

TOWARD AN ECCLESIAL VISION IN THE SHADOW OF WOUNDS

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This dissertation in the area of systematic theology examines wounds in the church, specifically two examples of systematic injustice that prevent the church from living into its mission to proclaim the Gospel and make present the reign of God on earth. I argue that the church is wounded, as most clearly evidenced by the wounds of racism and sexism. Ecclesiology must take seriously the reality of wounds in order to be church in credible and authentic ways.

In order to deepen this examination, I utilize contemporary trauma theory as a tool to clarify the nature and dynamic of wounds. The overarching theme of trauma theory is woundedness, for the term “trauma” derives from the Greek term for wound. An originating trauma or wound continues to become known to the victim in the present and future, unable to be relegated to the past. As a result, it is essential for the church to attend to the site of the wound in order to uncover the truth contained in the wound rather than ignoring it. The church cannot fully be church if it neglects its own painful and uncomfortable wounds. Rather, in order for the church to embody its mission, it must attend to these insistent, important, and neglected wounds.

The capacious ecclesiological work of Karl Rahner, when placed in dialogue with trauma studies, reorients ecclesial self-understanding. Rahner’s understanding of church as symbol and sacrament affirms paradoxical realities of the church, such as the church as

sinful and holy. Rahner's emphasis on the church as mystery has the capacity to hold the challenges articulated by trauma theory, for there is always more to the church than currently expressed. Rahner's ecclesiology emphasizes the importance of the concrete as well as the transcendent, attending to the realities of wounds in the church while being attentive to the ongoing self-gift of God.

Together, the contributions of trauma theory and Rahner's ecclesiology illuminate ways to identify essential components of an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds. An ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds must include lived experience, center the role of wounds, consider ecclesial authenticity, embrace paradox, and hold space for the revelatory nature of wounds. If ecclesiology fails to attend to the wounds of the church, our understanding and practice of the church will become distorted. The marks of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic are threatened when the wounds of the church are denied. By engaging in this ecclesiological method, wounds in the church can undergo a transfiguration to become post-Easter wounds, where their memory still exists but they cease to continue to harm the church. This dissertation argues that Roman Catholic ecclesiology must address its own institutional wounds in order to credibly embody its mission to make the reign of God present in the world, while living into the already-but-not-yet reign of God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction.....	1
1.0 Contemporary Questions in Ecclesiology	11
1.1 Ecclesiological Method.....	13
1.1.1 Task of Ecclesiology	13
1.1.2 Defining “Church”	18
1.1.3 Marks of the Church.....	21
1.1.3.1 <i>One</i>	23
1.1.3.2 <i>Holy</i>	25
1.1.3.3 <i>Catholic</i>	27
1.1.3.4 <i>Apostolic</i>	28
1.2 Trends in Contemporary Ecclesiology	32
1.2.1 Vatican II and Reception.....	33
1.2.2 Ecclesiological Models.....	39
1.2.3 Correctives to Tradition: Feminist and Latinx Ecclesiology.....	43
1.2.3.1 Feminist Ecclesiology.....	44
1.2.3.2 Latinx Ecclesiology	51
1.2.4 Systematic Ecclesiology and Practical Ecclesiology	57
1.3 Pressing Questions in Ecclesiological Investigations.....	69
2.0 Wounds in the Church.....	72
2.1 Ecclesiological Considerations of Wounds.....	74
2.1.1 Language of Wounds in Theology and Church Life.....	79
2.2 Examining Wounds in the Church: A Study of Racism and Sexism.....	88
2.2.1 Sexism	90
2.2.1.1 Examples of Sexism as an Ecclesial Wound	91
2.2.1.1.1 Patriarchal and Exclusively Male Language to Discuss God	92
2.2.1.1.2 Exclusion of Women from Ministerial Positions.....	96
2.2.2 Racism	106
2.2.2.1 “Racism as a Wound” in Theology: A Survey of Contemporary Contributions.....	110
2.2.2.2 Examples of Racism as an Ecclesial Wound.....	114
2.2.2.2.1 Exclusion and Experience of Black Men in the Priesthood and Black Women in Religious Life.....	114
2.2.2.2.2 Catholic Social Teaching on Racism	124
2.3 Theological Implications of Wounds	132
3.0 Trauma Theory as a Tool for Responding to Wounds	143
3.1 Contemporary Trauma Theory	145
3.1.1 Introducing Trauma Theory	145
3.1.2 Wounds.....	148
3.1.3 Temporal Concerns: Belatedness, Departure, and Memory.....	157
3.1.4 Witness	171
3.1.5 Healing	176
3.1.6 Paradoxical Nature of Trauma	179
3.2 Theology and Trauma Theory	181
3.2.1 Methodological Considerations.....	182

3.2.2	Major Contributions	188
3.2.2.1	Shelly Rambo	189
3.2.2.2	Serene Jones	191
3.2.2.3	Jennifer Beste	193
3.2.3	Remaining Questions	194
4.0	The Contribution of Karl Rahner's Ecclesiology	198
4.1	Key Features of Rahner's Ecclesiology	201
4.1.1	Mystery	203
4.1.2	Church as Sacrament and Symbol	206
4.1.3	Paradoxical Elements	216
4.1.3.1	Categorical and Transcendental	218
4.1.3.2	Institutional and Charismatic	220
4.1.3.3	Sinful and Holy	222
4.1.4	Eschatological Orientation	228
4.2	Significant Contributions to a Vision of Church in the Shadow of Wounds	231
4.2.1	Calling Attention to Hidden Realities	232
4.2.2	Mystery and Reality	235
4.2.3	Holding Paradoxes	239
4.2.4	Open to the Future	244
4.3	Conclusion	247
5.0	Towards an Ecclesial Vision in the Shadow of Wounds	248
5.1	Key Features of an Ecclesial Vision in the Shadow of Wounds	250
5.1.1	Lived Experience as a Point of Departure	250
5.1.2	Centrality of Wounds and Ecclesial Authenticity	256
5.1.3	Paradox	260
5.1.4	Wounds as a Source of Revelation	262
5.1.5	An Ecclesial Vision in the Shadow of Wounds	269
5.2	Deepening an Ecclesial Vision in the Shadow of Wounds	270
5.2.1	Marks of the Church	271
5.2.1.1	<i>One</i>	271
5.2.1.2	<i>Holy</i>	273
5.2.1.3	<i>Catholic</i>	274
5.2.1.4	<i>Apostolic</i>	275
5.2.2	Mission and Credibility	277
5.3	Living as a Church in Woundedness	280
5.4	Conclusion	287
	Works Cited	289

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INTRODUCTION

THE CONTOURS OF WOUNDS

“There stands the Church, and she declares herself to be necessary for salvation, she comes to us in the name of a holy God... And this very Church which comes to us with such claims, why look at her!”¹ As Karl Rahner reflected on the church, he pondered a church that is so often a sign of what the church should not be, rather than a vision of what the church could be. As I wrote this dissertation, details of the clergy sexual abuse crisis from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report became public. The rise of white nationalism in the United States was met with silence from the church hierarchy. Too often, the church became an example of how to shroud the reign of God rather than make present the reign of God on earth. The wounds of the church are on display for all to see and feel.

These wounds significantly impact the church, influencing the way that the church is expressed and viewed in the world today. If the church does not take wounds seriously, then it fails to be church in a credible way. Ecclesiology must take wounds in the church seriously, refiguring the ecclesiological task. Failure to take wounds seriously

¹ Karl Rahner, “The Church of Sinners,” trans. Boniface Kruger and Karl-Heinz Kruger, vol. 6, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969), 253.

results in a distorted ecclesiology, reflecting on an image of the church that does not exist. However, ecclesiology in shadow of wounds has the potential to transform the church and its wounds into post-Easter wounds as Jesus Christ's crucifixion wounds were transfigured in his appearances to his disciples. Post-Easter wounds are transfigured but not erased, testifying to pain and suffering yet ceasing to cause harm. In order for the wounds of the church to be similarly transformed, the church must do ecclesiology in a way that understands the nuances of wounds and reconsiders the ecclesiological task accordingly.

On Wounds

Wounds convey varied and vivid imagery. Gashes. Exposed. Blood. Tender flesh. Fresh wounds have the power to deepen and worsen, yet also carry the promise of healing. Scars tell of what has been before yet remain incomplete. In Christianity, the images of wounds are centerpieces of the resurrection narratives. Jesus appears with his wounds of the crucifixion. Yet Jesus' wounds do not continue to harm him, having been transformed in the resurrection.

Wounds have a paradoxical nature, and also serve a paradoxical role in theology and in this dissertation. In one sense, wounds signal something that should not be. They signify absence where there should be presence, incompleteness where there should be wholeness. They attest to pain and suffering. Wounds result from something that is not the way it should be, whether it is an injury, an accident, acts of violence, or discrimination. At the same time, wounds can also be revelatory, attesting to realities often hidden or obscured. Wounds can convey important truths and hope for a future

where wounds no longer cause harm. This dissertation writes from the site of the wound. In doing so, I do not seek to glorify wounds. Rather, I strive to take wounds seriously.

When looking at the church in the United States, examples of pain and suffering too quickly come to mind. Numerous examples can be found of the church failing to preach the Gospel and straying from Jesus' example to care for the poor and marginalized, and siding with the privileged. Racism and segregation still characterize the American religious experience. Sexism taints churches, impacting worship and the full expression of church. In short, the church is wounded, and is the victim and perpetrator of its wounds. Yet to list these wounds of the church and closely examine these wounds is not to be unduly critical of the church. Rather, faith in the church demands such an inquiry. As Rahner asserts, "We are critical in our attitude to the Church because this critique belongs to the very nature of our faith itself since in union with the faith of the Church it is on the way to the eternal light."²

In the midst of a wounded church, there are several options in how to proceed. One option is to ignore the wounds of the church. This path, taken all too often, seeks to affirm the positive aspects of the church at the expense of the pain and suffering of the church. Instead, discussions of the church operate from the lens of perfection. The holiness of the church is emphasized and the reality of pain, scandal, and sin is excluded. In turn, the lived experience of the church as wounded is never discussed. Wounds are ignored, yet persist and fester. I choose another path: acknowledge the wounds of the church. Such acknowledgement requires a thorough examination of wounds. It is not

² Karl Rahner, "Concerning Our Assent to the Church as She Exists in the Concrete," trans. David Bourke, vol. 12, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1974), 159–60.

enough to state, “the church is wounded.” Rather, we must examine the nuances and contours of these wounds.

Ecclesiology must attend to the site of the wound. The particularity of the site of the wound accounts for the wound itself as well as the context and conditions that cause the wound and prevent healing. If theology fails to attend to the woundedness of the church, our understanding and practice of the church will become distorted, ultimately failing to make present the fullness of the reign of God on earth. The church must respond to the realities of trauma in order to be church authentically. Ecclesiology must not only take this into account, but is richer for attending to the site of the wound. My thesis is that the Roman Catholic church must address its own wounds in order to credibly live into its mission to make the reign of God present in the world, while living in to the already-but-not-yet dimension of the reign.

Method and Overview

This project is guided by two central faith claims that inform my theological project. First, the church is central to bringing about the already-but-not-yet reign of God. Second, the church is the site of deep wounds. These are internal wounds that are perpetuated by the church within the church. These claims are interrelated, for the church must attend to its own wounds in order to live into its mission of bringing about the already-but-not-yet reign of God. If the church does not address its own woundedness, not only will it not carry out its mission, but it will continue to shroud the presence of God in the world.

I am primarily studying the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. This focus on a specific aspect of the church will become especially apparent in Chapter 2

where I examine wounds in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. This focus is intended to allow for greater depth, rather than exclusionary commentary. This study has implications beyond this specific church. For that reason, I use the lower-case “church” to emphasize the universal nature of the church and the prevailing significance of this study.

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the area of ecclesiology. Specifically, I argue that Roman Catholic ecclesiology and the church must address its own wounds in order to credibly live into its mission to make the reign of God present in the world, while living into the already-but-not-yet reality of the reign. It is the first work in Catholic theology to study ecclesiology in conjunction with contemporary trauma studies. I utilize trauma theory as a tool in order to illuminate and transform our ecclesial self-understanding.

Following the work of ecclesiologist and practical theologian Mary McClintock Fulkerson, theology has the potential to act as a response to a wound. She states, “Disjunctions birth invention—from a disjuncture in logic, where reasoning is compelled to find new connections in thought, to brokenness in existence, where creativity is compelled to search for possibilities of reconciliation.”³ This dissertation attends to the site of the wound, using trauma theory to deepen our ecclesiological understanding of woundedness, specifically through paradoxical understandings of time, experience, and truth. In grappling with the contours of our own woundedness, our understanding of what it means to be church is transformed. If we do not grapple with our own wounds, the church cannot be church credibly. Moreover, an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds

³ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13.

can transfigure and deepen our self-understanding of what it means to be church in the contemporary context.

Chapter 1 begins with an analysis of contemporary ecclesiological investigations. In doing so, I forefront questions of the relationship between the theological vision of the church and the lived experience of the church, paying special attention to areas where these diverge. Ecclesiology does not study a fixed point, but rather, examines a church that is a lived reality yet also more than its concrete manifestation on earth. The four marks of the church— one, holy, catholic, apostolic— serve as a way of defining the church as well as a guiding norm for ecclesiological investigations. Chapter 1 also explores trends in contemporary ecclesiology, integrating significant events and methods in considering the church in the modern world. In particular, I look to Vatican II and reception, ecclesiological models, and systematic and practical ecclesiology. I also look to important correctives to tradition, including feminist and Latinx ecclesiology. Together, these trends in contemporary ecclesiology set the stage for pressing questions in ecclesiological investigations. Mission, credibility, and the four marks of the church serve as norms for an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds throughout this dissertation.

In Chapter 2, I examine wounds in the church or examples of systematic issues that prevent the church from living into its mission to proclaim the Gospel and bring about the reign of God, as most clearly evidenced by racism and sexism. These wounds focus attention on particular instances where the lived experience of the church differs from the theological vision of the church, and this dissonance causes deep harm to the ecclesial body. The realities of racism and sexism threaten the oneness, holiness, and

catholicity of the church, for they create division within the church. I examine two examples each of racism and sexism in the church in order to ground this examination in lived reality. In the area of sexism, I look to (a) patriarchal and exclusively male language to discuss God and the theological endeavor and (b) exclusion of women from ministerial roles in the church, ranging from altar servers to priests. In the area of racism, I look to (a) the exclusion of black men from the priesthood and black women from religious life and (b) the silence of the hierarchical church on issues relating to racism.

In order to deepen this examination, I utilize contemporary trauma theory as a tool to assist in better understanding wounds in Chapter 3. The overarching theme of trauma theory is woundedness, for the term “trauma” derives from the Greek term for wound. An originating trauma or wound continues to become known to the victim in the present and future, unable to be relegated to the past. As a result, it is essential for the church to attend to the site of the wound in order to uncover the truth contained in the wound that is often ignored. When the church attends to the site of the wound, it incorporates this new knowledge and experience into the ecclesial tradition. In doing so, the church is equipped to live its mission in a more credible way. The church cannot fully be church if it neglects painful and uncomfortable experiences. Rather, in order for the church to embody its mission, it must attend to these significant and neglected wounds.

Given the expansive scope of trauma theory, I focus upon the paradoxical nature of wounds as presented in trauma theory. Trauma holds together multifaceted understandings of time, experience, and truth. Trauma demands a witness, as the originating event becomes known through the victim relaying the traumatic event to a person accompanying him/her in the aftermath. Paradoxically, trauma also defies a

witness, for trauma is unable to be fully revealed to another.⁴ Temporal understandings of time are challenged by trauma studies, as displayed by the concepts of belatedness, departure, and memory. A wound has the potential to integrate the past and future into the present, haunting the wounded and witnesses by events of the past yet always looking toward the future. The multiplicity of meanings articulated in trauma theory presents a necessary resource for a credible Catholic ecclesiology.

Chapter 4 draws upon the ecclesiology of Karl Rahner. While not written as a response to trauma, the ecclesiological work of Karl Rahner has the capacity to engage trauma theory in a scholarly analysis. God as mystery frames Rahner's theology and ecclesiology, emphasizing that there are important truths that cannot always be seen or touched. Rahner's understanding of church as symbol and sacrament holds together paradoxical elements of the church, such as the categorical and transcendental, institutional and charismatic, and church as sinful and holy. Rahner's ecclesiology has the capacity to hold paradoxes, harmonizing with the paradoxical nature of trauma theory. Rahner holds that mystery and reality are intimately connected and reveal God, blending together two aspects that are often held in opposition with one another. Wounds bring together the past, present and future, a movement that is echoed in Rahner's articulation of the eschatological orientation of the church and the openness to the future. It is in this process of attending to wounds that the church is able to come to a more authentic self-understanding and credibly live out its mission.

This dissertation concludes by presenting an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds in Chapter 5. Together, the contributions of trauma theory and Rahner's

⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

ecclesiology illuminate ways to consider the woundedness of the church. An ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds begins with lived experience, privileging the experience of the marginalized. It centers the role of wounds, taking seriously their contours and nuances. Wounds have a paradoxical nature; so too, the church has a paradoxical nature. Attending to wounds in the church invites us to enter more deeply into the mystery of the church. In doing so, we hold a posture of reverence. This dissertation seeks a deeper understanding of wounds and a deeper understanding of the church. Doing ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds deepens the four marks of the church. By coming to know the contours of wounds, we also come to know the church in a more authentic way and live into the mission of the church. In entering more deeply into the mystery, we also enter more deeply into the relationship with God.

The wounds of the resurrected Christ serve as a guiding image for the church in the shadow of wounds. After his crucifixion, death, and resurrection, Christ's crucifixion wounds remained when he appeared to the disciples. However, the wounds were transformed, for they no longer continued to cause harm or pain. This provides rich imagery for the church, for wounds continue to reveal new truth and experience yet can be transformed in such a way that they are not actively bleeding. In this sense, wounds can continue to be a source of revelation and propel the church into more fully living into its mission. By attending to the site of the wound, wounds can transform into post-Easter wounds, ceasing to harm the church and instead becoming a source of revelation.

Though this dissertation is focused on the wounds of racism and sexism in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, an ecclesiology in the shadow of the wounds has significance beyond this context. The global sexual abuse crisis illustrates the

wide-reaching impact of wounds in the church, for new revelations of abuse and cover-up continue to come to public light. The legacies of colonialism, whiteness, sexism, racism, ableism, and many more fractures in the body of Christ continue to harm the church. Wounds plague the church, and it is only when we consider church in the shadow of wounds that the process of healing and transfiguring wounds can begin.

In discussing the church, Rahner cautions that we must have patience, for “it is impossible to make everything clear and intelligible all at once.”⁵ As I embark on this study of the church, wounds, trauma, and ecclesiology, I encourage the reader to embody a similar posture. Exploring the wounds of the church requires uncovering overlapping layers of oppression in careful, complicated steps. Trauma theory is not linear, making multiple truth claims in ways that are paradoxical. Rahner’s ecclesiology is framed by the mystery and grace of God, inviting us into deeper relationship. An ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds must be capacious enough to embrace the paradoxical realities of wounds and the overarching mystery of God. Such a capacious ecclesiology requires patience and a posture of entering deeply into mystery.

⁵ Karl Rahner, “I Believe in the Church,” trans. David Bourke, vol. 7, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1977), 100.

1.0 CONTEMPORARY QUESTIONS IN ECCLESIOLOGY

Fundamental topics of ecclesiology ground this study of the church in the shadow of wounds. In particular, the relationship between the theological vision of the church and the lived experience of the church is especially important, for questions related to this topic address the crucial issues in ecclesiology. Ecclesiology does not study a fixed point, but rather, examines a church that is a lived reality while also always more than its concrete manifestation on earth. The ecclesiological investigations in this chapter serve as the context for further ecclesiological analysis in this dissertation.

In order to ask questions surrounding the state of discourse in contemporary ecclesiology, we must first examine ecclesiological method. The opening section identifies several important areas surrounding the task of ecclesiology, including the proper subject of ecclesiology, the relationship between ecclesiology and other loci of systematic theology, and the relationship between divine and human aspects of the church. Next, I define the term “church” and identify key aspects of church, including the four marks of the church. The four marks of the church function as a norm in this dissertation, for ecclesiological analysis in Chapters 2 and 5 will use these marks as a norm for analyzing the credibility and authenticity of the church’s practices. From this analysis in Section 1.1.3, the living nature of the church emerges. By this I mean that the church is not a static reality or fixed point that can be studied objectively, but rather, the

church is an incarnated reality that lives into its mission through the people of God. This section acts as the foundation for further ecclesiological investigation, both in this chapter and throughout the dissertation.

The focus of Section 1.2 is trends in contemporary ecclesiology. I set the stage through examining major ecclesiological developments of the Second Vatican Council that frame contemporary ecclesiological investigations. From there, I look to the influence of Avery Dulles's contribution of ecclesiological models on 20th and 21st century ecclesiology. This section also looks to two areas that serve as corrections to the tradition: feminist ecclesiology and Latinx ecclesiology. These methods seek to de-center the western, male influence on ecclesiology that "pretends to universalism"¹ through re-centering the importance of context and experience, especially the experience of the marginalized. Finally, this section engages the methodology of systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology. Together, Section 1.2 examines ecclesiological methods that analyze how to straddle the discrepancy between the church as discussed in theology and the lived experience of the church.

This chapter concludes by examining pressing questions in the field of contemporary ecclesiology. It identifies unresolved questions and lifts up areas for further analysis that will be taken up in the following chapters. Overall, this chapter identifies the tension between the real and ideal in ecclesiology. If ecclesiology focuses only on ideal notions of the church and neglects the lived reality, then the resultant ecclesiology becomes distorted and the church's ability to live into its mission is compromised.

¹ Gary Riebe-Estrella, "Catholic Ecclesiology," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espin (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2015), 191.

1.1 ECCLESIOLOGICAL METHOD

1.1.1 Task of Ecclesiology

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas identifies God as the proper object of theology. He argues, “Sacred doctrine deals with all things in terms of God, either because they are God himself or because they are related to him as their origin and end. So, God is truly the object of this science.”² Given the centrality of God to the theological task, several ecclesialogists point to God as the proper object of ecclesialogy as well. For example, Paul Murray follows Aquinas’s example in the *Summa Theologiae* to argue for this. Murray proceeds, “Accordingly, the formal subject of ecclesialogy is properly understood as God and the reality of the church viewed in relation to God as the church’s source, sustainer and consummation.”³ God as the formal subject of ecclesialogy is foundational to ecclesialogy, for it gives rise to its connection to other areas of systematic theology.

Ecclesialogy did not develop as a separate locus of systematic theology until the time of the Reformation.⁴ This is not to say that there was no reflection on the church, but rather, that reflection on the church was done through the categories of God, creation, reconciliation in Christ, and the sacraments.⁵ Given its closeness with other systematic loci, ecclesialogy shares a similar task. To fully explicate the task of theology is beyond

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Questions on God*, ed. Brian Leftow and Brian Davies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), sec. 1a1.7.

³ Paul D. Murray, “Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice: On the Transformative Task of Systematic Ecclesialogy,” *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (April 2014): 256.

⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesialogy: Ecumenical, Historical* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 9–11.

⁵ Kärkkäinen, 10.

the scope of this chapter. However, a word must be said about the task of theology in relation to the task of ecclesiology. Roger Haight, S.J. describes the method of ecclesiology as connected to the method of theology generally. He states, “The criteria of ecclesiology are simply the general criteria of theology itself transposed to the narrower subdiscipline that deals with the church. The three criteria are fidelity to the past, intelligibility and coherence today, and empowerment into the future.”⁶ These three criteria help ground the task of theology and ecclesiology, shaping the method and goals of the disciplines. Fidelity to the past connects theology and ecclesiology to the lived tradition of the church. Intelligibility and coherence today looks to the way that faith is expressed in the modern world, affirming the need for resonance with lived experience. Empowerment into the future, an often unexamined aspect of the task of theology, looks to how the church is propelled into the future. This understanding of future looks to both the future on earth as well as the eschatological future.

As a locus of systematic theology, ecclesiology examines questions surrounding the church. However, ecclesiology is unique in its connection to the other loci of systematic theology. In traditional frameworks of theology, ecclesiology was located between theological anthropology and eschatology, “between theological reflection on what it means to be human in the constructive tension between being in the image of God and living in structures of sin and sinfulness and the theological reflection on the ‘last things’, the world in the light of God’s creativity and justice.”⁷ This traditional location can also be expanded to see the task of ecclesiology as connected to other systematic loci. The task of ecclesiology is inherently connected to Christology, theological

⁶ Roger Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” *Science et Esprit* 45, no. 3 (1993): 272.

⁷ Natalie K. Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 115.

anthropology, pneumatology, eschatology, doctrine of God, understandings of revelation, and many other areas of systematic theology. Haight describes this phenomenon:

“Ecclesiology is not a simple discipline; its complexity calls upon a variety of disciplines and kinds of expertise.”⁸ For example, how we understand the church will naturally flow from as well as shape how we understand sin. This connection to other disciplines enriches ecclesiology. Nicholas Healy sees this connection as vital to the ecclesiological task. He explains, “The primary concern of ecclesiology should not be to explicate a particular model but to make sound judgments upon the ‘everything else.’”⁹ Analyzing the church for the purpose of understanding an ecclesial model can be a type of theological naval-gazing. However, analyzing an ecclesial model for the purpose of understanding of the reign of God is already-but-not-yet, or how God reveals Godself to the world is an essential ecclesiological task. This connection to the “everything else” does not distract from a focused analysis of ecclesiology, for it ultimately conveys the far-reaching implications of ecclesiology. The church is not removed from the “everything else,” but rather, intimately bound up with the questions of the world.

While the tasks of ecclesiology and theology are deeply connected, there are also key differences. Haight describes these differences: “Unlike other theological disciplines, however, the direct object of ecclesiology is a social movement and institution.”¹⁰ The direct object sets ecclesiology apart from other systematic areas. Not only is it distinct, but the nature of a social movement and institution highlight the unique nature of the ecclesiological task as well as the need for different tools. This is especially apparent in

⁸ Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 268.

⁹ Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 46.

¹⁰ Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 269.

the discussion of systematic and practical ecclesiology and the role of ethnography, taken up later in this chapter.

Murray further argues that the focus of ecclesiology is the “living truth of the church,” which he defines as “the reality of the church understood in both its divine and human dimensions and its theological and empirical expressions.”¹¹ He utilizes the term “living truth of the church”— which he admits is a deliberately ambiguous phrase¹²— in order to evoke connotations of human and divine elements of the church. While it may first conjure ideas of a heavenly or divine body, he extends the meaning beyond that. He explains, “Equally, ‘the living truth of the church’ refers us to the living, breathing, empirical reality of the church as it actually is and not simply as we would have or imagine it to be.”¹³

The divine and human elements of the church are at the center of methodological questions. How we understand each of these and their interaction with one another determines, in large part, the task of ecclesiology. In approaching this question, we must be careful not to separate the human and divine elements of the church as though they can be understood apart from one another. There is not a divine church that exists apart from the human church, or vice versa. Rather, they are infused with one another. Edward Schillebeeckx describes this interaction: “The church community as mystery cannot be found behind or above concrete, visible reality. The church community is to be found in this reality which can be demonstrated here and now.”¹⁴ The church as the concrete community is necessarily the divine church. This mystery guides our understanding of

¹¹ Murray, “Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice,” 255.

¹² Murray, 256.

¹³ Murray, 256.

¹⁴ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 5.

the church. This union of the human and divine aspects of the church is central to understanding the task of ecclesiology, and is a topic to which I will return throughout this chapter.

Following from the establishment of the formal object of ecclesiology as God and the church's relationship to God, we must further explore how to examine the church's relationship with God. Natalia Imperatori-Lee describes the ambitious task of ecclesiology: "Ecclesiology seeks to thematize and theorize the story of the church, a daunting task that involves the intertwining of historical research, philosophical analysis, and attention to the complexity of the human experience of salvation."¹⁵ There are two important aspects to lift up from this description of the task of ecclesiology. The first is the role of the story of the church. Imperatori-Lee looks to narrative ecclesiology as a contribution of Latinx theology to assist ecclesiology in reading and re-telling this story. I will analyze this area in further depth in Section 1.2.3.2 in this chapter. The second important aspect is the connection of many diverse areas inherent in the ecclesiological task, such as history, philosophy and soteriology. These aspects must not be lost in considering the task of the ecclesiology, for they reveal the breadth and depth of the ecclesiological task.

Importantly, ecclesiology assists the church in living out its mission. Just as the concrete and divine elements of the church cannot be separated from one another, the theological task of ecclesiology cannot be thought of apart from its concrete task. Healy describes this, stating, "Ecclesiology can aid the church's efforts by reflecting

¹⁵ Natalia M. Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium," in *A Church with Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, ed. Richard R. Gaillardetz and Edward P. Hahnenberg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 46.

theologically upon its concrete identity.”¹⁶ By reflecting theologically upon the concrete identity of the church, ecclesiology itself acts as a bridge between the theological and concrete. Further, this task is inherently connected to mission, as the concrete identity of the church is how the church embodies its mission of making present the reign of God on earth.

1.1.2 Defining “Church”

Having discussed the task of ecclesiology, it is necessary to define the term “church,” as it is central to this study. As discussed in the Introduction, I am studying the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. I use the lower-case “church” to emphasize the universal nature of the church and the significance of this study beyond the Roman Catholic Church in the United States.

Beginning with the big picture, there are advantages to thinking of church through its connection to revelation rather than an entity or organization. Dorothee Sölle connects church to the liberation of God’s reign. She explains, “Wherever God acts in a liberating way in and through human beings, there is participation in that liberating action of God, involvement, allowing oneself to be drawn into the process of liberation; there ‘church’ appears in the full sense of the word, related to the kingdom of God.”¹⁷ Sölle affirms characteristics and activities associated with church, namely participation in God’s liberation. This expansive approach to defining “church” underscores the connection of liberation and the reign of God with any understanding of church.

¹⁶ Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 25.

¹⁷ Dorothee Sölle, *Thinking about God* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 137–38.

Church refers to many realities at once, making it essential to begin by naming these realities. Ecclesiologist T. Howland Sanks, S.J. captures this by stating, “The church is not only a social and a historical reality; it is also a *theological* reality.”¹⁸ As a social reality, the church refers to a human group or gathering. Yet this most-basic understanding of the church is limited, for it neglects other essential aspects of the church. The historical reality of the church points to the long history of the church, emphasizing that the church is embedded in human history. While social science methods reflect these two realities in inquiries surrounding the church, a theological inquiry has a special interest in its relationship to God. Sanks describes the uniqueness of this aspect: “Unlike most other human social groups, however, the Christian community has always understood itself to have a relationship to the transcendent, to God, as well as to the rest of the world.”¹⁹ The theological reality of the church sets it apart from other social or historical realities. Catherine LaCugna underscores the importance of the difference between the church and other organizations. She states, “The church makes a claim that civil governments do not: that it is the People of God, Body of Christ, and Temple of the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ These three realities of the church guide this examination, focusing attention on the interconnection of these dimensions in the lived practice of the church. Further, these realities shape our expectations of the church. Given that the church is more than a social or historical reality, we hold those in the church to different expectations than other organizations. This will be seen in further detail in Chapter 2 where I examine the wounds of racism and sexism in the church.

¹⁸ T. Howland Sanks, *Salt, Leaven, and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 23.

¹⁹ Sanks, 23.

²⁰ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 401.

Joseph Komonchak explores the definition of the church in his *Père Marquette Lecture in Theology* entitled “Who Are the Church?”²¹ Komonchak noticeably addresses the church in the plural. He explains this choice: “I have chosen to ask my question in the plural: ‘Who are the Church?’ I do so because I wish it to be clear from beginning to end that the Church is a social phenomenon, and that any answer to the question about the referent of the word will always refer to us as a group of people, to ‘real subjects.’”²² While I do not use a similar practice in this dissertation due primarily to conventions in ecclesiology surrounding “church” as a singular noun, I affirm Komonchak’s emphasis on the church as a “group of people” and “real subjects.” This affirmation should not be lost in an ecclesiological examination.

Further, Komonchak argues that the most thorough understanding of church comes through the particular expression in history, or the concrete church. He argues, “‘In whom,’ that is, ‘in what men and women, in what communities, is the Church authentically realized?’ In the end, it is in individual Christians and in their local communities and Churches, in the varied circumstances of time and place, before the differing challenges of their historical moments, that the most telling answer will be found to my question: ‘Who are the Church?’”²³ Yet, there is an important dynamic of examining the relationship of the part to the whole. Haight describes this through affirming that “the object of the discipline of ecclesiology is the whole or universal church”²⁴ while also holding this in tension with the fact that “the actual object of

²¹ Joseph Komonchak, *Who Are the Church* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette Univ Press, 2008).

²² Komonchak, 15.

²³ Komonchak, 78.

²⁴ Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 256.

ecclesiology is often not the universal church but only a segment of it.”²⁵ The importance of the lived reality of the church in a particular time and location can be held together with the universal nature of the church. Haight explains this dynamic: “That is to say, the local church is not simply a part or fragment of a universal entity called the church. Rather, the whole of what it means to be church comes to realization in a local church, or in a part of the church.”²⁶ The universal nature of the church is expressed through the particular expression of a local church. Thus, both Komonchak and Haight’s arguments can be upheld as true and not contradictory.

An important aspect of defining the church is looking to the distinct qualities of the church. Catholic tradition upholds the four marks of the church as unique characteristics that convey important truths about the church. An examination of the marks of the church furthers our understanding of the church.

1.1.3 Marks of the Church

Rooted in the tradition of the Nicene Creed, the church is traditionally defined by four marks: one, holy, catholic, apostolic. These qualities are not arbitrary, but are rooted in the church’s connection to the triune God and appear in scripture and patristic sources. The marks are visible signs of the church’s nature and distinguish the church from other religious bodies.²⁷ While they have been lifted up as marks of the church since the Council of Nicea in 325 and Council of Constantinople in 381, they have often been the source of ecclesiological investigation during times of change, such as the Reformation.

²⁵ Haight, 256.

²⁶ Haight, 257.

²⁷ William Madges and Michael J. Daley, eds., *Many Marks of the Church* (New London, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 2006), 7.

Recently, Aidan Nichols took up this study in his book, *Figuring Out the Church: Her Marks, and Her Masters*.²⁸ Nichols examines each of the marks in conversation with modern theologians. He begins his study through looking to different approaches of examining the marks: ontological, epistemological, pedagogical, eschatological. Ultimately, he argues that these approaches fit together into a larger approach. He explains:

If unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity really belong to the Church (the ontological approach), then they will surely manifest themselves in some fashion (the epistemological approach), offering themselves as reference points for whatever else we want to say about the Church (the pedagogical approach), but always with the proviso that any Christian ontology— any account of reality in the light of the Gospel— will need to be open to divine completion from without at the Parousia of the Lord (the eschatological approach).²⁹

I utilize a similar method in this study, blending together the various approaches outlined by Nichols from the conviction that they are intimately related. This captures the fullness of the marks of the church by not magnifying one approach at the expense of the other approaches.

I contrast Nichols's presentation of the four marks of the church with that of Robert Schreiter in his essay "Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation." Schreiter writes from the context of HIV/AIDS, examining how times of transition illuminate often-neglected aspects of these marks.³⁰ He explains, "Reflection on the marks of the church has been at its keenest in times of change— changes that challenged the self-understanding of the church."³¹ As such, Schreiter presents an understanding of

²⁸ Aidan Nichols, *Figuring out the Church: Her Marks, and Her Masters* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013).

²⁹ Nichols, 12.

³⁰ Robert J. Schreiter, "Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation," in *The Church with AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 122–32.

³¹ Schreiter, 122.

marks of the church that come to the forefront of ecclesiological understandings when locating such an examination at the periphery. Schreiter's approach adds a sense of concreteness to this examination, complementing Nichols's theoretical analysis. Further, the location of Schreiter's research at the margins puts into practice the preferential option for the poor that is central to Catholic Social Teaching. Methodologically, this adds richness as well as an essential inclusion of a marginalized community. While Nichols and Schreiter do not capture comprehensively the variety of understandings of the marks of the church, they represent two important approaches to articulating these marks. As a result, one is able to see the most salient aspects of each of the marks. Further, this method models the necessary integration of systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology, which will be further discussed in Section 1.2.4.

An examination of each of these marks illuminates essential qualities of the church. While each mark of the church could be a chapter unto itself, I will briefly identify and discuss essential aspects of a contemporary understanding of each mark. I will return to these marks in Chapters 2 and 5 in order to analyze how the church's attention to or avoidance of wounds enhances or threatens its ability to credibly and authentically be church.

1.1.3.1 *One*

The unity of the church is the first mark. The oneness of the church has its roots in the unity of the Triune God. Just as the Triune God is one, so too is the church. Nichols draws upon the work of Heribert Mühlen to explain the role of the Holy Spirit in fostering unity: "In the economy of salvation, the Spirit performs the same task as he does in the Holy Trinity: namely, to be the nexus of unity, not this time between the

Father and the Son, but between the Son according to his humanity and ourselves.”³²

Thus, the unity of the church mirrors the unity of the Triune God. Prior to Vatican II, the Holy Spirit was seen as working primarily through the institutional church. Since Vatican II, the understanding of the working of the Spirit is much more expansive.

An essential nuance to understanding the oneness of the church is the distinction between unity and uniformity. Unity points to the oneness of the church. Uniformity, however, upholds identical expressions of church throughout the world as the ideal. Unity is a mark of the church, whereas uniformity is not. Given this, it is possible to uphold the need for unity in the church with the plurality of expressions of church throughout the world. Both the global and local churches participate in and make manifest the unity of the church. Nichols engages this through discussing the dynamic between parts and the whole of the church. He explains, “For the Creed, the Church is not more importantly many than she is one. Indeed, she is not equally importantly many and one. Rather, she is more importantly one than she is many.”³³ In a sense, the oneness of the church is expressed in many different forms throughout the world. It is through the many that the church is indeed one.

Schreiter points to the importance of unity and diversity without reducing this understanding to homogeneity. Schreiter highlights the importance of method in building an understanding of unity. Rather than looking to the center as the source of unity, Schreiter begins at the margins and “look[s] for the mark of unity along the boundaries that are redrawn in situations of struggle.”³⁴ This shift of boundaries changes the focus of

³² Nichols, *Figuring out the Church*, 28.

³³ Nichols, 14.

³⁴ Schreiter, “Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation,” 128.

unity, for unity is now “seen less from the center than from the shifting periphery.”³⁵ The oneness of the church still functions in the midst of struggle, diversity, and particularity. In fact, rooting an understanding of unity from the experience of diversity strengthens the experience of unity, moving it beyond a surface level sense of homogeneity to a deeper sense of oneness. The church remains united as one, and expressions of diversity strengthen this unity rather than threatening it.

1.1.3.2 *Holy*

At first glance, holiness appears to be an obvious mark of the church. This notion, however, is based on a shallow notion of holiness that bases holiness on its proximity to religious organizations. As a mark of the church, holiness is not a pious opinion or sentimental illusion, but rather, it is “a certitude of faith.”³⁶ Holiness points to the sacred nature of the church, setting it apart from secular organizations. Holiness conveys that the church embodies aspects of the divine, yet retains its identity as a human organization. As the church continues to live into the reality of being church, it embodies a “holiness of principles” that are characteristic of the church.³⁷ This raises a theological question related to the holiness of its members: does “holiness” mark the church as an institution or the church as a people? In answering this question, further questions arise, such as the relationship between the people of God and institutions and the basic understanding of the term “church.” While a full interrogation of these concepts is beyond this study, I will take up questions of the holiness and sinfulness of the church in Chapters 2 and 4.

³⁵ Schreiter, 128.

³⁶ Nichols, *Figuring out the Church*, 33.

³⁷ Nichols, 33–44.

Recalling the four approaches to considering the marks of the church, Nichols focuses on the eschatological dimension of the church's holiness. Similar to the mark of unity, the mark of holiness is best understood through the church's relationship with the Triune God. The Holy Spirit moves through the members of the church, drawing them closer into holiness. The foundation of the church in Jesus Christ furthers this understanding of holiness. Yet, the holiness of the church is not fully actualized in the present church. Rather, it is best understood eschatologically. Nichols explains, "This same initial holiness [of the founding of the church] is also the starting point of an open-ended movement of coming to share more fully in the holiness of Christ, which itself will come to term eschatologically in the final Kingdom."³⁸ The eschatological orientation of the church calls the church to make present the reign of God on earth in our midst, knowing full completion will not happen until the end of time.

Holiness is lived out through the church's engagement with the world. It is not through being set apart from the world, but precisely through engaging the world that the church most fully lives into its holiness. Schreiter emphasizes this through once again calling attention to the methodological move to the periphery. In Scripture, God continually aligned Godself with those at the margins, such as the migrant in the Hebrew Scriptures or the unclean and unwelcome in the Gospels. These examples compel the church to live out its holiness with the marginalized in the world today. In being "politically holy" and involved in the world, Schreiter argues, "The church not only shows its union with God, but helps the world see where God is most active— in the

³⁸ Nichols, 53.

brokenness and alienation of the human community, in situations such as the AIDS crisis.”³⁹

1.1.3.3 Catholic

The mark of catholicity primarily communicates two understandings of “catholic.”⁴⁰ The first understanding refers to the universal nature of the church throughout the world. Rooted in the meaning of catholic as “universal,” this understanding looks to the church spread throughout the world. Nichols further specifies this into the qualitative or quantitative sense of catholicity. The qualitative understanding of catholic refers to the “holistic or total way in which the Church spread throughout the world entertains the Catholic faith.”⁴¹ The quantitative sense looks to the communion with the church throughout the world.⁴² Both the quantitative and qualitative understandings of catholicity look to the connection between the local and universal church and assert the relationship between the parts and the whole as foundational to the church.

The second understanding of catholic refers to the orthodoxy of its teaching.⁴³ While this is a secondary understanding to the universal nature of the church when understanding marks of the church, it is a common enough understanding that it should be addressed. Orthodoxy looks to whether a teaching or embodiment of church is in line with authentic catholic belief. Schreiter explains that this sense of orthodoxy as related to

³⁹ Schreiter, “Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation,” 129.

⁴⁰ Schreiter, 130.

⁴¹ Nichols, *Figuring out the Church*, 58.

⁴² Nichols, 58.

⁴³ Schreiter, “Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation,” 130.

catholicity is especially prominent in times of persecution, when churches could claim catholicity as a result of having maintained faith in its entirety and integrity.⁴⁴

At its core, the mark of catholicity looks to the connection of churches throughout the world, addressing the local and universal aspects of the church. Schreiter encourages the examination of the degree or quality of these connections. In analyzing the report of the impact of AIDS on catholicity, he states that catholicity “reminds us that to be catholic means more than being confessionally or jurisdictionally connected; it tests the quality of that connectedness, especially its solidarity with those on the periphery of church and society.”⁴⁵ By invoking solidarity, Schreiter calls upon the heritage of Catholic Social Teaching to bring a richness in analysis. Solidarity deepens one’s understanding of catholicity, for it shifts the question from “are these connected?” to “*how* are these connected?” In doing so, it raises the bar of connection and looks to degree. While this can still be ambiguous, catholicity is a necessary consideration in light of our call to solidarity.

1.1.3.4 *Apostolic*

Apostolicity of the church is perhaps the most contentious and misunderstood of the marks. It conjures images of the apostles and foundation of the church, tracing an unbroken succession of leaders. Yet, this understanding of apostolicity can also convey a sense of being static. The church must remain as it was in the beginning, and is closed to change or development, or so the thought process goes. Yet this understanding of apostolicity is shallow. A more robust understanding draws out the nuances of this mark.

⁴⁴ Schreiter, 130.

⁴⁵ Schreiter, 131.

Nichols points to three aspects of apostolicity: apostolicity of origin, doctrine, and the ministerial succession of hierarchy.⁴⁶ Apostolicity of origin looks to the foundation of the early church. This is often discussed in conjunction with the apostolicity of doctrine and ministers. Apostolicity of doctrine looks to how the faith is passed on throughout generations, remaining one and true. Apostolicity of ministers points to the apostolic succession of church leaders, especially in terms of bishops and papal succession. These understandings highlight the foundation of the church in apostolic times, traced throughout church history, leading to the contemporary church. Nichols also underscores that apostolicity is not simply the connection to the past, but also the eschatological orientation of the church, looking to its fulfillment in the reign of God.⁴⁷ In this sense, apostolicity functions as an ongoing corrective to the church, calling the church to live into its fullness.

If understood strictly as continuity, apostolicity can adversely impact the marginalized. Continuity is too easily conflated with the status quo, which is often marked by injustice. Schreiter explains the impact of this understanding on those with AIDS: “From the perspective of those who feel the brokenness and alienation of human life in general and from the church in particular, continuity can be understood as those who do not suffer choosing to ignore the disruptions of the human community.”⁴⁸ Exclusion and ignorance cannot be justified in the name of apostolicity. This understanding betrays the meaning of apostolicity and is hardly a mark of the church. As a result, it is essential that apostolicity looks to connection rather than continuity. This subtle distinction ensures that marginalization is not justified in the name of apostolicity.

⁴⁶ Nichols, *Figuring out the Church*, 76.

⁴⁷ Nichols, 74–75.

⁴⁸ Schreiter, “Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation,” 131.

Continuity understood in light of connection can still be beneficial in understanding this mark. Schreiter explains, “For the church to be truly apostolic, it must seek continuity not only in an embracing of those things it considers potentially disruptive, but also in constancy in advocacy for justice. By always being at the point of discontinuity—that is, of being with those who are excluded or ignored—can the church hope to maintain fidelity to the cross and to Christ.”⁴⁹ Looking to the apostolicity of the church in terms of justice shifts the focus away from hierarchical structures and instead looks to mission-oriented questions of inclusion and justice.

Further, Yves Congar’s work on reform in the church is a helpful addition to understanding apostolicity. The mark of apostolicity does not point to an unchanging church, but rather, a church that changes in order to fully live into its mission. Congar calls attention to two temptations surrounding change. The first temptation is pharisaism, which risks turning a means into an end.⁵⁰ This temptation is characterized by a preoccupation with structures and things. A common symptom of this model is an emphasis on an ecclesial apparatus, thus overshadowing the human dimension of the church as well as the spirit and grace of God. The second temptation is the synagogue model,⁵¹ which refuses progress and is attached to forms fixed in time.⁵² It emphasizes fidelity to particular forms and models over principles. Congar also cautions that not all things in the church are changeable, but likewise, not everything is unchangeable. Things such as dogma, sacraments and the essential structure of the church are related to divine

⁴⁹ Schreiter, 131–32.

⁵⁰ Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert, Revised edition (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 135–46.

⁵¹ This term can be seen as supersessionist, or at the least, problematic to interreligious dialogue. A full critique of Congar and his work is beyond the scope of this study, though it is helpful to note here.

⁵² Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 147–68.

institution, and as such, are not open to change.⁵³ Yet Congar also warns that there is a tendency to “ascribe the value of permanence” to things that are indeed not permanent.⁵⁴

In response to these temptations, Congar calls for a genuine fidelity to the church. A full fidelity engages sources of faith, opposed to a “flat” or “superficial” fidelity that does not enter into dialogue.⁵⁵ Congar summarizes the dialectic of Catholic fidelity: “Catholic... fidelity will have to embrace two aspects: a fidelity to the presently realized form, because this is the concrete present form of existence of Christianity, and also a deeper fidelity embracing its future, thus fully respecting its principle or its tradition.”⁵⁶ Understanding apostolicity in connection with fidelity expands the notion of apostolicity. Rather than remaining attached to a particular form, it has the potential to call attention to connection with sources, tradition, and justice. It coincides with the root of tradition in “tradere” or to hand on, presenting the sense of movement in apostolic tradition. This understanding of apostolicity presents a vibrant church making the reign of God known in the world.

Together, these four marks form foundational attributes of the church. They highlight essential qualities of the church. Yet to understand them simply as qualities also denies these marks the fullness of their contribution. The four marks communicate what the church is and can be at the fullness of its being and expression. They serve as guideposts for how the church is or is not living into its identity and mission. Throughout this study, I will return to these marks as a form of evaluation to assess how the church responds to wounds in light of these four marks.

⁵³ Congar, 150–51.

⁵⁴ Congar, 153.

⁵⁵ Congar, 365–71.

⁵⁶ Congar, 367.

This first section serves as the foundation for the remainder of the dissertation. It identifies crucial components of the task of ecclesiology and defines key terms. Importantly, it frames the ecclesiological method as integrating tradition with lived experience. The church is not an objective object to be analyzed as a fixed point. Rather, it is an evolving reality that continually lives into itself through the people and God and context. As Saint Bede the Venerable remarked, “Every day the church gives birth to the church.” Ecclesiology cannot focus on the ideal only and neglect the lived experience of the church. In order to be authentic, the ecclesiological task must take up questions of context and experience. The terms and concepts examined in this introductory section serve as tools for further analysis. The next section draws upon these ecclesiological considerations through utilizing these tools to examine contemporary context.

1.2 TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGY

This section focuses upon recent developments in ecclesiology. It begins with Vatican II, a watershed moment in the life of the church that has a significant impact on the ecclesiological endeavor. Next, it looks to the work of Avery Dulles and models of the church. Dulles’s work is a touchstone for 20th and 21st century ecclesiological endeavors. While not without critique, it is a helpful contribution to examine due to its influence and breadth. I then look to two areas that serve as correctives to tradition: feminist theology and Latinx theology. These methods of inquiry utilize marginalized experience of women and Latinx persons respectively as points of departure. Finally, I

look to the approaches of systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology. These methods forefront the relationship between theory and practice.

1.2.1 Vatican II and Reception

Vatican II marked a monumental shift in the self-understanding of the church.⁵⁷ While an in-depth overview of the ecclesiology of Vatican II is beyond the scope of this examination, it is impossible to map the field of contemporary ecclesiology without at least a cursory examination of Vatican II. This section will highlight key ecclesiological insights that are especially relevant for the forthcoming examination of wounds in the church. Specifically, I look to the shift away from the “perfect society” image of the church to an understanding of the church mystery and the actualization of the global church. In addition, I look to the reception of Vatican II and communion ecclesiology, calling attention to the contextual nature of communion ecclesiology.

One of the largest ecclesiological shifts is the movement away from the “perfect society” model. The Latin manuals and Robert Bellarmine’s *societas perfecta* model no longer adequately reflected the role of the church in the world. The bishops at the Council criticized the first draft of the constitution on the church for its emphasis on the juridical and institutional elements, reminiscent of the First Vatican Council.⁵⁸ This is seen most clearly in the rejection of the initial schema on the church, which began with the first

⁵⁷ For an overview of ecclesiology before Vatican II, see Michael J. Himes, “The Development of Ecclesiology: Modernity to the Twentieth Century,” in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2000), 45–67.

⁵⁸ Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 51.

chapter “The Nature of the Church Militant.”⁵⁹ Instead, the final version of *Lumen Gentium* began with a chapter entitled, “The Mystery of the Church.”

This example reflects the ecclesiological shift present in the documents of Vatican II. The Second Vatican Council presented a multi-faceted view of the world church, utilizing a variety of images such as the church as people of God, pilgrim church, and church as sacrament. Imperatori-Lee describes this shift: “In a sense, one could view the council as stepping away from notions of a pristine Catholicism, recognizing the eschatological nature of the church’s perfection, and seeing the people of God as inevitably enmeshed in human history.”⁶⁰ To no longer see the church as a perfect society, or containing all the aspects it needs, puts forth a vision of the church and the world that is radically intertwined. Further, this understanding of the church as mystery is crucial for the further examination of wounds in the church, for it allows for the multiplicity of meanings as will be further analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5.

This shift in understandings of the church represents a larger theme in reception of the council and its theological impact. Though the council and its documents are complex, the council constitutes a “coherent unit” rather than “a grab bag of discreet elements.”⁶¹ To this end, Ormond Rush argues that Vatican II should be viewed primarily as in terms of theological principles, giving priority to theological interpretation as a way to guide ecclesial interpretation.⁶² This is not to undercut the significance of the impact of the council on ecclesiology, but rather, to emphasize that the church is connected to

⁵⁹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Expanded ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 17.

⁶⁰ Imperatori-Lee, “Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium,” 48.

⁶¹ John W O’Malley, “Vatican II Revisited as Reconciliation: The Francis Factor,” in *The Legacy of Vatican II*, ed. Massimo Faggioli and Andrea Vicini (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 6.

⁶² Ormond Rush, *The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019), xv.

God's self-revelation and called to greater fidelity to Jesus Christ and that ecclesial reception should be guided by these principles. Rush argues, "Although the council set about reform of the church, its ecclesiological vision of that reform was grounded on a renewed vision of God's way of working with humanity within history and of humanity's response in history to God."⁶³ This vision of the relationship between divine revelation and humanity, according to Rush, is central to Vatican II's reception and vision.⁶⁴

In addition, Vatican II marks the actualization of a global church. In the early stages of reception of the Council, Karl Rahner asserted, "The Second Vatican Council is, in a rudimentary form still groping for identity, the Church's first official self-actualization as a world Church."⁶⁵ Rahner explains this through comparing the pre-Vatican II activity of the church to that of an export firm "which exported a European religion as a commodity it did not really want to change but sent throughout the world together with the rest of the culture and civilization it considered superior."⁶⁶ As a world church, there is a shift away from this export mentality and instead a shift to understanding the church enmeshed with the world. While the church still has a long way to go to fully actualize as a world church and leave behind its Eurocentric heritage—a need that will be discussed later in this chapter—this is an important shift in the self-understanding of the church.

One of the most influential ecclesiological aspects of Vatican II comes from the reception, specifically the 1985 Synod of Bishops. In the final synod document, the

⁶³ Rush, 542.

⁶⁴ Rush, 542.

⁶⁵ Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (December 1, 1979): 717.

⁶⁶ Rahner, 717.

bishops asserted the primacy of church as communion as the fundamental ecclesiological theme from Vatican II. In their final report, they state:

The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents. *Koinonia*/communion, founded on the Sacred Scripture, have been held in great honor in the early Church and in the Oriental Churches to this day. Thus, much was done by the Second Vatican Council so that the Church as communion might be more clearly understood and concretely incorporated into life. What does the complex word "communion" mean? Fundamentally it is a matter of communion with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This communion is had in the Word of God and in the sacraments. Baptism is the door and the foundation of communion in the Church. The Eucharist is the source and the culmination of the whole Christian life (cf. LG 11). The communion of the eucharistic Body of Christ signifies and produces, that is, builds up, the intimate communion of all the faithful in the Body of Christ which is the Church (1 Cor. 10:16).⁶⁷

Communio ecclesiology appears throughout Council documents. Walter Kasper, theological secretary for the Extraordinary Synod, admits that *communio* is "not in the foreground in these texts."⁶⁸ However, Kasper argues that communion ecclesiology unites the multitude of images of the church that are in the foreground. "In this respect," he argues, "it is legitimate to call *communio* the ecclesologically guiding principle of the Council. Following the theology of the Church Fathers, the Council grounds its own ecclesiology in the inner-Trinitarian communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."⁶⁹ Kasper's pneumatological understanding of *communio*⁷⁰ guides the Extraordinary Synod's statement, as well as the prevalence of communion ecclesiology in the decades following.

⁶⁷ "The Church, in the Word of God, Celebrates the Mysteries of Christ for the Salvation of the World: The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod," 1985, sec. IIbC1, http://www.saint-mike.org/library/synod_bishops/final_report1985.html.

⁶⁸ Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission* (New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 21.

⁶⁹ Kasper, 21.

⁷⁰ The ecclesiological term "*communio*" enjoys a wide range of interpretations. As such, it has been a touchstone in 20th and 21st century ecclesiology. A full examination of *communio* and communion ecclesiology is outside the scope of this study. What follows is a brief analysis of issues related to this project.

While there is little question that communion is an important image of the church presented at Vatican II, there is considerable debate among ecclesiologists as to whether it is the *primary* image or the *synthesis* of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. José Comblin, an ecclesiologist from Latin America, critiques the elevation of communion over the image of “people of God.” He argues that this emphasis unduly calls attention to the hierarchical structure of the church at the expense of the human elements.⁷¹ He roots this critique in his context of Latin America and commitment to liberation theology. While Vatican II encouraged a retrieval of the church as people of God, and as such, emphasized the role of the laity in the church, communion calls attention to the hierarchical church. This becomes even more problematic when looking to conflict in the church. Comblin explains, “Obviously, a church of pure communion cannot explain conflicts and struggles, the diversity caused by these conflicts, clashes of mindsets, projects, sensitivities, and cultures. A communion has no conflicts.”⁷² Focusing on communion unduly highlights the role of hierarchy and the singular unity of the church, pushing the lived reality of the people of God to the sidelines.

Comblin’s critique of communion ecclesiology should not serve to erase communion as a helpful image of the church. Rather, it serves as an example of why it is necessary to have multiple images of the church. Vatican II presented the church from many aspects and discussed the church utilizing many images: mystery, sacrament, People of God, body of Christ, communion, mother, servant, world church. Brian Flanagan argues that the most complete way of viewing communion ecclesiology is not as the primary image of the church, but rather, as a contextual theology. Viewing

⁷¹ José Comblin, *People of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 55.

⁷² Comblin, 59.

communion ecclesiology as contextual opens up this type of ecclesiology to a critique, in addition to seeing its contributions to ecclesiology. He explains one of the dangers of viewing communion ecclesiology as universal: “Comblin’s witness...is an example of how communion ecclesiologies developed within the ecumenical movement or North Atlantic Roman Catholic ecclesiology might fit poorly at best and function malignantly at worst in promoting reconciliation without repentance, a peaceable communion rooted in the preservation of an unjust status quo.”⁷³ Communion ecclesiology can provide language of unity and connection in the church, yet it also reifies hierarchical authority to the exclusion of critique. Further, communion ecclesiology can also serve as a colonizing force, neglecting the experiences of non-European and North American parts of the church. As such, it is helpful to view communion ecclesiology as contextual as well as one of many helpful images of the church.

In the fifty years since the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*, ecclesiological analysis continues to grapple with reception. Komonchak proposes looking to the Council as an “event.” An event, according to Komonchak, gains its meaning through a series of events, and the series is indefinite.⁷⁴ Given this, the meaning of the documents from the Council as well as the Council as a whole continue to gain meaning through the ecclesiological process of reception. Simply looking to recent book titles surrounding Vatican II reflect this, such as Richard Gaillardetz’s *An Unfinished Council*⁷⁵ or Paul

⁷³ Brian P. Flanagan, “Communion Ecclesiologies as Contextual Theologies,” *Horizons* 40, no. 1 (June 2013): 67.

⁷⁴ Joseph Komonchak, “Vatican II as an Event,” in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?*, ed. David Schultenover (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 24–57.

⁷⁵ Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).

Lakeland's *A Council That Will Never End*.⁷⁶ As such, the meaning of Vatican II and impact on ecclesiology continues to unfold as the Council continues to be received.

1.2.2 Ecclesiological Models

In the decades following Vatican II, a major ecclesiological trend emerged: models of the church. This is due primarily to Avery Dulles's landmark book *Models of the Church*,⁷⁷ originally published in 1974. Dulles's work made a lasting impact on the field of ecclesiology, even considering the substantial critique of ecclesiological models. As such, it is helpful to examine Dulles's contribution and the ensuing critiques.

Dulles wrote in reaction to comparative ecclesiology, which he calls “too dichotomous.”⁷⁸ Instead, he proposes “another variety of comparative ecclesiology,” which are models of the church.⁷⁹ Dulles originally identified five models: church as institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant. In a revised edition, he added community of disciples as the sixth model. Each model emphasizes important aspects of the church that are less clear in other models. At the same time, each model also has drawbacks. For example, “church as sacrament” connects the divine and human elements of the church, the former which can be overemphasized by the “church as communion” model and the latter which is exalted in “church as institution.”⁸⁰ The sacramental model holds these aspects together as intimately connected. Further, this model is rooted in the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and emphasizes the

⁷⁶ Paul Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End : Lumen Gentium and the Church Today* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013).

⁷⁷ Dulles, *Models of the Church*.

⁷⁸ Dulles, 9.

⁷⁹ Dulles, 9.

⁸⁰ Dulles, 63.

role of grace in the church. Looking at the church as sacrament, however, has little resonance in Protestant ecclesiology and does not have roots in scripture. Dulles also points out that this model is “not easily available for preaching” and as such, can be limited in the “utility of the theory.”⁸¹

Dulles argues that models do not definitively capture the church. Rather, he repeatedly affirms that the church is a mystery. He elaborates: “Mysteries are realities of which we cannot speak directly. If we wish to talk about them at all we must draw on analogies afforded by our experience of the world. These analogies provide models.”⁸² Since the founding of the church, images of the church have described important aspects of the church. These images, while important, differ from Dulles’s use of the term “models.” He explains the difference: “When an image is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one’s theoretical understanding of a reality it becomes what is today called a ‘model.’”⁸³ Some models draw upon images, whereas other models are more abstract, such as “church as institution.”⁸⁴

It is also helpful to distinguish models from paradigms. A model can become a paradigm “when it has proved successful in solving a great variety of problems and is expected to be an appropriate tool for unraveling anomalies as yet unsolved.”⁸⁵ Models and paradigms can capture the ecclesiological imagination of the church so totally that other models are neglected. This was seen with the dominance of the *societas perfecta* model, and potentially, the 1985 Extraordinary Synod proclaiming communion as the

⁸¹ Dulles, 75.

⁸² Dulles, 9.

⁸³ Dulles, 23.

⁸⁴ Dulles, 23.

⁸⁵ Dulles, 29.

primary understanding of the church at Vatican II.⁸⁶ Fixation on one model or image impoverishes the ecclesiological imagination of the church and limits the ability of the church to live into new frontiers. Dulles warns of this danger, describing paradigm shifts as moments where “people suddenly find the ground cut out from under their feet” and feel “gravely threatened in their spiritual security.”⁸⁷ Paradigm shifts have the potential to rattle the faithful and the institutional church. As a result, Dulles recommends avoiding “imperialistically seeking to impose some one model as the definitive one.”⁸⁸

Overall, Dulles’s work is a major landmark in contemporary ecclesiology. It serves as a major landmark in the ecclesiological response to the Second Vatican Council and 20th century ecclesiology. Though not exhaustive, *Models of the Church* captures significant trends in ecclesiology. Further, it provides a common language for understanding different approaches to ecclesiology. In responding to the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops, Elizabeth Johnson references *Models of the Church* and questions whether the bishops have a different understanding of the church than her operative model.⁸⁹ She references this work as a way of explaining differing theological commitments. This example displays the impact of the common language provided by Dulles.

While models or images of the church can be a helpful tool in illuminating important aspects of the church, yet they also carry a large risk. Models can “diffuse the

⁸⁶ It is still too early in ecclesiological reception to assess whether communion has become a paradigm in the ecclesiological imagination of the church.

⁸⁷ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 31.

⁸⁸ Dulles, 32.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, “To Speak Rightly of the Living God,” in *When the Magisterium Intervenes: The Magisterium And Theologians In Today’s Church*, ed. Richard R. Gaillardetz (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 217.

indivisible mystery of the church among multiple ‘churches,’”⁹⁰ risking the unity of the church devolving into distinct entities. Further, presentations of multiple images of church have the potential to obscure the concrete nature of the church. Komonchak describes this trend:

Titles such as People of God, Body of Christ, Temple of the Spirit were commonly explored in such strictly theological terms, as the Scriptures, the tradition, the liturgy handed them on, that it was easy to forget that what was being talked about was a group of human beings. It was as if there is an entity, somewhere above them, a suprapersonal reality, of which these things are true, an entity that is whatever these images say it is, that does whatever these images say it does, apart from concrete men and women and their communities.⁹¹

This trend of separating the theological from the concrete is reminiscent of the task of theology. Just as ecclesiology cannot look to the church as two distinct realities of theological and concrete, so too our understanding of church must incorporate both of these elements as intimately connected. Murray describes this unity: “If the identity of the church is only articulated aright in robustly theological terms, so also it must be the lived concrete reality of the actual church that finds its deepest reality there expressed. We simply do not understand properly what it means to affirm this identity of the church until we understand what it is to affirm it of the empirical church we experience.”⁹² Any theological discussion of the church must be grounded in the concrete experience of the faithful. Experience is the source of theological reflection, as well as the end to which ecclesiology must be directed. This relationship will be further developed in subsection 4 concerning the relationship between practical ecclesiology and systematic ecclesiology.

⁹⁰ Richard Lennan, “A Continuing Pilgrimage: Ecclesiology since Vatican II,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 91, no. 1 (January 2014): 24.

⁹¹ Komonchak, *Who Are the Church*, 11–12.

⁹² Murray, “Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice,” 258.

1.2.3 Correctives to Tradition: Feminist and Latinx Ecclesiology

Traditional ecclesiology finds a point of departure in the white, male experience. In recent decades, correctives to the ecclesiological tradition have emerged and shaped Catholic ecclesiology. In order to include the richness of the church, ecclesiology must seek out voices omitted from dominant ecclesiological tradition. Limiting ecclesiological investigation to North American, European, white, or male perspectives results in an ecclesiology that is shallow. Further, it reinscribes patterns of domination and oppression of society that the church should seek to subvert rather than affirm. The margins contain truths that are silenced. They are a site of ecclesiological richness that enhance our understanding of the church.

In this subsection, I will focus on the contributions of select works of feminist ecclesiology and Latinx ecclesiology. Examining these contributions serves several purposes. These correctives highlight the diversity of the field of ecclesiology. Looking to feminist and Latinx ecclesiology calls attention to the richness of the field that is neglected when ecclesiology only pays attention to a limited context or experience. Further, feminist and liberationist perspectives lay the groundwork for further development of an ecclesiology departing from the site of the wound that will be developed further in this dissertation.

Prior to an in-depth examination of feminist and Latinx ecclesiologies, it is helpful to briefly examine global trends in ecclesiology that are also correctives to tradition. In the past several decades, there has been a subtle but important shift to looking at understandings of church in non-Eurocentric settings. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, S.J. offers an important contribution to ecclesiology in the form of theological

reflection on the mission of the church from the context of HIV/AIDS, refugees, and poverty in Africa.⁹³ Orobator demonstrates that ecclesiology is richer when it incorporates cultural considerations. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu proposes a “listening church” as an image of the church for the contemporary context, derived from an African image of the church with large ears.⁹⁴ Both of these examples from the African continent represent the richness that can come to ecclesiological reflection when the discipline moves beyond Eurocentric voices. Peter Phan writes from the perspective of a Vietnamese person living in the United States. He seeks to bring the insights of Asian cultures to shed light on ecclesiological questions.⁹⁵ While these few selections do not represent entire continents or hemispheres, they do capture important contributions and the general movement of the field to a less-Eurocentric view. Given ecclesiology’s Eurocentric view, it is essential to look to ecclesiological insights from non-European areas. These contributions are important developments in the field of ecclesiology and should be viewed as partners in the development of a robust ecclesiology from the site of the wound.

1.2.3.1 Feminist Ecclesiology

Natalie K. Watson, in her book *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, observed, “As an analysis of recent ecclesiological writings by Roman Catholic and Reformed

⁹³ A. E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos : The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees, and Poverty* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005).

⁹⁴ E. Elochukwu Uzukwu, *A Listening Church : Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

⁹⁵ Peter C. Phan, *Christianity With an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003); Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

theologians shows, ecclesiology has been written by men and for men.”⁹⁶ Part of this trend is unsurprising, for ordained men wrote the ecclesiology of Catholic manuals. However, since the Second Vatican Council, there has been little expansion in the field beyond men. Ecclesiologists are more commonly lay people, yet the field is still overwhelmingly dominated by men. Watson elaborates upon this situation, stating, “Feminist ecclesiology is responding to a situation of profound ambiguity. In writing formal ecclesiology from a feminist perspective, I am entering a conversation to which I have not been invited.”⁹⁷ Despite the dominance of men in this field, women still have dared to advance feminist ecclesiologies.

Authority structures are a common topic for feminist ecclesiological analysis, especially given the exclusion of women from ordained ministry and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.⁹⁸ However, this is not the only area of ecclesiological inquiry. Feminist ecclesiology looks to a variety of areas of ecclesiology, including ministry,⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 5.

⁹⁷ Watson, 5.

⁹⁸ For work on women’s ordination and feminist theology, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, Concilium Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Boosk ; London, England, 1996); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “We Are a Church - A Kingdom of Priests” (Women’s Ordination Worldwide Second International Conference, Ottawa, Canada, June 22, 2005), <http://womensordinationworldwide.org/ottawa-2005/2014/2/2/elizabeth-schussler-fiorenza-we-are-a-church-a-kingdom-of-priests>; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence-Becoming Visible,” in *Women, Invisible in Theology and Church*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Collins, vol. 182, Concilium (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1985), 3–16; Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton, eds., *Feminism and Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁹⁹ See Susan K. Wood, *Sacramental Orders*, Lex Orandi Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000); Sandra M. Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, vol. 1, Religious Life in a New Millennium (New York: Paulist Press, 2000); Sandra M. Schneiders, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011); Sandra M. Schneiders, “Engage the Future: Reflections on the Apostolic Visitation Report,” Global Sisters Report, accessed April 26, 2015, <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/engage-future-reflections-apostolic-visitation-report-17046>.

practice,¹⁰⁰ and the *sensus fidelium*.¹⁰¹ While there are women writing ecclesiology, it is also possible to find feminist ecclesiology in other areas of systematic theology. For example, LaCugna's work on the Trinity contains an ecclesiological vision. LaCugna's understanding of the church represents a feminist vision of ecclesiology. She states, "The church also claims to embody in its corporate life the presence, fruits, and work of the Holy Spirit, to be a visible sign of God's reign, of the divine-human communion, and the communion of all creatures with one another."¹⁰² Given this, she views the church and ecclesial existence as intimately connected to the reign of God. She describes ecclesial life as "a way of living in anticipation of the coming reign of God."¹⁰³ This understanding of ecclesial life as living in anticipation of the reign of God guides this study.

Feminist ecclesiology, by nature, takes place at the margins or other liminal areas. Watson describes this process: "Feminist ecclesiological discourse takes place on the boundary: it embraces existing institutional structures as well as the discourses of faith of those who reject those structures for a variety of reasons and identify the locations of their spirituality elsewhere."¹⁰⁴ There remains a sense of location on the border, with feet in two worlds that can stand in conflict or harmony with one another. Gloria Anzaldúa examined the perils and potential of the border in her landmark book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.¹⁰⁵ Anzaldúa's lifelong work brought to life the social location of the border, narrating moments of not belonging and struggles of being both and neither. Yet she also details the potential for creativity at the border. In an interview,

¹⁰⁰ See Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*.

¹⁰¹ See Amanda C. Osheim, *A Ministry of Discernment: The Bishop and the Sense of the Faithful* (Liturgical Press, 2016).

¹⁰² LaCugna, *God for Us*, 401.

¹⁰³ LaCugna, 401.

¹⁰⁴ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 102.

¹⁰⁵ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2007).

she remarked, “To live in the ‘borderlands’ is very exciting; it is living in the midst of culture in the making. It is a very creative space to be in, one where innovative art and theory on the cutting edge is being constructed.”¹⁰⁶ The border brings a richness and creativity to theological reflection. It is a site of energy, hope, and anticipation.

Further, looking to the margins uplifts those deemed unimportant or powerless by society. Departing from the margins lives out the preferential option for the marginalized that is central to the Gospel. There is a freedom in the margins to experiment with new ways of thinking of the church and engaging tradition. This can bring forth understandings of experiences of the church that are traditionally excluded or undervalued. The activity of bringing together two worlds, according to Watson, is “essentially subversive.”¹⁰⁷ Bringing women’s experiences and liberation into the ecclesiological inquiry subverts the power structure of ecclesiology that prioritizes the experience and knowledge of men over women.

Though Letty M. Russell does not write from a Roman Catholic perspective, it is helpful to look to the contributions that come from *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* due to its large influence in the field.¹⁰⁸ Russell utilizes the image of the round table as a metaphor for the church, illustrating the role of hospitality and connection. More than a metaphor, the table principle serves as a guiding principle of her method. Russell explains, “*The critical principle of feminist ecclesiology is a table principle*. It looks for ways that God reaches out to include all those whom society and religion have declared outsiders and invites them to gather round God’s table of

¹⁰⁶ Ellie Hernández and Gloria Anzaldúa, “Re-Thinking Margins and Borders: An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa,” *Discourse* 18, no. 1/2 (1995): 10.

¹⁰⁷ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 101.

¹⁰⁸ Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).

hospitality.”¹⁰⁹ Three methodological considerations for feminist ecclesiology emerge from Russell’s table principle: rereading from the margins, the spiral connection, and talking back to tradition.

Feminist ecclesiology prioritizes the view from the margins. In this way, it shares a vision with liberation theology, with which feminist ecclesiology shares a common mission. Russell describes feminist ecclesiology as sharing a common point of departure as the liberationist tradition, valuing those not at the center of society but rather those at the margins who are “considered less than human because they are powerless and unimportant.”¹¹⁰ Importantly, Russell points to the importance of language in this preferential option for the marginalized. She states, “The imagery of the margin is to be preferred, however, over that of above and below because one of the ways persons are marginalized is by hierarchical thinking.”¹¹¹ The location of the margins creatively enhances our ecclesiological imagination. It incorporates traditionally unvalued knowledge, and offers a setting for new ways of thinking about the church. Feminist ecclesiology utilizes and demands a re-reading of scripture and tradition from the margins, which leads to the next methodological point.

Feminist ecclesiology calls for a “spiral method of action and reflection that makes connections between context and tradition as a means of theological table talk.”¹¹² The spiral method of action and reflection is predicated on the fact that context, such as social location, experience, and culture, guides our theological reflection. Russell describes this spiral method in depth:

¹⁰⁹ Russell, 25. Emphasis original.

¹¹⁰ Russell, 26.

¹¹¹ Russell, 26.

¹¹² Russell, 30.

This style of theologizing in a continuing spiral of engagement and reflection begins with *commitment* to the task of raising up signs of God's new household with those who are struggling for justice and full humanity. It continues by *sharing experiences* of commitment and struggle in a concrete context of engagement. Thus, the theological spiral leads to a *critical analysis* of the context of the experiences, seeking to understand the social and historical factors that affect the community of struggle. Out of this commitment to action in solidarity with the marginalized and out of sharing experiences and social analysis, arise *questions about biblical and church tradition* that help us gain new insight into the meaning of the gospel as good news for the oppressed and marginalized. This new understanding of tradition flows from and leads to *action, celebration, and further reflection* in the continuing theological spiral.¹¹³

Each of these movements are crucial to the method of feminist ecclesiology, for it entails commitment, sharing experience, critical analysis, questions, action, celebration, and further reflection. Russell notes that the imagery of the spiral is preferred to that of a circle, for a spiral "moves to discover new clues and new questions in a continuing spiral that never comes out in exactly the same place."¹¹⁴ Since experience and context continually change, the location in the spiral also changes. This gives rise to new questions, which shifts one's location in the spiral.

Russell's final point of methodology in feminist ecclesiology is "talking back" to tradition. This underscores that feminist ecclesiology does not exist separately from theological tradition, but rather, is always engaged in dialogue with and is a part of theological tradition. The round table, which may appear to be simply talking to like-minded persons, is designed to talk back to tradition.¹¹⁵ In fact, this act of talking back to tradition has the potential to subvert the patriarchal qualities of tradition. Russell explains, "Discussion of tradition and ecclesiology from a feminist perspective is most definitely a way of talking back to a community whose self-understanding has been

¹¹³ Russell, 30–31.

¹¹⁴ Russell, 34.

¹¹⁵ Russell, 35.

shaped in all its aspects of tradition from a patriarchal paradigm of authority as domination.”¹¹⁶ As such, feminist ecclesiology seeks to shape the ecclesiological tradition through participation in the ecclesiological tradition. In many ways, feminist ecclesiology mirrors the pattern of traditional ecclesiology speaking between context and tradition. However, Russell adds an important qualifier: “Feminist ecclesiology is no different in this respect from any other expression of the church’s self-understanding, but it is different in that the self-understanding includes action/reflection on the way faith shapes life in the struggle for justice on behalf of marginalized people.”¹¹⁷ Feminist ecclesiology is geared towards the mission of justice, especially for the marginalized. This is central to the feminist ecclesiological task.

Feminist ecclesiology asks critical questions about how the vision of the church and the lived reality of the church are in conversation with one another. It points to the gaps between the church as making present the reign of God on earth and the experience of injustice in the lived experience of the church. As such, feminist ecclesiology calls the church to live into a fuller experience of the already-but-not-yet reign of God. Calls for inclusion assist the church in embodying the fullness of the body of Christ that can only come with justice.

¹¹⁶ Russell, 42.

¹¹⁷ Russell, 44.

1.2.3.2 Latinx Ecclesiology¹¹⁸

Historically, Latinx theology has little sustained reflection on ecclesiology,¹¹⁹ yet that does not mean that there is no ecclesiological focus in Latinx theology. While there may be few book-length treatments of Latinx ecclesiology, all Latinx theology presupposes or speaks from a particular understanding of the church. Further, Roberto Goizueta, Natalia Imperatori-Lee, and Gary Riebe-Estrella, S.V.D. all make significant contributions to articulating the unique insights of a Latinx ecclesiology. This section explores the unique contributions of a Latinx ecclesiology: importance of context, sociocentric nature and pueblo, and an understanding of the borderland.

Latinx ecclesiology begins by de-centering the Eurocentric focus of ecclesiology. Riebe-Estrella critiques Western ecclesiology's tendency to "pretend to universalism" by focusing on aspects of tradition classified as essential to the church.¹²⁰ He explains, "In taking this approach, Western ecclesiology has adopted a method of 'applied theology,' that is, applying to a given community the results of the reflection of a community before it, usually without identifying the specific socio-historical context of that earlier community."¹²¹ Significantly, Imperatori-Lee asserts that ecclesiological method must be reframed in light of the contributions of Latinx theology. Ecclesiology cannot proceed "as normal" and then add non-Eurocentric voices at the end of the process. She argues,

¹¹⁸ I use "Latinx" instead of the traditional "Latino/a" in order to signal a commitment to inclusion of non-binary identities in gender and a growing trend of utilizing "Latinx" in the field. In quotations, I keep the use of "Latino/a," "Latin@," or other articulations when used by the author. I share the sentiment of Natalia Imperatori-Lee on reflecting on the topic of language development: "These variations in naming exemplify how language evolves as context and understanding change, and they remind us of our incomplete and necessarily tentative attempts to capture the complex mystery of the divine-human encounter with language." Natalia M. Imperatori-Lee, *Cuéntame: Narrative in the Ecclesial Present* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), xxiii.

¹¹⁹ Roberto S. Goizueta, "Corpus Verum: Toward a Borderland Ecclesiology," in *Building Bridges, Doing Justice: Constructing a Latino/a Ecumenical Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 143; Riebe-Estrella, "Catholic Ecclesiology," 191.

¹²⁰ Riebe-Estrella, "Catholic Ecclesiology," 191.

¹²¹ Riebe-Estrella, 191.

“In a globalized world, telling the story of the world church demands more than an ‘add diverse voices and stir’ methodology.”¹²² The “add diverse voices and stir” approach sustains the dominance of a Eurocentric method, adding diverse voices at the end for the sake of claiming diversity.

Imperator-Lee calls for a greater disruption of Eurocentric ecclesiology and subsequent reframing of the ecclesiological vision.¹²³ Her thesis is that “the insights of Latino/a theology fundamentally disrupt the narrative of Catholic ecclesiology and prompt a historical, methodological, and thematic recalibration of the discipline that corrects the trajectory of ecclesiology as we enter Christianity’s third millennium.”¹²⁴ This reframing or recalibration of the trajectory of ecclesiology is essential, for it ensures a move away from the “add diverse voices and stir” approach. Riebe-Estrella suggests that this recalibration can come from using the “concrete historical experience of the church by US Latino/as” as the point of departure.¹²⁵

This role of context is crucial for Latinx ecclesiology. Riebe-Estrella underscores that Latinx ecclesiology begins from a particular context. He explains, “Our ecclesiological reflections, as initial as they may be, begin with the concrete historical experiences of church by US Latino/as and, as we shall see, how the US Latino/a Catholic community has named its experience of being a community of faith.”¹²⁶ This inductive approach not only sets Latinx ecclesiology apart, but also serves as a guide to call traditional western theology to follow suit. In doing so, ecclesiology would become

¹²² Imperatori-Lee, “Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium,” 47.

¹²³ Imperatori-Lee, 45.

¹²⁴ Imperatori-Lee, 47.

¹²⁵ Riebe-Estrella, “Catholic Ecclesiology,” 192.

¹²⁶ Riebe-Estrella, 192.

more enfolded in concrete situations and be forced to leave behind its claims to universalism.

One way that the importance of context is shown is through the emphasis on popular religion. Goizueta elevates popular religion as a key component of Latinx ecclesiology. He explains, “The notion of popular religion—as religious traditions and practiced that, though influenced by the larger tradition’s codified and ‘official’ texts and practices, nevertheless emerge from a borderland people whose lived faith incorporated influences from both sides of the border—is thus at the very heart of a Christian ecclesiology.”¹²⁷ Altars in homes, blessings of children, devotions to Guadalupe, and other expressions of faith form the church. Popular religious practices are both informed by and further form ecclesiology, giving life and flesh to ecclesiological topics. Goizueta boldly states that popular religion is “where the body of Christ is incarnated today.”¹²⁸ These practices are not separate from the church, but rather, the incarnation of the church.

The sociocentric, organic nature of Latinx culture is a crucial aspect of context. Riebe-Estrella utilizes the phrase “sociocentric organic” to describe Latino culture to express the central role of the group, primarily the family.¹²⁹ Not only is the family the fundamental component of society, but the extended family and towns come together to form this sociocentric, organic network.¹³⁰ While other aspects of Latinx culture have assimilated to other dominant cultural forces, the sociocentric nature of Latinx culture has remained strong. Riebe-Estrella explains:

¹²⁷ Goizueta, “Corpus Verum: Toward a Borderland Ecclesiology,” 156.

¹²⁸ Goizueta, 156.

¹²⁹ Gary Riebe-Estrella, “Pueblo and Church,” in *The Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Miguel H. Diaz and Orlando O. Espin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 173.

¹³⁰ Riebe-Estrella, 174.

This multidimensional model of acculturation allows us to see that, for example, while language may be the trait for which acculturation happens most frequently, other cultural traits show little significant change even after prolonged interaction with the dominant culture. The sociocentric understanding of family and the strength of family relationships for Latinos are strengthened in Latinos' continued contact with the dominant culture.¹³¹

The sociocentric organic nature of Latinx culture gives life to a central ecclesiological image: *pueblo*. Referring to people or town, *pueblo* points to the crucial role of relationships in Latinx culture. Riebe-Estrella explains, "The term *pueblo* evokes the concrete and embodied relationship that define who they are."¹³² *Pueblo* conveys that people are always rooted in a group. Identity and meaning comes in and through this group. Further, *pueblo* surfaced as a major theme in the *Encuentro* process of the 1970s. This process, which was "critical to the US Latino/a community's self-understanding as church"¹³³ repeatedly drew upon *pueblo*. The second *Encuentro* revolved around the theme "*Pueblo de Dios en Marcha*" and the third *Encuentro*'s document on pastoral guidelines opens with the words, "*Nosotros, como pueblo hispano*."¹³⁴

Goizueta elaborates upon *pueblo* as an ecclesiological image by discussing *Pueblo de Dios* (people of God) and *pueblo crucificado* (crucified people). *Pueblo de Dios* draws upon the ecclesial image of people of God from Vatican II. Yet, in Latinx culture, it has a unique emphasis. Goizueta explains, "At the heart of this interpretation of people of God, then, is the insistence that, precisely as a distinct community and pilgrim people, the *Pueblo de Dios* always constitutes itself over against a dominant other; for better or worse, confrontation and conflict are at the very heart of the *Pueblo de Dios*."¹³⁵

¹³¹ Riebe-Estrella, 175.

¹³² Riebe-Estrella, 176.

¹³³ Riebe-Estrella, "Catholic Ecclesiology," 192.

¹³⁴ Riebe-Estrella, "Pueblo and Church," 193.

¹³⁵ Goizueta, "Corpus Verum: Toward a Borderland Ecclesiology," 146.

This understanding of *Pueblo de Dios* draws out crucial aspects of this image that is central to contemporary ecclesiology, yet often overlooked in North American and European ecclesiological reflections.

To understand *pueblo* as *pueblo crucificado* is also central to the task of Latinx ecclesiology. *Pueblo crucificado* looks to the church of the poor, as exemplified in the thought of liberation theologians such as Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría. It goes beyond the church of the poor to consider how the church as the people of God are crucified today. Goizueta elaborates, “The *ecclesia crucis* identifies itself with the crucified people, seeks their liberation, and in so doing shares in their suffering.”¹³⁶ By making the concept of *pueblo* concrete, Goizueta puts into action the call of Latinx theology to begin and end with context.

Further, Latinx theology and praxis shed light upon the importance of narrative, specifically narratives of particularity. Recently, Natalia Imperatori-Lee’s book-length ecclesiological examination advanced the understanding of narrative in Latinx ecclesiology.¹³⁷ In this book, Imperatori-Lee traces Latinx experience, literature, art, and demography together with ecclesiological themes, focusing on the particular. She explains her method as “redirect[ing] ecclesiology from a top-down, deductive endeavor that has been the privileged paradigm of the hierarchical church to one that proceeds inductively from human experience.”¹³⁸ Narrative is not simply the telling of stories, but rather, “truthful storytelling” that provides a rich, nuanced picture filled with the complexities of life.¹³⁹ This “truthful storytelling” provides richness to our understanding

¹³⁶ Goizueta, 151.

¹³⁷ Imperatori-Lee, *Cuéntame: Narrative in the Ecclesial Present*.

¹³⁸ Imperatori-Lee, xviii.

¹³⁹ Imperatori-Lee, xvii.

of a global church. Imperatori-Lee describes this contribution: “If we are to be honest about the multidimensionality of the global church, its nuances and richness, its contradictions and frustrating realities, then the best way to do this is through an examination of a rich variety of stories and the use of a wide spectrum of storytelling.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, the particularity of narrative offers a gift to the global church and provides a depth to the catholic, universal nature of the church.

In other articles, Imperatori-Lee describes the importance of narrative in concretizing ecclesiology. She explains, “In contrast to totalizing metanarratives that erase differences in favor of a unifying story, an emphasis on narratives of particularity allows ecclesiology to avoid the marginalization of non-dominant voices, and reveals, in some sense, the invariable core of the Christian message in all its various cultural, historical, and linguistic expressions.”¹⁴¹ Thus, the inclusion of narrative fits well within the larger thrust of Latinx theology to de-universalize European theology’s claim to universalism.

Imperatori-Lee highlights that this reorientation of ecclesiology is essential not only for its inclusion of non-dominant voices, but also for its more comprehensive reflection of revelation. God continues to reveal Godself in “various cultural, historical, and linguistic expressions.” As such, ecclesiology must reflect and respond to this multitude of expressions. To not do so is to omit the richness of God’s revelation. Imperatori-Lee argues for the centrality of Latinx theology in this ecclesiological recalibration. She explains, “I must stress that Latino/a theology serves not only as an interesting supplement to the mainstream systematic theology or ecclesiology but rather

¹⁴⁰ Imperatori-Lee, xvii.

¹⁴¹ Imperatori-Lee, “Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium,” 46.

as a cornerstone of the reframing that must take place if we are to posit a credible ecclesiology for an increasingly globalized, interconnected world.”¹⁴² The emphasis on particularity that is characteristic of narrative is especially important for this reframing, as it captures the unique revelation of God and attends to those who are marginalized. This also reflects the methodological shift to build an ecclesiological trajectory from the location of the marginalized, rather than adding non-dominant voices to an existing trajectory or metanarrative.

How is ecclesiology to reflect such a shift? How can it attend to the rich ecclesiological tradition while also addressing concrete experience, especially in the marginalized? In order to answer these questions, we must articulate the relationship between tradition and experience, theology and lived reality. These themes are discussed in the discourse surrounding systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology. In addition, this area addresses questions surrounding particularity and universal claims of ecclesiology.

1.2.4 Systematic Ecclesiology and Practical Ecclesiology

Discourses surrounding the task of ecclesiology and the relationship between tradition and experience coalesce into the contemporary ecclesiological question concerning the relationship between systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology. This section begins with an overview of systematic and practical ecclesiology, focusing attention on their development through tradition. It then focuses on systematic ecclesiology, analyzing the task of systematic ecclesiology through the work of Roger

¹⁴² Imperatori-Lee, 55.

Haight, Paul Murray and Nicholas M. Healy. Next, I look to practical ecclesiology and the work of Clare Watkins and practical theologians Clare Wolfteich and Kathleen Cahalan. From here, I look to the related questions of ethnography and ecclesiology. Finally, I look to the alternative paths proposed by Neil Ormerod and Healy.

Generally understood, systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology differ more in method than in content. Systematic ecclesiology utilizes a deductive method, beginning with tradition and doctrine and then applying the content to the context. By contrast, practical ecclesiology utilizes an inductive method. The point of departure is experience and practice. While each method has a different point of departure, both are concerned with issues surrounding the church and have significant impacts on ecclesiological discourse. It should be noted that both systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology concern topics of lived experience and theology. The church cannot exist in theory alone, and thus, all ecclesiology addresses the church in the concrete. However, they diverge in the method of incorporating practice and doctrine. It is an issue of how each approach incorporates lived experience and doctrine, not whether they do or not.

The close and ever-changing relationship between systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology is seen throughout the history of the church. Though not identical, I look to the development of practical and systematic theology to map the development of practical and systematic ecclesiology. In the early church, Athanasius, Augustine, and other bishop-theologians “explicated the truths of the Christian faith in light of practical

realities.”¹⁴³ By the 11th century, an inductive approach gave way to a deductive approach, exemplified through the rise of scholastic theology. Yet practical theology was not dismissed, for theologians such as Bonaventure and Duns Scotus emphasized the practical side of theology.¹⁴⁴ The medieval era is characterized by the systemization of theology. This is most clearly displayed in the manuals of theology, outlining components of the church in relation to other aspects of ecclesiology. In the theology manuals, the church was described as established by Jesus in the twelve apostles. Haight outlines the features of this systematic ecclesiology: “A standard systematic treatise dealt with the divine origin of the church, the constitution of the church effected by Christ and the Spirit, the qualities of the church including its four marks, the necessity of the church and membership in it, and so on in an almost deductive fashion.”¹⁴⁵ While both practical and systematic approaches existed in theology and ecclesiology, the systematic approach was heavily favored until Vatican II.

Vatican II introduced a sense of historicity into ecclesiology, thus revolutionizing the ecclesiological endeavor. The systematic method that was once synonymous with ecclesiology was thoroughly shaken.¹⁴⁶ Haight explains, “Concern about method in ecclesiology stems from an historical consciousness that calls into question whether there can be a systematic ecclesiology at all.”¹⁴⁷ Contemporary ecclesiology continues to utilize a systematic approach, albeit a systematic approach infused with an understanding of historicity indicative of the Second Vatican Council. Haight describes this

¹⁴³ Kathleen A. Cahalan and Bryan Froehle, “A Developing Discipline: The Catholic Voice in Practical Theology,” in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions*, ed. Claire E. Wolfteich (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 29.

¹⁴⁴ Cahalan and Froehle, 30.

¹⁴⁵ Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 253.

¹⁴⁶ Haight, 253.

¹⁴⁷ Haight, 254.

contemporary systematic ecclesiology as distinct from the systematic ecclesiology of the manuals: “What is gone is an ‘ecclesiocentrism’ that tended to identify the church with the kingdom of God. Thus the church is decentralized in history; to understand the church today one will have to see how it relates to the wider sphere of what is called ‘kingdom of God.’”¹⁴⁸ Thus, systematic ecclesiology seeks to understand the church in and through its relationship to the world. It does not seek to eliminate pluralism,¹⁴⁹ but to systematically understand the relationship of pluralism in the church and world. Haight summarizes the systematic character of ecclesiology as pertaining “more to its method and less to its content.”¹⁵⁰ This distinction reveals that a systematic approach to ecclesiology still incorporates practice and the lived experience of the church in the world. The method of how it is incorporated and the points of departure are distinct.

Paul Murray significantly contributes to an understanding of the contemporary concerns of systematic ecclesiology. Murray outlines three systematic concerns of ecclesiology. First, he looks to “the tradition’s *internal*, or *intensive*, *coherence*.”¹⁵¹ He highlights two aspects of internal coherence: synchronic coherence and diachronic coherence. Synchronic coherence of the tradition examines “whether in any given period and context the contemporaneous articulation and performance of Christian tradition ‘hangs together’ across all the loci of belief and modes of practice.”¹⁵² Diachronic coherence also asks the question of whether it “hangs together,” but focuses this question “across the stretch of Christian history and the tremendous diversity of articulation and

¹⁴⁸ Haight, 263.

¹⁴⁹ Haight, 279.

¹⁵⁰ Haight, 259.

¹⁵¹ Murray, “Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice,” 254.

¹⁵² Murray, 265.

performance that it has received.”¹⁵³ Second, Murray looks to extensive coherence, or how ecclesiology coheres with knowledge from other disciplines.¹⁵⁴ He describes this as “the generic question as to whether the tradition can be seen to ‘hang together’ with and be expressed in terms of what we otherwise have good grounds for understanding about the world and the nature of things through the myriad forms of knowing and traditions of analysis (*scientia*) represented in our universities.”¹⁵⁵ The final systematic concern of ecclesiology is pragmatic coherence, or focus on practice. Murray defines this as “the way in which a given theological conviction or doctrinal tenet (or, for that matter, ecclesial structure, form or process; or intended personal or ecclesial practice) ‘hangs together’, or not, with what actually happens in practice.”¹⁵⁶ From this, one can see that systematic ecclesiology naturally brings in questions of practice. It is not neatly categorized as distinct from practical ecclesiology.

At its worst, systematic ecclesiology can become rigid due to the emphasis on order and structure. While this is not inherent to the task of systematic ecclesiology, it is a large enough concern that it requires attention. Healy coined the term “blueprint ecclesiology” to describe the tendency of images or models of the church to function as constraining blueprints. Instead of attending to the living reality of the church, ecclesiology instead looks to images of the church that limit the ability to recognize the changing existence of the church. He describes the dangers of this phenomenon:

Blueprint ecclesiologies thus foster a disjunction not only between normative theory and normative accounts of ecclesial practice, but between ideal ecclesiology and the realities of the concrete church, too. They undervalue thereby the theological significance of the genuine struggles of the church’s

¹⁵³ Murray, 265.

¹⁵⁴ Murray, 254.

¹⁵⁵ Murray, 265.

¹⁵⁶ Murray, 266.

membership to live as disciples within the less-than-perfect church and within societies that are often unwilling to overlook the church's flaws.¹⁵⁷

All modern ecclesiology has the potential to devolve into "blueprint ecclesiology" and ignore the complexity of lived experience. For example, Healy describes how communion ecclesiology views the Eucharist as the most perfect expression of communion. Yet, celebrations of the Eucharist are often divided by race, class, gender, and other identity markers.¹⁵⁸ To view communion as the only acceptable image of the church, or a blueprint understanding of communion ecclesiology, is to obscure these important aspects of the lived experience of the church. Healy importantly identifies the tension between how ecclesiology speaks of the church in the ideal as opposed to the church in lived reality. The church cannot live strictly in the theoretical realm, for it comes to fruition in the lives of the faithful.

To understand systematic ecclesiology as purely theoretical is incorrect. Haight explains, "The goal of systematic ecclesiology, as distinct from an ecclesiology that is merely narrative or descriptive, is critical understanding according to its criteria of faithfulness to scripture and key points in history, intelligibility as measured by a critical appropriation of common human experience, and its ability to empower the praxis of the Christian life."¹⁵⁹ Understood in this light, systematic ecclesiology and practical ecclesiology go together as essential aspects in theologically understanding the church. While there will always be a natural tension between the church as discussed in ecclesiology and the church experienced in the concrete, for the reign of God is not fully present on earth, there are also important ecclesiological questions that arise from this

¹⁵⁷ Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 37.

¹⁵⁸ Healy, 37.

¹⁵⁹ Haight, "Systematic Ecclesiology," 280.

gap. For this reason, practical ecclesiology responds out of this dissatisfaction with the lack of attention to the church in the concrete.

As mentioned in the introduction, practical theology utilizes an inductive method and begins with practice or experience. Practical ecclesiology naturally interacts with the field of practical theology, which views practice as an important expression of theology. Practical theology attends to the importance of practice in theology. However, it does more than examine practice, for it affirms that practices are embodiments of theology.¹⁶⁰ In describing this method, ecclesiologist Clare Watkins asserts that practices are not simply reflections of theology, but rather constitute “of themselves, embodiments of faith seeking understanding: they form a theological voice, or authority, which needs to be listened to as such.”¹⁶¹ By attending to practice as the primary source of ecclesiology, practical ecclesiology affirms the church as the people of God as well as God’s continued revelation of Godself in and through context. To this extent, it is in line with the call of *Gaudium et Spes* of reading the “signs of the times in light of the Gospel.”¹⁶² Claire Wolfeich describes the task of reading the signs of the times in practical theology as “a move that involves serious engagement with and discerning interpretation of contemporary experience and practice; deep remembering and critical analysis of the tradition; imaginative theological envisioning of future practice; and a hopeful and

¹⁶⁰ The question of method in practical theology extends beyond the scope of this study. For further information, consult: Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991); Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordan S. Mikoski, eds., *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); Claire E. Wolfeich, ed., *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014).

¹⁶¹ Clare Watkins, “Practising Ecclesiology: From Product to Process: Developing Ecclesiology as a Non-Correlative Process and Practice through the Theological Action Research Framework of Theology in Four Voices,” *Ecclesial Practices* 2, no. 1 (2015): 35.

¹⁶² Vatican Council II, “Gaudium et Spes,” 1965, para. 4, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

prophetic tending to the ongoing life of the faith community.”¹⁶³ To this end, it is clear that attention to practice is not simply a starting point, but forms the entire method. Just as Latinx ecclesiology is more than “add Latinx experience and stir,” so too is practical ecclesiology more than “start with practice and stir.”

Not only does practical ecclesiology employ an inductive method, but there are other crucial methodological distinguishing characteristics. Practical ecclesiology focuses on the process of ecclesiology, rather than a finished product. Watkins elaborates, “An ecclesiology not of product, resulting in ‘an ecclesiology,’ but of process, whose concern is service of the life of Christian men and women in and for the world.”¹⁶⁴ As an example of a practical ecclesiology, I turn to Watkins’s framework of “a theology in four voices.” The four voices— normative, formal, espoused, and operative— function together not as separate entities to be weighed and combined, but as “a single conversation between different points of emphasis and expertise, united in the purpose of discerning the way forward in faithfulness and practical wisdom.”¹⁶⁵ Watkins underscores that practical ecclesiology is not simply adding practice to an understanding of ecclesiology, but rather, re-orienting the ecclesiological task. In summarizing a paper where she employs this method, she summarizes, “The theological action research methods worked with in this paper suggest a different approach all together. These methods understand ecclesiology primarily as, itself, a practice, a process, by which the four-voiced theological

¹⁶³ Wolfteich, *Invitation to Practical Theology*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Watkins, “Practising Ecclesiology,” 35.

¹⁶⁵ Clare Watkins, “Conversational Methods of Discernment: Learning Mission from the Domestic Church,” in *Authentic Voices, Discerning Hearts: New Resources for the Church on Marriage and Family*, ed. Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi and Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2016), 19.

conversation is entered into by real, particular people, and learning takes place through ‘interruptions,’ or ‘epiphanies.’”¹⁶⁶ The grounding of practical ecclesiology in the lived experience of the faithful is a key component.

Practical ecclesiology is also distinguished by its conversation partners. Systematic ecclesiology, as with other loci of systematic theology, has primarily utilized philosophy as its chief interlocutor.¹⁶⁷ Practical ecclesiology, on the other hand, has a wide range of conversation partners. Healy provides an overview of the conversation partners, citing social psychology, organizational and network theories “in order to develop rich, critically informed descriptions of church life that point to areas for improvement— better leadership, more appropriate practices, more engaged and fruitful internal social dynamics, greater openness to other churches or the surrounding society, or growth in membership.”¹⁶⁸ This divergence in conversation partners is indicative of the differing methodologies, yet also the differing values and goals of systematic and practical ecclesiology. Practical ecclesiology starts and ends with practice in the church; the most crucial aspect of ecclesiology is how it is lived out.

Related to the question of how to incorporate practice is the question of ethnography,¹⁶⁹ for ethnography seeks to incorporate lived experience into theology in new ways. In referring to ethnography, Pete Ward described it as “part of a more general ‘turn’ toward practice and the lives that can be seen across many disciplinary fields.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Watkins, “Practising Ecclesiology,” 38.

¹⁶⁷ James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, Rev. and updated (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 64.

¹⁶⁸ Nicholas M. Healy, “Ecclesiology and Practical Theology,” in *Keeping Faith in Practice: Aspects of Catholic Pastoral Theology*, ed. James Sweeney, Gemma Simmonds, and David Lonsdale (London: SCM Press, 2010), 117.

¹⁶⁹ For a more complete treatment of this topic, see Pete Ward, *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2012).

¹⁷⁰ Ward, 6.

The turn to ethnography is often fueled by a desire to include the lived experience of the faithful in ecclesiology. Murray describes the reaction against ecclesiology that is removed from lived experience: “By seeking to integrate the empirical ‘moment’ or ‘turn’ within ecclesiological reflection in this way, the first aim is to escape the tendency, rightly criticised by Healy, towards pursuing ecclesiology in an abstract, purely theoretical mode that operates in an ideal realm detached from the actual lived reality of church life.”¹⁷¹ While incorporating the stories, experiences and lives of the faithful in ecclesiological methodology, the field is rightly grounded in the lived church. However, complications can arise when theologians who are not trained in ethnography or similar research methods attempt to conduct ethnographic research. For this reason, Murray cautions, “It should, however, be noted that this is quite deliberately not to say either that all ecclesiologists must become ethnographers or that all ethnographers must become ecclesiologists. A team approach is generally required.”¹⁷² This team approach has the potential to enrich ecclesiology through bringing a fuller understanding of “church” to ecclesiology.

Notably, there are also ecclesiologists who are building alternative paths through the debate surrounding systematic and practical ecclesiology. Neil Ormerod and Healy each call for new understandings of systematic and practical ecclesiology. Ormerod looks to a systematic-historical ecclesiology. While this may appear to be firmly in the systematic ecclesiology realm, his description of this method blends several approaches. He argues that systematic-historical ecclesiology should operate according to two specifications: “The first is that systematic ecclesiology should be empirical/historical,

¹⁷¹ Murray, “Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice,” 270.

¹⁷² Murray, 269.

critical, normative, dialectic and practical; the second will consider the image of the coming together of the upper and lower blades— an upper theoretic blade and a lower blade of empirical data.”¹⁷³ Influenced by Bernard Lonergan, Ormerod views systematic and practical as inherently connected. Healy advocates for a “prophetic-practical ecclesiology.” He argues that ecclesiology is more practical and prophetic than systematic.¹⁷⁴ Yet, he also maintains that ecclesiology is more than just practical or contextual theology. He includes prophetic in addition to practical as essential components of the ecclesiological task. He argues, “Putting it boldly, ecclesiologists have something rather like a prophetic function in the church. They reflect theologically and therefore critically upon the church’s concrete identity in order to help it boast in its Lord, and boast only in its Lord.”¹⁷⁵ The inclusion of the prophetic role of ecclesiology is a distinct contribution to the field of ecclesiology.

This dissertation engages in both systematic and practical ecclesiology. Chapter 2 takes an inductive, practical approach. By looking to the wounds of racism and sexism in the church, I then pose theological questions and raise ecclesiological issues that arise from these wounds. Chapter 4 focuses on Rahner’s ecclesiology and engages questions of practical and systematic ecclesiology. In particular, the tension between the ideal and the lived reality requires that ecclesiology be able to hold paradoxes. Rahner’s ecclesiology and focus on the church as symbol and sacrament has the capacity to hold paradox. Chapter 5 proposes an ecclesiology from the site of the wound, moving in a more practical and inductive orientation while making contributions to systematic ecclesiology.

¹⁷³ Neil Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church : An Experiment in Systematic-Historical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 2.

¹⁷⁴ Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 21.

¹⁷⁵ Healy, 46.

Overall, the contemporary field of ecclesiology is filled with both systematic and practical ecclesiology. When engaging both discourses, it becomes clear that many are arguing for similar methodology. A link to tradition and connection with other loci of systematic theology are essential for both methods. Likewise, the lived experience of the faithful is at the heart of both methods. This is not to say that systematic and practical ecclesiology are identical, for the above review highlights differences in priority and emphasis. Rather, both approaches value similar priorities, which is indicative of key components of ecclesiology. Murray explains the connection between theology and experience, stating, “If the identity of the church is only articulated aright in robustly theological terms, so also it must be the lived concrete reality of the actual church that finds its deepest reality there expressed.”¹⁷⁶ Ecclesiology, however it is expressed, must attend to both theological precepts and themes and the lived experience of the church.

This examination of contemporary trends in ecclesiology lifts up an essential theme for this dissertation: the church does not exist in the abstract, but in the lived experience of the faithful. Since Vatican II, a renewed sense of historicity has infused ecclesiology. In receiving the Council, several ecclesiological trends have arisen. All of these trends, including Dulles’s models of the church, feminist ecclesiology, Latinx ecclesiology, systematic ecclesiology, and practical ecclesiology, attempt to answer the question of how to discuss the lived experience of the church in the world. This question becomes even more pressing when looking to wounds in the church.

¹⁷⁶ Murray, “Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice,” 257.

1.3 PRESSING QUESTIONS IN ECCLESIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

This chapter assessed the major methodological issues in contemporary ecclesiology. However, many questions remain. Part of the reason for lingering questions has less to do with unresolved methodological concerns and more with the nature of the church. The church is not a static entity, able to be studied objectively with results holding true throughout time. Rather, the church is a living, evolving community. There are aspects that remain true throughout time, such as the four marks. However, even our understanding of these marks change and evolve over time. Vatican II and the resultant ecclesiological investigations further reveal the impact of culture and context in the church's lived expression in the world. There is no uniform expression of the church, yet all experiences of the church derive from the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. This chapter lifts up the tension of the ideal versus the lived reality that emerges within ecclesiological studies. If ecclesiology focuses only on the ideal, then the resultant work is shallow. Further, too often the "ideal" is equated with white, European, and male, creating a skewed vision of the church that neglects the lived experience of so many and the richness of the church. Ecclesiology must focus on the lived experience of the church in order to be credible and authentic.

One pressing ecclesiological question surrounds how the church can respond to wounds in the church. In the next chapter, I will look specifically to the wounds of racism and sexism and more thoroughly explore what is entailed in wounds. Yet for our current question, the presence of wounds presents a challenge, for it presses traditional ecclesiological methodology to its margins, potentially causing it to break. Up to this

point, ecclesiology has been presented in such a way that it responds to situations that are clear. However, wounds muddle such clarity. They present a situation that is marked by sin, chaos and pain. What kind of ecclesiology best responds to the wounds of the church? Does contemporary ecclesiology, as presently understood and practiced, only respond to situations of perfection? If so, how does ecclesiology need to be reoriented in order to account for wounds?

These questions of ecclesiological method also relate to the church. In the same way that ecclesiology often reflects upon a church in a “perfect” situation, so too does the church understand itself in a context free from conflict. Or, if the church does understand itself in the context of pain and suffering, it is imagined as external and characterizing the world, not the church. However, how does the church understand itself when looking to wounds within the church? Is there room in this self-understanding for woundedness and the resultant contradiction? How does the self-understanding of the church shift when looking to wounds within the church?

In order to answer these questions, we must begin at the site of the wound. Mary McClintock Fulkerson proposes a reordering of the ecclesiological process in order to account for wounds. She explains, “Theological reflection does not begin with a full-blown doctrine of God or of the church. Such a method misses that strange, often unremarked thing that compels a theological response—how it is that theological reasoning is provoked at all.”¹⁷⁷ This dissertation attends to the wound, the “strange, often unremarked thing,” and asserts that this is the appropriate place of departure for ecclesiology. If we fail to attend to wounds in the church, then ecclesiology is

¹⁷⁷ Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 13.

compromised. In order to do this, I now turn to a deeper exploration of wounds in the church.

2.0 WOUNDS IN THE CHURCH

Images of the church abound, ranging from a community of disciples to the mystical body of Christ to the bride of Christ.¹ Most images put forth an idealized version of the ecclesial body, each emphasizing different values and virtues yet striving to articulate an image of perfection and beauty. Pope Francis, departing from this trend, imagined the church as a field hospital. He explained, “I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else.”² The image of the church as field hospital addresses the tension between the ideal and the lived experience of the church, as discussed in Chapter 1. In this description, Francis places the image of wounds at the forefront. Wounds take priority, obscuring other concerns. Wounds demand attention. While Francis puts forth this image of the church as tending to and intimately involved with wounds, the wounds of the church are often neglected. The church’s own wounds must be considered as a point of departure for ecclesiology, refiguring ecclesiological method.

This chapter examines the wounds of the church. Wounds figure prominently in Christian theology, for all theology springs forth from the crucifixion wounds of Jesus

¹ For an analysis of models of the church, see Dulles, *Models of the Church*. The contributions and limitations of Dulles’s work is discussed in Chapter 1.

² Antonio Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis,” *America Magazine*, September 30, 2013, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.

Christ transformed yet still present in the resurrection. At the same time, theology has a history of obscuring or denying wounds. This examination begins with an analysis of use of language of woundedness in ecclesiology. I consult the work of Blessed Antonio Rosmini on *The Five Wounds of the Holy Church*, referencing this as an important focus on wounds in tradition. Pope Francis brings language of wounds to the forefront of contemporary discussions of the church, though his discussion of wounds fails to take account of internal wounds within the church. Contemporary theology is also experiencing resurgence in discussing wounds, including the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cecilia González-Andrieu, and Alejandro García Rivera. This literature review of wounds in the church serves as a background for a contemporary analysis of wounds in the church. It also reveals the need for further examination on internal wounds within the church.

Wounds do not exist in the abstract, but are concrete issues impacting the church today. In order to focus this examination of woundedness, I look to two specific wounds in the church: racism and sexism. While these issues are not unique to the Roman Catholic Church, they nevertheless take root in the church. I look at several examples of racism and sexism in the church in order to ground this examination in lived reality. For example, in the area of sexism, I look to: (1) patriarchal and exclusively male language to discuss God and the theological endeavor; and (2) exclusion of women from ministry in the church, ranging from altar servers to priests. In the area of racism, I look to: (1) the exclusion, eventual acceptance, and obstacles encountered by black men entering the priesthood and black women in religious life; and (2) the silence of the hierarchical church on issues relating to racism.

Rooted in the lived experience of woundedness in the church today, I then consider the theological implications of woundedness. At its core, the woundedness of the church and its own role in inflicting wounds pose grave ecclesiological concerns. Wounds threaten the unity, catholicity, and holiness of the church. Further, these wounds also impact the church's mission. My thesis is that the church is severely limited in its capacity to live into its mission to be one, holy, catholic, apostolic church while these often ignored wounds perdure and continue to grow.

Considering the woundedness of the church is an issue of credibility. The church cannot credibly be church if it is complicit in racism and sexism. However, the church can authentically be church if it confronts its own woundedness. If the church does not wrestle with its woundedness, it risks warping its ecclesiological imagination. Rather than living into its authentic role of making present the reign of God on earth, the church instead perpetuates systems of oppression and exclusion. By attending to its own woundedness, the church has the potential to more authentically be church and live into its mission. This chapter creates a robust theological and practical analysis of wounds, serving as a touchstone for the dissertation's larger endeavor of envisioning an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds.

2.1 ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF WOUNDS

No two wounds are the same, yet wounds share in common many characteristics. Wounds are inflicted with pain. A variety of situations may cause a wound, ranging from accidents to intentional infliction. No matter the cause, they demand a response—

pressure to stop bleeding, a bandage to prevent infection, skin and nerves establishing new connections, time to heal. Ecclesial wounds share similarities with physical wounds. Their origins vary, but they are united in their infliction of pain. While the full extent of wounds may not be visible, they still require attention. If one ignores an ecclesial wound, the wound may fester, growing beyond its initial localized infliction to impact the entire body of Christ.

Racism and sexism are most commonly referred to as social sins. As a result, it is important to consider the relationship between sin and wounds. In her 2018 presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America, Mary Hines looked to racism and sexism as structural sins in the church. She explained, “This category is less often applied to the church, but the social sin that pervades our world is also found embedded within the structures of the church.”³ This analysis of social sin is a helpful framing for this examination of woundedness. It recognizes that the social sin that is present in the world is also present in the church, affirming that the church is deeply connected with the world. While there is merit and value in language of social sin to discuss racism and sexism, I argue that language of wounds offers a crucial lens for analyzing the ecclesial impact of these wounds. The experience of wounds opens a different conversation than that of social sin and is a crucial for an ecclesiological investigation.

I use the language of woundedness to capture the impact of these social sins in the church. In this dissertation, I focus on wounds explicitly for three reasons. First, wounds focus attention on the lasting impact. They call attention to the harm done, the ongoing ripple impact of a particular action or system, and the need for healing. Second, sin can

³ Mary E. Hines, “Searching the Signs of These Times: Imitations of Grace,” *CTSA Proceedings* 73/2018 (2018): 62–63.

be abstract and wounds are concrete. When confronted with sin, individuals often want to deny responsibility. In the face of a wound, there is a need to respond regardless of responsibility. For example, if accused of being racist, a person will often respond with the many ways they are not racist. There is an attempt to deny responsibility. Or, if the person admits responsibility, grappling with sin often becomes an internal conversion or addressed in silent prayer. However, if one witnesses someone wounded, there is a call to action. It does not matter whether one caused the wound or not, for there is an immediate need. Wounds convey a sense of urgency that sin does not, and can often resist the series of self-justification involved in discussing sin. Third, wounds convey an imagery that sin does not. The impact of sin can be internal or can evade measurement. Wounds confront by signaling that something is wrong. While not all of a wound is visible or known immediately, there is visceral response to seeing a wound that may not necessarily arise from sin. Taken together, these reasons prompt an examination of wounds in the church.

Wounds point to a reality that is not immediately present. They attest both to what has come before and what might be in the future. Their very presence signifies transformation, calling attention to a spot that is different, but has not always been so. Mary McClintock Fulkerson explains, “Transformation is inherent in the image of the wound, for it invokes a sense of something wrong— of a fracture in things that should be joined or whole. The very sense of harm implies an impulse toward remedy— a kind of longing for it to be otherwise.”⁴ Thus, the wound holds together the past, present and future. It signals to a reality that had been—an unwounded site— that no longer exists. It also points to a future of healing that may come, though how, when, and if that healing occurs is unknown.

⁴ Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 14.

The tension surrounding visibility and invisibility of wounds is central. In one sense, wounds are very visible. They bring a sense of an oozing opening of the body, a place where skin should be undisturbed. At the same time, the entirety of the wound is never fully known. Wounds can touch upon areas that are unanticipated. Even as wounds heal, the scar tissue surrounding and beneath wounds extends in ways invisible to the eye, and at times, even unknown to the wounded. Wounds call out for attention from others, yet are also met with eyes that quickly look away, unwilling to be confronted by a departure from normalcy and safety. In this way, wounds confront others with a sense that perfection and safety are not always possible. Wounds attest to pain and suffering, telling a story that others may prefer to ignore.

Likewise, ecclesial wounds are marked by the tension between visibility and invisibility. For example, sexism in the church has both visible and invisible elements. The exclusion of women from ordained ministry is very visible, yet the internalized sexism of members of the church is difficult to measure, as will be explored in Section 2.2. This tension can be mapped onto the role of the wound in Christian theology. Theologian and trauma theorist Shelly Rambo explains that the logic of the wound in Christian theology is mixed. Wounds stand at the center of Christian theology in the wounds of Christ, yet there is also a long history of wounds being erased in Christian theology.⁵ Rambo points to the tendency to focus on the resurrection at the expense of recognizing wounds, as exemplified in the work of John Calvin.⁶ Yet, the resurrected Christ appears with wounds. Wounds are at the center of the Christian narrative, whether one focuses upon them or ignores them.

⁵ Shelly Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 145.

⁶ Rambo, 146.

In this examination, I refer to ecclesial wounds as pain in the ecclesial body. While this pain may be the result of an individual experience, no experience is strictly individual in the church. The community called church shares its joys and pains with one another. Images of the body of Christ can be helpful in exploring ecclesial wounds. In the letters of the New Testament, language of the church as the body of Christ is abundant. The letters tell of the church as made up of different parts of the body, all necessary and important in the midst of their diversity. In 1 Corinthians 12:26, Paul writes, “If one part [of the body] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” Ecclesial wounds are not limited to individual experiences that impact others. There are also social systems of injustice and oppression that wound the church. Section 2.2 will examine racism and sexism as wounds in the church. For example, racism is intertwined with systems of power that devalue persons on the basis of skin color. These systems often function on a corporate level. Concepts of social sin and structural sin attest to the corporate connection of sin and systems.

While the Christian story stems from the wounds of Christ, there remains a distinction between focusing on the wounds of Jesus Christ and the ecclesial wounds present in the church today. The wounds of Christ were inflicted by an unjust power, a result of a life and ministry devoted to justice and threatening to those in power. In the resurrection, the wounds were transformed. Examining ecclesial wounds today requires a self-examination surrounding our complicity in inflicting the wounds or benefitting from their presence. They are less abstract than the wounds of Christ, less able to be theologized about and sanitized in the process. Ecclesial wounds today continue to

impact the church, are perpetrated by the church, and reveal aspects of the church that are uncomfortable to discuss for those in power.

McClintock Fulkerson calls theology to take place from the site of the wound.⁷ Given that wounds testify to transformation— both the possibility of future healing and a testament to a past transformation— they demand a new way of thinking. Even if such healing does not occur, wounds signal the lack of healing and point to past harm and a time when the wound did not exist. Wounds signal that something is not the way that it should be, even if it remains so. McClintock Fulkerson explains, “Like a wound, theological thinking is generated by a sometimes inchoate sense that something must be addressed.”⁸ The transformation contained in a wound, even if it is a past transformation and not a promise of healing, calls for a transformation in theological thinking. Thus, I now turn to examine the presence of language of wounds in theology and ecclesial life. In order to understand the impact of ecclesial wounds today, we must first understand how discussion of wounds has functioned in key theological examinations.

2.1.1 Language of Wounds in Theology and Church Life

Language of wounds has a rich tradition in ecclesial life. In this section, I will highlight three poignant examples of wounds in the church. This is not meant to be an exhaustive summary, but rather, an illustrative overview of how language of wounds can depict important ecclesial and theological realities. I begin with Blessed Antonio Rosmini’s book, *The Five Wounds of the Holy Church*. This analysis from the 19th

⁷ Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 12.

⁸ Fulkerson, 13–14.

century looks at ecclesial wounds as connected to the wounds of Christ crucified. I then look to Pope Francis's surge in language surrounding a dirty, wounded church. Finally, I examine language of woundedness in contemporary Latinx theology through the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Pearl Barros, Cecilia González-Andrieu, and Alejandro García Rivera. These examinations point to the richness of discussion of wounds as well as the potential for further examination. By exploring these distinct contributions, we see that language of wounds has resonated in diverse contexts, capturing a sense of where the church is harmed and what healing might look like. Further, this examination lays the foundation for examining two moderns ecclesial wounds in Section 2.2 and analyzing how wounds impact the church in Section 2.3.

Rosmini (1797-1855) directly engaged the concept of wounds in the church in *The Five Wounds of the Holy Church*. He wrote the book in 1832-1833, but did not publish the book until 1848, at which point it was almost immediately listed on the *Index of Forbidden Books* where it remained until just before Vatican II.⁹ By critiquing the behavior of bishops and entanglement of civil authorities in ecclesial life, Rosmini's work was immediately met with condemnation. Further, the political context of the time made him a target. Austria invaded and occupied Northern Italy, where Rosmini was living. Rosmini argued for the freedom of the church to appoint bishops. This proposal removed this power from the Austrian Empire, making him the subject of persecution.¹⁰ Though this work was condemned, it remained relevant throughout the past three centuries. Pope Paul VI referred to it as a "prophetic book"¹¹ and Pope Francis has

⁹ Antonio Rosmini, *Five Wounds of the Holy Church*, ed. Antonio Belsito (Rosmini Publications, 2016), 3.

¹⁰ Rosmini, 5.

¹¹ Rosmini, 8.

referenced it in homilies and letters.¹² Rosmini was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.¹³

Rosmini outlines five wounds of the church, corresponding to the five wounds of the crucified Christ. For Rosmini, the wounds of the church are the wounds of Christ. While distinct, the wounds are also interconnected; no one wound is more important than the others. Rosmini begins with the wound in the left hand: the division between people and clergy at public worship. For Rosmini, the faithful are the clergy and laity together.¹⁴ Division between clergy and the laity was fueled by the use of Latin in liturgy, a language increasingly unknown to the laity. While Rosmini did not advocate for the adoption of the vernacular in liturgy, he did call for increased education of the laity so that they may understand the liturgy.¹⁵ The second wound, the wound in the right hand, is the insufficient education of the clergy. He critiqued seminaries of his time as disconnected from pastoral work, focused instead on “petty, one-sided works, without warmth and attraction, the offspring of narrow minds.”¹⁶ The third wound, the wound in the side of the holy Church, is disunion amongst the bishops. He critiqued the lavish lifestyles and political status of bishops of his time, calling instead for a return to the episcopate of the patristic era. The unity of the bishops, and therefore of the church, is of paramount importance for Rosmini. Fourth, the wound in the right foot is the nomination of bishops by the civil government. Not only did Rosmini seek to remove the involvement of civil government, he promoted election of the bishops by the faithful. It

¹² Cindy Wooden, “Five Wounds of Christ: Pope Urges Recovery of Traditional Devotion,” *National Catholic Reporter*, March 22, 2018, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-chronicles/five-wounds-christ-pope-urges-recovery-traditional-devotion>.

¹³ Rosmini, *Five Wounds of the Holy Church*, 100.

¹⁴ Rosmini, 21.

¹⁵ Rosmini, 24–25.

¹⁶ Rosmini, 37.

was this proposal that led to the condemnation of this book.¹⁷ Finally, the fifth wound, the wound of the left foot, is the restriction of the free use by the church of her own possessions. In this section, Rosmini calls for the church to be poor as it was in the early church. He traces the wounds of the church to the advent of feudalism in the 8th century, which he said, “extinguished the freedom of the Church and gave rise to all her afflictions.”¹⁸ Taken as a whole, Rosmini’s book offers a searing condemnation of the church. However, it also communicates a vision of hope and healing for the church, attesting to a hope that the church can live into its mission in more authentic ways than it is practicing currently.

Guiding Rosmini’s analysis is a conviction that the mystical and historical are intimately connected. His mystical vision views the mercy of God as a supernatural force working in the hearts of people to transform wounds. This is also connected to the historical reality of the church and its connection to civil society, for Rosmini calls all to create a human society and divine society where justice reigns. Antonio Belsito explains that for Rosmini, “the root of disunion is to be found in the weakening of the idea that the Church is a ‘supernatural’ reality based on grace and holiness, a ‘Sacrament’ of salvation for humankind.”¹⁹ This view of church as a sacrament is guided by his conviction that the church is united with Christ on the cross, a union that mirrors the nuptial mystery. While this union may seem lofty or difficult to access, it is the driving force that causes Rosmini to examine the wounds of the church as united with the wounds of Christ.

Rosmini’s work serves as an important example of the deep history of images of wounds in the church in Christian tradition. His analysis demonstrates that problems in

¹⁷ Rosmini, 60.

¹⁸ Rosmini, 75.

¹⁹ Rosmini, 13.

the church are not simply organizational challenges or crises in leadership, rather, they deeply wound in the church in ways analogous to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ. His articulation of the wounds of the church advance the work of this dissertation, for it demonstrates how the mission of the church and the church's ability to be church credibly is threatened by contemporary problems in the church. The naming of these problems as wounds provides a visceral imagery that underscore the threat posed by these wounds.

Similar to Rosmini, Pope Francis promotes a devotion to the wounds of Christ on the cross, retrieving a popular medieval devotion.²⁰ In a weekly address, he invited thousands of people in Saint Peter's Square to "enter into his [Jesus'] wounds and contemplate the love in his heart for you, and you, and you, and me, for everyone."²¹ Francis often depicts wounds as an entry point for compassion. In a homily, he recounted a story of when a child is hurt, she goes to her parent to kiss the site of her pain and proclaim that it is "all better." So too, Francis says, is it with God. He said, "There, in the encounter of our wounds with the wounds of the Lord, which was the price of salvation, there is tenderness of God."²² In this, he connects the wounds of Christ with the compassion of God, revealed through the wounds of Christ and our own woundedness.

Pope Francis often speaks of a church that is dirty and wounded, contrasting it with a church that is pure and clean. His reference to the church as a field hospital, with which this chapter opened, has animated much of his papacy. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he states, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from

²⁰ Wooden, "Pope Urges Recovery of Traditional Devotion."

²¹ Wooden.

²² Wooden.

clinging to its own security.”²³ In this, he reframes the question of the health of the church, presenting a dirty and hurting church as healthy and a church that is set-apart from the world and focused on purity as unhealthy. This invites the faithful to reconsider what a healthy church is, and puts forward a posture towards regarding a church that is bruised and dirty as an engaged, vibrant church. Francis’s language of wounds opens up the possibility of speaking about the church as something other than pure, perfect, and stainless, while still regarding the church as holy. In these examples, he often refers to wounds as marks that the church is living out its mission. They are signs of the church getting its hands dirty, engaging the world, and living out the Gospel.

Recently, Francis has moved to discussing wounds as a sign that the church is living out its mission to pointing to the ways that wounds can harm the church. In preparing for the Vatican Sex Abuse Summit in February 2019, Francis invited the curia to contemplate its own wounds. He pondered, “For if this grave tragedy has involved some consecrated ministers, we can ask how deeply rooted it may be in our societies and in our families. Consequently, the Church will not be limited to healing her own wounds, but will seek to deal squarely with this evil that causes the slow death of so many persons, on the moral, psychological and human levels.”²⁴ In this, Francis refers to the wounds of the church as harmful marks that contain pain and are in need of healing. This is a shift in his use of wounds, signaling the complexity of this symbol. This theme also appeared in a homily at World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019. He reflected, “The

²³ Francis, “*Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*,” November 24, 2013, para. 49, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

²⁴ Francis, “Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia,” December 21, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/december/documents/papa-francesco_20181221_curia-romana.html.

weariness of hope comes from seeing a church wounded by sin, which so often failed to hear all those cries that echoed the cry of the Master: ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’”²⁵ Again, Francis points to the damaging impact of wounds that radiate throughout the ecclesial body.

While Francis’s discussion of wounds illustrates the power of the imagery of wounds, he does not examine the ways that the church perpetuates its own wounds. For example, he does not consider a church that acts in racist and sexist ways, as I will in Section 2.2. It is important for this examination to include Francis’s discussion of wounds, for this language is rising in popularity due to his increased reliance on this imagery. At the same time, this dissertation seeks to discuss wounds in a way that examines the wounds within the church.

In examining the ways that language of wounds has informed the ecclesiological imagination, it is important to consider the contribution of Latinx theology. In Latinx theology, there is a growing movement of looking to the border as a wound. Notably, Chicana writer and activist Gloria Anzaldúa connects borders to wounds in her landmark work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Anzaldúa refers to borderlands as both a physical, geographical location, as well as a non-physical location in one’s consciousness.²⁶ She refers to borderlands as *una herida abierta*,²⁷ an open wound. She vividly explains, “The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the

²⁵ Junno Arocho Esteves, “Hope Wanes in Church Wounded by Sin, Pope Tells Panama Clergy, Laity,” National Catholic Reporter, January 26, 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/hope-wanes-church-wounded-sin-pope-tells-panama-clergy-laity>.

²⁶ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

²⁷ Anzaldúa, 25.

lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country— a border culture.”²⁸ The border designates insiders and outsiders, leading to a dualistic thinking that marginalizes outsiders. Pearl Barros utilizes Anzaldúa’s work to highlight both the suffering and the opportunities for grace through the border. While avoiding the temptation to romanticize the border, Barros points to borders as a place of grace. In this, she highlights that we necessarily encounter suffering in our search for grace.²⁹ Barros continues that authentic wholeness requires that we accept our own fragmentation and brokenness, or in the language of Anzaldúa, woundedness.

Cecilia González-Andrieu examined the connection of woundedness and grace in her plenary address at the 2018 Catholic Theological Society of America Annual Convention, *Wounded Grace and the Disquieting Invitation of the Real*.³⁰ González-Andrieu explores specific moments of wounds— anti-immigrant defacement of property, racist rhetoric, chemotherapy— and examines how “these wounds have become a way for grace to erupt in unexpected beauty.”³¹ For González-Andrieu, grace comes through an opening up of relationships. She explains, “The opposite of desperate grasping at invulnerability of attitudes of racism, classism and xenophobia, which seek to separate and sow distrust as a defense against the truth of human frailty, shared woundedness creates community, engenders trust, and reaches out to the other in kinship.”³² This shared woundedness is found in a chemotherapy room, or in a gathering of students watching the 2016 presidential results come in and see the national affirmation of

²⁸ Anzaldúa, 25.

²⁹ Pearl Barros, “Grace and Its Transformations” (Catholic Theological Society of America Annual Convention: Women’s Consultation on Constructive Theology, Indianapolis, June 2018).

³⁰ Cecilia González-Andrieu, “Wounded Grace and the Disquieting Invitation of the Real” (Catholic Theological Society of America Annual Convention, Indianapolis, June 2018).

³¹ González-Andrieu.

³² González-Andrieu.

xenophobia. Wounds have the potential to connect with others because wounds reveal the truth, or the real.³³ This revelatory quality of wounds is a significant contribution to this conversation which will be further explored in Chapters 3 and 5.

Finally, González-Andrieu looks to the artwork *The Bleeding Border* by Sergio Gomez. This depiction of children fleeing the border details the pain and suffering of the contemporary United States immigration policies. Yet González-Andrieu points to this art as an invitation. She explains, “The truth of the bleeding wound invites us to know our oneness and work for healing.”³⁴ Again, wounds convey a truth that is often difficult to capture in words, realities from which most people avert their eyes. A bleeding wound, however, also conveys a truth and invites us into relationship with the real, with others, with God.

In bringing together woundedness, art, and theological reflection, González-Andrieu draws upon the work of Alejandro García Rivera. García Rivera advances a theology of art in his book, *A Wounded Innocence*. Importantly for this study, García Rivera describes woundedness as an experience that brings “to self-consciousness a profound vulnerability, a radical openness to being acted upon, that, ultimately, expresses itself as the need for intercession, a call for sacred sympathy.”³⁵ From woundedness comes the capacity for healing, a capacity that comes through the gift of grace and the joining of the creative process.³⁶ González-Andrieu and García Rivera offer insights into what our experience of woundedness has to teach us.

³³ González-Andrieu.

³⁴ González-Andrieu.

³⁵ Alex García-Rivera, *A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 18.

³⁶ García-Rivera, 115.

This brief tracing of wounds in theology reveals a diverse account of the role of wounds. They are representative of the diversity of theological accounts of wounds and share in their attention to the concrete. Together, these contributions shape the ecclesiological imagination surrounding wounds. Wounds call attention to moments where the church is failing to be church, proposing ways for the church to be church in a more authentic way. While these contributions are important, there is more work that must be done to examine wounds in the church. In this chapter, I look to open wounds in the church. These wounds are harming the church, preventing the church from living into its mission. In Chapter 3, I look to build a more nuanced understanding of wounds through the tool of contemporary trauma theory. Examining, understanding, and examining wounds of the church is essential for the credibility of the church. In order for the church to fully live into its mission, it must address its own wounds.

2.2 EXAMINING WOUNDS IN THE CHURCH: A STUDY OF RACISM AND SEXISM

In order to deepen this examination of wounds, it is necessary to move from the theoretical to the practical. Wounds do not just exist in theory, but are active and present in the church today. This section examines two wounds: sexism and racism. *Gaudium et Spes* speaks out against racism, sexism, and other forms of division, stating that “every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to

God's intent."³⁷ This section is intended to be an illustrative rather than an exhaustive examination of wounds. I selected these wounds due to their relevance in the contemporary church and enduring impact throughout church history. Further, this is not intended to be a thorough examination of all instances of sexism and racism in the church. Rather, I identify two aspects of each wound that illustrate how the church's mission is undermined as a result of this wound. This approach serves to illustrate the wide-ranging instances of wounds in the Catholic Church in the United States.

It is essential to consider racism and sexism as wounds rather than social sin, though these remain social sins, because language of wounds focuses attention on the wide-reaching and enduring harm caused by wounds. These wounds greatly harm the church and extend beyond their initial infliction, as will be further addressed in conjunction with trauma theory in Chapter 3. It is a harm that extends beyond the oppressed and victims, though the harm inflicted on persons through racial discrimination, enslavement, and exclusion based on gender is significant and should not be minimized. In this study, I focus on the harm to the church as a whole. The church cannot fully be church with these wounds persisting. The church cannot be united if part of the church is oppressing another part of the church. Further, the church cannot live into its mission of making the already-but-not-yet reign of God present in the world if it is a source of division and oppression. The wounds of racism and sexism impact the ecclesiological imagination of the church, facilitating a church that is white and patriarchal masquerading as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. In order for the church to credibly be church, it must address its wounds.

³⁷ Vatican Council II, "Gaudium et Spes," para. 29.

2.2.1 Sexism

Sexism refers to the oppression and discrimination against women and non-binary persons. In this analysis, I use the definition of sexism from the *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*: “Sexism refers to gender stereotyping of men and women as hierarchically ordered (men over women) and also as confined to limited cultural identities and roles as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’”³⁸ Many of the materials I am drawing from rely upon an understanding of gender according to a binary system due to the understanding of gender at the time they were written. While my language at times will reflect a binary of male and female to reflect the sources, I intend this analysis of sexism to be inclusive of all gender identities. All persons who identify other than cisgender male are oppressed in a sexist system. Further, I contend that all persons are negatively impacted by a sexist system. The hierarchical ordering of persons according to gender identity harms all persons, impacting stereotypes, gender roles, distorted and unhealthy relationships between persons, and a culture where some are undervalued and the recognition of dignity is diminished.

Sexism in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is pervasive yet often unrecognized as such, masquerading as natural. This is partly due to the invisibility of sexism in the United States. Rosemary Radford Ruether explains that gender differences “are assumed to be biologically based and necessary for good social order, rather than unjust social constructions that limit the full humanity of women and also men.”³⁹ The appeal to gender essentialism often goes together with an appeal to systems being “just

³⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Sexism,” in *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, ed. Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 256–57.

³⁹ Ruether, 257.

the way they are” or “normal.” Yet the silence and invisibility of sexism enables it to perpetuate. This translates to the silence and invisibility of women. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza contends, “The silence and invisibility of women is generated by the patriarchal structures of the Church and maintained by andocentric i.e. male defined theology.”⁴⁰ It is no mistake that women are both the “silent majority” and “silenced majority”⁴¹; patriarchal structures and andocentric theology combine to create and perpetuate this often-invisible system.

Feminist theology seeks to create theology where all are embraced. It shines a light on these invisible systems, identifying them as patriarchal and harmful. It seeks to create systems where biological sex does not result in constraining gender norms. Diverse in its forms, feminist theology re-reads the rich theological tradition and identifies liberating components.⁴² Womanist and mujerista theology recognizes the distortions of whiteness in feminist theology and speaks from specific experiences that are unique to black women or Latinas. This intersectional approach is an essential framework for all feminist theology. Feminist theology seeks not only to identify sexism in the past, but also create a theological and ecclesial reality where sexism ceases to exist and the dignity of all persons is embraced.

2.2.1.1 Examples of Sexism as an Ecclesial Wound

To illuminate the wounds of sexism in the church, I look to (1) patriarchal and exclusively male language to discuss God and the theological endeavor and (2) exclusion

⁴⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence- Becoming Visible,” 4.

⁴¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, 3.

⁴² For an in-depth analysis of feminist method in biblical interpretation, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*.

of women from ministry in the church, both by official teaching and local practice, including ordained priesthood and altar servers. These two examples highlight the connection between theology and practice, displaying that theology and practice shape and form one another. In this analysis, I underscore that sexism in the church harms all persons, not just women.

2.2.1.1.1 Patriarchal and Exclusively Male Language to Discuss God

In discussing patriarchal and exclusively male language to discuss God, it is important to begin with two foundational points. First, all language for God is metaphorical. As God is mystery, no title or name for God can express God fully. Further, the “livingness of God”⁴³ defies any one title, for God continues to reveal Godself to us. Yet this does not mean that we cannot say anything meaningful about God. Rather, all language of God affirms an aspect of God, yet no language expresses the entirety of God. Thus, all language about God is metaphorical. In Christian theology, this is most completely expressed by Thomas Aquinas in his foundational work *Summa Theologiae*. The grammar of God-talk proceeds in a three-fold pattern for Aquinas: causality, remotion and eminence. This *triplex via* affirms God as cause, distinguishes the cause from effect by negation, and finally is qualified by eminence.⁴⁴

Second, male language for God is not inappropriate, as scripture is filled with language about God as both male and female. This study criticizes *exclusively* male language of God and the trend of taking literally male language for God. Elizabeth

⁴³ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (New York: Crossroad, 2014), 7.

⁴⁴ This is of course a cursory examination of Aquinas’s work on God-talk and the process of theology. In this overview, I am drawing primarily from the primary work of *Summa Theologiae* Prima Pars, Questions 1-12, and the secondary work of Rudi Te Velde. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*; Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The “Divine Science” of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

Johnson, in her groundbreaking work *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* argues that the problem with male language for God is that it is used exclusively, literally, and patriarchally.⁴⁵ In this section, I will analyze the exclusive, literal, and patriarchal use of male language for God.

Language about God is not abstract theological method, removed from the lived reality of faith communities. Rather, it reflects ecclesial life and impacts everything from theology to practice. Johnson explains, “Neither abstract in content nor neutral in its effect, speaking about God sums up, unifies, and expresses a faith community’s sense of ultimate mystery, the world view and expectation of order devolving from this, and the concomitant orientation of human life and devotion.”⁴⁶ Johnson’s often-repeated mantra “the symbol of God functions” encapsulates this sentiment, demonstrating how God-talk shapes and also reflects the community’s values. The language used to discuss God shapes practices, theology, and systems. Exclusively male language for God has the potential to obscure patriarchal systems as natural or invisible.

The exclusive use of male language for God becomes idolatrous when it overshadows the mystery of God. It exalts one image for God above others, and in the process, makes an idol of such language. Ruether explains, “To take one image drawn from one gender and in one sociological context as normative for God is to legitimate this gender and social group as the normative possessors of the image of God and the representatives of God on earth. This is idolatry.”⁴⁷ Ruether’s framing of male language for God as idolatry frames this as a theological issue. The language for God is revered in

⁴⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 31–32.

⁴⁶ Johnson, 4.

⁴⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Feminist Theology and Spirituality,” in *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*, ed. Judith L. Weidman (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984), 16.

such a way that the language takes precedence over that to which it points. All God-talk should point us towards God, rather than become idols. Exclusively male language for God becomes an idol in a patriarchal culture, making our focus on the language rather than that to which the language points. Idolatry is dangerous theological territory, and Ruether's caution should be heeded.

Further, the exclusive, literal, and patriarchal use of male language for God has profound social impact. This is most fully captured by the often-quoted passage from Mary Daly: "If God is male, then the male is God."⁴⁸ The male becomes God, reinforcing and propelling cultures that center the male and oppress non-male persons. This is harmful to both those exalted and those excluded from sharing in divine likeness. Exclusively male language for God elevates the male gender to the level of God to the detriment of female and non-binary persons. Johnson explains, "Whether consciously or not, sexist God language undermines the human equality of women made in the divine image and likeness."⁴⁹ Theological language which affirms only one gender as *imago Dei* is socially dangerous and theologically blasphemous. It provides the foundation for not recognizing women and non-binary persons as created in the image and likeness of God, thus laying the groundwork for practices that do not recognize the dignity of non-white-male persons.

Male language for God that focuses on the powerful qualities of men also has a social impact. Male language for God often connotes power and oppression. Images of God as ruler and king blend together with historical images of rulers and kings who oppress women and minorities. This oppressive quality of exclusively male language for

⁴⁸ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, Revised edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 38.

⁴⁹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 18.

God “functions effectively to legitimate structures and theories that grant a theomorphic character to men who rule but that relegate women, children, and other men to the deficient margins.”⁵⁰ The legitimization of oppression should signal that there is danger in the exclusively male language of God, as oppression is contrary to the reign of God. Further, this language is also harmful to cisgender men as it creates unrealistic and unhealthy notions of masculinity. The social impact of exclusively male language is harmful to all.

The feminist critique of exclusively male language for God is not simply negative, but also contains a positive movement of calling for more diversity in language surrounding God. This movement is one of retrieval, drawing from neglected images in scripture and tradition. Anne Carr describes feminist criticism as a movement that “challenges a pervasive idolatry that has crept into Christian thought and practice and at the same time provides a new awareness, for women and for the whole church, of God as the fully transcendent mystery who encompasses *all* of creation, *all* of our lives in universal presence.”⁵¹ Moving away from exclusively male language of God is also a move toward enriching our theological imaginations. It is a move toward entering deeper into the mystery of God. It is a move toward an inclusive theology that recognizes the unity of the ecclesial body.

As I asserted at the outset, expanding language for God is a positive advancement beyond the impact on women. All flourish when there is expansive language for God. Johnson summarizes this, pointing towards the ends of feminist theology. She states, “What is at stake is simultaneously the freeing of both women and men from debilitating

⁵⁰ Johnson, 18.

⁵¹ Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 134.

reality models and social roles, the birthing of new forms of saving relationship to all of creation, and indeed the very viability of the Christian tradition for present and coming generations.”⁵² There is no question that women benefit from female imagery for God, coming to see themselves as *imago Dei*. At the same time, this is about more than women and more than gender inclusive language for God. Gender inclusive language for God is ultimately about seeing the transcendent in all of creation. Removing the limitation of exclusively male language for God speaks to God’s ongoing relationship with the world, revealing Godself to us through new contexts and cultures. Thus, we can see that moving away from exclusively male language for God has social implications, theological implications, and ecclesial implications. To limit ourselves to male and patriarchal language for God wounds the ecclesial body.

2.2.1.1.2 Exclusion of Women from Ministerial Positions

To further illustrate the lived reality of the wound of sexism in the church, I now turn to the exclusion of women from ministerial positions. In this, I look to a variety of ministerial positions, including altar server, usher, other parish ministries, and the ministerial priesthood. The ordained priesthood is the most visible example of the exclusion of women, due to the importance of the priest in Catholic sacramental life as well as the divergence between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian denominations that allow the ordination of women. Recent questions of the admission of women to the diaconate have further focused attention on ordained ministry. However, ordained ministry is not the only form of ministry from which women are excluded. The exclusion of women from particular roles and spaces, whether *de facto* or *de jure*,

⁵² Johnson, *She Who Is*, 15.

permeates Catholic liturgical tradition and ecclesial life. Schüssler Fiorenza argues, “Women as Church are invisible neither by accident nor by our own default but by patriarchal law that excludes us from Church office on the basis of sex.”⁵³

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the issue of women’s ordination at length. In this section, I will briefly summarize important historical moments, central elements of church teaching, and point to the most pressing ecclesiological and theological wounds that result from this teaching. In the time since Vatican II, the topic of women’s ordination has gained momentum in the church and been met with decisive responses from the Vatican. In 1975, the first Women’s Ordination Conference was held in Detroit, Michigan, serving as a call to action for reform in the priesthood. In the following decades, the magisterium has issued several statements in which they assert the definitiveness of church teaching on ordination. On October 15, 1976, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued *Inter Insigniores* with the approval of Paul VI. *Inter Insigniores* asserted that women would not be ordained and articulated the theological reasons underpinning this conclusion. Pope John Paul II affirmed this teaching with his apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, issued on Pentecost Sunday 1994. In the letter, John Paul II concluded, “In order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter which pertains to the church’s divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk. 22:32) I declare that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the church’s faithful.”⁵⁴ In 1995, the CDF issued *Responsum ad Dubium* regarding *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. In this, the CDF affirmed that

⁵³ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence- Becoming Visible,” 4.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, “Ordinatio Sacerdotalis,” May 22, 1994, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html.

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis “requires definitive assent” since the teaching of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* “has handed on this same teaching by a formal declaration, explicitly stating what is to be held always, everywhere, and by all, as belonging to the deposit of faith.”⁵⁵ Over the past two decades, language of the church having “no authority” to change this teaching has remained consistent, despite the challenging of theologians.⁵⁶

A key element of the restriction of ordination to men stems from the role of the priest to stand at the head of the church *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. Yet, this interpretation of *in persona Christi* limits our understanding of the person of Christ to a gender expression. Further, in baptism we are all joined to Christ and called to a life rooted in Christ’s priesthood. Elizabeth Groppe asks, “Given that the vocation of all the baptized is to ‘clothe ourselves in Christ’ (Gal. 3:27), and given that we can recognize the image of Christ in both male and female persons, why have women been proscribed from standing *in persona Christi* as a priest ordained to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy and lead a Catholic ecclesial community in public witness to the compassion and justice of God?”⁵⁷ By emphasizing the priest as *in persona Christi* at the expense of the entire faithful, ordination theology undercuts the universal priesthood. It diminishes the

⁵⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Responsum Ad Propositum Dubium Concerning the Teaching Contained in ‘*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*,’” October 28, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19951028_dubium-ordinatio-sac_en.html.

⁵⁶ For a more thorough examination of the church’s teaching on ordination and theological critiques, see Deborah Halter, *The Papal “No”: A Comprehensive Guide to the Vatican’s Rejection of Women’s Ordination* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0419/2004014725.html>; Phyllis Zagano, *Women & Catholicism: Gender, Communion, and Authority* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1106/2010049031-t.html>; Phyllis Zagano, ed., *Women Deacons?: Essays with Answers* (Liturgical Press, 2016); Avery Dulles, “Gender and Priesthood: Examining the Teaching,” *Origins*, May 2, 1996, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/05/24/avery-dulles-women-and-priesthood-1996>; Elizabeth T. Groppe, “Women and the Persona of Christ: Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church,” in *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder*, ed. Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 153–72; Carr, *Transforming Grace*; Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence- Becoming Visible.”

⁵⁷ Groppe, “Women and the Persona of Christ: Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church,” 155.

participation of the faithful in priesthood of Christ in baptism. Further, as discussed with exclusively male language surrounding God, it elevates males and undercuts the dignity of women by only seeing men capable of acting *in persona Christi*. This links the divinity of God with maleness in an exclusive way, creating a division between divinity and female humanity. In turn, this raises problematic theological questions surrounding the dignity of all persons and the salvation of women, in particular.

While there is more to women's ministry in the church than the question of ordination, ordination remains an important topic due to both practical and symbolic reasons. Practically, ordained priests are in positions of power. As a result of the limitation of priesthood to men, the hierarchy of the church is filled with men. Women are excluded from decision-making and positions of power. The results of this reverberate throughout the lived experience of the faithful as well as theology that reflects an andocentric point of view. Anne Carr summarizes this, stating that the exclusion of women "represents an important symbol of the lack of the presence of women in the official life of the church, a symbol of women's exclusion from all significant decision making and practical policy formation, a traditional exclusion that is historically based on the inferiority and subservient status ascribed to them."⁵⁸ Recalling the words from Schüssler Fiorenza, the absence of women is not accidental, but guided by and sustained by patriarchal structures.

Symbolically, the role of the priest is a crucial role in the life of the church. As a leader and pastor, the priest is present with the faithful accompanying them through new life and baptisms to death and funerals and everything in between these moments. The sacramental role of the priest is crucial, for the priest presides at Eucharistic celebrations

⁵⁸ Carr, *Transforming Grace*, 21.

that are the source and summit of liturgical life. The person who stands in this role acts as an icon, pointing the community to God. When this role is limited by gender or race, as will be discussed in Section 2.2.2.2.1, it communicates that those excluded are unworthy of serving in this role. It elevates the white male above all others as more deserving of this role or better able to act *in persona Christi*. Schüssler Fiorenza argues, “The Roman church is divided into a two-class system, that of the ordained and that of the laity, connoting not only second class citizenship for those who are not clergy men but also metaphysical difference.”⁵⁹ A two-class system has no place in a church that is supposed to be one, holy, catholic, apostolic church. This devalues both those excluded and elevates those included to a level of idolatry. In short, everyone suffers.

The church is called to be a community that is unique. It is a community that rejects the patterns of oppression of society and instead strives to be united as the body of Christ. Such a call is deeply rooted in the Gospel of Christ. By limiting where and how women can participate, share their gifts, and even stand within the church building, the church rejects this call to justice and instead mimics the oppression of society. Sandra Schneiders describes the community of the church:

The Church is a unique kind of community, the union of those baptized into Christ, formed by his Word which is not bound (see 2 Tim. 2:8-9)— never fully grasped nor controlled by anyone— gathered around the table where we share Christ’s Body in order to become his Body for the world. It is a community in which there is no slave or master, no national or ethnic superiorities, no gender domination, no inequality that is theologically or spiritually significant except holiness, and in which even distinctions of role and function are not titles to power but differences which must serve the unity of the whole.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence- Becoming Visible.”

⁶⁰ Sandra M. Schneiders, “LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award Acceptance Address” (LCWR Assembly, St. Louis, MO, August 10, 2012), 4, <https://lcwr.org/media/news/sandra-m-schneiders-ihm-addresses-ecclesial-leadership-context-theology-vatican-ii>.

By excluding women, the hierarchical church ceases to live into the unique reality that it is called to be. The impact on holiness and unity will be further discussed in Section 2.3.

Women are also excluded, either formally or by practice, from other liturgical roles such as altar server and usher. Parishes and local dioceses restrict where women can be present at mass, not allowing them in the sanctuary at times, and how to express their ministry. Women are serving in a multitude of ministerial positions, yet there are still realms from which they are excluded. The Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska still does not permit females to act as altar servers.⁶¹ Carr argues, “As long as women are barred from full recognition and sacramental completion of the service they are already fulfilling, barred in fact from the liturgical functions usually assigned to eight-year-old-boys, the language of the church is unfortunately clear in what it is saying to women and to the world about women.”⁶² These practices of excluding women from ministry communicate that women are not welcome in all parts of the church. Further, these practices reveal a devaluing of women in favor of perpetuating systems of exclusion.

It is illuminating to examine contemporary trends of women in ministry. In 2018, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) conducted a nation-wide study on women in the Catholic Church. This study reveals trends in women’s participation in ministry. The most commonly held ministerial position by women is catechist or religious education teacher in a parish, with fifteen percent of Catholic women serving in this role.⁶³ Fewer than one in ten women have served in other

⁶¹ “Ask the Register: Altar Servers?,” accessed May 26, 2019, <https://www.lincolndiocese.org/news/diocesan-news/12208-ask-the-register-altar-servers>.

⁶² Carr, *Transforming Grace*, 39.

⁶³ Mark G Gray and Mary L Gautier, “Catholic Women in the United States: Beliefs, Practices, Experiences, and Attitudes” (Washington, DC: The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2018), 6, <https://cara.georgetown.edu/CatholicWomenStudy.pdf>.

ministerial roles in the church.⁶⁴ While the participation of women in religious education is an important role, it should be noted that education is a traditionally female associated profession. The majority of women's participation in a stereotypically female role limits the parish's understanding of religious education as a ministerial position. Further, only four-percent of women reported serving as an usher or RCIA team member, and one in twenty served as an altar server.⁶⁵ Overall, 67% of women have not served a parish in any ministry role,⁶⁶ or perhaps more accurately, identified their role or participation as ministry.

The CARA survey also illuminates an important aspect of sexism in the church: the silence and hidden nature of sexism. When asked if they have personally experienced sexism within the church, only one in ten women responded "yes."⁶⁷ I contend that this number is not indicative of the absence of sexism, but rather, the hidden nature of sexism. What many consider simply "the way things are" is actually a system based on the hierarchical ordering of men over women and non-binary persons. The fact that 90% of women reported that they have not personally experienced sexism is an indication that sexism is internalized as normal. When looking to the ten-percent of women who have reported that they experienced sexism in the church, 44% have indicated that they "have seriously thought about leaving the Church at some point."⁶⁸ This reveals that when women recognize the experience of sexism, it is an experience that results in alienation from the church and further wounds the church. To stay in the church when recognizing

⁶⁴ Gray and Gautier, 6.

⁶⁵ Gray and Gautier, 7.

⁶⁶ Gray and Gautier, 7.

⁶⁷ Gray and Gautier, 24–25.

⁶⁸ Gray and Gautier, 25.

sexism can cause an internal dissonance, further harming the individual and the church community as a whole.

The CARA survey allowed for descriptions of experiences of sexism. I include these personal narratives to reflect a range of experiences of sexism. One respondent replied that she experienced sexism because “As a girl, I could not be an altar server.”⁶⁹ Another echoed this sentiment, exploring the ministries and issues of control related to it: “Technically, women are not welcome in the sanctuary of the Church—except to clean it, of course! So there are parishes that do not allow girls as altar servers or readers.”⁷⁰ Many respondents drew upon experiences from childhood, demonstrating that sexism is experienced by all persons and not limited to adults. One relayed experiences of her childhood in the church: “Routinely as a child, I would ask questions about why I was not permitted to do things classmates and peers were invited to do, and the simple answer was ‘You’re a girl. Girls don’t do that.’ Further inquiry as to why girls ‘couldn’t’ do something as basic as taking up the collection, even, was met with ‘girls don’t.’”⁷¹ This sense of some ministries, such as taking up the collection, as limited to men demonstrates that gender essentialism permeates parish ministry. There is nothing about holding a collection basket that is well-suited to a particular gender. Rather, this reflects an environment where men are tasked with responsibility and keeping order while women are told, implicitly or explicitly, that this is not their territory. Though there may not be formal exclusions of women from many ministries, practice reveals that women are excluded from many ministries in the church. This exclusion, while more informal than

⁶⁹ Gray and Gautier, 25.

⁷⁰ Gray and Gautier, 25.

⁷¹ Gray and Gautier, 26.

the exclusion from ordained ministry, still has an impact of relegating women to less than full members of the church.

A final comment from the CARA survey captures the wide-spread nature of sexism: “You experience it in every occasion. Men are the hierarchy of the Church and women are just there to assist the men and are told to listen to the man’s ideas. It is a world of suppression.”⁷² These experiences bring to light the varied nature of sexism in the church. Sometimes experiences of sexism are outright and obvious, other times they are subtle. I contend that while only ten-percent of women identify as experiencing sexism, a far greater number would respond in the affirmative if asked questions such as “are women are excluded from specific ministries in the church?” or “do men have access to a greater range of ministries in the church?” This survey should not be read to prove the absence of sexism, but rather, reveal the invasive, internalized nature of sexism in the church.

The exclusion of women from ministry impacts the ecclesiology of the church beyond women’s absence from ministry. To see this, Natalie Watson traces key ecclesiological understandings from *Lumen Gentium* that center upon an all-male priesthood. These aspects that are essential to the self-understanding of the church have an impact on the ecclesiological imagination of the church and advance the impact of sexism through rendering women invisible. To see this, Watson examines the role of bishops in uniting the church and the sacramental priesthood. *Lumen Gentium* identifies the college of bishops as expressing the diversity and unity of the church. It explains, “This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the multifariousness and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of

⁷² Gray and Gautier, 27.

Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head.”⁷³ Watson critiques this expression of diversity, for an all-male institution used to express diversity obscures the role of women. She explains, “This concept of diversity is then used to assert the universality of the claims made by this hierarchical and exclusively male understanding of the church...It is a diversity of males exercising power that is essentially subsumed under the power of one male: the supreme pontiff.”⁷⁴ Patriarchal systems that are used to signify and promote unity and diversity in fact further promote patriarchy. Women are silenced and neglected in this attempt at expressing unity, harming the ecclesial body.

Watson also critiques the role of the sacramental priesthood in representing the people of God. She looks to *Lumen Gentium* 10 which states, “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the Eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”⁷⁵ Watson responds that such a statement “identif[ies] the church of ‘*Lumen Gentium*’ as an essentially male church that is centered around a male priesthood which alone can represent the people of God. This makes the sacramental priesthood essentially a structure of power over the people, and in particular as male power over women.”⁷⁶ In this critique, Watson identifies two important limitations of the exclusion of women from ministry, in this case, the sacramental priesthood: a distortion of the understanding and exercise of the sacramental priesthood and the result of exerting power over women. This highlights that all are harmed by structures of exclusion, extending beyond the harm

⁷³ Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium*,” 1964, para. 22, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

⁷⁴ Natalie K. Watson, “A Feminist Critical Reading of the Ecclesiology of ‘*Lumen Gentium*,’” in *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?*, ed. Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier, Studies in Theology and Sexuality 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 80–81.

⁷⁵ Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium*,” para. 10.

⁷⁶ Watson, “A Feminist Critical Reading of the Ecclesiology of ‘*Lumen Gentium*,’” 82.

inflicted on women. To distort the priesthood as a structure of domination is harmful to priests and the entire church. This underscores the feminist principle that sexism harms all people, not just women.

Examining the wound of sexism in the church reveals a church that undercuts the dignity of women. Such a diminishment of women wounds the entire church, extending beyond the direct impact on women. The personal impact on women is significant, as revealed by the internalized sexism. Yet sexism also harms the church's ability to be church in a credible way. It threatens the unity, holiness, and catholicity of the church while undercutting the church's mission. In order for the church to be church fully, it must heal the wounds of sexism and create a church where all are welcomed and included. I will discuss this in greater depth in Section 2.3.

2.2.2 Racism

Similar to sexism, racism wounds the church. Broadly understood, racism is prejudice along the basis of race combined with power.⁷⁷ Attempts to define racism face significant challenges, ranging from problems surrounding the issue of race as a social construct to varying definitions of race, racism, and attempts to delineate between structures, culture, and individual acts. These critiques notwithstanding, this study proceeds within the framework of racism for "in the absence of any definition, the

⁷⁷ This view of racism is articulated in David T. Wellman, *Portraits of White Racism* (Cambridge, [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977). For an overview of the development of the term "racism," see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 3 (1997): 465–80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657316>.

concept becomes meaningless, and opposition to racism is hindered.”⁷⁸ I favor a multiplicity of meanings for the term “racism,” capturing the far-reaching impact of racism in acts, thought and culture. To guide this study, Margaret Guider’s definition encapsulates the multiplicity of meanings and has served as a highly referenced definition in recent theological discourse. She defines racism as “a system by which one race maintains supremacy over another race through a set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures, ideologies, and the requisite power needed to impose them.”⁷⁹

In looking to define racism, it is also important to examine the use of this term by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The USCCB, in *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, describes racism as arising when “either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard.”⁸⁰ They trace the many forms that racism can take, ranging from deliberate acts to unconscious bias to structural practices.

Racism straddles collective and individual components, making both of these aspects essential for our examination. To focus on the individual acts, while important, is ultimately an inadequate examination. Diana Hayes explains that racism is “a sin that goes beyond the individual acts of individual human beings.”⁸¹ She continues, “Racism, to be blunt, is sin that is incorporated into and becomes a constituent part of the

⁷⁸ Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism*, Second Edition, Key Ideas (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3.

⁷⁹ Margaret E. Guider, “Moral Imagination and the Missio Ad Gentes: Redressing the Counter-Witness of Racism,” in *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence*, ed. Laurie M Cassidy and Alexander Mikulich (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 101.

⁸⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism,” 2018, 3, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf>.

⁸¹ Cyprian Davis and Diana L. Hayes, *Taking down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 5.

framework of society, sin that is the concentration to the infinite of the personal sins of those who condone evil.”⁸² In analyzing racism, we must bring together both an individual and collective analysis. Individual acts of racism, microaggressions, and structures built on the basis of white supremacy and anti-blackness coalesce to create a church where all in positions of privilege are complicit in racism. The USCCB explains, “The cumulative effects of personal sins of racism have led to social structures of injustice and violence that makes us all accomplices in racism.”⁸³ Thus, it is essential that an ecclesiological examination takes seriously the wounds of racism and responds accordingly.

Importantly, Bryan Massingale’s work *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* puts forth a nuanced understanding of racism. Massingale addresses racism by shifting the analysis towards an understanding of racism as a “cultural analysis.” By this, he focuses attention on the way that racism functions as an ethos, or “the animating spirit of U.S. society which lives on despite observable changes and assumes various incarnations in different historical circumstances.”⁸⁴ This shift in focus recognizes that there is more to racism than individual acts. Instead, it looks to the cultural conditions that are conducive to facilitating a context where individual racists actions are possible. I follow Massingale’s focus on racism as a cultural phenomenon, looking to the ways that racism permeates Catholicism in the United States, making possible such practices as the exclusion of black people from ministry.

⁸² Davis and Hayes, 5.

⁸³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Open Wide Our Hearts,” 5.

⁸⁴ Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2010), 15.

Racism is not simply a sociological or political concept; it also has many theological implications. Theologically, racism is “incompatible with God’s design.”⁸⁵ At a foundational level, racism fails to recognize the dignity of black persons. This neglect of *imago Dei* is significant, radiating out to a devaluing of the human person and their unique worth. Further, failing to recognize that each person is created in the image and likeness of God also fails to recognize their capacity for communion with God and communion with creation.⁸⁶ While exploring the theological implications of racism is a worthy topic, in this study, I want to focus on the theological ramifications of racism as embodied by the Catholic Church in the United States. In collective and individual ways, the Catholic Church in the United States is infused with racism and anti-blackness. M. Shawn Copeland explains:

In subtle and crude ways, U.S. Catholicism has and continues to demonstrate contempt for God’s black human creatures who share in the glory, beauty and image of the Divine. Such contempt veers toward contempt of the Divine, toward blasphemy through enacting, even passively, such metaphysical violence. And such contempt toward black existence could set U.S. Catholicism on the path of idolatry.⁸⁷

By elevating white supremacy to the dominant viewpoint, the Catholic Church in the United States refuses to see the divine in black persons. This “path of idolatry” prevents the church from fully living into its mission, as I will explore in Section 2.3.

Racism can be directed to any minority race, such as Latino or Asian persons, and this examination focuses specifically upon anti-blackness and white supremacy in the Catholic Church in the United States. The reason for my focus on anti-blackness is due to

⁸⁵ Davis and Hayes, *Taking down Our Harps*, 5.

⁸⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), chap. 2.

⁸⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, “White Supremacy and Anti-Black Logics in the Making of U.S. Catholicism,” in *Anti-Blackness and Christian Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 74.

the unique and decisive impact of anti-blackness in the church in the United States.

Massingale explains his focus in the following way, with which I agree and follow:

I concentrate on exploring racism from the perspective of the historic and continuing divisions in the United States between those social groups designated as ‘black’ and ‘white’ Americans. I grant that a study that focuses upon these two racial groups is somewhat inadequate, especially given the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population. I also do not deny the existence or importance of racial tensions between or among other racial groups. Yet I contend that the estrangement between black and white Americans has shaped American life in decisive ways not matched by either the estrangement between whites and other racial/ethnic groups, or the tensions among the ‘groups of color.’⁸⁸

As the church mirrors society, racism permeates all aspects of the church. To those in power, racism may be invisible. Yet, to those facing the daily reality of segregated parishes and the silence of the church on issues of race, racism is a painfully visible reality. As Shelly Rambo explains, “Wounds of racism live under the surface of our collective skin.”⁸⁹ The church is called to self-examination to assess the many ways that racism infiltrates its practices.

2.2.2.1 “Racism as a Wound” in Theology: A Survey of Contemporary Contributions

Referring to racism as a wound in the church is common in theological discourse. In particular, I will look to the work of Wendell Berry, Willie James Jennings, Dan Hauge, and Thema Bryant-Davis and Carlota Ocampo, for their use captures a wide range of discourse. These contributions are selected for their influence on the contemporary state of theological discourse.

⁸⁸ Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, x–xi.

⁸⁹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 71.

Wendell Berry refers to racism as a wound, utilizing the language of wounds to depict how race lives on in the present.⁹⁰ He describes wounds as a “profound disorder, as great a damage in his mind as it is in his society.”⁹¹ Berry ponders the way that racism was casually reminisced about in his life, emphasizing the ordinariness of racism blended together with religion. Strikingly, he reflects on how white Christianity deepened rather than healed the wound of racism. He reflects, “The white man’s Christianity has been its soothing bandage—a bandage masquerading as Sunday clothes, for the wearing of which one expects a certain moral credit.”⁹² Berry highlights that racism is a collective wound in the United States, especially for white people, sitting beneath our collective skin and passed along from generation to generation. While Berry’s work is in the genre of a personal spiritual reflection, the naming of racism as a wound is a significant contribution to this study.

Willie James Jennings refers to Christianity as “born of a colonial wound.”⁹³ Jennings’s work connects theology to the origins of race and creation of whiteness, paying special attention to colonialism’s grip on forming Christian social imagination. If colonialism is a wound, then it follows that its lasting impact on Christian social imagination extends the impact of this distortion beyond its historical occurrence. In this sense, Jennings underscores that the wound is not limited to the past. While the wound may have been inflicted in the past, its impact extends much beyond the original infliction. Rather, the impact of the wound continues today through its influence on

⁹⁰ Rambo, chap. 3.

⁹¹ Wendell Berry, “The Hidden Wound.” (Counterpoint, 1957), 4.

⁹² Berry, 18–19.

⁹³ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 291.

Christian imagination. The impact of the wound becomes even more powerful when Christianity seeks to cover or erase the wound, claiming that its impact is not significant.

Significantly, Jennings underscores the power of whiteness to control the Christian imagination. Whiteness masquerades as neutrality, claiming to be invisible while actually shaping and controlling systems. Jennings explains, “It is the power of that whiteness to shape our social worlds—defining good and bad, beautiful and ugly, true and false—that is at heart the reason this wound will not heal.”⁹⁴ As long as whiteness claims to be neutral, it will remain impossible to heal the wound of racism. Jennings’s connection of the Christian imagination to the colonial wound underscores that wounds are carried within us today. Further, his inclusion of colonialism brings into focus the experiences of other marginalized groups, such as Native Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latinx persons.

Dan Hauge also studies the impact of racism in distorting white imagination, specifically through the trauma of racism.⁹⁵ Hauge explores the “small but growing body of psychological research” that emphasizes the need to include racist incidents as causes of trauma.⁹⁶ Hauge’s analysis and the surrounding psychological research are important for this dissertation that utilizes trauma studies to better understand wounds, as I will do in Chapter 3. Naming racism as trauma does not relegate it to the past, but rather, calls attention to the ways that trauma continues to influence today. He explains, “Framing racism in terms of an omnipresent trauma-generating matrix can hopefully serve to

⁹⁴ Willie James Jennings, “What Does It Mean to Call ‘God’ a White Racist?,” *Religion Dispatches*, July 17, 2013, 1, <http://religiondispatches.org/what-does-it-mean-to-call-god-a-white-racist/>.

⁹⁵ Dan Hauge, “The Trauma of Racism and the Distorted White Imagination,” in *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, ed. Arel, Stephanie N. and Shelly Rambo (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 89–114.

⁹⁶ Hauge, 93.

confront the distorted white imagination, which obfuscates the true nature of systemic racism and therefore works against analysis of it as a pervasive system.”⁹⁷

In particular, the work of Thema Bryant-Davis and Carlota Ocampo is helpful in analyzing the relationship between racism and trauma. They explore the “daily minitraumas that result from out-group status and de facto segregation.”⁹⁸ They highlight the impact of the ongoing nature of these minitraumas. They state, “Many target group members who live with racism live with the expectation that racism will be felt, yet they are unsure of when the incident will occur or of what type of racism they will face. Knowing neither what will happen nor how devastating the effects will be contributes to hyperarousal and anxiety.”⁹⁹ This type of ongoing anxiety, hyperarousal and daily minitraumas provide a framework to understand the trauma and woundedness that come from ecclesial racism.

Taken as a whole, these discussions of racism as a wound articulate the far-reaching impact of racism on individuals and communities. Racism as a wound is deeply connected with other wounds of division, such as colonialism and white supremacy. These contributions focus attention on the ongoing harm of racism. What is needed, however, is further examination of how racism functions as a wound in the Roman Catholic Church. We now turn to examine two such examples: the exclusion of black men from the priesthood and black women from religious life, and the silence of the ecclesial hierarchy on issues related to race.

⁹⁷ Hauge, 109.

⁹⁸ Thema Bryant-Davis and Carlota Ocampo, “Racist Incident-Based Trauma,” *Counseling Psychologist* 33, no. 4 (2005): 483, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000005276465>.

⁹⁹ Bryant-Davis and Ocampo, 492.

2.2.2.2 Examples of Racism as an Ecclesial Wound

In order to explore the wound of racism in the church, I now look to (1) the exclusion, eventual acceptance, and obstacles encountered by black men entering the priesthood and black women in religious life and (2) the silence of the hierarchical church on issues relating to racism. Racism and anti-blackness in the church is intertwined with slavery and the control of black persons. While I do not explicitly focus on the topic of slavery, it is necessarily connected to this examination.

2.2.2.2.1 Exclusion and Experience of Black Men in the Priesthood and Black Women in Religious Life

Ministers both reflect the community's values and shape the community as leaders. As discussed in Section 2.2.1.1.2, the makeup of the priesthood is indicative of the values of the church. When specific groups are excluded from the priesthood, it is done according to the conviction that this group cannot act *in persona Christi*. This conviction fails to represent the inherent dignity of all persons. This is especially true when these divisions fall according to the color of one's skin. The path pursued by black women in religious life also encountered persistent racism and exclusion. The exclusion of black men from the priesthood and black women from religious life are examples of how racism wounded and continues to wound the church.

In the 18th century, the Vatican's Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, known at the time the Propaganda,¹⁰⁰ promoted the world-wide development of an indigenous priesthood. Yet, as late as the 19th and early 20th centuries, the American

¹⁰⁰ Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 145–46.

bishops viewed a black priesthood as unacceptable.¹⁰¹ The Catholic bishops in the United States were out of step with Vatican leadership, as well as Protestant traditions, such as Methodist and Baptist ordination of black men in the late 18th century.¹⁰² The history of the first black priests in the United States reveals a church marked by racism and varying degrees of racial discrimination, from outright exclusion to subtler ways of preventing the acceptance of black priests. This section highlights the pivotal historical moments in the exclusion and eventual acceptance of black men into the priesthood, as well as the development of congregations of women religious.

The first three black priests in the United States were the Healy Brothers: James Augustine, Patrick Francis, and Alexander Sherwood. The Healy brothers were born to Michael Morris Healy, an Irish immigrant, and Mary Eliza, a black woman who was enslaved. Michael and Mary Eliza had ten children who were not raised as slaves yet also were not legally free in Georgia. As a result, several of the children were sent to the north for education, eventually enrolling at the newly established Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1844, four of the sons were baptized at Holy Cross. While James Augustine was the first black priest in the United States, it is crucial to note that he attended seminary in Montreal and Issyles-Molineaux, France and was ordained in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Alexander Sherwood entered the Sulpician Seminary in Paris and was ordained in Rome in 1858. Patrick Francis entered the Society of Jesus, studied at the University of Louvain and was ordained a priest in Liege in 1864. All three brothers served in influential positions in the Church, with James Augustine serving as bishop of Portland, Maine and Patrick Francis as president of Georgetown University.

¹⁰¹ Davis, 146.

¹⁰² Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones : Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 122.

The Healy brothers made important headway in creating a path for the ordination of black men to the priesthood. At the same time, the Healys were not champions of racial justice, preferring to not address issues of race.¹⁰³ Further, it is not apparent that the Healys self-identified as African American. Raboteau explains, “Brilliant as they were, the Healys did not really identify themselves with the Black Catholic Community.”¹⁰⁴ This is not to question their racial identity, but rather, to nuance the history of the ordination of black men into the priesthood in the United States. It is also significant that none of the Healy brothers were ordained in the United States, signaling that there was still resistance to ordaining black men within the church in the United States.

The first black priest “whom all knew and recognized as black” was Augustus Tolton, a former slave.¹⁰⁵ Born in Missouri, Tolton also had to attend seminary abroad due to persistent racism preventing him from being admitted to a seminary in his home state. “Incredibly, the former slave who had faced rejection after rejection found acceptance in the Urban College, attached to the Congregation of the Propaganda in Rome.”¹⁰⁶ Originally scheduled to be sent as a missionary to Africa, Tolton instead returned to America in a “triumphant return,” celebrating masses in New Jersey, New York, and Illinois.¹⁰⁷ Upon settling at a black parish in Quincy, Illinois, Tolton encountered racism and loneliness. Those least supportive of his vocation, he reported, were not white parishioners but white priests who were upset that their parishioners attended his parish. Tolton wrote to James Gibbons, archbishop of Baltimore: “The

¹⁰³ Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 152.

¹⁰⁴ Cyprian Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Church History,” in *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States*, ed. Cyprian Davis and Diana L. Hayes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 32.

¹⁰⁵ Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 152.

¹⁰⁶ Davis, 154.

¹⁰⁷ Davis, 155.

priests here rejoiced at my arrival, now they wish I were away because too many white people come down to my church from other parishes.”¹⁰⁸ The lack of other black priests and the antagonism from white priests resulted in Tolton feeling lonely and isolated. He moved to Chicago, where he founded a black church in the city. Yet even in Chicago, the isolation and pressure of being the first recognizably black priest in America had enduring effects on Tolton. He died from heat exhaustion in 1897 at age 43.

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries saw a rise in ordination of black men in the United States. The first black man to be ordained in the United States was Charles Randolph Uncles in 1891. Uncles was ordained by the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, known as the Josephites. The Josephites separated from the Mill Hill Fathers, a missionary community founded in England in 1866. In 1902, John Henry Dorsey became the second black man ordained in the United States and the fifth black priest in the nation.¹⁰⁹ Dorsey became the first black pastor in the South and encountered tremendous racism while in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. John Plantevigne was ordained a Josephite priest in 1907. However, his experience reveals persistence encounters with racism and discrimination:

Forbidden to have a public first Mass on a Sunday in his home parish; thwarted in his efforts to have a Catholic school opened for Blacks in his home parish at Chenel, Louisiana, because the pastor did not believe in education for Blacks; and finally, forced to cancel a scheduled mission at a black parish in New Orleans because Archbishop James Blenk (1856-1917) believed that white Catholics of the city would not accept a black priest as a preacher; Plantevigne became progressively disenchanted with what he felt was the oppressive racism in the American church.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Davis, 157.

¹⁰⁹ Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Church History,” 34.

¹¹⁰ Davis, 34.

Plantevigne died at age 42 from deteriorating health, marking the end of the Josephite's practice of ordaining African American men. In spite of the appearance of the Josephite order welcoming African Americans, the reality indicates that racism continued to plague the reception of African American priests. This reveals a nuanced history of African Americans in the priesthood, for it is not as simple as pointing to the "firsts," the first black man ordained abroad, ordained domestically, made a bishop, and so on. Rather, the central issue is how African Americans were welcomed or rejected from ministry and American culture. This instead points to a history of racism, isolation, and rejection.

The tracing of history through the Healy Brothers, Tolton, and Josephite community reveals that there were so few black priests in the United States that studies of individuals are more conducive to historical understanding than studies of trends. There were no more than a dozen African American priests in the United States until 1933.¹¹¹ Even beyond that point when numbers began to grow, the question of reception of African American priests remained a pressing issue. Albert Raboteau describes one situation: "In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Archbishop Joseph Rummel of New Orleans placed a rural parish under interdict (no observance of the sacraments) for refusing to allow a black priest to say Mass and excommunicated several prominent segregationists for resisting parochial school integration."¹¹² Even when seminaries began admitting black seminarians and dioceses began ordaining black men, white supremacy rather than unity often guided the actions of parishes.

The exclusion of black men from the priesthood is not simply a historical fact occurring a century ago; it continues to have implications on the church today. In 2019,

¹¹¹ Davis, 34.

¹¹² Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones : Reflections on African-American Religious History*, 134.

Wilton Gregory was named Archbishop of Washington DC, an archdiocese where 13-percent of the Catholics are black, compared to the national average of three-percent.¹¹³ Notably, Archbishop Gregory is the first African American to be appointed to this position. If named a Cardinal, Gregory will be the first African American cardinal. There are few African Americans in leadership positions in the church. This historical analysis of the exclusion of black men from the priesthood in the United States continues to shape the church today, for the historical pattern of exclusion and discrimination resulted in a lack of welcome, leadership, and development of vocations.

Equally important is the role of women in religious life. In tracing the development of black women in religious life, I focus less on black individuals joining existing communities and instead examine the development of congregations of women religious for black women. In contrast to men pursuing ordination, black women followed a path of founding their own religious communities. Existing congregations of women religious were complicit with the institution of slavery, as evidenced by nine congregations owning slaves¹¹⁴ and many more operating out of a position of whiteness and racial segregation.¹¹⁵ Further, there was a pervasive stream of thought in society that “doubt[ed] the virtue of all black women,”¹¹⁶ leading to further prejudice, segregation and oppression. Intersectionality accounts for the layers of prejudice and oppression faced by black women who sought to join religious life, which in some ways parallel the prejudice

¹¹³ Michelle Boorstein and Chico Harlan, “Archbishop Wilton Gregory to Head Catholic Church in D.C., Vatican Announces,” *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/vatican-announces-atlantas-wilton-gregory-as-new-archbishop-of-washington/2019/04/04/28bfa9b4-564b-11e9-aa83-504f086bf5d6_story.html?utm_term=.9a7b80981d1b.

¹¹⁴ Diane Batts Morrow, “The Difficulty of Our Situation: The Oblate Sisters of Providence in Antebellum Society,” in *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience*, ed. M. Shawn Copeland (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 27.

¹¹⁵ Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History*, 121.

¹¹⁶ Batts Morrow, “The Difficulty of Our Situation: The Oblate Sisters of Providence in Antebellum Society,” 26.

and discrimination encountered by men seeking to join the priesthood yet also touches upon unique challenges.

Two orders of black women religious were established in the United States during the period of slavery: Oblate Sisters of Providence and Sisters of the Holy Family. These communities were not transplants from Europe, but rather, “were very much American in origin.”¹¹⁷ The communities were founded in two of the largest African American cities in the United States, Baltimore and New Orleans, indicative of a segregated nation.¹¹⁸ This is significant, for it tells of the black community in the United States during this time, as well as the unique qualities of women religious. Davis summarizes: “In an era when black people were accorded little or no respect or esteem, in a time when black women were degraded by slave holders or abused by white employers, in a society where black women were considered to be weak in morality, black sisters were a counter sign and a proof that the Black Catholic community was rooted in faith and devotion, for vocations arise from a faith-filled people.”¹¹⁹ Examining the Oblate Sisters of Providence and Sisters of the Holy Family reveals the “uncommon faithfulness”¹²⁰ of black women as well as the continued obstacles encountered, pointing to a history of repeated wounds.

The Oblate Sisters of Providence were founded in Baltimore in 1829. Elizabeth Clarisse Lange and Marie Magdalaine Balas desired to join a community of women religious for over ten years, holding on to their vocation in the midst of no way forward. Lange and Balas ran a school for black children in their home, prompting Sulpician priest James Hector Joubert to seek them out when he wished to establish a school for the

¹¹⁷ Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Church History,” 30.

¹¹⁸ Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones : Reflections on African-American Religious History*, 120.

¹¹⁹ Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Church History,” 30.

¹²⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, LaReine-Marie Mosley, and Albert J. Raboteau, eds., *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

religious instruction of black children. Joubert consulted with Archbishop James Whitfield of Baltimore and “concluded that a black sisterhood would suit his purposes well.”¹²¹ Elizabeth Lange, Marie Balas, Rosine Boegue, and Therese Duchemin¹²² professed vows on July 2, 1829, and Lange became the first mother superior of the community. The community operated a school for black girls, and later opened a school for black boys as well as an orphanage.

The Oblate Sisters consistently encountered racism in the church. Many white members of the church objected to a community of black women religious, referring to it as “a profanation of the habit.”¹²³ In a white-controlled, patriarchal system of the church, Joubert assisted the Oblate Sisters in navigating the church hierarchy. He secured diocesan approbation of the Oblate Rule in 1929 and papal recognition of the black Oblate Sisters as a community of women religious by Pope Gregory XVI in 1931.¹²⁴ In doing so, he used his authority to “validate this first community of African American Catholic sisters in the eyes of the institutional church.”¹²⁵ He used his white privilege and clerical privilege to assist Lange in establishing the community and guiding the congregation throughout its early years. This is an important dimension in the historical analysis of the admittance of black women into religious life, for the ecclesial structures were marked by racism, sexism, and clericalism to such a large extent that even the

¹²¹ Batts Morrow, “The Difficulty of Our Situation: The Oblate Sisters of Providence in Antebellum Society,” 27.

¹²² Almeide Maxis Duchemin, later known as Therese, would later found the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Michigan in 1845. Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Church History,” 29.

¹²³ Batts Morrow, “The Difficulty of Our Situation: The Oblate Sisters of Providence in Antebellum Society,” 28.

¹²⁴ Batts Morrow, 28.

¹²⁵ Batts Morrow, 28.

establishment of a new community for black women had to be shepherded by a white, male priest.

Henriette Delille and Juliette Gaudin established the Holy Family Sisters in New Orleans in 1842. There are few records of the early development of the Holy Family Sisters. According to oral tradition, “there was a gradual development from a group of pious women to the creation of a religious congregation” in 1851.¹²⁶ The Holy Family Sisters encountered different challenges than the Oblate Sisters, beginning in conjunction with an association with lay people due to legal purposes and financial support.¹²⁷ They made their public vows in 1852, indicative of a slow development on a count of persistent obstacles. They were not permitted to wear their religious habits in public until 1872. They did not receive canonical recognition as a religious community of pontifical rite until 1949.¹²⁸ The community taught young black girls during the day and educated enslaved persons at night. They were also devoted to serving the poor, purchasing a home in the French Quarter of New Orleans that served as a hospice.¹²⁹

Similar to Joubert and the Oblate Sisters, the Holy Family Sisters were also assisted by a French, white priest. Abbé Etienne Rousseleon was appointed pastor of the newly established St. Augustine parish in New Orleans, Louisiana. He supported Delille and Gaudin’s plans for a religious community of black women “because he realized that they could be of help in ministering to the poor blacks in the parish.”¹³⁰ He gained the support of Bishop Antoine Blanc for this purpose.

¹²⁶ Cyprian Davis, “Henriette Delille: Servant of Slaves, Witness to the Poor,” in *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience*, ed. Copeland, M. Shawn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 56.

¹²⁷ Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Church History,” 30.

¹²⁸ Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 108.

¹²⁹ Davis, 106–7.

¹³⁰ Davis, 106.

It is also important to examine failed attempts at beginning communities of women religious, for they provide a glimpse of the pervasiveness of segregation and racism in the United States at the time. In 1836, Marie-Jean Aliquot attempted to begin a community for young women of color known as the Sisters of the Presentation. Henriette Delille and Juliette Gaudin were members of this community. The community, however, was stopped due to its violation of the state of Louisiana segregation laws.¹³¹ The Sisters of Our Lady of Lourdes was a diocesan community in New Orleans in 1883. Three young, light-skinned girls were students at a white catholic school in Kentucky. A visitor recognized them as from New Orleans and told the administration they were not white. The girls were sent back to New Orleans, but did not want to join the Holy Family sisters since they were “not light-skinned enough.”¹³² Yet they were also rejected from white communities since they were black. As a result, Archbishop Perché established a diocesan community for these women. It grew to seven people and dissolved to just two persons by the end of the community. This community is indicative of the deeply engrained racism and problems related to the designation of races. Lastly, there was an experimental interracial convent of the Sisters of Loreto in Kentucky.¹³³ This attempt at an interracial community of women religious failed, as Raboteau notes that “the time was not auspicious for such a venture.”¹³⁴ These many failed attempts indicate the pervasive racism of the time, compounded by sexism and attempts to control and invalidate the worth of black women specifically.

¹³¹ Davis, 106.

¹³² Davis, 110.

¹³³ Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones : Reflections on African-American Religious History*, 122.

¹³⁴ Raboteau, 121–22.

Tracing the history of the exclusion and eventual acceptance of black men from the priesthood as well as the troubles encountered by black women religious reveals a hierarchy that continually sought to monitor and control black persons. Slavery's hold on the ecclesiological imagination of the church was such that bishops continued to seek to control where black people were allowed or prohibited. Further, the issue of ordination is related to many other patterns of discrimination. Copeland explains,

The hierarchy held (and holds) interpretative and juridical power to justify geographic and spatial sequestering or segregation of black flesh and bodies. Their accommodation to anti-black logics included the establishment of segregated parishes, schools, and in some case, cemeteries; the denial, exclusion, and prohibition of black bodies from religious vows and from priesthood and the proscription of black religious expression culture and spirituality.¹³⁵

We can see the continued accommodation to anti-black logics in the relative silence of Catholic Social Teaching on racism, to which I turn next.

2.2.2.2.2 Catholic Social Teaching on Racism

Since the development of Catholic Social Teaching with *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, the ecclesial hierarchy has issued documents on topics ranging from war and peace to climate change. Responding to the signs of the times, these documents help guide the church's actions as well as speak to the issues that matter most to the church. Noticeably absent from the wide array of topics is church teaching surrounding racism and white supremacy.¹³⁶ Dan Hague observes, "Perhaps the most remarkable things to note

¹³⁵ Copeland, "White Supremacy and Anti-Black Logics in the Making of U.S. Catholicism," 73–74.

¹³⁶ It is interesting to note the abandoned USCCB pastoral letter on women. Drafts of this letter circulated between 1982-1992, yet the letter was rejected by a USCCB vote in 1992 after involvement from the Vatican and Pope John Paul II. John L. Allen, "CTSA Backgrounder: The Pastoral Letter on Women That Never Was," National Catholic Reporter, June 7, 2007, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/ctsa-backgrounder-pastoral-letter-women-never-was>.

concerning U.S. Catholic social teaching on racism is how little there is to note.”¹³⁷ This topic is well-suited to regional and national bishops conferences, especially considering how racism is contextualized uniquely within each culture. Given that, this study will focus on the United States Catholic Church.

First, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by church documents. I am looking to public documents and statements issued by the leadership of the church in the United States, such as the USCCB.¹³⁸ As I outlined in Chapter 1, this is not to conflate the term “church” with the ecclesial hierarchy. It would be possible to look to the activity of the laity surrounding racial justice, such as the activity of the Black Catholic Congresses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Further, I am making a distinction between private communication and public statements. For example, Cardinal Girolamo Maria Gotti, O.D.C., prefect of the Congregation of the Propaganda wrote to Archbishop Diomedeo Falconio in January 1905 and bluntly called the Church in the United States to end the practice of racial discrimination, stating that the treatment of black persons is “very humiliating and different from that of whites” and calling the Archbishop to “procure that this diversity of treatment may be lessened and... little by little entirely removed.”¹³⁹ In fact, Davis traces the difference between the indifference of the US Bishops with the pastoral concern from the church in Rome.¹⁴⁰ However, much of the involvement by the leadership in Rome was in private correspondence. It did not shape the practice of the US

¹³⁷ Dan Hauge, “The Trauma of Racism and the Distorted White Imagination,” in *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, ed. Arel, Stephanie N. and Shelly Rambo (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 89–114.

¹³⁸ It should be noted that the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has published two documents on race: *The Church and Racism: Toward a More Fraternal Society* (1988) and *Contribution to the World Conference against Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance* (2001).

¹³⁹ Cyprian Davis, “The Holy See and American Black Catholics. A Forgotten Chapter in the History of the American Church,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7, no. 2/3 (1988): 171.

¹⁴⁰ Davis, 179.

Catholic church, and the laity have heard silence rather than an outspoken message of racial justice.

Though there are few ecclesial documents on racial justice, the ones that exist are worth examining. The first notable document is *Discrimination and the Christian Conscience*. Issued in 1958, this document was approved by all but four bishops.¹⁴¹ Theologically, the bishops grounded their call for equality in natural law. They promoted a “method of quiet conciliation” as a path between “gradualism” and “rash impetuosity.”¹⁴² While this statement is a start, it failed to make any notable impact on practice. Ten years later, the bishops issued another statement on race entitled *The National Race Crisis*. Written in light of the race riots of 1967 and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, this document focused more on solutions than the previous documents. Notably, this document drew upon The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, more popularly known as the Kerner Report. One of the solutions proposed by *The National Race Crisis* was the formation of the Urban Task Force. Under the guidance of John McCarthy, the Urban Task Force evolved into the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.¹⁴³ However, this shift in focus to alleviating poverty neglected the calls of *The National Race Crisis* to work against racism and for racial justice. Notably, *Discrimination and the Christian Conscience* and *The National Race Crisis* both were entirely composed by white persons.

¹⁴¹ John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 90–91.

¹⁴² National Catholic Welfare Conference, “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience,” 1958, para. 192.

¹⁴³ Lincoln Rice, *Healing the Racial Divide: A Catholic Racial Justice Framework Inspired by Dr. Arthur Falls* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 6.

One of the most notable contributions to the dialogue on race came in 1979 with the publication of *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, a pastoral letter on racism. For the first time, a black person, Cyprian Davis, consulted with the committee writing the document. *Brothers and Sisters to Us* notes the systematic nature of racism, even referring to the church as an institution that is experienced as a “racist institution” by many.¹⁴⁴ The bishops outlined the sin of racism and called for action on many levels, including personal, ecclesial and societal. While *Brothers and Sisters to Us* “offered great promise of a new beginning in the Catholic story of race relations,”¹⁴⁵ it is still unknown to many Catholics. On the 25th anniversary of the pastoral letter, the bishops commissioned a study on the reception of the document. This study revealed that over the 25-year period, only 18 percent of bishops issued statements on racism.¹⁴⁶ Further, a majority of Catholics (64-percent) reported that they had not heard a homily on racism or racial justice in three-years (a period selected to coincide with the three-year lectionary cycle).¹⁴⁷ This signals a problem with promulgation in addition to reception. While reception may be difficult to measure, these are certainly signals that this pastoral letter has not been received by the faithful either due to lack of knowledge or the teaching.

What We Have Seen and Heard marks a new type of ecclesial document on racial justice, for it is a pastoral letter written by the 10 black bishops of the USCCB in 1984. In addition, it is addressed “To Our Black Catholic Brothers and Sisters in the United

¹⁴⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” accessed September 19, 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm>.

¹⁴⁵ Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Massingale, 68.

¹⁴⁷ Massingale, 69.

States.”¹⁴⁸ *What We Have Seen and Heard* is notable for its uniqueness, such as incorporating a variety of African American sources. It calls attention to the gifts of African American spirituality to the church, such as an emphasis on community and extended family, and joyful celebration. While this is a great contribution to church teaching, this document is largely unknown in the church.

Most recently, the USCCB issued *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism* in November 2018. *Open Wide Our Hearts* follows in the footsteps of *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, weaving together scripture and tradition with the contemporary topic of racial justice. Given its recent issuance, it is difficult to assess how widely known this document is and its impact on the church in the United States. The USCCB has provided study guides and bulletin inserts to assist in the promulgation of the document,¹⁴⁹ yet my analysis suggests that *Open Wide Our Hearts* shares in many of the same limitations as *Brothers and Sisters to Us*.

Open Wide Our Hearts advances the primarily individual understanding of racism put forth in *Brothers and Sisters to Us*. While there is an increased discussion of structural racism, the bishops often refer to individual bias and acts of racism, failing to apply the concept of structural racism to the church. The bishops speak of racism in the church, yet never name the church as racist. For example, they state, “Acts of racism have been committed by leaders and members of the Catholic Church—by bishops, clergy, religious, and laity—and her institutions.”¹⁵⁰ While this admission of acts of

¹⁴⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “What We Have Seen and Heard,” 1984, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/resources/what-we-have-seen-and-heard.cfm>.

¹⁴⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Combating Racism,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, accessed September 11, 2019, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/index.cfm>.

¹⁵⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Open Wide Our Hearts,” 22.

racism is a step forward, it remains insufficient. Eric Martin observes that the pastoral letter vacillates “between vague admissions of fault and specific self-praise, understandings of racism as structural and merely individual, awareness of power difference between races and claims that all are accountable for racial injustice.”¹⁵¹

While *Open Wide Our Hearts* effectively speaks to the contemporary dynamics of racism, it falls prey to a familiar pattern of ecclesial documents: it presumes whiteness. Guider observes, “With some exceptions ecclesial statements on racism tend to reveal a church that is self-referentially white and speaks in a white voice.”¹⁵² The church speaks from a position of whiteness and privilege. In doing so, whiteness is deemed normative and blackness is positioned as “other.” This is seen most clearly in *Brothers and Sisters to Us*. The position of “us” is presumed to be the white church; black people are identified as “brothers and sisters,” but not a part of “us.” Not only does the church often identify with the white experience or white point of view, but the writers of the documents are often white as well. Lincoln Rice elaborates, “For over the last hundred years, Catholic ethical thought in the area of racism— when it has been addressed—has consisted almost exclusively of white clergy writing and speaking about how whites should be more civil in their personal interactions with blacks.”¹⁵³ This approach keeps whites in positions of power, claiming the space of the church as their own and viewing black persons as visitors or outsiders in the church.

¹⁵¹ Eric Martin, “Blackface and White Comfort: Reading The Bishops’ Letter from Charlottesville,” *Political Theology Network* (blog), February 15, 2019, <https://politicaltheology.com/blackface-and-white-comfort-reading-the-bishops-letter-from-charlottesville/>.

¹⁵² Guider, “Moral Imagination and the Missio Ad Gentes,” 103.

¹⁵³ Rice, *Healing the Racial Divide: A Catholic Racial Justice Framework Inspired by Dr. Arthur Falls*, xiv.

Further, this position of ecclesial whiteness is demonstrated through the sources engaged in ecclesial documents. Often, documents from the Vatican and USCCB do not use black sources. In *Open Wide Our Hearts*, the USCCB most commonly referred to recent ecclesial documents, primarily issued by Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. There are a few citations of not exclusively white sources, such as the website of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.¹⁵⁴ Still, the lack of robust dialogue with black sources reveals a church that operates from a position of whiteness. Rice argues, “This omission of African American resources is a damning indictment of Catholic leaders: it betrays a worldview in which white European reflection is sufficient for all times and places.”¹⁵⁵ Even when the church does speak on racism, it does so from a position of privilege and power, from a position of whiteness. To this end, the continued silence from the church on issues of racial justice that engage the experience and thought of black persons is deafening.

Overall, the few documents on racial justice fundamentally miss the mark. They engage the issue of racism from a white point of view, failing to see how this furthers structures of whiteness. Massingale characterizes the church’s efforts as “impeded due to a fundamental misunderstanding of racism.”¹⁵⁶ The US bishops have focused on racism as individual actions and individual bias. Massingale counters that “racism, at its core, is a defense of racially based white social privilege,”¹⁵⁷ an understanding that the bishops never engage, and in some cases perpetuate. Massingale assesses that overall, Catholic Social Teaching on racism is “superficial in its social analysis of racism, naïve in its

¹⁵⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Open Wide Our Hearts,” 19.

¹⁵⁵ Rice, *Healing the Racial Divide: A Catholic Racial Justice Framework Inspired by Dr. Arthur Falls*, xv.

¹⁵⁶ Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, 76.

¹⁵⁷ Massingale, 76.

reliance upon rational persuasion, and blind to how the church's complicity in and bondage to a racialized culture compromises its teaching and identity."¹⁵⁸

Given this legacy of racism and white supremacy in the Catholic church, one must stop to ask how to proceed. Massingale posits, "The central message of Catholic Christian faith is this: *The wounds of racism are real and deep, but healing is possible.*"¹⁵⁹ At the same time, I heed the caution of Hauge that a rush to healing is often indicative of misunderstanding. He explains, "This fundamental characteristic of racial trauma—the denial of basic humanity generated through a social environment of insecurity and indignity—complicates and, indeed, thwarts any efforts to move too easily to healing or resolution."¹⁶⁰ In order to evaluate the possibility of healing, we must better understand how wounds function. To answer this, I employ two tools. First, I look to the theological implications of wounds in Section 2.3. This analysis focuses on how wounds threaten the holiness, catholicity, and oneness of the church. These wounds take away from the credibility of the church and its ability to effectively live into its mission. The second tool is contemporary trauma theory in Chapter 3. Trauma theory highlights the nuances of wounds, presenting a dynamic vision of the paradoxical nature of wounds. It is only in light of such a deep understanding that we can evaluate the possibility for healing.

¹⁵⁸ Massingale, 77–78.

¹⁵⁹ Massingale, xiv.

¹⁶⁰ Hauge, "The Trauma of Racism and the Distorted White Imagination," 104.

2.3 THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF WOUNDS

This section analyzes the theological implications of wounds. In particular, I look to the impact on the unity, catholicity, and holiness of the church. Our understanding and experience of these marks of the church is warped by wounds. Further, the persistence of these wounds inhibits the church's mission. The church cannot live into its mission to make the reign of God known on earth if it does not first attend to its own woundedness. Finally, wounds hinder the ecclesiological imagination of the church, preventing the church from being church fully.

When the church is wounded and fails to recognize its wounds, it creates a system of injustice. Wounds that fester result in wrong relationships marked by oppression and division. Justice, or right relationship, calls for attention to the wounds. In proposing a feminist ecclesiology within the grammar of justice, Susan Abraham argues, "Only with justice can we become one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church."¹⁶¹ Justice provides the conditions for the church to embody the marks of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Justice cannot be present until the church attends to its own woundedness.

In this analysis, I focus on the marks of oneness, holiness and catholicity. These marks are the most clearly harmed by the wounds of racism and sexism, as I will address in this section. This does not imply that the mark apostolicity is unharmed. Rather, this focus highlights the most salient threats to the church's identity.

Racism and sexism threaten the catholicity of the church. If the church is truly universal, then it must universally include all people. The wounds of racism and sexism

¹⁶¹ Susan Abraham, "Justice as a Mark of Catholic Feminist Ecclesiology," in *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder*, ed. Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 193–214.

prevent the church from being universal. Instead, the church is limited by an expression that favors whiteness and patriarchal structures at the expense of other gender identities and races. In lived reality, the catholicity of the church is a uniformity controlled by white men rather than a true catholicity of universality.

James Cone spoke to this threat to the catholicity of the church, stating, “The Catholic Church is not what it claims to be: it is not truly universal church, seeking to be accountable to the whole of humanity. It is a white European church, almost exclusively defined by issues and problems arising from that history and culture.”¹⁶² Cone draws out two important aspects for this examination. The first is that the church claims to be universal, but fails to live into this vision of universality. The second argument is that the church, failing to be universal, actualizes itself as a “white European church.” This phrasing rings similar to Karl Rahner’s articulation that the Second Vatican Council inaugurated a third major stage in church history as a world church.¹⁶³ I argue that both Rahner and Cone’s assessment of the church are simultaneously true. Rahner correctly notes that in Vatican II, the church reoriented itself as a world church. Yet Cone’s assessment that the church is primarily a “white European church” remains true as well, for the church is marked by racism and colonialism¹⁶⁴ and continues to act out of whiteness. Given that the world is marked by a racism and colonialism, the church acting as a world church is simultaneously a white, racist church. The church may be moving to

¹⁶² James Cone, “A Theological Challenge to the American Catholic Church,” in *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 57.

¹⁶³ Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II.”

¹⁶⁴ This chapter draws from Willie James Jennings surrounding whiteness and colonialism. For a further assessment of colonialism and postcolonial theology, see Pui-lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 1st ed.. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

inhabit itself as a world church, yet the default position remains that of a white, European church.

Further, the catholicity of the church is threatened by the impact of racism and sexism on the mystical body of Christ. The mystical body of Christ speaks to the unity and diversity of the church. Deeply rooted in tradition, the mystical body articulates how the church can have many different expressions yet remain one church, one body of Christ. Rice argues that racism is “not only sinful, but rooted in a heretical understanding of Christianity— specifically a denial of the mystical body of Christ.”¹⁶⁵ To deny the church as the mystical body of Christ is to deny its catholicity. The mystical body of Christ is rooted in the unity of all believers, not the supremacy of some and oppression of others along race and gender lines.

This poses a threat to the oneness of the church. A church marked by racism and sexism creates divisions in the church. Instead of being one church, there is a lived reality of many churches. From a racist, sexist outlook, there is one patriarchal, white church with “other” churches viewed as less than. Any vision of the church that creates many churches, or separates out church members from one another is inherently wrong. Attempts to create separate churches are seen in both overt and subtle ways, such as the segregation of churches by race¹⁶⁶ and the dependence on an underclass of women and invisible labor in the church. Racism and sexism result in de facto and de jure segregation and separation, thus threatening the oneness of the church.

Similarly, racism and sexism also threaten the holiness of the church. In addressing the threat to holiness, it is helpful to address what this does not mean.

¹⁶⁵ Rice, *Healing the Racial Divide: A Catholic Racial Justice Framework Inspired by Dr. Arthur Falls*, xv.

¹⁶⁶ McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*.

Holiness does not mean that the church cannot or does not sin. Too often, people view the holiness of the church as proof of the absence of sin. In this line of thinking, holiness becomes synonymous with purity. To admit there is sin in the church, or so the logic goes, is to deny the holiness of the church. Ecclesiologist Brian Flanagan explains this dynamic: “To say the church is holy *and* sinful is not contradictory. And yet holding these two truths together in tension is difficult.”¹⁶⁷ Flanagan describes the tendency to resolve this tension by favoring one side at the expense of the other. It is tempting to separate the holy church from the sinful church, creating divisions between structures and people, theory and practice. Likewise, it is natural to swing to the other side of the spectrum, pointing to the problems of the church and surmising that the church is little more than a flawed organization.¹⁶⁸ Yet neither of these tendencies is helpful, as they eclipse the true meaning of holiness. Holiness is not opposed to sin in a way where sin’s presence results in the absence of holiness. Rather, it is an affirmation of the mark of holiness of the church. Flanagan explains, “Holiness is, at heart, participation in the very life of God (which of course expresses itself in love of God and neighbor), and our participation is in relationship to a God who is paradoxically transcendent and close, always Other and always More than we are able to know.”¹⁶⁹ The relationship between a holy and sinful church will be explored further in Chapter 4 in conjunction with Rahner’s ecclesiology. For now, it is sufficient to heed Flanagan’s caution that viewing holiness and sinfulness as diametrically opposed is an unhelpful category for ecclesiological assessment.

¹⁶⁷ Brian P. Flanagan, *Stumbling in Holiness: Sin and Sanctity in the Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), 4.

¹⁶⁸ Flanagan, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Flanagan, 167.

While avoiding the unnecessary juxtaposition of holiness and sinfulness in the church, I argue that racism and sexism threaten the holiness of the church because they are wounding the church. These wounds do not erase the holiness of the church, but they prevent the church from living into the fullness of its holiness. Instead of striving for the fullness of holiness, racism and sexism mark the complicity of the church with structural sin and bring about harm to the ecclesial body.

In Chapter 1, I explored holiness as related to engagement with the world. Holiness does not require the church to set itself apart from the world, attempting to cultivate sanctity through isolation. Rather, holiness demands engagement with the world. In this engagement, it is essential that the church resist social sin. The church is called to prophetically challenge structures that diminish human dignity. Instead, too often the church has reinscribed patterns of exclusion and division. Flanagan describes instances of this complicity:

Ecclesial complicity in racism and white supremacy, both historically and today, leads many to question how we can continue to call a church holy that, in just one example among many, sold 262 enslaved women, men and children to preserve its institutions. The perception of systematic injustice in church structures and institutions as discriminatory or actively harmful to persons of color, women, and LGBT people has become for many an increasingly challenging mark of ecclesial failure.¹⁷⁰

When the church is complicit in racism and sexism, it ceases to live into the fullness of holiness. Instead, it favors the easy work of mimicking the status quo rather than the challenging call to prophetically dismantle the patterns of discrimination of the times.

Holiness must also be considered in light of its eschatological dimension. Aidan Nichols's described the eschatological orientation of holiness in connection with the holiness of the foundation of the church: "This same initial holiness [of the founding of

¹⁷⁰ Flanagan, 139.

the church] is also the starting point of an open-ended movement of coming to share more fully in the holiness of Christ, which itself will come to term eschatologically in the final Kingdom.”¹⁷¹ The eschatological orientation of the church is related to the mission to make present the reign of God on earth, while knowing full completion will not happen until the end of time. Thus, the threat to holiness becomes a threat to the mission of the church.

The wounds of racism and sexism in the church ultimately threaten the church’s ability to live into its mission. In analyzing the impact of wounds on the church’s mission, I look to the articulated mission of the church as stated in Vatican II, primarily in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. The documents of Vatican II put forth a vision of the church as having a special relationship with the world. It affirmed that the church is sign of God’s salvific presence to human beings in history.¹⁷² *Lumen Gentium* opens with this vision:

Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring the light of Christ to all men [sic], a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church. Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission.¹⁷³

In this opening vision, the church is to bring the “light of Christ” to all. Yet when the church perpetuates systems of racism and sexism, it fails to bring the light of Christ. Further, the church fails to facilitate the “unity of the human race,” by creating division according to gender and race designations. I will further explore the church as sacrament in conjunction with Karl Rahner’s ecclesiology in Chapter 4.

¹⁷¹ Nichols, *Figuring out the Church*, 53.

¹⁷² Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 236.

¹⁷³ Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium*,” para. 1.

Central to the mission of the church is proclaiming the Gospel and making the reign of God present on earth. The Gospel is truly “good news,” especially to the marginalized. In order to proclaim the Gospel today, the church must continue Jesus’ ministry of reaching out to the marginalized and excluded. As this chapter has explored, the history of the Catholic Church in the United States is filled with examples of the church doing the opposite by continuing marginalization based upon gender and race.

There is a dimension to the reign of God that will always lie beyond our grasp, as articulated by the already-but-not-yet quality. *Gaudium et Spes* elaborates on this, stating:

Coming forth from the eternal Father’s love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit, the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world. But she is already present in this world, and is composed of men [sic], that is, of members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God’s children during the present history of the human race, and to keep increasing it until the Lord returns.¹⁷⁴

While the reign of God will always have an eschatological dimension, we can work as a church to make present the reign of God on earth through working toward justice.

Further, the reign of God cannot be conflated with the result of human work; there is always an element of the free gift from God.

At the same time, the church can create conditions where the reign of God can thrive. We can build a church where the reign of God is glimpsed, rather than a church that sides with the oppressive forces of the world. By tending to the wounds of the church, the church can become a little more “already” of the reign of God and a little less “not yet.”

Gaudium et Spes puts forth a vision of the church that promotes the dignity of the human person and the unity of the human family. It states:

¹⁷⁴ Vatican Council II, “*Gaudium et Spes*,” para. 40.

Pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the Church does not only communicate divine life to men but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth, most of all by its healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which it strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human.¹⁷⁵

The church cannot fully be church if it does not recognize, welcome, and uplift all the members of the church and by extension the entire human family. Instead of prophetically challenging the social sins of racism and sexism, too often the church joins with the forces of injustice and oppression. However, instead of promoting the dignity of the human person, the church has sided with systems that disregard this dignity. This is not only straying from the mission of the church, but also from the Gospel of Christ.

Gaudium et Spes identifies the Gospel as that which “can anchor the dignity of human nature against all tides of opinion, for example those which undervalue the human body or idolize it.”¹⁷⁶ Yet the exploration of instances of racism and sexism reveal a church that chooses to undervalue the human body rather than promote human dignity. Rather than prophetically standing against structures that threaten dignity, the church has chosen to reinscribe these patterns. Thus, racism and sexism in the ecclesial structures of the church move the church away from living out its mission.

In this analysis, it is essential to avoid a dualistic framework of assessing the church as either living into its mission or denying its mission. Rather, mission is an evolving reality, evading a simplified assessment. This analysis seeks to pose the question of credibility: how can the church live into its mission in a credible way? When people look to the church and see exclusion along gender and race divisions, the church is

¹⁷⁵ Vatican Council II, para. 40.

¹⁷⁶ Vatican Council II, para. 41.

not credibly living into its mission. When members of the church encounter racism and sexism rather than inclusion and affirmation, the church fails to proclaim the Gospel in a credible way. The division between articulated theology in doctrine and the lived experience of the faithful is striking; this division inhibits the church from being church in a credible way.

Further, living in a wounded church without recognizing the wounds leads to a warped ecclesiological imagination. Not attending to wounds and allowing the wounds to fester impacts our collective ecclesiological imagination. It is as though we say that no other reality can exist; we are left with the current, wounded reality and have no hope for a different church. Such a disposition is a position of despair. Instead, we must take these wounds seriously by first acknowledging they exist, then examining the wounds, and finally by working to create a church where these wounds do not continue and healing can occur. We must wrestle with these wounds, contemplating what they reveal about the church and imagining a future where the church can truly be church.

The church must attend to its own woundedness in order to fully understand itself, and thus live out its mission to be a sign of God's salvific presence. The church cannot bury its head to its own woundedness, refusing to recognize the pain and suffering it has caused out of fear that it might diminish its holiness. Rather, the church must understand itself as a wounded church. It is only through this recognition that it can begin to heal its own wounds. Roger Haight looks to the immense suffering in the world and its implication on our ecclesial self-understanding. He asserts, "It is impossible today to understand the church in any credible way without formulating this self-understanding so

that it is directly responsive to global social injustice, poverty and dehumanization”¹⁷⁷ To ignore or not take seriously these wounds is to have an incomplete self-understanding. Operating out of a not credible self-understanding further impacts all ecclesiology, having a ripple effect.

Wounds have the potential to warp the ecclesiological imagination of the church. However, the power of these wounds can be harnessed to reorient the ecclesiological imagination in order to live into the mission of the church more fully. To do this, the church must attend to the site of the wound. Jones explains, “The church is called, as it exists in this space of trauma, to engage in the crucial task of reordering the collective imagination of its people and to be wise and passionate in this task.”¹⁷⁸ It is possible to attend to the woundedness of the church in such a way that the church is more authentically itself. It is also possible to disregard wounds, choosing instead to ignore wounds and in turn ignore those who suffer from exclusion in the church. This is the challenge facing the church: how do we regard our own woundedness?

In short, the church cannot fully be church unless it attends to its own woundedness. This involves a wrestling with wounds, examining the theological issues implicated in our understanding of a wounded church. However, the church cannot attend to its own woundedness if it does not understand wounds. In order to do this, we must have a nuanced understanding of what wounds are and how they continue to impact much beyond their initial infliction. For this, I turn to trauma studies as a lens for understanding wounds. Contemporary trauma theory operates from the place of the wound. It takes seriously the wound and looks to the far-reaching impact of wounds. In order to take

¹⁷⁷ Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 264.

¹⁷⁸ Serene Jones, “Emmaus Witnessing: Trauma and the Disordering of the Theological Imagination,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 55, no. 3–4 (2001): 119.

seriously the wounds of the church, we must examine how wounds operate and function, looking to their power and impact.

3.0 TRAUMA THEORY AS A TOOL FOR RESPONDING TO WOUNDS

This dissertation is particularly focused on the wounds of racism and sexism, yet this examination has implications beyond these two wounds. The church must attend to its own woundedness in order to be church in authentic and credible ways. Failing to attend to these wounds results in the wounds festering, continuing to adversely impact the church without attention to the multitude of ways wounds continue to make themselves present and known in the church. At stake is the church's mission to make the reign of God known on earth. In order to do effectively respond to its own woundedness, it is essential to engage in a focused study of woundedness and the impact of wounds. To this end, I employ trauma theory as a tool to bring about an in-depth understanding of wounds.

This chapter begins by presenting an overview of contemporary trauma theory. In particular, I look to the contributions of Cathy Caruth. Caruth, who researches trauma and language and is a post-modern literary theorist, brought Sigmund Freud's work on psychoanalysis into dialogue with literary theory, giving rise to contemporary trauma studies. She is one of the most referenced scholars in trauma studies, particularly notable for her contribution of looking at trauma as a "way of reading," a lens that harmonizes with this project. Given the expansiveness of trauma theory, I explore the major tenets of trauma theory through examining the concepts of belatedness, witness, healing, and the

paradoxical nature of trauma. Next, I look to the intersection of trauma theory and theology. Caruth's articulation of trauma has been examined in the field of theology by Shelly Rambo, Serene Jones, and Jennifer Beste. These theologians attend to the site of the wound in today's world and draw out important theological insights about ethics, soteriology, and anthropology in light of trauma theory, given their areas of expertise. While these theologians are writing at the intersection of theology and trauma studies, none have examined ecclesiology through the lens of trauma theory.

The field of trauma, grounded in an inquiry surrounding wounds, examines the way that past events continue to make themselves known in the present. Trauma theory asserts that the past and future co-mingle in the present at the site of the wound. Woundedness presents an image of dialectical understandings of wounds— wounds that appear in a particular way in the moment, yet are also intrinsically connected to events of the past continuing to emerge and be experienced in the present. Trauma and wounds also open up temporal dynamism, looking to the future while also making the past present again. This promotes a wider, softer gaze that resists the temptation to arrange events in a linear, chronological fashion and instead cultivates a space for seemingly contradictory aspects to come together. This is an essential posture for an ecclesiological investigation, for it fosters an approach that takes seriously the wounds of the church. Further, the traumatic experience is inherently communal, as it demands yet often defies its witness in order to be known. Taken as a whole, trauma theory holds together paradoxical aspects, claiming several truths as valid. Naming many truths as true is an important contribution to ecclesiology, for it provides an intellectual framework to affirm that the church can be many things at once, such as holy and sinful, wounded and perfect, grounded in reality

and infused with mystery. These ecclesiological paradoxes are important to uphold, which will be further examined in Chapters 4 and 5.

This chapter concludes by looking to challenges presented by trauma theory. In particular, I examine how ecclesiology has the potential to respond to the challenge of wounds as articulated by trauma theory. This chapter identifies major components of trauma theory that serve as a tool to assist in regarding the wounds of the church. If we are able to better understand woundedness, then we are able to better understand the church, and in the process, live into the mission of the church. A trauma-informed analysis of wounds expands the capaciousness of our ecclesial imagination. This capaciousness requires an ecclesiology that can hold paradoxes, such as Karl Rahner's ecclesiological examination of church as symbol and sacrament, which will be the focus of Chapter 4.

3.1 CONTEMPORARY TRAUMA THEORY

3.1.1 Introducing Trauma Theory

Contemporary trauma theory examines the impact of trauma on individuals and communities. Rooted in the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud in the 20th century,¹ trauma theory recognizes that the impact of wounds is not limited to physical healing. It holds that physical and mental wounds have far-reaching impacts that were previously

¹ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. Todd Dufresne, Gregory C. Richter, and Gregory C. Richter, Broadview Editions (Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2011); Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," 1914, 147–56.

unrecognized. Cathy Caruth, a preeminent scholar in literary trauma theory, posits the following definition of trauma: “In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.”² This sense of the survivor being unable to assimilate the traumatic experience in the initial occurrence is central to an understanding of trauma. Shelly Rambo, a theologian who focuses on trauma theory, defines trauma as “the suffering that does not go away. The study of trauma is the study of what remains.”³ Trauma impacts everything, making itself known in ways that may not seemingly be connected to the originating event. It often acts as a division in life, marking time as before the storm, accident, or other traumatic event and another time of “after.” Contemporary trauma theory focuses upon both the originating wound and the lingering impact of the unassimilated experience, or what remains after the originating wound.

In the past four decades, clinical analysis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has increased in both clinical settings and cultural discussions. “Post-traumatic stress disorder” first appeared in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-3) by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. Judith Herman’s groundbreaking work *Trauma and Recovery*⁴ brought the intricacies of trauma and PTSD from the clinical setting to a wider audience. Similarly, Bessel Van der Kolk’s work bridges neuroscience, trauma and PTSD, making his work classic in this field.⁵ Both of

² Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 11.

³ Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 15.

⁴ Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, 1R edition (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

⁵ Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

these clinicians and experts work to bring the intricacies of PTSD into public view in order to see how trauma influences the brain, body, mind, and spirit. Clinical studies can inform contemporary trauma theory, providing a breadth and depth, yet these two areas should not be conflated. While there is certainly overlap between these areas, trauma theory looks to the more general understanding of the impact of trauma. It highlights patterns and concepts that attempt to articulate the elusive nature of trauma. Clinical studies, while a necessary conversation partner, and insufficient for this study in that they focus on the biological, chemical and psychological processes. Trauma studies, more generally, looks to general patterns and themes and can serve as a conversation partner with other disciplines, such as theology. The suitability of trauma studies as a tool to illuminate aspects of the human condition that are applicable to theology will be further explored in Section 3.2.

This dissertation operates from the point of view that the individual and communal are intimately related. In a church, the concept of something being strictly personal has no role. All are members of the body of Christ, and if one person is wounded then the entire body is wounded. This investigation into trauma studies focuses on individual trauma. There are some aspects on trauma studies that focus on communal trauma, such as natural disasters⁶ and war.⁷ Communal trauma as a whole is less studied than individual trauma, making a study of individual trauma more pertinent to this examination. Again, given the methodological commitment that the individual and communal are intimately connected in ecclesiology, the focus on individual trauma is still

⁶ Kai Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995); Otrude Moyo and Vadim Moldovan, "Lessons for Social Workers: Hurricane Katrina as a Social Disaster," *Social Development Issues* 30, no. 1 (2008): 1–12.

⁷ Arlene Audergon, "Collective Trauma: The Nightmare of History," *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 2, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 16–31, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.67>.

applicable to communal. I will also highlight communal dimensions of individual trauma, such as witnessing, throughout this examination.

3.1.2 Wounds

Trauma theory is rooted in the examination of wounds. This is more than a theoretical priority, as displayed by the roots of the term “trauma.” The Greek term for trauma derives from the term wound or “injury inflicted upon the body by an act of violence.”⁸ Wounds are embedded within trauma at an etymological level. From this, one can see the centrality that wounds have in trauma theory. At the same time, to restrict an understanding of wounds to an etymological examination would miss the richness of wounds in trauma theory.

Trauma theory examines the far-reaching impact of an originating wound. In describing trauma, Caruth emphasizes the centrality of the wound. She explains, “It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.”⁹ This originating wound varies according to circumstance, yet all wounds share the commonality of inflicting an ongoing impact that cannot be contained to the originating moment. These wounds can be physical, yet they can also extend beyond the physical to include the mental, psychological, social, and spiritual impact. Serene Jones explains this shift in focus in contemporary trauma theory: “Although the Greek definition of ‘trauma’ focuses primarily on physical wounds,

⁸ Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 12.

⁹ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

contemporary trauma studies have extended its application to the mind and the emotions, focusing on the effects of violence on our vast interior worlds.”¹⁰ As such, contemporary trauma theory traces the impact of the originating wound throughout individual and communal lives. The communal aspect is especially pressing for this ecclesiological investigation, for it has implications on the social dimension of the church that extend beyond individual or isolated experiences of trauma. This will be examined in Section 3.1.4 through the concept of witnessing.

In many ways, trauma is synonymous with physical and psychological wounds. Reinder Ruard Ganzevoort examines the psychological wounds of trauma. He summarizes trauma as “the psychological wound resulting from the confrontation with a serious event that shatters a person’s integrity and induced powerlessness and estrangement.”¹¹ This definition highlights several important aspects of trauma. By focusing on the serious nature of the originating event and the effects of powerlessness and estrangement, we see that trauma is more significant than ordinary experiences of unpleasantness or suffering. Further exploring both of these aspects in depth sheds light upon the uniqueness of trauma.

A traumatic event is characterized by a sense of magnitude. It is not simply an event that is unpleasant, but rather, an event that is large and significant. In differentiating traumatic events from other instances of displeasure, Jones explains, “They are, instead, events in which one experiences the threat of annihilation.”¹² This order of magnitude is essential to an understanding of trauma, for it sets trauma apart from more ordinary

¹⁰ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 12.

¹¹ Reinder Ruard Ganzevoort, “Scars and Stigmata: Trauma, Identity and Theology,” *Practical Theology* 1, no. 1 (2008): 20.

¹² Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 13.

experiences. Herman explains, “Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.”¹³

Trauma is also defined by that which is overwhelming. Van der Kolk simply defines trauma as that which is “unbearable and intolerable.”¹⁴ This unbearable nature of trauma refers both to the originating event as well as the continued impact of trauma. Rambo summarizes traumatic research, stating, “While definitions of trauma differ, one common denominator is the notion that traumatic experiences overwhelm human processes of adaptation.”¹⁵ Our typical responses, spanning neurobiology, psychology and spirituality, are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the traumatic event. The body, mind and spirit cannot rely on traditional methods of processing, for these are overwhelmed. As a result, all of the processes that typically respond to threats are limited or made new. This results in the body and mind shutting down and stunting the experience, unable to experience it fully in the originating event. Pathologies associated with PTSD, such as dissociation, spring out of this overwhelming nature of trauma.

The overwhelming nature of trauma has wide-ranging consequences. In this examination of wounds, it is important to focus attention on the impact of wounds on identity. Jones explains, “You lose a sense of yourself as someone who can take effective action against an attacking agent, because at a literal level, either you cannot fight back, or if you do, you fail.”¹⁶ Trauma is overwhelming not only in the sense that it is difficult, but more importantly, in the sense that it overrides all physical, emotional, and spiritual

¹³ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

¹⁴ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 1.

¹⁵ Shelly Rambo, “Introduction,” in *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, ed. Stephanie Arel and Shelly Rambo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

¹⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 15.

systems of response. Jones succinctly summarizes that trauma can “override your powers of both action and imagination.”¹⁷ The overriding of the power of action is easily imagined, as this outcome is often depicted as related to PTSD. Examples include being overwhelmed by triggering moments or events, avoiding events where there is the potential for triggering moments, fear, isolation, impaired executive function, and other related impediments. The impact on the power of imagination is less often considered, for it is also more difficult to explain. It looks to how the mind imagines things, including spiritually and emotionally. In this dissertation, I look to the impact of trauma on the ecclesiological imagination. Trauma overrides the power of imagination, for its magnitude and destruction does not allow the victim to imagine life out of the shadow of the wound. The belated nature of trauma and intrusion of recurring experience and memory creates a future that is always haunted by the past, thus stunting the possibility of hope for a future that is free of traumatic intrusion. So too, with the church, wounds haunt the hope for a future where racism and sexism are not part of the church. This impact on ecclesial imagination will be further explored in Chapter 5.

It is helpful to delineate trauma from the more general concept of suffering. There is an overlap between these two concepts, for trauma can cause suffering. However, to equate them as synonyms neglects that trauma is unable to be assimilated by its very nature. Rambo explains the distinction between suffering and trauma: “Suffering is what, in time, can be integrated into one’s understanding of the world. Trauma is what is not integrated in time; it is the difference between a closed and an open wound. Trauma is an open wound.”¹⁸ Rambo’s distinction between open and closed wound demands further

¹⁷ Jones, 15.

¹⁸ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 7.

examination. Open wounds require a specific kind of tending and attention. Visually, there is a sense of continued bleeding or oozing. They are actively open and have the potential to get worse. Closed wounds, by contrast, have begun the process of transformation. They do not actively require attention, yet they still exist beneath the surface. Closed wounds remain a site of revelation and continue to communicate meaning. Trauma is not able to be integrated into one's life in time, resulting in a wound that continues to be open and requires tending.

Trauma marks a connection between life and death. No longer separated by a clear dividing line, trauma integrates the presence of death in life. Given the magnitude of trauma, the experience of trauma is the experience of death within life. Rambo explains, "There is no clear-cut line separating the two; life is not a departure from death but, instead, a different relationship to death and life."¹⁹ Death and life co-mingle at the site of the wound. At the same time, wounds are marks on the living. Rambo explains, "Instead of appearing as marks on the dead, wounds surface *in* life to reveal dimensions of life that may not have been accounted for— dimensions that we could identify in terms of the afterlife of trauma."²⁰ It is this sense of "revealing dimensions of life that may not have been accounted for" that make wounds revelatory. They contain and communicate mystery, for they hold the marks of afterlife within the land of the living.

Life and death co-mingle at the site of the wound, and continue to do so beyond the originating event. This introduces a sense of porousness between life and death. Traditional frameworks present death and life as polar opposites, with the absence of each defining the concept. Trauma challenges this framework, presenting instead an

¹⁹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 7.

²⁰ Rambo, 14.

understanding of death within life. They are not polar opposites, but rather, porous concepts that can exist within one another. Life in the aftermath of trauma is defined by living with death. This can also be considered an intrusion of death into life, though this language stems from a sense that death and life are distinct, a sense that is challenged by trauma theory.

Rambo proposes new language to discuss this phenomenon of the porousness of life and death. In *Spirit and Trauma*, Rambo utilizes “the middle” to discuss “the figurative site in which death and life are no longer bounded.”²¹ The existence of death within life presents a new reality where traditional frameworks are insufficient. Trauma ushers in this new reality, demanding further reflection. Rambo continues to explain: “The middle speaks to the perplexing space of survival. It is a largely untheologized site, because the middle is overshadowed by the other two events.”²² This sense of “the middle” is built into the very structure of trauma. Theologically, it stands between death and resurrection. In daily living, it is the integration of death and life in ways that cannot be distinguished. Trauma refocuses our attention on the middle, looking to the ways that death and life are integrated.

To speak to the far-reaching impact of wounds, Rambo utilizes language of *continuer* and ongoingness in *Resurrecting Wounds*. She explains, “The term *continuer* attests to unintegrated loss and its continuing impact in the present. A companion term is ‘ongoingness,’ which acknowledges that the impact of violence carries into the present.”²³ These terms speak to the “afterlife within life.”²⁴ These proposals for language

²¹ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 7.

²² Rambo, 7.

²³ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 13.

²⁴ Rambo, 15.

attempt to speak to the expansive nature of the wound. Trauma cannot be bounded to a single event, but rather, continue to live in the present. This paradoxical nature of wounds will be further analyzed in Section 3.1.6.

While trauma is traditionally defined as a single originating event, it can also be “repeated events of the low-intensity variety.”²⁵ Thus, trauma can come from repeated encounters with racism or sexism, as outlined in Chapter 2.2. Jones explains the phenomenon of these continued low-intensity events: “In such instances, the assault on the psyche is no less disabling than a frontal attack; but because it never reaches the explosive level of violence we associate with traumatic harm, its corrosive effects are more likely to go unnoticed—and uninterrupted—for years.”²⁶ While there is less research on these types of trauma, it is essential to note that they are just as overwhelming as a singular traumatic encounter. Continual encounters with repeated, low-intensity events, such as microaggressions and other experiences of racism, share in the overwhelming nature of trauma. They threaten the sense of safety, security, and well-being that are necessary to survive. They also reach the order of magnitude that is one of the defining features of trauma.

A principal tenet of an understanding of woundedness is that wounds are always present. They never completely go away. While wounds may transform, heal, or scar, they always remain present in some capacity. Often times, wounds are invisible. As invisible wounds, they often go unnoticed and continue to fester below the surface. Rambo insists that “these ‘invisible wounds’ are active, although not recognized as such;

²⁵ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 15.

²⁶ Jones, 15.

they remain below the surface of life.”²⁷ There is a challenge in assessing these wounds, for many neglect or misunderstand their power and influence due to their invisibility. Rambo explains, “When and if these wounds surface, they are often unrecognizable and misunderstood.”²⁸ This highlights a central tension when discussing wounds. Not only is it difficult to discuss something that is invisible, but in the process of surfacing, wounds become misunderstood. However, the tendency to misunderstand wounds does not mean that we should further relegate them to the point of invisibility. Rather, it calls for a posture of examining wounds that reverences their mystery and power.

Struggles with how to regard the invisibility of wounds can translate into endeavors to erase wounds. Wounds can be covered over both intentionally and unintentionally. Intentionally, there is a desire to stifle the truth that wounds communicate, such as wounds that reveal torture. Unintentionally, wounds can be silenced out of a sense of not knowing how to regard them; it is easier to ignore and silence than to hold in mystery. Whether intentional or not, there is a danger in silencing and erasing wounds. Rambo explains, “The danger in erasing these wounds is that the erasure occludes a testimony to what is most difficult about traumatic histories, whether personal or collective: that the wounds remain.”²⁹ Even attempting to silence wounds, they continue to exist. Wounds fester and persist. The acknowledgement of wounds does not impact their existence, for wounds continue to exist even when unacknowledged. However, attempts to erase wounds cause them to fester in new ways. It is necessary to acknowledge and uphold wounds, yet this task is difficult. Rambo explains that “to

²⁷ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 14.

²⁸ Rambo, 145.

²⁹ Rambo, 42.

reorient the logic of wounds toward the after-living requires care and attention.”³⁰ This care and attention requires a sense of reverence toward the power of the wound.

Some trauma theorists prefer language of scars to that of wounds. Wounds suggest a newness and develop into scarred spots, signifying a wound that has evolved and changed yet continues to be present. Ganzevoort explains the relationship between scars and wounds, pointing to the movement from perfection to destruction. “The scars or stigmata inflicted on the body symbolize this end to the former existence. The wholeness or original perfection is destroyed and the wounds turn into scars that remind us of this destruction.”³¹ In this understanding, scars are markers of identity changes. Further, Ganzevoort highlights scars as the lived reminder of our stories. “The scars on our body and soul tell the story of the wounds inflicted upon us. They mark the person as having lived through this particular ordeal and thereby refer to the story only this person can tell.”³² Scars mark a transformation. They mark a specific story and experience, persisting with the person throughout their lives.

Ganzevoort ascribes particular meaning to scars, going as far to assert, “Scars do not subtract meaning from our lives, but in fact add meaning to it.”³³ In saying this, Ganzevoort affirms the importance of wounds and scars, pointing to their potential to mark identity. However, this statement neglects that scars are formed by traumatic events. By definition, they contain that which is unbearable. Ganzevoort risks glorifying suffering in this statement. While scars may add meaning, they may also be constant

³⁰ Rambo, 42.

³¹ Ganzevoort, “Scars and Stigmata,” 27.

³² Ganzevoort, 24.

³³ Ganzevoort, 24.

reminders of unbearable experiences, abuse, neglect, and near-death encounters. We must uphold the meaning-making potential of scars while not glorifying suffering.

Wounds have the potential to be prophetic calls that challenge society. In analyzing the prophetic potential of scars, Ganzevoort focuses on the move from perfection to destruction, as well as a move from individual to communal. He explains, “Stigmata are not only individual experiences but prophetic markers of resistance against the normative cultural stories of wholeness and perfection.”³⁴ Scars continue to be revelatory, signaling to society that something has changed, even if it is not clear what changed or how this happened. They communicate that there is a story that is unknown to the person looking on. In this way, they signal to the communal nature of witnessing, which will be further discussed in Section 3.1.4.

Racism and sexism wound the church, continuing to fester below the surface and infringe upon the church’s ability to make the reign of God known on earth. Trauma theory offers a lens to view these wounds, illuminating the many ways that wounds impact the church far beyond the initial infliction. This exploration of wounds is deepened when put in conversation with other topics in trauma theory, such as the belated nature of trauma, role of witnessing, process of healing, and paradoxical nature of trauma. These will be explored in each of the following sections.

3.1.3 Temporal Concerns: Belatedness, Departure, and Memory

The belatedness of trauma is built into the structure of trauma. While the initial traumatic encounter is significant, it is precisely through the departure from the event that

³⁴ Ganzevoort, 30.

trauma is most fully experienced. The ongoingness of trauma raises many concerns surrounding temporality. Rambo underscores this, stating, “In trauma, distortions in time constitute the wound. The problem of temporality is at the root of the phenomenon of trauma.”³⁵ The past is no longer relegated to the past, but rather, becomes present once again through the act of witnessing. In order to better understand wounds and trauma, we must examine the belated nature of trauma.

Trauma centers upon a “double wound,” a term employed by Caruth that illustrates how trauma impacts both the body and the mind beyond the originating event. She describes wounds of the body as a “simple and healable event” whereas wounds of the mind are “an event that... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.”³⁶ Contained in this understanding of a double wound are several tenets of trauma theory, including the unable to be assimilated nature of the originating wound, the intrusion of the wound into the present and future, the repetition associated with intrusion, and the haunting nature of wounds.

To illustrate this sense of double wounding, Caruth draws upon the parable of Tancred and Clorinda from Tasso’s romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, a foundational story in the psychoanalytic work of Freud.³⁷ The story tells of Tancred, the hero, who unknowingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel where she is dressed in the armor of an enemy knight. This originating wound continues to be repeated unwittingly. When Tancred goes into a magic forest, he slashes a tree with his sword causing the tree to cry

³⁵ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 19.

³⁶ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

³⁷ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

out with the voice of Clorinda, whose soul was contained in the tree. For Freud, this story communicates “the way that the experience of trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will.”³⁸ This unwilling repetition of trauma serves as the foundation for Freud’s work in psychoanalysis.

Caruth further draws upon the story of Tancred and Clorinda for her articulation of belatedness in trauma theory. She explains, “Just as Tancred does not hear the voice of Clorinda until the second wounding, so trauma is not locatable in the simple violence or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on.”³⁹ Further, this story illustrates that trauma is rooted in an experience of death, even if the person survives. Trauma conveys the interconnection between death and life. Caruth explains this dynamic: “At the core of these stories, I would suggest, is thus a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival.”⁴⁰ It is not enough to simply survive an event, for the double wounding nature of trauma means that death continues to be present even in survival.

Double wounding illustrates the belatedness of trauma. Given the ongoing nature of the double wound, trauma continues to be experienced much beyond the original inflicting wound. As a result, the belatedness of the experience of trauma is central to trauma theory. Repetition forces the subject to relive trauma in a way that was prevented

³⁸ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 2.

³⁹ Caruth, 4.

⁴⁰ Caruth, 7.

in the initial trauma. Freud lays the groundwork for trauma theory in regards to repetition. He observes the importance of repetition for a patient in psychoanalysis: “As long as the patient is in the treatment he cannot escape from this compulsion to repeat; and in the end we understand that this is his way of remembering.”⁴¹ This lack of knowledge is not an impediment to understanding, but rather, the unknown and unexperienced is the structure upon which early trauma theory is built.

Connected to the belated nature of trauma is its connection to witness. While witnessing will be explored in depth in Section 3.1.4, it is helpful to briefly trace the tenets of witnessing in order to draw out the belated nature of trauma. Trauma becomes known in the present through the witness of another person to the wound. It is through this act of witnessing that the person who experienced the trauma is able to reconnect with the trauma. Yet, the witness never fully knows the true depth or fullness of trauma. As such, in a phrase that is now central to trauma studies, trauma “simultaneously defies and demands our witness.”⁴² Trauma requires a witness in order to become known in the present, yet it will always defy witness as well. Further, the story of Tancred and Clorinda tells of the paradoxical nature of witnessing. Caruth describes it as “a parable of psychoanalytic theory itself as it listens to a voice that it cannot fully know but to which it nonetheless bears witness.”⁴³

Caruth furthers Freud’s work on repetition through outlining the structure of trauma. In discussing the traumatic event, Caruth explores how the very structure of trauma is marked by belatedness. She explains, “The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced

⁴¹ Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” 155.

⁴² Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 5.

⁴³ Caruth, 9.

fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it.”⁴⁴ The structure of trauma at its very core infringes upon the future, continually making itself known in the present. This blending of time resists definitions. It brings the past and future together in the present at the site of the wound, making the wounds paradoxical in nature. This paradox is not a limitation, however, for it promotes a traumatic gaze that is able to hold many truths together at the same time.

Traumatic memory becomes known in the present in various ways through repetition. Herman explains, “The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep.”⁴⁵ These flashbacks and nightmares are experienced fully. They are not merely mental activities, but rather, experiences of repetition. Herman elaborates: “Reliving a traumatic experience, whether in the form of intrusive memories, dreams, or actions, carries with it the emotional intensity of the original event.”⁴⁶ Too often, flashbacks and other experiences of repetition are dismissed as “just memories,” and as such, are not as powerful. Trauma theory challenges this, arguing instead that experiences of repetition are experiences of trauma. In these experiences, the past enters the present in new ways. The traumatic event is repeated and made known in the present. The past does not remain in the past.

It is only in the aftermath that the traumatic event can be known, resulting in the paradox of belatedness. Caruth elaborates upon this, stating, “Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox:

⁴⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.

⁴⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 37.

⁴⁶ Herman, 42.

that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness.”⁴⁷ The indirect nature of trauma causes a break in the subject’s experience of time,⁴⁸ resulting in the initial experience of trauma to be unknown. Caruth describes this phenomenon as the outside going inside without mediation.⁴⁹ The language of inside/outside provides images and movement to a process that is otherwise difficult to comprehend, thus opening the doors for trauma theory to reflect upon this dynamic.

Contributing to the paradox of trauma is the notion of departure. While the past becomes present, it is also marked by leaving the site of trauma. One does not remain at the site of the initial infliction, but rather, leaves the site of the accident, assault, or other traumatic event. Caruth further explains, “The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site.”⁵⁰ This departure from the site of the wound into the creation of a new story is built into the structure of trauma. When one relives the traumatic experience, one also leaves the site of trauma once again. Departure is a crucial concept that is intimately connected with belatedness, for it marks that the after-living of trauma is not a continual state of retraumatization, but rather, a process of experiencing the traumatic event and departing from that experience. The past becomes present, yet one continually leaves the retraumatization, marking a departure. Caruth explains, “Stories of trauma cannot be limited to the catastrophes they name, and the theory of catastrophic history may ultimately be written in a language that already lingers, in these texts, after the end, in a time that comes to us from the other shore, from the other side of

⁴⁷ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 91–92.

⁴⁸ Caruth, 60–61.

⁴⁹ Caruth, 59.

⁵⁰ Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 10.

the disaster.”⁵¹ This departure is not a one time event, but a repeated pattern. Caruth’s concept of departure is predicated on the witness turning to “the other shore.”

These concepts of belatedness and departure lead to questions of temporality and trauma. The belated nature of trauma troubles linear notions of time. The past is no longer relegated to the past, disrupting a sense of chronology. Rambo explains, “The central problem of trauma is a temporal one. The past does not stay, so to speak, in the past. Instead, it invades the present, returning in such a way that the present becomes not only an enactment of the past but an enactment about what was not fully known or grasped.”⁵² Trauma troubles linear notions of time, instead putting forth a vision of past and future co-mingling in the present at the site of the wound. In this way, it challenges traditional frameworks. Trauma holds as truth that the past can become present in unknown ways, thus challenging traditional truth-claims. Strictly chronological understandings of temporality are insufficient in the face of trauma, resulting in a need to affirm porous understandings of time and experience.

Not only does trauma disrupt notions of time, but it also challenges understandings of beginnings and endings. In a traditional framework, moments can be defined by beginnings, middles, and endings. Yet, in trauma, there is never a definitive end. Rather than being marked by a clear ending or cessation, trauma continues into the present. Rambo explains, “Trauma not only fractures time, but also challenges our understanding of endings, endings beyond which we cannot imagine but nonetheless survive.”⁵³ The ongoingness of trauma eludes definitions of beginnings, middles, and

⁵¹ Cathy Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 92.

⁵² Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 19.

⁵³ Rambo, “Introduction,” 8.

endings. This challenges our language and ability to discuss trauma, for it is simultaneously in the past and the present.

Trauma also poses challenges to a strictly referential understanding of time due to the intermixing of death and life. Experiences of trauma are experiences of death within life. Death is not simply an event that will happen in the future, but rather, exists in glimpses throughout life. Rambo refers to death and life as “coterminus rather than sequential, entangled rather than clearly delineated.”⁵⁴ From this point of view, theological understandings of life, death and resurrection are all challenged by the temporal notions of trauma. This challenge should not be thought of as an implication of these notions, but rather an enrichment. Life and death are not fully separated, but can exist together in glimpses.

The temporal challenges posed by trauma can be tied to the inability of trauma to be integrated in the primary experience. At its core, trauma is an event of excess. It overwhelms the senses and the brain, and as a result, cannot be fully integrated in the originating experience. Rambo explains, “Trauma came to be identified as what does not get integrated in time and thus returns or remains, obstructing one’s ability to engage the world as one did before.”⁵⁵ The unassimilable nature of trauma demands that it be repeated in order to be assimilated. As such, trauma is not a singular occurrence but rather “speaks to an event in its excess.”⁵⁶ The excess of trauma is intimately bound up with temporal concerns, belatedness, and continual departure from the site of the wound.

Questions surrounding the belatedness of trauma and traumatic memory lead to further questions of the relationship of human agency and accessibility of trauma. This

⁵⁴ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 8.

⁵⁵ Rambo, 4.

⁵⁶ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 19.

question is most comprehensively captured by Joshua Pederson's article "Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory." In this article, Pederson challenges Caruth's premise of the unknown and unexperienced dimension of trauma. Pederson draws upon Richard McNally's research, arguing that "traumatic amnesia is a myth, and while victims may *choose* not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence that they *cannot*."⁵⁷ From this, Pederson asserts that trauma is knowable in the moment and emphasizes the role of agency in accessing the traumatic memory. While this may be primarily a matter of evolving scientific research on trauma and memory accessibility, there is a core issue at stake: is there an unwillingness to think about trauma, or an inability to do so?⁵⁸ Traditionally, Freud and Caruth posit there is an inability to experience trauma in the moment,⁵⁹ whereas Pederson cites McNally to advance the argument that there is an unwillingness to access the trauma. For the purposes of this dissertation, this question will remain unresolved at this time, for the question of how memory is challenged is less important than the fact that memory is not integrated in the initial experience of trauma. The crucial fact is that trauma presents itself as a belated experience, becoming most known beyond the initial encounter.

Related to the topic of belatedness is the concept of memory. It is essential to examine traumatic memory as a whole in order to more fully understand the temporal challenges posed by trauma. At its most fundamental level, memory is defined as past made present, a definition put forth by Richard Terdiman in his landmark study on

⁵⁷ Joshua Pederson, "Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory," *Narrative* 22, no. 3 (2014): 334.

⁵⁸ Pederson, 337.

⁵⁹ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*.

memory.⁶⁰ This notion of memory fits within the traumatic framework of the past becoming known in the present. Examining memory is an essential component of this examination, for it provides a framework for the temporal challenges of trauma. The paradoxical nature of memory demonstrates why Rahner's ecclesiological contributions are necessary for a vision of a wounded church, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In this examination, I focus on the work of Michael Rothberg in *Multidirectional Memory*. Rothberg analyzes the power and purpose of memory, specifically through the lens of trauma and Holocaust Studies. In looking to Terdiman's definition, Rothberg draws out two corollaries: "First, that memory is a contemporary phenomenon, something that, while concerned with the past, happens in the present; and second, that memory is a form of work, working through, labor, or action."⁶¹ This examination focuses on the implications of these corollaries.

In making the past present, memory weaves together time and space. Time is not clearly delineated, but rather, rewoven through the act of remembering. Rothberg explains, "Memory's anachronistic quality—its bringing together of now and then, here and there— is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones."⁶² This power to create new worlds is crucial to an understanding of memory, for it points to the potential for transformation. Yet this power to create can also be intimidating, for it raises the question of how memory functions collectively.

⁶⁰ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁶¹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, 1 edition (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3–4.

⁶² Rothberg, 5.

Memory is more than an individual activity, for it is also collective. The individual and collective notions are not separate realities, but together compose memory. Rothberg explains, “Not strictly separable from either history or representation, memory nonetheless captures simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side and the collective, social and constructed side of our relations to the past.”⁶³ Memory is bound up with history, lived experience, and connections to the past. Avishai Margalit diverges slightly from Rothberg by making a distinction between common memory and shared memory.

A common memory... is an aggregate notion. It aggregates the memories of all those people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually. A shared memory, on the other hand, is not a simple aggregate of individual memories. It requires communication. A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode... into one version. Shared memory is built on a division of mnemonic labor.⁶⁴

In this study, I look to both common memory and shared memory. Wounds such as racism and sexism function in both a common memory and a shared memory. Margalit’s distinction is helpful to illustrate the varying ways that collective memory functions. As a common memory, these wounds bring together many experiences of particular episodes of racism and sexism. Shared memory also applies to the wounds of racism and sexism, integrating the many experiences into one version.

The rhythm of incomplete and belated memories continues to function at the collective level. Traumatic memory remains inaccessible in the originating event, resulting in collective memory mirroring the gaps and incompleteness of individual trauma. Lawrence Langer illustrates this dynamic in *Holocaust Studies*: “Listening to accounts of Holocaust experience, we unearth a mosaic of evidence that constantly vanished into

⁶³ Rothberg, 4.

⁶⁴ Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 51–52.

bottomless layers of incompleteness. We wrestle with the beginnings of a permanently unfinished tale, full of incomplete intervals, faced by the spectacle of a faltering witness often reduced to a distressed silence by the overwhelming solicitations of deep memory.”⁶⁵ The “bottomless layers of incompleteness” become unearthed by witnesses, yet also give way to more layers of incompleteness. Collective memory is not whole, but rather, prone to the same limitations of individual memory.

Individual and collective memory are both “closely aligned with identity.”⁶⁶ How memories are told often function in a sense of origin stories, articulating values and how something came into being. Rothberg explains, “Memories are not owned by groups—nor are groups ‘owned’ by memories. Rather, the borders of memory and identity are jagged; what looks at first like my own property often turns out to be a borrowing or adaptation from a history that initially might seem foreign or distant.”⁶⁷ These “jagged” borders once again point to the connection of memory with other contextual factors. Memory forms our identity, connecting or separating us from a tradition that came before and will continue after us. At the same time, our identity impacts our memory, highlighting or obscuring moments as important, harmful or otherwise significant.

To capture these many aspects of memory, Rothberg develops the term “multidirectional memory.” Multidirectional memory emphasizes that memory is continually formed by ongoing negotiation that often occurs in the public sphere.⁶⁸ This connection to the public sphere is foundational for memory, for there is a continual cross-referencing and borrowing from the individual to the collective and vice versa. Rothberg

⁶⁵ Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, Reissue edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5.

⁶⁶ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 4.

⁶⁷ Rothberg, 5.

⁶⁸ Rothberg, 11.

explains, “Pursuing memory’s multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction.”⁶⁹ Memory is not a fixed occurrence, nor is the public sphere a fixed concept. Rather, both are subject to constant negotiation, shaping and forming one another in a cyclical rhythm.

There can be a tendency to think of memory as a zero-sum game, where privileging one memory displaces another memory. Multidirectional memory challenges this notion, asserting that many memories can exist individually and collectively without displacing another. Rothberg elaborates, “Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest that we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative.”⁷⁰ Moving away from the competitive framework, multidirectional memory asserts the power of memory to be expansive. This is especially important when looking at collective memory, where emphasizing one memory does not come at the expense of other memories. The framework of multidirectional memory emphasizes the productive role of memory in shaping identity while also being shaped and framed.

Part of the power of memory is that the meaning of memory only becomes known after the originating event. Rothberg explains, “One cannot know in advance how the articulation of a memory will function; nor can one even be sure that it will function only

⁶⁹ Rothberg, 5.

⁷⁰ Rothberg, 3.

in one way.”⁷¹ As such, the meaning of memory is determined by a range of factors, including context and chance. Further, the meaning of memory is not universal for all persons who hold the memory. Even an event that is considered traumatic by all involved, such as a car crash, hurricane, or mass shooting, will have different meaning for participants. Rothberg elaborates, stating, “While a given memory rarely functions in a single way or means only one thing, all articulations of memory are not equal; powerful social, political, and psychic forces articulate themselves in every act of remembrance.”⁷² As such, the articulations of memory actively are shaped by and reveal other contextual elements. For example, narrative surrounding the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States are intertwined with media coverage of terrorism and fear. At the same time, traumatic memory reveals that there is no such thing as “pure” memory unaffected by context. Rather, all memory is impacted by context.

Multidirectional memory is subject to the limitations of memory in terms of displacement and erasure. Multidirectional memory also “highlights the inevitable displacements and contingencies that mark all remembrance.”⁷³ While not being zero-sum conditions, multidirectional memory is still subject to contingencies. This highlights the paradoxical nature of traumatic memory, for memory has the power to be expansive as well as limited. This moves us beyond a framework of absolutes and assessing memory as “pure” and instead directs us towards a posture of holding competing truths together as valid.

The temporal challenge presented by trauma is not just a challenge to linear frameworks of time, but also has wide-ranging implications. Time is a sort of meaning-

⁷¹ Rothberg, 16.

⁷² Rothberg, 16.

⁷³ Rothberg, 15–16.

making, and when challenged, our abilities to make meaning are also challenged. This mirrors the challenge to identity that occurs when living with trauma. Rambo explains, “The linear framework of past, present, and future is a way of orienting oneself in time. When this orientation is lost, what grounds persons and communities in the world?”⁷⁴ This question posed by Rambo is an important one, for it illustrates the far-reaching implications of troubling linear temporality. I will address this question more fully in Chapter 4 utilizing Rahner’s ecclesiology.

3.1.4 Witness

The previous section raised questions surrounding belatedness, memory, and temporal concerns in trauma theory. Given that trauma is marked by departure and experienced beyond the initial encounter, how is trauma made known in the present? Witnessing is one of the processes through which trauma becomes known, both to the listener and the person who experienced trauma. Jenny Edkins explains that “experiencing of the traumatic event is not only belated; it often involves another person, a listener, to whom the trauma can be recounted.”⁷⁵ While the very nature of trauma requires a witness in order to be known and fully experienced, the act of witnessing is never complete. Caruth’s assertion that trauma “defies and demands witness”⁷⁶ frames this examination of witnessing.

Dori Laub identifies three positions of witnessing as “the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others;

⁷⁴ Rambo, “Introduction,” 7.

⁷⁵ Jenny Edkins, “Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11,” *International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2002): 246.

⁷⁶ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 5.

and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself.”⁷⁷ For the purposes of this study, I focus on the second position of being a witness to the testimony of others, for it highlights the communal nature of an otherwise isolating experience that has implications for ecclesiology. In sharing the traumatic experience with a listener, the victim⁷⁸ engages in a process that shines light upon and accesses previously inaccessible memories. Laub explains, “The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time.”⁷⁹ The process of witnessing not only uncovers previously inaccessible experience, yet also is “creation of knowledge *de novo*.”⁸⁰ Witnessing simultaneously retrieves experience and creates new knowledge, spanning the creative process of the traumatic experience.

In creating a new knowledge, the witness and the victim share in an experience. This is not the original traumatic experience, but rather, the creation of the new knowledge through witnessing. Rambo describes the act of witnessing as revealing a “porousness of experience.”⁸¹ By that, she refers to “the complex ways that another’s trauma, trauma that we view as external to us, comes to live within us.”⁸² It is essential that this porousness of experience is not understood to mean that the witness experiences the trauma in the same way as a victim. The experiences of trauma are distinct and not conflated, while also highlighting that experience is not able to be strictly delineated. The experience of witnessing contributes to the paradoxical nature of trauma, for traumatic

⁷⁷ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 75.

⁷⁸ While the term “victim” can be criticized for over-emphasizing the trauma on the identity of the person, I use it here to more easily distinguish between the person who experienced trauma and the witness.

⁷⁹ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 57.

⁸⁰ Felman and Laub, 57.

⁸¹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 4.

⁸² Rambo, 4.

experience is shared among the victim and witness yet also remains properly with the witness.

The act of listening is challenging, for as Caruth asks, “How does one listen to what is impossible?”⁸³ Listening to the impossible sets witnessing apart from other forms of therapeutic listening. Caruth also highlights a sense of chosenness when explaining witnessing. She elaborates, “Certainly one challenge of this listening is that it may no longer be simply a choice: to be able to listen to the impossible, that is, is also to have been *chosen* by it, *before* the possibility of mastering it with knowledge.”⁸⁴ The listening that is involved in witnessing is not a listening that involves a mastering of the topic, but rather, listening to the impossible in a way that opens the door to the experience of the traumatic.

It should be noted that not all listening is witnessing. Too often, the disclosing of trauma is met with frustration and rejection. Van der Kolk describes this pattern:

Talking about painful events doesn’t necessarily establish community— often quite the contrary. Families and organizations may reject members who air the dirty laundry; friends and family can lose patience with people who get stuck in their grief or hurt. This is one reason why trauma victims often withdraw and why their stories become rote narratives, edited into a form least likely to provoke rejection.⁸⁵

Van der Kolk’s observations based on clinical settings reveal insight into the difficulty of listening to trauma and the resultant changes in the victim. These outcomes underscore the importance of a specific type of listening in witnessing that opens the door to encountering trauma without devolving into “rote narratives” that force the trauma to remain at a distance.

⁸³ Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 10.

⁸⁴ Caruth, 10.

⁸⁵ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 246.

It is through witnessing that the victim experiences the traumatic event and can eventually depart from the event. Caruth explains that in listening to the crisis of trauma, the witness will listen not only “for the event, but to hear in the testimony the survivor’s departure from it; the challenge of the therapeutic listener, in other words, is how to listen to departure.”⁸⁶ This departure is crucial, for it means that witnessing does not involve a non-stop experience of the originating trauma. Eventually, through the act of witnessing, one is able to move beyond the trauma. Eruption without mediation into the present is not one’s destiny. Departure from the site of the wound is possible.

The listener is more than a blank slate, for there is also a movement within the witness. Laub describes this process: “The listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. The listener, therefore, has to be at the same time a witness to the trauma witness and a witness to himself.”⁸⁷ The heaviness of witnessing traumatic memory is not to be overlooked. As a result, there is an increasing call for psychotherapists, ministers, and other people who listen to traumatic testimony to be in therapeutic services and engage in self-care processes.⁸⁸

In examining witnessing, it is important to connect the action of witnessing with the ongoing nature of trauma. Witnessing is required by the belatedness of trauma. It is through sharing the trauma with another person that the victim is able to fully experience the trauma. As a result, witnessing flows from the temporal structure of trauma.

Witnessing “offers a way of thinking about a relationship to, and responsibility for, the

⁸⁶ Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 10.

⁸⁷ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 57–58.

⁸⁸ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

past in its ongoingness.”⁸⁹ Rambo’s framing of witnessing in this way highlights the nature of trauma as well as our continued responsibility to care for those who experience trauma.

Witnessing is predicated on the notion that the fullness of the originating traumatic event is unavailable to the victim. In the process of witnessing, “the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, *not available* to its own speaker.”⁹⁰ At the same time, it is important to note that the listener never possesses the event or experience. To explain this, Shoshanna Felman draws upon Freud’s work surrounding inaccessible experience. She explains, “One does not have to *possess*, or *own* the truth, in order to effectively *bear witness* to it.”⁹¹ The concept of witnessing raises questions surrounding inaccessibility, truth, possession, and relationship. Ultimately, it holds these together in tension, highlighting how experience is simultaneously accessible and inaccessible, revealed in the relationship of witnessing yet still individual. These tensions will be further examined in Section 3.1.6.

While trauma may be an individual event, witnessing introduced a communal dynamic. The witness breaks the isolating nature of traumatic intrusions, instead accompanying the person through the belated nature of traumatic memory. While the witness does not experience the trauma in the same way as the victim, the very act of witnessing prevents the cyclical, isolating process of traumatic memory from going on unchecked. From an ecclesiological viewpoint, this speaks to the importance of

⁸⁹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 5.

⁹⁰ Shoshana Felman, “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 24.

⁹¹ Felman, 24. Emphasis original.

community in the ecclesial body. When one member of the body of Christ is hurt, the entire body is in pain. This is even more true when the wounds are inflicted within the ecclesial body. Witnessing steps into the isolating process of traumatic intrusions and offers support. It presents community and accompaniment instead of solitary suffering.

As a result, witnessing invites us to a new posture. By holding several truths together, witnessing affirms that experiences can be simultaneously present and absence, experienced and forgotten. Caruth explains, “By carrying that impossibility of knowing out of the empirical event itself, trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, *of impossibility*.”⁹² Witnessing of impossibility itself is a paradox, yet also speaks to a truth of trauma. Trauma is that which is overwhelming and impossible, an entrance of death into life. Witnessing recognizes these elements as true and valid, inviting us to a listening and witnessing that respects the paradoxes of trauma.

3.1.5 Healing

In an examination of wounds, it is necessary to examine the possibility of healing. Herman’s landmark work on trauma and recovery outlines three stages of traumatic healing: establishing safety, hearing the story, integration into everyday life.⁹³ Too often, western society rushes to focus on healing, ignoring the pain and suffering of the originating wound and the healing process. There is a desire to heal, and thus, relegate the

⁹² Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 10. Emphasis original.

⁹³ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

wound to the past. Trauma theory resists this urge, instead highlighting that wounds cannot be contained in the past.

Further, the physical process of healing is prioritized over spiritual or mental healing, or even equated as synonymous. Jones explains this phenomenon: “Too often we believe that when physical healing occurs, mental healing naturally follows, and that with time, all wounds heal. Such is not always the case, however. Violence often cuts so deeply into our minds that surface healings cover it over and, hidden away, allow it to expand.”⁹⁴ At its best, trauma studies calls attention to the far-reaching impact of trauma that extends beyond physical wounds.

Not only do wounds continue to make themselves known in the present, but attempts to hide wounds or rush healing results in their expansion. Herman asserts that understanding trauma is predicated on “rediscovering history.”⁹⁵ She explains that “denial, repression, and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level.”⁹⁶ This is a crucial point for this study, for when the church is confronted with the wounds of racism and sexism, there is often a response to hide the wounds. In the rare occasion when the wound is acknowledged, there is a tendency to rush to healing and fast-track the healing process. Both of these responses compound the wounds, causing them to fester, expand, and continue to impact the church. The communal process of rediscovering the history of the church, a history marked by racism and sexism, is a necessary first step for healing.

Though the tendency to rush to healing should be avoided, healing in and of itself is not to be shunned. Rather, our understanding of what healing is and how wounds are

⁹⁴ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 1.

⁹⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 2.

⁹⁶ Herman, 2.

healed must be informed by trauma. Trauma studies regards the wound as revelatory. The wound reveals and participates in the past, present, and future. Yet, the wound should also not be glorified. Healing must recognize the meaning contained in wounds while seeking not to make the wound continually present or exacerbated. Rambo describes the potential for meaning in the healing process. She states, “The challenge of healing, then, is to incorporate that experience into a framework of meaning— to make sense of it, in the full-orbed meaning of sense.”⁹⁷ This endeavor to incorporate the wound into a framework of meaning resonates with the call of theology.

Similarly, Jones envisions the work of theology as bound up with the work of healing. She summons the field, stating, “The balmlike work of theology and of religion is to uncover and mend such wounds.”⁹⁸ While Jones is not referring to ecclesiology specifically, this dissertation seeks to take up the healing work of theology to mend the wounds of racism and sexism. Thus, this dissertation seeks to uncover the wounds of racism and sexism in the church and begin the process of acknowledging, understanding, holding, and mending these wounds. This balmlike work of theology does not cover or hide wounds, but mends through recognition and working to eradicate the causes of wounds. The role of theology in considering wounds will be further examined in Section 3.2.

⁹⁷ Rambo, “Introduction,” 3–4.

⁹⁸ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 1.

3.1.6 Paradoxical Nature of Trauma

At its core, trauma is paradoxical. We see this in its structure and meaning, for “trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival.”⁹⁹ Throughout this examination of trauma, I have examined several paradoxical elements of trauma. While each of these tensions are addressed in detail in their respective sections, the paradoxical nature of wounds and trauma is important enough to merit its own proper examination. Drawing together these pieces, we can see that trauma “resists simple comprehension.”¹⁰⁰ I argue that the ability of wounds to hold tensions and paradox is a defining feature of trauma theory. Given this, Chapters 4 and 5 will explore an ecclesiology of the wounded church that is based in its ability to hold multiple truths.

Trauma is experienced in the originating event. However, it also is characterized by an overwhelming excess that is unable to be integrated, resulting in the phenomenon of belatedness. It is after the originating event that the breadth and depth of trauma is uncovered. This occurs through flashbacks as well as the reverberations of trauma throughout one’s life. The recurring nature of trauma is also marked by departure, leaving trauma as a past event. Thus, trauma contains a multitude of temporal truths. It is ongoing, yet historical. It is in the past, yet also experienced in the present. It haunts the future.¹⁰¹ Strictly chronological understandings of time are insufficient to understanding trauma, yet chronological time also continues. These paradoxes are challenges to

⁹⁹ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Caruth, 6.

¹⁰¹ For a thorough examination of the role of haunting in trauma, see Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

understanding wounds as inflicted in a particular moment, for they illustrate the ongoing nature of wounds.

Likewise, the act of witnessing highlights the paradoxical nature of trauma. Caruth's well-known assertion that trauma demands yet defies witness is rooted in this paradox. The belatedness of trauma invites witnessing, requiring another in order to experience one's own individual trauma. Yet the witness does not ever fully witness the trauma, for the witness does not experience the originating event. Further, community is at the core of this structure of trauma, yet isolation characterizes the experience of trauma. Once again, these paradoxes point to the need to affirm multiple truths as valid. Trauma is both individual and communal, isolating and shared, experienced in the originating event yet belated. None of these assertions negates the paradoxical pairing. Rather, trauma upholds all of these as true.

Overall, attending to wounds as informed by trauma theory requires that we hold many truths that may appear at first glance to contradict as instead valid. Van der Kolk summarizes learnings from trauma in the following way: "The essence of trauma is that it is overwhelming, unbelievable, and unbearable. Each patient demands that we suspend our sense of what is normal and accept that we are dealing with a dual reality: the reality of a relatively secure and predictable present that lives side by side with a ruinous, ever-present past."¹⁰² This dual reality is present around us today, yet often goes unnoticed beneath the surface. The lens of trauma theory invites us to reconsider definitions of normal and instead embrace a reality where many things can be true, even if those appear to contradict.

¹⁰² Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 197.

3.2 THEOLOGY AND TRAUMA THEORY

Given the relatively recent birth of contemporary trauma studies, it is an even more recent development that theology interacts with trauma studies. As trauma theory moves beyond a clinical study of psychoanalysis, it naturally begins to interact with other fields of study. Likewise, as theology extends beyond concerns traditionally considered theological and interacts with other fields of study in a response to the “signs of the times,” trauma studies is a conversation partner. Further, a major task of theology is responding to the suffering of the world. As Rambo reflected, “Suffering has always been around. The question is how we attend to it.”¹⁰³ Trauma studies invites theology to attend to a particular type of suffering by shining a light upon the unique attributes of trauma. Most importantly, analyzing the interaction of theology and trauma opens the door to conversation surrounding the resonance of theology and trauma. Rambo explains, “The relationship between theology and trauma theory does not rest in the degree to which theologians employ insights from trauma into the discipline of theology but in a resonance between two languages.”¹⁰⁴ This section analyzes the potential for trauma studies to raise fresh questions for the study of theology. Trauma studies can inform and enrich theological investigations into wounds and experiences of trauma. In this examination, I study three book-length examinations of trauma and theology from theologians Rambo, Jones and Jennifer Beste. Finally, I look to emerging theological questions that arise from the intersection of ecclesiology and trauma studies.

¹⁰³ Shelly Rambo et al., “‘Theologians Engaging Trauma’ Transcript,” *Theology Today* 68, no. 3 (October 2011): 229, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573611416539>.

¹⁰⁴ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 31.

3.2.1 Methodological Considerations

Trauma examines intrusions and wounds, looking at how the intolerable impacts individuals and communities. As discussed in Section 3.1, past and future mingle together at the site of the wound. Categories such as time no longer hold to be certain, but rather, are open to negotiation. An impact of trauma is that all categories, and indeed all meaning, become open to negotiation. Rambo describes the impact of this on theology, asking: “If theology is a meaning-making enterprise, how does the shattering of meaning in trauma impact religious claims about lived experience?”¹⁰⁵ The very meaning of meaning is impacted by trauma. As a result, theologians must ask questions in light of a trauma-filled world.

Predicated on the notion that God continues to reveal Godself to the world, theology must attend to human experience while also seeking to reflect on the mystery of God. As discussed in Chapter 1, *Gaudium et Spes* articulates the mission of the church as responding to the signs of the times. Perhaps no content is riper for theological reflection than suffering and trauma. Phillis Isabella Sheppard asserts, “Directing our attention to the brutal realities and traumata that are, very often, integral in some communities and people’s lives, makes theology worth the paper on which it is written.”¹⁰⁶ Sheppard’s connection of the worth of theology with the attachment to the brutal realities of trauma underscores the importance of attending to trauma. If theology cannot speak to the experience of suffering and the ongoingness of trauma, then it fails to attend to the ongoing revelation of God.

¹⁰⁵ Stephanie Arel and Shelly Rambo, eds., *Post-Traumatic Public Theology* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Arel and Rambo, 292.

Further, it is crucial that theology responds to and is formed by lived experience. Rather than beginning with theoretical commitments, theology must be born from the experience and practice. This methodological point of departure is strengthened when put in conversation with trauma studies. Sheppard connects the method of theology and trauma to focusing on lived experience. She explains, “Trauma demands that our theology and commitments begin on the ground, in the blood, sweat and tears, and the pain-induced lesions that are carved into our bodies and psyches, and in the intersubjective realm.”¹⁰⁷ Trauma underscores the importance of attending the “blood, sweat and tears,” the pain and anguish of daily realities. By attending to the site of the wound, theology listens to and is formed by the signs of the times.¹⁰⁸

By responding to suffering through the specific form of trauma, theologians exercise the fundamental call of theology to pay attention to God’s continued revelation in the world. Theology is not limited to an activity in classrooms, universities, and churches. Rambo asserts, “Theologians should be theologians everywhere, because we ask distinctive questions, contributing to education in unique ways.”¹⁰⁹ Part of being a theologian everywhere requires that theology say something meaningful in dialogue with trauma studies. This resonates with public theology, speaking to an audience beyond the academy and church. While the theologian must attend to the site of the wound, this does not require that theologians become psychologists or neurobiologists. Sheppard explains this distinction: “The role of the theologian is to help make sense of trauma without

¹⁰⁷ Arel and Rambo, 292.

¹⁰⁸ By beginning with a specific instance of suffering in trauma, theology and trauma studies resembles the methodological commitments of liberation theology where the point of departure is a particular experience of suffering, such as poverty.

¹⁰⁹ Rambo et al., “‘Theologians Engaging Trauma’ Transcript,” 235.

claiming to be *the one* who is able to make sense.”¹¹⁰ The theologian is called to attend to the implications of trauma, yet does not need to be the person making sense of trauma. Instead, the theologian assumes a new posture informed by trauma studies, holding the paradoxical nature of trauma with a reverence for mystery. Jones reflects upon the theological task, stating, “It is hard to think of a task more central to Christian theology as a whole than this one: finding the language to speak grace in a form that allows it to come toward humanity in ways as gentle as they are profound and powerful.”¹¹¹ This combination of gentleness and power capture part of the disposition shared by trauma studies and theology. Trauma studies shines a light upon previously unexplored dimensions of the human situation. As such, it has the potential to be an important tool for theologians in exploring human experience today.

This posture informed by trauma studies takes a wider, softer gaze. It holds the mystery of trauma in awe, recognizing that temporality is arranged in mysterious ways at the site of the wound. It holds the tension of the seemingly contradictory aspects of trauma, allowing for the possibility of many truths. The posture informed by trauma studies allows death and life to co-mingle together at the site of the wound, challenging strictly referential understandings of time and experience. It regards ambiguity not as incompleteness, but as wholeness. Rambo explores the new posture informed by the intermingling of death and life. She posits, “Trauma forces us beyond a familiar theological paradigm of life and death, and places us, instead, on the razed terrain of what remains. Trauma presses theologians to seek new language to express God’s relationship

¹¹⁰ Arel and Rambo, *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, 293. Emphasis original.

¹¹¹ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, x.

to the world. This is not a new task. In fact, it is the perennial work of theology.”¹¹² The mingling of death and life may push theology to new limits, but as Rambo asserts, this is not foreign to the theological task. Rather, the theological task must always find new ways to reflect upon the mystery of God present in our midst. Trauma studies adds dimension and texture to our understandings of death and life, time and structure, presence and absence, experience and departure. As such, it deepens our experience of the mystery of the human experience and the mystery of God.

Trauma calls attention to the wide range of human experience that is not accessible or known in traditional formats. It highlights that there are experiences within us that have been lost to traditional memory yet continue to make themselves known in the present. Trauma tells us that there are aspects of memory, experience, temporality, and even core components of what it means to be a human person that cannot be fully known or understood. At its best, trauma enriches our understanding of the human person and points to the elements that are unknown and unable to be articulated.

While much of trauma studies points to what can be known beyond traditional formats, there can be a tendency in the psychoanalytical aspects of trauma studies to highlight the biology or statistical significance of the human person at the expense of the transcendence. M. Shawn Copeland reflects on the implications on our theological understanding of the person as a result of trauma studies. In a dialogue with other theologians transcribed by Rambo, Copeland explains, “The thing about theology, in terms of our vocabulary use, that struck a chord in me, is that we have a way of thinking about the human person where the human person is not reduced to a statistic, a problem, or a social fact. This is the issue of transcendence of the human person that isn’t quite

¹¹² Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 14.

captured in psychoanalytic, sociological, or some other language.”¹¹³ When using trauma studies as a tool to understand woundedness, theology can highlight the transcendence of the human person.

While trauma focuses attention upon the site of the wound, it is important that this does not transform into a glorification of the wound. By taking wounds seriously, there is a risk that trauma studies exalts wounds. Given this risk, it is necessary to explore how wounds function in trauma theory. Theology, specifically feminist and womanist theology, can serve as a helpful corrective to this tendency.

In bringing theology and trauma theory together, theologians seek to attribute theological meaning to wounds. To ignore wounds is to ignore not only the suffering but also the lingering impact of trauma on persons and communities. This is not an option for theology. At the same time, it is important not to glorify wounds. Rambo articulates this tension: “The challenge lies here to attribute theological meaning to wounds, because they mark identity in significant ways, but to not reinscribe the suffering as definitive for wounds.”¹¹⁴ In discussing the power of wounds, it is important not to do so in a way that glorifies suffering or depicts a definitive view of wounds. Rather, the posture of trauma promotes an openness for the many forms that wounds might take and the multitude of ways that they continue to live on today. As a result, Rambo summarizes the challenge posed to the theologian in the midst of this tension: “Thus, the challenge is not *whether* to regard wounds, but *how* to regard them theologically.”

The question of how to acknowledge the importance of suffering without contributing to a sense of redemptive suffering is a question that has been a part of

¹¹³ Rambo et al., “‘Theologians Engaging Trauma’ Transcript,” 229.

¹¹⁴ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 64.

Christian theology since its inception, rooted in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Rambo reflects on the role of suffering in Christianity, remarking, “Insofar as theology ascribed to a certain governing logic of the passion and resurrection, theology is complicit in covering over suffering, in offering a redemptive gloss over its deep wound.”¹¹⁵ Suffering and wounds are firmly rooted in Christian tradition, yet do not have a monolithic interpretation. Christian theology is filled with many examples of the glorification of suffering, various interpretations of wounds, and differing interpretations of redemptive suffering.

Notably for this dissertation, feminist and womanist theology has a wealth of responses for acknowledging the impact of suffering without elevating suffering as necessary for salvation. Womanist theology, especially the work of Delores Williams, calls attention to the real danger of redemptive suffering. Williams’s landmark statement that “there is nothing divine in the blood of the cross” asserts that suffering is not and cannot be considered redemptive.¹¹⁶ By shifting the focus from the cross to the life and ministry of Jesus, Williams affirms the importance of touching wounds as rooted in Jesus’ ministry to the marginalized. While wounds are central to the Christian story, they are not normative for Christian living.¹¹⁷ Rather, Christian theology must firmly stand against the glorification of suffering. “One of the chief concerns of feminist theologians is that Christian theologies of crucifixion and resurrection transmit a toxic logic of redemptive suffering that does not alleviate women’s suffering but rather perpetuates it.

¹¹⁵ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 16.

¹¹⁶ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, Anniversary Edition edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013).

¹¹⁷ Christian living may entail opposition. Following the Gospel has consequences, as the long history of martyrdom reveals. This statement does not imply that wounds are not a potential outcome of following the Gospel. Rather, wounds inflicted by racism and sexism are always antithetical to the Gospel.

Thus, ascribing sacred status to wounds inevitably ends in sanctifying the suffering rather than healing it.”¹¹⁸ Trauma theory can serve as a tool for theology in how to attend to wounds without glorifying wounds.

The ongoingness of trauma impacts understandings of what it means to be human and the formation of meaning, making it a natural conversation partner for philosophy and theology. Rambo notes the wider significance of trauma studies, as the field “testifies to the fact that trauma is not simply a category that can be confined to the fields of psychology and counseling; it has broadened to present profound challenges to epistemology, constructions of the self, and theological understandings of time.”¹¹⁹ In theology, trauma studies has been incorporated into the fields of theological anthropology, systematic theology, ethics, and scripture studies.¹²⁰ As will be explored in Section 3.2.2, Rambo, Jones, and Beste have explored how trauma impacts notions of sin, grace, and personhood. This dissertation acts as an initial endeavor to utilize trauma studies as a tool in the field of ecclesiology.

3.2.2 Major Contributions

The interaction of theology and trauma studies is a relatively new advancement, with several monographs published in the 2000s. In this section, I will analyze three major contributions. These contributions highlight three book-length examinations of

¹¹⁸ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 64.

¹¹⁹ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 5.

¹²⁰ There has been many recent doctoral dissertations and conference papers in these areas. See the work of Julia Feder, Erin Kidd, Stephanie Edwards, and Corinna Guerrero.

trauma theory and theology.¹²¹ They should not be understood as the only scholarship on this issue, but rather, as the most prominent with the most far-reaching impact on other scholarship in trauma studies and theology.

3.2.2.1 Shelly Rambo

At the forefront of the use of trauma studies in theology is Shelly Rambo. A student of Caruth, Rambo has published substantial work on the theological implications of trauma studies. To this end, she has published two books and several articles. Her work is cited prominently in other works of trauma studies, and she is widely regarded as an expert in the field.

In her first book *Spirit and Trauma* (2010), Rambo develops a theology of remaining. She examines the relationship between theology and trauma and pays special attention to the subjects of witness, departure, and remaining. Traditionally in theology, there is attention on death and life, beginnings and endings. A trauma-informed lens, however, focuses attention on the middle. In explaining the middle, Rambo states, “Because of its precarious positioning, the middle can easily be covered over and ignored. It is subject to the elisions of time, body and language and therefore is difficult to witness. The good news of Christianity for those who experience trauma rests in the capacity to theologize this middle.”¹²² To this end, she dialogues with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s concept of “Holy Saturday,” holding it up as a ripe theological symbol that connects life, death and resurrection, much like trauma. Holy Saturday represents a place

¹²¹ A fourth book-length examination by Dirke Lange was published in 2010. See Dirk G. Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010). I am omitting Lange’s contribution in this examination, for his focus on Lutheran liturgy does not have the same resonance with Catholic ecclesiology as the contributions by Rambo, Jones, and Beste. As a student of Caruth, Lange’s contributions largely follow in the footsteps of Caruth.

¹²² Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 8.

of the middle between death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday. Rambo also looks to the Gospel of John as an example. From the location of the middle, Rambo seeks to “examine the ways in which theological language, newly conceived through the lens of trauma, witnesses to what remains.”¹²³ This result can have a significant impact on theology. “Concepts like love, divine presence, and redemption are reshaped through this language of witness.”¹²⁴ While Rambo focuses on redemption, her work has implications for other loci of theology.

In *Resurrecting Wounds* (2017), Rambo focuses her examination of trauma and theology on the topic of wounds. While she does focus attention in the introduction on trauma in general, Rambo spends the majority of this book applying trauma theory to specific wounds. In this effort, she examines John Calvin and the resurrected body, Macrina and scars, race as a wound in the age of Ferguson in the United States, and veteran healing as informed by the resurrection appearances in the Gospel of John. These investigations reveal a layered understanding of wounds, lifting up the multivalent meanings of wounds, scars, body, resurrection and healing. Rambo looks to a central paradox of Christianity, a faith focused upon the wounds of crucifixion and resurrection, yet also engaged in a history of erasing wounds. In examining after-living and the ongoingness of wounds, Rambo explains that “these acknowledge that there is something of those wounds still persisting in life, that there is no pure space to stand apart from them, and that we need to think creatively and constructively in the midst of these

¹²³ Rambo, 8.

¹²⁴ Rambo, 26.

realities.”¹²⁵ As a result, Rambo offers a robust account of woundedness that informs theological understandings of resurrection as well as pastoral practices.

Taken as a whole, Rambo’s work serves as foundational texts in theological works that are grounded in questions posed by trauma theory. Her work is seminal in the field, serving as the launching point for other inquiries. Notably, her application of “Holy Saturday” and the articulation of the “ongoingness” of wounds serve as significant contributions to the field. Taken together, these concepts argue against a rush to healing. They underscore that trauma’s impact cannot be relegated to the past and invite us to stay with the wound in a “Holy Saturday” period. This is especially important for this dissertation that focuses on the far-reaching impact of wounds in the ecclesial body.

3.2.2.2 Serene Jones

In *Trauma + Grace* (2009), Serene Jones reexamines the concept of grace in light of individual and collective trauma. The question driving her research is, “How do people, whose hearts and minds have been wounded by violence, come to feel and know the redeeming power of God’s grace?”¹²⁶ At the core of this examination is a vision of grace that continues to be known and felt even in the most desperate of circumstances.

Jones traces trauma through narrative in the introductory chapter of the book, telling the story of Leah, a woman living with PTSD. Jones mentored Leah at her parish. Attending worship triggers flashbacks and dissociations for Leah, providing Jones with a witnessing account of how trauma is intertwined with liturgy and faith. Leah’s story grounds the collection of essays, providing a lived example of the importance and

¹²⁵ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 145.

¹²⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, viii.

urgency of this work. Jones also examines collective trauma of September 11, miscarriage and prenatal loss, and Calvin's commentary on the psalms. Jones also focuses upon images of the cross and points to encounters of grace as a source of hope and healing. This wide-ranging assessment captures the breadth of trauma studies and potential intersections with theology.

Most significantly, Jones seeks to speak to how one can experience grace when their capacity to know or experience is impacted by trauma. She explains, "Central to the overall theme is an investigation of the myriad ways both individual and collective violence affect a person's capacity to know, to remember, to act, and to love, and how those various circumstances potentially challenge theological understandings of how grace is experienced, how Jesus's death is remembered, and how the ethical character of Christian practices is assessed."¹²⁷ We live in a world where violence impacts us all, whether directly or indirectly. We also live in a world that God loves, where God continues to make Godself known to us through grace. These two convictions undergird¹²⁸ Jones's theological examination in *Trauma + Grace*. The presence of trauma does not undercut God's relationship with us, but rather, enriches our theological examination. Jones's contribution demonstrates how questions presented by trauma theory can deepen our theological inquiry on a wide range of topics ranging from questions of grace to liturgical and pastoral studies.

¹²⁷ Jones, vii.

¹²⁸ Jones, ix.

3.2.2.3 Jennifer Beste

Jennifer Beste engages in an analysis of theological anthropology and ethics in light of the contemporary trauma theory in her monograph *God and the Victim* (2007). Specifically, Beste engages Rahner's examination of human freedom and places it in conversation with the experiences of female victims of incest. Rahner's theological anthropology is based upon a sense of freedom. God gifts us with the freedom to respond to God's self-offer of grace through self-determination and loving our neighbor. However, the lived reality of trauma survivors, especially incest survivors, reveals a life marked by a lack of freedom, where intrusive thoughts, compulsive behaviors, and desire to self-harm or die depicts a picture of a life that is decidedly not free. It is against this background that Beste examines what human freedom, and by extension the human person, might mean in situations marked by severe trauma. While Rahner's theology is not unique for its emphasis on freedom, Beste focuses on his work due to his influence on theology and philosophy.

Beste argues for a revised theology of freedom. This new articulation of freedom "needs to acknowledge the possibility that interpersonal harm has the power to destroy a person's capacity to realize sufficient freedom to love self, neighbor and God."¹²⁹ Similar to Jones, Beste's work addresses questions of how to understand grace in light of profound suffering and a particular instance of trauma.¹³⁰ Beste dialogues with feminist conceptions of self and agency that differ from Rahner's articulations.

While Beste critiques Rahner's articulation of human freedom as insufficient, she argues that Rahner's work does not buckle under this pressure. Instead, she highlights

¹²⁹ Jennifer Erin Beste, *God and the Victim: Traumatic Intrusions on Grace and Freedom*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14.

¹³⁰ Jones served as Beste's co-director of her dissertation, from which *God and the Victim* is revised.

that it is possible to construct a more adequate Rahnerian theology of freedom and grace.¹³¹ Informed by feminists and trauma theory, such a revised account of a theology of freedom would focus on (1) acknowledging “to a greater degree the power of sin against one’s neighbor to disable that neighbor’s freedom to respond to God’s grace”¹³² and (2) articulate “how God’s grace is mediated through loving, interpersonal relations.”¹³³ From this, Beste looks to the ethical implications that spring from this understanding of self, freedom, and God’s grace.

Beste’s inquiry lays important groundwork for this dissertation, for she engages Rahner’s theology in light of challenges presented by trauma theory. She demonstrates that there is room within Rahner’s theology to hold the tensions presented by trauma theory. While her focus is on human freedom and questions of theological anthropology, Rahner’s theology is such that anthropology and ecclesiology are intimately connected. Beste effectively brings together the challenges posed by trauma theory to an engaged analysis of Rahner’s work, demonstrating one possible avenue for utilizing trauma theory as a lens to pose new, challenging questions to tradition and emerge with a deeper understanding of both theology and the human condition.

3.2.3 Remaining Questions

These three contributions significantly contribute to the ways we can understand trauma studies as a tool to deepen theological inquiry. By taking seriously the experience of persons living in the aftermath of trauma, they engage key theological themes such as

¹³¹ Beste, *God and the Victim*, 16.

¹³² Beste, 16.

¹³³ Beste, 16.

grace, redemption, and freedom. These are important endeavors, and theology is well suited to have these examinations continue in greater depth. Far from answering all the questions raised by theology and trauma theory, the work of Rambo, Jones, and Beste raise further questions for theology. They highlight central themes of trauma studies, such as agency and human freedom, in order to rethink theological categories and claims.

In this dissertation, I look to the challenge presented by trauma theory to our understanding of the church. Chapter 2 provided an account of racism and sexism as wounds in the church. This chapter introduced trauma theory as a tool to deepen our understanding of wounds. Foundational to understanding wounds is the paradoxical nature of wounds. Trauma demands and simultaneously defies witness.¹³⁴ Past, present and future co-mingle at the site of the wound, challenging traditional notions of temporality as strictly chronological and referential. Wounds demand to be seen, yet remain hidden and elusive. They cannot be erased, yet also cannot be completely understood or known. Examinations of trauma and woundedness lift up this paradoxical nature of wounds.

How can we understand the church as wounded in light of the depiction of wounds in trauma theory? Trauma theory invites a new posture in front of wounds, a posture that holds the mystery and multiple truths contained by wounds. It also requires a language that is not straightforward, a “language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding.”¹³⁵

Any ecclesiology on wounds in the church must account for the paradoxical nature of wounds. An account of the church as wounded must have the power and

¹³⁴ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 5.

¹³⁵ Caruth, 5.

flexibility to hold multiple truths together. It must account for the porousness of experience and highlight relationships that affirm multiple truth claims as valid. Such an ecclesiology resists absolutes and embraces a posture that holds the mystery of trauma.

Further, a trauma-informed analysis of wounds impacts the ecclesiological imagination. Jones succinctly summarizes that trauma can “override your powers of both action and imagination.”¹³⁶ While the overriding of the power of action is easily depicted, as this outcome is often depicted as related to PTSD, the impact on the power of imagination is less often considered. This impact looks to how the mind imagines things, including spiritually and emotionally. An ecclesiological investigation raises the question of how wounds impact the ecclesiological imagination. Trauma overrides the power of imagination, for its magnitude and destruction does not allow the victim to imagine life out of the shadow of the wound. So too, with the church, wounds haunt the hope for a future where racism and sexism are not part of the church. If one does not consider wounds in the church, one risks a distorted ecclesiological imagination that is warped by racism and sexism yet masquerades as neutral or free from this influence.

A trauma-informed analysis of the ecclesiological imagination seeks to uncover the influence of wounds on the ecclesiological imagination. It makes visible the impact of wounds that is too often rendered invisible. It acknowledges that racism and sexism have wounded the church, and that these wounds need attention. To ignore these wounds does not undercut the holiness of the church, but rather, allows these wounds to fester. Trauma theory upholds that wounds have a far-reaching impact, and must be acknowledged in order to begin the process of healing.

¹³⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 15.

Trauma studies attest that there is never a time where the originating wound disappears. Time is divided into a “before” and “after” the originating event; there is no returning to a time that is identical with “before.” This does not result in despair, for healing is possible, as we can rebuild coping processes, identity and imagination. Ecclesiologically, this demands that the church acknowledges the presence of wounds within itself and begins the process of healing. This process should not seek to return to a time when the church was free of wounds, for that time does not exist. Rather, trauma studies underscores that the only way forward is through acknowledging the gravity of wounds and living into the new reality.

Trauma studies can pose a challenge to ecclesiology, yet ecclesiology has the capacity to hold these challenges. Rahner’s ecclesiology, specifically his articulation on the church as sacrament and symbol, is able to respond to the challenges posed by trauma theory. I now turn to an in-depth examination of Rahner’s ecclesiology of church as symbol and sacrament in order to demonstrate how such an understanding has the capacity to hold the paradoxical nature of wounds. Such an ecclesiology acknowledges the significance of wounds while also seeking to create a church where wounds are revelatory without festering or continuing to wound the ecclesial body.

4.0 THE CONTRIBUTION OF KARL RAHNER'S ECCLESIOLOGY

In striving to create an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds, it is essential to have an understanding of the church¹ grounded in lived experience. In considering the wounds of the church, I surveyed the contributions of contemporary trauma theory towards the creation of a rich, nuanced understanding of wounds. Taken as a whole, trauma theory presents wounds as paradoxical. Past, present, and future co-mingle at the site of the wound, troubling a strictly referential sense of time. Wounds are individual and communal, demanding yet defying a witness. They command the attention of others, yet their depth extends beyond that which anyone can see, invoking a sense of mystery. In order to build an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds, theology must attend to these elements of wounds. Failing to attend to these aspects of wounds runs the risk of creating a shallow understanding of the woundedness of the church, allowing the wounds to persist and continuing to harm the church.

In this chapter, I examine Karl Rahner's contribution to a Roman Catholic ecclesiology that has the potential to respond to the challenges presented by trauma theory. Rahner's ecclesiology is capacious enough to take seriously the challenges of

¹ Remaining consistent, I will continue to refer to church with a lower-case "c." Karl Rahner, the focus of this chapter, refers to "Church" with an upper-case C. This is a result of translations since "Kirche" is upper-case due to the capitalization of German nouns. In quotations of Rahner's work and other theologians discussing Rahner, I will maintain the upper-case "C" where included originally by the author. In my own analysis, I will maintain the use of a lower-case "c." This is not to be understood as two different churches, but rather, a reflection of contemporary ecclesiological discourse that generally favors a lower-case church, as outlined in Chapter 1.

ecclesial paradoxes and appreciate mystery as foundational to the nature of the church. As a result, Rahner's ecclesiology serves as the basis for a vision that attends to the wounds of racism and sexism in the church. I selected Rahner as an interlocutor for three reasons. First, Rahner's articulation of church as sacrament and symbol has the capacity to hold the paradoxes illuminated by trauma theory, as I will explore in depth in Section 4.1. Next, Rahner underscores the importance of theology responding to context. He argued that the church must respond to the concerns of humanity. His call for theology to be done in a "new key" resonates with this dissertation, which attends to the wounds of the world and the church. Certainly, consciousness surrounding the wounds of racism and sexism and the expanded knowledge of trauma theory present a new context to which theology must respond. Rahner sought to engage the challenges posed by modern philosophy and sciences, while also placing theology at the service of Christian life.² Finally, Rahner's influence on contemporary ecclesiology is monumental. His work has shaped contemporary ecclesiology, especially at the Second Vatican Council and its ongoing reception. To dialogue with Rahner is to dialogue with significant areas of ecclesiology.

This chapter begins by examining the central features of Rahner's ecclesiology. Rahner's ecclesiology, specifically his work surrounding the church as symbol and sacrament, has the ability to respond to the contradictions that are inherent in wounds. In Section 4.1, I will explore the most salient aspects of Rahner's theology and ecclesiology that are ripe for dialogue with contemporary trauma theory. Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology is founded on the notion that God's self-communication in grace is the

² William V. Dych, "Theology in a New Key," in *A World of Grace*, ed. Leo J. O'Donovan (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 2.

source of the church's being. Given this, there is always room for the church to grow in its relationship to God. Since we are never free of our need for conversion, the church must always remain open to conversion. Yet this does not dismiss the special role of the church. Rahner calls for the church to be open to conversion while also affirming the church as primary sacrament.

Section 4.2 applies the key features of Rahner's ecclesiology to the challenges presented by trauma theory, providing a framework for an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds. Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology provides language to discuss the church as a product of grace and history, articulating the mission of the church in the world while keeping sight of the eschatological orientation of the church. The paradoxical elements of the church do not conflict to Rahner, but are essential aspects that deepen the mystery and mission of the church. By calling attention to hidden realities and affirming the connection to mystery, Rahner's ecclesiology provides a foundation for an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds. His ecclesiology fosters the space to hold together seemingly contradictory concepts. Rahner's ecclesiology looks to the future while remaining grounded in tradition, opening up a moment of convergence with the backward and forward looking sense of time that characterizes wounds. Finally and most importantly, this chapter provides the groundwork for an ecclesial vision that can respond to the challenges presented by wounds that I will construct in Chapter 5.

4.1 KEY FEATURES OF RAHNER'S ECCLESIOLOGY

Over half of Rahner's writings are on the topic of the church,³ spanning a range of ecclesiological topics. Rahner's ecclesiology is best understood within his overall theological commitments, for his ecclesiology is a natural continuation of his theology of grace. God's self-communication through Christ and the church is at the core of Rahner's ecclesiology. God gives of Godself to the world. This is not an abstract theological concept, but rather, a real and concrete gift that is actualized in history. Grace has an incarnational tendency, seeking to express itself or Godself in history. The high point of God's self-communication is Jesus Christ. The church, through the work of the Holy Spirit, makes present Christ's saving grace in history. This is not a continuation of the incarnation, but a unique presence of God in the world. Since God is inseparable from all human experience, so, properly understood, is the church. Richard Lennan summarizes the foundations of grace in Rahner's ecclesiology: "God's self-communication in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit brings about the church as the social and historical locus of the encounter with God, thereby opening possibilities that not only transcend the limits of humanity's longing and planning, but also invite a response."⁴ This free response to God's self-offer is paradoxically enabled by God.

Rahner emphasized the indispensable role of the church. The church is not one organization among many. Further, as we will see in Section 4.1.3.3, sin does not eradicate the special role of the church. For Rahner, the church has an indispensable role

³ Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* (Oxford: New York, 1995), 10.

⁴ Richard Lennan, "Narcissistic Aestheticism? An Assessment of Karl Rahner's Sacramental Ecclesiology," *Philosophy & Theology* 25, no. 2 (2013): 253.

in salvation. This idea first appeared in his writing as early as 1947, where he discussed the importance of membership in the church in light of *Mystici Corporis Christi*.⁵ While the role of membership in the church and “anonymous Christians” act as a lightning rod in ecclesiological analysis of Rahner’s writings and are beyond the focus of this study, the important undercurrent is that Rahner did not see membership in the church as “a passport to heaven”⁶ nor did he discount the important role of the church. The church is not the source of salvation and cannot be reduced to the means of salvation. Instead, the church is the fruit and vanguard of salvation and the avenue through which God offers salvation to the world.⁷ As a sacrament of Christ, the church is an essential aspect of the transmission and presence of God’s grace in the world.

This section analyzes the most salient aspects of Rahner’s theology for an analysis of ecclesial wounds in conjunction with trauma theory. I begin with the role of mystery, which serves as an overarching theme for Rahner’s ecclesiology. Next, I examine Rahner’s articulation of church as sacrament and symbol. Following this analysis, I look at several corollaries to the sacramental understanding of the church, including the paradoxical elements of Rahner’s theology, and the eschatological orientation of the church.

⁵ Karl Rahner, “Membership of the Church According to the Teaching of Pius XII’s Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*,” trans. Karl-Heinz Kruger, vol. 2, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963), 1–88.

⁶ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 43.

⁷ Karl Rahner, “The Church and the Parousia of Christ,” trans. Boniface Kruger and Karl-Heinz Kruger, vol. 6, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1969), 297.

4.1.1 Mystery

God is mystery. Rahner's view of mystery undergirds his theology of revelation, which is also his theology of God.⁸ Rahner understands mystery as primordial and permanent.⁹ Mystery does not refer to a puzzle to be solved or a problem that will become clear if one simply contemplates it or thinks about it for an extended period of time. This is a shift from the view characteristic of the scholastic era, where mysteries were characterized as leaving one feeling puzzled.¹⁰ Mystery is ineradicable, for even in the beatific vision God's mystery will remain and be "the very object of our blissful love,"¹¹ for mystery is part of the reality of God.

We are oriented to God as primordial mystery, yet also marked by freedom. Rahner explains, "For the Whither of an absolute transcendence of freedom, the nameless being which is at the disposal of none and disposes of all, which rules over transcendence by being loving freedom, is uniquely and precisely that which we can call 'holy' in the strict and original sense."¹² The human person is the "being of the holy mystery" and also "God is present to [the person] as the holy mystery."¹³ God as mystery seeks to be in relationship with us, yet God is always beyond our understanding.

Michael Buckley reflects on mystery in Rahner's work, stating, "Mystery is not that which I cannot know. Mystery is that which I cannot exhaust, which I cannot go beyond, which I cannot transcend. In this sense, Mystery is incomprehensibility—I can

⁸ Richard Lennan, "Karl Rahner," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Paul Avis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 432.

⁹ Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," trans. K Smyth, vol. 4, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 36–73.

¹⁰ Rahner, 42–44.

¹¹ Rahner, 41.

¹² Rahner, 53.

¹³ Rahner, 54. Emphasis original.

never enclose it in definition.”¹⁴ Buckley brings together the importance of transcendence when reflecting on the mystery of God. This sense of being unable to grasp mystery is not constraining, but rather, freeing, for we can experience fully our transcendence in light of the total mystery of God. Dych elaborates: “This transcendence brings us not to a content of knowledge which we grasp, but to an absolute question. This experience of the unattainable and incomprehensible we call the experience of mystery.”¹⁵ Affirming the transcendence of God, Rahner also affirms God’s immanence. God reveals Godself in the here and now and is radically close, while also transcendent. This relationship will be explored in greater detail in Section 4.1.3.1. Taken together, the transcendence and immanence of God invites us to enter more deeply into relationship with God.

God as mystery does not mean that we cannot say anything about God, but that what we say is incomplete. God is beyond our understanding not because God is unintelligible or because we lack the faculties to understand, but because recognizing God as beyond our comprehension is the proper activity for humans.¹⁶ In discussing Rahner’s understanding of God as mystery, Peter Joseph Fritz summarizes, “All words have some bearing on God. At the same time, any words one sends into the silence of God do not grasp God. Instead, by these words God grasps the one who says them.”¹⁷ Thus, the mystery of God must be considered within relationship, allowing oneself to be grasped by the mystery of God.

¹⁴ Michael J. Buckley, “Within the Holy Mystery,” in *A World of Grace*, ed. Leo J. O’Donovan (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 40.

¹⁵ Dych, “Theology in a New Key,” 9.

¹⁶ Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology.”

¹⁷ Peter Joseph Fritz, *Karl Rahner’s Theological Aesthetics* (Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 159, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt9qdqhm>.

God as mystery undergirds the church as symbol. The paradoxical elements of Rahner's ecclesiology lead us deeper into the mystery of the church. There is much that we can say about the church, and Rahner's ecclesiological analysis certainly does that. But an examination of the foundation of the church, apostolic succession, structures and organization of the hierarchy, the church in the world, and any more of a number of ecclesiological topics does not exhaust all that can be said about the church. Due to God's presence in the church and the church's unique salvific role, the church participates in this mystery.¹⁸ As I will more fully explore in Section 4.1.2, God is present in the church but the church is not synonymous with God, and as a sacrament the church is always open to conversion. At its best, the church deepens our experience of mystery and ushers us deeper into our relationship with God.

The element of mystery in Rahner's ecclesiology invites a posture of reverence. Rahner's ecclesiology is not a collection of disparate ecclesiological topics, but rather, an invitation to enter into the mystery of God. Rahner underscores that the mystery of God is more than we can bear.¹⁹ Holding the mystery of the church and the mystery of God does not mean that we ignore the concrete, but rather, calls for a posture of regarding reality and mystery as connected through the relationship of uncreated grace. Rahner explains, "Grace does not imply the promise and the beginning of the elimination of the mystery, but the radical possibility of the absolute proximity of the mystery, which is not eliminated by its proximity, but really presented as mystery."²⁰ The immanence of God does not erase or decrease the transcendence of God, for God remains absolute mystery

¹⁸ This is also demonstrated in *Lumen Gentium*, which begins with an examination of the church as mystery. Vatican Council II, "Lumen Gentium," chap. 1.

¹⁹ Rahner, "I Believe in the Church," 101.

²⁰ Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 55.

while also revealing Godself to creation. In looking to the paradoxical elements of Rahnerian ecclesiology, we must do so in a posture of mystery, for these elements are not polar opposites but exist in relationship with one another. Pondering this relationship invites us to enter into the mystery of God. Even with all of Rahner's ecclesiological analysis, there remains a sense that there is always more to be said, or rather, cannot be said. This is the mystery of the church, which participates in the mystery of God.

4.1.2 Church as Sacrament and Symbol

The sacramental nature of the church is the cornerstone of Rahner's ecclesiology.²¹ The church is the primordial sacrament, *Grundsakrament*, in which all other sacraments participate. In order to understand the depths of Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology, we must first examine his understanding of symbols and sacrament.

As is common in sacramental theology, Rahner distinguishes between a symbol and a sign. A sign is readily intelligible. Signs point to other objects or realities that are also readily intelligible.²² Symbols, by contrast, participate in the reality in which they represent, or in Rahner's terms, "in which one reality renders another present."²³ Symbols are effective, in that they make present what they represent. Karen Kilby points to a kiss between lovers as a symbol.²⁴ The kiss represents the love shared between a couple, but to see a kiss as a sign or signal of this love is to miss an important dimension. A kiss also

²¹ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 15–44.

²² Karl Rahner, "Theology of the Symbol," trans. H. Riley, vol. 4, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 225.

²³ Rahner, 225.

²⁴ Karen Kilby, *A Brief Introduction to Karl Rahner* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 40.

cultivates the love and unity of the couple. The kiss is a symbol, for it “is not external to the love which it symbolizes, but is a part of it.”²⁵ It brings about that which it represents.

Further, Rahner distinguishes between types and gradations of symbols. He critiques the naming of thing commonly referred to as symbols, but which have no *intrinsic* connection to that which they represent, such as a country’s flag. To Rahner, these are less important symbols, and may actually function as signs in certain ways. Instead, Rahner devotes his attention to “real symbols” which are “the highest and most primordial manner in which one reality can represent another.”²⁶ A *Realsymbol* exists in a “differentiated unity” with that which it represents.²⁷ This unity is a key feature of his understanding of symbols, for it underscores the unique and intimate relationship between the symbol and the reality that is symbolized. A symbol of this degree renders another reality present.²⁸

What sets Rahner’s theology of symbol apart from other similar theologies of symbol is his emphasis on the expressive nature of all reality. Rahner famously asserted, “All beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature.”²⁹ To Rahner, everything expresses itself in order to become itself. The categorical, or that which can be experienced immediately, is not all that there is to know about something. Rather, it is intimately connected to the transcendental, or the deeper reality that the categorical expresses,³⁰ a relationship that

²⁵ Kilby, 40.

²⁶ Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 225.

²⁷ Rahner, 224.

²⁸ Rahner, 225.

²⁹ Rahner, 224.

³⁰ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 20.

will be explored more in Section 4.1.3.1. The Trinity is an example of the expressive nature of symbols. Kilby explains,

Just as a symbol is neither identical with nor simply different from that which it symbolizes, so the Son is distinct from and yet one with the Father. Just as a symbol expresses what it symbolizes, so the Son... can be called the self-expression of the Father. And just as a being becomes itself in being expressed in its symbol, so the Father would not be the Father without the Son.³¹

This expressive nature is fundamental to Rahner's doctrine of God, Trinitarian theology, understanding of symbols, and relatedly, his understanding of church. It also lifts up the paradoxical elements of Rahner's ecclesiology, for the symbol is not identical with that which is symbolized, yet remains inseparable.

Rahner's view of sacraments comes from this understanding of symbols. The expressive nature of all beings carries over to grace, which also "needs to be symbolized, to be made concrete and tangible, in order fully to be what it is."³² Sacraments participate in the reality in which they represent; they make grace concrete. In baptism, we can point to a concrete experience of grace when a person becomes a member of the church and is anointed priest, prophet, and king. Rahner's sacramental theology necessarily is connected to his ecclesiology. He critiques the average view of sacraments that understands the Church as participating in sacraments because it dispenses sacraments. To Rahner, this view is inadequate, for it neglects the sacramental nature of the church itself. The church is the primary sacrament of Christ who is the fundamental sacrament. All other sacraments, such as the seven sacraments, flow from the sacramental nature of the church. Thus, sacraments are not to be understood as the only moments of grace in the world, but rather, the church as *Grundsakrament* attests to the ongoing presence of

³¹ Kilby, *A Brief Introduction to Karl Rahner*, 43.

³² Kilby, 44.

God in the world. Rahner does not diminish the role of sacraments, instead affirming that the sacraments are “the eschatologically efficacious word of God, as the absolute self-realization of the Church, according to its essence as the primary sacrament.”³³

The lynchpin between Rahner’s theology of symbol and sacramental ecclesiology is his Christology. The ultimate symbol of God is Logos, the self-expression of the Father. Again, this theology of Logos as symbol is connected to Rahner’s theology of grace, for he asserts “It is because God ‘must’ express himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly.”³⁴ This expression is free and takes place through the Logos. Explaining the dynamics of the Logos as symbol, Rahner states, “He is not merely the presence and revelation of what God is in himself. He is also the expressive presence of what—or rather, who—God wished to be, in free grace, to the world, in such a way that this divine attitude, once so expressed, can never be reversed, but is and remains final and unsurpassable.”³⁵ All beings express themselves in order to become themselves, and this also applies to the Logos, “the expressive presence of what God wished to be.” As the ultimate symbol, Christ continues to be present in the church. This should not be confused as an ongoing incarnation, but a unique and real presence. Christ as *Ursakrament* and the church as *Grundsakrament* attest to this dynamic, for the church’s sacramental nature comes from Christ as primary sacrament while also remaining distinct. Rahner explains,

Christ is the primal sacramental word of God, uttered in the one history of mankind [sic], in which God made known his irrevocable mercy... The Church, is the continuance, the contemporary presence of that real, eschatologically triumphant and irrevocably established presence in the world, in Christ, of God’s

³³ Karl Rahner, “The Word and the Eucharist,” trans. H. Riley, vol. 4, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 274.

³⁴ Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 236.

³⁵ Rahner, 237.

salvific will. The Church is the abiding presence of that primal sacramental word of definitive grace, which Christ is in the world, effecting what is uttered by uttering it in sign.³⁶

The sacramental nature of the church as the “abiding presence” of Christ as the primal sacrament continues the presence of Christ in the world without being identical to Christ, and thus is open to conversion.

It is within this context that we can understand Rahner’s sacramental ecclesiology. The church is “the persisting presence of the incarnate Word in space and time,” and thus “continues the symbolic function of the Logos in the World.”³⁷ Further, the Holy Spirit is present in the church, for the church is “the visible manifestation of the Spirit in the world.”³⁸ Rahner explains, “The Church knows that the Spirit of God has been projected into her innermost nature, the living Spirit still actively present and at work in the here and now.”³⁹ The Spirit is present in the church in both charismatic and institutional ways, unable to be restricted to specific aspects of the church. The presence of the Spirit, self-offer of God, and emphasis on Jesus Christ as *Ursakrament* culminate into Rahner’s sacramental ecclesiology. He explains, “The Church is the great and unique gesture of God and the accepting gesture of humankind, in which divine love, reconciliation, and the self-communication of God are forever manifested and imparted.”⁴⁰ Rahner’s sacramental ecclesiology underscores the presence of God in the church and world, as well as the uniquely salvific role of the church. Yet it is not strictly a “high ecclesiology,” ascribing divinity to the church. Rahner emphasizes the unique

³⁶ Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W.J. O’Hara (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Burns and Oates, 1974), 18.

³⁷ Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 240.

³⁸ Karl Rahner, “The Church as the Subject of the Sending of the Spirit,” trans. David Bourke, vol. 7, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1977), 187.

³⁹ Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 241.

⁴⁰ Karl Rahner, “Do Not Stifle the Spirit!,” trans. David Bourke, vol. 7, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1977), 75.

role of the church without divinizing the church in such a way that restricts its concrete existence in history. Since the church is not divine, it can express itself in a manner that is less than authentic to its sacramental nature.

Rahner's sacramental ecclesiology resists division into separate entities, such as ascribing holiness to the charismatic church and sinfulness to the church in the concrete. Just as a symbol is inseparable yet not identical with that which it symbolizes, so too the many aspects of the church share in an intimate and distinct connection. The church cannot be considered simply a juridical or social entity, nor can these aspects of the church be divided out from the divine aspects of the church.⁴¹ He explains that the church is "the union of the interior graced relationship of the redeemed and the historical, visible form of this transcendent interior union."⁴² The "interior" and "exterior" aspects of the church are not separated out in Rahner's thought, but remain united in the mystery of the church. Further, the church is product of both grace and history. There is no church that exists apart from the church on earth, as though a church is floating in the heavens. The church is always the church here and now, concrete in history. Yet the church also cannot be reduced to a strictly historical entity. The church remains a product of grace and history, united in this relationship.

With this background, Rahner affirms the church as sacrament. In a statement that encapsulates his sacramental ecclesiology, he asserts: "But this is to affirm that this symbol of the grace of God really contains what it signifies; that it is the primary sacrament of the grace of God, which does not merely designate but really possesses

⁴¹ Rahner appeals to the teachings of Leo XIII and Pius XII in this analysis while also challenging aspects of their presentation that makes the church too juridical. Rahner, "Theology of the Symbol," 241.

⁴² Karl Rahner, "Personal and Sacramental Piety," trans. Karl-Heinz Kruger, vol. 2, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963), 122.

what was brought definitely into the world by Christ: the irrevocable, eschatological grace of God which conquers triumphantly the guilt of man.”⁴³ This quotation is a rich summary of Rahner’s sacramental ecclesiology. As the primary sacrament, God is truly present in the church. This presence is real and efficacious, having an impact on us today and throughout history. Again, affirming the sacramental nature of the church may first appear to be a high ecclesiology. However, Rahner emphasizes that as a sacrament, the church “really possesses what was brought definitely into the world by Christ” while also underscoring that the church is open to and even requires ongoing conversion.

At the same time as recognizing the presence of God’s grace in the church, Rahner also recognizes that the church is not synonymous with God. Rahner’s sacramental ecclesiology emphasizes that the church is not “the equal of God or... the prolongation of the Incarnation.”⁴⁴ As a symbol, the presence of God in the church is real and concrete. Yet the church can always be more open to God and can always do more to make God’s reign known on earth. As such, the church must always be open to conversion and development. Lennan underscores this point, connecting the church as the work of the Holy Spirit while being inseparable from history. He explains, “Rahner does not present the church as a fixed or finalized object. Rather, there is always room for the community of the church to grow in its relationship with the God who is at the heart of its life.”⁴⁵ The church is the symbol of Christ, and as such, is not identical with Christ. Grace continues to invite the church to grow in conversion to more fully embody God’s grace in the world.

⁴³ Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 241.

⁴⁴ Lennan, “Narcissistic Aestheticism? An Assessment of Karl Rahner’s Sacramental Ecclesiology,” 254.

⁴⁵ Lennan, 253.

Recognizing the church as a symbol opens the door to acknowledging the presence of sin in the church. As will be discussed in Section 4.1.3.3, Rahner challenged dominant thinking that ascribed sin to the members of the church and retained holiness for structures of the church. Rather, Rahner asserted that the church sins, as the church does not live into the fullness of its mission. This can be explained in the distinction and inherent unity between the symbol and the reality symbolized. Lennan elaborates, “Thus, the acknowledgment of the sinfulness of the Church—the gap between the symbol and what it symbolizes— established the need for reform in order that the Church might become in fact what it is by nature.”⁴⁶ In responding to the gap between the symbol and the symbolized, we do not simply resign ourselves to the church unable to be fully church. Rather, this calls us to make the symbol more thoroughly aligned with the reality it expresses, while also keeping in mind that the driving force is God’s action and not human achievement. There is hope in the ongoing conversion of the church.

The ongoing need for conversion of the church, taken together with the presence of God in the church, highlights the dual role of the church. The church is at once the bearer of salvation and called to conversion by reception of the Word. In Rahner’s words, the church is “the proclaiming bearer of the revealing word of God as God’s utterance of salvation, and *at the same time*, she is the subject, harkening and believing, to whom the word of salvation of God in Christ is addressed.”⁴⁷ These are not contradictions, for these realities are united in the church. The sacramental nature of the church attests to this unity. Further, we should not attempt to divide out the divine and human aspects of the church, for the church is always at once the bearer of the word of salvation and a

⁴⁶ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 44.

⁴⁷ Karl Rahner, “What Is a Sacrament?,” trans. David Bourke, vol. 14, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Seabury, 1976), 143.

historical reality. Attempts to separate these aspects result in inauthentic or distorted ecclesiologies that fail to adequately hold together these central elements of the church. God offers God's grace through the church and we are free to respond to this offer of grace. The church is a product of grace and history, and we are unable to divide out these aspects. Rather, holding these together in unity affirms the mystery of the church and its unique role in salvation history. In Rahner's thought, the church has salvific significance, and is an essential aspect of salvation history.

It is important to note that there have been substantial challenges to Rahner's theology of symbol, especially centering upon the role of sign and the relationship between the individual and community. Most significantly, Latinx theologians have engaged Rahner's articulation of theology of symbol to expand it in new ways. Ignacio Ellacuría, Rahner's student, responded to the difficulties he identified in the individualism of Rahner's theology of symbol by creating a "theology of sign."⁴⁸ Ellacuría focuses on an expansive view of signs, compared with Rahner's more particular focus on symbols, such as a sign that "does not have to resemble what it signifies" yet continues to transmit a message.⁴⁹ Ellacuría posits that "God and humanity do not become one without an historical process" which is the history of salvation.⁵⁰ Given this, "the Church... become[s] an historical sign... of the reign of God among humanity."⁵¹ By moving away from language of symbol and instead looking to the church as sign, Ellacuría aligns Rahner's theology of the symbol with the call of *Gaudium et Spes* to

⁴⁸ This development is examined in Robert Lassalle-Klein, "Rethinking Rahner on Grace and Symbol: New Proposals from the Americas," in *Rahner beyond Rahner: A Great Theologian Encounters the Pacific Rim*, ed. Paul G. Crowley (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 87–99.

⁴⁹ Ignacio Ellacuría as quoted in Lassalle-Klein, 95.

⁵⁰ Ignacio Ellacuría as quoted in Lassalle-Klein, 95.

⁵¹ Ignacio Ellacuría as quoted in Lassalle-Klein, 95.

respond to the “signs of the times” in a way that resonates with his lived experience in El Salvador.⁵² Another important engagement with Rahner comes from Miguel H. Díaz, who examined the relationship between U.S. Hispanic theological anthropology and Rahner’s theological anthropology. He argues that both U.S. Hispanic theology and Rahner’s theology can be enriched by one another.⁵³ In particular, Díaz identifies the challenge of the relationship of the individual and community. Rahner’s theological anthropology moves from the individual to the communal, a move that is reversed in Latinx theology. Díaz explains, “The emphasis on community predisposes U.S. Hispanic anthropology to consider more so than Rahner can with his individual starting point, those commonly shared experiences out of which the self is born.”⁵⁴ Nancy Pineda-Madrid’s works on Our Lady of Guadalupe address the question of the relationship between the individual and communal in Rahner’s theology of symbol. Pineda-Madrid engages how to “understand Rahner’s supernatural existential such that the category of experience is conceived of as communal as well as individual, such that communities and individuals are concurrently transformed by God’s self-offer.”⁵⁵ Her work challenges the relationship between the individual and communal in Rahner’s work, re-orienting this relationship given the reality of Latinx experience as presented by Yolanda López’s artwork depicting Our Lady of Guadalupe. In addition, Pineda-Madrid engages the work of Paul Tillich, particularly his ontological priorities, and brings Tillich’s analysis of the integral link between communal and individual in conversation with Rahner’s works.

⁵² Lassalle-Klein, 95.

⁵³ Miguel H. Díaz, *On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives*, Faith and Cultures Series (Marynoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

⁵⁴ Díaz, 132–33.

⁵⁵ Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Guadalupe’s Challenge to Rahner’s Theology of Symbol,” in *Rahner beyond Rahner: A Great Theologian Encounters the Pacific Rim*, ed. Paul G. Crowley (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 74.

These connections to Tillich's work and Lopez's artwork demonstrate the importance of engaging and expanding Rahner's theology as symbol. I take these critiques seriously, as they demonstrate the limitations of Rahner's theology of symbol. At the same time, these critiques do not invalidate Rahner's work, especially in considering the church as symbol and sacrament. They point to the limitations that arise when Rahner's understanding of symbols encounter new contexts and applications. These are important limitations to keep in mind when applying this work to wounds in the church in Section 4.2 of this chapter.

With this framework of the church as symbol and sacrament, we can see elements of Rahner's theology that appear to be paradoxical. As a sacrament, the church is the product of grace and history. God is present in the church, but the church is not identical with God or the continuation of the incarnation. Still, the church remains significant in salvation history. The ongoing need for conversion promises fulfillment and transformation at the end of time. These elements are not pure paradox, but rather, connected in relationship with one another. We can now consider the dialectical elements that frame Rahner's ecclesiology.

4.1.3 Paradoxical Elements

Rahner's theology is characterized by paradoxical elements and relationships. Lennan underscores that "a distinguishing feature of Rahner's ecclesiology was its ability

to hold in tension two potentially divisive poles.”⁵⁶ Concepts that appear to be paradoxical are held together in relationship. This pairing of seemingly contradictory elements invites the reader to enter into a posture of holding the deeper mystery of each element. I will begin with an overview of the paradoxical elements of Rahner’s theology. I will then examine three examples: categorical and transcendental, institutional and charismatic, holy and sinful. Finally, I will look to the oneness of the church that is the overarching ecclesial theme holding together these paradoxical elements.

A clear example of the centrality of paradoxical elements in Rahner’s theology is “spirit-in-the-world,” a central element of his theological anthropology. As stated in the introduction to Section 4.1, Rahner’s ecclesiology flows from his understanding of God’s self-communication to the human person and graced existence. As a result, the paradoxical elements of Rahner’s anthropology are also characteristic and illuminative of his ecclesiology. Spirit-in-the-world is a feature of Rahner’s theological anthropology, used to describe the human person. At first, “spirit” and “world” may appear to be contradictory terms. Indeed, many times “spirit” is popularly used to refer to things that are not of this world. To Rahner, however, these terms necessarily go together. He explains, “By spirit I mean a power which reaches out beyond the world and knows the metaphysical. World is the name of the reality which is accessible to the immediate experience of man.”⁵⁷ Following from this, self-transcendence is the pivotal defining characteristic of the human being. The openness and dynamism of spirit must be held together with the limitations of the world, while also recognizing that the spirit must be

⁵⁶ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 107.

⁵⁷ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), liii.

immersed in the world to come to actualization, for it is only known when embodied.⁵⁸

Erin Kidd explains this relationship: “‘Spirit’ and ‘world’ are not ultimately oppositional terms in Rahner’s understanding but are aspects of the one human being that increase in direct proportion.”⁵⁹ Rahner asserts that “we are both of these at once and cannot be one without the other.”⁶⁰ This is indeed ground-breaking in theology, bringing together seemingly contradictory aspects as intimately related to one another. Kidd continues, “The revolutionary aspect of Rahner’s argument is the fact that these traditional antinomies are no longer opposed.”⁶¹ This central feature of Rahner’s anthropology underscores that concepts that appear to contradict can be in partnership with one another. The relationship between spirit and world creates an opening for other realities that appear to contradict, lending itself to this examination.

In order to understand the contours of the paradoxical elements of Rahner’s theology, I will now outline three paradoxical relationships: categorical and transcendental, institutional and charismatic, sinful and holy.

4.1.3.1 Categorical and Transcendental

As discussed in Section 4.1.1, the categorical, or the object that can be experienced here and now, is a symbol of the transcendental, or a deeper reality.⁶² The transcendental can be understood as “the unthematic awareness of the wholeness of being itself, implicitly present in ordinary knowledge and freedom as their constant background

⁵⁸ James J. Bacik, *Humble Confidence: Spiritual and Pastoral Guidance from Karl Rahner* (Liturgical Press, 2014), 15.

⁵⁹ Erin Kidd, “The Violation of God in the Body of the World: A Rahnerian Response to Trauma,” *Modern Theology* 35, no. 4 (October 2019): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12484>.

⁶⁰ Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 407.

⁶¹ Kidd, “The Violation of God in the Body of the World,” 5.

⁶² Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 229–31.

and goal.”⁶³ Even in this definition of the transcendental, there is reference to the categorical, as these concepts share in a relationship though remaining distinct. This structure of relationship between the transcendental and categorical is also foundational to Rahner’s theological anthropology. Revelation and God’s self-communication occur within history and concrete human experiences. Patrick Burke elaborates, “The structure of mutual priority between transcendence and the categorical is the fundamental structure of human nature... and is intrinsic to Rahner’s understanding of reality.”⁶⁴ The categorical and transcendental are in relationship with one another and permeate Rahner’s understanding of grace and Christology, and as a result, ecclesiology.

The categorical and transcendental illuminate the relationship central to the paradoxical elements of Rahner’s theology. The categorical and transcendental are distinct, yet connected. They do not oppose one another, yet they are not synonymous. They are intertwined in relationship with one another. Appreciating this relationship serves as the foundation for engaging seemingly contrasting truths that emerge from experiences of trauma and the resulting woundedness. Rahner’s theology of grace is such that the transcendental comes through the categorical. This further connects to freedom, as Dych explains, “And to the extent that we are free, self-conscious subjects we exist beyond the world and its causes and explanations, and in this sense we transcend it.”⁶⁵ We transcend the world, but we do not cease being spirit-in-the-world. This glimpse into one element of Rahner’s theology and ecclesiology highlights the mystery that underpins Rahner’s paradoxical theology.

⁶³ Leo O’Donovan, *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner’s Theology* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 197.

⁶⁴ Patrick Burke, *Reinterpreting Rahner: A Critical Study of His Major Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 183.

⁶⁵ Dych, “Theology in a New Key,” 6.

4.1.3.2 Institutional and Charismatic

Rahner's ecclesiology is predicated on the connection between the institutional and the charismatic. The church cannot be divided into the historical over and against the charismatic. As emphasized throughout this chapter, this is due to Rahner's theology of grace that views revelation as not a set of propositions but the ongoing self-communication of God in the concrete experiences of history. There is not a charismatic, spirit-filled church apart from the concrete church; there remains only one church imbued with both of these elements. Rahner explains, "The 'charismata' can be conceived of not merely as present in the Church but actually as constitutive for her and for the life that is proper to her. These charismata belong to the very nature and life of the Church just as much as the institutional factors."⁶⁶ As such, Rahner's ecclesiology does not oppose the institutional from the charismatic, for God is present in the concrete through the work of the Holy Spirit. Rahner asserts that the charismatic element "is the first and most ultimately among the formal characteristics inherent in the very nature of the Church"⁶⁷ while also affirming the institutional and concrete church.

The connection of the institutional and charismatic follows from the church as sacrament and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. To understand this, it is helpful to examine briefly the role of the Holy Spirit in the church. Lennan explains, "In Rahner's theology, the Spirit and the Church were inextricably linked. If its existence as the sacrament of Christ in history meant that the Church needed a visible form, it also meant that the church needed a source of animation: this animation was provided by the

⁶⁶ Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," in *Theological Investigations*, trans. H. Riley, vol. 12 (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 82.

⁶⁷ Rahner, 97.

Spirit.”⁶⁸ Just as revelation is not a set of propositions about God but *is* the self-communication of God, so too the Spirit not only guides the church but is the truth that forms the consciousness of the church.⁶⁹

Rahner’s understanding of the Spirit in the church emphasizes that the Spirit animates rather than opposes the structures of the church.⁷⁰ As such, the institutional structures of the church are not referred to in contrast with the Spirit, but are deeply in relationship with one another.⁷¹ After affirming that the Spirit is part of the nature of the church and present in the here and now, Rahner affirms, “The activity of the Spirit, therefore, can never find adequate expression simply in the forms of what we call the Church’s official life, her principles, sacrament system and teaching. These can never be the sole or exclusive forms which the Spirit has, so to say, made himself available to the Church.”⁷² At the same time, Rahner cautions that discussions of the charismatic in the life of the church cannot remain at the theoretical level, for the Spirit is present in the practical reality of the church.⁷³ Rahner’s refusal to separate out the juridical elements from the church is an important challenge to other ecclesiological trends that separate structural elements of the church from divine elements. This has an especially groundbreaking application when considering the presence of sin in the church.

⁶⁸ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 80.

⁶⁹ Lennan, 86–87.

⁷⁰ Lennan, 88.

⁷¹ This examination raises other questions of Rahner’s pneumatology, such as the connection of pneumatology and the development of the church. These topics, while important, are ultimately outside the scope of this study.

⁷² Karl Rahner, “Do Not Stifle the Spirit!,” trans. David Bourke, vol. 7, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1977), 75.

⁷³ Rahner, 75.

4.1.3.3 Sinful and Holy

Perhaps the most discussed paradoxical element of the church is the holiness and sinfulness of the church. Rahner refuted the commonly held distinction that the church was holy while the members of the church were sinful. In fact, Rahner critiqued *Lumen Gentium* for its failure to explicitly name the church as sinful.⁷⁴ Contrary to *Lumen Gentium*, Rahner argued that the church itself was sinful, for the church cannot exist apart from its members.⁷⁵ This section will examine the key features of Rahner's understanding of the sinful and holy nature of the church.

Rahner understands sin as the free and definitive "no" to God.⁷⁶ The holiness and sinfulness of the church follow from the sacramental nature of the church. Self-criticism is not a denial of the church's sacramentality. Rather, it is an affirmation that the church can become what it is called to be. As a symbol, the church communicates the presence of Jesus but is not the fullness of divine self-communication. Rahner described the sacramental church as "the proclaiming bearer of the revealing word of God as God's utterance of salvation, and *at the same time*, she is subject, harkening and believing, to whom the word of salvation of God in Christ is addressed."⁷⁷ The sacramental nature of the church affirms that the church can be at once holy as well as fail to live into the fullness of its call to holiness. As a sinful and holy church, the church must strive to live into its mission to make the reign of God flourish on earth. This does not undercut the

⁷⁴ Karl Rahner, "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," trans. Boniface Kruger and Karl-Heinz Kruger, vol. 6, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1969), 284–85.

⁷⁵ Rahner, "The Church of Sinners," 259.

⁷⁶ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 101; For a more thorough examination of Rahner on the freedom to say "no," see Ron Highfield, "The Freedom to Say 'No'? Karl Rahner's Doctrine of Sin," *Theological Studies* 56, no. 3 (1995): 485–505, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399505600304>.

⁷⁷ Rahner, "What Is a Sacrament?," 143. Emphasis original.

special role of the church, for Rahner maintains that the church can uniquely reveal Christ.

In a similar way, the church also has the potential to distort the presence of Christ in the world.⁷⁸ In describing the church, Rahner asserts, “For she alone can distort by her sin the eternal visible presence of Christ in the world which she is and so wrap a shroud about him— and do this in the face of men who must seek him as a matter of life and death!”⁷⁹ This language of “shrouding” Christ emphasizes that the church can either make visible Christ in the world, or obscure Christ’s presence. The self-communication of God remains ongoing in the world, even if shrouded by the church. The mission to make present the reign of God on earth is to highlight rather than obscure “the eternal visible presence of Christ in the world.”

Sin and holiness do not exist as opposites, despite this common misconception. Too often, holiness is depicted as the absence of sin. This point of view posits that when one acknowledges sin, she is thereby denying the holiness of the church. Rahner challenges this dominant framework, instead arguing that the presence of sin does not negate the holiness of the church. Holiness does not mean purity, and it cannot be erased by the presence of sin. Instead, holiness belongs to the church due to the presence of God in the church and the church’s uniquely salvific role.

Further, Rahner argued against an “ecclesiological Nestorianism”⁸⁰ or division of the church into distinct entities, similar to a hypostasis. The sacramental nature of the church demands that there was a union of the visible and invisible dimensions of the

⁷⁸ Rahner, “The Church of Sinners,” 262.

⁷⁹ Rahner, 262.

⁸⁰ Rahner, “Membership of the Church,” 70.

church.⁸¹ To separate out the visible and invisible, concrete and charismatic, sinful and holy dimensions of the church— a typical habit of late scholastic and post-Tridentine theology— is to hypostasize the church. Speaking of the church as a separate “holy church” from the church of sinners is prone to create a vision of the church that:

Is somehow, without being noticed, “hypostasized,” she becomes almost like an independently existent “entity,” which stands as teacher and guide *over against* the people of God; she does not appear to *be* this people of God itself... in its actual state of pilgrimage. For this reason it is easy to conceive her and understand her as “holy” without the question arising whether or not (and how far) the sins and failings of her members fall on herself and, if so, how this can be reconciled with her true holiness which is part of the substance of her creed.⁸²

There is no church apart from the people of God. There is no hypostasis of the church that exists apart from concrete reality. To create such a division is an error and a theologically dangerous vision of the church.

The holiness of the church must be considered alongside the sinfulness of the church, for each element illuminates the other. To consider the holiness of the church apart from the sinfulness would create an image of purity or perfection, failing to resonate with the lived experience of the church. Further, this can also lead to a denial of the reality of the church, for one attempts to uphold the holiness of the church at the expense of reality. As Brian Flanagan explains, “To deny the reality of sin in the church, therefore, in large ways or small, formally or informally, leads to a distorted understanding of the composition of the community.”⁸³ Considering the holiness and sinfulness of the church together leads to a richer understanding of each concept, for each can illuminate the other. For example, considering the holiness and sinfulness of the church together fills out an understanding of the church that has a unique role in

⁸¹ Rahner, “The Church of Sinners,” 259.

⁸² Rahner, “The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II,” 277.

⁸³ Flanagan, *Stumbling in Holiness*, 142.

salvation, as well as a unique ability to obscure God's self-communication. It also underscores that these are not diametrically opposed concepts, but rather, both speak to the church's ability or failure to live into its mission.

Holiness and sinfulness belong to the church in differing ways. Holiness is connected to the true nature of the church, whereas sinfulness is not a manifestation of the true nature of the church.⁸⁴ Still, the church is both holy and sinful, as Rahner refuses to separate out the church into two entities or state that only members of the church—not the church itself—sins. For Rahner, the church can be both sinful and holy. The presence of sin does not negate the holiness of the church. This is an important affirmation for this work.

Prior to Vatican II, the dominant trend in ecclesiology was to separate the sinfulness of the members of the church from the sinlessness of the church.⁸⁵ Rahner resisted this tendency and instead emphasized the oneness of the church. The church does not and cannot exist apart from its members. Rahner explains,

If we were merely to say, "Certainly there are sinners in the Church, but this fact has nothing to do with the real Church," we would be assuming an idealistic concept of the Church which from a theological point of view is very questionable. 'Church' is then an idea, an ideal, an ought-to-be, something to which appeal can be made from the concrete reality, something which is meant to be reaching only asymptotically, as it were, by slow approximation.⁸⁶

For Rahner, the church is never an abstract notion but always a historical reality; the church does not exist apart from its concreteness. If we only see the church as an "ideal, an ought-to-be," then we are missing the richness of the church in reality. This is not just

⁸⁴ Rahner, "The Church of Sinners," 262–63.

⁸⁵ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 78.

⁸⁶ Rahner, "The Church of Sinners," 259–60.

an ecclesiological issue, for Rahner's theology of grace emphasizes that the self-gift of God exists in the concrete.

Sin in the church is less about the morality of individuals and more about the failure of the church. Still, this is a part of who we are. Rahner emphasizes, "This sinner belongs to this Church: he is not merely entered in her official register, a part of the visible presence of God's grace in the world, a member of the Body of Christ."⁸⁷ Again, he resists the common division of marking the members of the church as sinful or somehow "other." Rahner's ecclesiology is incredibly inclusive in this way, for he underscores that those who sin, which is all members of the church, remain a part of the body of Christ. In this dissertation, I look to the sinfulness of the church as the failures of the church to live into its mission. As explored in Chapter 2, I contend that the failures of the church cause wounds in the church and threaten the church's oneness, holiness, and catholicity. I will further explore the ecclesiological implications of this in Chapter 5.

In light of the sinfulness of the church, Rahner advised that people of faith should neither deny nor rejoice in the sinfulness of the church. Instead, we must recognize our own sinfulness as the sinfulness of the church.⁸⁸ Lennan explains, "The most creative response, therefore, was not only to refrain from rejecting the Church, but also to hope that the Church would be led through its sinfulness to a deeper conversion."⁸⁹ The sacramental nature of the church underscores that this conversion is possible, for the church can grow deeper and deeper into its relationship with God. This understanding of conversion in the church points to an important aspect of the relationship between sin and holiness. They are not opposites, and the presence of one does not negate the presence of

⁸⁷ Rahner, 257.

⁸⁸ Rahner, 267.

⁸⁹ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 31.

the other. Sin does not decrease in the proportion that holiness grows. Still, we hope for and work for the conversion of the church away from sin so that the church can more fully live into its mission. Thus, sin and holiness exist in relationship with one another, yet not a dialectical relationship that one might first consider. The relationship ultimately invites us to behold the greater mystery of the church while working to live into a church of conversion.

Having explored three pairs of paradoxical elements of Rahner's ecclesiology, it is essential to examine the oneness of the church in light of the paradoxical elements. It would be a fundamental misunderstanding of Rahner to characterize these elements as two realities of the church, existing independently of one another. The sacramentality of the church underscores that the church cannot be divided theologically into two distinct elements. Rather, the church remains united as one church. The paradoxical elements cannot be separated into belonging to the visible or invisible, historical or spiritual church, for there is one church. Rahner emphasized that the church is always "the union of the interior graced relationship of the redeemed and the historical, visible form of this transcendent interior union."⁹⁰ The categorical and transcendental, institutional and charismatic, sinful and holy all affirm important realities of the church. These elements exist together in the sacramental nature of the church, deepening our understanding of the richness and mystery of the church.

⁹⁰ Rahner, "Personal and Sacramental Piety," 122.

4.1.4 Eschatological Orientation

God is absolute future, and as such, the eschatological orientation is an orientation to God. Rahner explains that the church is in the first place “an eschatological reality; that is to say, the future fulfillment, notwithstanding its being still to come, is in her already a present event, so that she makes her pilgrimage in a certain sense in her end to her end.”⁹¹ Affirming the eschatological orientation of the church affirms the church as oriented to God, open to change, and engaged in making present the already-but-not-yet reign of God.

An implication of the sacramental nature of the church is that the church is not synonymous with Christ, and thus open to becoming more and more like Christ. As a symbol, the church is intimately connected with God yet is not identical with God. Sin prevents the church from fully living into its mission. Yet Rahner underscores that grace will have the final word: “The Church is always in history, always in a one-way history, in which it never loses its legitimate past, and in this unpredictable, dark history of suffering, the Church always comes from Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.”⁹² The church is not a static or fixed object, but always growing in relationship with God and open to conversion. The church can more authentically be church, and thus has an inherent openness to the future.

In this analysis, Rahner did not understand future as “simply the continuation of the present.”⁹³ Rather, Lennan explains, “He envisaged the Church changing in the

⁹¹ Rahner, “The Church and the Parousia of Christ,” 298.

⁹² Karl Rahner, “The Church’s Redemptive Historical Provenance from the Death and Resurrection of Jesus,” trans. E. Quinn, vol. 19, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 37.

⁹³ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 8.

direction of becoming more itself, of growing to what it was always meant to be.”⁹⁴ The Holy Spirit spurs this change, present with the church and guiding it to live into the fulfillment of the church. Rahner affirms the role of the Spirit in the church, while also cautioning not to define the work of the Spirit in too narrow of a way. He warns, “No one can say, ‘See, it is precisely there, and what is there is nothing else than this working of the Spirit.’”⁹⁵ Instead, we must recognize the Spirit at work in many aspects of the church, as well as “in spite of” and beyond the many areas to which we point.⁹⁶ The Spirit is the presence of God here and now in the church and orients the church to the absolute future of God.

This eschatological orientation of the church is a crucial dimension of this analysis, for it conveys that it is more than simply looking to the future, but rather a foundational orientation of the church to become what it is meant to be. In this orientation, the future breaks into the present. Rahner underscores that this is “already a present event,” thus co-mingling the future and present in a manner reminiscent of trauma theory, which will be explored in Section 4.2. Rahner continues, explaining, “The Church belongs therefore both to the present time in so far as the Church is still moving towards the goal by faith and hope, that is in so far as it must still let the Parousia of Christ come upon it, and at the same time the Church belongs to eternity as the Church moves towards its end in virtue of the future which has already arrived.”⁹⁷ The church remains a historical reality, yet is also pointed towards the future.

⁹⁴ Lennan, 8.

⁹⁵ Rahner, “I Believe in the Church,” 117.

⁹⁶ Rahner, 117.

⁹⁷ Rahner, “The Church and the Parousia of Christ,” 297.

This eschatological orientation does not result in an acceptance of the current state of the church, resigning oneself to give up on account of the fullness of the church coming only at the end of time. It also does not discount the concrete conditions of today. Rahner explains, “Therefore there is a ‘here and now’ in the world into which God has come in order to deliver us and lead us into his own life, in which there is no ‘here and now’.”⁹⁸ Rahner’s theology of grace and sacramental ecclesiology values the present in connection with the future. Therefore, the openness to the future does not bring despair in the present based in a fear that the church cannot be reformed. Rather, the church can always grow in relationship with God and become more authentically itself. The church can work to bring about conditions to make the reign of God flourish, while always acknowledging that this is not caused by human action but remains God’s free gift. The eschatological orientation of the church affirms that grace has the final word.

One way of expressing the church’s openness to the future is the image of the pilgrim church. This image, central to the documents of Vatican II, illustrates the church as on the way. In speaking of the pilgrim church, *Lumen Gentium* states: “The Church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, and in which we acquire sanctity through the grace of God, will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven, when there will come the time of the restoration of all things.”⁹⁹ It is not just the members of the church that are pilgrims, but the church itself, always one with its members. It is headed in a direction, not wandering aimlessly through the world. A pilgrim church is a church open to change, becoming what it authentically is in process. The pilgrim church affirms the historical reality of the church while also connecting the church in the here and now with

⁹⁸ Rahner, “The Church as the Subject of the Sending of the Spirit,” 188.

⁹⁹ Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium*,” para. 48.

the church in the future.¹⁰⁰ As such, it affirms the complex reality and mystery of the church and the in-breaking of the reign of God.

Overall, Rahner's ecclesiology centers upon the mystery of God revealing Godself through Jesus Christ and the church. As a sacrament, the church reveals God yet is open to conversion to more fully live into its mission. Taken together, the paradoxical aspects of Rahner's ecclesiology depict a holy and sinful church, immersed in reality and on the way to becoming what it is called to be. Rahner presents a church that strives and fails, yet remains a unique part of salvation history and the ongoing presence of God's self-offer to the world.

4.2 SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO A VISION OF CHURCH IN THE SHADOW OF WOUNDS

Throughout Section 4.1, I have identified central tenets of Rahner's ecclesiology that are well suited to build an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds. In this section, I will elaborate on these aspects, weaving Rahner's work together with contemporary trauma theory in order to create an ecclesiology that takes wounds seriously. While Rahner did not write in response to trauma theory,¹⁰¹ several aspects of his ecclesiology are conducive to an ecclesiological investigation through the lens of trauma theory. In particular, I look to four aspects of Rahner's ecclesiology as the building blocks for a

¹⁰⁰ For an in-depth exploration of the church as pilgrim, see Layla Karst, "Reimagining Pilgrimage" (Atlanta, GA, Emory University, 2018).

¹⁰¹ Rahner did write one article on psychotherapy. However, this should not be understood as a response to trauma theory as much as a reflection on the role of the church in responding to sin and guilt. Karl Rahner, "Guilt and Its Remission: The Borderland between Theology and Psychotherapy," trans. Karl-Heinz Kruger, vol. 2, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963), 265–81.

vision of church in the shadow of wounds: hidden realities, mystery and reality, holding paradoxes, and eschatological orientation. I contend that Rahner's ecclesiology together with contemporary trauma theory provide a theoretical framework for enriching our understanding of wounds, thus providing the foundation for an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds.

4.2.1 Calling Attention to Hidden Realities

Trauma theory focuses attention to realities that are otherwise obscured. Brewing below the surface, often unknown to others, trauma dominates the experience of the person encountering and processing trauma. While trauma may be an overwhelming experience for the person, it is often invisible to others. This hidden dimension of trauma is rooted in several aspects of trauma, including that trauma defies witnesses.¹⁰² Further, trauma eludes tidy definitions, as the ongoing nature of trauma is continually changing. Simply because trauma cannot be fully captured or understood does not negate its reality, attesting to the hidden nature of trauma.

Rahner's ecclesiology is built on the foundation that there are important realities, perhaps even the most important realities, which must be mediated. His theology of symbol and sacrament is predicated on the assertion that all beings express themselves in order to express their nature, and thus are symbolic.¹⁰³ Importantly, he underscores that all realities long to be unveiled. This sense that all realities want to be known harmonizes with trauma theory. Trauma haunts the survivor, seeking to be known and experienced in

¹⁰² Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 5.

¹⁰³ Rahner, "Theology of the Symbol," 224.

the present. Rahner's theology of the symbol captures this sense of calling attention to realities that are hidden or otherwise exceed being easily grasped.

Alone, survivors cannot express traumatic truth. It is overwhelming and defies language. Coupled with mediation, bodily or otherwise, this reality can be expressed. This pattern mirrors that of symbol and symbolic reality. In summarizing this aspect of Rahner's work, Lennan explains, "In other words, it was true both that no being could be understood without reference to a symbol, and that what appeared externally did not exhaust all that could be known of any being."¹⁰⁴ This sense of that which is seen externally as only a partial aspect of all that can be known resonates with wounds and trauma theory. What is visible and able to be accessed is certainly part of the truth, but it is not the complete truth. Christ alone is the perfect sacrament, where the symbol and that which is symbolized are one and the same. In all other symbols, there is always more to be known, similar to wounds. Thus, symbols and wounds both point to what more can be known. Their presence evokes an absence, for a deeper reality is made present but aspects of that reality remain elusive.¹⁰⁵ They signal that more exists that cannot be fully captured at the moment, but nonetheless is an important part of reality.

Further, the relationship between the symbol and the symbolized and the wound and the trauma mirror one another. They both participate in the reality that they represent. For Rahner, this relationship between the reality that seeks to be expressed and the symbol is captured in the relationship between the categorical and transcendental. Lennan explains, "The physical object which could be experienced immediately—the

¹⁰⁴ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ For more on presence and absence, see Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995); Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001).

‘categorical’— was to be understood as the symbol of a deeper reality— the ‘transcendental.’”¹⁰⁶ In a sense, wounds participate in a similar relationship with trauma, as the wound can be experienced immediately and is a part of the deeper reality of the trauma. The relationship between the categorical and transcendental, wound and trauma point to many paradoxical realities being true. The symbol is both what it is, as well as participates in the reality that it points to. The wound is both a scar and points to a larger trauma that exceeds representation as a scar.

The resonance between Rahner’s theology of symbol and trauma’s unknown nature is deepened when looking to the ways that trauma is mediated. Bessel Van der Kolk’s work on traumatic healing underscores the importance of body in traumatic healing, pointing to ways that practices such as yoga can engage the body and allow the unspeakable to be mediated.¹⁰⁷ Healing from trauma incorporates bodily elements. As Kidd summarizes, “Survivors do not need to be told or to believe they are safe— they need to feel it in their gut.”¹⁰⁸ Van der Kolk underscores this by observing that survivors of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks prefer massage therapy to talk therapy.¹⁰⁹ The body mediates trauma in a way that extends beyond intellectual, emotional, or other divisions. In a sense, the body mediates trauma in ways that cannot always be captured yet remains true.

The connection of traumatic memory and bodily mediation point to the distinctiveness of traumatic memory as ongoing. Katie Cannon underscores this connection, stating, “Our bodies are the texts that carry the memories and therefore

¹⁰⁶ Lennan, 20; Lennan is drawing upon Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 229–31.

¹⁰⁷ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 209.

¹⁰⁸ Kidd, “The Violation of God in the Body of the World,” 14.

¹⁰⁹ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 233.

remembering is no less than reincarnation.”¹¹⁰ In remembering trauma, the survivor experiences trauma again. Yet this experience is unique, different from the initial encounter of trauma. Cannon calls attention to the birth of a new experience in traumatic remembering. Again, this mirrors the relationship between the symbol and symbolized, participating in the reality that it represents. Recalling typical stories functions more like a sign, pointing to something but not participating in that reality. Traumatic memory is distinct, for “traumatic memories are fundamentally different from the stories we tell about the past”¹¹¹ as they make present the trauma in real and new ways. Thus, the act of traumatic remembering is literally a re-membering of a new knowledge. This resonates with *anamnesis*, a process of remembering that makes past and future present through recalling, that is central in sacramental theology.¹¹² Traumatic memory participates in the reality that it represents. Traumatic memory and Rahner’s theology of symbol and sacrament both focus attention on realities that are hidden or exceed our ability to grasp, reminding us that many important realities defy easy definition. This leads to the next aspect of Rahner’s ecclesiology that is particularly well-suited for analysis with trauma theory: the relationship of mystery and reality.

4.2.2 Mystery and Reality

An ecclesiology that responds to the challenges presented by trauma theory must hold together the relationship between mystery and reality. Wounds challenge a mindset

¹¹⁰ Source unknown, quoted in Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 233.

¹¹¹ Van der Kolk, 196.

¹¹² For a further exploration of anamnesis and trauma theory, see Annie Selak, “The Power of Memory and Witnessing: A Trauma-Informed Analysis of Anamnesis in the Roman Catholic Mass,” in *Liturgy and Power*, ed. Brian Flanagan and Johann Vento, vol. 62, Annual Publication of the College Theology Society (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 22–33.

that view mystery and reality as opposites, instead offering a vision of reality that is infused with mystery. What is here and now, able to be touched and seen, also gives way to something more that cannot be touched or seen. This is not a contradiction, but a basic tenet of wounds.

Rahner's theology of mystery captures a similar dynamic to that of wounds. God is mystery, but this mystery is not confusing in a way that a difficult puzzle perplexes the mind while waiting to be solved. Rather, God is mystery and continually communicates with us. God's self-offer is an essential aspect to be considered with the mystery of God, for it is not a far-away mystery, but a mystery that invites relationship. In freely responding to the self-communication of God, one journeys with God towards deeper knowledge and relationship. It is not simply a cognitive mystery, but a mystery that exists in and invites a relationship.

In this analysis, we should not understand mystery as something other than reality, as though it is unreal. Rather, mystery and reality are deeply connected. Rahner explains, "What is comprehended and what is incomprehensible are in reality one and the same thing."¹¹³ To this end, we should not see reality as that which is opposite from mystery, as though reality does not interact with reality or mystery is somehow opposed to reality. Rather, the concrete which we can see and touch is deeply connected with that which cannot be touched or seen, yet remains true. Rahner approaches theology, and in that way, approaches God, through reflection on human reality. Theology cannot exist outside of reality. Rahner's theological method takes reality and experience seriously, rather than utilizing preconceived notions as points of departure like other theologies.

¹¹³ Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 55.

Again, this is deeply connected to his theology of grace and notion of graced experience, rooted in the self-communication of God.

Interestingly, Jon Sobrino identifies the connection of mystery and reality as a legacy of Rahner's work that resounds in liberation theology. Sobrino observes that in Rahner's theology "*reality itself* was its foundation."¹¹⁴ Sobrino continues, explaining that "this reality has a mystery at its heart."¹¹⁵ Though Rahner did not directly engage with liberation theology, a movement in the beginning stages at the time of his death, Rahner's sense of reality and mystery had a significant impact on the development of liberation theology. Sobrino elaborates: "I believe that liberation theology understands the poor person as mystery: not just a particular case that makes ethical demands, not even just as a person who might be saved, but rather as a *reality freighted with the Mystery*."¹¹⁶ This phrasing of "reality freighted with the Mystery" captures the intimate relationship between reality and mystery. There is no reality apart from mystery. Mystery infuses reality, for God-as-mystery permeates the world. This is an important challenge to modern theism that challenges a collective appreciation of mystery.

Recalling the images of scars presented by Rambo¹¹⁷ in Chapter 3, we can see this dynamic at play. Scars testify to what was here before: pain, bleeding, healing that can be inhibited. There is also more to scars than what is visible. Scar tissue extends beneath the surface, impacting the body in ways that are hidden from the eye, whether that be the outsider's eye or the person impacted. Scars evolve and change over time, yet still remain as the body grows old and changes. This image illustrates the intimate connection

¹¹⁴ Jon Sobrino, "Karl Rahner and Liberation Theology," *The Way* 43, no. 4 (October 2004): 59. Emphasis original.

¹¹⁵ Sobrino, 59.

¹¹⁶ Sobrino, 59. Emphasis original.

¹¹⁷ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*.

between that which is tangible and that which cannot be seen. We cannot sparse out exactly what aspects of the scar represent that which is tangible and what aspects are mystery. Taken as a whole, the scar confronts us with both mystery and reality, that which is unseen and seen. Further, wounds extend beyond the physical to the spiritual, emotional, and psychological aspects that cannot be seen but remain real. Mystery and reality come together at the place of the wound, challenging us to attend to both aspects and their interrelationship.

An ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds revolves around the inextricable relationship of reality and mystery. To acknowledge wounds is to take account of reality. Yet wounds also point beyond that which is visible or tangible, calling us to contemplate and respond to the ways that mystery permeates wounds. There is always more to wounds than what we can see or touch, yet we must also still respond to that which confronts us. An honest ecclesiology of woundedness refuses to see mystery and reality as opposites, presenting instead accounts of mystery and reality that are in relationship with each other. Recognizing that mystery and reality are inextricably linked is an essential gift presented by wounds, yet also a challenge to respond to the ways that brokenness and pain extend beyond that which is visible. We are called to respond to that which is tangible and visible as well as that which exists but exceeds our ability to grasp, sometimes with action and sometimes by pondering the mystery and entering deeper into relationship with mystery. An ecclesiology that responds to the challenge of wounds that is based in Rahner's understanding of reality and mystery is able to hold these aspects together, attending to the site of the wound while also growing deeper into relationship with God.

4.2.3 Holding Paradoxes

Through exploring the connection of mystery and reality and the attention to hidden realities, this section has uplifted many paradoxical elements of trauma theory and wounds. Wounds contain many paradoxical elements, making this an important aspect to explore in depth. For example, wounds testify to a previous trauma yet continue to impact the present and future through belatedness and repetition. These acts of repetition engage the trauma once again, bringing the past into the present. It is precisely through its forgetting that trauma is experienced, as explained by Caruth: “The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all.”¹¹⁸ In the forgetting and reliving of trauma, the traumatic experience dances between being accessible and inaccessible, known and unknown. Trauma demands yet defies a witness, furthering the paradoxical nature of wounds.

Rahner’s ecclesiology creates space to regard paradoxes, holding concepts in relationship that may appear to be opposed at first glance. Rahner upholds the oneness of the church throughout his many ecclesiological investigations. In Section 4.1.3, I explored Rahner’s affirmation that there are not two churches, one concrete and the other charismatic, one holy and the other sinful, one categorical and the other transcendental, but rather one church. This unity parallels the relationship between reality and mystery, discussed in Section 4.2.2. In looking to an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds, the oneness of the church must be upheld in similar patterns. Rather than accepting a

¹¹⁸ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 17.

narrative that concepts that attest to different realities conflict with one another, Rahner theologizes in a way that allows many truths to be true.

Rahner's insistence on the oneness of the church has important implications for a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds. As discussed in Section 4.1.3, Rahner's work on sin in the church resists a division between the church and the members who compose the church. As such, the sinfulness of the church is not about the morality of individual members, but the failure of the church as a whole. As discussed in Chapter 2, the wounds of sexism and racism in the church are concrete examples of how the church fails to live into its mission to make the reign of God present on earth. Although Rahner's ecclesiological analysis does not include structural sin such as racism and sexism, there are elements of his ecclesiology that are suited to such an analysis. For example, the sacramental nature of the church has the space to account for these failures, for the church is not the continuation of the Incarnation while still maintaining a unique salvific role and serving as the "basic sacrament of salvation for the world."¹¹⁹ Rahner's discussion of the moral failure of the church, not the focus on the morality of individual members, opens the door to discussions of the woundedness of the church. I argue in this dissertation that the church is wounded. Such a theological argument can be made on the foundation of Rahner's analysis of the sinfulness of the church. This sacramental nature of the church holds together the promise of a vision of what the church can be with an honest appraisal of how the church misses the mark. This spirit of self-criticism within the bounds of a sacramental vision of the church provides the framework for an analysis

¹¹⁹ Karl Rahner, "The New Image of the Church," trans. David Bourke, vol. 10, *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1977), 14.

of the church as wounded. It allows us to state emphatically, “this is not what the church should be” while in the context of hope that the church can indeed live into its mission.

A crucial aspect to Rahner’s paradoxical elements of his theology is that nothing is “pure paradox.” These elements were in relationship with one another, deepening in mystery when held together. When looking to sin and holiness in the church, for example, there is not a strict division between visible sin and invisible grace. Rather, Lennan explains, “While he clearly accepted that it could properly be described as sinful, Rahner nevertheless stressed that the Church was not a pure paradox of the union of visible sin and invisible grace. Thus, even the sinful Church did not cease to proclaim, through the indwelling Spirit, the holiness of God.”¹²⁰ Even what may appear to be “pure paradox” is not so, for these elements mingle together. So too it is with wounds. Wounds do not present strict divisions between the visible and invisible, past and present, impacted and unaffected. Rather, many paradoxical realities co-mingle at the site of the wound. Rahner’s use of paradoxical elements underscores that strict divisions are not the most helpful framework for understanding these realities, but rather, looking to the relationship among seemingly contradictory realities deepens our experience of mystery.

An essential aspect of Rahner’s theology that allows for paradox is the theology of symbol. Nancy Clasby observes that Rahner sought a “more flexible matrix” in drawing upon symbols.¹²¹ Clasby affirms that symbolic language does not operate according to specific rules, offering instead another description: “it dances.”¹²² This image of dancing language lifts up an important aspect of symbolic language: it

¹²⁰ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 31.

¹²¹ Nancy Clasby, “Dancing Sophia: Rahner’s Theology of Symbols,” *Religion and Literature* 25 (1993): 51.

¹²² Clasby, 62.

communicates while moving in ways that defy rules. So too do wounds communicate while operating according to a different logic. Symbolic language and wounds both communicate, but do so according to differing rules of the game. Rahner's symbolic language has openings for language surrounding wounds. The dynamic of symbolic language operating according to a differing structure mirrors the dynamic of trauma troubling the strictly chronological ordering of time. Both challenge the traditional logic governing each area, language, and time respectively. In doing so, they offer alternate accounts of truth.

The relationship between the individual and community is an essential aspect in considering the oneness of the church in the midst of paradoxical elements. Rahner's ecclesiology prioritizes the communal dimension of faith without negating the role of the individual. In "I Believe in the Church," Rahner reflects on how to respond to the recently proclaimed dogma of Mary's Assumption. In this, he explores the relationship between the communal and individual dynamics of faith:

Faith does not only mean accepting what 'I' as an individual believe that I have heard. It also means accepting what the Church has heard, giving my assent to the 'confession' of the Church, the Church which not only is the bearer of the message of Christ which it delivers to individuals (and which then disappears again like a postman) but it is the enduring and abiding medium of faith.¹²³

The communal and the individual are not opposed in the church, posing a prophetic challenge to the individualism of contemporary American culture. In this section, Rahner explores how the individual and communal are necessarily related. The church is the object of faith, while also being the dimension in which faith exists. Again, these are not in tension in Rahner's ecclesiology, as both can be true at the same time. This communal

¹²³ Rahner, "I Believe in the Church," 109.

emphasis on “the reality of ecclesial faith as a shared experience”¹²⁴ is a helpful addition to an ecclesiology that takes wounds seriously.

The examples of the relationship between the categorical and transcendental, institutional and charismatic, individual and communal, and sinful and holy nature of the church illustrate how Rahner’s theology has the capacity to hold paradoxes. These relationships demonstrate how Rahner utilizes two concepts that may appear to contradict at first glance, but upon further examination, are not only able to be considered together but come to a deeper meaning when considered together. Considering this in light of trauma theory affirms that the many elements of wounds do not contradict, but rather, are deepened when considered in conjunction with the mystery of God. For example, Chapter 3 explored how trauma defies yet demands a witness. Looking at the ways that trauma becomes known through the act of witnessing reveals important aspects of trauma, such as its belatedness. At the same time, the act of witnessing does not fully engage in the trauma; there remains elements of trauma that are inaccessible to the witness, and even to the person experiencing trauma. Shoshana Felman describes that in the act of witnessing, “the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, *not available* to its own speaker.”¹²⁵ This underscores that there is always more to the traumatic experience than can be captured in writing, therapy, or trauma studies. By considering the ways that trauma needs a witness yet the witness cannot engage in the fullness of trauma, several important and paradoxical truths about trauma are affirmed. Holding these together, rather than analyzing in discrete categories, facilitates a deeper appreciation of these truths. Taken together, these aspects

¹²⁴ Lennan, “Karl Rahner,” 440.

¹²⁵ Felman, “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching,” 24. Emphasis original.

of the paradoxical elements of Rahner's theology form the foundation to build an ecclesiology of woundedness. Truths that appear to contradict can be held together in a posture of mystery.

4.2.4 Open to the Future

Past, present, and future mingle together at the site of the wound, troubling a strictly referential understanding of time. Jenny Edkins explains that "trauma and traumatic memory alters the linearity of historical, narrativized time."¹²⁶ Instead of chronological understandings of time, trauma offers a vision of time where past and future can be experienced in the present. As such, there is an inherent openness to the future in trauma theory.

The eschatological orientation of the church is a key feature of Rahner's ecclesiology. It guides his understanding of the pilgrim church on the way becoming more authentically what it is called to be. The eschatological orientation of the church has the capacity to respond to the challenges raised by trauma theory, especially surrounding an understanding of time where past, present, and future are not clearly demarcated.

As referenced in Section 4.1.4, the eschatological dimension of the church harmonizes with a sense of time that is not strictly chronological, a notion that is a central tenet of trauma theory. Rahner speaks of the "the future fulfillment, notwithstanding its being still to come, is in her already a present event."¹²⁷ In this articulation of the eschatological orientation of the church, Rahner brings together past, present, and future

¹²⁶ Edkins, "Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11," 246.

¹²⁷ Rahner, "The Church and the Parousia of Christ," 298.

as present in the church. The future remains the future, yet cannot be clearly distinguished from the present as a strictly chronological understanding of time would suggest. The co-mingling of time, a hallmark of trauma theory, resonates in Rahner's ecclesiology.

Part of the eschatological nature of the church is the connection to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rahner explains, "The Church is always in history, always in a one-way history, in which it never loses its legitimate past, and in this unpredictable, dark history of suffering, the Church always comes from Jesus Christ, crucified and risen."¹²⁸ This connection with the crucifixion of Christ— certainly a traumatic event— as present in the church today also resonates with trauma theory. The wounds of the past still figure today, but are transformed in the resurrection, an aspect that will be expounded upon in Chapter 5. Thus, Rahner's ecclesiology is predicated on a co-mingling of past and future in the historical church of today. It takes the wounds of Jesus Christ seriously, yet also recognizes how wounds can transform.

This eschatological orientation does not erase the wounds of the church today. In a way, this orientation takes these wounds more seriously than other ecclesiologies that minimize wounds or the connection of the historical and eschatological realities of the church. The eschatological orientation of the church promises a time where suffering will be no longer, when wounds will be healed, while not discounting their impact today. This "unpredictable, dark history of suffering" will not be disconnected from the church in the eschaton, but promises to be transformed by God's grace.

¹²⁸ Rahner, "The Church's Redemptive Historical Provenance from the Death and Resurrection of Jesus," 37.

Lennan characterizes Rahner's theology as distinguished by a commitment to the future.¹²⁹ This signaling to the future is also a feature of wounds, promising a healing that has not occurred while also pointing out that the future is significantly impacted by the present and the past. This future, not "simply a continuation of the present,"¹³⁰ promises of a time when healing will occur. This future brings hope. Lennan explores hope in the church as rooted in God and an integral aspect of the church. He explains, "With hope, the church can be a symbol of God's kingdom that is the promise of our future, as well as the heart of our present."¹³¹ Hope does not discount the wounds of today, telling victims to suffer for there will be a time when all is healed. Rather, in the reign of God, the wounds of the past and present will not dominate in the way that they do today, but will be transformed. This is held together with a hope for healing today, for deferring healing to the future risks neglecting the impact of wounds today. Understanding the future as connected to yet distinct from the present troubles a strictly referential understanding of time. This openness to a future is a resonance between trauma theory and Rahner's ecclesiology. Both are rooted in a deep hope that is not naïve, but brings together that which is tangible with that which is characterized by mystery in hope for a transformation.

¹²⁹ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 8.

¹³⁰ Lennan, 8.

¹³¹ Richard Lennan, "The Church: Got Hope?," in *Hope: Promise, Possibility, and Fulfillment*, ed. Richard Lennan and Nancy Pineda-Madrid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), 52–53.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the contribution of Rahner's ecclesiology to creating a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds. With a foundation in the mystery of God and God's self-offer to creation, Rahner presents a vision of the church that is at once essential in salvation and always open to conversion. His ecclesiology resists divisions, and instead upholds the importance of paradoxical elements. He affirms that the categorical is important, as are the transcendent and charismatic aspects of the church. In placing Rahner's ecclesiology in conversation with contemporary trauma theory, Rahner's ecclesiology does not buckle under the pressure from these challenges, but instead offers an ecclesiological analysis that has the capacity to hold the challenges of wounds.

If the church is truly to be a "grace-filled community of believers"¹³² as envisioned by Rahner, then it is essential that the church attend to its own woundedness. It cannot be united as an ecclesial body if some members are actively harming other members, as in cases of racism and sexism. This communal dimension places the onus of responsibility on the church to create a community where all are welcome and celebrated. It presents a hopeful vision of what the church can be, calling it to be a community that embodies the grace freely given by God. This analysis emboldens this study on the threats of wounds to the unity, holiness, and catholicity of the church, for it empowers the church to live into its mission while taking account of the challenges in a posture of hope. This is an essential element for Chapter 5 in order to build an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds.

¹³² Lennan, "Karl Rahner," 441.

5.0 TOWARDS AN ECCLESIAL VISION IN THE SHADOW OF WOUNDS

The church is living in the shadow of wounds. Trauma studies present accounts of wounds extending beyond their initial impact, continuing to be present in the aftermath. Life after the originating wound is reshaped. The pressing issue in trauma studies, according to Shelly Rambo, is “how people refigure their lives, given their experiences of trauma.”¹ Such a refiguring is also necessary in ecclesiology, for the wounds created by the church continue to live on and impact the church today. To take seriously the wounds in the church demands that we refigure our understanding of church.

This final chapter imagines an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds. It synthesizes the challenges presented by the wounds of racism and sexism in the church and considers how the church might authentically be church in light of these wounds. The challenges of wounds calls for a new self-understanding of the church and re-imagination of ecclesiology. It is insufficient to proceed with traditional ecclesiological investigations and consider wounds as one would consider any number of issues at the conclusion of an ecclesiological investigation. Rather, the insights illuminated by trauma studies and deepened in conversation with Rahner’s ecclesiology demand a re-imagination of the church in the shadow of wounds.

¹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 5.

First, this chapter explores the central components of an ecclesial vision that takes wounds seriously. Utilizing the contributions of Rahner's ecclesiology, such an ecclesiology must include lived experience, center the role of wounds, consider ecclesial authenticity, embrace paradox, and hold space for the revelatory nature of wounds. By engaging in this ecclesiological method, wounds in the church can undergo a transfiguration to become post-Easter wounds, where their memory still exists but they cease to harm the church. The next section further develops such an ecclesial vision. This section upholds the four marks of the church as norms for considering how this ecclesiology deepens an understanding of these marks. In addition, the mission of the church and the credibility of the church serve as norms for developing a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds. An ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds advances the church's ability to credibly live into its mission.

Finally, this chapter considers what it looks like to live as a church in woundedness. This calls for a re-ordered ecclesiological imagination and attending to the site of wounds in the church today. An ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds is a profoundly hopeful vision, taking root in a God that continues to reveal Godself to the world.

5.1 KEY FEATURES OF AN ECCLESIAL VISION IN THE SHADOW OF WOUNDS

An ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds begins with lived experience, privileging the experience of the marginalized. It recognizes the centrality of wounds, including the contours and nuances of wounds. The paradoxical nature of wounds enables several truths to be simultaneously true, opening the door to a deepened experience of the mystery of God. This ecclesial vision regards wounds as revelatory. Jesus Christ's appearance to his disciples as resurrected with transformed crucifixion wounds provides insight into the revelatory nature of wounds, demonstrating how wounds can be present and transformed. As such, an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds seeks a post-Easter account of wounds where wounds are visible and testify to the past but no longer wound the church in their transfigured state.

5.1.1 Lived Experience as a Point of Departure

An ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds must be rooted in lived experience of woundedness. Wounds do not exist in the abstract; it is essential that discussions of wounds integrate the lived experience of the faithful. Chapter 2 incorporated examples of racism and sexism in ways that centered lived experience. In doing so, I looked at individual experiences as well as larger trends. Navigating the relationship between individual and communal in experience is similar to the dynamic of particular and universal in the catholicity of the church, as discussed in Chapter 1. Lived experience

refers to the experience of wounds, whether named as such or not. In particular, lived experience includes the concrete experiences of racism and sexism. It is tempting in a theological project to make wounds abstract, but this ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds seeks to consider wounds in light of the actual experiences of the faithful, privileging experiences that are often marginalized or silenced.

In Chapter 1, I examined differing points of departure for ecclesiology. Practical ecclesiology places practices at the center, whereas systematic ecclesiology begins with theological principles. Both include practice and theological principles, but often begin from different points of departure. Though lived experience is not conflated with practice, an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds most similarly follows the methodological priority of experience of practical ecclesiology, for it uplifts lived experience as central to an ecclesiological analysis. This approach affirms that wounds in the church are of the magnitude and importance to be a point of departure for theological reflection; to ignore or undercut the significance of wounds does a disservice to the church. By beginning with the experience of wounds, I affirm the experience of the marginalized, the impact on the church as a whole, and from there engage questions of the marks of the church in light of these wounds in Section 5.2. At the same time, this project is not removed from systematic ecclesiology. Chapter 4 engaged the work of Karl Rahner, analyzing his ecclesiology and assessing how his ecclesiology can serve as a tool for developing an ecclesiology that takes wounds seriously. In particular, Rahner's focus on affirming hidden realities, embracing paradox, and overarching emphasis on mystery are also conducive to recognizing the centrality of wounds.

Clare Watkins explains that practical ecclesiology is “an ecclesiology not of product, resulting in ‘an ecclesiology,’ but of process, whose concern is service of the life of Christian men and women in and for the world.”² This dissertation looks at the wounds of racism and sexism in the church and takes seriously the experience of the wounded. It then imagines how to envision a church in light of these wounds. This is more of a process and less of a finished product, as the wounds continue to impact the church and as such, the process is ongoing.

To center the lived experience of the faithful in an ecclesiology in response to wounds is to validate the experience of hurt and pain that is all too often ignored or discredited. It is to align the church with the oppressed and marginalized, putting the preferential option for the poor into ecclesiological action. It unequivocally aligns the church with the victim, stating that the victim’s story has truth and merit, and the ongoing impact is no small matter. In short, it validates the victim.

In examining lived experience, it is important to note that the experience of racism and sexism is not always named as such. Recall the survey cited in Section 2.2.1.1.2 that 90% of catholic women report not having experienced sexism in the church.³ Despite this lack of naming one’s experience as sexism, the fact remains that exclusively male language to discuss God and the exclusion of women in ministerial roles leads to a communal environment of pervasive sexism. Even though experiences of racism and sexism are not always named as traumatic or wounds, these experiences remain experiences of wounding because they shape how one perceives herself, her relationship with the church, and her relationship with God. When such an experience is

² Watkins, “Practising Ecclesiology,” 35.

³ Gray and Gautier, “Catholic Women in the United States,” 24–25.

marked as “less than” or othering, these relationships with self, other, and God are negatively conditioned. This dissertation seeks to uplift experiences of racism and sexism, whether named as such or not, as experiences of the church and re-envision ecclesiology in light of these experiences.

Part of the complexity of wounds within the church is that the person or community inflicting the pain also belongs to the church. In this examination of racism, the people excluding black persons from ministry in the church were also in the church, often time leaders of the church. The silence perpetuated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops surrounding matters of racism occurs within the church. The exclusion of women from ministry and the exclusively male language for God is carried out by people within the church. Thus, an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds must recognize the complexity of lived experience within the church. Reinder Ruard Ganzevoort applies the psychology of trauma theory to the process of recognizing evil in churches. He explains, “If we take traumatization seriously, we have to acknowledge that there is evil in our society, our churches, and our families. If we pay attention to victims as victims, we have to admit that there are perpetrators as well. And maybe we have to admit our own complicity to the structures of violence by which people have become traumatized.”⁴ To center lived experience is to grapple with the complexity of the victim and perpetrator being in the same church.

The challenges of trauma theory mean that we not only recognize the harm caused to victims, but also the communal complicity in structures that continue to wound the church. Thus, incorporating lived experience is a call to action to examine the communal complicity in perpetuating systems of racism and sexism in the church. This underscores

⁴ Ganzevoort, “Scars and Stigmata,” 29.

that utilizing lived experience as a point of departure is not a tidy package of “add experience and stir,” but reorients the entire process, for it adds many layers of complexity. Yet this complexity does not cause an ecclesiology that takes wounds seriously to buckle, for it has the capacity to embrace paradox, as will be explored in Section 5.3. A central challenge of an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds is coming to terms with the church as the entity inflicting wounds, while also being wounded.

It is essential to note to such an inclusion of lived experience must be intersectional. In incorporating the experience of black women from religious life, there are overlapping areas of oppression, for their gender, race, and culture deemed them to be considered “less-than” in the church. These multiple layers of oppression extend to include sexual orientation, disability and ability levels, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and many more layers of identity. Such an intersectional approach must be attentive to the asymmetries of power, calling attention to the power differentials that undergird situations where trauma occurs.

This intersectional approach must be central to the project of an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds. This project is unapologetically a work of feminist ecclesiology, envisioning a church where women and all gender identities are valued and celebrated. However, too often feminism is equated with white feminism, holding up the experience of white women as neutral or the most valuable at the expense of non-white women. However, this project seeks to move away from this trend and instead embrace an inclusive, intersectional feminism. This feminism involves interrogating our own ecclesial tradition for ways that it upholds the white, able-bodied male as supreme to the detriment of a truly inclusive ecclesiology. Jessica Coblentz and Brianne Jacobs envision

this reform, stating, “Feminist ecclesial reform thus requires that we dismantle the enduring effects and realities of white supremacy in the contemporary American church.”⁵

Thus, an intersectional, feminist approach to a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds begins by centering the lived experience of wounds. In this dissertation, it upholds that acknowledging the wounds of racism and the wounds of sexism are both vitally important. It would be an error to think that the wound of sexism is somehow more central to the feminist project given that it focuses upon gender. After acknowledging these wounds, the work of “dismantling the realities of white supremacy in the contemporary American church” begins. Trauma theory affirms that wounds are not located strictly in their originating incident, but continue to live on in unique ways today. Applying this insight to racism in the church, we must recognize the ways that racism, anti-blackness, and white supremacy continue to live on in the church today. Though seminaries no longer explicitly exclude on the basis of race, racism continues to impact the church through the de facto segregation of parishes⁶ and relative silence of church leadership on issues of race.

This example highlights the final element of lived experience in an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds: it calls for attention to church practice today. The role of lived experience is not just a methodological point of departure, but also part of the end to which this project is directed. Ecclesiology is shaped by practice, as well as shapes practice. As a result, an ecclesiology that responds to the challenges of wounds seeks to

⁵ Jessica Coblentz and Brianne A. B. Jacobs, “Mary Daly’s *The Church and the Second Sex* after Fifty Years of US Catholic Feminist Theology,” *Theological Studies* 79, no. 3 (2018): 560, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563918784781>.

⁶ For an in-depth examination of segregated parishes, see McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*.

shape church practice. It looks at the way that the church functions as church in the world, and seeks to be a church that does not cause wounds. When the church does cause wounds, the church should respond by applying balm to the wounds rather than ignoring the wounds.

5.1.2 Centrality of Wounds and Ecclesial Authenticity

Wounds must be at the center of this ecclesial vision. Chapter 2 examined racism and sexism, demonstrating the ongoing presence of wounds in the church. Yet these are not the only two wounds present in the church. The legacy of colonialism continues to shape an ecclesiological imagination of the church being a white, European, privileged entity. The ongoing sexual abuse crisis continues to wound the church. A full examination of the multitude of wounds in the church would be never ending. To deny these wounds is to deny the reality of the church.

The centrality of wounds in the church attends to two realities of wounds: presence and absence. Wounds can be viscerally present; they command attention as something that is “not as it should be.” Images of wounds as oozing blood, revealing that which is typically hidden, such as deeper layers of flesh and blood, communicate this presence. Yet wounds are not always visible. Trauma theory underscores that wounds are persistently present, even when unacknowledged. Wounds continue to make themselves known in a belated fashion, becoming present in unexpected ways. Ignoring wounds or stifling them below the surface does not negate their presence. In fact, this may cause

wounds to fester and develop into toxic or dangerous outcomes. Thus, a crucial step towards being church in the shadow of wounds is to acknowledge wounds.

To affirm wounds in the church is to affirm the experience of the wounded. This ecclesiological move affirms people who are excluded, discriminated against, and experience denial of their dignity on account of racism, sexism, and other wounds. Yet it is also important to uphold that all in the church are wounded by these experiences, not just the direct victims. When racial segregation divides parishes, all people in the church are impacted. When women are excluded from ministries, it is not just women who suffer, but all who are robbed of their ministry and instead experience an impoverished church. Wounds in the church harm the entire body of Christ. Left unattended, wounds fester and create a distorted self-understanding of the church.

The centrality of wounds focuses attention on that which is hyper-visible, as well as that which is hidden or obscured. Rahner's ecclesiology provides a helpful framework for an analysis of calling attention to hidden realities. Specifically, his work on church as sacrament and symbol affirms that there are elements of the church that may not be seen, yet are essential to ecclesiological considerations. Utilizing Rahner's ecclesiology of church as sacrament as a foundation, an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds centers the role of wounds while recognizing that there is more to wounds than one can see. Looking to an image of a physical wound, one may be able to see a scar on the body, but an observer cannot see the scar tissue beneath the surface, or the psychological, emotional, and spiritual scarring. In analyzing sexism in the church, one can observe the exclusively male language for God but it is difficult to assess the ways that this shapes one's relationship, or lack thereof, with God and the far-reaching theological and spiritual

impact on one's imagination, sense of self, and connection to community. The historical exclusion of black men from the priesthood is visible through a historical analysis, but such an examination cannot capture how this exclusion impacted black persons witnessing this discrimination and white persons whose sense of white superiority was affirmed and reinforced by the church. In short, the impact of wounds extends in ways that no analysis, no matter how detailed, can fully capture. It is not possible to comprehensively capture how the denial of one's dignity impacts the victim, oppressor, and bystander. The impact of wounds stretches to include many communities and infinite outcomes. Rahner's insight of calling attention to hidden realities affirms this, while also resisting the urge to capture exhaustively the full extent of the impact, for such an attempt neglects the nature of mystery. An ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds thus affirms the centrality of wounds while also acknowledging that the impact of wounds cannot fully be known.

Further, the far-reaching and often invisible impact of wounds also resonates with the relationship between the categorical and transcendental and emphasis on mystery that permeates Rahner's ecclesiology. Wounds affirm both the seen and unseen, that which is before us and that which remains elusive. In a similar pattern, Rahner's work engages the church in the concrete and the categorical while also connecting these to the charismatic and transcendental. Mystery is not opposed to reality, as though mystery is unreal. Rather, Rahner explains, "What is comprehended and what is incomprehensible are in reality one and the same thing."⁷ Likewise, wounds cannot be divided out into what is seen and unseen, for all is connected in the wound and ongoing experience of trauma. Rahner's affirmation of the connection between that which is concrete and tangible and

⁷ Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 55.

the larger mystery of God is a helpful framework for building an ecclesiology centered upon wounds. Such an ecclesiology must always be connected to mystery, underscoring that there is more to a wound than can be captured or theologized about. This is not reason to give up, but rather, invites a posture of awe towards this mystery. At its best, mystery invites one to enter into a deeper relationship with God.

It is important to note that affirming the centrality of wounds is not the same as glorifying wounds. Rather, placing wounds at the center of the ecclesiological project affirms that wounds are not how things should be. It is a prophetic call to another reality. Roberto Goizueta explores the role of suffering in the world and the church, explaining, “In so mediating the wounded and resurrected body of Christ in the world, the church herself is called to a cruciform existence in history. This is true not because the cross is the goal of Christian discipleship but precisely because it *isn't*. Precisely because Christian discipleship is *ultimately* not about death but about life.”⁸ It should be noted that Goizueta is looking primarily at suffering outside of the church and cultivating a church that embodies the suffering of the poor, whereas I am looking at wounds within the church, including where the church itself is perpetrator. These differences notwithstanding, the parallel holds in that by embodying the cruciform existence in history, the church models this “not because the cross is the goal of Christian discipleship but precisely because it *isn't*.”

Thus, the centrality of wounds calls the church to action. It prophetically proclaims that this is not what the church should be, and instead, compels a vision of a church free from active wounds. It demands action from the church to heal wounds and create environments where wounds will not fester. The church has the potential to be the

⁸ Goizueta, “Corpus Verum: Toward a Borderland Ecclesiology,” 151. Emphasis original.

balm on wounds, rather than the source of wounds. Centering attention on wounds calls attention to the prophetic mission of the church in making the already-but-not-yet reign of God present in the world.

5.1.3 Paradox

As traced in Chapters 3 and 4, the paradoxical nature of wounds is a key tenet of trauma theory. Trauma defies yet demands a witness. Past, present, and future co-mingle at the site of the wound, troubling strictly referential notions of time. As such, an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds must account for the paradoxical nature of wounds, and be paradoxical itself.

An ecclesiology marked by paradox recognizes many realities of the church. It is grounded in the church in the concrete, while also recognizing that the church is always called to be more. A paradoxical ecclesiology recognizes that the church is simultaneously holy and sinful; these two truths do not compete but exist together. An ecclesiology that embraces paradox is an ecclesiology that has its eyes open to the many experiences and truths of the church.

Rahner's contribution to an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds is the affirmation of mystery and room for embracing paradoxical elements. God as mystery frames Rahner's understanding of church. Again, mystery is not a puzzle that one can solve if she thinks hard enough, but rather, an overarching sense of mystery that invites deeper relationship. Similarly, this sense of mystery can also frame an ecclesiology that responds to wounds. It recognizes that there are many important realities that may defy language, yet remain true. Further, the paradoxical nature of Rahner's articulation of

church as sacrament affirms that many truths can be true simultaneously. Paradoxes do not mean that there are contradictions, but rather, paradoxical elements illuminate unseen aspects and invite deeper relationship. By framing an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds with an affirmation of mystery, we are invited to a posture that regards the many truths of wounds with reverence and a desire for deeper relationship and understanding.

One element of the paradoxical element of an ecclesiology that takes wounds seriously is its ability to embrace ambiguity. It is compelling for ecclesiology to be strictly systematic, for each element to have a precise place and purpose and for all of the elements to come together in a cohesive, clear way. Wounds challenge this logic, instead inviting an approach that embraces paradox. This is not to say that it is sloppy or does not fit together, but rather, that it comes together differently. In speaking about the challenge of wounds to theology in a dialogue with other theologians transcribed by Shelly Rambo, M. Shawn Copeland reflects on the re-membering that occurs around the Eucharistic table:

But in coming together around the table in a certain way we are re-membered; we are put back together again in some way....As long as the wounds are there, I'm comfortable because it's not just a tidy little package. It really didn't turn out the way we thought it would turn out. But it still isn't turning out the way we thought it would turn out. In other words, it didn't turn out triumphantly, but it didn't turn out badly either. It turned out that people were still searching for each other, for those who are disappeared, looking for the loved ones who are missing people, not just looking physically but looking in their hearts where love is still there.⁹

Copeland's language surrounding avoiding "a tidy little package" speaks to the complexity that comes with embracing paradox. Being open to God's ongoing revelation in the world demands that our "tidy little packages" of theology be challenged and re-negotiated, for our experience of God continues to be ongoing. "Tidy little packages" run

⁹ Rambo et al., "'Theologians Engaging Trauma' Transcript," 231–32.

the risk of functioning as a “blueprint ecclesiology,” seeking to apply abstract notions and ideals in universal ways, but instead stifling the Spirit as a result.

The embrace of ambiguity makes possible a vision of the church that is grounded in the experience of church. It creates space for a living ecclesiology that resonates with the faithful’s actual experience of church, instead of an abstract ideal removed from reality. By aligning ecclesiology with the lived experience of the faithful, the church is able to truly live into its unique role as church. It is able to be a sacrament and symbol that makes present that which it represents, while also acknowledging the ways in which it uniquely shrouds Christ’s presence. Embracing ambiguity allows space for an ecclesiology that is real and authentic, recognizing the successes and failures of the church as it exists in the concrete. Further, it emphasizes that there is always more to the church than what can be captured in theological analysis or ecclesial documents. It embraces the mystery of God who continues to reveal Godself in our midst. An ecclesiology that embraces the paradoxical nature of wounds thus must embody that mystery and paradox, seeking to respond to and articulate God’s ongoing revelation in our midst.

5.1.4 Wounds as a Source of Revelation

These three elements of an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds culminate into the final aspect: wounds as a source of revelation. Wounds can be a source of revelation and propel the church into living into its mission more fully to make the reign of God known on earth. To focus this theological claim, I look to the wounds of the resurrected

Christ. Jesus Christ's wounds remained when he appeared to the disciples, yet his wounds were transformed. This provides rich imagery for the church, for wounds continue to reveal truth and experience yet can be transformed in such a way that they are not actively wounding the church. If the church does not deny its woundedness but instead recognizes its wounds, it is possible for the wounds to be transfigured and become a source of revelation.

The body of Christ evokes many images, including unity of the church, the Eucharist, and the crucified and resurrected body of Jesus Christ. Erin Kidd connects Rahner's often-neglected work on body with trauma studies, arguing that Rahner's work enables us to better understand trauma-induced disorders and demands solidarity with survivors of trauma. She argues, "The body of Christ exposes those complicit in trauma as those who not only sin against others but also against God; in the body of Christ, God has definitely sided with those who have been traumatized."¹⁰ This affirmation of the body of Christ standing against oppressors and with victims captures the prophetic dimension of wounds in the body of Christ; wounds compel acts of solidarity. Further, Kidd argues that a wound in the church is a sin against others as well as against God. As a result, she reconfigures Bessel Van der Kolk's well-known trauma phrase, "the body keeps the score"¹¹ to become "the body of God keeps the score."¹² This emphasizes the harm done to the ecclesial body that cannot simply be quantified, yet still exists and continues to harm the church.

Examining wounds in the body of Christ also evokes the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ. When the resurrected Christ appeared to his disciples, he did so with the

¹⁰ Kidd, "The Violation of God in the Body of the World," 20.

¹¹ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*.

¹² Kidd, "The Violation of God in the Body of the World," 20.

wounds of his crucifixion still present. If Jesus had appeared in a fully transfigured body or state, erasing the wounds of his recent and violent crucifixion, it may have conveyed a hopeful message that all is healed in the reign of God. Given how promising that message would be, it is significant to recognize that such an erasure of wounds did not happen. Jesus' wounds were not erased, yet they did not remain the same; Jesus' wounds remained visible and transfigured in the resurrection. This promises a time when the wounds of the church will be transformed. They will never be erased from memory, yet they can be transformed in a way where they cease their active harm to the church and instead become a source of revelation.

Jesus Christ appearing with transformed wounds of the crucifixion signals that life can be reimagined in the aftermath of wounds. Rambo explains, "Resurrection wounds provide a curious constellation for conceiving of life that is marked by wounds but recreated through them."¹³ As a source of revelation, wounds can reveal God's presence in the world, especially in places and experiences associated with pain and division. Even in the midst of wounds, God is present. This presence signals a hope for a time when these wounds do not dominate and sow division in the ways that they do now, instead promising of a "recreation of wounds" in Rambo's words. Prophetically, the crucifixion wounds also do not disappear when Jesus appears to the disciples. This conveys that wounds are significant and are not erased, thus validating the experiences of pain while promising a future where wounds are transformed.

A pivotal image of Jesus appearing to the disciples with wounds comes in the interaction with Thomas the Twin (John 20:24-29). Thomas was not with the disciples when the resurrected Jesus Christ first came to them. In response to hearing of the

¹³ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 42.

appearance, Thomas said, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Thomas refuses to believe the accounts of others and seeks to return to life pre-Glorification. Biblical scholar Sandra Schneiders explains “He (Thomas) insists that he will believe only if he can touch the very wounds of Jesus, only if he can return to the dispensation of pre-Easter faith, only if he can continue to relate to Jesus in the flesh... He is demanding that Jesus be for him as he had been prior to the Glorification.”¹⁴ For Thomas, there is a desire to return to a time before the crucifixion and resurrection, yet this desire is transformed when he is confronted with the wounds of Christ. A week after Jesus’ appearance to the disciples, Jesus appeared once again and said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe” (John 20:27). Contrary to popular discussion and many pieces of artwork, Thomas does not doubt or touch the wounds of Christ.¹⁵ Being confronted with Jesus’ wounds conveys a sense of rupture to Thomas, causing him to believe and proclaim, “My Lord and My God!” (John 20:28). This resonates with trauma theory’s sense of a rupture in time. There is a division in time into “time before the originating event” and “time after the event.” Thomas seeks to return to a time before, yet he cannot, for reality has changed. Just as Thomas initially wished to return to a time pre-Glorification, so too, it is tempting for the church desire to return to a time when it was not confronted with its own woundedness. While there was never a time without wounds in the church, there remains a sense that denying wounds preserves a sense of holiness and wholeness in the church. Thomas’s interaction with the risen Christ can serve as a

¹⁴ Sandra M. Schneiders, *Jesus Risen in Our Midst: The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 51.

¹⁵ Schneiders, 51.

model that the church must grapple with this rupture, and in doing so, the church can live into the post-Easter world and authentically embody its mission.

The interaction between the resurrected Christ and Thomas underscores the revelatory dimension of wounds. It is through the invitation to touch that Thomas believes. Schneiders names Jesus' invitation for Thomas to touch his wounds as a sacramental experience. She explains, "The invitation to touch... is not an invitation to physical verification that cannot cause or ground faith but to sacramental experience, to seeing what crucifixion really means, to appropriating what the open side really offers."¹⁶ In thinking of how to "appropriate what the open side really offers," we are invited to do theology from the site of the wound. To do so is to take wounds seriously, opening up the church to the possibility of transformation when encountering the wound, just as Thomas was transformed. Schneiders underscores that this sacramental experience takes the material seriously: "Sacramental experience is not disembodied. It is an experience of the spiritual precisely in the material. Jesus invites all of his post-Easter disciples to an experience that is in continuity with but different from the faith based on the signs performed in the pre-Easter dispensation."¹⁷ Putting Schneiders's work in dialogue with trauma studies underscore that there is continuity as well as a rupture in time before the originating event and after. An ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds enters into this sacramental experience, affirming that wounds transform time while also underscoring a continuity of time. The paradox of rupture and continuity deepens the overarching sense of mystery surrounding wounds, inviting one to more deeply enter into the mystery of God.

¹⁶ Schneiders, 57.

¹⁷ Schneiders, 57.

Thomas's interaction with Jesus affirms an important truth of trauma theory: there is no returning to a time "before." Thomas wants to return to a time before, yet this is not possible. Trauma studies underscores that the time period before and after an originating event are decidedly different; for those that experience trauma, there is a dividing line between "life before" and "life after." Ecclesiologically, the church must accept that there is no returning to a time before wounds. Even if such a reality did exist, it would be inaccessible since wounds fundamentally alter what it means to be church. This dissertation calls the church to confront its own woundedness and begin to live into the reality of what it means to be church in the shadow of wounds.

Though depicting an aspect of the Thomas narrative in the Gospel of John that differs from Schneiders, there is merit in examining a theological aesthetics analysis in looking at the wounds of Christ, for it illuminates the connection of spiritual and physical elements of wounds. Alejandro García Rivera reflects on *The Incredulity of St. Thomas*, Caravaggio's artwork depicting Thomas touching the wounds of the resurrected Christ. In this painting, Jesus peels away his robe to reveal a wound on his side. He takes the finger of St. Thomas and places it into his wound on the side of his body. The disciples surround Jesus and Thomas, looking on as this act of touching occurs. García Rivera describes this moment: "As Jesus' arm pulls his robe to uncover the wound at his side, it also enters a region of light as if the act of disrobing is identical with the act of revealing or enlightenment, or, in my view, insight. This same light also fills the faces of the apostles signaling the instant of a very special enlightenment."¹⁸ In this, García Rivera connects the act of disrobing with revealing and enlightenment, affirming that the act of

¹⁸ García-Rivera, *A Wounded Innocence*, 120–21.

seeing a wound in a new way, or touching it in this case, can be an act of revelation. He continues,

The risen Jesus “teaches” Thomas to sense anew through the union of his physical and spiritual sense. This is the meaning, I think, of Jesus’ sure and guiding hand on Thomas’s physical and seeking figure. Jesus teaches Thomas the possibilities of a full humanity, the possibilities of a united physical and spiritual sensibility, the guiding hand of a risen but wounded body. Indeed, it is the wound at the side of Jesus that, in Caravaggio’s painting, becomes the site where that union takes place. And, it is here, as well, that the mystery and the profundity of a wounded innocence takes shape and meaning.¹⁹

For García Rivera, the wound is the site of unity of spiritual and physical sensibilities.

Further, it advances the “possibilities of a full humanity.” This underscores the revelatory dimension of post-Easter wounds.

In an ecclesiological sense, wounds can reveal the possibilities of a full church, a full ecclesial community. Bringing together the spiritual and physical dimensions of Jesus Christ’s resurrection wounds signals to the spiritual and physical dimensions of wounds in the church. The post-Easter wounds of Christ are transformed in such a way that they are not active wounds, yet still testify to the pain and suffering of the crucifixion. Until the wounds of the church are transfigured, they will continue to fester and harm the church. The wounds of Christ invite us as a church to “sense anew,” fleshing out what it means to do ecclesiology from the site of the wound.

Jesus appearing to his disciples with crucifixion wounds is not an abstract theological concept, but rather, has demands on our ecclesiology and actions today.

Goizueta argues that we must recognize the body of Christ as it is, explaining:

The failure to see the body of Christ *as it is*, as a crucified *and* risen Body, ultimately prevents us from truly appreciating, truly taking seriously, the lived faith of the poor, who do not flee from the wounded bodies in their midst to the

¹⁹ García-Rivera, 121.

illusory security of abstract, ideal bodies; they are not concerned with abstract ideals but with real persons, with the real Christ.²⁰

Thus, the crucifixion wounds present on the resurrected Christ point us to a concreteness in responding today. In this project, it demands that we look to the concrete wounds of the church today, contemplate how this impacts the church's ability to authentically and credibly be church, and act to heal the wounds in the church. This requires that the church grapple with its own woundedness, rather than seeking a return to the pre-Easter faith as Thomas desired. It is only by confronting its own woundedness that the church can live into a post-Easter experience of wounds, where wounds are transfigured to be revelatory.

5.1.5 An Ecclesial Vision in the Shadow of Wounds

Together, these components come together to form a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds. This vision is not abstract, but attends to wounds in the church today, mindful to how these wounds spring forth from the repeated wounding of the church over time. Tradition passes on these wounds, connecting the church today to the previous wounds of the church. Until the church takes these wounds seriously and atones for its role as a perpetrator of wounds, these wounds will fester and harm the church. The church cannot credibly and authentically be church as long as these wounds persist.

Yet there is a hope in this state of woundedness, for the appearance of the resurrected Christ with transformed crucifixion wounds tells of a time when wounds can be transfigured. If the church attends to its own woundedness, then its wounds can also transfigure into post-Easter wounds. In such a situation, these wounds do not disappear,

²⁰ Goizueta, "Corpus Verum: Toward a Borderland Ecclesiology," 152. Emphasis original.

erasing all memory of pain. Instead, they cease to bleed and ooze and become a testament to a God who can transform all things. They signal to the impact of the wounds but also point to a future where these wounds can be revelatory, without glorifying wounds.

This vision of the church in the shadow of wounds seeks an honest account of the lived reality of the church. Such an account is marked by paradox, for many paradoxical truths of the church can exist at the same time. The church is both wounded and wounder, victim and perpetrator. Wounds convey untold harm, yet also contain the hope of being transfigured. Such a vision is permeated by mystery, for there is always more to the wound than can be fully captured, and God has the power to transform these wounds in ways that we cannot imagine. As such, this vision of the church is marked by an eschatological orientation. We hope for and work for a church where these wounds do not persist, while also knowing that all wounds will not be transfigured until the reign of God is fully known.

5.2 DEEPENING AN ECCLESIAL VISION IN THE SHADOW OF WOUNDS

In order to deepen this ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds, I turn to two norms introduced in Chapter 1. First, I look to an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds in light of the four marks of the church: one, holy, catholic, apostolic. Next, I examine the mission of the church. In order to live into its mission in a credible way, the church must attend to its own woundedness. The marks of the church and the mission of

the church function as norms, for these are constitutive of what it means to authentically be church. If the church is not one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and if the church does not live into its mission, then it is not fully church.

5.2.1 Marks of the Church

In this section, I will explore each of the marks of the church as a norm for deepening an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds. I begin each section with a brief overview of the mark, as described in Section 1.1.3. I then look to how failing to consider wounds would threaten each mark, as well as how an ecclesiology informed by wounds enhances our understanding of this mark. These norms establish what is essential to the church throughout tradition and context. These marks have roots in scripture and patristic sources and were articulated at the Council of Nicea and Council of Constantinople. They derive from the church's connection to the triune God, and as such, utilizing them as a norm can also function to assess how a vision of the church deepens the church's relationship with God or fails to do so. These four marks of the church clarify the authenticity and credibility of an ecclesial vision in the shadow of wounds.

5.2.1.1 One

The oneness of the church is rooted in the unity of the triune God. As discussed in Section 1.1.3.1, the oneness of the church should not be understood as homogeneity. Rather, there is unity in diversity, where differing and diverse expressions of what it means to be church in the modern world remain united as one church. This mark

emphasizes that in the midst of diversity, there remains one church united throughout the world. Diverse expressions of the church do not create multiple churches or separations into distinct entities within the church, but the church remains one whole church free of division.

To not recognize wounds is to threaten the mark of oneness. As I argued in Chapter 2, wounds in the church create division and threaten the oneness of the church. A white, patriarchal church creates division and separation within the church, both intentionally through segregation as well as the often unintentional but still real division of an underclass of labor providers. To fail to recognize wounds is to masquerade that a white, patriarchal church is united as one. In fact, this creates further division and perpetuates a system that thrives on the invisible labor of the excluded and marginalized. Denying wounds promotes a false uniformity at the expense of an authentic diversity. It furthers division within the church and leads to a shallow understanding of the oneness of the church. It risks creating a two-tiered church of division, where members of the church are excluded as subordinate and the unity of the church dissipates.

An ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds can enhance an understanding of the oneness of the church by promoting an authentic expression of oneness. It resists whiteness masquerading as neutrality, and instead invites a self-reflection on who is truly united with one another and where fault lines lay in the church. From this honest self-reflection, a true unity can come about. Acknowledging wounds also resists the conflation of unity and uniformity, instead offering that uniformity often relies upon false accounts of oneness offered from a white, patriarchal vision of the church. An ecclesiology that grapples with wounds enters into a more intense self-examination of

who is included and who is excluded, and seeks to promote a true oneness in the church. It upholds that the church must remain one church, rather than devolving into disparate organizations or several levels of the church. Such a self-examination is difficult, yet it has the potential to lead to a more authentic expression of this mark.

5.2.1.2 Holy

The holiness of the church affirms the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. Holiness can often be best understood by what it is not. It does not imply a lack of involvement with the world, but rather, is lived out in engagement with the world. In Chapters 2 and 4, I utilized the work of theologian Brian Flanagan to explore the relationship between holiness and sin. Holiness is not the absence of sin, for such an understanding causes the concept of holiness to collapse when one recognizes the presence of sin in the church. Rahner's articulation of sin in the church resists a division between the members of the church as sinners and a sinless church, for the church does not exist apart from its concrete existence in the members of the church.

Failure to acknowledge wounds in the church threatens the holiness of the church by creating a shallow understanding of holiness. Such a posture incorrectly conflates holiness with sinlessness, stating that acknowledging wounds somehow harms the church. Further, to deny wounds leads to a proclamation of holiness in a way that is not credible. People feel the wounds in the church, and to proclaim each week at mass that the church is holy while also denying the real experiences of wounds threatens the church's credibility.

Doing ecclesiology from the site of the wound, paradoxically, can enhance our understanding of the holiness of the church. It does not undercut the special holiness of

the church, but instead invites a reflection on how the church is holy and how the church has failed to live into its holiness. It promotes a deeper, more authentic understanding of holiness. In Section 1.1.3.2, I explored holiness as related to engagement with the world. The wounds of the church can also be the wounds of the world, thus making an engagement with wounds also an engagement with the world. The eschatological understanding of holiness is enhanced through a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds, for it reminds us that the fullness of the reign of God will not be present until the end of time while also calling for the church to live into that reality now.

5.2.1.3 Catholic

The mark of catholicity looks to the universal nature of the church. It highlights the connection between parts and the whole and affirms the connection of the church. The universal church is present in the local church, connected in its diverse incarnations. Importantly, Robert Schreiter invokes solidarity when discussing catholicity, arguing that this mark “reminds us that to be catholic means more than being confessionally or jurisdictionally connected; it tests the quality of that connectedness, especially its solidarity with those on the periphery of church and society.”²¹ This sense of evaluating the catholicity of the church through reflecting on the quality of the connection within the church is essential for this examination.

An ecclesiology that does not take wounds seriously undercuts the catholicity of the church. As I argued in Chapter 2, if the church is truly universal, then it must include all people universally. To deny the existence of wounds is to deny the experience of those who experience racism and sexism in the church. Further, given that wounds harm the

²¹ Schreiter, “Marks of the Church in Times of Transformation,” 121.

entire church, to deny wounds is to create a shallow account of the catholicity of the church. In Schreiter's terms, it is a low quality of connectedness. A true connection, a true universality, indeed a true catholicity can only exist if there is an honest appraisal of the connection and threats to connection in the church.

A vision of the church in the shadow of wounds has the potential to expand an understanding of catholicity to include the quality of connection. It privileges the experience of those who are marginalized and looks to a true connection that is marked by justice. This shifts an assessment of catholicity away from *if* there is a connection and instead offers the question of *how* we are connected. Such a shift invites a deeper reflection on how catholicity functions in the church and calls for a self-reflection on how the church lives out or fails to live out this mark.

5.2.1.4 Apostolic

The apostolic mark of the church looks to the tradition of the church as passed on and expressed authentically in the modern world. It does not require a static or unchanging expression of faith, for the church must live out its mission in unique ways that fit with the contemporary context. To this end, it is helpful to heed the call of Aidan Nichols and look to the eschatological orientation of the church and fulfillment in the reign of God when considering the mark of apostolicity.²² In Chapter 1, I also drew upon the work of Yves Congar in understanding apostolicity. Congar cautions against the temptations of pharisaism and the synagogue model, calling instead for a living out of a genuine fidelity. He describes two aspects of this fidelity: "a fidelity to the presently realized form, because this is the concrete present form of existence of Christianity, and

²² Nichols, *Figuring out the Church*, 74–75.

also a deeper fidelity embracing its future, thus fully respecting its principle or its tradition.”²³ Taken as a whole, the apostolic mark of the church looks to how the tradition of the church is lived out today in ways that are authentic to the contemporary world and faithful to the tradition of the church, keeping in mind the eschatological orientation of the church.

Failure to fully acknowledge the wounds of the church is also a failure to fully understand the reality of the church. It is not possible to evaluate the apostolicity of the church if one does not know the reality of the church. There is no authentic fidelity of the church without an honest self-assessment of the church. As a result, one cannot speak of the apostolicity of the church without first acknowledging the wounds of the church.

An ecclesiology that takes the wounds of the church seriously has the potential to enhance an understanding of the apostolicity of the church. Apostolicity looks to fidelity and tradition. The wounds of racism and sexism point to moments of the church adhering to patterns of white supremacy and patriarchy, rather than an authentic lived experience of tradition as shaped by the Gospel. Rather than living out the tradition of the church in new ways that make the Gospel present in the world, reckoning with wounds confront the church with the reality that it reinscribed patterns of oppression rather than fidelity to the Gospel. Such an acknowledgement does not deny the apostolicity of the church, just as it did not deny the holiness of the church. Rather, this grappling with woundedness opens up the possibility for an honest self-reflection in the church and a deepening of our understanding of what apostolicity can look like today.

²³ Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 367.

5.2.2 Mission and Credibility

The mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel and make the reign of God present on earth. In Chapter 2, I look to the articulated mission of the church as stated in Vatican II, primarily in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. Vatican II affirms the church as having a special relationship with the world and emphasizes that the church is a sign of God's salvific presence to human beings in history.²⁴ *Lumen Gentium* proclaims that the church is to bring the light of Christ to all.²⁵ Further, *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that "the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world" while also underscoring that "she is already present in this world, and is composed of men [sic], that is, of members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God's children during the present history of the human race, and to keep increasing it until the Lord returns."²⁶ In understanding mission, I cautioned against a dualistic framework of assessing the church as either living into its mission or denying its mission. Instead, I offered the question of credibility: how can the church live into its mission in an authentic, credible way?

To fail to acknowledge the complexity of the wounds within the church is to fail to live into the mission of the church in a credible way. In order to proclaim the Gospel and Good News, one must first be aware of context. The Gospel is particular to a context while being universal, making an awareness of how wounds shape a context essential. In order to bring the light of Christ to all, the church must be aware of the darkness that it has created. Further, the call to attend to the reality of lived experience is an essential part

²⁴ Haight, "Systematic Ecclesiology," 236.

²⁵ Vatican Council II, "Lumen Gentium," para. 1.

²⁶ Vatican Council II, "Gaudium et Spes," para. 40.

of the mission of the church. This involves attending to the wounds of the church, and working to heal these wounds.

For the church to proclaim the Good News credibly, it must do so in a way that acknowledges the times where it has failed. It must recognize that there are moments when the church has been a source of pain and division rather than healing and inclusion. To ignore these instances is to present a hollow understanding of the Gospel. Further, proclaiming the Gospel must incorporate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This includes the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus, as well as his resurrection appearances with the transfigured wounds of the crucifixion. In speaking of the connection between the church and the crucifixion wounds of Christ, Copeland asserts, “For the church must authentically bear the marks of its Lord.”²⁷ In order to bear the marks of Jesus, the church must, at minimum, acknowledge its own wounds and its role as the source of wounds. Yet to bear the wounds of Jesus also involves a deeper conversion. It involves an honest account of how the church has inflicted wounds and how the church itself has become wounded in this process. It involves acknowledging how the church has failed to live into its mission and instead been the source of division. Through this process, the wounds of the church can be transformed similarly to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ, never being erased but instead becoming a source of revelation. Copeland describes how the marks of crucifixion can inform the church’s living out of its mission:

Like Jesus, the church must have a vision of the gracious, compassionate reign of God. If the church is to fulfill the vision of the reign, then the broken-hearted must be welcomed among us with an embrace and a kiss. Above all, these children, women, and men must be welcomed not as objects of pity or mercy, but as equals, as necessary partners, as human subjects— persons capable of

²⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, “The Church Is Marked by Suffering,” in *The Many Marks of the Church*, ed. William Madges and Michael J. Daley (New London, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 2006), 213.

discernment, understanding, decision, and action; persons with whom we have a future and without whom we have nothing.²⁸

The church is called to acknowledge its own woundedness in order to embody its mission in a credible way. To fail to do so is to fail to be church authentically in the world.

The eschatological orientation of the church, as articulated by Rahner and described in Chapter 4 is an essential component of the mission of the church. The fullness of the reign of God will not be known until the end of time. Through the grace of God, the church can work to create conditions in which the reign can become known in incomplete ways on earth. This should not be thought of as a pure product of human work, but instead, as always connected to the self-offer of God and freedom. The sacramental view of the church affirms that the church cannot be divided into that which is of God and that which is not, for the church is always united as one church. In order to live into its mission and while acknowledging that the church can always become more authentically a symbol of God, the church must recognize its own woundedness. By recognizing the ways the church has failed to be an authentic symbol of God, it is paradoxically enabled to more authentically live into this reality while knowing that it will not be fully united with the reign of God until the end of time. The eschatological orientation of the church does not defer hope for the reign of God until a far off time, but instead encourages the church of today to work to align the lived experience of the church with the mission of the church to make the reign of God known on earth.

With these tools for evaluating a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds, we are able to assess how the church can credibly and authentically be church. The pressing question now becomes how to live into this reality in the world. The next section

²⁸ Copeland, 215.

addresses this question and constructs a vision of living as a church in the shadow of wounds.

5.3 LIVING AS A CHURCH IN WOUNDEDNESS

Thus far, this chapter has constructed and evaluated a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds. This vision is important, for it takes seriously the reality of wounds in the church today. However, visions that are disconnected from lived reality are insufficient. This final section imagines how the church can live in woundedness.

In order to live as church in the shadow of wounds, the church must attend to the site of the wounds. To explore what this means, I look to Pope Francis's 2018 letter to the church in Chile. Francis refers to the sex abuse crisis in the church as "an open, painful, and complex wound which for a long time has not stopped bleeding."²⁹ By first acknowledging the pain of this open wound, Francis begins the process of exploring what it means to be a wounded church, for we cannot theologize about wounds without first acknowledging wounds. He goes on to say, "A wounded Church is able to understand and be moved by the wounds of today's world, make them its own, suffer them, accompany them and move to heal them."³⁰ This vision of the church as intimately connected with the world is reminiscent of the opening line of *Gaudium et Spes*, proclaiming, "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [sic] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes,

²⁹ Francis, "Full Text of Pope Francis' Letter to the Church in Chile," *Catholic News Agency*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/full-text-of-pope-francis-letter-to-the-church-in-chile-35580/>.

³⁰ Francis.

the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”³¹ The church and the world are connected, and the church cannot exist outside of the world. For a church to see the wounds of the world and “make them its own,” it must be aware of the world and attend to the wounds of the world. This dissertation argues that it is the wounds inflicted by the church that are most pressing, and must be acknowledged in order to create an authentic and credible ecclesiology.

A wounded church is honest about its wounds, seeing wounds not as something that mitigates its mission, but as an entry point for God. Francis underscores this, stating, “A wounded Church does not put itself at the center, does not think its perfect, does not seek to cover up and dissimulate its evil, but places there the only one who can heal the wounds and he has a name: Jesus Christ.”³² This should not be seen as glorifying wounds, but rather, as vision of the church rooted in the wounds of Jesus Christ. By being upfront with its wounds, the church affirms its need for healing in Jesus Christ. This does not absolve the church as healing its wounds, for such work is necessary. Francis’s attention to Jesus Christ affirms the eschatological nature of the church, for such wholeness will only be experienced at the end of time.

To live as a church guided by an ecclesial vision shaped by wounds is to re-order our collective imagination. In reflecting on the impact of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, Serene Jones names the communal re-watching of the collapsing of the Twin Towers as a “disordering of our collective imaginations.”³³ Drawing on clinical trauma studies, Jones explains that “to suffer from a traumatic stress disorder is to live in a mental world where the usual landmarks of meaning have fallen down and the most

³¹ Vatican Council II, “*Gaudium et Spes*,” para. 1.

³² Francis, “Full Text of Pope Francis’ Letter to the Church in Chile.”

³³ Jones, “Emmaus Witnessing,” 119.

familiar path to reordering this disordered world is to repeat the event.”³⁴ Once we are aware of the wounds in the church, the standard ways of proceeding are no longer accessible, as they are marked by these wounds. This is not reason for despair, but rather, a call to action. In the face of this disordering, Jones asserts the mission of the church: “The church is called, as it exists in this space of trauma, to engage in the crucial task of reordering the collective imagination of its people and to be wise and passionate in this task.”³⁵ Trauma studies asserts that there is no returning to a time before the originating wound; the experience is so profound that all experiences that follow are in a time of “after.” To live in a wounded church is to accept that there is no returning to a time prior to the wounds, and to admit that such an attempt is futile for there was never a time when the church was free of division. A collective re-ordering of the ecclesiological imagination first admits that wounds have shaped the church. From this, we can ask how to move forward.

The rhythm of ecclesial life informed by wounds can find an analogue in clinical trauma studies. Jones draws upon three qualities of clinical healing from post-traumatic stress disorder to identify a path forward for a church impacted by trauma: telling one’s story, witnessing, and creating a new story.³⁶ The first step is for the person who experienced trauma to tell their story. Collectively, “it means that as a community, we need to give testimony.”³⁷ The church needs to tell the story of the church, with attention to the wounds within itself. As such, this may be an unfamiliar story to those in power but a deeply personal story to the victims of racism and sexism. This act of testifying

³⁴ Jones, 119.

³⁵ Jones, 119.

³⁶ Jones, 120–21.

³⁷ Jones, 120.

amplifies the stories of wounds in the church, deepening our collective understanding of tradition. Next is the act of witnessing, or “a third-party presence that not only creates the safe space for speaking but also receives the words when they finally come.”³⁸ This involves an honest reception of hard truths and neglected histories within the church. Witnessing to the wound of racism, for example, involves acknowledging the ways that the church operates according to a logic of whiteness and antiblackness and admitting that this wound is not relegated to the past. The third step is the telling of a new story. Referring to this step as “extremely tricky business,” Jones describes the process: “It does not mean forgetting the past; rather, it means telling the events in such a way that agency is returned and hope (a future) is possible.”³⁹ It is in this act of telling a new story that the church is able to truly be church, for it lives into a mission in a way that does not neglect the wounds of the church, but rather, acknowledges their harm in the church and seeks to live into a way of being church that heals these wounds.

While it is not possible to explore all of the ways that wounds have impacted the church, an example can help illustrate this. In Section 2.2.2, I examined the impact of racism in the church. An ecclesiological imagination that is re-ordered in the wake of recognizing the impact of racism in the church begins by exploring the many ways that the church has participated in racism and white supremacy. This involves examining the ways that religious orders and schools relied upon enslaved persons to literally build the structures that continue to exist today. This act of telling one’s story centers the voices of victims and makes present the stories of the many people who have suffered directly at the hands of racist actions. Such a reordering of the imagination is not simply a historical

³⁸ Jones, 120.

³⁹ Jones, 121.

retrieval, though such projects are necessary. The act of witnessing may happen in several ways. Organizations such as religious orders or universities may engage a witness within the church to tell of their use of slavery and begin the process of restitution. Anti-racism experts can be utilized to assist parishes in reconciling the ways that racism continues to pervade their community. The church hierarchy can publicly repent for their complicity in racism, and the community can receive this repentance as a witness.

An ecclesiological imagination that takes racism seriously views the church as instrumental in advancing anti-racism today, thus telling of a new, collective story. It self-interrogates the segregation of parishes and disproportionately white leadership in parishes. It calls for a move away from viewing whiteness as “neutral,” and non-white as “other.” This involves examining what music is used in worship, how churches are decorated, and how socials before and after mass are conducted according to norms of whiteness. Such an ecclesiological imagination makes demands on the hierarchical leadership of the church, urging them to view racism as an urgent issue and work against racism overtly and vigorously. It calls the church to be on the front-lines fighting against policies that diminish one’s dignity on the basis of race and promoting policies where all are embraced. Local communities are called to actively engage in anti-racism work. In short, such an imagination makes demands on the community and radically re-orient the mission of the church. It is not just an exercise in mind, but a call to action.

As such, an ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds is profoundly hopeful. It signals that another reality is possible. It promises a time where wounds do not dominate and continue to bleed but also do not disappear, as Jesus Christ’s resurrection with his

transformed wounds of crucifixion reveal. This hope permeates the ecclesial imagination, shaping a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds.

A vision of the church in the shadow of wounds is hopeful because it takes wounds seriously. It does not ignore wounds, wishing for a time when wounds do not exist. Instead, hope requires attending to wounds today. Hope is not a naïve optimism, but rather, confronts the difficulty of the situation and proceeds forward in light of this. Nancy Pineda-Madrid explains the importance of coming to terms with tragedy: “How we engage tragedy matters; if we do not come to terms with it, we will severely limit our capacity to be people of hope. Indeed, our response to tragedy carries the possibility of breaking open hope in history.”⁴⁰ Though wounds and tragedy differ from one another, they share the insight that we must attend to them. Failure to do so limits our capacity to hope. Christian hope attends to wounds while asserting that there is more to one’s existence than wounds. It is a sober hope that takes the impact of wounds seriously while also refusing to glorify wounds or be defined by wounds.

This sense of attending to wounds is deeply rooted in Catholic tradition. Dominic Doyle retrieves the theological virtue of hope as articulated by Thomas Aquinas as the foundation for a post-traumatic ecclesiology in light of the sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas describes hope as “something arduous and attainable with difficulty, for someone is not said to hope for any trivial thing that is immediately in one’s power to have. And in this, hope differs from desire or cupidity, which concerns the future good absolutely.”⁴¹ Doyle views “hope as the movement of the

⁴⁰ Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Hope and Salvation in the Shadow of Tragedy,” in *Hope: Promise, Possibility, and Fulfillment*, ed. Richard Lennan and Nancy Pineda-Madrid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2013), 116.

⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. 1-2, q. 40, a. 1.

will toward a future difficult, yet possible, good.”⁴² It is this attention to the difficult that facilitates the possibility of moving forward.⁴³ To do ecclesiology from the site of the wound is to pay attention to the difficult, to linger at the wound and not rush to healing, and to be shaped by a Christian hope that attends to wounds while also invoking the possibility of moving forward.

A vision of the church in the shadow of wounds is marked by hope not only by outlook or virtue, but also due to the nature of the church as a sacrament of hope. The documents of Vatican II affirm the church as a sacrament, sharing the joys and hopes, as well as the griefs and anxieties of the world. Rahner’s articulation of the church as a sacrament underscores how the church can uniquely reveal God in the world, as well as uniquely shroud Christ. As sacrament of hope, the church lives into the reality of hope while also being open to conversion. Richard Lennan explains, “Hope fuels the awareness of our need for conversion while also encouraging us to continue on the path of discipleship.”⁴⁴ By making us aware of our need for conversion but also encouraging that such a conversion is possible, hope takes account of the reality of wounds while also pointing toward a future where wounds do not continue to harm the church. Just as the wounds of Christ were transformed in the resurrection, we can hope for a future where the wounds of the church are transformed.

This posture of hope underscores the paradoxes inherent in a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds. As discussed in Section 5.1, the paradoxical nature of wounds is a central tenet of this vision. This paradoxical quality also applies to hope, as explained

⁴² Dominic Doyle, “Post-Traumatic Ecclesiology and the Restoration of Hope,” *Theological Studies* 72, no. 2 (2011): 275, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056391107200202>.

⁴³ Doyle, 276.

⁴⁴ Richard Lennan, “The Church as a Sacrament of Hope,” *Theological Studies* 72, no. 2 (2011): 248, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056391107200201>.

by Lennan when discussing the holiness of the church: “Paradoxically, then, the holiness of the church, no less than its hope, can shine most brightly when we acknowledge our failings and our need for the love of God that is always greater than those failings.”⁴⁵ Wounds underscore that we need God’s mercy. Wounds command our attention, showing us that something is wrong but also summoning a promise of a time when wounds will heal. As a sacrament of hope, the church remains open to conversion while also uniquely revealing God to the world. God’s grace can transform wounds, but first, the church must attend to these wounds and work to create a church where these wounds are healed.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to articulate how we can refigure our understanding of the church given the presence of wounds in the church. Trauma theory sharpens our understanding of wounds and serves as a challenge to understanding the church in light of its woundedness. Utilizing insights from Rahner’s ecclesiology, it is possible to understand the church as wounded and to strengthen our understanding of the church in light of this. Such a reimagining of ecclesiology in the shadow of wounds places wounds at the center of attention. It has the capaciousness to hold paradox. This vision of the church centers lived experience and recognizes the revelatory aspect of post-Easter wounds, rooted in the image of Jesus Christ appearing after the resurrection with the wounds of his crucifixion present yet transformed.

⁴⁵ Lennan, “The Church: Got Hope?,” 51.

It is essential that ecclesiology take account of wounds in the church. Failure to do so results in a vision of the church that is not credible. Further, it threatens the church's ability to live into its mission and creates shallow understandings of the marks of the church. Yet a vision of the church in the shadow of wounds can enhance the church's ability to authentically and credibly be church in the world. Such a vision reshapes the ecclesial imagination, reorienting how the church collectively considers itself and acts as church in the world. It is only through attending to its own woundedness that the church can truly be church.

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