then she could have prevailed because no president ever assumed power with the personal mandate for change.³⁰ However, Richter also agreed despite the missed opportunity that Aquino ‘may have done the right thing’ by focusing on political stability, restoring democracy and political institutions and carefully protecting her enormous credibility and integrity.³¹ Riedinger has described the events as appearing to be a ‘minimax’ strategy where the number of reform beneficiaries is maximised while minimising the number of landowners adversely affected by the reform process.³²

The prospects of achieving the radical agrarian reform that peasant activists advocated in Congress were very slim. According to Riedinger, Congress essentially mirrored Cabinet deliberations, where progressive or radical draft reform provisions were successively watered down.³³ At the end of 1987, Congress had multiple drafts of the reform law before the House of Representatives and the Senate.³⁴ By the time the CARP had become CARL or Republic Act No. 6657, exceptions, exemptions and a glacially slow timetable of goals assured most members of Congress no land revolution would occur.³⁵ The CARL was signed into law by Aquino on 10 June 1988 and came into effect on 15 June 1988. Borrás characterised CARP as ‘a public policy that does not fit with the ideal types of revolutionary or conservative agrarian reform policies’.³⁶ While Riedinger lamented that the law held relatively little promise of comprehensive agrarian reform.³⁷ As expected, agrarian reform would be a very contentious issue. However, in relation to the CBCP, only two statements were released. First, *The Fruits of Justice is Peace* on 26 January 1987, and second, the pastoral exhortation, *Thirsting for Justice*, on 14 July 1987. These CBCP statements will be further explored in the third section of the chapter. The Philippines had

²⁷ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 44.

²⁸ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 44.

²⁹ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 44.

³⁰ Richter, ‘Changing Directions’, 42.

³¹ Richter, ‘Changing Directions’, 42.

³² Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 139.

³³ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 150.

³⁴ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 152.

³⁵ Richter, ‘Changing Directions’, 45.

³⁶ Saturnino M. Borrás, ‘Inclusion-Exclusion in Public Policies and Policy Analyses: The Case of Philippine Land Reform, 1972–2002’, *Journal of International Development* 15, no. 8 (2003): 1051.

³⁷ Riedinger, *Agrarian Reform*, 152.

another new agrarian land reform law and program under the Aquino administration; however, now the time had come to implement the reforms.

4.2.2 Ramos Refines CARP

The Ramos Administration faced a public that had lost confidence in the agrarian land reform program. However, Ramos did not abandon CARP; rather, he sought to amend and, in a way, refine CARP. I note no official statements were issued from the CBCP on agrarian land reform during the Ramos Administration. This is an intriguing situation for the current research and will be further explored in the next section of this chapter. The Ramos Administration was ‘resolute ... to pursu[ing] agrarian reform in a fairer and faster manner’.³⁸ Ramos delivered a speech at Malacañang on 10 June 1994, the sixth anniversary of CARP, saying:

Let me be clear, then, my Administration is committed to agrarian reform. This commitment drives its mandate from Republic Act 6657—the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. But it is not enough to have the law on our side. There must be, in addition, the political will to carry out the law. There must be the foresight to pursue the broader framework of socioeconomic reforms that makes the law meaningful and effective.³⁹

Making CARP ‘meaningful and effective’ meant introducing changes to the scope and implementation of the agrarian reform. According to Villacorta, ‘for a military man, Ramos is particularly conscious of political dynamics’.⁴⁰ This insight may have been one factor leading to the amendments made to CARP. Unlike Aquino, who was connected to the well-known landowning Conjuangco family, Ramos did not belong to an oligarchic family.⁴¹ However, as Villacorta notes, both Aquino and Ramos were non-politicians thrown into the political arena but who, nonetheless, were exposed early to politics as they came from political families.⁴² Perhaps Ramos was more astute in his handling of agrarian land reform.

According to Richter, Ramos, unlike Aquino, recognised that broadening agrarian land reform to all corps, albeit with exceptions and exemptions, only compounded the land transfer problem

³⁸ Fidel Ramos, ‘Speech of President Ramos on the Enactment of the Amendment to Section 63 of R.A. 6657 (The CARP Law of 1998)’, *Official Gazette*, accessed 17 July 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1998/02/23/speech-of-president-ramos-on-the-enactment-of-the-amendment-to-section-63-of-r-a-6657-the-carp-law-of-1998>.

³⁹ Fidel Ramos, ‘Speech of President Ramos During the 6th Anniversary of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program’, *Official Gazette*, accessed 17 July 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1994/06/10/speech-of-president-ramos-during-the-6th-anniversary-of-the-comprehensive-agrarian-reform-program/>.

⁴⁰ Villacorta, ‘The Curse’, 84.

⁴¹ Villacorta, ‘The Curse’, 80.

⁴² Villacorta, ‘The Curse’, 80.

because the landlord-dominated Congress would be unlikely to finance such a massive reform.⁴³ On 20 February 1995, Republic Act No. 7881 was enacted to amend Republic Act No 6657 (CARL). The new legislation narrowed the scope and application of CARL. For instance, section 1 amended the definition of agriculture, agricultural enterprise or agricultural activity in section 3(b) of CARL by removing reference to ‘raising of livestock, poultry or fish’.⁴⁴ Further, it increased the exemptions and exclusions in CARL from CARP. Section 2 amended Section 10 of CARL to add prawn farms and fishponds as being exempted from the coverage of CARP.⁴⁵ Therefore, the coverage of CARP became narrower under the Ramos Administration.

The implementation of the objectives of CARP was meant to be achieved within 10 years.⁴⁶ That is, full implementation of CARP was due to be completed in 1998 and coincided with the last year of Ramos’ term of office. Ramos was conscious early in his term as president of the nearing deadline for the CARP. He said:

What is unique about the current program is that it is time bound. We are mandated to complete agrarian reform by 1988. Within the years remaining in the program, we must speed up its implementation. We no longer have the luxury of time. We have only four years to go and still have so much ground to cover.⁴⁷

The objectives of CARP at this time were still to be completed. Republic Act No. 8532 was enacted and amended section 63 of CARL, which provided an additional 10 years to implement CARP (until 2018) and an additional 50 billion pesos to bring the fund for CARP to 100 billion pesos.⁴⁸ Ramos would remark at the signing of Republic Act No. 8532 that:

this law represents the commitment of the legislative and executive branches to social amelioration and economic equity for peasants and small farmers ... At least six million agrarian reform beneficiaries have been waiting for the passage of this law. That long wait is over. Congress, in spite of the handful of doomsayers within its ranks, has once again displayed its reformist spirit, making it possible for the reinforcement of agrarian reform as the main instrument of peasant and farmer advancement by virtue of R.A. 8532.⁴⁹

⁴³ Richter, ‘Changing Directions’, 51.

⁴⁴ Cf. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, Republic Act No. 6657, § 3(b) (1988).

⁴⁵ Cf. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, Republic Act No. 6657, § 10.

⁴⁶ See Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, Republic Act No. 6657, § 63.

⁴⁷ Ramos, ‘6th Anniversary’.

⁴⁸ Act Strengthening Further the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), By Providing Augmentation Fund Therefor, Amending for the Purpose Section 63 of Republic Act No. 6657, Otherwise Known as ‘The Carp Law of 1988’, Republic Act No. 8532, § 1 (1998).

⁴⁹ Ramos, ‘Amendment to Section 63’.

The agrarian land reform program would continue for a much longer period and still had to complete its intended objectives in the Philippines.

4.3 Agency of the CBCP in Agrarian Land Reform

This section will operationalise the framework of analytic eclecticism to analyse the CBCP within the policy context of agrarian land reform. I argue that the level of CBCP engagement, whether implicit or explicit, in agrarian land reform can be better understood through a multilayered understanding of agency. I suggest these indicators shaped the agency of the CBCP: (1) the function and purpose of the episcopal conference define the capacity of its actorness, (2) the CBCP bears the faith and traditions of Catholic social teaching, (3) it is embedded within a conception of a really existing natural order according to its Catholic traditions, (4) the PCP II of the Philippines has not made specific acts or decrees on agrarian land reform but instead dealt with broader categories, (5) debates and tensions on the global Catholic Church from liberation theology would have had an indirect effect on the CBCP, (6) debates on the magisterial authority of episcopal conferences in the global Catholic Church influence the decision to apply Church teaching to new issues, and (7) the frequency of the practice of pastoral letters and statements are influenced by the preceding layers and create a corpus for the CBCP. The discussion of these layers in this section will be organised according to the different levels of agency from Wight's framework as an efficient approach to discussing the agency of the CBCP.

4.3.1 CBCP Statements on Agrarian Land Reform

I have identified only two CBCP statements that explicitly deal with the issue of agrarian land reform: first, the statement *The Fruits of Justice is Peace*, and second, the pastoral exhortation *Thirsting for Justice*. The CBCP issued the first discernible statement on agrarian reform on 26 January 1987: *The Fruits of Justice is Peace*. The release of this statement coincided with the release of the CBCP's statement on the Mendiola Massacre, which was a statement on the violent killing of demonstrators dissatisfied by the lack of agrarian reform action. This statement made seven declarations 'in light of the Gospel values'.⁵⁰ The first declaration provided, 'We believe that to work for peace, we must seek justice by working towards effective land reform'.⁵¹ Further, the CBCP denounced extremists in any political camp, reiterated its condemnation of the Mendiola Massacre, urged rational and sincere dialogue and expressed the CBCP's commitment

⁵⁰ CBCP, 'The Fruit of Justice is Peace', accessed 20 March 2020, <http://cbcponline.net/the-fruit-of-justice-is-peace>.

⁵¹ CBCP, 'Fruit of Justice is Peace'.

to work for transformation through non-violence.⁵² The fifth and sixth declarations in the statement reiterated the Church's condemnation of ideologies of atheistic communism and liberal materialistic capitalism and the inconsistency to support or join organisations or movements that espouse violence to social transformation, promote and intensify class struggle or instrumentalise faith and religious symbols.⁵³ These declarations will be discussed later as having roots within the tradition of Catholic social teaching developed by papal encyclicals, conciliar documents and later episcopal conference statements and letters.

On 14 July 1987, the CBCP issued a pastoral exhortation on agrarian reform called, *Thirsting for Justice*. The pastoral exhortation provided the support of the CBCP for 'as comprehensive a program of agrarian reform as possible'.⁵⁴ However, support was qualified by the need to be realistic because, according to the CBCP, 'no program can be successful if it transcends the capabilities of government to manage and finance'.⁵⁵ This is a qualified support for agrarian land reform from the CBCP based on the proviso that it be 'realistic'. The CBCP approaches the issue of agrarian land reform through the broader issue of poverty, which is examined using principles and themes from Catholic social teaching. For example, connected with the first statement, *The Fruit of Justice is Peace*, the pastoral exhortation links the lack of peace with 'not yet attain[ing] the justice that brings about peace' because poverty and inequity result from injustice.⁵⁶ According to the CBCP, achieving justice is through applying the principles of solidarity as a 'call of God for all ... to form one human family bound by love that does justice', social justice and the preferential option for the poor.⁵⁷ As a pastoral exhortation, it is not a mere restatement or application of Catholic doctrine but a call to action. It calls on those in authority to abide by the principles enunciated in designing the reform program, and it calls upon the landed people to respond to the 'call of the gospel' to share their goods.⁵⁸ The CBCP even stated that it would 'not seek exemption to whatever may be legislated towards a comprehensive agrarian reform program'.⁵⁹

⁵² CBCP, 'Fruit of Justice is Peace'.

⁵³ CBCP, 'Fruit of Justice is Peace'.

⁵⁴ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice: A Pastoral Exhortation on Agrarian Reform', accessed 20 March 2020, <http://cbcponline.net/thirsting-for-justice>.

⁵⁵ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice: A Pastoral Exhortation on Agrarian Reform', accessed 20 March 2020, <http://cbcponline.net/thirsting-for-justice>.

⁵⁶ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

⁵⁷ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

⁵⁸ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

⁵⁹ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

Magadia has characterised the CBCP as taking a moderate position in the agrarian reform debate since it merely spoke of moral imperatives without further elaborating on what is meant by ‘authentic’ agrarian reform.⁶⁰ The classification of the CBCP as ‘moderate’ by Magadia is interesting, and I will explore this further through the layers of agency in the sections to follow. The political debate on agrarian land reform is often characterised as a split between those advocating ‘radical’ or ‘progressive’ reform and those advocating ‘conservative’ reform. The CBCP, who ‘merely spoke of moral imperatives’, would undoubtedly disappoint those wanting more concrete and forceful action. The CBCP seemed to be aware of this when in its pastoral exhortation: ‘this stand of ours will surely create dismay in some quarters who would have us do more than we can’.⁶¹ I will argue that the significance of the principles enunciated by the CBCP in its statement cannot be lost as we consider agency. This will be further elaborated in the following sections as I discuss the layers of agency.

These two statements form the body of CBCP statements explicit on agrarian reform during the Aquino Administration. It essentially forms the whole corpus of CBCP statements on agrarian land reform from 1986 to 1998. Interestingly, there were no further CBCP statements on agrarian land reform during the Ramos Administration. This is particularly so towards the end of the initial implementation period in 1998. The starkness of this situation is highlighted when compared with the CBCP statements in the other case study of this research. The number of CBCP statements on agrarian land reform may be contrasted with the number of statements on family planning policy as outlined in Table 1.⁶²

⁶⁰ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 46–47.

⁶¹ CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’.

⁶² CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’; CBCP, ‘Fruit of Justice is Peace’; CBCP, ‘Love is Life: A Pastoral Letter on the Population Control Activities of the Philippine Government and Planned Parenthood Associations (Short Version for Pulpit use)’, accessed 29 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/love-is-life>; CBCP, ‘Guiding Principles on Population Control’, accessed 29 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/guiding-principles-of-the-catholic-bishops-conference-of-the-philippines-on-population-control>; CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live: A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines on the Family’, accessed 29 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/save-the-family-and-live/>; CBCP, ‘In the Compassion of Jesus: A Pastoral Letter on AIDS’ accessed 29 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/in-the-compassion-of-jesus>; CBCP, ‘Pastoral Statement on the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development’, accessed 29 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/pastoral-statement-on-the-cairo-international-conference-on-population-and-development/>; CBCP, ‘“I Will Make a Suitable Companion for Him” (Gen, 2:18): Pastoral Statement on the Forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing’, accessed 28 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/i-will-make-a-suitable-companion-for-him-gen-218-pastoral-statement-on-the-forthcoming-fourth-world-conference-on-women-in-beijing>.

Table 1

Comparison of CBCP Statements on Agrarian Land Reform and Family Planning

Agrarian land reform	Family planning policy
The Fruits of Justice is Peace (26 January 1987)	Guiding Principles of the CBCP on Population Control (10 July 1990)
Thirsting for Justice (14 July 1987)	'Love is Life', Pastoral Letter on the Population Control Activities of the Philippine Government (7 October 1990)
	In Compassion of Jesus, Pastoral Letter on AIDS (23 January 1993)
	'Save the Family and Live', Pastoral Letter of the CBCP on the Family (13 July 1993)
	Pastoral Statement on the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (19 July 1994)
	Pastoral Statement on the Forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (9 July 1995)

Fruits of Justice indicates that agrarian land reform for the CBCP was important and necessary for achieving 'true and lasting peace'.⁶³ The declaration tells of this, 'to work for peace, we must seek justice by working towards effective land reform'.⁶⁴ If agrarian land reform indeed occupied an important place, then the significantly low number of official statements from the CBCP in Table 1 is confronting and perplexing. This gap can be an opportunity to challenge and inform our understanding of agency of the CBCP.

If adopting a 'how much' type of definition to agency in a qualitative sense, then the lack of CBCP statements on agrarian land reform would lead us to conclude that the CBCP did not have much influence and did not have agency. An examination of agency in this sense is an either/or approach. This definition of agency is not necessarily an accurate conception of what we mean by the word 'agency'. The negative expressions, such as lack of statements, is an opportunity to explore further the concept of agency. A negative or, perhaps, in this case, inaction to issue further official statements can be viewed as an action. It is dubious to equate the lack of formal statements with a lack of agency.

⁶³ CBCP, 'Fruit of Justice is Peace'.

⁶⁴ CBCP, 'Fruit of Justice is Peace'.

This period in the Philippines can be characterised as one of transition. The plurality of this characterisation is deliberate. In the main, the period is known for the transition from the authoritarian Marcos regime to the restoration of democracy under Aquino. However, and relevant for our analysis, this is also a transition period for the CBCP. Robredillo aptly described the period of 1987–1995 in the history of the CBCP as a ‘period of renewal of vision for the Church and society’.⁶⁵ One transition for the CBCP concerns the official political involvement of the local Church in sociopolitical issues. Transitions are fertile periods of contestation, movement and change that allow one to delve deeper into the political dynamics of the actors involved. The understanding of the agency of the CBCP would be informed by the contestations it is situated within. The next sections will draw this out by applying the eclectic framework I have constructed to understand the CBCP. In agency₁, the CBCP as an actor is explored through the function and purpose of episcopal conferences within the Catholic Church. This will define the ability of the CBCP to engage in the social world and the layers to follow in the framework of the study. Then in agency₂ the CBCP, as a bearer of context, especially Catholicism, is informed by (1) Catholic Social Teaching, (2) a really existing natural order, (3) the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, (4) the history of liberation theology and the communist insurgency in the Philippines. Finally, in agency₃, I will examine the role of the bishops who make up the CBCP and query what the authority to the episcopal conference is within the Catholic Church. Then I consider the practice of applying Catholic principles and teaching in the written form of pastoral letters and statements as the culminations of the layers of agency.

4.3.2 Agency 1—‘Self’

The first layer in the multilayered understanding of agency from Wight is agency₁. Agency₁ refers to the idea of the ‘freedom of subjectivity’. Wight argues there is a self that exists and is conceptualised as not automatically determined but constantly negotiating the external forces of construction in the social world.⁶⁶ This conceptualisation by Wight depends on a subject capable of reflecting upon and constantly renegotiating the forces of construction.⁶⁷ Vatican II is an important time in the history of the Catholic Church. It also represents the establishment of episcopal conferences throughout the global Catholic community, and in this way, episcopal conferences are a creation of Vatican II. By situating the core function of episcopal conferences and thus clarifying the position of such conferences within the institutional Church, I consider

⁶⁵ Robredillo, ‘The Challenges of the Times’.

⁶⁶ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

⁶⁷ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

what this means for the CBCP. Following the self-identified approach of Omer, I will first engage with the religious traditions of the CBCP in this regard before considering how the CBCP conceptualises itself. I will argue the CBCP is properly understood as intended to further the evangelising mission and pastoral responsibility of the Church. This is the ‘self’ of the CBCP that will interact with the subsequent layers discussed later.

(a) Function and Purpose of Episcopal Conferences

An episcopal conference as a national institution of the Catholic hierarchy of a nation should not have its place and role misinterpreted by its national character and legal status in Canon Law. Understanding the intended establishment of episcopal conferences would shed insight into our understanding of the agency of the CBCP. For some, the image of a national organisation of bishops may invoke a parallel image of a ‘national government’ of the local Catholic Church exercising authority over the entire Catholic community in the Philippines. This would be misinterpreting the role and position of an episcopal conference concerning the local Catholic Church. The introduction and establishment of Bishops’ Conferences globally have not altered the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. The individual bishops within the Bishops’ Conference still exercise authority and responsibility for their diocese or territory.

An examination of the function and purpose of episcopal conferences must begin with Vatican II. The documents from Vatican II provide a foundational understanding of the wider global establishment of episcopal conferences in the Catholic Church. The Vatican II decree, *Christus Dominus*, concerning the pastoral office of bishops in the Church, was the primary Council document that established episcopal conferences. The decree stated:

From the very first centuries of the Church bishops, as rulers of individual churches, were deeply moved by the communion of fraternal charity and zeal for the universal mission entrusted to the Apostles. And so they pooled their abilities and their wills for the common good and for the welfare of the individual churches. Thus came into being synods, provincial councils and plenary councils in which bishops established for various churches the way to be followed in teaching the truths of faith and ordering ecclesiastical discipline.⁶⁸

The statement is a good starting point for seeing episcopal conferences. The idea of a conference of bishops being part of the life of the Church around the world is not new. Sullivan notes that in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, evermore national episcopates saw the usefulness

⁶⁸ Paul VI, ‘Christus Dominus’.

of the conferences.⁶⁹ Thus, more than 40 episcopal conferences had been established by the beginning of Vatican II.⁷⁰ According to Sullivan, the use of plenary councils since the Council of Trent has been suggested to have declined due to, among other reasons, the necessity of obtaining Rome's permission and the obligation to submit the council's decrees for review by a Roman congregation.⁷¹ He noted that the practice of bishops in a number of European countries, experiencing the need to take common counsel on important issues facing their churches, began to hold annual meetings.⁷² This continued despite the meetings lacking the canonical requirements and legislative power of a plenary council.⁷³ The meetings could be held frequently to allow the bishops of the whole nation to take counsel together as often as issues arose needing a common solution.⁷⁴ As the Vatican II decree states, the bishops could pool 'their abilities and their wills for the common good and for the welfare of the individual churches'.⁷⁵ The decree acknowledged the benefits already-established episcopal conferences have as 'furnish[ing] outstanding proofs of a more fruitful apostolate'.⁷⁶

If a bishop is responsible for the people and the faith in their diocese, why would they be concerned by those beyond their boundaries? This may seem like a nonsensical question to ask. This question can clarify how the episcopal conference provides a 'more fruitful apostolate'. A bishop is entrusted with the care of a particular church (i.e., territory or diocese) under the authority of the Pope 'as their own, ordinary and immediate pastors, performing for them the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing'.⁷⁷ Bishops are constituted as members of the episcopate body and, as the decree states, 'as legitimate successors of the Apostles and members of the episcopal college, bishops should realize that they are bound together and should manifest a concern for all the churches'.⁷⁸ In this sense, bishops are not just locally concerned but globally concerned as well. Episcopal conferences facilitate the ability of bishops to achieve this objective. We can understand the decree's statement in this context: 'in these days especially bishops frequently are unable to fulfil their office effectively and fruitfully unless they develop a common effort involving constant growth in harmony and closeness of ties with other

⁶⁹ Francis A. Sullivan, 'The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences', *Theological Studies* 63, no. 3 (2002): 473.

⁷⁰ Sullivan, 'Teaching Authority', 473.

⁷¹ Sullivan, 'Teaching Authority', 473.

⁷² Sullivan, 'Teaching Authority', 473.

⁷³ Sullivan, 'Teaching Authority', 473.

⁷⁴ Sullivan, 'Teaching Authority', 473.

⁷⁵ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

⁷⁶ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

⁷⁷ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

⁷⁸ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

bishops'.⁷⁹ Episcopal conferences then provide a practical means or aid to furthering the mission of the Church as, in the words of the decree, 'the insights of prudence and experience hav[ing] been shared and views exchanged, there will emerge a holy union of energies in the service of the common good of the churches'.⁸⁰

Taking *Christus Dominus* with another Vatican II decree, *Ad Gentes*, on the mission activity of the Church, episcopal conferences have a particular function to promoting the Catholic faith. The episcopal conference is treated within the decree as a body allowing common coordination of the Church's wider mission. The decree gives episcopal conferences a role in the missionary activity of the Church because the Church is missionary by its very nature, which, according to the decree, comes from the 'mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin'.⁸¹ Bishops as successors of the Apostles' ministry where the 'Holy Spirit [is sent] that both they [i.e., the Apostles and now, the bishops] and the Spirit might be associated in effecting the work of salvation always and everywhere'.⁸² The duty to preach according to the decree is:

to be fulfilled by the order of the bishops, under the successor of Peter [the Pope] and with the prayers and help of the whole Church, is one and the same everywhere and in every condition, even though it may be carried out differently according to circumstances. Hence, the difference recognizable in this, the Church's activity, are not due to the inner nature of the mission itself, but rather to the circumstances in which this mission is exercised.⁸³

While it may be possible to see differences between the CBCP and other national or regional episcopal conferences, the nature of episcopal conferences remains the same. Further, the decree states several responsibilities for the episcopal conference, such as deciding whether to establish the diaconate, the availability of biblical, theological, spiritual and pastoral refresher courses, coordinating the proposal of adaption within their territory with a common plan to their sociocultural area, taking common counsel on weightier and urgent problems and pooling resources to found projects that will serve the good of all.⁸⁴ However, the decree said that 'the Church has no desire at all to intrude itself into the government of the earthly city. It claims no

⁷⁹ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

⁸⁰ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

⁸¹ Second Vatican Council, 'Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church: Ad Gentes', Vatican, accessed 8 April 2020, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

⁸² Second Vatican Council, 'Decree on the Mission Activity'.

⁸³ Second Vatican Council, 'Decree on the Mission Activity'.

⁸⁴ Second Vatican Council, 'Decree on the Mission Activity'.

other authority than that of ministering to men with the help of God, in a spirit of charity and faithful service’.

Paul VI’s *motu proprio*, *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, after Vatican II and issued on 6 August 1966, implemented several Vatican II decrees, including *Christus Dominus* and *Ad Gentes Divinitus*. *Ecclesiae Sanctae* predated many of the norms now contained in the 1983 revised Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church. Paul VI begins *Ecclesiae Sanctae* with the observation that ‘the conclusion of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, demands indeed that new norms be established and that new adjustments be made to meet new relationships introduced by the Council’.⁸⁵ The idea of ‘new relationship’ being introduced does not mean episcopal conferences have become a new official intermediary in the hierarchy between bishops and the Pope.

Ecclesiae Sanctae stipulated that episcopal conferences establish regulations and publish norms for bishops to obtain a suitable distribution of clergy and a commission within the conference to study the needs of the various dioceses, the possibility of giving some of their clergy to other churches and implementing decisions regarding clergy distribution.⁸⁶ Further, episcopal conferences must perform other functions, such as establishing norms for the sustenance of all clerics, assigning a priest or special commission for the spiritual care of migrants and travellers and, if the case warrants it, establishing a special commission to review the diocesan boundaries and drawing up pastoral directories.⁸⁷ *Ecclesiae Sanctae* also included the relationship between episcopal conferences. This includes communicating the principal methods of action in pastoral matters and activities, forwarding the decision of the conference or the acts or documents issued jointly by the bishops, sending information about various undertakings of the apostolate that may be useful in similar circumstances, proposing serious question of very great importance and indicating dangers or error arising in their own country that may creep into other countries.⁸⁸ These functions are not inherently directed towards forming episcopal conferences as a kind of ‘national government’ over the dioceses in a nation or altering the Catholic Church’s hierarchy globally and locally.

⁸⁵ Paul VI, ‘*Ecclesiae Sanctae*’, Vatican, accessed 8 April 2020, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae.html.

⁸⁶ Paul VI, ‘*Ecclesiae Sanctae*’.

⁸⁷ Paul VI, ‘*Ecclesiae Sanctae*’.

⁸⁸ Paul VI, ‘*Ecclesiae Sanctae*’.

(b) Who is the CBCP?

Agency₁ of the CBCP is shaped by the understanding function and purpose of the episcopal conference entity as its *raison d'être*. This forms the boundaries of the CBCP in the case study. Wight relates agency₁ with the idea of the 'freedom of subjectivity'.⁸⁹ On this point, Wight conceptualises a 'self' that is never automatically or deterministically instituted but is in relationship to the world by which it is constructed.⁹⁰ This conceptualisation by Wight depends on a subject capable of reflecting upon and constantly renegotiating the forces of construction.⁹¹ This is similar to O'Neil, Balsiger and Van Deveer, who view that 'agency entails a degree of conscious or unconscious choice, the ability to reflect on the situation at hand, the capacity to use reflexive knowledge to transform situations and to engage in learning as a result'.⁹² The tripartite character of agency that Wight provides for the current framework is based on the human subject as agent. This is grounded Wight's concept of an existing 'self' in agency₁. We encounter in this first layer the first pressure point with the Wight framework of agency and its focus on the human agent. The framework of agency from Wight is focused on the human as the agent.⁹³ In the present study, this would be the individual bishops comprising the CBCP rather than the CBCP collectively as the actor. However, analysing all the individual bishops of the CBCP would be beyond the scope of the current study. If it is possible to extrapolate out from Wight's agency₁, we might talk about the 'self' of the episcopal conference. As an actor, the CBCP is constructed by the ideas from Vatican II that established the episcopal conferences within the Catholic Church. Like other episcopal conferences, I suggest that the CBCP must continually reflect upon and constantly renegotiate their context locally and globally within the social world and in Catholicism. Then, who is the CBCP? The Vatican II documents suggest that the establishment of episcopal conferences as an entity in the Code of Canon Law of the Church had a practical purpose. It is contrary to the idea of creating a new intermediary in the hierarchy of the Church. In the same way the Church is by its very nature missionary then so too is the episcopal conference in aiding to achieve the objective of evangelisation and not to function as a 'national government' of the Philippine Catholic Church. These elements are suggestive of the

⁸⁹ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

⁹⁰ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 130.

⁹¹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 130

⁹² O'Neil, Balsiger and Deveer, 'Actors, Norms and Impact', 158.

⁹³ See, for example, Colin Wight, 'State Agency: Social Action without Human Activity?', *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 269–80.

agency₁ of the CBCP. They will serve as part of the enablements and constraints of the CBCP, leading on to the other layers of agency in the framework.

The Constitution of the CBCP makes explicit that the Bishops' Conference operate 'without prejudice to the power which diocesan Bishops enjoys by divine institution in his own particular Church'.⁹⁴ This is recognition that episcopal conferences do not amend the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the existing structure of the Catholic Church continues. The objectives of the CBCP can be seen to have, among other things, similarities to those specified in documents emerging from Vatican II. These objectives include serving as a forum for the bishops to share experiences, pooling resources, collaborative programs for the common good, formulating general decrees and joint pastoral policies as prescribed by the common law or mandate of the Apostolic See, establishing organisational structures for implementing the joint pastoral policies and programs, helping individual bishops be actively involved in the pastoral thrust of the Universal Church, ensuring suitable upkeep of retired or resigned bishops, fostering ecclesial relations with other episcopal conferences, fostering close communion and solidarity with the Apostolic See and acquiring, owning and operating the means of social communications and other media.⁹⁵ The objective in Article 1 section 2(3) of the Constitution of the CBCP provides, 'to issue doctrinal declaration ... through the conjoint exercise of the authentic teaching office, to which, although they do not have the characteristic of a universal magisterium, the faithful shall adhere with a sense of religious respect', is another layer to understanding agency because it involves a question of authority.⁹⁶ If the episcopal conference does not alter the Catholic Church's hierarchy, what is the authority of episcopal conference statements concerning the local church? In the case of the current research, what is the authority that can be ascribed to CBCP statements? These are questions related to the nature of the magisterial authority of episcopal conferences themselves, which I explore later in relation to agency₃.

4.3.3 Agency 2—CBCP and the Sociocultural System

The next layer in the framework is the idea of agency₂. According to Wight, agency₂ refers to how agency₁ becomes an agent of something. This refers to the sociocultural system and the groups and collectives into which persons are born and develop.⁹⁷ The CBCP, as conceived in agency₁ as an institution oriented towards the mission of the Church to proclaim the good news,

⁹⁴ CBCP, 'Preamble/Constitution', accessed 30 October 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/preamble-constitution/>.

⁹⁵ CBCP, 'Preamble/Constitution'.

⁹⁶ CBCP, 'Preamble/Constitution'.

⁹⁷ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

is defined by its Catholicity and the Philippine context. The category of agency₂ is not static because, according to Wight, the agent can ‘reproduce and/or transform their individual and collective identities as part of maintaining or transforming the socio-cultural structures they inherited at birth’.⁹⁸ Wight argues that ‘the social groups and collectives that one is born into crucially affect the potential of agency₁ to mobilise the resources embedded in the social field’.⁹⁹ That is, agents₂ [i.e., agents being the bearer of their context] are embedded in structures and are always differentially placed’.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, as Wight states, agency₂ ‘plays a crucial role in the development of agency₁, without completely determining it. But equally, it plays an important role in setting the conditions of possibility for the next level of agency, that of agency₃’.¹⁰¹ If we can conceive the CBCP as agent₁ it would be its Catholicity and the Philippine context that would shape its capacity as an actor in this second layer.

How the religious is treated in the analysis is an important question within the discourse on religion in IR. The gap in the Wight framework on agency can potentially treat the religious as secondary to another category or in quite secular and structural terms. Agency₂ may be supplemented by the contribution from Pabst’s metaphysical political realism. Pabst maps a more metaphysical approach where faith and reason are equally placed, and nations and people are linked in corporate associations based on shared principles, goods and ends. As Pabst argued, ‘what is underplayed is the role of religious communities in fostering associative ties across the globe. Transnational links among members of the same faith have created bonds even as they are embedded in local communities and overseas diasporas alike’.¹⁰² This means that the immediate context is not the only source of agency₂. There are links beyond the local, and I argue the CBCP is at a nexus between the local and global Church. According to Pabst, ‘the metaphysical principals and moral intuitions of faith offer conceptual and practical resources to foster mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among different countries and cultures’.¹⁰³ There is not just the temporal social world but a transcendent reality that is real and present, adding to the way agency₂ can be conceptualised.

⁹⁸ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

⁹⁹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

¹⁰⁰ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

¹⁰¹ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

¹⁰² Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

¹⁰³ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

(a) Catholic Social Teaching Tradition and Agrarian Land Reform

The supportive position of the CBCP for agrarian land reform can be understood as a local application of the global Catholic Church's social teaching tradition. By understanding the tradition of Catholic social teaching, can we begin to appreciate how, as Omer says, the religious actor's 'religiosity meaningfully informs their actions on their own terms'.¹⁰⁴ It could be said that the Catholic Church's position on agrarian land reform was already established from the body of teachings known as the social doctrine or, more commonly, Catholic social teaching. Engaging with this teaching tradition in the Catholic Church is important because agency₂ engages with an actor embedded in their identified groups and collectives and social structures. There is a flow of religious tradition from the global Catholic Church to the local Philippine Catholic Church community. The CBCP as an institution, and the bishops who form the CBCP, are shaped by Catholicism. This view would accord with Marin's statement: the 'support of the Philippine Catholic Church for the plea of the rural poor for agrarian reform emanates from the experiences of her personnel in the rural areas, as well as *from the inspiration they have gathered from Catholic social teaching*' (emphasis added).¹⁰⁵ The comparative study by McGoldrick is a useful illustration to open this discussion on Catholic social teaching in agency₂ of the CBCP. McGoldrick's comparative 1998 study on the Catholic social teaching of episcopal conferences globally provides an interesting insight. The summary table used by McGoldrick is replicated in Table 2.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Omer, 'Good Religion', 132.

¹⁰⁵ Gemma Rita R. Marin, 'A Church for Agrarian Reform', in *Becoming a Church of the Poor: Philippine Catholicism After the Second Plenary Council*, ed. Eleanor R. Dionisio (Quezon City, Philippines: John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues, 2011), 43.

¹⁰⁶ Terence McGoldrick, 'Episcopal Conferences Worldwide on Catholic Social Teaching', *Theological Studies* 59, no. 1 (1998): 29.

Table 2

McGoldrick’s Findings of the Six Major Themes of Episcopal Conferences in Each Region and Ranked in Order of Frequency.

Asia	Africa	Europe	Latin America	North America	Oceania
Poverty	Education	Europe	Poverty	Work	Education
Solidarity	Human rights	Solidarity	Property	Family	Government
Dignity of the person	Corruption	Family	Salaries	Human rights	Property
Human rights	Poverty	Human rights	Family	Economic system	Poverty
Economic system	Family	Work	Distribution of wealth	Unemployment	Economic development
Economic development	Economic development	Migrants	Unemployment/employment	State/statism	Family

It is unsurprising to see variation among regional groupings of episcopal conferences. The themes in Table 2 are certainly broad categories, and I would add that this shows the contextual application of Catholic social teaching as a transnational resource. McGoldrick concluded that this comparative study showed a multifaceted picture ‘as different global regions promote this teaching while adjusting it to their own cultural, economic, and political character. But the fundamental questions all address are much the same’.¹⁰⁷ He agrees with the comment from Archbishop Weakland that Catholic social teaching is being developed as it refined through application.¹⁰⁸ I will similarly argue, as a whole, that CBCP is developing the local application of Catholic social teachings to particular social issues in the context of the Philippines.

There are direct links between what is said by the CBCP and the Catholic social teachings. In the pastoral exhortation, *Thirsting for Justice*, the CBCP presents its agreement with the government to undertake agrarian land reform. According to the CBCP, ‘today we are in danger of being torn apart as a nation on a problem that springs precisely from that universal “thirst for justice”’: the problem of agrarian reform—and the government’s desire to meeting it in a truly comprehensive manner’.¹⁰⁹ The CBCP continued by declaring that ‘we are for as comprehensive a program of agrarian reform as possible—one that will make it possible for all, the 70% who

¹⁰⁷ McGoldrick, ‘Episcopal Conferences’, 49.

¹⁰⁸ McGoldrick, ‘Episcopal Conferences’, 50; Rembert G. Weakland, ‘“Economic Justice for All” 10 Years Later’, *America* 176, no. 9 (1997): 8.

¹⁰⁹ CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’.

live below the poverty line especially, to have more in order to be more'.¹¹⁰ A caveat to supporting the 'comprehensive a program of agrarian reform as possible' is that 'genuine agrarian reform must be realistic ... [and not] transcend the capabilities of government to manage and finance'.¹¹¹

The teachings of the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* as a foundational published on 15 May 1891 from Pope Leo XII are considered a foundational document to the Catholic Church's social teaching tradition. In more than 120 years since then, subsequent popes have built on Leo XIII's encyclical with further teaching on capitalism and socialism, wealth and poverty, democracy, authoritarianism and more.¹¹² This papal encyclical has had a profound impact on Catholic life and thought, and John XIII encapsulated this impact when he said:

[Leo XIII's] directives and appeals have established for themselves a position of such high importance that they will never, surely, sink into oblivion ... [Subsequent Popes] In their social and economic teaching they have frequent recourse to the Leonine Encyclical, either to draw inspiration from it and clarify its application, or to find in it a stimulus to Catholic action.¹¹³

This dynamic of continually drawing from the Leonine encyclical and its enduring importance makes it a significant document to revisit considering the CBCP statement on agrarian land reform. I will accordingly primarily focus on the question of private property as presented in *Rerum Novarum*.

The issue of agrarian land reform, among other things, is a governmental policy centred on the accessibility and ownership of property. The positionality of the Catholic Church on this issue is discernible even as far back as *Rerum Novarum*. Leo XIII taught that 'every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own'.¹¹⁴ This right of private property ownership continues despite, according to Leo XIII, the 'fact that God has given the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race'.¹¹⁵ In the context of the encyclical, Leo XII refers to land when discussing this right to private property. The right to private property can be applied in two ways in agrarian land reform: first, as justifying the non-intervention from the state on the continued

¹¹⁰ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

¹¹¹ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

¹¹² Maciej Zieba, *Papal Economics: The Catholic Church on Democratic Capitalism, from Rerum Novarum to Caritas in Veritate* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012), 4.

¹¹³ John XXII, 'Mater et Magistra', Vatican, published 15 May 1961, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html.

¹¹⁴ Leo XXIII, 'Rerum Novarum', Vatican, accessed 6 August 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xxiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

¹¹⁵ Leo XXIII, 'Rerum Novarum'

possession of existing properties of a landlord, or, second, as showing that the beneficiaries of the agrarian land reform have a right to possess land. However, the right to own property is not absolute in Catholic social teaching. Leo XIII further says in *Rerum Novarum* that there are limits to private property ownership.

The right to private property owes duties and responsibilities to others in its use and sharing of the land. In the context of this limitation in Catholic social teaching, we see the support for agrarian land reform. Recall that the pursuit of agrarian land reform aims to address the unequal distribution of land in the Philippines between landlords and farmers. This is intended to facilitate increased development and improve the Philippines' poverty rate. It is a condition that owning private property is geared towards subsistence required for oneself and the family. According to Leo XIII, 'no one is commanded to distribute to others that which is required for his own needs and those of his household; nor even to give away what is reasonably required to keep up becomingly his condition in life'.¹¹⁶ The right of private property ownership is then tempered by this condition because, as Leo XIII wrote, 'when necessity demands has been supplied, and one's standing fairly taken thought for, it becomes a duty to give to the indigent out of what remains over'.¹¹⁷ The large accumulation of land can be said to be contrary to this duty of 'Christian charity'. Then it can be said that agrarian reform aims to redistribute excess property that goes beyond what is needed to support one's life. The CBCP makes a similar point in their pastoral exhortation stating:

We plead with all landed people to respond boldly and generously to the call of the gospel—to share not simply of their superfluous goods but out of their very substance (Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 69). Even superfluous goods must be measured today not so much in relation to one's own status or accustomed way of life but in terms of the needs of others.¹¹⁸

The above CBCP quotation is connected to the duty of Christian charity that Leo XIII spoke of in *Rerum Novarum*. It is also related to the principle that the land be used for one's subsistence and the common good. This call to the landed people in the Philippines is a good example of the connection with Catholic social teaching as espoused in the papal encyclicals.

¹¹⁶ Leo XIII, 'Rerum Novarum'.

¹¹⁷ Leo XIII, 'Rerum Novarum'.

¹¹⁸ CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'.

The position of the Catholic Church and the CBCP on agrarian land reform does not conform to any particular political or ideological camp in the legislative debates. Under ‘special notice’ in *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII noted:

First of all, there is the duty to safeguard private property by legal enactment and protection. Most of all *it is essential, where the passion of greed is so strong, to keep the populace within the line of duty*; for, if all may justly strive to better their condition, neither justice nor the common good allows any individual to seize upon that which belongs to another, or, under *the futile and shallow pretext of equality, to lay violent hands on other people’s possession*.¹¹⁹

The position concerning agrarian land reform within Catholic social teaching is neither the ‘conservative’ policy approach of landed politicians to curb reform nor that of ‘progressive’ politicians who want an expansive reform to redistribute property. The principles in the tradition of Catholic social teaching are perhaps better seen as a middle ground. This characterisation accords with Magadia’s classification of the CBCP as moderate compared to other organisations.¹²⁰ Subsequent popes have drawn from and reasserted the validity of the teachings contained in Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. Successive popes have then further built on the Catholic Church’s social teaching tradition by applying it to new and current social issues. Papal encyclicals, like *Quadragesimo Anno* from Pius XI,¹²¹ *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* from John XXIII,¹²² *Populorum Progressio* from Paul VI,¹²³ and *Laborem Exercens* and *Centesimus Annus* from John Paul II¹²⁴ have continued the Catholic Church’s social teaching tradition from Leo XIII. These papal encyclicals form the doctrinal corpus the CBCP is situated within and engages with as part of its interaction with the issue of agrarian land reform policy. This is important because the CBCP is an institution situated within a particular Catholic tradition. The statements must then proceed from this tradition.

¹¹⁹ Leo XIII, ‘*Rerum Novarum*’.

¹²⁰ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 46.

¹²¹ Pius XI, ‘*Quadragesimo Anno*’, Vatican, accessed 6 August 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

¹²² John XXIII, ‘*Mater et Magistra*’, Vatican, accessed 6 August 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html; John XXIII, ‘*Pacem in Terris*’, Vatican, published 11 April 1963, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

¹²³ Paul VI, ‘*Populorum Progressio*’, Vatican, published 26 March 1967, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

¹²⁴ John Paul II, ‘*Laborem Exercens*’, Vatican, accessed 6 August 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html; John Paul II, ‘*Centesimus Annus*’, Vatican, accessed 6 August, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

(b) More than Just Moral Imperatives—A ‘Really Existing’ Natural Order

The CBCP statements in its Catholicity, I argue, draw from an understanding of an established reciprocal relationship to an existing natural order from God. In the previous section, I discussed the relationship and continuity of the position of the CBCP on agrarian land reform concerning the Catholic Church’s social teaching. These moral principles espoused in the Catholic Church’s social teachings are an influential resource for Catholic actors to respond to social issues. However, they are only one aspect of the significance of this connection. The next step is acknowledging that Catholic actors understand Catholic social teaching as linked to a palpable existence of a social order. This will go beyond the characterisation of the CBCP’s statement by Magadia as ‘merely [speaking] of moral imperatives, without further detailing what it meant by “authentic” agrarian reform’ (emphasis added).¹²⁵ Acknowledging this understanding of an existing natural order can deepen our engagement with agency because the concept of a social order is an important religious component to the source of the Catholic Church’s social teaching tradition.

Engagement with this idea of an existing natural order at the agency₂ level of the Wight framework requires a deeper engagement with religious self-understanding and metaphysical components. Recall that agency₂ is where the agent in agency₁ becomes an agent of the sociocultural system and the groups and collectives into which persons are born and develop.¹²⁶ For this case study, it will be the Catholicity of the CBCP and the local Philippine context. Wight argued that the ‘social groups and collectives that one is born into crucially affect the potential of agency₁ to mobilise the resources embedded in the social field’.¹²⁷ This is because ‘agent₂ [i.e., agents being the bearers of their context] are embedded in structures and are always differentially placed’.¹²⁸ This results in agency₂ ‘play[ing] a crucial role in the development of agency₁ [i.e., a self in negotiation with the forces of construction] without completely determining it’.¹²⁹ The second layer in the adopted framework from Wight on agency does not necessarily exclude the possibility of the world being construed as, using the term from Marty, ‘religio-secular’.¹³⁰ It could be argued that the Wight framework might be applied in a way that misunderstands the religious element or assumes it under a different category. The significance

¹²⁵ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*, 47.

¹²⁶ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

¹²⁷ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

¹²⁸ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

¹²⁹ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

¹³⁰ Martin E. Marty, ‘Our Religion-Secular World’, *Daedalus* 132, no. 3 (2003): 42.

of this natural order layer in the Wight framework of agency will be borne out through, as Omer argued, an engagement with the actor's religious self-understanding of their actions and motivations.¹³¹ As the Wight framework on agency is not part of the discourse on religion in IR, I will supplement its operationalisation in this case study with other scholarly insights. The approach of engaging with the religious traditions of the CBCP following the approach of Omer, I suggest, can be further deepened in the discipline of IR by supplementing our engagement in the agency framework with the theoretical principles offered by Pabst. His metaphysical political realism may provide a useful point to approach and understand this element in the Wight framework, which I discuss later in this section of the chapter. It will be useful to first sketch out some of the Catholic conceptions of the natural order.

The 'natural order' can be defined as a 'really existing community' divinely constructed by God, who is in communion with all in existence as the source of the nature and order of the world. I have appropriated the 'really existing community' term from Elshtain to describe the palpable existence of the natural order. Elshtain stated that '[a] plurality of forms of membership, loyalty and identity are recognised. At times, commitment to a particular community may take precedence. But one is also a member of an international, plural body consisting of trans-national forms of membership'.¹³² This will be further demonstrated by engaging with the arguments from Pabst later in this section.

The conception of a natural order can be seen in the CBCP statements and the papal encyclicals in which the Catholic social teaching tradition was espoused and developed. Consider first the oneness of the Church and God within the dogmatic constitution from Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*. According to Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*:

Until the Lord shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him and death being destroyed, all things are subject to Him, some of His disciples are exiles on earth, some having died are purified, and other are in glory beholding 'clearly God Himself triune and one, as He is'; but *all in various ways and degrees are in communion* in the same charity of God and neighbour and all sing the same hymn of glory to our God. *For all who are in Christ, having His Spirit, form one Church and cleave together in Him.*¹³³ (emphasis added)

The belief is that all exist in communion with God. There is not just the temporal existence but also the concurrent transcendent and sacred world. In IR, this can be seen as the 'religio-secular'

¹³¹ Omer, 'Good Religion', 132.

¹³² Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'Really Existing Communities' (1999) *Review of International Studies* 25, 143.

¹³³ Second Vatican Council, 'Lumen Gentium'.

existence and relationship.¹³⁴ The CBCP pastoral exhortation on agrarian land reform, *Thirsting for Justice*, makes a similar assertion in stating:

*God shared himself with us fully in creation; so we must share his creation with one another. Christ shared himself in becoming man for our redemption; so we must share him with others. The Spirit shares himself in his indwelling in us, so we in turn must share with one another in the spirit of justice and charity.*¹³⁵ (emphasis added)

The above quotation from the pastoral exhortation shows a duty to share from this communion with God. The sacred and divine source that creates this duty to share ‘in the spirit of justice and charity’ is part of the structuring of the world. For example, the pastoral exhortation later stated that the ‘beneficiaries of agrarian reform, motivated by the common good and in the interest of law and order, should not unjustly and forcibly pre-empt claims to lands in question prior to approval of the agrarian reform act’.¹³⁶ This recognises the right in Catholic social teaching to private property ownership. The CBCP then says that doing so would ‘further compound injustices on all sides and forestall immediate implementation of a truly comprehensive and just agrarian reform program’.¹³⁷

The connection with this really existing natural order is further demonstrated in the Catholic Church’s social teaching tradition in the papal encyclicals. For example, in *Pacem in Terris* John XXIII stated:

the order which prevails in human society is wholly incorporeal in nature ... such an order—universal, absolute and immutable in its principles—finds its source in the true, personal and transcendent God. He is the truth, the sovereign good, and as such the deepest source from which human society, if it is properly constituted, creative, and worthy of man’s dignity, draws its genuine vitality.¹³⁸

The structures ordering the world go beyond the temporal and empiric structures usually analysed. As John XXIII stated in the encyclical, the prevailing structures ordering the world are ‘wholly incorporeal in nature’. In other words, the dominant structures in the Catholic view are not temporal or material but transcendent and sacred. In *Populorum Progressio*, Paul VI stated that ‘[w]hen we fight poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering man’s spiritual and moral development’.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Marty, ‘Religio-Secular World’, 42.

¹³⁵ CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’.

¹³⁶ CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’.

¹³⁷ CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’.

¹³⁸ John XXIII, ‘Pacem in Terris’.

¹³⁹ Paul VI, ‘Populorum Progressio’.

He further says that peace ‘is fashioned by efforts directed day after day *toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God*, with a more perfect form of justice among men’ (emphasis added).¹⁴⁰ These statements connect the actions of ‘fight[ing] poverty and oppos[ing] with a sacred quality as leading to ‘spiritual and moral development’ within the ‘ordered universe willed by God’.¹⁴¹ Another good example of drawing from the natural order to guide the social teaching tradition is the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* from John Paul II, published after the CBCP’s pastoral exhortation *Thirsting for Justice*. It states:

What Sacred Scripture teaches us about the prospects of the Kingdom of God is not without consequences for the life of temporal societies ... The Kingdom of God, being *in* the world without being *of* the world, throws light on the order of human society, while the power of grace penetrates that order and gives it life ... In union with all people of good will ... are called to this task of imbuing human realities with the Gospel.¹⁴² (original emphasis)

The global nature of papal encyclicals and the local nature of CBCP statements both draw from this transcendent and universal order and sacred source. I have used the term ‘natural’ not in its empiric sense but rather in the Catholic understanding of the social order within the creation of God as an innate part of the world. The above quotation of ‘being *in* the world without being *of* the world’ (original emphasis) indicates bringing together two worlds: the secular and immanent and the sacred and transcendent. I suggest that the documents reveal this natural order is simultaneously real and present in the social world of the CBCP, echoing a ‘religio-secular’ world.¹⁴³

The implications of a conception and participation in a natural order within the Catholic tradition for IR is understood deeper through the arguments of Pabst. As noted in Chapter 3, Pabst charts out a conceptual map he termed metaphysical political realism to ‘end “the end of metaphysics”’ in IR theory.¹⁴⁴ With this approach developed by Pabst, IR can go deeper into the religious traditions of the CBCP. The epistemological and ontological claims contained in the statements of the CBCP because of the dynamics of agency are a legitimate point of inquiry. Pabst argued that renewed grand theory in IR is hindered by the limitations on reason, the dominance of secular standards that are empirical and normative and the ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments precluding debates about first-order political questions and

¹⁴⁰ Paul VI, ‘*Populorum Progressio*’

¹⁴¹ Paul VI, ‘*Populorum Progressio*’

¹⁴² John Paul II, ‘*Centesimus Annus*’.

¹⁴³ Marty, ‘*Religio-Secular World*’, 42.

¹⁴⁴ Pabst, ‘*Secularism*’, 1009.

possible links between immanent values and transcendent principles.¹⁴⁵ The decline in grand theory in IR, Pabst argued, coincided with the post-metaphysical turn in IR.¹⁴⁶ Pabst argued that ‘heavenly and earthly powers are inextricably intertwined and interact with one another according to certain patterns—in line with the idea that immanent reality bears the trace of its transcendent source and in part reflects the divine warrant’.¹⁴⁷ For Pabst then:

the glue that most of all holds together societies both nationally and internationally is ‘an antecedent common culture’, which is more primary than the rights of individual citizens or sovereign states. Culture so configured rests on a shared ‘cosmic, moral constitution’ that is metaphysical in nature because it links immanent values to their transcendent origins and outlook.¹⁴⁸ (emphasis added)

In observing and analysing phenomena, IR needs to deal with metaphysical ideas accordingly. This linkage could be a valuable bridge between agency and IR discourse on religion. The concept of a natural order is like the concept of ‘an antecedent common culture’ as linking ‘immanent values to their transcendent origins and outlook’. The next premises of Pabst develop this linkage further.

Pabst argues the synthesis of faith and reason can enhance our understanding and theoretical frameworks. I similarly argue such a synthesis of faith and reason can improve our understanding of agency. The negotiation of the existing self with the forces of construction in the social world is developed through the lens of the groups into which one is born and developed and the structures the actor then carries.¹⁴⁹ The relationship between agency₁ and agency₂ may require rationality that links those layers and injects meaning and intentionality in the actor’s resulting actions. If it can be argued rationality is involved, what role does faith play? It would be a misunderstanding to regard the commitment to faith as blind or irrational. Pabst argued reason and faith are ‘mutually corrective and augmenting’.¹⁵⁰ He continued by illustrating this relationship:

Faith can reinforce trust in the human capacity for both reasoning and understanding and also trust in the reasonableness of reality. Likewise, ‘secular’ rationality can help religious belief make sense of its claims and give coherence to its intuitions. Crucially, reason and faith can assist each other’s search for objective principles and norms that govern personal and political action. What binds rationality to belief is the shared

¹⁴⁵ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1010.

¹⁴⁶ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011.

¹⁴⁷ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011

¹⁴⁸ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011–12.

¹⁴⁹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

¹⁵⁰ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1013.

commitment to universal standards of truth beyond mere logical coherence and empirical validity.¹⁵¹

This relatedness of reason and faith for Pabst is ‘not merely a concern for religion but in fact lies at the heart of politics, the economy and society both domestically and globally’.¹⁵² Pabst has secular in inverted commas in the quotation above when he says, ‘“secular” rationality can help religious belief’’. I argue this could be an intentional decision by Pabst because his argument about the synthesis of faith and reason does not necessarily view reason as ‘secular’ or, in other words, equated with empiricism. An empiric understanding of reason rests solely on observable and verifiable phenomena. This accords with a secularist account of reason and faith because it excludes from reason those that are unobservable and unverifiable in a scientific sense. Reason should not be confined to that description. This is the first and only use of the word ‘secular’ by Pabst in relation to reason in his argumentation for metaphysical political realism. Pabst uses a different understanding of reason linked to logical critical thinking, understanding and a commitment to truth. He does not make the same normative and epistemological claim as an empirical understanding of reason. The relationship between faith and reason is the dynamic of the tradition of Catholic social teaching and CBCP statements drawing from the sacred natural order. For example, in *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II said re-reading the teaching of the right to property that ‘the origin of individual property’ and ‘the foundation of the universal destination of the earth’s good’ is ‘the very act of God, who created both the earth and man, and who gave the earth to man so that he might have dominion over it by his work and enjoy its fruits’.¹⁵³ This reasoning is a reference to Genesis in the Bible. In the CBCP’s pastoral exhortation, the conclusion to support agrarian land reform started with the challenge of poverty and inequity has to ‘our faith and move us to solidarity, the call of God for all of us to form one human family bound by love that does justice’.¹⁵⁴

Communion with God in the natural order and solidarity between people is a system not bound by states, geography or status. Pabst argued a ‘corporate’ association of peoples and nations is ‘a plural search for the shared common good and substantive ends that can mediate between the individual and the collective will and thus help bind together members of diverse bodies and polities’.¹⁵⁵ This mode of community is understood in relation to the metaphysical principles and

¹⁵¹ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1013

¹⁵² Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1013

¹⁵³ John Paul II, ‘Centesimus Annus’.

¹⁵⁴ CBCP, ‘Thirsting for Justice’.

¹⁵⁵ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1014.

relatedness of faith and reason that surpass the boundaries of the nation-state system in international relations. According to Pabst:

Values are valuable because they originate from an ‘invaluable’ source and because they are ordered towards an equally ‘invaluable’ end—a transcendent principle that provides an intelligible account of what is valuable and how it ought to be valued, blending the empirical with the normative.¹⁵⁶

The CBCP statement, *The Fruit of Justice is Peace*, which preceded the pastoral exhortation, *Thirsting for Justice*, is another example of the link between agrarian land reform and the ‘invaluable source’ that is the natural order. The CBCP wrote that ‘peace has to be *built on the values of the Kingdom of God, on Gospel values* and on the authentically human values of justice and truth, of freedom and love. It is only on such foundation that we can build genuine and lasting peace’ (emphasis added).¹⁵⁷ The CBCP declared their conviction ‘in light of the Gospel values’ that ‘to work for peace, we must seek justice by working towards effective land reform’.¹⁵⁸ This linkage is consistent with linkages to the natural order found in the CBCP pastoral exhortation and the papal encyclicals. Pabst further argues that religious communities ‘foster associative ties across the globe’.¹⁵⁹ He stated:

Different world religions alert us to the existence of a social order that precedes and underpins the modern system of national states and transnational markets ... Among the ideas and practices that unite societies nationally and internationally, the flow of religions and religious framed cultural customs is what most of all integrates individuals into a global community and nations into a global polity.¹⁶⁰

The natural order conceived in the Catholicity of the CBCP is an ‘existence of a social order that precedes and underpins the modern system’. The Catholic doctrines being applied locally take on that same universal and transnational flavour that Pabst argued concerning a corporate association of peoples and nations. This gives the CBCP and the statements or letters it produces global dimensions and the qualities of bringing the secular and sacral spheres together. The understanding of the CBCP is agency₂ is expanded beyond the immediate context and temporal sphere of engagement.

¹⁵⁶ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1014.

¹⁵⁷ CBCP, ‘The Fruit of Justice is Peace’.

¹⁵⁸ CBCP, ‘The Fruit of Justice is Peace’.

¹⁵⁹ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

¹⁶⁰ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

(c) Second Plenary Council of the Philippines 1991 (PCP II)

The PCP II holds significance in the life of the local Philippine Catholic Church for setting the renewal and direction of the Church. The PCP II was a national assembly of clergy, religious and laity convened in 1991 to set a forward-looking agenda for the renewal of the Church in the Philippines.¹⁶¹ At the outset, it is important to note the distinction between the PCP II and this study's focus on the CBCP. The PCP II is arguably external to the framework of the CBCP. While bishops were involved in the PCP II, it would be inaccurate to necessarily equate PCP II with the CBCP. However, what is important for this study are the acts and decrees of PCP II in shaping the direction, discourse and principles in the wider Philippine Catholic context. This becomes the context in which the CBCP becomes embedded and part of the resources of its social world.

There are important structural differences between a plenary council and an episcopal conference. As Fr Waters states, 'unlike a bishops conference, which is an assembly of bishops, a council is a meeting of churches. A conference is an expression of episcopal collegiality; a council an expression of ecclesial *communio*'.¹⁶² Further, Fr Waters says, 'Council do not just happen. They have to be convoked, planned, prepared and celebrated. Then promulgation and implementation follow. They should be a solemn proclamation of current convictions and future vision, involving the whole Catholic community'.¹⁶³ Consider also the canonical status of plenary councils and episcopal conferences. According to Canon 439, 'a plenary council, that is, one for all the particular churches of the same conference of bishops, is to be celebrated whenever it seems necessary or useful to the conference of bishops, with the approval of the Apostolic See'.¹⁶⁴ In contrast, as noted earlier, Canon 447 states that 'a conference of bishops, a permanent institution, is a group of bishops of some nation or certain territory'.¹⁶⁵ Given that a particular church referred to in Canon 439 means a portion of the people of God known as dioceses or equivalents, then a plenary council is a gathering of churches as opposed to being merely an assembly of bishops.¹⁶⁶ Further, while an episcopal conference is a permanent, mandatory institution with its own statutes, a permanent committee, a secretariat, at least annual meetings,

¹⁶¹ Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, 'Review of *Becoming a Leaven of Society: The Catholic Church and Philippine Politics in the Light of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, by Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas', *Political Theology* 17, no. 1 (2016): 104.

¹⁶² Ian Waters, 'The Plenary Council and Canon Law', *The Australasian Catholic Record* 95, no. 4 (2018): 400.

¹⁶³ Waters, 'Plenary Council', 400–1.

¹⁶⁴ *The Code of Canon Law*, 439, 431.

¹⁶⁵ *The Code of Canon Law*, 447.

¹⁶⁶ Waters, 'Plenary Council', 401.

a plenary council is transitory with a start and finish.¹⁶⁷ Finally, as mentioned in Canon 439, a plenary council can only be convoked with the permission of the Holy See. This is compared to there being no requirement for permission to be sought for an episcopal conference to meet.

From these distinctions between plenary councils and episcopal conferences, what does this mean for this study's examination of agency and the CBCP concerning agrarian land reform? I argue the acts and decrees of the PCP II become an important source of the principles for the Philippine Catholic context. In doing so, it is part of the world the CBCP is embedded within and so, becoming an agent of that context. On 1 August 1988, then-CBCP President, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi OP, sent a letter to Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, seeking the Holy See's permission under Canon 439 to hold PCP II.¹⁶⁸ In the letter, the CBCP noted Vatican II, the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law, the seven Synods of Bishops and two Extraordinary Synods convoked, a significant increase in the number of Archdioceses, dioceses, vicariates and baptised Catholics and the change in the societal condition of the Philippines by a new government brought by a peaceful revolution as the changes seen since the First Plenary Council in 1953.¹⁶⁹ In light of these changes, the letter notes:

These changes, needless to say, bring distinct advantages as well as significant problems that urge the review of and resolve on the proper pastoral orientation that the Church in the Philippines should adopt on the national level for the decade of the 1990's.¹⁷⁰

The aim of PCP II towards the renewal of the Philippine Church by deciding the pastoral orientation and direction of the Church plays into the theme mentioned earlier on the history of the CBCP. That is, Robredillo identified the period of 1987 to 1995 in the history of the CBCP as a 'period of renewal of vision for the Church and Society'.¹⁷¹

According to the conciliar document of the PCP II, 'agrarian reform is still the one big issue that touches our rural poor most directly'.¹⁷² Interestingly the conciliar document stated, 'hard opposition to it on the part of the landed class, Catholics, most of them, is one big reason for its continuing failure'.¹⁷³ As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the CARP and CARL were

¹⁶⁷ Waters, 'Plenary Council', 402.

¹⁶⁸ *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: 20 January - 17 February 1991* (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 1992), XV–XVI.

¹⁶⁹ *Acts and Decrees*, XV–XVI.

¹⁷⁰ *Acts and Decrees*, XVI.

¹⁷¹ Robredillo, 'Challenges of the Times'.

¹⁷² *Acts and Decrees*, 134.

¹⁷³ *Acts and Decrees*, 134

established on 22 July 1987 and 10 June 1988, respectively. Accordingly, the observation made by the PCP II concerning the landed class, especially those who were Catholic, have been ‘one big reason for [agrarian land reform’s] continuing failure’.¹⁷⁴ Also earlier mentioned, the contentious nature of the reforms included multiple versions of CARL. If the opposition from the landed class is a reason for failure and this was known, it may be reasonably questioned, why was a public intervention by the Church, particularly the CBCP, not made? Arguably, answers to this may not be readily available. However, perhaps we may find inferences as we continue to examine the agency of the CBCP. The conciliar document continues:

The problem of what compensation is fair for the lands covered by the Agrarian Reform Program is a hindrance. It must be resolved with equity. If indeed we are serious about all we say about our preferential love for the poor, the beginnings of real reformation in our patterns of use and ownership of land should be easily made; the beginnings too of the solution to the scandalous problem of rural poverty.¹⁷⁵

The pronouncements of PCP II on agrarian land reform within the conciliar document occurred approximately four years after the publication of the CBCP’s statements, *The Fruits of Justice is Peace* and *Thirsting for Justice*. Interestingly, the extent to which PCP II moves to address agrarian land reform in its decrees is not explicit. Under ‘Special Social Concern’, there is no reference to agrarian land reform. Arguably, the nearest possible provision in the PCP II’s decree is Section 5 Article 32 on Rural Poor. This states: ‘The Church should organize service apostolates in favour of farmers, fishermen and Tribal Filipinos, and thus make herself present to the majority of the people in the rural areas’.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps this is more in line with a significant contribution of PCP II of declaring the Philippine Church a ‘Church of the Poor’.

In this context, I want to draw on an interesting statement in the conciliar document of the PCP II, which stated:

There is much that we can do in our social action apostolate, schools, Church organizations, if not in initiating actual development projects for the poor and helping them to organize themselves, at least in working to *create an atmosphere of thinking that will be pro-poor both within and without our Church communities*. Possibly a small endeavour, but it is part of our general task of *injecting the values of the Kingdom into our society*.¹⁷⁷ (emphasis added)

¹⁷⁴ *Acts and Decrees*, 134

¹⁷⁵ *Acts and Decrees*, 134

¹⁷⁶ *Acts and Decrees*, 243.

¹⁷⁷ *Acts and Decrees*, 133–34.

I suggest this draws an interesting parallel to agency₂ in Wight's framework. No doubt, the statement above does not preclude the action through other means if it is creating a pro-poor atmosphere and 'injecting the values of the Kingdom'. However, in terms of the focus of the current study on the culminating CBCP pastoral statements, the themes of PCP II may provide important insight.

(d) Liberation Theology in the Philippines and the Communist Insurgency

The history of liberation theology in the Catholic Church and the continuing communist insurgency in the Philippines may influence engagement with the issue of agrarian land reform. This contextual background can be seen from the declaration of the CBCP in *The Fruits of Justice is Peace*. The CBCP declared as part of the same list that gave support for agrarian land reform stated,

We believe and teach that it is inconsistent with the Gospel values for lay faithful, priests, religious brothers and sisters, seminarians and church workers to support or join *organizations or movements that espouse violence as the road to social transformation, that promote and intensify class struggle, instrumentalize the faith and religious symbols; exploit or manipulate pastoral and religious resources and activities*, and in effect, make deception a value in furthering their objectives. These we believe, are not the way of evangelical truth, justice, and peace.¹⁷⁸ (emphasis added)

This declaration makes it clear that it is 'inconsistent with Gospel values' to join or support movements that advocate violence, promote class struggle and instrumentalise religious resources and symbols. Why is this a relevant declaration for the CBCP to make? And what relevance does it have for the agrarian land reform policy context? The answers lie in intertwining Marxist and Catholic motifs in the Philippines and elsewhere in the global Catholic community. A relevant development before 1986 was the emergence of the movement known as liberation theology in Latin America. It would be reasonable to infer that the CBCP was aware of the development of liberation theology within the global Catholic community and the potential for this movement to influence local Philippine dynamics.

Liberation theology is a radical theology identifying with the early Christian Church and engaged in reconstructing modernisation processes from the vantage point of the poor and those displaced by development.¹⁷⁹ It emerged in Latin America as a response to Vatican II, the papal encyclical

¹⁷⁸ CBCP, 'Fruit of Justice is Peace'.

¹⁷⁹ William Holden and Kathleen Nadeau, 'Philippine Liberation Theology and Social Development in Anthropological Perspective', *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 38, no. 2 (2010): 91.

Populorum Progressio and in a context of a decade after the Cuban revolution.¹⁸⁰ In 1968 the Latin American Episcopal Conference (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*, CELAM) in Medellin, Colombia, boldly stated that the continent's population suffered from 'structural sin' and 'called for the Church to be in solidarity with the poor'.¹⁸¹ CELAM also encouraged the formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities, also known as Basic Christian Communities, as a strategy to combat structural sin.¹⁸² The challenge of liberation theology, according to Aguilar, is that it is not a 'single theopastoral school' but is a movement of pastoral agents challenging the dogmatic theology of the Church vis-à-vis society and political systems.¹⁸³ Aguilar further argued that liberation theology is a diversified and varied part of political theology located itself as a contextual theology.¹⁸⁴

The Vatican has criticised some versions of liberation theology for adopting certain Marxist themes and concepts in articulating its theology of liberation and preferential option for the poor. The then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) as the Catholic Church's Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) published a document on 6 August 1984 called, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'—Libertatis Nuntius*. The CDF said that concepts have been 'uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology and recourse to theses of a biblical hermeneutic marked by rationalism are at the basis of the new interpretation which is corrupting whatever was authentic in the generous initial commitment on behalf of the poor'.¹⁸⁵ According to the CDF, 'liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin ... As a logical consequence, it calls for freedom from many different kinds of slavery in the cultural, economic, social, and political spheres, all of which derive ultimately from sin'.¹⁸⁶ The issue identified by the CDF relates to the interpretative frame applied to theological teachings and scripture. The document did not criticise all aspects of liberation theology, such as focusing on the poor. According to the CDF, 'the present Instruction has a ... limited and precise purpose ... This warning should in no way be interpreted as a disavowal of

¹⁸⁰ Mario I. Aguilar, 'Liberation Theology 2: Developments and Reception', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019), 293.

¹⁸¹ Robert Sean Mackin, 'Liberation Theology: The Radicalization of Social Catholic Movements', *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 13, no. 3 (2012): 333.

¹⁸² Mackin, 'Liberation Theology', 333.

¹⁸³ Aguilar, 'Liberation Theology 2', 294.

¹⁸⁴ Aguilar, 'Liberation Theology 2', 294.

¹⁸⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"', Vatican, accessed 18 July 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html.

¹⁸⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Theology of Liberation'.

all those who want to respond generously and with an authentic evangelical spirit to the “preferential option for the poor”’.¹⁸⁷ Goizueta argued that the document has accused ‘certain’ liberation theologians of reducing salvation to political liberation and politics to Marxist class struggle.¹⁸⁸

The CDF then published a second document on 22 March 1986 called the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation—Libertatis Conscientia*. The intention of this document after *Libertatis Nuntius* was to ‘highlight the main elements of the Christian doctrine on freedom and liberation’. It reaffirmed the doctrinal content of *Libertatis Nuntius* concerning liberation. The CDF based a theology of liberation in the ‘first and fundamental meaning of liberation which thus manifests itself is the salvific one: man is freed from the radical bondage of evil and sin. In this experience of salvation, man discovers the true meaning of his freedom, since liberation is the restoration of freedom’.¹⁸⁹ Then further stating that the ‘salvific dimension of liberation is linked [to] its ethical dimension’.¹⁹⁰ In these two important documents, the Vatican made its position known on the movement of liberation theology and the mixing of Marxist concepts in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Goizueta has now argued that:

if the public visibility of liberation theology has diminished [today], this is, in large part, because the fundamental questions raised by liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez—questions once considered novel and controversial—are today unavoidable in any theological conversation that demands to be taken seriously by either the churches or the academy.¹⁹¹

Liberation theology has not been rejected in its entirety. Rather, it is the content of Marxist influences from some liberation theologians. Some of these questions, like the preferential option for the poor, are even observed in the documents and decrees of PCP II. The formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities was a pastoral priority emerging from the decrees and conciliar document of PCP II.

¹⁸⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Theology of Liberation’.

¹⁸⁸ Roberto S. Goizueta, ‘Liberation Theology I: Gustavo Gutiérrez’, in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019), 290.

¹⁸⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation’, Vatican, accessed 30 September 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html.

¹⁹⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ‘Christian Freedom and Liberation’.

¹⁹¹ Goizueta, ‘Liberation Theology I’, 291.

The Philippines has experienced its own intertwining of liberation theology influence, known there as a theology of struggle, and communist groups. In *The Fruits of Justice is Peace*, the CBCP stated in its sixth declaration that ‘priests, religious brothers and sisters, seminarians and church workers, involved in such activities are urged to refrain from leadership roles which identify them with the Church’.¹⁹² The CBCP further continued by stating that it ‘reiterate[s] the condemnation, already made by the Church on previous occasions, of ideologies that profess either atheistic communism or liberal (materialistic) capitalism’.¹⁹³ This is seen, for example, in the papal encyclicals mentioned earlier in this chapter.¹⁹⁴ This declaration goes further than the previous declaration by indicating participation in the leadership of such groups and not just joining or supporting these groups. It also reiterates the Catholic Church’s position that there is an inconsistency with ‘atheistic communism’ and ‘liberal (materialistic) capitalism’. This can be seen as a middle of the road position between two opposing ideologies. The context of the Philippines will provide further insight into the relevance of this declaration.

In the post-Marcos period, the governments of Aquino and Ramos were still dealing with several insurgent groups, including the communist movements. The lands owned by members of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, such as the Spanish friars of the various religious orders, have been historically sites of peasant unrest.¹⁹⁵ The Catholic Church, in this view, also acts as a landowner in the agrarian land reform debate and not just as a religious institution in its ‘multilayered actorness’, as Barbato would characterise.¹⁹⁶ According to Barry, ‘The Church, for its part, was frightened of what peasant unrest indicated and much of its attention to what it called “the social question” was intended to thwart communist influence’.¹⁹⁷ Bolasco argued in 1986 that the criticisms of the Catholic Church directed at the Marcos regime in defence of human life faced the problem that ‘it has been at the same time providing oblique legitimation to a leftist-led revolution’.¹⁹⁸ There would be a comparatively similar dilemma in supporting agrarian land reform between opposing political positions of those with a vested interest in land ownership

¹⁹² CBCP, ‘Fruit of Justice is Peace’.

¹⁹³ CBCP, ‘Fruit of Justice is Peace’.

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, Leo XXIII, ‘Rerum Novarum’; Pius XI, ‘Quadragesimo Anno’; John XXIII, ‘Mater et Magistra’; Paul VI, ‘Populorum Progressio’; John Paul II, ‘Laborem Exercens’; John Paul II, ‘Centesimus Annus’.

¹⁹⁵ Michael J. Connolly, *Church Lands and Peasant Unrest in the Philippines: Agrarian CONflict in 20th Century Luzon* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1992).

¹⁹⁶ Barbato, ‘Multi-layered Actorness’.

¹⁹⁷ Coeli M. Barry, ‘The Limits of Conservative Church Reformism in the Democratic Philippines’, in *Religious Organizations and Democratization: Case Studies from Contemporary Asia*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng and Deborah A. Brown (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 168.

¹⁹⁸ Mario Bolasco, ‘The Church and National Liberation’, *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 2, no. 1 (1986): 5.

and those advocating a sweeping redistribution of property. As Parlade notes, the agrarian land reform was a primary cause for the communist insurgency in the Philippines.¹⁹⁹ Priests and religious sisters became radicalised by the Marcos regime's impact on the poor.²⁰⁰ The CPP recruited them to form the underground group, Christians for National Liberation, that utilised Church 'social action' programs to generate funds.²⁰¹ According to Harris, throughout the martial law years, Church people, especially those directly associated with the Christians for National Liberation, maintained a dual persona working with legal organisations while also participating in underground activities that brought them under the leadership of the CPP.²⁰² Liberation theology and a more social activist role undertaken by the Church, according to Parlade, pushed some priests to join the NPA and even become NPA commanders.²⁰³ The hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the Philippines was appalled by this radical infiltration because, according to Abinales and Amoroso, the bishops 'could do little about it' since 'to attack its own rank and file for following the official Church position on human rights and social justice would open the hierarchy to charges of supporting the dictatorship'.²⁰⁴ By the early 1980s, there was an all-out split between the bishops and the more radicalised church workers, priests and religious sisters.²⁰⁵

Barry argued the end of the Marcos era did not reflect the long history of opposition by other groups in the Philippines, inside and outside the Church, as it was conservative reformism that rose to prominence.²⁰⁶ According to Barry, conservatism reformism in the Philippine Catholic Church is characterised by two features.²⁰⁷ First, 'the endorsement of elections and constitutionalism and the support of elite democracy', and second, 'premised on the idea that the church has a role to play as moral guardian of the nation and that this role extends from the cultural and social spheres to the realm of formal politics'.²⁰⁸ There was still some growth in the realm of liberation theology in the Philippines. According to Harris, 'in the context of the theology of struggle, the post-Marcos era is also remembered as a time when significant and enduring written works were produced. This written component sent a message nationally and

¹⁹⁹ Antonio G. Parlade, *An Analysis of the Communist Insurgency in the Philippines* (n.p: Hauraki Publishing, 2015), 42.

²⁰⁰ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 220.

²⁰¹ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 220.

²⁰² Anne Harris, 'The Theology of Stuggle: Recognizing its Place in Recent Philippine History', *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 21, no. 2 (2006): 90–93.

²⁰³ Parlade, *Communist Insurgency*, 42.

²⁰⁴ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 220.

²⁰⁵ Barry, 'Conservative Church Reformism', 166.

²⁰⁶ Barry, 'Conservative Church Reformism', 158.

²⁰⁷ Barry, 'Conservative Church Reformism', 158–59.

²⁰⁸ Barry, 'Conservative Church Reformism', 158–59.

internationally that there was a movement in the Philippines linking ecumenical Christianity and revolutionary struggle in a unique manner'. However, a deeper dive than the current cursory dip into liberation theology and the participation of Catholics in communist groups would be beyond the scope of the current study. The contextual dilemmas facing the bishops from liberation theology globally and the local implications inform the actions of the CBCP. Therefore, understanding the CBCP can be further gained from acknowledging the contextual factors of the liberation theology movement and the support and participation of members of the Catholic Church in communist groups.

4.3.4 Agency 3—The Position and Practice of the CBCP in Agrarian Land Reform

According to Wight, agency₃ refers to the 'positioned-practice-places' that agents₁ inhabit on behalf of agents₂.²⁰⁹ Put simply, agency₃ refers to those 'roles' that agents₁ play for agency₂.²¹⁰ Wight further explains that the "positioned-practices" are structural properties that persist irrespective of the agents that occupy them and as such cannot be reduced to the properties of the agents₁ that occupy them, but these "positions-practice-places", when occupied by agents₁, enable and constrain them according to the specific modalities of the "position-practice-place".²¹¹ In this section, I will explore two areas in this third layer of the framework. First, I examine the position of bishop and the questions and debates surrounding the authority of the episcopal conference concerning the magisterium to pronounce authentic Catholic teaching. Second, the practice of issuing pastoral statements and letters by the CBCP and how is it affected by the previously discussed agency layers in this chapter.

(a) Magisterial Authority, Episcopal Conferences and the CBCP

The official engagement of the CBCP on the issue of agrarian land reform can be informed by interrogating the status of the episcopal conference concerning the magisterium. Since Vatican II, there has been debate on the magisterial or teaching authority of episcopal conferences. Indeed, a relevant question for the present project is what should be ascribed to episcopal conference statements? These questions raise the need to consider the concept of the magisterium in the Catholic Church and, perhaps, an even broader question could be asked: who speaks for the Catholic Church? However, it would be beyond the scope of this present project to undertake a detailed review of the literature on the magisterium and episcopal conferences. It is also not

²⁰⁹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

²¹⁰ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

²¹¹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133-34.

the intention of this project to enter theological debates on the magisterium and episcopal conference. Although, for present purposes, some points may be noted from the literature.

The teaching authority of the Church is invested in what is known as the magisterium, which is ‘the teaching authority of the college of bishops under the headship of the Bishop of Rome [i.e., the Pope]’.²¹² The office of bishop is responsible for three areas: teaching, sanctifying and governing.²¹³ Again, it is worth noting the point from the previous section on agency₁ that the creation of episcopal conferences did not alter the jurisdictional arrangement in the Catholic Church. Accordingly, despite what may emerge from the CBCP, the individual bishop is ultimately responsible for deciding within his diocese. Nonetheless, as a grouping of bishops and given the national significance often attached to a Bishops’ Conference, questions on the teaching authority of these conferences arise. Indeed, it is a continuing debate and encompasses questions about subordinate bodies’ authority within a conference, such as permanent commissions and episcopal commissions.²¹⁴

Sullivan notes that ‘Vatican II has described an episcopal conference as “an assembly in which the bishops of some nation or region discharge their pastoral office in collaboration”. Since the *munus pastorale* conferred on bishops at their ordination obviously includes the office of teaching the faith, it is not surprising that after Vatican II episcopal conferences saw it as within their competence to issue pastoral letters in which they were exercising their pastoral teaching office in common’.²¹⁵ This controversy over the authority of episcopal conferences came when in 1983, the US National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), now known as the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, published a draft of a pastoral letter on the position on the moral issues involved in the maintaining of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against their use.²¹⁶ Some European episcopal conferences reacted to this, including some critical of the position taken by the NCCB.²¹⁷ The Holy See summoned representatives of the NCCB and the episcopal conferences of six European nations to an ‘informal consultation’ at the Vatican chaired by the then-known Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the CDF.²¹⁸ Ratzinger later remarked in an interview

²¹² Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? Foundation for Understanding Authority in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018), 83.

²¹³ Second Vatican Council, ‘Lumen Gentium’. [21]

²¹⁴ See, for example, Julio Manzanares, ‘The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences’, *The Jurist* 48 (1988): 234–63; cf. Peter C. Phan, ‘From Magisterium to Magisteria: Recent Theologies of the Learning and Teaching Functions of the Church’, *Theological Studies* 80, no. 2 (2019): 393–413.

²¹⁵ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 475.

²¹⁶ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 475.

²¹⁷ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 475.

²¹⁸ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 475.

with journalist Vittorio Messori a few months before the gathering of the presidents of all episcopal conferences in Rome for the Extraordinary Synod with Pope John Paul II: ‘We must not forget that the episcopal conferences have no theological basis, they do not belong to the structure of the Church, as willed by Christ, that cannot be eliminated; they have only a practical, concrete function’.²¹⁹ Ratzinger further said, ‘no episcopal conference, as such, has a teaching mission; its documents have no weight of their own save that of the consent given to them by the individual bishops’.²²⁰ The 1985 Extraordinary Synod produced a final report, stating:

Because the Episcopal Conferences can be so helpful, indeed necessary, in the Church’s pastoral work nowadays, we look for a study of their theological status, so that the question of their doctrinal authority in particular may be the more deeply and clearly unfolded, having in mind the provisions of the Council’s Decree *Christus Dominus* n. 38 and canons 447 and 753 of the Code of canon law.²²¹

According to Canon 753 of the *Code of Canon Law*:

Although the bishops who are in communion with the head and members of the college, whether individually or joined together in conferences of bishops or in particular councils, do not possess infallibility in teaching, they are authentic teachers and instructors of the faith for the Christian faithful entrusted to their care; the Christian faithful are bound to adhere with religious submission of mind to the authentic magisterium of their bishops.²²²

For instance, Canon 753, referred to by the Extraordinary Synod, states that bishops together in episcopal conferences do not possess infallibility in teaching. Rather, they are ‘authentic teachers’ of the faith, and the faithful ‘are bound to adhere with religious submission’. On 3–8 January 1988, the most thorough study of the authority of the episcopal conference was completed at an international and interdisciplinary colloquium known as the Salamanca Colloquium.²²³ Among the groups in the colloquium, a convergence was reached that episcopal conferences do exercise the teaching authority of the magisterium.²²⁴ The views expressed by the colloquium are different to the view later expressed in the working paper, *Theological and Juridical Status of Episcopal Conferences* from the Vatican.²²⁵

²¹⁹ Joseph Ratzinger and Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 59; Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 477.

²²⁰ Ratzinger and Messori, *Ratzinger Report*, 60.

²²¹ *Documents of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops: November 28 - December 8, 1985*, trans. J. Muirhead (Hombush, New South Wales: St Paul Publications, 1986), 43.

²²² *The Code of Canon Law*, 735.

²²³ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 479.

²²⁴ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 479.

²²⁵ Sullivan, ‘Teaching Authority’, 481–82.

On one level, it would seem that the issue of the authority of episcopal conferences was settled. For completeness, it would be important to note the *motu proprio* from Pope John Paul II, an apostolic letter *Apostolos Suos*, issued on 21 May 1998. This seems to have settled some issues on the authority of episcopal conferences. Article 1 of *Apostolos Suos* establishes two conditions:

In order that the doctrinal declaration of the Conference of Bishops ... may constitute authentic magisterium and be published in the name of the Conference itself, they must be unanimously approved by the bishops who are members, or receive the *recognition* of the Apostolic See if approved in plenary assembly by at least two thirds of the Bishops belonging to the Conference and having a deliberative vote.²²⁶

Further, Article 2 states that ‘No body of the Episcopal Conference, outside of the plenary assembly, has the power to carry out acts or authentic magisterium. The Episcopal Conference cannot grant such power to its Commissions or other bodies set up by it’.²²⁷ Further, Article 3 provides that ‘For statements of a different kind, different from those mentioned in article 2, the Doctrinal Commission of the Conference of Bishops must be authorized explicitly by the Permanent Council of the Conference’.²²⁸ Interestingly, the *motu proprio* from Pope John Paul II comes for the present study at the end of the period being explored.

So, what does this all mean for understanding the CBCP? Agency₃, according to Wight, refers to those ‘positioned-practice-places’ that agents₁ inhabit on behalf of agents₂.²²⁹ In other words, this level of agency refers to the ‘roles’ that agents₁ play for agency₂.²³⁰ In being distinct, the ‘positioned-practices’ are structural properties that persist irrespective of the agents that occupy them.²³¹ For instance, before the People Power Revolution in 1986, in his 1982 analysis of the CBCP, Youngblood identified two models: (1) *distinction of planes*, which refers to those usually associated with the established order and comfortable with the benefits accruing to the Church from this relationship, and (2) *community of liberation*, which refers to a Church frequently more directly involved with the problem of the poor and being a more critical challenge at every level against the repressive aspects of existing regimes.²³² Youngblood’s division of the bishops in the CBCP is made on a ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ dichotomy. Arguably, from a different perspective, we could potentially say that this can also raise a question

²²⁶ John Paul II, ‘Apostolos Suos’, Vatican accessed 18 July 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_22071998_apostolos-suos.html.

²²⁷ John Paul II, ‘Apostolos Suos’.

²²⁸ John Paul II, ‘Apostolos Suos’.

²²⁹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²³⁰ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²³¹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²³² Robert Youngblood, ‘Structural Imperialism: An Analysis of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines’, *Comparative Political Studies* 15, no. 1 (1982): 34.

on competence. That is, does the Church, more specifically the CBCP, have the authority to make binding judgements on sociopolitical issues? It may be noted that the analysis from Youngblood and the event of the People Power Revolution are amid the debate within the Catholic Church, as outlined above, on the authority of the episcopal conferences.

As previously mentioned, this is a ‘period of renewal of vision for the Church and society’ for the CBCP. I suggest that the transformation and reimagining of the CBCP must deal with the authority question. Consequently, it may be inferred that could affect the extent to which the CBCP may deal with certain issues. This may be especially so where Catholic teachings may be applied on an issue or area not previously explicitly applied—as Dulles wrote, ‘whatever “magisterium” the conferences possess is pastoral rather than strictly doctrinal. To meet the needs of their own nation or region, they call attention to certain teachings of the universal Church and apply them to the local situation’.²³³ Further, ‘episcopal conferences, since they lack the fully collegial character of the whole body of bishops, cannot bind their member bishops in matters of doctrine’.²³⁴ In the context of the episcopal conference possessing pastoral rather than strictly doctrinal authority, what significance should be given to applying Catholic teachings in pastoral letters or statements? This will be explored in the next section, which examines the practice.

(b) Pastoral Letters and Statements

The agency of the CBCP in the practice of publishing pastoral letters and statements plays an important role. I suggest the intentionality exercised by the CBCP to publish support for agrarian land reform and apply Catholic teaching holds weight. To reach this argument, it may be helpful to situate the practice of publishing pastoral letters and statements on sociopolitical issues. Demeterio’s analysis on the CBCP is based on a politico-ecclesiastical history of the Philippines in the periodisation of the CBCP, encompassing five groupings. He periodises it in this way:²³⁵

- pre-martial law: from 1968, when the CWO became the CBCP, to 20 September 1968, a day before the declaration of martial law
- early martial law: from 21 September 1970 to 31 December 1976, the end of the term of Julio Cardinal Rosales as CBCP President

²³³ Avery Dulles, *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2007), 56.

²³⁴ Dulles, *Magisterium*, 57.

²³⁵ F. P. A Demeterio, *Ang Mga Ideolohiyang Politikang ng Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2012), 2–5.

- late martial law: from 1 January 1977, the beginning of the term of Jaime Cardinal Sin as CBCP President, to 20 August 1983, the day before the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino Jr
- EDSA Revolutions: from 21 August 1983 to 14 September 2003, the day before the retirement of Sin as archbishop of Manila, and
- post-Sin period: from 15 September 2003 to the present.

Demeterio noted an interesting trend in the practice of publishing pastoral statements or letters on sociopolitical issues. According to Demeterio, the percentages of sociopolitical oriented documents concerning the total number of documents are 66.7 per cent in the pre-martial law period, 57.1 per cent in the early martial law period, 56.3 per cent in the late martial law period, 69 per cent in the EDSA Revolution period and 89.2 per cent in the post-Sin period.²³⁶ The interesting point from Demeterio's observation is the rise in sociopolitical oriented documents between the EDSA Revolutions period and the post-Sin period.

Arguably, the modality of the practice of using pastoral statements and letters by the CBCP in the realm of agrarian land reform, at least in the currently studied period, is affected by those aspects of agency₁ and agency₂. It could be said that the social teaching of the Catholic Church, and particularly as applied and promulgated by the CBCP, is 'the fruit of their interaction'.²³⁷ This can shape both the content of the CBCP statements and, arguably, the frequency. Cartagenas has argued that what has been fixed in text 'is less the event of promulgating a message, but more the *noema* or meaning behind the Church's public intervention in human affairs and temporal realities'.²³⁸ Cartagenas further states:

The Church's official discourse does not merely restructure or redescribe reality for its reader. Liberated from the tutelage of authorial intention and freed from its reference to a specific and immediate situation, it does possess the capacity to 'pro-ject' a 'new way of being in the world'.²³⁹

Cartagenas draws us towards seeing the effect of the written discourse of the Catholic Church beyond the moment of promulgation and beyond the human agents occupying the position of

²³⁶ F. P.A Demeterio, *Structural Justice and Collective Responsibility: The Sociopolitical Discourses of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2018), 36.

²³⁷ Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas, *Unlocking the Church's Best Kept Secret: Principles for the Interpretation, Communication, and Praxis of Catholic Social Teaching* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2012), 17.

²³⁸ Cartagenas, *Unlocking the Church*, 13–14.

²³⁹ Cartagenas, *Unlocking the Church*, 17.

bishop. A good example of this argument from Cartagena is the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* from Leo XIII, which continued to feature in the encyclicals of successive popes. The same argument on the effect of the written document going beyond the individual author and time of promulgation could be used concerning the pastoral statements and letters of the CBCP.

Though there is only substantially one CBCP statement on agrarian land reform, it does represent the first instance of such a statement and application of Catholic teaching on the subject by the CBCP. By fixing the moral principles to agrarian land reform in the Philippine context through a written mode, the CBCP can be contributing to the future development of the CBCP's agency² in the Wight framework. Consider the following example on other CBCP statements on agrarian land reform. I briefly note that in subsequent years, which are beyond the scope of this current study, the CBCP has issued further statements, including:

- The Dignity of the Rural Poor—A Gospel Concern: A Pastoral Statement, 28 January 2007²⁴⁰
- Agrarian Reform is an Instrument of Social Justice and an Actor of Political Wisdom—Pastoral Statement on the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, 18 May 2008²⁴¹
- Statement of Appeal to the Government of the Philippines, 12 July 2009²⁴²
- Moral Ethical Dimensions of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform, 6 June 2014,²⁴³ and
- Agrarian Reform as a Continuing Project of Social Justice, 12 November 2014.²⁴⁴

These later CBCP statements are not the subject of the present study; thus, I do not intend to engage in any deep analysis of them. Regardless, the significance of the CBCP statements I am focused on here can be appreciated.

²⁴⁰ CBCP, 'The Dignity of the Rural Poor - A Gospel Concern: A Pastoral Statement', accessed 15 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/the-dignity-of-the-rural-poor-a-gospel-concern>.

²⁴¹ CBCP, "'Agrarian Reform is an Instrument of Social Justice and an Act of Political Wisdom": A Pastoral Statement on the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program', accessed 15 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/agrarian-reform-is-an-instrument-of-social-justice-and-an-act-of-political-wisdom-pontifical-council-for-justice-and-peace-1997-a-pastoral-statement-on-the-comprehensive-agraria>.

²⁴² CBCP, 'Statement of Appeal to the Government of the Philippines', accessed 15 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/statement-of-appeal-to-the-government-of-the-philippines>.

²⁴³ CBCP, 'Moral Ethical Dimensions of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform', 15 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/moral-ethical-dimensions-of-the-comprehensive-agrarian-reform>.

²⁴⁴ CBCP, 'Agrarian Reform as a Continuing Project of Social Justice', accessed 15 August 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/agrarian-reform-as-a-continuing-project-of-social-justice>.

John Paul II encapsulates the concept of a building corpus in the encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, who stated in relation to the contribution of Leo XIII that:

[Leo XIII] created a lasting paradigm for the Church. The Church, in fact, has something to say about specific human situations, both individual and communal, national and international. She [the Catholic Church] formulates a genuine doctrine for these situations, a *corpus* which enables her [the Catholic Church] to analyse social realities, to make judgements about them and to indicate directions to be taken for the just resolution of the problems involved.²⁴⁵ (original emphasis)

The practice of conference statements and the position of bishop, which each member of the CBCP holds, continues regardless of the human occupant. A future question for the agency₂ of the CBCP is related to precedence: what has the CBCP said or done before? The evidence of precedence, such as past statements, could form a constitutive element to the agency₂ context of the CBCP in the future.

Reflecting on the US Catholic Bishops Conference's letter, *Economic Justice for All*, American Archbishop Rembert Weakland's 1997 comments are informative of the glocal nature of episcopal conference statements and letters. Archbishop Weakland commented that the '[US] bishops, if they were to rewrite their letter, would also have to look at another body of teaching, namely, the pastoral letters from conferences of bishops from around the world'.²⁴⁶ He further said, that 'if Catholic social doctrine is refined by its continual application to current issues, then this body of teaching material [i.e., episcopal conference letters] is most important'.²⁴⁷ The CBCP was refining Catholic social teaching through its application to social issues at the time in the Philippines, and the agrarian land reform policy debate is one such example. The fact that the CBCP publicly drafted a statement on agrarian land reform has significance. As far as the researcher is aware, the CBCP has not publicly created a specific pastoral statement or letter before the pastoral exhortation *Thirsting for Justice* in 1987.

The culmination of the agency layers discussed in this chapter deepens how we can understand the CBCP. We have seen multiple aspects of the CBCP in the context of agrarian land reform. The CBCP is an institution of the Catholic Church, with the Philippine Catholic Church being landowners in the Philippines. The CBCP pastoral exhortation *Thirsting for Justice* exemplifies this term of multilayered actorness from Barbato. The pastoral exhortation is a culmination of both the CBCP drawing from the glocal dimensions of the institution from a transnational Church

²⁴⁵ John Paul II, 'Centesimus Annus'.

²⁴⁶ Weakland, 'Economic Justice for All', 14.

²⁴⁷ Weakland, 'Economic Justice for All', 14.

and the bishops themselves as landowners in the Philippines. In this chapter, I have discussed that the CBCP draws from the global Catholic social teaching tradition principles. I have drawn attention to the significance of the CBCP statement in the pastoral exhortation that it ‘will not seek exemption to whatever may be legislated towards a comprehensive agrarian reform program’. The multilayered framework of agency similarly can view bishops in the CBCP as actors of the Philippines context in agency², and, conversely, as Catholic actors in agency² and agency³. The CBCP is ‘at the same time both less and more than the Catholic Church’, but it cannot be reduced to any one layer.²⁴⁸ Therefore, the practice of episcopal conferences issuing pastoral statements and letters would be influenced by the interaction of these various layers and resulting in the frequency and modality of taking such action.

4.4 Applying the Framework to the CBCP and Agrarian Land Reform

The aim of this thesis was to conceptualise an approach to understanding the agency of religious actors in IR to answer the research question posed: *How can the agency of the religious actor be understood and situated in IR?* I have answered this through the construction of the analytical framework, which has now been applied. In this first case study chapter, I have explored aspects of the agency of the CBCP through the analytic eclecticism of the constructed interpretive framework concerning its statements on agrarian land reform policy. The lack of formal public CBCP statements on agrarian land reform, especially during the legislative debates, presented a conundrum for the research. This is particularly a conundrum given the importance of such reform in the Philippines recognised by the CBCP itself.²⁴⁹ I have argued in the present study that we cannot understand the capacity of agency in mere quantitative terms. The existence and dynamics of agency are more than the outcome of the actor’s action. What, then, can our examination of the CBCP and agrarian land reform through the constructed interpretative framework of the study tell us about agency? In Table 3, I have summarised the multiple layers I have identified and analysed as influencing the agency of the CBCP in this chapter.

²⁴⁸ Barbato, ‘Multi-layered Actorness’, 27.

²⁴⁹ See, for example, CBCP, *Fruits of Justice is Peace*.

Table 3

Multilayered Agency of the CBCP in Agrarian Land Reform

Agency layer findings	
Agency 1—self	
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to further the evangelisation and pastoral responsibilities of the Church
Agency 2—sociocultural context	
Papal encyclicals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to continue with Catholic social teaching principles in papal encyclicals to apply broad Catholic social teaching principles to a ‘new’ topic area
Natural order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘really existing community’—a communion between all that exists and God the origin of individual property and the universal destination of Earth’s good is from the act of God
PCP II acts & decrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no specific decree on agrarian land reform and PCP II focused on broader themes (e.g., preferential option for the poor, concern for farmers)
Liberation theology and Philippine communist insurgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communist insurgency in the Philippines was linked to the issue of land reform liberation theology and Marxist elements found in the global Catholic community criticised by the Holy See’s CDF members of the Philippine Catholic Church joined communist and insurgent groups
Agency 3—position-practice-place	
Office of bishop & magisterial authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBCP social issue statements are fewer in this period ongoing debate about the authority of Bishops’ Conferences pastoral letter on agrarian land reform is new to the magisterium
Pastoral letters & statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> first CBCP pastoral letter on agrarian land reform for the CBCP to build a corpus of documents previous layers of agency shape the modality of using this practice

The layers summarised in Table 3 show the complex overlapping dynamics at play in the exercise of agency by the CBCP. These layers are not intended to be a definitive list of the layers of the agency of the CBCP. It is nonetheless revealing about the CBCP in this policy context. The exercise of agency is not simple, nor is its exercise predetermined by one factor alone.

The framework of agency from Wight in Table 3 is set in a complementary relationship to other readings of the context of the CBCP. The first level of the Wight framework on agency¹ starts the exploration of agency with the concept of an existing ‘self’ that is not automatically determined but is constantly negotiating the external forces of construction in the social world.²⁵⁰ As noted earlier, this view mediates between the extremes in the agent–structure debate: on the

²⁵⁰ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

one hand, the supremacy of the individual—on the other, the supremacy of structures over individuals. In the first level, we encountered the first pressure point with the Wight framework of agency. The framework of agency from Wight is focused on the human as the agent. In the present study, this would be the individual bishops comprising the CBCP rather than the CBCP collectively as the actor. The research can recognise ‘self’ of the individual bishops as situated within the CBCP. However, if it is possible, as I have done in the present study, to abstract from the concept of the ‘self’ from the Wight framework of agency as self-understanding, then the nature and function from its foundation in Vatican II become the core of the first level of the agency of the CBCP. The framework of the thesis requires the research to consider the self-understanding of the CBCP following the arguments of Omer. The purpose and function of episcopal conferences in the Catholic Church from Vatican II are intended to advance the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church or, in Catholic terms, to proclaim the good news. This can be seen as the *raison d’être* of the CBCP engaged in ‘negotiat[ion] [with] the external forces of construction in the world’ or, in other words, the Philippine context and dynamics of agrarian land reform.²⁵¹ The self-understanding of the purpose and function of episcopal conferences sets the course for the framework to analyse the CBCP in the next levels of the framework of agency.

In agency₂, the next level in the agency framework, understanding the CBCP as situated in its political and religious context beings to gain more substance. The negotiation of the external forces of construction, as Wight terms it, was engaged in this chapter through the CBCP’s ‘own accounts of their motivation’ and how their ‘religiosity meaningful inform their actions’, as Omer would say.²⁵² The first identified layer is seeing the continuity between the CBCP’s supportive statements of agrarian land reform and the tradition of Catholic social teaching as espoused in papal encyclicals. The CBCP, as the bearer of the structures and cosmovision of Catholicism, continues the religious traditions in its local application to social issues. I have argued that the lineage of the CBCP’s pastoral exhortation on agrarian land reform, *Thirsting for Justice*, can be connected to the teachings of Leo XIII in the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. The contextual reading of CBCP support for agrarian land reform is given perspective concerning the global Catholic context. The next layer to emerge from this engagement with Catholic social teaching is the recognition of, appropriating the phrasing of Elshtain, a ‘really existing’ natural order as perceived by the CBCP.²⁵³ I argued the CBCP, through the tradition of

²⁵¹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

²⁵² Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 130, 132.

²⁵³ Elshtain, ‘Really Existing Communities’.

Catholic social teaching, draws from an understanding of an established reciprocal relationship to an existing natural order from God. This layer was identified as the next pressure point in operationalising the Wight framework of agency. There was the potential that any engagement with this religious element could be through a secularist approach, with religion seen as a secondary component through some other category. Such an approach would be contrary to constructed framework's adoption of Omer's argument of engaging with the self-understanding of religious actors. Acknowledging the application of agency with Omer, I have grappled with this really existing natural order by applying the additional theorising of Pabst to the framework of agency. Pabst draws this natural order conception to the fore to be engaged with in analysis because 'immanent reality bears the trace of its transcendent source and in part reflects the divine warrant'.²⁵⁴ Pabst then provides a way of including in IR theorising the 'mutually corrective and augmenting' necessary relationship between faith and reason.²⁵⁵ By supplementing the agency framework with Pabst's arguments, we can have a deeper engagement with the motivations and interests of religious actors on their terms, as Omer would argue. This understanding of a natural order from God sees the CBCP as the bearer of their Catholicity and as a participant in a reality that 'precedes and underpins the modern system of nation states'.²⁵⁶ The Catholic traditions used to support agrarian land reform in seen in their sacral dimensions. Individual private property is understood in relation to its ultimate origin and destination in God. It provides the moral principles that mediate between the political extremes of no agrarian land reform supported by certain landlords and governmental usurping of private property to redistribute supported by more radical movements and politicians. Thus, CBCP statements are not just a restatement of moral principles but are situated in relation to an existing sacral order to the world.

Additionally, the religious traditions identified thus far should be situated in their broader political context. The issue of agrarian land reform and Catholic social teaching in a post-Vatican II Catholic Church raises the historical movement of liberation theology in the global Catholic community. The Holy See critiqued certain liberation theology mixing Marxist themes and concepts into Catholic theology, as contrary to the teachings espoused in the papal encyclicals condemning communism. In the Philippines, the Catholic Church saw members of the laity, clergy and religious brothers and sisters join Marxist organisations. A local version of liberation theology known as a theology of struggle also emerged and developed in subsequent years. Prior to and at the time of the CBCP making its statements, the Philippines was facing an ongoing

²⁵⁴ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1011.

²⁵⁵ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1013.

²⁵⁶ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1016.

communist insurgency, triggered by issues related to agrarian land reform. It is also complicated by the fact that the actorness of the bishops in the CBCP can individually be landlords themselves and, by extension, represent the Catholic Church as a landlord. A multilayered actorness is present within a policy context and subsequently shaping agency. This contextual reading suggests a balance needing to be maintained in the Philippine context. Such a reading also adds material factors in analysing the Catholic traditions in the constructed framework.

The PCP II was a significant event in the history of the Philippine Catholic Church to forge the renewal and vision of what the Philippine Catholic Church ought to be in the future. The PCP II is a distinct assembly from the CBCP, and the acts and decrees from PCP II would form part of the structures informing the Philippine Catholic lens of the CBCP. I have argued the acts and decrees of PCP II do not necessarily deal with agrarian land reform itself as a dedicated subject and are perhaps best viewed under other broad subjects, like the rural poor. This can shape the treatment of agrarian land reform in the vision of the Philippine Catholic Church. These four layers identified and situated within the agency² level of the Wight framework of agency will influence the modality of the practice and position of the CBCP in the next level of the framework.

In the third level of the framework, agency³, I have situated the CBCP in relation to the position and practice the CBCP inhabits on behalf of the second level of agency. I have argued that debates around the position of bishop, and the corresponding concept of magisterial authority in relation to episcopal conferences, could have had an effect on the CBCP readily applying Catholic social teaching to new social issues not traditionally addressed by the Philippine Catholic hierarchy. As we are examining the CBCP during what Robredillo aptly described as a ‘period of renewal of vision for the Church and society’, the lack of statements may indicate this characterisation.²⁵⁷ The modality of the frequency of using the CBCP practice of public statements and pastoral letters could be constrained by the debate on magisterial authority, and the focus of the PCP II acts and decrees could shift to broader subjects than specifically agrarian land reform.

This current examination of the agency of the CBCP in relation to agrarian land reform does not intend to represent the entirety of the agency of the CBCP in this policy context. It does tell us about the complexity of the dynamics involved in the exercise of agency by the CBCP. The principles within the beliefs of Catholicism may support a more equitable distribution of property

²⁵⁷ Robredillo, ‘Challenges of the Times’.

and in favour of agrarian land reform, which, for example, does not necessarily determine the outcome of the modality and frequency of CBCP statements and pastoral letters. The interpretive framework has added value by bringing together a wider contextual reading of the CBCP statements on agrarian land reform. In the next chapter, I consider the CBCP in another equally contested and high-profile policy space as a comparative case study. It will examine the high volume of pastoral statements and letters from CBCP in the family planning policy context.

Chapter 5: Family Planning Policy

*A critical component of our development philosophy and of our population policy has been—and has to be—the right of individuals to choose the kind of family life they believe is best for them ... our population policy is both pro-life and pro-choice; non-coercive but value-laden; family-centred yet socially responsible.*¹

President Fidel Ramos, Rafael M. Salas Lecture, United Nations (UN)
New York, 26 November 1997.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will now turn to the family planning policy context. It will similarly use the constructed analytic framework, which is this study's response to the research question, to examine the active engagement of the CBCP through its published pastoral letter and statement in response to the Philippine Government's family planning policies. Between 1986 and 1998, the CBCP created six pastoral letters and statements opposing government attempts to reduce population growth through contraceptives. Herrin argued that 'the single most important factor influencing population policy making since its formulation in 1969, and may partly explain its ever shifting focus [in the Philippines], is the persistent and consistent opposition of the Catholic Church hierarchy'.² This opposition should be understood within the context of the particularities and Catholic traditions of the CBCP, as Omer would say 'on their own terms'.³

In the first section of this chapter, I will briefly explore the policy context of family planning policies during the presidential administrations of Aquino and Ramos. It will serve as the contextual background to the discussion on the CBCP, and, where appropriate, I will situate the publication of each CBCP statement in the historical narrative. The second section will use the constructed framework to understand the agency layers and dynamics of the CBCP. First, I briefly discuss the commonality between the two case studies of the self of the CBCP in agency1. We can understand the CBCP is an organisation intended to further the evangelising mission and pastoral responsibilities of the Church. I then identify four layers to be examined in agency2. These layers are the continuity of teaching between the CBCP and papal encyclicals, the

¹ 'Fidel Ramos on Globalization, Population Policy, and Demographic Development', *Population and Development Review* 23, no. 4 (1997): 922, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2137406>.

² Alejandro N. Herrin, 'A Review of Population Policy and Program in the Philippines, 1969–2002', Philippine Institute for Development Studies, accessed 21 August 2021, [https://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/popn_pub/Discussion%20Paper%20\(ANHerrin%20and%20ACOrbeta\)/A%20Review%20of%20Popln%20Policy%20and%20Program%20in%20the%20Phils,%201969-2002%20by%20ANH.pdf](https://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/popn_pub/Discussion%20Paper%20(ANHerrin%20and%20ACOrbeta)/A%20Review%20of%20Popln%20Policy%20and%20Program%20in%20the%20Phils,%201969-2002%20by%20ANH.pdf).

³ Omer, 'Good Religion', 130, 132.

connection with a concept of a natural order established by God, the specific concern to the family in the PCP II decrees, and John Paul II's influence in the Catholic Church. In agency³, I then contrast the magisterial authority of the position of bishop and the practice of issuing pastoral letters to infer potential reasons for the increased CBCP letters and statements.

5.2 Family Planning Policy 1986–1998

The Philippines has had a long history of contentious debates on population growth and contraceptives. These policy debates are closely tied to questions about economic development in the Philippines. I have chosen to use the phrasing 'family planning' as a more neutral term compared to 'reproductive health', a phrase rejected by the Catholic Church. The broadness of 'family planning' can include population growth. I do not intend to indicate any policy preference in this research, nor is such an evaluation the subject of this study. This policy context can include issues of contraceptives, in vitro fertilisation, sterilisation and abortion. We should first briefly lay out some context before focusing on the statements of the CBCP and its agency. The creation of programs in this policy area was slow under the presidency of Aquino (1986–1992) but increased under the presidency of Ramos (1992–1998).⁴ Demeterio argued that 'the Philippine Government has had an inconsistent stand and policy on the problem of over-population'.⁵ This section will first look at key points during the Aquino and Ramos administrations.

5.3 Corazon Aquino 1986–1992

Aquino, a devout Catholic, recognised the population problem but did not have a definite commitment to a population reduction policy.⁶ The introduction of a program to address population growth in the Philippines predated the Aquino Administration. For instance, according to Demeterio, President Marcos 'started with a strong commitment to a population reduction policy that was, however, not fully implemented and waned during the last years of his dictatorship'.⁷ High population growth during the Marcos years was viewed as hindering economic growth.⁸ The Commission on Population was established in 1970 by President Marcos

⁴ Clarissa C. David, Jenna Mae L. Atun and Antonio G. M. La Viña, 'Framing in Legislation: The Case of Population Policy in the Philippines', *Population Research and Policy Review* 31, no. 2 (2012): 303.

⁵ F. P. A. Demeterio, 'The Philippines Church, State, and People on the Problem of Population', *Kritike* 1, no. 2 (2007): 105.

⁶ Demeterio, 'The Philippines Church', 105.

⁷ Demeterio, 'The Philippines Church', 105.

⁸ Genilo, 'Catholic Church', 1044.

to implement and national family planning program.⁹ According to Marcos in a speech opening the nineteenth General Population Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population in Manila on 10 December 1981, ‘our population program has been the most valuable ingredient in the totality of our endeavors to overcome our problems and bring the fruits of development to the masses of Filipinos’.¹⁰ He further stated:

We adhere strictly to a noncoercive approach, in drawing people to the movement for responsible parenthood. While we deliver information and services on what our policy-makers consider as acceptable methods of contraception, we continue to respect and safeguard the right of every human couple to determine the size of its family and to choose for itself the method that conforms to its moral and religious belief.¹¹

While population policies and programs were aggressive under Marcos, this changed under Aquino’s presidency as it was placed on the backburner and a conservative approach adopted.¹²

The new 1987 Philippine Constitution had a reference important to the family planning policy context. According to Youngblood, the harmony between Aquino and the Catholic hierarchy on family planning was reflected in the articles on the family in the 1987 Constitution.¹³ According to Article II section 12 of the Philippine Constitution:

The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. *It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception.* The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of the moral character shall receive the support of the Government.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

In her second state of the nation address on 25 July 1988, Aquino stated, ‘we must achieve a viable consensus on an authentic family welfare program that is responsive both to the Constitutional mandate and the challenge of a growing population’.¹⁵ According to Youngblood, this meant that Aquino reaffirmed her pro-natal stance by emphasising family wellbeing rather than family planning.¹⁶ She essentially agreed with church leaders, who advocated government

⁹ Genilo, ‘Catholic Church’, 1044.

¹⁰ Ferdinand E. Marcos, ‘Ferdinand E Marcos on Philippine Population Policy’, *Population and Development Review* 8, no. 1 (1982): 226.

¹¹ Marcos, ‘Ferdinand E Marcos’, 227.

¹² David, Atun and Viña, ‘Framing in Legislation’, 303–4.

¹³ Robert Youngblood, ‘President Ramos, the Church, and Population Policy in the Philippines’, *Asian Affairs* 25, no. 1 (1998): 8.

¹⁴ Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987 art. II, § 12.

¹⁵ Corazon Aquino, ‘Corazon C. Aquino, Second State of the Nation Address, July 25, 1988’, Official Gazette, accessed 30 October 2020, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1988/07/25/corazon-c-aquino-second-state-of-the-nation-address-july-25-1988>.

¹⁶ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 8.

programs to reform unjust social structures rather than population control as the best way to alleviate poverty.¹⁷

The government's family planning policy stagnation failed to stifle debate among academics, government officials, politicians and church leaders about the best way to alleviate poverty and population growth.¹⁸ By 1990, after the US Agency for International Development suspended population planning funds in January 1989 due to the chaos of the Philippine program, the Aquino Administration took steps to revitalise it.¹⁹ The revitalised program included artificial birth control methods, but not abortion, and stressed 'family planning as a health service rather than a means to reduce population'.²⁰ Nevertheless, population planning met strong resistance.²¹ Many Catholic Church leaders were alarmed by renewed population management efforts; they feared that artificial birth control methods and the reestablishment of population targets would revive objectionable aspects of the Marcos family planning program.²² In an attempt to avoid confrontation and at the request of President Aquino, the CBCP agreed in July 1990 to postpone issuing a pastoral letter critical of the government's revived family planning policy program and enter into a dialogue with government officials.²³ Instead, the bishops circulated a guidelines statement declaring that 'directly willed abortion, the use of abortifacients, sterilization and contraception are wrong in themselves' and natural family planning is the only 'morally acceptable' form of birth control.²⁴

Government and Catholic Church officials met in August 1990 to discuss the 1990–1994 Philippine family program.²⁵ The government panel attempted to reassure the bishops that the program was non-coercive, not geared towards reducing fertility or population growth but assisted married couples wishing to stagger or limit births, and abortion was prohibited.²⁶ According to a statement from Bishop Jesus Varela, chairman of the Church/Government Dialogue on Family Planning from the Episcopal Commission on Family Life, the discussions 'were serious, substantive and amicable'.²⁷ He further noted the government's program 'will not

¹⁷ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 8.

¹⁸ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

¹⁹ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²⁰ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²¹ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²² Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²³ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²⁴ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²⁵ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²⁶ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

²⁷ CBCP, 'Church/Government Dialogue on Family Planning', accessed 30 October 2020, <https://cbcponline.net/to-all-editors-station-managers-news-editors/>.

be undertaken to reduce fertility or population growth'.²⁸ His statement did state that the 'Church reiterates its objection to contraception and sterilization and expresses its reservation about the moral acceptability of certain aspects of the Program'.²⁹ Reactions before and after the dialogue were positive but short-lived.³⁰ On 7 October 1990, the CBCP published a pastoral letter disassociating the Church and 'all who wish to remain faithful to Gospel values' from the government's population program.³¹ According to the CBCP, 'there are local and foreign non-government organizations which have renewed their efforts to manipulate family size by promoting values that are incompatible with Christian family living'.³² The letter called on various sectors of society to follow the Church's teaching because, according to the CBCP, 'we are unwittingly caught in a systematic campaign against child bearing. It is a worldwide drive that undermines the value of life'.³³

5.3.1 Fidel Ramos 1992–1998

The Ramos Administration adopted a more aggressive push towards including contraceptives as part of its population control policy. This led to more clashes with the Philippines' Catholic Bishops. Ramos, a Protestant, was the Philippines' first non-Catholic president. This contrasts with Aquino, who was known to be a very devout Catholic herself. The Ramos Administration's family planning policy shifted away from the Aquino Administration's focus on health and prioritised fertility and population reduction to achieve the goal of sustainable development.³⁴

According to Youngblood, unlike Aquino, Ramos enjoyed no honeymoon with the Catholic Church upon his election as president in May 1992.³⁵ Within weeks of the inauguration, Ramos clashed with the Church over the government's family planning policy.³⁶ Ramos and his newly appointed Secretary of Health, Juan Flavio, established 'freedom of choice' as the cornerstone of the government's family planning program, availing it to couples wishing to limit the size of their family with a range of birth control methods that included artificial methods like pills, IUD and sterilisation.³⁷ Ramos launched the national family planning communication campaign in a

²⁸ CBCP, 'Church/Government Dialogue'.

²⁹ CBCP, 'Church/Government Dialogue'.

³⁰ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

³¹ CBCP, 'Love is Life'; Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

³² CBCP, 'Love is Life'.

³³ CBCP, 'Love is Life'.

³⁴ Genilo, 'Catholic Church', 1045.

³⁵ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

³⁶ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 11.

³⁷ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 12.

2 August 1993 speech. He declared, ‘first and foremost, the program is based on freedom of choice’.³⁸ He continued by saying a family planning program:

affirm[s] the right of citizens—especially of our women—to decide about their fertility and their families. It is in this light that we affirm that individuals and couples are entitled to information about family planning so they can make their own decisions about their reproductive options according to their health needs, family aspirations, religious beliefs and economic situation. They must be free to choose what is best for them in their respective circumstances.³⁹

This policy promoting the increased use of artificial birth control would lead to clashes with the Catholic bishops. Acrimony between the government and the bishops intensified in early 1993 over Ramos’ endorsement of prophylactics in fighting the spread of HIV.⁴⁰ The CBCP published a pastoral letter on AIDS on 23 January 1993 called *In the Compassion of Jesus*. It reaffirmed the Church’s position on contraceptives as a method of addressing the spread of HIV and AIDS. According to the CBCP, the condom-distribution approach is ‘simplistic and evasive’ as it leads to ‘a false sense of complacency on the part of the State, creating an impression that an adequate solution has been arrived at’.⁴¹ It continued by saying the policy ‘evades and neglects the heart of the solution, namely, the formation of authentic sexual values’.⁴² The CBCP said that ‘given the trend of the government’s family planning policy, we have a well-founded anxiety that the drive to promote the acceptability of condom use for the prevention of HIV-AIDS infection is part of the drive to promote the acceptability of condom use for the contraception’.⁴³ Another blistering pastoral letter was published on 13 July 1993 called, *Save the Family and Live: A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines on the Family*. The pastoral letter reaffirmed the role of the family and the sacredness of marital love in ‘its origin and destination’.⁴⁴ The CBCP was similarly alarmed by the government’s actions. It registered its ‘strong and unqualified objection to actions of the government and its instrumentalities ... [that] work towards the destruction of the Filipino family’.⁴⁵ The CBCP called on people to stand up for the Church’s teachings and refused to promote contraception, sterilisation and abortion if

³⁸ Fidel Ramos, ‘Speech of President Ramos at the launching of the Philippine Family-Planning Program, National Communication Campaign, August 2, 1993’, Official Gazette, accessed 17 September 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1993/08/02/speech-of-president-ramos-at-the-launching-of-the-philippine-family-planning-program-national-communication-campaign-august-2-1993>.

³⁹ Ramos, ‘Speech of President Ramos’.

⁴⁰ Youngblood, ‘President Ramo’, 12.

⁴¹ CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

⁴² CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

⁴³ CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

⁴⁴ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live’.

⁴⁵ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live’.

their superiors ordered them to do so.⁴⁶ Just as the CBCP had done in 1990, the CBCP and individual bishops and priests called on health workers to refuse to implement government family planning practices violative of Church beliefs.⁴⁷ Ramos responded by reiterating the government's commitment to reduce population growth to two per cent by the year 2000, emphasising that the government's family planning was based on free choice and not forced 'to adopt or support' contraceptive practices 'country to his or her personal beliefs or inclination', and that if government health workers were unable to support government family planning policies they should resign.⁴⁸

Although CBCP President Bishop Antonio Morelos and Secretary of Finance Vicente Jayme agreed to meet in August 1993 to try to defuse strife with the overpopulation policy, differences remained and denunciation continued.⁴⁹ Church–state conflict increased with the approach of the September 1994 UN-sponsored Third International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.⁵⁰ Government family planning advertisements, partly supported by foreign aid, were branded as an example of 'demographic imperialism'.⁵¹ Bishop Achilles Dakay, speaking for Cardinal Vidal, voiced support for denying Holy Communion to government health workers purveying birth control information and devices.⁵² Bishop Jesus Varela, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Family Life, objected to Ramos' assertion that the government was 'pro-life' in rejecting abortion but 'pro-choice' in allowing Filipinos to determine family size.⁵³ Varela declared that pro-life and pro-choice positions were incompatible.⁵⁴ On 16 August 1994, the Ramos Administration and the Philippine Catholic Church agreed on a joint statement for the UN conference that underscored their unequivocal opposition to abortion as a means to family planning.⁵⁵ Ramos also acceded to CBCP requests and added Catholic Church–backed members to the official Cairo delegation while dropping others considered pro-abortion.⁵⁶

Differences on family planning between the Ramos Administration and the Church spilled into the May 1995 congressional and local elections.⁵⁷ In January, the CBCP issued a pastoral letter

⁴⁶ CBCP, 'Save the Family and Live'.

⁴⁷ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁴⁸ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁴⁹ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵⁰ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵¹ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵² Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵³ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵⁴ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵⁵ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵⁶ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13.

⁵⁷ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13–14.

urging Catholics to vote for ‘pro-God, pro-life and pro-family’ candidates and promoted the reactivation of a citizen’s group to mobilise voting.⁵⁸ The CBCP also published a pastoral letter in July 1995 on the draft platform of the approaching UN-sponsored World Conference on Women in Beijing.

The acrimony surrounding the family planning debate faded in 1996 and 1997 partly because of Ramos’ reaction to the criticism of the powerful Church officials.⁵⁹ According to Youngblood, Ramos’ public posture was to turn the other cheek to avert direct confrontation, especially with Cardinal Sin.⁶⁰ Ramos also shifted his rhetoric in December 1996 at the National Population Congress.⁶¹ He stated it was ‘no longer sufficient’ or ‘wise’ to focus on ‘family planning at all’ or ‘to speak about birth control alone’ and that population control had to be addressed ‘under the concept of population–resources–environment balance’.⁶² Church opponents of artificial birth control methods also modulated their rhetoric in 1996 and 1997.⁶³ Like Ramos, they wanted to avert direct confrontation and perhaps the need to block a movement to change the 1987 Constitution to allow Ramos a second term.⁶⁴ From this brief overview of the family planning policy context in the Philippines, I now turn to a close examination of CBCP statements within this period and a focus on understanding CBCP agency.

5.4 Agency of the CBCP in Family Planning Policy 1986–1998

There is a comparative quantitative difference in CBCP pastoral statements on agrarian land reform and family planning policies, as shown in Table 1 in the previous chapter. A reasonable inference can be made that the CBCP was more concerned with the family planning policy area through the multiple public interventions of their published statements. Recall Abellanosa, who argued that ‘as a moral force, the CBCP ... is unified and more passionate when it comes to issues that have something to do with human life, sexuality, and the family’.⁶⁵ We could ask: *what is it about the agency of the CBCP that could lead to the different approach in the family planning policy space?* The discussion in the following sections will provide some ideas on this different approach.

⁵⁸ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 14.

⁵⁹ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 15.

⁶⁰ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 13.

⁶¹ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 13.

⁶² Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 13.

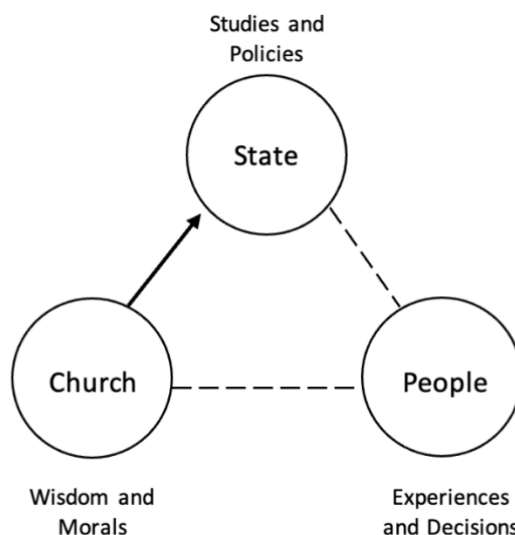
⁶³ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 16.

⁶⁴ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 16.

⁶⁵ Abellanosa, ‘Discursive Detours’, 239.

The communicative approach and power relations between the Philippine Catholic Church, the state, and the Filipino people on population control have taken a more one-sided flow from the Church to the state. Demeterio illustrated this communication and power relationship in the diagram reproduced in Figure 2.⁶⁶

Figure 2. Demeterio’s Three-Cornered Circuit of Power and Communication Diagram



Demeterio argued (see Figure 2) that the flow of power and communication were characterised by:⁶⁷

- the Church’s effectiveness, since the state has failed to come up with an effective fertility reduction program,
- the state’s failure to convince the Church to cooperate in solving the population problem,
- the Church’s failure to convince people to abide by its doctrine against contraception,
- an absence of the expected flow of power and communication from the people to the Church due to the latter’s hierarchical structure and dogmatic nature,
- the state’s power and communication with the people being ineffective due to a lack of a clear and effective program, and
- despite a growing majority of Filipinos favouring the government to create a fertility reduction program, state failure in creating an effective program.

⁶⁶ Demeterio, ‘Philippine Church’, 107.

⁶⁷ Demeterio, ‘Philippine Church’, 107.

The Philippines eventually enacted a Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law 2012, known as the ‘RH Law’. Its enactment was not free from tension and disagreement between the CBCP and policymakers. Demeterio’s diagram (see Figure 2) shows his argument that the only significant flow of power and communication is the Philippine Catholic Church’s imposition of its non-negotiable doctrine on the state.⁶⁸ This can be contrasted with the different approach taken by the CBCP on agrarian land reform, as discussed in the previous chapter. The arguments of Demeterio raise an interesting question about what this tells us about the agency of the CBCP on family planning policy in the Philippines. We should first consider the CBCP statements before delving deeper into the components of agency.

5.4.1 CBCP Statements from 1986 to 1998 on Family Planning

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief overview of the CBCP statement between 1986 to 1998. These statements have already been briefly listed in Table 1 in the previous chapter and touched upon in the previous section. In a 2015 article, Francisco examined all the statements of the CBCP on reproductive health issues and classified the statements according to three categories:⁶⁹

- Cluster (A) centres on Catholic doctrine on marriage, family and sexuality, and is represented by many general statements on church teaching.
- Cluster (B) concentrates on the relation between poverty, population control and family planning.
- Cluster (C) rejects particular government proposals, programs and activities related to reproductive health.

I have replicated a portion of Francisco’s classification in Table 4 to focus on the statements of the CBCP relevant to the current study.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Demeterio, ‘Philippine Church’, 107.

⁶⁹ Francisco, ‘Letting the Texts’, 227.

⁷⁰ Francisco, ‘Letting the Texts’, 228.

Table 4

CBCP Statements in Francisco’s Cluster Classification

CBCP statements	Francisco’s cluster classification
Guiding Principles of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines on Population Control: 10 July 1990	B
Love is Life: A Pastoral Letter on the Population Control Activities of the Philippine Government and Planned Parenthood Associations (Short Version for Pulpit Use): 7 October 1990	C
In the Compassion of Jesus: A Pastoral Letter on AIDS: 23 January 1993	A
Save the Family and Live: A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines on the Family: 13 July 1993	A
Pastoral Statement on Cairo International Conference on Population and Development: 10 July 1994	C
‘I will make a suitable companion for him’ (Gen. 2:18): Pastoral Statement on the Forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing: 9 July 1995	C

Based on Francisco’s classification, Table 4 indicates that the CBCP statements heavily focus on critique. This can confirm the effective communication and power relations argued by Demeterio in his constructed diagram in Figure 2. We can also see from Demeterio and Francisco that there is a more Catholic elite-driven engagement in this policy area compared to agrarian land reform because there have been more public statements from the Catholic bishops as a collective from the CBCP. These patterns identified by Demeterio and Francisco provide insight into agency dynamics to be further investigated by the analytic eclecticism of the constructed framework. As will be seen, the modality of the practice of pastoral letters and statements as embodied by the observations by Demeterio and Francisco form part of agency₃ of the Wight framework of agency. The interpretive framework of this thesis will add value to the contextual readings of Demeterio and Francisco.

The first CBCP statement, *Guiding Principles on Population Control*, was published on 10 July 1990. Youngblood argued this statement was made in an attempt to avoid confrontation between the CBCP and the Aquino Administration.⁷¹ The CBCP agreed in July 1990 to the request of

⁷¹ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 9.

President Aquino to postpone the issuance of a pastoral letter critical of the government's revived family planning program and enter into dialogue with government officials.⁷² According to the CBCP, 'directly willed abortion, the use of abortifacients, sterilization and contraception are wrong in themselves'.⁷³ The CBCP noted that 'the Church rejects the contraceptive mentality, i.e., the attitude that selfishly avoids the procreation of offspring solely because the couples do not want to bear the responsibility that comes with having a child'.⁷⁴ Since the 'decision on the number of children lies solely on the parents', according to the CBCP, 'the Church is against a coercion exercised on couples to pressure or force them to limit or increase the number of their children'.⁷⁵ To the point about the relationship between population reduction and economic development, the CBCP stated 'the increase or decrease of population growth does not by itself spell development or underdevelopment' but rather 'it should be kept in mind that injustice in society is a more fundamental cause of poverty in our country'.⁷⁶ It is noteworthy that the CBCP concluded the statement by quoting the Holy See's submission to the World Health Organization-sponsored International Conference on the Ethics and Values of Family Planning held in Bangkok in June 1988. The quotation was 'there are no "value-free" methods of family planning. Research scientists, medical personnel, government officials and welfare agents should reflect on the consequences of their activities, on the assumptions they hold, and on the goals they pursue in family planning'.⁷⁷ This is one example of the CBCP as both a local institution within the Catholic Church and influenced and connected by events in the global Catholic community.

Not long after the *Guiding Principles* statement, on 7 October 1990, the CBCP published a pastoral letter on the population control activities of the Philippine Government and planned parenthood associations called *Love is Life*. It is the first critical document from the CBCP within the period of the present study. It is noteworthy the CBCP has adopted using different terminology between the July statement and this document. The CBCP moved from a statement called 'Guiding Principles' to a 'pastoral letter'. This is a more direct statement from the CBCP on government policy. The pastoral letter gives directions to particular groups, including the underprivileged, the privileged, government personnel, medial and paramedical personnel in private practice, policymakers, legislators, local executives, demographers and priests and fellow

⁷² Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 9.

⁷³ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

⁷⁴ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

⁷⁵ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

⁷⁶ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

⁷⁷ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

pastors. The CBCP sought to distance itself from the government's program, stating that 'because of the nature of its call and mission, the Catholic Church, with all who wish to remain faithful to Gospel values CANNOT associate themselves with this program—not even in appearance' (original capitalisation).⁷⁸ In the section directed to legislators, the pastoral letter referred to the Philippines' Constitution, stating, 'the clause in the 1973 Constitution mandating the State to regulate the population levels of the country was deleted in the 1987 Constitution. Study the reasons for the decision before you delve into discussion and debate'.⁷⁹

The next collection of CBCP statements occurred during the Ramos Administration. These statements follow a similar pattern by initially starting with a statement on Catholic doctrine and then later leading into more critical statements from the CBCP. The first CBCP statement was called *In Compassion of Jesus* and published on 23 January 1993. This statement in the Francisco classification in Table 4 forms part of cluster (A) statements centring on Catholic doctrine. According to Youngblood, this statement responded to Ramos' endorsement of prophylactics in fighting the spread of HIV. The CBCP said that the 'moral dimension of the problem of HIV-AIDS urges us to take a sharply negative view of the condom-distribution approach to the problem' because such an approach was 'simplistic and evasive'.⁸⁰ Despite the classification by Francisco of this statement as centring on Catholic doctrine, it does not necessarily mean it would be devoid of critiquing government policy. The CBCP, in its moral evaluation, critiqued 'the "safe sex" proposal would be tantamount to condoning promiscuity and sexual permissiveness and to foster indifference to the moral demands as long as negative social and pathological consequences can be avoided'.⁸¹ The CBCP's position compared to the government's policy was that 'when one lives by faith, as all followers of Christ must, one is convinced that chastity and the refusal to engage in extra-marital sexual activity are the best protection against HIV-AIDS'.⁸² The CBCP then emphasised that 'in the face to the rapidly spreading scourge of HIV-AIDS, we cannot overstate the moral renewal of our people'.⁸³

In the lead up to the UN-sponsored International Conference on Population and Development, the CBCP published on 10 July 1994 a critical pastoral statement. The CBCP went beyond

⁷⁸ CBCP, 'Love is Life'.

⁷⁹ CBCP, 'Love is Life'.

⁸⁰ CBCP, 'Compassion of Jesus'.

⁸¹ CBCP, 'Compassion of Jesus'.

⁸² CBCP, 'Compassion of Jesus'.

⁸³ CBCP, 'Compassion of Jesus'.

merely critiquing a government policy or program but took a direct approach of making demands. An example is seen in the statement with the following CBCP request:

We have asked our government to let us know the identity of the country's delegates, the criteria according to which they were chosen, and, more importantly, the positions they have been instructed to uphold. We have also requested the President to hear out our opinion on the delegates our government is thinking to send.⁸⁴

This is an example of the directness of the flow of communication and power relations Demeterio argued. It is different from critiquing the government or explaining Catholic doctrine because the CBCP is demanding the Ramos Administration. The Cairo statement continues with another request: 'in solidarity with the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, we have deemed it especially necessary to ask that our representatives to Cairo present positions that are consonant with our Constitution, our culture, and the religious heritage of the overwhelming majority of our people'.⁸⁵ We can draw out two points here. The first is the idea of solidarity with the Pope, particularly John Paul II, within the statement of the CBCP. The second is the request from the CBCP that the Philippine representatives have a position in line with the Constitution; the culture and religious heritage of the majority of the population seem to conflate Catholicism with the Philippines and the Filipino people. The call by the CBCP to the Philippines' representatives at the Cairo conference is 'to reject ... [the] imperialism which subjugates and determines the future of peoples by money'.⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that the Ramos Administration and Philippine Catholic Church would later agree on a joint statement for the Cairo conference unequivocally opposing abortion as a means of family planning and acceded to the request of the CBCP to add Catholic Church-backed members to the official Philippine delegation and dropping those considered pro-abortion.⁸⁷

In the lead up to the UN-sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the CBCP similarly issued a pastoral statement on 9 July 1995. The CBCP 'commend[ed] the concern of ... [the] forthcoming conference ... [of] look[ing] more closely into the dignity of women'.⁸⁸ However, according to the CBCP, the draft document of the Beijing conference is 'based on the same ideology' as the 1994 Cairo conference.⁸⁹ Compared to other CBCP statements, there is a change in the addressee in this statement. Instead of the addressee as 'dear brothers and sisters

⁸⁴ CBCP, 'Pastoral Statement'.

⁸⁵ CBCP, 'Pastoral Statement'.

⁸⁶ CBCP, 'Pastoral Statement'.

⁸⁷ Youngblood, 'President Ramos', 13–14.

⁸⁸ CBCP, 'Suitable Companion for Him'.

⁸⁹ CBCP, 'Suitable Companion for Him'.

in Christ’, ‘dear brothers and sisters in the Lord’ or ‘dear Catholic families’ found in previous statements, the addressee of the Beijing statement has become more general to ‘dear sisters and brothers’.⁹⁰ There is no qualification to the addressee of the statement compared to previous statements. I argue the CBCP is directing the contents of its statement to the Filipino at large, whether they be Christian, non-Christian or of no faith tradition. The concern of the CBCP was the ‘subtle yet persistent view to devalue life’ and the ‘secular humanistic philosophy which promotes [imposing] contraception, abortion and sterilization’ on all governments.⁹¹ Similar to the Cairo statement, the CBCP again requested of the Ramos Administration ‘that the Philippine Delegation would truly represent the deep faith and traditions of the Filipino people and that women, noted for their Christian witness and firm faith, be sent among our representatives’.⁹² Among other things, the CBCP wanted the Philippine delegation to ‘be uncompromising in their stance against feticide and abortion, camouflaged in phrases such as “reproductive health” and “reproductive rights”’, encourage education in natural family planning, ‘fight against all forms of violence against women ... including forced sterilization, forced contraception and forced abortion’ and ‘be uncompromising in the definition of the family’.⁹³ In this statement, there is a similar expression of solidarity with the Pope, with the CBCP reiterating its ‘unfailing commitment in union with the Holy Father in this fundamental struggle to proclaim the “gospel of life” against the forces that intend to suppress it’.⁹⁴ The strong tone of the statement can be further observed, for example, in this kind of phrasing: ‘We raise our voices anew to *resist the enemy and expose the evils* expressed or implied in the draft document to the Beijing Conference. And we ask all our Lay Faithful to be one with him and *with us in this battle*’ (emphasis added).⁹⁵

The themes in the CBCP statements revolve around and mirror the global Catholic Church’s doctrines on marriage, the family and sexuality as its core.⁹⁶ Francisco argued that while there was an aspect of continuity, there was also discontinuity in the CBCP’s corpus of statements regarding the frames of reference used for this consistent church teaching.⁹⁷ I will use the constructed framework in this study to analyse the statements of the CBCP in the sections that follow.

⁹⁰ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

⁹¹ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

⁹² CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

⁹³ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

⁹⁴ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

⁹⁵ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

⁹⁶ Francisco, ‘Letting the Texts’, 230.

⁹⁷ Francisco, ‘Letting the Texts’, 232.

5.4.2 Agency 1—The Self of the CBCP

The first layer of the Wight multilayered framework of agency is known as agency₁ and refers to the idea of the ‘freedom of subjectivity’. Wight argued a self exists that is not automatically determined but is in constant negotiation with the forces of construction of the social world.⁹⁸ In the Wight understanding of agency, there is an emphasis on the human agent as the actor, where agency is seen to reside and is possessed. This is seen in Wight’s 2004 article, where he argued against the personification of the state and the idea of the state as an actor exercising ‘state agency’ without human agency.⁹⁹ The concept of the self in the agency₁ layer of the framework conceptualises a subject capable of reflecting upon and constantly renegotiating the forces of construction.¹⁰⁰ We encounter the same pressure point discussed in the previous chapter with the framework in this chapter on family planning. As I mentioned previously, the CBCP is an institution that comprises all individual bishops in the Philippines. Examining individual bishops would conform with the idea of a self as conceptualised in agency₁ of the Wight framework. Venturing into such an examination would be beyond the scope of the present research. Instead, it can be recognised that the bishops do have a self as human agents and, contrary to some perceptions of religious actors, are not automatically determined by their religious traditions. The bishops forming the CBCP will continually negotiate with the social world.

The existence of episcopal conferences within the Catholic Church is due to the changes brought by Vatican II. This does not mean episcopal conferences are beholden to the time and context of Vatican II. Dulles pointed out that ‘a historical study of the development of Christian ministry would probably show that the Church in every age has adjusted its structures and offices so as to operate more effectively in the social environment in which it finds itself’.¹⁰¹ The formalisation of episcopal conferences is an example of the Catholic Church’s adjustment to operate more effectively in the world. *Christus Dominus* recognised the already-established episcopal conferences benefits as ‘furnish[ing] outstanding proofs of a more fruitful apostolate’.¹⁰² Recall from the previous chapter my argument that episcopal conferences intended to facilitate the Church’s evangelisation mission and pastoral responsibilities. This can constitute the self-understanding of the CBCP. Episcopal conferences provided a practical means to further aid the mission of the Church. As *Christus Domus* said, ‘the insights of prudence and experience

⁹⁸ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

⁹⁹ Wight, ‘State Agency’.

¹⁰⁰ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

¹⁰¹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church: Expanded Edition* (New York: Image Book, 1987), 162.

¹⁰² Paul VI, ‘Christus Dominus’.

hav[ing] been shared and views exchanged, there will emerge a holy union of energies in the service of the common good of churches'.¹⁰³ This is a point of continuity between the CBCP in the agrarian land reform context and the CBCP in the family planning context in this chapter. It will be shown in the next sections, the evangelising mission of the CBCP will be engaged differently in relation to the state's family planning policy.

5.4.3 Agency 2—CBCP and the Sociocultural System

Recall that the second layer of the Wight framework of agency, agency₂, refers to how the self in agency₁ becomes an agent of something. This refers to the sociocultural system and the groups and collectives into which people are born and develop. The layer of agency₂ is not static because, according to Wight, agents 'reproduce and/or transform their individual and collective identities as part of maintaining or transforming the socio-cultural structure they inherit at birth'.¹⁰⁴ Wight argued that 'the social groups and collectives that one is born into crucially affect the potential of agency₁ to mobilise the resources embedded in the social field. That is, agents₂ [i.e., agents being the bearer of their context] are embedded in structures and are always differentially placed'.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, as Wight states, agency₂ 'plays a crucial role in the development of agency₁ without completely determining it. But equally, it plays an important role in setting the conditions of possibility for the next level of agency, that of agency₃'.¹⁰⁶ I suggest that some of the layers contributing to the agency of the CBCP are: (1) the global Catholic Church's teachings, particularly its papal encyclicals on contraceptives, sexuality and the family, (2) the real and present reality of God's natural order for the Catholic actor that places the family planning policy context within the Catholic concern of its salvific mission, (3) the vision of the Philippine Catholic Church in this new political landscape from the decrees of PCP II that define the importance of aspects congruent to the family planning context, and (4) the influence of Pope John Paul II to the global Catholic community.

(a) Global Catholic Church—Papal Encyclicals on Contraceptives, the Family and Sexuality

The global Catholic context the CBCP is embedded within has defined specific teachings relevant to the family planning policy context. The statements of the CBCP are then embedded with those doctrines promulgated by the authority of the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

¹⁰³ Paul VI, 'Christus Dominus'.

¹⁰⁴ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

¹⁰⁵ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 133.

¹⁰⁶ Wight, *Agent, Structures*, 213.

The point on magisterial authority will be explored later in this chapter when considering agency³. The Catholic Church's doctrines have defined positions on specific issues of contraception, abortion, the family and sexuality that lend themselves as a resource to the direction of the CBCP. I argue the specificity of Catholic teachings enables the CBCP to readily access the teachings as a resource to respond to the government's family planning policies. However, the Catholic teachings must be accepted and adopted by the CBCP and applied to the Philippine context. I am not suggesting the position and response of the CBCP is predetermined. I will return to this point when considering Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*.

The CBCP statements on Philippine family planning policy are embedded and have continuity with the Catholic teachings in papal encyclicals. In this context, the Catholic Church's teachings are not the application of Catholic teaching to a new problem but an affirmation of a particularly held Catholic stance on a specific issue. This specificity can be compared to applying broad principles of Catholic social teaching to social issues like agrarian land reform. An important papal encyclical to consider first is *Humanae Vitae* from Pope Paul VI on 25 July 1968. The encyclical affirmed the Catholic Church's position on marriage, natural and artificial birth control, sexuality and abortion. Each of these areas is not a discrete issue but is interrelated in formulating the Church's teaching in this space. The affirmation in the encyclical was 'deeply rooted in classical philosophy and long-standing Church teachings and practices'.¹⁰⁷ The intention is not to examine the theological and philosophical merits of the encyclical or to trace in detail the principles espoused in the encyclical. It will be useful to briefly lay out some of the principles contained in the encyclical to contribute to our understanding of the agency of the CBCP. Marriage in the encyclical is understood as 'the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect on man His loving design'.¹⁰⁸ Then the 'husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons ... cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives'.¹⁰⁹ In observing the natural law concerning sexual activity, Paul VI wrote that the 'Church ... in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every material act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relation to the

¹⁰⁷ Donald T. Critchlow, 'The Legacy of *Humanae Vitae*', in *Humanae Vitae, 50 Years Later: Embracing God's Vision for Marriage, Love and Life: A Compendium*, ed. Theresa Notare (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 3.

¹⁰⁸ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae', Vatican, accessed 30 October 2020, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

¹⁰⁹ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

procreation of human life'.¹¹⁰ This is because the teachings 'expounded by the magisterium of the Church' are, according to the encyclical, 'established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act'.¹¹¹ As a consequence, that which 'impairs the capacity to transmit life ... frustrates [God's] design which constitutes the norm of marriage, and contradicts the will of the Author of life'.¹¹² *Humanae Vitae* then declared based on the first principles of the human and the doctrine of marriage that:

the direct interruption of the generative process already begun and, above all, all direct abortion, even for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means for regulating the number of children. Equally to be condemned ... is direct sterilization, whether of the man or of the woman, whether permanent or temporary.¹¹³

The encyclical continued by saying that this is because these are 'of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general'.¹¹⁴ The underlying concept of a natural order evident in these quotations from *Humanae Vitae* will be further explored in the next section. The encyclical did make some allowances. For example, individuals could use 'therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily disease, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result ... provide such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever'.¹¹⁵ Married people could also 'take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse during those time that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles'.¹¹⁶ Critchlow argued there is an equally important aspect to the encyclical aside from the content of Catholic doctrine that received less attention from the media and many commentators at the time. According to Critchlow, the important aspect missed was 'the encyclical's warning about the dangers of morally unrestrained state power in regulating human life and death and the consequences of a breakdown in moral order for civilization itself'.¹¹⁷ In the words of the encyclical:

¹¹⁰ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹¹ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹² Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹³ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹⁴ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹⁵ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹⁶ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹⁷ Critchlow, 'Legacy of Humanae Vitae', 3-4.

Everything therefore in the modern means of social communication which arouses men's baser passions and encourages low moral standards, as well as every obscenity in the written word and every form of indecency on the stage and screen, should be condemned publicly and unanimously by all those who have at heart the advance of civilization and the safeguarding of the outstanding values of the human spirit.¹¹⁸

Humanae Vitae is an important Church document on marriage, the family, sexuality and contraceptives. This is similar to the importance *Rerum Novarum* had in the Catholic Church for its Catholic social teaching tradition. It would be mistaken to assume the contents of *Humanae Vitae* were universally accepted within the global Catholic community in the same way.¹¹⁹ Controversial could be an acceptable description of the encyclical's reception at its publication. Williams explored the statements of the episcopal conferences of France, Canada, Indonesia and Scandinavia. Paul VI had called on the bishops to lead in safeguarding Catholic doctrine. In the encyclical, Paul VI said:

For we invite all of you, We implore you, to give a lead to your priests who assist you in the sacred ministry, and to the faithful of your diocese, and to devote yourselves with all zeal and without delay to safeguard the holiness of marriage, in order to guide married life to its full human and Christian perfection. Consider this mission as one of your most urgent responsibilities at the present time.¹²⁰

The statements of the episcopal conference examined by Williams in the wake *Humanae Vitae* 'seemed to carry an "official" character even if the term "magisterial" was not proposed to identify them'.¹²¹ Williams argued:

The authenticity of the Church's teaching on contraception itself ... seems never to have been directly questioned by the bishops ... an accommodation was being delineated with regard to the response. The statement provided 'contexts', some diversionary and questionable, that had the tendency to override in attention the specific teaching being formally advanced. There were devout exhortations, classical textbook *dicta*, and the pastoral approaches of the day. But the conferences responsible for the statements we have viewed, in effect, appeared to have demurred on the importance of identifying the immorality of the contraceptive act. *HV* [*Humanae Vitae*] was order, clear, and concise in this message.¹²²

What about the statement of the CBCP in the wake of *Humanae Vitae*? The CBCP released a pastoral letter on 12 October 1968 concerning *Humanae Vitae*. At a glance, the letter seems to

¹¹⁸ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Critchlow, 'Legacy of Humanae Vitae'; John Joseph Williams, 'Bishops' Conferences in the Wake of Humanae Vitae: Commentaries that Missed the Mark', *Catholic Social Science Review* 22 (2017).

¹²⁰ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹²¹ Williams, 'Bishops' Conferences', 172.

¹²² Williams, 'Bishops' Conferences', 180.

show the CBCP accepting the teachings and message presented in *Humanae Vitae* without qualification. The CBCP noted that ‘a good portion of the Catholic world has been waiting for the decision of the Holy Father on the question of the regulation of birth. Now that he has given us ... the right moral guidance ... it behoves us all to accept his word with filial love and follow it faithfully and loyally’.¹²³ The CBCP acknowledged opposition to the encyclical, even from Catholics. Still, for the CBCP, the prohibition contained in the encyclical was not a ‘trivial matter’ and ‘refusal to accept it is a serious disobedience because by its nature it is an authoritative teaching which commands assent’.¹²⁴ As the CBCP has said, ‘the teaching office of the Church has spoken ... So to form a right and certain conscience on this matter, we have the doctrine contained in the Encyclical as a sure guide’.¹²⁵

The CBCP continued by rejecting two arguments to justify or insinuate disagreement and non-adherence to the encyclical. Thus, the Catholic person did not have an obligation to listen to what the Pope wrote in the encyclical. The two arguments were: first, Paul VI did not intend for the encyclical to be the last word as an irreformable statement since the matter is still in a stage of doctrinal development, and second, there was no infallible pronouncement, and so everyone has the right to disagree with the Holy Father because Vatican II gives everyone the duty and right to form true and right judgements of conscience.¹²⁶ Concerning the first argument, the CBCP acknowledged that Paul VI claimed the encyclical was not a ‘complete treatment’ and that the magisterium of the Church should return to it with fuller exposition.¹²⁷ The CBCP argued that the first argument is a criterion stemming from ‘the modern tendency to wat down [the Church’s] institutional character’.¹²⁸ It further argued that to accept the first argument against following the encyclical would mean that ‘no law or discipline could ever be enforced for everyone would have the right to claim that the doctrinal basis of any given law can still stand further study and so ... has no obligation in conscience to obey it until he decides that full growth has been achieved’. According to the CBCP, this hierarchy has the function ‘to serve the people of God through the sacramental life and the interpretation of the truth and will of God’.¹²⁹ This means that the institutional character of the Church through the hierarchy has the authority to define the beliefs of the faith. Concerning the second argument, the CBCP argued that ‘the “right to form

¹²³ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’, accessed 2 September 2021, <https://cbcponline.net/pastoral-letter-of-the-catholic-hierarchy-of-the-philippines-on-the-encyclical-letter-humanae-vitae>.

¹²⁴ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹²⁵ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹²⁶ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹²⁷ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹²⁸ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹²⁹ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

judgement of conscience” is delimited by the duty to adhere sincerely” to the judgements of the supreme magisterium, even when they are not given ex cathedra’.¹³⁰ Otherwise according to the CBCP we would fall into a situation of ‘personal ethics’.¹³¹ The statement of the CBCP on *Humanae Vitae* provides valuable insight into the CBCP before the 1986–1998 period. Arguments from Williams on the differences among episcopal conferences emphasise the response towards the encyclical was not determined automatically despite the encyclical being a global Catholic document on Catholic doctrines. It should then not be assumed the encyclical has determined how the CBCP, or any Catholic actor, would act. The differences lie in the dynamics of agency, where influential intervening elements can influence the resulting actions of the actor.

The Catholic teachings of *Humanae Vitae* have continued in subsequent papal encyclicals. John Paul II published on 25 March 1995 the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* or the ‘Gospel of Life’. The drafted encyclical was much longer than *Humanae Vitae*. This encyclical focused on the themes of the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life to address issues of murder, euthanasia, abortion, contraceptives and capital punishment. This encyclical reaffirmed the Catholic Church’s doctrines important to the family planning policy context and responded to ‘the struggle between the “culture of life” and the “culture of death” ’.¹³² According to John Paul II, ‘the body is no longer perceived as a properly personal reality, a sign and place of relations with others, with God and with the world. It is reduced to pure materiality ... to be used according to the sole criteria of pleasure and efficiency’.¹³³ The encyclical continues with:

the original import of human sexuality is distorted and falsified, and the two meanings, unitive and procreative, inherent in the very nature of the conjugal act, are artificially separate: in this way the marriage union is betrayed and its fruitfulness is subjected to the caprice of the couple. Procreation then becomes the ‘enemy’ to be avoided in sexual activity.¹³⁴

According to the encyclical, procreation is ‘deeply human and full of religious meaning’, where ‘God’s own image and likeness is transmitted, thanks to the creation of the immortal soul’.¹³⁵ On the sacredness and inviolability of human life, the encyclical stated that ‘by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his successors, and in communion with the Bishops of

¹³⁰ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹³¹ CBCP, ‘*Humanae Vitae*’.

¹³² John Paul II, ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’, Vatican, accessed 3 September 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html.

¹³³ John Paul II, ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’.

¹³⁴ John Paul II, ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’.

¹³⁵ John Paul II, ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’.

the Catholic Church, I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral'.¹³⁶ The encyclical shows this position is 'reaffirmed by Sacred Scripture, transmitted by the Tradition of the Church and taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium'. The encyclical concludes that it is 'always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end in itself or as a means to a good end. It is ... a grave act of disobedience to the moral law, and ... to God himself, the author and guarantor of that law'.¹³⁷ Abortion is treated in the encyclical as 'murder' because, according to the encyclical, 'the one eliminated is a human being at the very beginning of life'.¹³⁸

The statements of the CBCP as the bearer of their Catholicity reflect the Catholic teachings promulgated in the papal encyclicals. This means the self of CBCP in agency₁ within the Wight framework sees it as bearing its identification with Catholicism in agency₂. The lens to respond to governmental family planning policies and programs uses resources available in the Catholic community. The 1995 CBCP statement on the Beijing conference is a good example of explicitly drawing from a papal encyclical. The CBCP criticised what it saw as the 'subtle yet persistent view to devalue life' in the conference by 'impos[ing] on all governments of the world a secular humanistic philosophy which promotes contraception, abortion and sterilization'.¹³⁹ By referencing John Paul II, the CBCP said that this 'secular humanistic philosophy' is referred to in *Evangelium Vitae* as the 'culture of death'.¹⁴⁰ However, we do not see direct citations of papal encyclicals in other previous CBCP statements subject to this current study. I argue that there is a common link between the Catholic teachings and position espoused in the various CBCP statement and the contents of *Humanae Vitae*. The statements of the CBCP from 1990 to 1994 have remained consistent in their opposition to abortion, sterilisation and contraceptives. For example, the 1990 *Guiding Principles on Population Control* held that directly willed abortion, abortifacients, sterilisations and contraceptives are 'wrong in themselves'.¹⁴¹ Instead, the *Guiding Principles* supported natural family planning, as in *Humanae Vitae*, and the need for responsible parenthood.¹⁴² The 1990 *Love is Life* pastoral letter similarly condemned contraceptives, abortion and sterilization.¹⁴³ The CBCP, also in line with Catholic teachings,

¹³⁶ John Paul II, 'Evangelium Vitae'.

¹³⁷ John Paul II, 'Evangelium Vitae'.

¹³⁸ John Paul II, 'Evangelium Vitae'.

¹³⁹ CBCP, 'Suitable Companion for Him'.

¹⁴⁰ CBCP, 'Suitable Companion for Him'.

¹⁴¹ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

¹⁴² CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

¹⁴³ CBCP, 'Love is Life: A Pastoral Letter on the Population Control Activities of the Philippine Government and Planned Parenthood Associations (Short Version for Pulpit use)'.

rejected condom distribution and the safe sex proposal in its pastoral letter on AIDS because, according to the CBCP, ‘it simply evades and neglects the heart of the solution, namely, the formation of authentic sexual values’.¹⁴⁴ The pastoral letter stated that ‘sexual love must be faithful, not promiscuous. It must be committed, open to life, lifelong and not casual. This is why the full sexual expression of human love is reserved to husband and wife within marriage’.¹⁴⁵ In its 1993 *Save the Family and Live* statement, the CBCP said, ‘the blatant promotion of direct contraception and direct sterilization which separate the two aspects of the conjugal act—the expression of love and openness to transmission of life—is contrary to the will of God’.¹⁴⁶ Finally, in the 1994 Cairo statement, the CBCP said that ‘marriage is the only morally legitimate setting for the exercise of the sexual act and the procreation of children’.¹⁴⁷ Catholic teachings on the family, sexuality and marriage, and the opposition to abortion, contraceptives and sterilisation are a common thread running through CBCP statements. This is also reflected in the doctrinal contents of *Humanae Vitae*. The statements and the CBCP then do not emerge out of anywhere but are embedded within the wider Catholic community.

With its brief examination of the papal encyclical, this section cannot go any deeper into the intricacies of the doctrines of the Catholic Church based on the scope of the study. I have argued there is continuity between the doctrines of the global Catholic Church as proclaimed in the papal encyclicals and the doctrinal points in the statements of the CBCP. However, this continuity between the CBCP and the global Catholic context does not of itself determine the agency of the CBCP. The papal encyclicals and Catholic teachings are a resource that enables the CBCP to act, but this is not the totality of its agency. As we progress through the next layers in the agency of the CBCP, this doctrinal stance will be further enhanced and influential on the bishops of the CBCP and the statements. The papal encyclicals discussed in this section provide a resource for the CBCP to critique government family planning policy. These encyclicals, as mentioned, have indicated the existence of a natural order of God. This natural order and the implications for understanding agency in the family planning policy context is discussed in the next section.

(b) The Family and Salvation in the Natural Order of God

The Catholic teachings the CBCP statements are embedded within, point to and draw from an existing natural order from God. I will argue that understanding the Catholic teachings discussed

¹⁴⁴ CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

¹⁴⁵ CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

¹⁴⁶ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live’.

¹⁴⁷ CBCP, ‘Pastoral Statement on the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development’.

in the previous section and its relationship to a concept of the natural order shows the central effect government policy has on a significant Catholic view of salvation. To understand the implication of this, we need to engage with the CBCP's religious self-understanding that meaningfully informs its actions.¹⁴⁸ I have previously argued that agency₂ of the Wight framework can be supplemented with the arguments of Pabst to understand the actions of the CBCP.

The 'natural order' in the understanding of the Catholic actor can be defined as a 'really existing community' divinely constructed by God, who is in communion with all in existence, as the source of the nature and order of the world. As a bearer of the structures of its own Catholicity, the CBCP negotiates the social world considering this present natural order established by God. In the previous section, I contrasted the papal encyclicals and CBCP statements on Catholic doctrine on family planning policy issues. This established the continuity of teaching between the two document sets. I propose to adopt a similar approach in this section by looking at both document sets on this question of a natural order.

In the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, there are multiple references to the idea of a 'moral order which was established by God'.¹⁴⁹ It is written that 'the teaching of the Church regarding the proper regulation of birth is a promulgation of the law of God Himself'.¹⁵⁰ Another example is where the encyclical stated, 'God has wisely ordered laws of nature and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws'.¹⁵¹ Le Roi similarly highlights that in John Paul II's apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, 'marriage and the family are rooted in God's plan for humanity, more fundamentally in his salvific work which starts out at creation, finds its achievement in Christ's incarnation and resurrection and extends into an eschatological future' (emphasis added).¹⁵² This can be contrasted to agrarian land reform in the previous chapter. It was seen that there were moral considerations to supporting agrarian land reform within Catholic social teaching. However, agrarian land reform could not be said to have the same significant importance to a sacred plan compared to family planning policy. Finally, a palpable imagery is given by *Evangelium Vitae*, where John Paul II said, 'indeed "the blood is the life", and life, especially human life, belongs

¹⁴⁸ Omer, 'Good Religion', 132.

¹⁴⁹ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹⁵⁰ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹⁵¹ Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

¹⁵² Thomas Knieps-Port Le Roi, 'Innovation or Impasse? The Contribution of *Familiaris Consortio* to a Contemporary Theology of Marriage', *Bijdragen: International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 70, no. 1 (2009): 85.

only to God: for this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself'.¹⁵³ This is not explicitly referenced in the CBCP statement on the Beijing conference, which referred to *Evangelium Vitae*. Another example is where the encyclical stated, 'the deliberate decision to deprive an innocent human being of his life is always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end in itself or as a means to a good end. It is in fact *a grave act of disobedience to the moral law, and indeed to God himself, the author and guarantor of that law*' (emphasis added).¹⁵⁴ These examples illustrate that the papal encyclicals convey the belief in a really existing reality that has an ordered nature according to the laws of God. In this sacred and transcendent reality, family planning policy takes on a greater significance.

It is not easily a straightforward answer how this feature in the pastoral letters and statements of the CBCP; however, some hints indicate a natural order. The implication of this layer is the elevation of the statements of the CBCP from mere critiques of government policy to holding greater significance. The statements of the CBCP compared to the papal encyclicals do not have explicit references to what may be termed as the natural order established by God. There are still sections in several of the relevant statements of the CBCP that allude to the concept of a natural order established by God. In *Guiding Principles on Population Control*, we can search beyond the text itself for this reference. The text stated, 'Directly willed abortion, the use of abortifacients, sterilization and contraception wrong in themselves. *They are wrong not because the Church forbids them; the Church forbids them because they are morally wrong*' (emphasis added).¹⁵⁵ It directs the audience to a distinction in the prohibition of contraceptives because the institution has not made the decision. What does it mean that it is forbidden 'because they are morally wrong'? The answers lie in the Catholic context in which the CBCP is embedded, which includes the connection to papal encyclicals, and shows the prohibition is in the natural order or laws established by God.

The first paragraph of the statement, *Love is Life*, is an example of the oneness of the Church and the people with God. According to the statement, 'ALL HUMAN LIFE has its basic value and dignity for 'God created man in the image of himself ... male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27) ... The basic value behind this service to life is that God alone is the ultimate Lord and Master of Life and we are only stewards of life' (capitalisation original).¹⁵⁶ The CBCP stated to those privileged that 'Christian spouses are married to one another in Christ. Please do not

¹⁵³ John Paul II, 'Evangelium Vitae'.

¹⁵⁴ John Paul II, 'Evangelium Vitae'.

¹⁵⁵ CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'.

¹⁵⁶ CBCP, 'Love is Life'.

forget that the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—plays an integral part in your married life. Let God work freely in your relationship’.¹⁵⁷ In addition, the CBCP said:

Many of you involved with the population program, we know, are in good faith, moved by a sincere desire to help our brothers and sisters in the Lord. But we are unwittingly caught in a systematic campaign against childbearing. It is a worldwide drive that undermines the value of life. It is evil. This attack on life is an attack on the human person’s capacity to love. Ultimately it is an attack upon God who is Love.¹⁵⁸

In its pastoral letter on AIDS, *In the Compassion of Jesus*, the CBCP’s stated, ‘to attend to their pain is to attend to the whole Mystical Body, to attend to Christ Himself who is the Head’.¹⁵⁹ This draws us towards the concept of communion. Further on love, the pastoral letter stated, ‘among these moral beliefs is the beauty, mystery and sacredness of God’s gift of human love. It reflects the very love of God, faithful, and lifegiving. This marvellous gift is also a tremendous responsibility’.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, in the CBCP’s pastoral letter on the Family, *Save the Family and Live*, the CBCP said, ‘the mutual love husband and wife is both an institution and a mandate from the Creator for the increase of His family on earth. Marital love is sacred in its origins and destination’.¹⁶¹ This is contrasted with the use of contraception and sterilisation, which the CBCP stated was ‘contrary to the will of God’.¹⁶² The will of God is that the nature of the family is ‘by God’s design to be the Church in microcosm, that like the Church, itself Evangelizer’.¹⁶³ This means it is part of the salvific work of God. Interestingly, the letter said, ‘there will no longer be purely secular realities. All earthly realities will have a religious meaning, and offer opportunities for experiencing of the sovereignty of God’s love’.¹⁶⁴ This hints at a way of understanding the conception of agency of the CBCP because the groups and collectives in agency₂ are not just of the imminent world but also of the transcendent.

The effect governmental family planning policy has on the natural order understood in the Catholic traditions of the CBCP elevates concern for the policy. Pabst argued that societies are held together nationally and internationally by an ‘“an antecedent common culture”, which is more primary than the rights of individual citizens or sovereign states’.¹⁶⁵ This is configured by a shared ‘cosmic, moral constitution’ that is metaphysical because it links immanent values to

¹⁵⁷ CBCP, ‘Love is Life’.

¹⁵⁸ CBCP, ‘Love is Life’.

¹⁵⁹ CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

¹⁶⁰ CBCP, ‘Compassion of Jesus’.

¹⁶¹ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live:’.

¹⁶² CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live:’.

¹⁶³ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live:’.

¹⁶⁴ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live:’.

¹⁶⁵ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011–12.

their transcendent origins and outlook.¹⁶⁶ The natural order conceived in the Catholic traditions is the ‘antecedent common culture’ for the CBCP that holds society together. Pabst acknowledges the importance of both reason and faith as ‘mutually corrective and augmenting’.¹⁶⁷ In having recognised both, we can also engage deeper in IR, as Omer argued, with the religious actor’s own account of how their religiosity informs their actions. At this point, let us recall the stance of the CBCP on family planning policy discussed in the previous section. Some may easily dismiss the critiques and declaration of doctrine by the CBCP in response to family planning policy as outdated and conservative, which is a chiding of religious faith. In contrast with the direction of the discourse on religion within IR, this position does not engage with the religious actor. It strips out the rationality of the actor’s faith-based position on the issue. The position against contraception, sterilisation and abortion in the statements of the CBCP is based on and reasoned according to the concept of an existing natural order. In our understanding, the implication of the natural order is a corporate association of peoples and nations.

The natural order contains a relationality of peoples beyond the boundaries of a nation-state. This means that family planning policy is not *just* an issue for the Filipino but also for *all*. This could be equated with the Catholic social teaching principle of solidarity. This is an important implication for agency. The CBCP is positioning itself and the issue of family planning within the cosmovision of a shared common good from an invaluable source and ‘ordered towards an equally ‘invaluable’ end’.¹⁶⁸ Pabst argued a ‘corporate’ association of peoples and nations is ‘in favour of a plural search for the shared common good and substantive ends that can mediate between the individual and the collective will and thus help bind together members of diverse bodies and polities’.¹⁶⁹ This is the same for the CBCP in its stance against contraception, sterilisation and abortion because the natural order as established by God is an order towards the ‘invaluable end’ being the salvific work of God for humanity. This association emphasises the relational nature as Pabst argues that religious communities ‘foster associative ties across the globe’.¹⁷⁰ Pabst furthers:

Religions alert us to the existence of a social order that precedes and underpins the modern system of national states and transnational markets ... [and] the flow of

¹⁶⁶ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011–12.

¹⁶⁷ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1013.

¹⁶⁸ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1014.

¹⁶⁹ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1014.

¹⁷⁰ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

religions and religious framed cultural customs is what most of all integrates individuals into a global community and nations into a global polity.¹⁷¹

We are similarly alerted by the CBCP to the ‘existence of a social order that precedes and underpins the modern system’ in its stance on the government’s family planning policy. For agency² of the CBCP, the actor is embedded in this understanding of reciprocity in the social world. This natural order takes precedence for the CBCP because it is prior to the modern system. Therefore, this associative tie to a natural order contributes to the centrality of family planning policy issues.

(c) The Family in the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

The vision of the Philippine Catholic Church in the acts and decrees of the PCP II explicitly addressed areas important to the family planning policy context. Recall that PCP II was a national assembly of clergy, religious and laity convened in 1991 to set a forward-looking agenda for the renewal of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.¹⁷² PCP II, a plenary council, is structurally and legally in Canon Law distinct from the CBCP. As mentioned in the previous chapter, ‘unlike a bishops conference, which is an assembly of bishops, a [plenary] council is a meeting of churches. A conference is an expression of episcopal collegiality; a [plenary] council is an expression of ecclesial *communio*’ (original emphasis).¹⁷³ This means that a plenary council is still distinct from the CBCP despite bishops of the CBCP playing a role in convoking, planning, preparing and participating in PCP II.

Additional CBCP statements were published in the family planning policy space in the years after PCP II compared to agrarian land reform. PCP II was referenced in two CBCP statements from 1993. In the pastoral letter on the family, *Save the Family and Live*, a specific section is devoted to the idea of a renewed church. The CBCP wrote that ‘PCP II invites us to renewal in our church. It is calling us to join in that springtime in the universal Church that the 3rd Millennium will usher. This is the intuition and prayer of the Holy Father. Joyfully, we make that our own’.¹⁷⁴ What is this renewal founded on? And what does it mean to ‘make it our own’? The pastoral letter continues, giving us some indication. It is unsurprising given the title of the pastoral letter. Still, the CBCP stated that renewal will:

¹⁷¹ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

¹⁷² Genilo, ‘Review’, 104.

¹⁷³ Waters, ‘Plenary Council’, 400.

¹⁷⁴ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live’.

[rest] on the growing awareness by the family of its nature: by God's design to be the Church in microcosm, that like the Church, itself Evangelizer. And so, the Holy Father points, *evangelizing the family is at the heart of evangelization*. 'Evangelization, in fact, necessarily passes through the family'. The family itself proclaims the gospel.¹⁷⁵ (emphasis added)

Again, we see the link with a 'really existing' natural order discussed in the previous section. The central premise in the linkage between the call for renewal in PCP II and this statement is summarised in the emphasis point in the quotation above—'evangelizing the family is at the heart of evangelization'. This point will be explored in more detail later in this section when I examine the PCP II acts and decrees. The purpose of the CBCP is to spread the good news, in a word, evangelise. Evangelising would then require the family, and in the CBCP's view, this would be affected by the government's family planning policies and programs that promote contraceptives, population growth reduction and sterilisation. It can be said that the fight over family planning policies strikes at the heart of the salvific mission of the CBCP and, more broadly, the Catholic Church. In the CBCP pastoral letter on AIDS, *In the Compassion of Jesus*, a connection is drawn between the message of solidarity in Vatican II and PCP II. The pastoral letter stated, after quoting the word of St Paul:

The words of St Paul strongly remind us that we are responsible for one another. They reverberate in the declaration of Vatican II: 'The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the peoples of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well' (On the Church in the Modern World, no 1). More recently the words are echoed by the [PCP II] in its clarion call for solidarity (PCP II Acts and Decrees, e.g. no. 295).¹⁷⁶

The CBCP emphasises a different aspect of PCP II, namely, solidarity among peoples. This contrasts with the emphasis on renewal within the Philippine Catholic Church community in the *Save the Family and Live* pastoral letter. I turn now to look at the acts and decrees of PCP II, particularly the concept presented in the quote earlier—'evangelizing the family is at the heart of evangelization'—and its connection to the stance of the CBCP to the government's family planning policy.

Recall that the position of the Catholic Church is based on multiple areas, such as marriage, the family and sexuality, intersecting with the issue of abortion, sterilisation and contraceptives. The PCP II conciliar document on aspects of the laity's role and life said:

¹⁷⁵ CBCP, 'Save the Family and Live'.

¹⁷⁶ CBCP, 'Compassion of Jesus'.

The family is the Church in the home. It is the primary community of Christ's disciples whose members are bound together not only by the ties of flesh and blood but by the grace and obedience to the Father's will. *Jesus began his work of salvation with a family ... Thus, family life in the Lord is of the greatest concern of the Church. The family plays a pivotal role in renewing Christian life and in forming communities of the Lord's disciples.*¹⁷⁷ (emphasis added)

This passage emphasises the importance of the family to the Church. It highlights several aspects, including: (1) the relationship between the family and the Church, (2) members are bound together by the grace and obedience to God's will (a connection to the transcendent natural order as discussed in the previous section), (3) the family is the beginning of the salvific work, (4) it is pivotal in the formation of communities of disciples, renewal and maturity of the faith. It is not surprising then to see the condemnation of abortion, sterilisation and contraceptives later in the conciliar document under the heading of the Christian Family. The points raised above are again reemphasised in the section on the Christian Family in the conciliar document. According to the PCP II conciliar document, the Christian family is the first among the groups, communities and institutions that continues the evangelising work to manifest and transmit the truth and love of Christ.¹⁷⁸ This is because the family is 'an evangelizing force' and 'the first school of discipleship'.¹⁷⁹ After continuing to discuss the various roles within the Christian family, the PCP II conciliar document arrived at its condemnation of abortion, sterilisation and contraceptives. It stated:

We reiterate here the Church's condemnation of directly-willed abortion, sterilization and contraception as wrong in themselves, even as we also express our sorrow at the existence of conditions that have included many to perpetuate these misdeeds. We also wish to register our opposition to any pressure, coercive action or policy that removes from couples the right to decide the number of their children.¹⁸⁰

This is a continuation of both the stance of the Catholic Church and the CBCP expressed in the two statements in 1990. The document characterises approaches to family planning policy to control population growth as coercive by removing the right of couples to decide the number of their children. The above passage then continues in the conciliar document by stating, 'Catholics should be guided by the teaching of the Pope and the bishops ... [as] stated in official documents like the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, the papal documents, *Humane*

¹⁷⁷ *Acts and Decrees*, 145.

¹⁷⁸ *Acts and Decrees*, 195.

¹⁷⁹ *Acts and Decrees*, 195.

¹⁸⁰ *Acts and Decrees*, 198.

Vitae, and *Familiaris Consortio*, the CBCP [1990 documents]'.¹⁸¹ The ending of the section on the Christian family in the PCP II conciliar document is noteworthy because it highlights the reasoning behind the concern of the Church with the family planning policy space. The section ends with the statement that 'the *future of humankind passes through the family. So does the future of the Church.* Hence, the *Church should direct its primary attention to the Christian family* so that it may become not only the object but also the subject of evangelization' (emphasis added).¹⁸² What is important for our discussion on agency is revealed and encapsulated in this last paragraph. The crux of the issue is that the family, as affected by government policy, also affects 'the future of humankind' and the 'future of the Church'. I now turn to discuss the decrees resulting from PCP II.

The decrees of PCP II have specific references to the Catholic Church's teaching against contraceptives. This can be contrasted to agrarian land reform, which did not have a stance enunciated in the decrees of PCP II but was instead incorporated in other broader concerns. The theme of responsible parenthood was seen in both papal encyclicals and the statements of the CBCP. In the decrees of PCP II, consider section 2 'Responsible Christian Parenthood' of Article 29 found under the heading 'special social concerns'. It states:

The Church, faithful to her teachings should call on the responsibility of all concerned to help present the notion of responsible Christian parenthood as contained in *Gaudium et Spes*, *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiarise Consortio*. In this sense, 'a broader, more decision and more systematic effort should be undertaken to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected and applied'.¹⁸³ (emphasis original)

The quotation in the above extract is derived from Pope John Paul II's papal encyclical, *Familiaris Consortio*.¹⁸⁴ This decree is an example of the visible link between papal encyclicals and the position adopted within the Philippine Catholic Church. As a response to the 'contraceptive mentality' noted in the conciliar document, the Catholic Church's concept of responsible parenthood is a very specific response to family planning policy in the Philippines. The decrees of PCP II further legislated on the family, with section 2 on the family Article 46 paragraph 4 providing, '*Christian families should be countersign to the manipulative anti-life culture, through a strengthened family spirituality which is pro-life*' (emphasis added).¹⁸⁵ Article

¹⁸¹ *Acts and Decrees*, 198.

¹⁸² *Acts and Decrees*, 202.

¹⁸³ *Acts and Decrees*, 242.

¹⁸⁴ See, John Paul II, 'Familiaris Consortio', Vatican, accessed 18 September 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html.

¹⁸⁵ *Acts and Decrees*, 247.

48 also stated that ‘the family is to be regarded as the basic unit of Christian life. Hence it must be viewed as both subject and object of evangelization; for evangelization begins in the family and family catechesis must be part of the fostering of BECs [i.e., basic ecclesial communities]’.¹⁸⁶ These articles in the decrees of the PCP II are a visible sign of the importance of the family to the Philippine Catholic Church and by extension the CBCP. As the conciliar document noted, the family is the ‘future of humankind’ and ‘the future of the Church’.

The decrees of PCP II are a significant component for understanding the agency of the CBCP because the PCP II is a blueprint for what the Philippine Church is and will be in the next period of history. Remember, a plenary council is a ‘solemn proclamation of current convictions and future vision, involving the whole Catholic community’.¹⁸⁷ This means that the PCP II is a repository for the CBCP to draw from in its response to the world. It reaffirms and shapes how the CBCP, as an entity, responds to the outside forces of construction (agency₁). As a meeting of the churches (i.e., the dioceses), compared to just the individual bishops, the PCP II shapes the conceptual direction and framing of the Philippine Catholic Church community as a whole in this next period of history. The PCP II can be argued to form part of the identity of the CBCP in the years ahead and the exercise of agency₃ (i.e., the position, practice and place of the CBCP).

(d) The Influence of Pope John Paul II

The pontificate of Pope John Paul II has had a profound influence on the global community of the Catholic Church and society. It was a pontificate that was wholly within the post-conciliar period after Vatican II. Several of the encyclicals of John Paul II would have a major impact on the internal affairs of the Church, including *Centesimus Annus*, *Veritatis Splendor*, *Evangelium Vitae*, *Ut Unum Sint*, *Fides et Ratio* and *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.¹⁸⁸ According to Schelkens, Dick and Mettepenningen, these six encyclicals demonstrated that, compared to his predecessors, John Paul II became ‘known for his radical stance on ethical issues, particularly his opposition to abortion and euthanasia’. It was mentioned earlier that the CBCP in the Beijing statement referred to John Paul II’s encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*.¹⁸⁹ The Beijing statement said that the forthcoming World Conference on Women ‘intends to impose on all governments ... a secular humanistic philosophy’, which John Paul II called in his encyclical as the ‘culture of death’.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ *Acts and Decrees*, 247–48.

¹⁸⁷ Waters, ‘Plenary Council’, 400–1.

¹⁸⁸ Karim Schelkens, John A. Dick and Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Aggiornamento? Catholicism from Gregory XVI to Benedict XVI*, ed. Wim Janse, vol. 63, Brill’s Series in Church History (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2013), 193.

¹⁸⁹ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

¹⁹⁰ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

The CBCP thanked the Holy See for its ‘timely and forceful’ intervention in the Cairo conference in the preceding year.¹⁹¹ As for the Beijing conference, the CBCP reiterated its ‘unfailing commitment in union with the Holy Father in this fundamental struggle to proclaim the “gospel of life” against the forces that intend to suppress it’.¹⁹² The same statement also referenced John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* on the dignity and vocation of women. According to John Paul II in the apostolic letter:

the moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that *God entrusts the human being to her in a special way*. Of course, God entrusts every human being to each and every other human being. But this entrusting concerns women in a special way—precisely by reason of their femininity—and this in a particular way determines their vocation.¹⁹³ (emphasis original)

John Paul II would also be particularly known for his large corpus of papal audience addresses constituting his teachings known as the theology of the body.¹⁹⁴ Schelkens, Dick and Mettepenningen argued that John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ‘made it immediately clear that his main concern for the post-conciliar Catholic Church was that of evangelization’. These scholars further argued that while tying itself explicitly to the agenda of Vatican II, the Catholic magisterium returned to an emphasis of the ‘defence’ of the truth as the dogmatic undercurrent for evangelisation.¹⁹⁵

An example of the evangelising mission of John Paul II was with the youth of the Catholic Church through the tradition of World Youth Days begun during his pontificate. According to the Pope, the ‘first meeting held in St Peter’s Square on Palm Sunday 1986, started a tradition of world and diocesan gatherings in alternate years, underlining ... the twofold dimension, local and universal, or young people’s indispensable apostolic commitment’.¹⁹⁶ In 1995 the Philippines hosted the tenth World Youth Day with the personal participation of John Paul II in Manila, Philippines. The significance of this event was to bring together the youth of the global Catholic Church to the Philippines. An added significance of a World Youth Day in the

¹⁹¹ CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

¹⁹² CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

¹⁹³ John Paul II, ‘Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year’, Vatican, published in 1988, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

¹⁹⁴ See, John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

¹⁹⁵ Schelkens, Dick and Mettepenningen, *Aggiornamento?*, 63, 188.

¹⁹⁶ John Paul II, ‘Letter of John Paul II to Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio on the Occasion of the Seminar on World Youth Days Organized in Czestochowa’, Vatican, published 1996, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1996/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19960508_czestochowa-gmg.html.

Philippines was, as the Pope mentioned in his message at the ninth and tenth World Youth Days, ‘the world meeting of young people with the Pope will be celebrated for the first on the Asian continent’.¹⁹⁷ John Paul II mentioned the ‘historic destiny’ of the Philippines during his welcome address at Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila, on 12 January 1995:

The Church in the Philippines knows that it has *a special vocation* to bear witness to the Gospel in the heart of Asia. *Guided by Divine Providence, your historic destiny* is to build a ‘civilization of love’, of brotherhood and solidarity, a civilization which will be perfectly at home among the ancient culture and traditions of the whole Asian continent.¹⁹⁸ (emphasis added)

This is rich with the imagery of the Philippines as holding a special significance in Asia. It is a familiar characterisation of the Philippines mentioned earlier in this study.

The family featured in one of the messages of John Paul II during his visit to the Philippines. The Pope thanked the Philippine bishops and the CBCP’s Commission on Family Life for what they have done to ‘focus attention on the family’s needs during the past *Year of the Family*’ (original emphasis) in his address to the CBCP on 14 January 1995 during his World Youth Day visit in Manila, Philippines.¹⁹⁹ The address to the CBCP also had points relevant to the CBCP and the Philippine family planning policy context. The Pope told the Philippine bishops there is ‘[a] particular challenge facing your ministry ... of defending *the family and strengthening family life*’ (original emphasis).²⁰⁰ The Pope acknowledged that the CBCP had ‘strongly defended the truth about man in your teaching on the *value of human life and the sanctity of procreation*’ when ‘powerful interests promote policies which are against the moral inscribed on the human heart’ (emphasis original).²⁰¹ The Pope continued: ‘because the Church treasures the divine gifts of human life and its inalienable dignity, she cannot but strenuously oppose all measures which are in any way directed at promoting abortion, sterilization and also contraception’.²⁰² The CBCP’s ‘firm stand against the pessimism and selfishness of those who plot against the splendor of human sexuality and human life (Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, *Conciliar*

¹⁹⁷ John Paul II, ‘Message of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II for the IX and X World Youth Day’, Vatican, accessed 29 August 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_21111993_ix-and-x-world-youth-day.html.

¹⁹⁸ John Paul II, ‘Welcome Ceremony Address of His Holiness John Paul II’, Vatican, published 12 January 1995, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19950112_welcome-manila.html.

¹⁹⁹ John Paul II, ‘Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines’, Vatican, published 14 January 1995, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_14011995_bishops-of-the-philippines.html.

²⁰⁰ John Paul II, ‘Address of His Holiness John Paul II’.

²⁰¹ John Paul II, ‘Address of His Holiness John Paul II’.

²⁰² John Paul II, ‘Address of His Holiness John Paul II’.

Document, n. 585) is an essential demand of your pastoral ministry and of your service to the Filipino people' (emphasis added).²⁰³ This is an acknowledgement and perhaps an encouragement to the bishops of the CBCP for their active and public statements in opposition to government policy on contraception, abortion, sterilisation and population reduction. The CBCP statement on the World Conference in Beijing was published in July 1995 after the Philippines hosted the tenth World Youth Day in January 1995 with Pope John Paul II.

The theme of the Philippines as the 'Catholic nation' has been a persistent theme of both Philippine bishops and the papacy. Another palpable example of the imagery of Catholicism in the Philippines after the People Power Revolution is the gathering at World Youth Day. An estimated 4 to 5 million people attended the Papal Mass at Luneta Park, Manila, celebrated by John Paul II.²⁰⁴ This was a world record for a papal gathering at the time, only surpassed approximately two decades later by the estimated 6 million attendees at the Papal Mass with Pope Francis.²⁰⁵ The 'Catholic nation' theme can be seen in the Pope's farewell address at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila, on 16 January 1995. He said, 'may God help you to follow the path you have already begun: towards a continuing development that preserves and promotes the *true values of your Filipino culture!*' (emphasis original).²⁰⁶ What constitutes the 'true values' of Filipino culture? I argue that this reiterates the conflation of the Filipino with Catholicism. This can be seen with the earlier mentioned remarks of the providential 'special vocation' and 'historic destiny' of the Philippines by John Paul II in his welcome address at the airport on 12 January 1995.²⁰⁷ These descriptions of the Philippines are also a continuation of similar previous statements by Pius XII and Paul VI quoted by the CBCP in a pastoral letter in 1970, as mentioned in Chapter 3.²⁰⁸ The CBCP quotes Paul VI in calling the Philippines 'a great Catholic nation' and suggesting that the Philippines' 'geographical and historical destiny' is to 'give your sincere Catholic profession a wider missionary expression'.²⁰⁹ These descriptions strengthen the image of the Philippines as a Catholic nation by conflating it with the Catholic

²⁰³ John Paul II, 'Address of His Holiness John Paul II'.

²⁰⁴ Frank J. Coppa, *The Papacy in the Modern World: A Political History* (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2014), 219; Alan Cowell, 'Up to 4 Million Turn Out for Pope's Mass in Manila', *The New York Times*, last modified 16 January 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/16/world/up-to-4-million-turn-out-for-pope-s-mass-in-manila.html>.

²⁰⁵ 'Filipinos Mass in Their Millions for the Pope', *Daily Telegraph*, last modified 19 January 2015, News, <https://search-ebscohost-com.ipacez.nd.edu.au/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=8Q294957723&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁰⁶ John Paul II, 'Farewell Ceremony Address of His Holiness John Paul II', Vatican, accessed 29 August 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19950116_congedo-manila.html.

²⁰⁷ John Paul II, 'Welcome Ceremony Address'.

²⁰⁸ CBCP, 'Visit of the Holy Father'.

²⁰⁹ CBCP, 'Visit of the Holy Father'.

faith. Francisco has elsewhere argued that the ‘Catholic nation’ emphasises the imaginary nature of constructing any community and applies to both the national and religious collective’.²¹⁰ He traces the official discourse of the CBCP and its predecessor, the CWO, as constructing and promoting the imaginary of the Philippines as a ‘Catholic Nation’.²¹¹ According to Francisco ‘national concerns are read as signs of the times with the imaginary of “Catholic nation”’ through the pastoral logic of the CBCP.²¹² Francisco argued that the ‘special status’ of the Philippines as God-given and linked to the papacy had provided the basis for much CBCP critique on aspects of Philippines society.²¹³ The construction of a ‘Catholic nation’ fortifying the ‘actorness’ of the CBCP as moral guardians of the nation is reemphasised at both the local and global levels. This contrasts with the institutional character of the Catholic Church as represented by the bishops of the CBCP. This ‘multi-layered actorness’ of the CBCP is reinforced in sources at the local and global levels through the cultivation of the Catholic nation conception of the Philippines.²¹⁴ This structure feeds into the agency₂ of the bishops of the CBCP to engage at the level of agency₃ with their position as bishops and with the practice of pastoral letters and statements. This will be discussed in the section on agency₃ to follow.

5.4.4 Agency 3—The Position and Practice of the CBCP in Family Planning Policy

Wight called his third level of agency, agency₃, referring to the ‘positioned-practice-places’ that agents₁ inhabit on behalf of agents₂.²¹⁵ Put simply, agency₃ refers to those ‘roles’ that agents₁ play for agency₂.²¹⁶ Wight argued that the “positioned-practices” are structural properties that persist irrespective of the agents that occupy them and as such cannot be reduced to the properties of the agents₁ that occupy them, but these “positions-practice-places”, when occupied by agents₁, enable and constrain them according to the specific modalities of the “position-practice-place”’.²¹⁷ The components in agency₁ and agency₂ in the family planning policy context will provide a different outcome in this third layer for the CBCP. First, no problems were encountered with questions on the magisterial authority of the CBCP. Second, the agency layers have enabled a greater frequency of the use of pastoral letters and statements by the CBCP to respond to government policy.

²¹⁰ Francisco, ‘People of God’, 342.

²¹¹ Francisco, ‘People of God’, 341–75.

²¹² Francisco, ‘People of God’, 358.

²¹³ Francisco, ‘People of God’, 356.

²¹⁴ Barbato, ‘Multi-layered Actorness’.

²¹⁵ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²¹⁶ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

²¹⁷ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133–34.

(a) Magisterial Authority of Bishops and the Teaching on the Family

There seem to be no problems encountered with questions on the magisterial authority of the CBCP concerning the relevant teachings to respond to the government's family planning policies. The CBCP is a collective comprising those individuals who occupy and are positioned in the office of bishop. This will endow each individual bishop with certain privileges, status and function within the Catholic Church in the Philippines and globally. The individual and collective bishops participate in what is known in the Catholic Church as the magisterium. The CBCP does not need to face questions of authority in relation to the magisterium. This leads to its actions and, by extension, the bishops' within the CBCP, as being confident and loud in their criticisms of government policy.

Recall from the previous chapter that the office of bishop is responsible for three areas: teaching, sanctifying and governing.²¹⁸ The magisterium is 'the teaching authority of the college of bishops under the headship of the Bishop of Rome [i.e., the Pope]'.²¹⁹ It is a term used to refer to both the teaching authority and the body as the authoritative teacher of the Catholic faith within the Catholic Church. There has been a continuing debate about the teaching authority or magisterial authority of episcopal conferences and subordinate bodies within the episcopal conference. Sullivan noted that 'it is not surprising that after Vatican II episcopal conference saw it as within their competence to issue pastoral letters in which they were exercising their pastoral teaching office in common'.²²⁰ This led to debate within the Catholic Church about the teaching authority of episcopal conferences. On 21 May 1998, Pope John Paul II issued a *motu proprio*, *Apostolos Suos*, that clarified the authority of episcopal conferences and what conditions needed to be met for doctrinal declarations of the episcopal conference to constitute the authentic magisterium. There has been continued discussion in theological literature about extending the magisterial authority to episcopal conferences and their subordinate bodies.²²¹

The CBCP does not seem to have been affected by the debates on magisterial authority in the current policy context. It continued to issue pastoral letters and statements in response to the government's family planning policies, as shown in the comparison Table 1 in Chapter 4. This is significant because some consider that the debate's resolution occurred at the *mutu proprio* of

²¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, 'Lumen Gentium'. [21]

²¹⁹ Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?*, 83.

²²⁰ Sullivan, 'Teaching Authority', 475.

²²¹ See, for example, Manzanares, 'Teaching Authority'; cf. Phan, 'From Magisterium to Magisteria'.

John Paul II, *Apostolos Suos*, issued only in 1998—the final year within the time focused on in the current study.

In some of the statements from the CBCP, there have been explicit intentions of connecting the CBCP with the Pope. Consider the point made in the Cairo statement of ‘solidarity with the Holy Father’ and the Beijing statement of ‘Your Bishops, reiterate our unfailing commitment in union with the Holy Father in this fundamental struggle to proclaim the “gospel of life”’.²²² These signifiers point to authority beyond the borders of the nation-state. It also connects the CBCP’s message in the Cairo and Beijing statements to the global Catholic Church with the pope as its head. However, for the ordinary Catholic, it may be reasonable for us to say, as Gaillardetz did, ‘It is not easy for ordinary Catholics today to recognize the distinct modes in which the pope and bishops exercise their teaching office’.²²³ If that is so, and it is just an academic exercise, what is the point? The significance for the current study does not necessarily reside in the effect on lay Filipino Catholics but rather in the self-conception of the CBCP. The position of bishop in the framework of agency₃ was not limited as such. Rather, the preceding layers in agency₂ enhanced the capacity for the CBCP to act more through the office of the individual bishops. It seems then that regardless of the classification of the authority exercised by the CBCP, it still exerts authority as a collective of bishops. I mean this by not concluding as to the theological evaluation of the distinct modes that their authority is exercised within the magisterium. From this discussion, I turn to consider the modality of the practice of the CBCP in issuing pastoral letters and statements on the government’s family planning policy.

(b) Practice of Pastoral Letters and Statements

The practice of issuing pastoral letters and statements by the CBCP on subjects related to governmental family planning policies has had a greater modality than compared to agrarian land reform. This practice (agency₃) is shaped by the dynamics of agency₁ and agency₂. These different dynamics in the two policy contexts are where the CBCP engage differently with this practice. It can be recalled from the previous chapter that the CBCP only substantively issued one pastoral letter on agrarian land reform. Magadia argued that the position of the CBCP is characterised as being moderate in the agrarian land reform debate because the CBCP merely spoke of moral imperatives without further elaborating on what is meant by ‘authentic’ agrarian

²²² CBCP, ‘Pastoral Statement’; CBCP, ‘Suitable Companion for Him’.

²²³ Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?*, 125.

land reform.²²⁴ The CBCP speaking only in ‘moral imperatives’ means that it is moderate is an interesting curiosity. I argue that the practice of issuing pastoral letters and statements, even if only speaking of ‘moral imperatives’, can signify more. The agency of the CBCP through the multiple layers is expressed in the statements in pastoral letters issued.

The practice of issuing pastoral letters and statements is not confined to the restatement of Catholic ethical principles. Pastoral letters and statements have political outcomes regardless of their causal effect in the world. Rees argued that ‘sacred text be read *alongside* their textual “others” are really existing sources of ethics for the building of real political outcomes’.²²⁵ He argues against the tendency for ‘religious texts hav[ing] been reduced to function only as sources of ethical principle’.²²⁶ I adopt a similar view to Rees. The pastoral letters and statements of the CBCP interpret and apply scripture to discern the signs of the time. Though this would be an authoritative interpretation within the Philippine Catholic Church, it could be recognised as one perspective. The position of the CBCP does not itself mean there are no divergent views with the Catholic community of the Philippines. There are real and important implications in issuing pastoral letters and statements by the CBCP despite it being one interpretive view within the wider Catholic community.

Agency₁ and agency₂ shape both the content of the CBCP statements and the frequency. According to Le Roi, ‘the complaint about the degradation of marriage and family life, which is said to be exceptionally alarming at the present time, seems to be a constant and indestructible *topos* of the Church’s teaching in every age’.²²⁷ Cartagenas has argued that what has been fixed in text ‘is less the event of promulgating a message, but more the *noema* or meaning behind the Church’s public intervention in human affairs and temporal realities’.²²⁸ Further, he states:

The Church’s official discourse does not merely restructure or redescribe reality for its reader. Liberated from the tutelage of authorial intention and freed from its reference to a specific and immediate situation, it does possess the capacity to ‘pro-ject’ a ‘new way of being the world’.²²⁹

²²⁴ Magadia, *State-Society Dynamics*.

²²⁵ John A. Rees, ‘“Really Existing” Scriptures: On the use of Sacred Text in International Affairs’, *Brandywine Review of Faith & International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2004): 19.

²²⁶ Rees, ‘Really Existing Scriptures’ 19.

²²⁷ Roi, ‘Innovation or Impasse? The Contribution of *Familiaris Consortio* to a Contemporary Theology of Marriage’, 73.

²²⁸ Cartagenas, *Unlocking the Church*, 13–14.

²²⁹ Cartagenas, *Unlocking the Church*, 17.

For the present study, Cartagenas is drawing us towards seeing the effect of the written discourse of the Catholic Church beyond the moment of promulgation. There are two points from Cartagenas I would like to focus on: (1) the *noema* or meaning behind the Church's public intervention and (2) the capacity to 'project' a 'new way of being in the world'. This could have similarities to the arguments from Rees about really existing scriptures.²³⁰ Cartagenas is not looking at agency; however, these two points can deepen our understanding of the practice in the agency of the CBCP in this study. First, the meaning behind the Church's public intervention could include the interpretation of scripture and Catholic ethical principles and the structures identified earlier in agency₂. This includes the continuity and connection between the CBCP and papal encyclical of the global Catholic Church and the natural order established by God. Second, the capacity to project a new way of being in the world could be seen as the resulting dynamic in agency₃ from the prior layers of agency₁ and agency₂. The resulting practice of agents in agency₁ is constituting and navigating the world through their development in their groups in agency₂. Therefore, the points raised by both Rees and Cartagenas could assist with understanding the practice of the CBCP issuing pastoral letters and statements. This deepens our understanding of the agency of the CBCP in the third layer of the Wight framework.

With the preceding points above in mind, the statements of the CBCP can be situated. For example, in an earlier section of this chapter, it was noted that the PCP II conciliar document stated, 'In the matter of birth regulation, Catholics should be guided by the teaching of the Pope and the bishops ... [as] stated in official documents like the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, the papal documents, *Humanae Vitae*, and *Familiaris Consortio*, the CBCP [1990 documents]'.²³¹ The conciliar documents refer to the CBCP's *Guiding Principles on Population Control* and *Love is Life*. Recall Table 4 earlier in this chapter and detailed Francisco's classification of the CBCP statements. Concerning the 1990 CBCP documents, *Guiding Principles* was seen as concentrating on the relation between poverty, population control and family planning, and *Love is Life* was seen primarily as a rejection of government programs and activities related to reproductive health.²³² Past statements, especially from the CBCP, have become an important resource in the future. As the actor moves through time, the statements become part of the structures in agency₂. Whether the documents are critiques of the government or statements of ethical principles is not the only concern because these documents have projected a way of being in the world. The decrees of the PCP II are a good point in this

²³⁰ See, Rees, 'Really Existing Scriptures'.

²³¹ *Acts and Decrees*, 198.

²³² Francisco, 'Letting the Texts', 227.

regard. The 1986 to 1998 period, which is the subject of the current study, is within the phase of transition for the CBCP. This transition is to discern what the Philippine Catholic Church is in this next period of history. The decrees of the PCP II reinforced the vision and stance of the Catholic Church on issues relevant to the family planning policy context. There were more statements from the CBCP after PCP II. The two statements, *In the Compassion of Jesus* on AIDS and *Save the Family and Live* on the family, continue as statements of church teaching.²³³

An increased boldness and assertiveness from the CBCP was exemplified by the statements on the Cairo and Beijing conferences. This is building a corpus of statements compared to agrarian land reform. A corpus of statements could be an important indicator of the significance of this policy area. In agency₂, the concept of a natural order established by God was identified as an important feature of the world of the CBCP. This really existing reality is a central component to the self in agency₁, which places the CBCP as furthering the evangelising and pastoral mission of the Church. This can be coupled with the central concept of the family as ‘an evangelizing force’.²³⁴ That is, ‘family life in the Lord is of greatest concern to the church. The family plays a pivotal role in renewing Christian life and informing communities of the Lord’s disciples’.²³⁵ Thus, family planning policies strike at the heart of the salvific mission of the CBCP. More broadly, the Catholic Church as the family is both the ‘future of humankind’ and ‘the future of the Church’.²³⁶ This strikes at the natural order really existing and present as established and willed by God. Here is the central and significant difference with the agrarian land reform debate. There is a moral significance in the proper distribution of property in the policy context of agrarian land reform. However, it does not necessarily strike at the salvific mission of the Church compared to the centrality of the family. Therefore, the CBCP is compelled to engage much more in the practice of public interventions by issuing pastoral letters and statements.

5.5 Applying the Framework to the CBCP and Family Planning Policy

Returning to conceptualising an approach to understanding the agency of religious actors in IR to answer the research question: *How can the agency of the religious actor be understood and situated in IR?* I have again applied and tested the constructed analytical framework in another policy context different in history and dynamics to those considered in chapter 4. It should be reiterated that these case study chapters provide the conceptual and contextual material to

²³³ Francisco, ‘Letting the Texts’, 227.

⁸⁸³ Francisco, ‘Letting the Texts’, 227; *Acts and Decrees*, 195.

²³⁵ *Acts and Decrees*, 145.

²³⁶ *Acts and Decrees*, 202.

evaluate the theoretical arguments in the constructed analytical framework, which is the answer I argue in response to the research question.

In this second case study chapter, I explore the CBCP through the analytic eclecticism of the constructed framework on the government's family planning policy. Understanding the significant quantity of the CBCP statements is deepened by the interconnected factors influencing the CBCP. As I have argued in this study, we cannot accurately understand an actor's agency in mere quantitative terms. Additionally, the existence of agency is more than the outcome of the actor's action. What can our examination of the CBCP on the government's family planning policy tell us about agency? I have summarised the multiple layers of agency in Table 5. The Wight framework of agency highlights the complex interconnectivity of the factors influencing the actions of the CBCP. With the additions of Pabst, Omer and Barbato, this framework has engaged with the Catholic traditions and particularities of the CBCP. The constructed framework significantly gives appropriate and important attention to, in the words of Omer, the 'religious actors' own accounts of their motivations' and 'whose religiosity meaningfully informs their actions on their own terms'.²³⁷ The interpretive framework shows the statements of the CBCP cannot be labelled merely as conservatism or 'it is what the Catholic Church believes'. The Catholic beliefs of the CBCP do play a role, but they must be situated within the broader dynamics involved in the account of agency.

²³⁷ Omer, 'Good Religion', 130, 132.

Table 5

Agency of the CBCP in Relation to Family Planning Policy

Agency layer findings	
Agency₁—self	
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further the evangelisation and pastoral responsibilities of the Church
Agency₂—sociocultural context	
Papal encyclicals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuity with Catholic Church teaching on the family, marriage and sexuality • application of specific teachings from a global resource to the same topic area in the Philippines
Natural order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘really existing Community’—a communion between all that exists and God • family planning policy affects the natural order established by God and has consequences beyond the nation-state
PCP II acts & decrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Jesus began his work of salvation with a family’—the family of greatest concern to the Church • ‘family is an evangelizing force’—several specific decrees relevant to the family planning policy context
John Paul II influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Paul II defence of Catholic teaching on contraceptives and abortion • multiple instances throughout World Youth Day reinforce the imagery of the special status of the Philippines, connection with the papacy as a ‘Catholic nation’ provides a basis for CBCP critique
Agency₃—position-practice-place	
Office of bishop & magisterial authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBCP encounters no problems with magisterial authority • specificity of the teaching means more statements issued, despite issues around authority
Pastoral letters & statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • centrality of issues in family planning policy context is not new • bold and assertive action—increased frequency of public interventions via pastoral letters and statements

In this chapter, I have adopted similar layer types in the family planning policy case study as with the previous case study chapter. I started with the idea from Wight of an existing ‘self’ that is not automatically determined but is constantly negotiating the external forces of construction in the social world.²³⁸ Given the agency framework focuses on the human agent—in this case, the individual bishops in the CBCP—it may not be readily applied to engaging with the CBCP as a collective. This is again the first pressure point for the constructed framework. If it is possible to abstract from Wight’s concept, I have started with the purpose and function of the CBCP to view the self-understanding of the CBCP based on Omer’s argument. As I have again argued, the self-understanding of the CBCP is towards the evangelisation and pastoral responsibilities of

²³⁸ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

the Catholic Church. The CBCP must, in the words of Wight, ‘negotiat[e] the external forces of construction in the social world’ or, in other words, the Philippine context and political dynamics of the state’s family planning policy.²³⁹ This self-understanding again sets the course for the interpretive framework to analyse the CBCP in the next levels of agency on family planning policy.

To understand the negotiation of the CBCP of this Philippine policy context, I have grappled with the CBCP’s ‘own accounts of their motivation’ and how ‘religiosity meaningfully informs [its] actions’ as Omer would argue.²⁴⁰ This approach is valuably explored in the second layer of the agency framework of Wight, agency₂. First, as the bearer of its context, the CBCP carries its Catholicity. There is continuity between the teachings of the Catholic Church promulgated in the papal encyclicals and the statements of the CBCP. The Catholic Church’s doctrines have defined positions on the specific issues of contraceptives, abortion and family planning lead to the similar direction of the CBCP. I suggest the Catholic teaching’s specificity enables the CBCP to readily access the teachings as a resource to be applied in this policy context. The continuity with papal encyclicals connects the CBCP beyond the borders of the Philippines to its global Catholic context. Through this Catholic lens, the CBCP in the first layer negotiates the social world. I have also argued that consistent with the framework of agency, the totality of the agency of the CBCP is not reducible to this continuity with the teachings of the global Catholic Church. The interpretive framework employs a wider contextual reading of the CBCP.

Second, the Catholicity of the CBCP sees, appropriating the phrase of Elshtain, a ‘really existing’ order or reality.²⁴¹ I have called it the ‘natural order’ for the Catholic actor. The CBCP draws from an established reciprocity and union to a natural order through the Catholic teachings. Acknowledging this sacral dimension through the adoption of Omer’s arguments, I have further engaged with this really existing natural order using the theorising of Pabst. Pabst draws this natural order conception to the fore to be engaged with in analysis because ‘immanent reality bears the trace of its transcendent source and in part reflect the divine warrant’.²⁴² It includes in IR theorising the ‘mutually corrective and augmenting’ necessary relationship between faith and reason.²⁴³ The CBCP linking with this natural order highlights the role of the family in evangelisation and, ultimately, the role of salvation. This wider contextual reading may not have

²³⁹ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

²⁴⁰ Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 130, 132.

²⁴¹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, ‘Really Existing Communities’, *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999).

²⁴² Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1011.

²⁴³ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1013.

been as present in the dynamics of agency without the relationship to Omer and Pabst. As I have shown for the CBCP, government policy issues affecting the family, such as contraception, abortion and sterilisation, directly affect the belief that existing natural order leads to the salvation of humanity. This elevates the importance of the moral imperatives for the CBCP. It is an elevation to the concern for all people, not just the Filipino. The natural order significantly ‘mediate[s] between the individual and the collective will’.²⁴⁴ As stated by the CBCP in *Save the Family and Live*, ‘by God’s design to be the Church in microcosm, that like the Church, itself Evangelizer ... [t]he family itself proclaims the gospel’.²⁴⁵ This was importantly reflected in the PCP II conciliar documents that spoke of ‘Jesus [who] began his work of salvation with a family ... Thus, family life in the Lord is of the greatest concern to the Church. The family plays a pivotal role in renewing Christian life and in forming communities of the Lord’s disciples’.²⁴⁶ The connection between concern for the family for evangelisation and, significantly, the salvific mission of the Catholic Church aligns with the ontology of the CBCP in the first layer of agency. The statements of the CBCP are then understood to be ‘valuable because they originate from an ‘invaluable’ source and because they are ordered towards an equally ‘invaluable’ end’.²⁴⁷ In understanding this natural order, we can see that the CBCP not only bears the Catholic teachings but is a participant in a reality that ‘precedes and underpins the modern system of nation states’.²⁴⁸ The constructed interpretive framework has generated this additional contextual reading of the CBCP because the role of salvation is further understood within the political context.

Third, the centrality of the family is shown in the vision of the Philippine Catholic Church contained in the acts and decrees of PCP II. Though a distinct assembly from the CBCP, PCP II posited what the Philippine Catholic Church ought to be vis-à-vis the experiences of Filipinos. It has been said in PCP II that ‘the future of humankind passes through the family. So does the future of the Church’.²⁴⁹ This incorporates the same linkage to the sacral dimensions of the natural order and the family’s role in evangelisation and salvation in the Church into the vision of the Philippine Catholic Church. The PCP II as an important transitory moment in the broader Philippine Catholic Church, holds the importance of the family, including the prohibition on contraception, abortion and sterilisation, as part of the vision of what the Church in the

²⁴⁴ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1014.

²⁴⁵ CBCP, ‘Save the Family and Live’.

²⁴⁶ *Acts and Decrees*, 145.

²⁴⁷ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1014.

²⁴⁸ Pabst, ‘Secularism’, 1016.

²⁴⁹ *Acts and Decrees*, 202.

Philippines is and will be. The acts and decrees of PCP II inform the Catholic lens through which the CBCP sees the Philippines.

Fourth, the pontificate of John Paul II has had a profound influence on the global Catholic community and society. John Paul II has become known for his stance on abortion and contraceptives. The CBCP draws from John Paul II encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, to respond to the Beijing conference and the Philippines' delegation to the conference. World Youth Day, hosted in Manila, the Philippines, is held in Asia for the first time. The acknowledgement of the John Paul II of the CBCP's active and public defence of Catholic teaching on contraceptives and abortion reinforces the CBCP's actions. There was also a continuation in John Paul II's statements on the characterisation of the Philippines' God-given historical destiny. This conflates Catholicism with the Philippines and conceives a 'Catholic nation' that provides a basis for CBCP critiques. In Barbato's multilayered actorness, the CBCP conceives itself as a 'moral guardian' of this constructed Catholic nation. This additional actor type adds to the CBCP as an institution within the Catholic Church. The four layers discussed and situated in the agency₂ level in the Wight framework of agency influence the modality of the practice and position of the CBCP in the third level, agency₃.

In the third layer of agency, agency₃, I argued that the position of bishop and the corresponding concept of magisterial authority and the practice of pastoral letters and statements had been influenced by the preceding points above. I have argued that questions about the authority of the bishops within the CBCP and the magisterial authority of the episcopal conference do not have the same contestability in the family planning policy space. This is because the statements and position of the CBCP are not promulgating teaching on a new social issue. The CBCP could readily enter the political debates on issues arising in the family planning policy space. The practice of issuing pastoral letters and statements by the CBCP increased in the family planning policy space because, I argue, the prior layers in the agency framework enable the practice to be used more frequently. The dynamics involved in the layers of agency are different in this case study chapter. The family's centrality within the Catholic Church's teaching and the perceived really existing natural order, which holds significance for salvation, elevates this policy space for the CBCP. This salvific element arguably is core to the agency₁ function and role of the CBCP. This is the point of the evangelising mission of the CBCP. Additionally, the very specificity of the teachings on the family and sexuality lends itself to be readily applicable to an equally specific issue or family planning policy. Catholic social teaching can, in contrast, be seen

as broader principles applied to a specific social issue. Through these layers, I argue the CBCP can use pastoral letters and statements with greater ease in the family planning policy space.

As the contextual information about the administrations of Aquino and Ramos shows, through the multitude of statements, the CBCP is an active and real political actor in the policy context. This is in addition to its actorness as a ‘moral guardian’ of the Catholic nation. The CBCP agreed in 1990 to the request of President Aquino to postpone the issuance of a pastoral letter critical of the government’s revived family planning policy program and to enter a dialogue with government officials.²⁵⁰ Despite a more active push for population control, Ramos also agreed to CBCP demands. For example, Ramos, after the CBCP’s 1994 Cairo statement, agreed to a joint statement for the UN conference that underscored unequivocal opposition to abortion as a means to family planning and acceded to the CBCP’s request to add Catholic Church-backed members to the official Cairo delegation by dropping others considered pro-abortion.²⁵¹ The dynamics of agency in this framework influences the CBCP to be bold and assertive in its statements. Like Barbato via the Holy See, we can appreciate that the CBCP has had an important and influential voice in the family planning policy debate and implementation in the Philippines.²⁵² This means that the CBCP does not simply restate Catholic doctrine—it is an actor in the policy discussions. In the constructed interpretive framework, Barbato has shown this influential voice is reinforced by the multiple actor types of the CBCP. Therefore, overlaying all the identified layers in the Wight framework of agency in relation to the complementary readings from Pabst, Omer and Barbato, the individual and interconnected layers deepen the understanding of what motivates and influences the CBCP to act.

²⁵⁰ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 9.

²⁵¹ Youngblood, ‘President Ramos’, 13–14.

²⁵² Barbato, ‘Multi-layered Actorness’, 27–48.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has applied the method of analytic eclecticism in constructing an interpretive framework to understand the agency of a religious actor within the discipline of IR. Specifically, the framework was used in two case study chapters on the CBCP in select policy contexts. The research question of the thesis is, ‘*How can the agency of religious actors be understood and situated in IR?*’ At its core, the research question has required two components: a) conceptualising agency and b) the significance of understanding the religious in a political context. I have treated these two components of the research question as having interrelated significance in the research because the way one views agency will have implications for approaching the religious. The way one views the religious in a political context will have implications for its significance to understanding agency. In response to the research question, this study has proposed the constructed framework as an approach to understanding the agency of religious actors in IR.

At the outset, I argued that the research would be situated within what Rees called the mode of accommodation in the study of religion in IR.¹ This mode of scholarship engages with religion as a concept with ontological weight and ‘acknowledges the negative effect of misreading’ religion and uses insights from other modes of scholarship.² In line with the inclusiveness of an accommodationist scholarship, I have chosen to adopt similarly open theoretical approaches: critical realism to understand religion and agency and analytic eclecticism as the method to construct the study’s framework. The framework has thus resulted from considerations of the two components of the research question and their application to a case study.

I have investigated the research question by applying the framework constructed from analytic eclecticism to a Philippine focused case study. To control the investigation, several parameters have been adopted. I have focused on an institution of a collective of the bishops within the Philippine Catholic Church known as the CBCP. The CBCP was examined in relation to the two comparative policy contexts of agrarian land reform and family planning policy. These policies were chosen because of their long history of contestation and their importance in the Philippines. The primary sources analysed are the public pastoral letters and statements the CBCP have

¹ Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

² Rees, ‘Religion and Foreign Policy’, 45.

published on these policies. I have limited my examination to a defined time—1986 to 1998—to provide further control in investigating the research question in the case study.

This chapter draws the thesis to its conclusion by discussing the key findings emerging from the case study of the project and considering the framework constructed from the analytic eclecticism method and its application in the case study and the implications of the key findings beyond the case study. These sections will heed the interplay of theory and the real world illustrated by Dunne et al. as mentioned early in the thesis.³ This two-way interplay between theory and context attempts to provide inductive and deductive conclusions from the research in this chapter. The final section will then conclude by suggesting avenues for future research emerging from this thesis.

6.1 Key Findings of the Philippine Case Study

In Chapters 4 and 5, the framework constructed from the methodology of analytic eclecticism was applied to the CBCP and its statements in the policy contexts of agrarian land reform and family planning between 1986 to 1998. I operationalised the framework based on the methodology of analytic eclecticism to the two Philippine policy case studies, which has yielded interesting findings about the CBCP. In Table 6, the findings in each layer of agency found in agrarian land reform and family planning policy chapters are collated from Table 3 in Chapter 4 and Table 5 in Chapter 5.

The problem at the start of the case study was the quantitative differences in CBCP pastoral letters and statements on agrarian land reform and family planning. Table 1 in Chapter 4 showed this stark difference with two statements identified for agrarian land reform and six statements for family planning policy. Throughout this study, I have argued that agency cannot be accurately understood in quantitative terms as it leads to ‘either/or’ questions that do not provide nuanced explanations. The investigation into the layers of agency of the CBCP provides validation of this view as agency continually subsists with the actor.

³ Dunne, Hansen and Wight, ‘The End of International Relations Theory’, 407.

Table 6

The Agency of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines 1986 to 1998

Layers	Agrarian land reform	Family planning policy
Agency 1 Purpose of episcopal conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further the evangelisation and pastoral responsibilities of the Church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further the evangelisation and pastoral responsibilities of the Church
Agency 2 Catholic teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuity with Catholic social teaching principles in papal encyclicals. • application of broad Catholic social teaching principles to a ‘new’ topic area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuity with Catholic Church teaching on the family, marriage and sexuality • application of specific teachings from a global resource to the same topic area in the Philippines
Natural order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘really existing community’—a communion between all that exists and God • origin of individual property and the universal destination of earth’s good is from the act of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the family as the Church of the home and an evangelising force towards salvation • family planning policy affecting the natural order established by God and having consequences beyond the nation-state
PCP II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no specific decree on agrarian land reform, and PCP II focused on broader themes (e.g., preferential option for the poor, concern for farmers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • several specific decrees relevant to the family planning policy context • ‘Jesus began his work of salvation with a family’—the family of greatest concern to the Church • ‘family is an evangelizing force’—several specific decrees relevant to the family planning policy context
Global Catholic community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communist insurgency in the Philippines linked to the issue of land reform • liberation theology and Marxist elements found in the global Catholic community criticised by the Holy See’s CDF • members of the Philippine Catholic Church joining communist and insurgent groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Paul II defence of Catholic teaching on contraceptives and abortion • multiple instances throughout World Youth Day reinforcing the imagery of the special status of the Philippines and connection with the papacy as a ‘Catholic nation’ providing a basis for CBCP critique
Agency 3 Magisterial authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the CBCP social issue statements are less in this period • ongoing debate about the authority of bishop conferences • pastoral letter on agrarian land reform is new to the magisterium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the CBCP does not encounter problems with magisterial authority • centrality of family planning issues is not new • more statements issued despite issues around authority
Pastoral letters and statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first CBCP pastoral letter on agrarian land reform for the CBCP to build a corpus of documents • the modality of the use of this practice is shaped by the previous layers of agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the centrality of issues in family planning policy context is not new • bold and assertive action—increased frequency of public interventions via pastoral letters and statements

The agency of the CBCP in the two policy contexts has been usefully explored through the framework constructed from the methodology of analytic eclecticism. The comparison of the agency layers in Table 7 show areas of similarity and difference between the two policy contexts. This shows that the dynamics involved are different, and the difference can lead to contrasting results in the quantity of the statements produced. This means that understanding and engaging with the CBCP in each policy context is to engage with this complexity of multicausal factors influencing agency.

In the first interaction in the two-way exchange between theory and context, the framework I constructed has drawn out several findings in the interpretation of context. Throughout the application of the framework, there are several instances of the dynamic of the global context influencing the local context and vice versa. This study has highlighted the similar continuity between the pastoral letters and statements of the CBCP with the Catholic teachings contained in the various papal encyclicals across agrarian land reform and family planning policy. Another example is the Holy See's criticism of using Marxist themes and concepts in certain liberation theologies. In the Philippines, a developing theology of struggle, like the liberation theology of Latin America, was based on its local context. This means that understanding the CBCP concerning its policy position needs to understand the broader global dimensions and not just the local context influencing it.

The principal scholars' contributions used in the framework constructed for this study provide a valuable interpretive approach to the dynamics of the CBCP in the Philippine case study. It is in complementary relationship to other readings of the CBCP in the policy contexts. I have argued that the principal scholars were chosen to address the two components of the research question investigated through the case study: conceptualising agency and the significance of the religious. The findings in the case study show the importance of these scholars to the framework and the insights gained from addressing these two components of the research question.

The multilevel framework of agency proposed by Wight was used in Chapters 4 and 5 on agrarian land reform and family planning policy, respectively, to provide the basis for conceptualising agency and structuring the contextual dynamics and readings of the CBCP. Wight proposed a tripartite framework of agency that brings 'a sense of balance to the agent-structure relationship' by being non-reductive to either the individual or structure in primacy.¹

¹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 129.

Agency₁ recognised the existence of a self that is independent of but in relationship to the structures of the world. The agent is ‘in relationship to the world by which it is constructed’ and ‘capable of reflecting upon, and constantly renegotiating, the forces of construction’.² In agency₂, the agent is seen as the bearer of their sociocultural structures and group identities that are reproduced or transformed.³ Agency₃ refers to the position, practices and placement the agent inhabits on behalf of their context or groups.⁴ According to Wight, these are structural properties that continue irrespective of the agent occupying them, nor can those structural properties be reduced to the occupying agent.⁵ This tripartite concept of agency aimed to ‘elaborate a more rigorous critical realist theory of agency in International Relations theory’.⁶ The conceptualisation of agency Wight proposes is a co-constitutive approach to agents and structures. It has provided a means of seeing individual elements and the important overall relational dynamic between those different elements involved in the concept of agency in the Philippine case study on the CBCP.

This influence of the Wight multilevel understanding of agency is seen in the summary tables in this study found in Table 3 (Chapter 4), Table 5 (Chapter 5) and Table 6 (in the current chapter). The framework of agency set against the Philippine context hones the complex dynamics involved in the agency of a contextually embedded Catholic actor. In the agrarian land reform chapter, we can observe the constrained modality in the use of pastoral letters and statements in agency₃ as a practice be affected by the debates regarding the position and magisterial authority and the local and global contexts of liberation theology, Catholic participation with Marxist movements, the Catholic Church as a landowner and developments in the Catholic social teaching tradition.

In comparison, the same multilevel understanding of agency has produced a different view of the CBCP in the family planning policy space. The study has found that the modality in the use of pastoral letters and statements in agency₃ is enhanced by several local and global contextual structures. These included the specificity of the Catholic Church’s teachings, conflation of Catholicism and the Philippine nation, the cultivation of a ‘guardian of the Catholic nation’ view, the central concern for salvation intersecting with areas affected by the state’s family planning

² Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 130.

³ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

⁴ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133.

⁵ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 133–34.

⁶ Wight, ‘They Shoot Dead Horses’, 128.

policy and the topic being previously addressed by the CBCP. Seeing these differences is enabled by the Wight critical realist and non-reductive approach to conceptualising agency.

Pabst was the first scholar used in contribution to how I constructed the framework for this study in investigating the religious component of the research question. The arguments of Pabst in developing his metaphysical political realism brought the metaphysical into the realm of IR theorising and challenged basic assumptions in the discipline of IR. The examination of the CBCP in the Philippine case study contained findings that show the value of Pabst's important arguments. I have argued the second level in the Wight framework of agency, agency₂, would benefit from the explanatory capacity of Pabst's arguments to analyse the actor's religious traditions. In using Pabst with Wight, I followed the former's arguments in favour of the importance of the 'mutually corrective and augmenting' relationship of faith and reason, and the existence of a linkage between the immanent and transcendent since 'immanent reality bears the trace of its transcendent source'.⁷

On one level, examining the motivations and interests enabling or constraining the CBCP on state policies would be to investigate the content of its Catholic teachings on the subject. In Table 6, I indicate the overall position of the Catholic teachings in each policy context discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. A deeper engagement with the religious traditions of CBCP in the analysis of the dynamics of agency entails more than restating the teachings contained in the various statements published. I have found the embeddedness and statements of the CBCP within a Philippine context are within a divinely constituted natural order. The movement in agency₂ from the Catholic teachings the CBCP is embedded within and espoused in its statements was to the natural order in which this dynamic occurs. For instance, in agrarian land reform, I identified that the papal encyclicals influential in developing the Catholic social teaching tradition and the CBCP statement connected to an existing natural order established by God.⁸ This was similarly identified in the Catholic teachings on the family, marriage, sex and contraceptives relevant to the family planning policy context.⁹ These findings offer a deeper dive into the religious traditions of the CBCP than would the mere restatement of the teachings espoused by the statements in our analysis of agency. This is enabled by the significant incorporation of the

⁷ Pabst, 'Secularism', 1011, 1013.

⁸ See, for example, CBCP, 'Thirsting for Justice'; John Paul II, 'Centesimus Annus'; John XXIII, 'Pacem in Terris'; Paul VI, 'Populorum Progressio'.

⁹ See, for example, CBCP, 'Love is Life'; CBCP, 'Guiding Principles'; CBCP, 'Save the Family and Live'; CBCP, 'Compassion of Jesus'; John Paul II, 'Familiaris Consortio'; John Paul II, 'Evangelium Vitae'; Paul VI, 'Humanae Vitae'.

metaphysical and faith by Pabst and means that IR is then capable of delving deeper into the religious traditions of the actor.

A differentiating feature between the agrarian land reform and family planning policy space is the role of salvation. A common aspect between the policy contexts is an understanding of a natural order established by God as a present reality through which to observe the world. The way government policy affects or breaches this natural order conception influences the dynamics of agency. Catholic social teachings as they apply to agrarian land reform show that the moderate support for agrarian land reform recognises the right to property, and a fairer distribution of land is supported by the natural order and ultimate destination of goods in God. In this case, it is more of the application of broader principles of Catholic social teaching to the specific social issue of agrarian land reform.

In comparison, the Catholic teachings on contraception, abortion, sexuality, marriage and the family consider government policy as impacting a core element of the Catholic natural order. It is the family where salvation and the salvific purpose of the Catholic Church within the natural order are achieved. It is achieved because the family is the future of humankind and the Church and is an evangelising force. In this context, these specific Catholic teachings are then applied to a commensurate policy context.

Omer was their second scholar used in the framework I constructed to address the conceptualisation and significance of the religious. Omer argued that pursuing analysis of religious actors should be based on the self-identified conceptualisation of their religious traditions. As Omer stated, ‘a refusal to engage with religious actors’ own accounts of their motivations and work ... is a limitation’.¹⁰ As a critical scholar of decoloniality operating within critical realist assumptions,¹¹ Omer challenges what she sees as the ‘state-centric theorising of religion that attributes agency only to state actors and to discursive formations, stripping away agency and hermeneutical coherence away from self-identified religious actors whose religiosity meaningfully informs their actions on their own terms’.¹² For Omer, a whole array of practices, actors and meanings constructed through praxis of interfaith and intertradition/communal

¹⁰ Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 130.

¹¹ Omer, ‘Prophets’, 116.

¹² Omer, ‘Good Religion’, 132.

grassroots efforts should not be overlooked to understand the complex way religion and religious actors participate.¹³

I have repurposed Omer's self-identified religious actor approach to add to how Pabst and Wight interact in the constructed framework to be applied to the CBCP. Omer's operation within critical realist assumptions has a good synergy with Wight's critical realist approach to his agency framework. In applying the Wight multilevel understanding of agency, I have attempted to follow this non-reductionist approach of self-identified religious actors from Omer to the examination of the CBCP. In the Philippine case study, as I have mentioned above, deeper insights into the Catholic teachings were gained by identifying the significance of the reality of an existing natural order for the CBCP by incorporating the relation of faith and reason as argued by Pabst. It situates the way the CBCP perceives itself and the significance in which the CBCP interacts with its context. The bridge between Wight and Pabst is made by Omer's self-identified religious actor approach.

In examining the CBCP across both contexts of agrarian land reform and family planning policy, I discussed the significance of the concept of the magisterium as part of the array of factors influencing the CBCP. The CBCP is primarily an institution of the collective bishops of the Philippines. As individuals occupying the office of bishop, they are in the tradition of the Catholic Church responsible for teaching, governing and sanctifying.¹⁴ The reductionism critiqued by Omer would not delve deeper into the religious tradition of the magisterium as a factor in response to government policy. This is because, as Omer has critiqued, the 'state-centric theorising of religion that attributes agency only to state actors'.¹⁵ In following the self-identified religious actor approach, we need to consider their view of the exercise of the episcopal office. I found a difference in the treatment of the issues on magisterial authority by these bishops in the CBCP in the two policies examined. In the context of family planning, the CBCP does not seem to have been constrained by the underlying debates within the Catholic Church on the magisterial authority of episcopal conferences. There is a different dynamic present in the context of agrarian land reform context. I have argued that debates on magisterial authority and episcopal conferences could have influenced the ability of the CBCP to apply Catholic social teaching to new social issues not traditionally addressed by the Philippine Catholic hierarchy.

¹³ Omer, 'Good Religion', 132.

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, 'Lumen Gentium', [21].

¹⁵ Omer, 'Good Religion', 132.

Through the case study on the CBCP, further valuable insights can be gained from these complex policy contexts by grappling with the practices and meanings of the self-identified religious actor.

The seminal contribution of the concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato in IR discourse on religion, especially concerning a Catholic actor, was repurposed in the framework constructed. Barbato uses multilayered actorness to hone on the multiplicity of 'roles' and the dynamic of an actor to simultaneously perform and hold those roles. This non-reductive focus on the place and role of religious actors is a valuable bridge to the Wight framework of agency into the study of religion in IR. It introduces to IR discourse on religion the non-reductive approach and concept of multilayeredness like the Wight understanding of agency. I have argued that multilayered actorness is the key outcome of dynamics of agency. This has been found with the CBCP in the Philippine case study.

The study has highlighted the CBCP as a multilayered actor within and between policy contexts. A multilayered understanding of the CBCP has shown a complex dynamic of several factors through the agency layers that influence the outcome of its public intervention in pastoral letters and statements. I argued in Chapter 2 that agency is a capacity of an actor. This means the multilayered nature of agency can lead to different actorness types in different situations. In agrarian land reform, the CBCP is less of a political actor in the legislative debates but acts more as the institutional church reminding the people of their moral duties. The CBCP, as a collective of bishops can represent the Philippine Catholic Church as a landowner. In family planning, as a comparison, the CBCP is an active political actor in the legislative debates by its frequent public interventions. It has also conceived itself a moral guardian of the Philippine Catholic nation. These different actorness types influence the CBCP by enabling or possibly constraining its ability to act in each policy context. An understanding of the CBCP is deepened by this multilayered approach revealing the nuances of the many factors involved in a political context. This is an understanding revealed by the bridge created by the repurposed concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato.

6.2 Evaluating the Application of the Constructed Framework

A framework was constructed in Chapter 3 of the thesis based on the methodology of analytic eclecticism in response to the research question. I have chosen to construct the framework of this research by using select works of four principal scholars: Colin Wight, Adrian Pabst, Atalia

Omer and Mariano Barbato.¹⁶ The choice of these scholars was based on several considerations, including the components of the research question, the specificities of the case study, the plurality of theoretical approaches in IR and the project being embedded among accommodationist scholarship on religion. I adopted the understanding of agency as multilayered from the critical realist Wight and used this framework to structure and organise the case study in Chapters 4 and 5. I then used Pabst and Omer to supplement the agency framework to address the understanding of the religious component in the research question and case study. The metaphysical political realism arguments from Pabst were repurposed within the agency₂ layer to understand the Catholicity and teachings of the Church within which the CBCP was embedded. I then used Omer's religiously self-identified approach and non-reductionism as a guiding approach in applying Pabst in the Wight framework of agency. I then repurposed the concept of multilayered actorness from Barbato to emphasise the difference between policy contexts due to the agency layers and different CBCP actor types within each policy context. The key findings discussed in the previous section emerged from using the methodology of analytic eclecticism for constructing the framework as a lens to view the case study. These findings show the framework's value to deepen our understanding of the agency of a religious actor—the CBCP in the current project. It is conversely important to evaluate the framework considering its use in the case study of this thesis.

The first point to consider is the role of the agency₁ layer in the multi-layered agency framework from Wight within the case study of the thesis. It is common within the IR discipline to regard collectives such as non-government organisations, corporations and even the state, as an actor. Though common practice in IR, it has also been the subject of contestation within the literature. The framework has encountered this pressure point in the thesis. Wight's multilayered framework of agency is based on the view that agency is properly an attribute of the human agent. This means in examining the produced statements of the CBCP, a more extensive breakdown of the bishops and their individual agency may be required.

The second point to consider is the synergy between Pabst and Omer in the framework to contribute to the analysis of the case study. Omer's religiously self-identified approach and non-reductionism was mentioned at selected points throughout the case study to reinforce engagement with the religious aspects, including the Catholic Church's teachings in the papal encyclicals and CBCP pastoral letters and statements and the conception of an existing natural

¹⁶ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses'; Wight, *Agent, Structures*; Pabst, 'Secularism'; Omer, 'Good Religion'; Barbato, 'Multi-layered Actorness'.

order. Such a contribution to the thesis provides the balance between the modes of engagement and interrogation scholarship that is maintained in the accommodationist scholarship this thesis situates itself in. Still, the contribution seems to provide a secondary and implicit structure to the framework. In combining the arguments of Omer into the framework, Pabst provides the means to go deeper into what Omer is arguing. This means there is value in having Omer as part of the framework despite its targeted impact.

The third point is the targeted nature of using multilayered actorness from Barbato. Throughout the case study, I have made targeted mention of the multilayered actorness of the CBCP. This has included the CBCP containing bishops as Church landowners, the CBCP as the moral guardian of the Catholic nation, the CBCP as a political actor in legislative debates and the institutional character of the CBCP. In the case study, I repurposed the term used by Barbato and not used the same categories as a transnational church, state and diplomat that he adopts in relation to the Holy See.¹⁷ This means that I have not necessarily adopted the same approach that Barbato arrives at in the multilayered actorness conclusion in his valuable work. I instead see this concept as a useful summary of the non-static nature and differing dynamics of the CBCP in the comparative policy contexts. It has come to occupy a second role in the framework compared to Wight and Pabst. Nonetheless, the multilayered actorness concept has provided a useful analytical tool to assess the CBCP and the multicausal aspects within agency.

6.3 Implications of the Research Findings

While yielding interesting insights into the CBCP in the Philippines in specific policy contexts, the research has also borne important contributions to the wider study of religion in IR. The first implication is that a religious actor and context present double complexity for the researcher. There have been quite a few ‘multi’ descriptions applied throughout this study. It is multicausal, multilayered agency and multilayered actorness that capture the dynamics of agency and the CBCP. Seeing religious actors in this multilayered way gives IR greater scope to apply a nuance in the research on religion by allowing for differentiation and accommodating the integration of those varied factors into an explanation. This means that monocausal agency explanations have a limited explanatory value to show the complexities of religious and material factors influencing the religious actor.

¹⁷ See, Barbato, ‘Multi-layered Actorness’.

The second implication for IR is the global nature of religious actors. This accords with Pabst in the thesis framework, who argued for a corporate association of peoples and nations through the ‘flow of religions and religiously framed cultural customs’ into a global community and global polity.¹⁸ This understanding of the transnational flow of religious traditions expands the idea of multi-layered agency. As the case study indicates, there are transactional connections, whether it be between the Holy See and the local Philippine Catholic Church or between episcopal conferences themselves and observing the responses from each other.

The third implication for IR is the value analytic eclecticism as a method has provided in the study of religion. It can be inferred from the findings in this thesis to contribute to the broader understanding of agency and religious actors. I have affirmed the value of the methodology of analytic eclecticism to analyse religion in IR. This will contribute to the literature on analytic eclecticism in the study of religion. It would seem out of place to say that the analytic eclecticism conceived by Sil and Katzenstein can provide value to IR theory because it is conceptualised as a method of bracketing metatheoretical debate. However, the value of the method is deepened by recognising, as Reus-Smit did, there are metatheoretical implications because of the normative assumptions and theoretical approaches engaged.

The specific benefit of these theoretical insights can contribute to greater policy considerations in relation to religion. I have argued that problem-driven research agendas in analytic eclecticism seeking to explain political phenomena can also have metatheoretical implications within IR. I have discussed three specific implications from the thesis for IR in this section. When policymakers apply these considerations, they can contribute to addressing with nuance the role and way religious actors and religious traditions act in the political space. The thesis has shown how the findings of the Philippine case study and the broader implications of such findings have contributed to the way IR understands the agency of religious actors.

6.4 Avenues for Future Research

The research has opened several new avenues for further research in IR on the agency of religious actors because of the directions taken in this thesis. The Philippine case study has started to scratch the surface of the complex policy areas of agrarian land reform and family planning. The first avenue for future research is a deeper dive into the Philippine context. A further detailed study could be undertaken into the individual Filipino bishops within the CBCP. This would

¹⁸ Pabst, ‘Secularism, 1016.

accord closely with the focus on the human actor in agency₁ of the Wight framework. It is also possible to add further layers of agency not explored here due to the present constraints of the current thesis. The framework constructed from the methodology of analytic eclecticism in this thesis could also be applied to other Catholic actors, such as parish priests, religious brothers and sisters and the Catholic laity in political movements. Further application of the research to other Catholic actors may lead to interesting future studies giving greater insight into how Catholic actors may respond to contemporary Philippine politics. The framework could also in future research be applied beyond the Catholic actors and into a multi-faith context of the Philippines.

The second avenue for new research is to expand the framework's application beyond the Philippine and Catholic case studies. I have confined the present study to a state context to provide control in the thesis. The framework constructed in this study could be applied to other comparative state-based contexts and other transnational religious actors in other religious traditions or in different contextual settings. The benefit of this domestic state-based case study has implications for analysis in international settings on religious actors. Though the exact application of the framework in the outcomes of future analysis, especially in different religious traditions, may be difficult to predict. The framework can be further tested concerning these other religious actors and contexts to further consider the value of such an approach. This will contribute to the way the discipline of IR understands the agency of religious actors considering their religious traditions and specificities. This will contribute, in turn, to the advancement of IR theory on the agency of religious actors more broadly.

The third avenue for new research is related to the layers of Wight's multilayered agency framework. Wight's tripartite framework of agency is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the layers of agency.¹⁹ Religion research in the future may consider whether there needs to be an addition of new layers of agency. One query is whether a specific layer should be added to account for the conception of an existing natural order based on the religious traditions of the actor. This is so that it is not amalgamated into the category of sociocultural system in agency₂ of the Wight framework. Future religion research may delve deeper into this agency framework to see if future layers can be added.

As this thesis draws to a close, these further avenues for research form part of a focus on religion and agency in IR based on an accommodationist engagement with the religious realm. The value of accommodationist scholarship and the methodology of analytic eclecticism in moving the

¹⁹ Wight, 'They Shoot Dead Horses', 129.

agenda of research forward, as attempted by this thesis, should be considered further in the study of religion in IR.

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