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# Innovative Catholicism and the Human Condition

Jane Anderson



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*Innovative Catholicism and the Human Condition* gives an anthropological account of a progressive religious movement in the Roman Catholic Church that is attempting to reconcile religious conviction and reason and, ergo, modify the human condition. Investigation is given to a representative group of this movement, “Innovative Catholics,” who are endeavouring to maintain the momentum for change which began in the 1960s and 1970s. They now find themselves caught between traditional notions of religion and a secularised society while trying to reconcile these polarising forces to find a pathway forward. While ethnographic fieldwork for this research was conducted in Australia, this movement is to be found across the Western world. The research is framed by the question posed by Jürgen Habermas, who asks whether the democratic constitutional state is able to renew itself and recognises a benefit in learning from religion. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, subsequently Pope Benedict XVI, responds by asserting the need for a common ethical basis and limits on reason. This latter position, however, remains problematic for Innovative Catholics who are conscious of history and culture. The research explores how Innovative Catholics, who in taking the middle position, inform this dialectic on secularisation through their ideas and practices about the human condition.

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# Preface

*Innovative Catholicism* is an anthropological account of an international progressive religious movement in the Roman Catholic Church that is attempting to reconcile religious conviction with reason. While there are well-informed accounts which provide analyses of this phenomenon, this book is the result of the epic task of gathering and analysing qualitative data from the ethnographic field. Investigation is given to a representative group of this movement, which I refer to as “Innovative Catholics,” who have attempted to maintain the momentum for change which began in the 1960s and 1970s. They now find themselves caught between traditional notions of religion and a secularised society while trying to reconcile these polarising forces to find a pathway forward.

Although fieldwork for this research was conducted in Australia, this religious movement is to be found across the Western world. The transnational scope of progressive action has one explanation in the difficulties which the Church has had in coming to terms with the consequences of the Enlightenment. It locates its foundation in the divine figure of Jesus Christ and considers many of its teachings to be eternal, immutable, and unchanging. However, the Enlightenment, which gives primacy to reason, has provided conditions for educated religious citizens, such as those who are the ethnographic subjects of this research, to ask unsettling questions of the Church.

This progressive religious movement is well placed as a focus for examining a critical question that is being posed in religion and society. Jürgen Habermas, a renowned sociologist and philosopher, raises the question as to whether the democratic constitutional state is able to renew itself from its own sources. In acknowledging its vulnerability to external threats to secular society, he wonders whether there is a social benefit in learning from religion. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, subsequently Pope Benedict XVI, responded to this question in a dialectic on secularisation by asserting that reason must learn its limits; that is, it cannot question that which has been determined in a time before history. Nonetheless, this view remains problematic for modern citizens who emphasise rationality, as it does for the research respondents. Examination is thus given to how Innovative Catholics are attempting to resolve the dichotomy of views, the result of which signals novel possibilities for reconciling religious conviction and reason.

*Innovative Catholicism* is for people who want to understand the cultural and historical complexities which have contributed to the estrangement between religion and secular society and who are open to more communicative arrangements. It is the thesis of this work, as well as that of Habermas and Ratzinger, that there is much to be gained from entering into a dialectic on religion and reason. The research offers to academics, clergy, students of religion, and interested laypersons a window through which to view how alternative understandings of the relationship between religious conviction and reason are being navigated. In using a range of theories and ethnographic data, the book provides a scholarly appraisal of how this progressive religious movement is revising the human condition.

# Acknowledgements

Completing this work has taken five years, from initial fieldwork begun in 2010 and completed two years later, to subsequent writing of the manuscript. In the field, respondents to the research gave generously of their time, knowledge, and experience. The book was made possible because of their magnanimity, and I remain indebted to them.

An academic debt of gratitude is owed to Reverend Professor Stewart McPherson for his mentoring of the project. He diligently read several drafts and provided thoughtful commentary on the early development of this book. Similarly, I wish to thank Dr Chris Haynes for making valuable comments on an earlier draft. The generosity of Stewart and Chris are magnified when consideration is given to the many demands on their time, professions, and lives. A vote of thanks goes to Professor Richard Davis, University of Western Australia, who introduced me to the works of Jürgen Habermas and provided some sterling thinking during the initial phase of the project. I would also like to thank the reviewers, including Professor Jay Corrin, who made welcomed and constructive suggestions as to how to improve this work and the staff of Routledge, who assisted in bringing this research to fruition.

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# Conventions

As is customary in ethnography, vignettes from research respondents are used frequently to assist with clarification of what is being said in the field and to enable them to define the situation in their own terms. So that they can be clearly identified, these brief accounts are presented in *italics*.

In academic research, gender-inclusive language is an ethical standard commonly observed. However, this is not the case in the Roman Catholic Church where official documents commonly use terms such as “man” and “mankind.” In this book, I have chosen to maintain exclusive terminology in some places to ethnographically highlight how the human condition is communicated in the Church.

When reference is given to a Pope, it includes the entire system of governance in which a particular Pope is recognised as the supreme head. As is customary, dates given for the Popes are for their papal reigns.



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*The sins of our Church are patently obvious to everybody, said Judith, a religious sister in her early seventies. Our many failures, scandals and crimes are deeply distressing. Many Catholics feel betrayed by those who are expected to epitomise the best of Christianity. . . . Our disgrace is also fodder for sceptics and atheists. People are regularly warned off religion as the cause of violence, discrimination and oppression. Religion is often seen as backward looking and ignorant, but little or nothing is said of the good it has done and is doing.*

Judith's complaint touches upon the difficulties that many progressive religious citizens experience in the Western world. As a young nun in the 1960s, she embraced significant changes that resulted from the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which had attempted to reform the Church and renew its connections with the modern world. These reforms prompted her to revise her religious convictions and pursue avenues for giving pragmatic service. However, the potentially revolutionary modifications exposed manifold contradictions. People like Judith began asking critical questions about the social organisation of the Church. Traditional roles, which had provided surety of identity, were scrutinised and deemed inadequate for engaging with the modern world, which had as its basic social unit the rational individual. Some priests and Religious<sup>1</sup> subsequently left active ministry to marry and pursue a professional career, while other Religious and many laity took up new roles in the post-conciliar Church informed by tertiary education. This changing situation also had a consequence in conservative believers defending traditional religion as a bastion of certainty. Among them were senior clergy who insisted on the inviolability of doctrine and law. Today, the battle lines are drawn between progressive religious citizens who seek an evolutionary approach to religion and conservative believers who defend the constancy of their position.

Judith also commented on the impact of social change in recent decades. *We live in the so-called lucky country, she said, but it's not so lucky for a great many people today. There are real inequalities and considerable hardship for growing numbers of people.* Judith, who runs a refuge for the homeless, is well aware of the problems that low-wage and no-wage



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citizens have in accessing housing, medical care and education. *But what is even more worrying is the rootlessness of people in general. They seem to be caught in a vortex of demand. They're driven to compete, compare and consume with little regard for what happens to themselves, their neighbours and the environment.* Judith considers many are self-absorbed by a narrow and never-ending desire to acquire and consume material goods. She laments their lack of awareness and regard for the less fortunate and their surroundings. For her, the human condition is to be realised in the recognition and practice of an encompassing common good.

In her lifetime, Judith has experienced and observed a dramatic social transition that has been accompanied by a range of difficulties. During her childhood years, those in positions of authority governed society and organised it along traditional lines, with men working and women concentrating on the family and domestic duties. However, in the 1960s, a countercultural movement defied the status quo by attributing to individuals an unprecedented freedom to pursue wants, needs and desires. Such latitude opened up opportunities never envisaged by earlier generations. Nevertheless, change came at a cost. Individuals who could not convert the promise of personal success to actual achievement and material accumulation were marginalised. Many were also not able to fall back on traditional frameworks of support as were to be found in the family and community because they, too, were undergoing a transformation. Meantime, the environment, which provided resources for the project of modern advancement, was becoming degraded, with the further consequence of threatening human well-being and the viability of ecosystems.

Despite her distress, Judith remains optimistic about the future of religion. Internal to the Church, she insists that *structural and internal disputes have to be addressed. They can't be avoided.* As for society, *I am convinced that Christianity still has much to offer. . . . What I'm talking about is restoring to social life needed values and spiritual wisdom.* Judith considers revised religion, along with its penetrating insights, to be an instrument for navigating the current chaos and for delivering humanity to more satisfying and sustainable arrangements. But she links her view of religion to reform. She argues that if the Church is to operate as a moral compass in the larger imperative of addressing social and environmental difficulties, it must attend to its own conflicts and difficulties.

The exigencies which Judith raises illustrate the contours of this study. During ethnographic field work, I studied people like her, who represent a multitude of others throughout the Western world who are undertaking the complementary project of simultaneously revising religion and society. Their investigations are situated in a perspective that favours a cosmopolitan disposition. These progressive religious citizens whom I refer to as "Innovative Catholics" (the reason for which is elaborated in a subsequent section) tend to eschew denominational and national preoccupations and attachments and resist the polarised positions of "us and them." Their attitudes and

activities are inclined towards increasing inclusion where novel connections are explored and made. They prefer, instead, to set aside what makes them different and focus on what makes them similar. Such scrutiny and outlook provides insight into how the semantic contents of religion might be modified to produce a unitive worldview for the contemporary era.

This research is further focused in larger theoretical concerns raised by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and the theologian Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, subsequently Pope Benedict XVI (2005–2013).<sup>2</sup> Their viewpoints were made particularly clear in what was widely regarded as their conversation about the topic “The Pre-Political Moral Foundations of a Liberal State.” The event, held in Munich 2004, was billed as a dialogue between “the personification of liberal, individual and secular thought” and the “personification of the Catholic faith” (Welker 2010, 456). Although the content of the discussion itself was not made available, two essays written by these scholars on the topic, prior to the event, were published as *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006).

In the following section, a brief account of the theoretical trajectory produced by Habermas is given. Thereafter, I summarise the main themes of the dialectic between Habermas and Ratzinger. A critique of these oppositional positions is then made from an alternative theoretical middle ground which has its justification in the ethnographic field. The field, from which I have drawn considerable and comprehensive material, asserts the validity of this centred position in its attempt to address the dispute between religious conviction and reason. In analytical response, the research investigates the rhetorics and practices of subjects like Judith, who think about and modify the human condition in religion and society and with the environment.

## A Preamble to Theory

The present work has a theoretical foundation in the later philosophy of Jürgen Habermas, who as a leading intellectual, was first recognised as a persistent defender of Enlightenment rationality and promoter of the secularisation thesis. The early thesis asserted that religion will eventually disappear from the public sphere, where matters of social importance are discussed freely by citizens and which work to influence political action and social life. Habermas argued that the function of fostering social order had been transferred from religion to the secular realm and was maintained by a communicative understanding of rationality (Mingers 2011). Social cohesion and normative guidance were to be determined by free and open processes of debate and deliberation rather than by presupposed ideological or religious commitments. “The authority of the holy,” Habermas declared, “is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensus” (1987, 77).

In recent years, Habermas (2008) has somewhat revised his position on religion in light of three new developments. Firstly, global conflicts that are born of economic and political changes are often aligned with religious

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discord. Secondly, religious organisations within nation-states assert their interpretation of key issues in the public arena. Thirdly, migrants from countries who uphold established traditions are contributing to religious plurality and influencing value systems in democratic societies. Habermas now considers that despite society having become intensely secularised, religion will continue to have an impact.

The thinking of Habermas on religion is not restricted to factoring in the impact of religious views of fundamentalist and traditionalist movements. He also questions the ability of the secular to go it alone, arguing that reason is not able to stand outside of itself and reflect on the underlying motivations for its products and conclusions (Habermas 2012a, 18). Unlike religion, the modern liberal state has no basis for making moral judgements about the outcome of having welcomed a plethora of worldviews in the public arena. The liberal citizen in a democracy is taught that the individual has the right to choose the direction of one's own life. Habermas, thus, contends that rationality "does not foster any impulse towards solidarity, that is, towards morally guided, collective action" (2012b, 75). Secular reason is not able to mentor itself, police its ideas and their consequences, and self-direct those ideas to foster interconnectedness. Habermas, thereafter, argues that the secularisation thesis has lost its explanatory power.

In an attempt to address the consequences of "motivational weakness" and an eroded social cohesion, Habermas turns to world religions, wherein he contends, a religious consciousness can produce "stronger impulses towards action in solidarity" (2012b, 75). Nonetheless, he remains cautious about how this form of cooperation might translate to secular society because he does not want to forgo the advances which have been made. He considers that modern society not only depends on technological progress but also upon the ability to criticise and reason collectively about its own heritage. Reason, says Habermas, lies at the heart of our everyday communications. We continually ask for justification as to why something is being done, and these questions serve to strengthen society. In continuing with the basic idea of communicative rationality, Habermas proposes a productive engagement between secular society and religion in a shared life world (1993, 90, 108). In this relationship, religion is invested with a social role in a constitutional democracy that it exercises by disclosing rationally its moral sources in the public sphere (Dreyer and Pieterse 2010).

#### **Reviewing the Dialectic of Secularisation**

The following summary of the essays authored by Habermas and Ratzinger crystallises the problems that this research attends. Habermas opens the dialectic with the question as to whether a democratic constitutional state can "renew from its own resources the normative presuppositions of its existence" (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 21). He responds by drawing on the example of human rights, recognising that these rights have a religious

source, but that it is secular politics constituted in reason which socially organises them. Thereafter, he asserts that the constitutional justification for these rights must come from citizens and not from a pre-established authority. The expectation is that this broad inclusion should provide a stimulus for citizens to make use of the right to communicate and protect their own interests and, relatedly, that of the common good (25–26, 30).

Habermas then raises an abiding question as to whether the democratic constitutional state is able to renew itself from its own sources. He approaches this concern by first recognising that social solidarity is necessary for secular society to sustain itself and that the “uniting bond” is mobilised by the participation of citizens (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 32). Similarly, he considers that patriotism contributes to solidarity “when the principles of justice have penetrated . . . [the] ethical orientations of culture” (33–34). The establishment of these social sources leads Habermas to conclude that the secular nature of the democratic constitution is sound. However, he goes on to identify “external threats” such as those of self-interested individuals who use their rights against others, market forces that work to depoliticise citizens, and “the power of the bureaucracy” (35–36, 45).

The acknowledgement of the vulnerability of democratic society prompts Habermas to consider a benefit in learning from religion which is “dependent upon the truths of revelation” (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 42). One lesson is located in how these communities have maintained a continuity of interpretation in their traditions. He argues that secular society might also be advantaged if it were to keep track of stabilising forces. However, he attaches a proviso to this instruction: “[D]ogmatism and the coercion of people’s consciences [are to be avoided]” (43). The stipulation has its aim in sustaining a broad inclusion of expressions and the sensitivities of individuals who “have gone astray” (43).

In a willingness to be taught by religion, Habermas considers that philosophy can translate religious terms into secular principles without stripping them of their significance. Given that the solidarity of society is at risk, Habermas and Ratzinger propose that the constitutional state “deal carefully with all the cultural sources that nourish its citizens’ consciousness of norms and their solidarity” (2006, 46). He concludes his essay with a recommendation for a “complementary learning process” where secular and religious citizens reflect on the respective potential and limits of reason and religion. In this course of action, secular citizens are to play their part alongside religious citizens in making religious sources accessible to the public (47, 52).

Ratzinger opens his contribution to the dialectic with recognition of the emergence of a global community and the potential for developing human possibilit(ies). He argues that this changing situation requires ethical bases to ensure “a common structure that tames power and imposes a legally responsible order on the exercise of power” (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 55). He also contends that the answer to “the question of what the good is”

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cannot be explained by scientific knowledge which “can never show us more than partial aspects” of the goal of existence. An ethical consciousness cannot be fully realised as an outcome of rational scrutiny but is realised in “our awareness of the totality and of the broader dimensions of the reality of human existence” (56–57). For Ratzinger, that “totality” is to be sustained by a religious conviction which secures a timeless universality.

Ratzinger then turns his attention to the arrangement of power and law, asserting “[i]t is the specific task of politics to apply the criterion of the law to power, thereby structuring the use of power in a meaningful manner” (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 58). The law is determined by “self-subsistent values that flow from the essence of what it is to be a man, and [is] therefore inviolable” (61). Ratzinger illustrates his argument by critiquing new developments that have resulted in abuses of power such as large-scale war and terrorism. To this list of abuses, he adds the capacity of “man” to manipulate human life, for example, in the use of “in vitro” fertilisation and the atomic bomb. He concludes that “we must now *doubt the reliability of reason*” [original emphasis] (65).

In addition to challenging the idea that human rights have an ultimate framework in rationality, Ratzinger presents an alternative view: “[Rights] must be discovered—not invented” because they are framed in “a doctrine of human obligations and of human limitations” (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 71). For him, the content of human rights exists a priori; that is, these rights are beyond question and cannot be the subject of scrutiny. They are general rules of “man” that have been established *in aeternum*. Ratzinger shores up his claim in the negative assessment of modern reason that has failed to assimilate human rights in contexts outside of Western society. In contrast, he makes the positive assertion that Christianity alone has been able to sustain this universal (275–76).

Ratzinger considers that the answer to the breach in the relationship between religion and society lies in the correction to the exceptional development of a secular Europe. He points out that no other society has become disconnected from religion as has this one (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 73–74). It is a rupture that can be healed if religion allows itself to be purified and structured by reason and, vice versa, if reason learns its limits; that is, there are some things that cannot be questioned. In adhering to these precepts, Ratzinger concludes that the “pathologies of reason and religion” can be overcome, and when “authentic religion” and the appropriate use of reason are realised, the benefit will be the maintenance of a free state (77–78, 96).

### **Advancing a Theoretical Alternative**

The views of Habermas and Ratzinger amplify the hegemonic and polarised positions of secular reason and religious conviction. This research, however, indicates that there is a midway position; it neither defers to one stance,

nor the other, but produces from a complex interaction a novel viewpoint. Innovative Catholics, in undertaking the hard work of attempting to overcome polarities, recognise the potential of a creative tension in a hybrid relationship between reason and religious conviction. In this section, I examine arguments for these conflicting positions and, thereafter, propose a theoretical alternative that seeks to explain what is happening in the field.

In his essay, Habermas is largely concerned with the question of whether secular reason provides sufficient grounds for a democratic constitutional state. He addresses his disquiet by exploring what religion might offer, but these findings are to be conditioned by the winnowing of doctrinaire attitudes and behaviours. For him, no position is beyond scrutiny, implying that the only possible way forward is to identify foundational principles which connect to concrete realities. Ratzinger, in contrast, responds to the dialectic of secularisation by referring to the importance of maintaining the extra-referential knowledge of Christianity (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 77, 79). This religion is founded in immutable universal laws which stand outside of concrete realities to influence them. He insists that there exists in the mind of the human person a rational character that is embedded in unchanging moral principles and that society is dependent on maintaining these laws.

In reference to the ethnographic field, I argue firstly that Habermas, in having essentialised reason, has diminished the capacity for modern society to utilise other forms of knowledge such as can be identified in emotion and spirit and which have a corollary in sentiment and symbol. The lessening of these sources has led to an inability to morally temper the human condition, revivify social connections and locate a relevant and meaningful cosmology. The exclusive focus on reason prevents these other sources of knowledge from contributing to social order and a system of values that respond to existential questions. In the following analysis, I explore how reason, emotion and spirit are combined to produce an expanded consciousness. In this process of enlargement, there is the potential for revising universality. In producing similitude between knowledges, I show how Innovative Catholics attend to critical questions arising from their everyday existence.

Secondly, I contend, as is again directed by the ethnographic field, that the form of religion Ratzinger advocates, which invests in a priori ideas that are said to be external to culture and history, is not able to respond to the concrete and real or life as it is known in modern society. The emphasis on extra-referential knowledge has had the consequence of reducing the capacity of religion to contribute to a moral foundation for a democratic society and from which solidarity can be achieved. In drawing on the ethnographic field, I show how Innovative Catholics are modifying their worldview to take into account the human condition as is understood by modern society. In this endeavour, they recognise that modern reason has contributed to social advancement but that this cannot be sustained or consolidated without a related religious dimension. They therefore set aside the ecclesiastical

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demand to filter contemporary knowledge through doctrine and law to incorporate modern reason in their religious project.

Habermas and Ratzinger assert that religious conviction and secular reason should learn from each other. But their ideas about who should participate in these dialectics are seemingly in dispute. Habermas considers that the proposed encounter should be inclusive because “citizens are expected to make active use of their rights to communication and to participation, not only in what they rightly take to be their own interests, but also with an orientation to the common good” (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 30). Ratzinger, in contrast, indicates a restricted participation as is evidenced in his essay. In his questioning of individual determination, he asserts that it has no reference to the common good and criticises “the majority principle” (60). The implication in this stance is that the established custodians of extra-referential religion should arbitrate the content of public discussion when it touches upon the “ethical foundations of the law” (60). The corollary of this position is that no other citizen can legitimately participate to determine what is necessary to secure society and the environment. Indeed, Innovative Catholics often complained that their exclusion from the conversation within the Church has prevented them from proposing a correspondence between religion and democratic society and, more recently, with the environment.

Habermas is concerned to address problems in the secular realm and proposes a remedy in the translation of religious concepts into the language of secular principles (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 54). Yet, this is a one-sided proposal. While religion is obliged to disclose its contents in the public sphere, there is no corresponding requirement for modern citizens to articulate secular concepts in the religious realm. Ratzinger, on the other hand, makes reference to the exceptional development of secular society, while arguing that religion can only be purified or freed from anything that debases it. In this regard, neither author assents to the idea that religion can undergo a transition and adapt to historical and cultural changes. But as is made evident in the field, people can and do create syntheses of old and new beliefs, values and practices. Innovative Catholics make it clear that they are engaging in hybridising processes to produce embryonic applications for religion and society.

The substance of the argument advanced by this research and as drawn from the ethnographic field can be summarised in the following thesis. Firstly, religion is not divorced from history and culture and, therefore, has the capacity to forge a substantial connection with modern society. That relationship can be brought about by including in public debates those citizens who are able to make correspondences between religious conviction and reason. Secondly, secular citizens are required to be open to the idea that knowledge is not limited to reason. Knowledge can also be derived from emotion and spirit and can be expressed in sentiment and symbol. Thirdly, conservative believers and secular citizens are to recognise that the

receipt of content from religion can have a reciprocal effect in ideas flowing from the public sphere to the religious realm. Thus, citizens who engage with each other and who are prepared to consider, expand and exchange a more comprehensive knowledge are able to produce an agreeable accord between religious conviction and reason.

### **Innovative Catholics and Anti-structure**

In the opening paragraphs of this chapter, I introduced Judith as a representative of Innovative Catholics who are to be found across the Western world. In the next section, I identify and survey these people as a remnant group of a countercultural movement that swept democratic societies from the 1960s to the 1970s. Here, in this section, I lay out a subsidiary theory of anti-structure as advanced by the anthropologist Victor Turner (2009) to provide an understanding of how Innovative Catholics are positioned with regard to Church structure and, similarly, to secular structure. In producing his theory, Turner sought to understand how conflict could be overcome and how vitality could be sustained in communities. Moreover, he generalised his ideas in application to religious, cultural and social movements, recognising in the juxtaposing of anti-structure and structure millenarian and utopian movements as well as movements identified in that of the hippies of the 1960s and various political populist movements (2009, 131–165). Thus, briefly, in this analysis, Innovative Catholics are identified as constituting anti-structure which takes form in a progressive religious movement. From this position, they effectively exercise a bi-focused dialectic in that they challenge and revise conventions both in religion and secular society.

The theory of anti-structure as advanced by Turner was heavily influenced by the work of Arnold van Gennep, who had observed that crises are brought about by “every change of place, state, social position and age” and that these can be resolved in ceremonial rites (van Gennep cited in Turner 2009, 94). The so-called rites of passage transition an individual or group from one status to another in a tripartite process. Thus, in this process, an individual separates from everyday social life, enters into a liminal stage wherein non-status is experienced, and then re-enters or reintegrates into normal society but with a new status (Turner 2009, 95). Turner adapted this idea of liminality to his theory of anti-structure and, in doing so, identified a similitude between liminality and the unstructured person and liminality of the unstructured or rudimentary community, which he referred to as “*communitas*” (2009, 96).

Turner described *communitas* and structure as two mutually dependent models of social organisation that have an oppositional character. In *communitas*, this form of society, as is found in movements, has a “relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities” (Turner and Turner 1978, 251). Individual members, in believing each person has equal worth and merit, sets aside normative expectations and boundaries to engage personally or subjectively



with each other (Turner 2009, 131). Structure, on the other hand, is considered to be a “system of social positions” arranged in a “hierarchy” and consisting of “statues, roles, and offices” (2009, 131). In these systems, as exemplified in the structures of the Church (hereafter, referred to as the “hierarchical Church”) and secular society, members situate themselves in the established patterns of relationships. They accept structural divisions as natural and adapt their behaviour to related and accepted conventions. However, for Innovative Catholics, these two sets of often contradictory demands are problematic and require resolution.

Within *communitas*, Turner identifies three types (spontaneous [existential], normative, and ideological), each of which indicates a corresponding course for becoming structured. This research is concerned with one type, namely, “ideological *communitas*,” the characteristics of which are identified in this research in the progressive religious movement. As members of the latter, Innovative Catholics “attempt to describe the external and visible effects . . . of an inward [existential] experience . . . and to spell out the optimal social conditions under which such experiences might be expected to flourish and multiply” (2009, 132). In resisting the normative systems of the hierarchical Church and secular society, they seek to introduce “a utopian blueprint for reform” (Turner and Turner 1978, 252). But the consequence of that opposition is a difficulty in establishing their goals because they must work out how to replicate their ideals needed for an established structure while fending off the existing structures’ “lucid thought and sustained will” (Turner 2009, 132).

Turner describes *communitas* as “the *fons et origo* of all structures and at the same time their critique” (Turner and Turner 1978, 250). As a site of resistance and opposition, *communitas* forges bonds of solidarity, experiments with and develops beliefs, values and practices, and provides an avenue for venting expressive tendencies (Kautzer 2012, 19). This source of creativity may also benefit structure, enabling it to divest itself of “selfish attributes”; indeed, it can be “purified by association with the values of *communitas*” (2009, 184). Nevertheless, the possibility of such appropriation by structure is hedged with suspicion. Structure considers *communitas*, referred to in this work as a “rudimentary community,” to be a danger to social order and a threat to ordinary social life. Thus, in application, this theory is instructive for analysing Innovative Catholics and how they are pressured by the respective misgivings and doubts of the hierarchical Church, which has a “distrust of the human being’s great capacity for knowledge” (John Paul II 1998), and by secular structure, which is sceptical about religion and its beliefs.

Turner emphasised the “dialectic” of social processes as alternating between structure and *communitas*. However, in the event of one of these processes becoming exaggerated, the opposite is provoked. Hence, “exaggeration of structure may well lead to pathological manifestations of *communitas* outside or against ‘the law’”; while exaggeration of *communitas*

may be succeeded by “despotism, over bureaucratisation, or other modes of structural rigidification” (Turner 2009, 129). Turner, furthermore, contends that there needs to be an appropriate balance between *communitas* and structure to arrive at genuine society, which can be brought about by ongoing processes of evaluation and adaptation. But where dialectical interaction is absent, structure will be faced with the danger of becoming ossified, and *communitas* will be destined to remain a fleeting moment in history (Turner 2009, 129). Thus, this research argues that the progressive religious movement, in which Innovative Catholics are attributed membership, is an adaptive phenomenon which is pivotal to maintaining an operational and meaningful connection between the hierarchical Church and secular society.

### **Innovative Catholics and the Countercultural Movement**

Innovative Catholics tend to share a common heritage and educational opportunity. Many had Irish ancestors and most were born to working-class parents, who as Catholic citizens, had been in opposition to a Protestant hegemony. Sectarianism, however, began to subside in the postwar years with a burgeoning prosperity opening up huge opportunities for Innovative Catholics entering into adolescence and early adulthood. Like a multitude of other young people in the Western world, they took advantage of the opportunity for gaining a university education—one which had not been made available to their parents. In the United Kingdom (UK), United States (US) and Australia, reforms were made to universities, resulting in a significant increase in the number of places, with more women, especially, undertaking higher education courses. Indeed, tertiary education is a common denominator among Innovative Catholics. Of the 103 people I interviewed 51 had a bachelor’s degree, 28 a master’s degree or equivalent and 11 a PhD. Given that in 1991, 8 percent of adults in Australia held a degree or higher educational qualification, these Catholics are a highly educated cohort (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994).

The access to liberal education in a pluralist democracy by Innovative Catholics would have significant implications for the hierarchical Church, which was devoted to securing knowledge to fundamental and immutable truths. In the 1960s and 1970s, these young Catholics were introduced to an approach to education that was pragmatic and focused on “a diverse range of skills, abilities, interests, and realms of inquiry” with no attempt to unify them or provide oversight on the basis of some unquestioned principles or doctrines (Lang and Wee 2004, 55). The acquiring of such knowledge contributed to their engaging creatively with the modern world, resulting in a desire for greater individual freedom to pursue meaningful lifestyles. They recognised in the combination of religious conviction and reason the potential for producing an expanded view of the human condition.

As liberal educated people, Innovative Catholics can be seen to be a part of the countercultural movement which began in the US and spread

throughout the Western world. The movement coalesced in its rejection of the military involvement of the US, Australia and, more ambiguously, the UK in the communist insurgencies of Southeast Asia. Many young citizens rallied to end war and mandatory military service, protested against nuclear development and advocated for peace among nations (Anderson 1995, 60, 184). They also fought for the democratic right to speak and assemble freely, resulting in a challenge to constraints maintained by conservative religion and established society and inspiring political movements for equality across the world (1995, 65). Campaigns of civil resistance were launched to promote the rights of all people to be equally protected by the law, including but not limited to the rights of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, women, gays and lesbians, and the disabled. They sought to break free of the orthodoxy of previous generations and struggled to create a more inclusive and tolerant society.

The hierarchical Church was drawn early into the demand for social change, most explicitly in the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Up until then, it had strongly resisted reform, commonly referred to as liberalism, the opposition of which could be traced back to the Enlightenment era. During this latter period, liberal Catholics favoured greater freedom for the individual and had attempted to introduce democratising ideas and the principle of religious freedom to the Church (Bokenkotter 1998, 39–81). But this and subsequent movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which tried to introduce a range of novel ideas and practices, were largely rejected by successive papacies (Bokenkotter 2004, 304–395).

During the Second Vatican Council, the hierarchical Church drew on the creative thinking of liberal Catholic movements to revise and promote conciliatory attitudes towards other Christian traditions, non-Christian religions and the modern world (O'Malley 2008, 40–43, 75–76). Internal to the Church, the council put less emphasis on papal supremacy and promoted ideas such as collegiality, subsidiarity<sup>3</sup> and spontaneity, aiming to redistribute the power of decision making among the bishops and making possible pastoral discernments in local churches (Hellwig 2003, 127). All these arrangements were to be underscored by greater individual freedom, as indicated in conciliar teachings on the freedom of conscience and religion and characterised by dialogue and cooperation (Fries 1995).

One result of the council was that it inspired the liberal arm of the Church to produce a worldview that would subordinate religious orthodoxy to an interpretation of Catholic social teaching that emphasised the dignity of the human person. A prime example of its application was the liberation theology movement, which took hold in South and Central America, many parts of Africa and to a lesser extent in Western countries. This movement interpreted the Bible through the lens of the poor and destitute to oppose unjust political and social structures which maintained poverty and oppression (Schreier 1985, 90–92). In the Western world, this “social Gospel”

motivated many young Catholics to work alongside other countercultural activists to attend the underprivileged and advocate for the relief of their plight. While the goals of the movement were not fully achieved, some improvements were made to the legal and social rights of some previously oppressed groups (Anderson 1995).

The *zeitgeist* also affected operations of the Church. Many young Catholics across the Western world discerned a liberal ethos in the council, most notably in a democratising of the Church as “community,” in contrast to “hierarchy,” and an emphasis on the individual conscience (Collins 1997, 99). They actively took up new roles in liturgical and pastoral ministries, which challenged the clerical monopoly. In those early years, they were further inspired by liberal Catholic scholars and activists, such as Leonardo Boff, the Berrigan Brothers, Charles Curran, Mary Daly, Matthew Fox, Hans Küng, Richard McBrien, Anthony de Mello, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Edward Schillebeeckx and countless others who challenged established structures and related moral codes. They read liberal Catholic newspapers, such as the UK *The Tablet* and the US *National Catholic Reporter*, which sought to make connections between conciliar determinations and the modern world.

Some also heard about or joined reform movements in the Church such as the US *Call to Action* (established in 1976), which motivated some to generate other reform movements that focused, for example, on married priests, ordination of women and respect for gay and lesbian people. A few would later coalesce as international movements, as in the case of the *International Federation of Married Priests* (1986–2008), *Women’s Ordination Worldwide* (1996–) and the *International Movement We Are Church* (1996–). Essentially, these progressive religious movements sought to bring about utopian goals which, potentially, would have a significant impact on the hierarchical Church. They sought after a community-oriented Church, constituted in an equality of membership, underpinned by active participation, headed by a leadership and decision making that represented diverse and local views and which was directed to issues of justice and care (Cwiekowski 1994).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the momentum of the countercultural movement began to slow across the Western world. Conservative forces rallied, a worldwide economic recession loomed large, and life-stage demands compelled many countercultural activists to focus on their young families. By this time, young Innovative Catholics had joined the professions, situations that somewhat revised social arrangements. Their greater financial independence produced a greater freedom and mobility across society and between groups. Those living in an urban environment came into contact with an expanded pool of choices and lifestyles, resulting in their connecting to and identifying with more groups and the loosening of traditional arrangements (Kassin, Fein and Markus 2010, 267–269). This broadening effect pressured the re-evaluation of beliefs, values and practices, with

Innovative Catholics developing a greater capacity to think independently and make their own choices.

Within the Church, the newly elected conservative Pope John Paul II (1978–2005), who would enjoy the third-longest papacy in history, endeavoured to gain control over the post-conciliar euphoria. This Pope believed that that council was not a structurally changing event, but a spiritual one, and that some reforms had gone too far and too fast (Gillis 2006, 28). He preferred a stable and uniform Church which would provide sanctuary from the perceived crisis and uncertainty in a rapidly changing world (Hebblethwaite 1991, 451). The Pope used his position at the apex of the hierarchical Church to, *inter alia*, re-traditionalise “normativity” by realigning the episcopacy to his papacy. He selected bishops who supported Church discipline or orthodoxy rather than those who were pastoral minded or supported reforms such as optional celibacy, the ordination of women and birth control (Hebblethwaite 1995, 8). He reasserted moral teaching and restricted social teaching to a narrow and inflexible personal ethics secured in tradition and supported these constraints by introducing protective measures with penalties (Collins 1986, 168–169). For example, he “obliged” Church officials and theology teachers to take oaths of fidelity and obtain teaching mandates from bishops (John Paul 1990). In effect, Pope John Paul moved the outward oriented, liberal-like Church back to one that had clear boundaries, was under full hierarchical control and was secured to his views and policies.

Innovative Catholics across the world were not willing to acquiesce to papal direction as was expected of them: They were loath to abandon significant changes that they had made to conciliar and social demands. The message of the council for a Church where power and authority were more evenly distributed and an emphasis on a person’s conscience combined with a broader attitude and approach to the modern world prompted them to scrutinise clerical direction. In this examination, they made claims of freedom of conscience and religion to attend concrete realities of inequality and submission or oppression. In short, they were determined, as Catholics, to retain their creative engagement with the modern world and assert the value of greater although not absolute freedom for the individual, believing that this would mean real progress for humanity.

Nonetheless, the assertions of greater independence remained unacceptable to Pope John Paul, who believed that his papacy was a fulfilment of the Second Vatican Council (Hebblethwaite 1991). He publicly chastised those Catholics who held different views to him and then shunted them to the margins of the hierarchical Church. Liberal theologians, for example, who refused to recant their views were dismissed from their positions, silenced or ex-communicated (Collins 2001). Another result was that exploration and experimentation in pastoral approach, moral consideration, ritual and myth, were stymied (Lakeland 2004). The fledgling worldview of a more egalitarian religion and society, which had been promoted, and argued for, was and continues to be curtailed.

Meantime, in the early twenty-first century, Innovative Catholics have had to face problems and complexities in democratic societies which are giving rise to substantial social strain. For example, they tend to view grand narratives of neoliberalism and rational projects as limited goals. They recognise that these rhetorics and schemes have inspired social and industrial progress, and encouraged competition and self-sufficiency, and contributed to an intensification of social inequality, unsustainable consumption patterns and environmental deterioration (“Human Development Report” 2011). Furthermore, they are concerned about the global impacts of fundamentalist movements, which are often driven by religious impulses and endeavour to reassert traditional sex roles and national and ethnic boundaries. A corollary of this pressure is the erosion of individual liberty and increased economic and social inequality. The combined consequence of these particular religious and social movements is the production of narrowly defined and strongly bounded groupings intent on maintaining and protecting respective interests and purposes.

Innovative Catholics recognise in this current dynamic the implication that partisanship and discrimination should be considered normative, but it is an assumption that they critique and address. They are eager to revitalise the interrupted countercultural program and adapt it to the needs and demands of the contemporary era. Their emphasis is now not so much on asserting liberal beliefs and ideas but on their application and adaptation in creative practices that anticipate a meaningful reality. They seek to implement routines in everyday life that are connected to their ideals of transformation in both religion and society. Thus, it is the exercise of a bi-focused dialectic and related anti-structural efforts that this research documents and analyses to address significant questions raised by Habermas and respond to the structural positions taken by Habermas and Ratzinger.

## **Identifying Research Respondents**

In 2010, I planned to undertake research on Innovative Catholics in Australia. My aim was to identify how religious identity was being continuously shaped by the contingencies of globalised religion and a pluralist democracy. The intention included examining six progressive small Christian communities which I expected to be loosely homogenous, and to some extent they were. In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, I recognised that these research respondents had an age range of mid-fifties to the early eighties, with an average age of sixty-four years. Two-thirds of those interviewed can be described as non-consecrated laypeople, with the remaining third being constituted largely in priests and Religious who have mostly vacated roles and offices in the hierarchical Church and, in a much lesser contingent, in those who remain. These respondents, in setting aside normative expectations and boundaries, gather in small, close-knit groups, preferring to engage personally and pursue creative and common interests.

Nevertheless, as is often found when an ethnographic project gets underway, the original plan went awry. I discovered an unanticipated degree of heterogeneous activity among these rudimentary communities that compelled me, instead, to follow three identifiable trajectories of an identified encompassing progressive religious movement, as are elaborated next. What I came to realise was that Innovative Catholics marginalised by recent Popes gave considerable thought and made voluntary decisions as to how they would continue with their religion. Their initiatives were not only prompted by an individual pursuit of the spiritual quest but also a desire to share that journey with like-minded others. A consequence of that combination of personal interest and a yearning for companionship was their dispersal in three sub-movements, which I describe respectively as “the meditation movement,” “the reform movement” and “the advocacy movement.” What each of these movements have in common is that they encourage in individuals the idea that they are agents of their own destiny and, at the same time, persuade them to be active and collaborative (Gamson 1991).

The first of the three sub-movements is located within the Christian meditation movement which operates as a pan-Christian endeavour to bring about a unity of fellowship. The movement demands from its members only the most basic elements of faith in twice-daily contemplative prayer. While not all members are progressive, the loose organisation of this interest-based group promotes a policy of inclusion insofar as Innovative Meditators are not beholden to the structural expectations of Popes. The egalitarian atmosphere of these rudimentary communities provides scope for them to explore their religious needs and aspirations. In their meditation as ritualised prayer, they navigate religious and social pressures through a spiritualised form of penetrating self-awareness that cultivates personal discipline and amicable connections. Many, but not all, Innovative Meditators are connected to the Worldwide Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM).<sup>4</sup> The origin of the movement is Catholic, and Catholics dominate executive positions. At an international level the WCCM is directed by a Catholic priest, while at the local level, organisation and leadership is commonly maintained by lay-people. From a demographic perspective there is a notable and rising interest in Christian meditation, signalling further pressures on established religion. The meditation movement was introduced to Australia circa 1980s, and in 2012, 481 groups had registered with the organisation.

The second sub-movement of reformist-minded Innovative Catholics urges the hierarchical Church to *adapt or die*, to *move on or disappear*. Innovative Reformers regard their actions as instrumental in maintaining the momentum of the Second Vatican Council. In positioning themselves, they contrast themselves with conservative believers, the latter whom are looked upon as attempting to return the Church to a previous era of belief and activity. As a corollary, they remain frustrated with the lack of structural change within the Church, as is expressed in the various protests, petitions and alternative viewpoints that they periodically make, produce or express.

Their grief is also compounded by a basic belief in the value of a structured Church for ensuring the survival of Catholicism and for maintaining the memory and legacy of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Increasing numbers of Innovative Reformers are not pinning their hope on senior clergy to reorganise the hierarchical Church. As one long-time reformer lamented, *challenging the bishops is a waste of time*. His comment illustrates the exhaustion that has resulted from his and his peers' frequent attempts at communication with senior clergy and the failure to implement a constructive dialogue. Another respondent expressed his deep pessimism over the ongoing dominance of conservative believers: *Even if Jesus had returned to take the place [of the Pope], I really fear the Neanderthal element that controls that Church today would crucify him all over again for being a radical or just a "reformer."* Some Innovative Reformers are now reasserting their efforts to promote small, personable and mutually supportive groups. These rudimentary communities are variously facilitated by those who have leadership abilities, irrespective of whether they might be categorised as priests or laypersons, men or women or otherwise. The members tend to congregate around theological interests and explorations of the Bible and other religious texts with the aim of vitalising their religious convictions. The number of these rudimentary communities, including those which are to be found in cyberspace, is difficult to ascertain, but my sense is that they exercise a small but persistent influence.

The third sub-movement of Innovative Advocates emphasises "right relationships" or egalitarian principles, which attribute equal worth to each person and which take their form in advocacy. These Innovative Catholics find inspiration in the Second Vatican Council, which asserted that justice is a Gospel imperative and that the Church has an affirmative role to play in the world.<sup>5</sup> This thinking was, at the time, revolutionary and prompted many to give non-paternalistic, specialised service to the poor, the marginalised and the victims of injustice. But this priority in the Church was short-lived. In a bid to control creativity, Pope John Paul appropriated justice to his own understanding, curtailing a plurality of locally sensitive voices and activities (Lernoux 1990). Nonetheless, some Religious orders, particularly those who have their original motivation in apostolic works, undertook the mammoth task of reforming themselves. They have since invested their skills, resources and energy in advocacy for victims of injustice, the poor and marginalised and for raising ecological consciousness. The organisation of these rudimentary communities is often headed by laypeople who attract like-minded volunteers and network with other voluntary groups, government organisations and international agencies. Although Innovative Advocates might be viewed as orthodox insofar as they adopt and adapt Catholic social teaching, they, nevertheless, have encompassing, progressive moral views.

Although each of these sub-movements can be looked upon as discrete in terms of the interests they congregate around and pursue, it became apparent



during fieldwork that members of one sub-movement often have an affinity with the other movements. Indeed, it is not uncommon for research respondents to dabble in all three sub-movements. When I asked some why they chose a particular movement, they gave a range of reasons, including personality, circumstance, interest and opportunity. Some, however, commented that contemplation (with meditation being considered one form) and action (with reform and advocacy being understood as two forms) constitute a foundational binary for the progressive project. One respondent describes that relationship as being like a form of hunger: *When I am busy in action, I yearn for silence and contemplation. After this hunger is filled, the new hole for action rises and [so] on.* Others emphasised contemplation as being the source of discerning action. *The real Christian action, said one respondent, can only be when an individual who is open and “obedient” (listening) to the Spirit sees the truth in his situation, does it, and proclaims it for others to see and hear.* But most would insist that “*reform/contemplation/action*” . . . *are intrinsically interwoven.* In effect, Innovative Catholics make particular choices for giving agency to the religious project, but they also indicate a shared belief in the need for widespread change in religion and society, and it is a determination they pursue collectively.

These three sub-movements constitute collectively a progressive religious movement which has its origins in the countercultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It is to the broader movement which this research is directed. While I acknowledge there are differences of thought and practice, my focus is on similarities. In devoting attention to what is held in common, examination is given to how this evolved remnant is grappling with the tension between religious conviction and reason at a fundamental level. The study, despite its epic scale and complexity, attempts to produce a comprehensive picture of how Innovative Catholics view and navigate the human condition.

### **The Terminology of Innovative Catholics**

The naming of research respondents was a difficult task. When I began fieldwork, I used the term “progressive” to describe and address them. The description is a generic one that emerged in conversations about religion and society in the early 2000s as an advance on the liberal position but also as a response to religious fundamentalism. This latter modern movement is to be found in the major religions of the world. Fundamentalism is defined by Marty and Appleby as an “approach, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group . . . by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past” (1993, 3). Fundamentalists believe that members of established religion have lost their original truth and zeal and that it is their task to “save” the human condition which is viewed as corrupt and in need of repair. Thus, fundamentalism rejects individual freedom and

rational discussion, is intolerant of opposition, and is determined to subordinate social life to religious tradition (Arbuckle 2004, 196). Religious fundamentalism came to global prominence with the bombing of the twin towers in the US in 2001 and nightclubs in Bali in 2002 and is maintained by media attention given to Islamic fundamentalist movements.

The Church has also produced expressions of fundamentalism, and these have a common focus in the criticism of the countercultural movement, including the Second Vatican Council. Catholic fundamentalism is propelled by intense anxiety over changes that have taken place and aggressive determination to restore the Church to pre-Vatican II structures and attitudes (Arbuckle 2004, 209–212). Examples are to be found in *Opus Dei* and the *Neo-Catechumenal Way*. These sectarian groups demand independence from episcopal or parochial authorities and responsibilities, allow for no adaption to local conditions or culture, and seek to restore a clear sense of what it is to be Catholic (Arbuckle 1993, 52; Collins 2008, 19). These and similar groups have become powerful and influential during the reigns of recent Popes who consider they embody principles of a purified religious orthodoxy (Hayes 2005).

Catholics who have upheld a liberal ethos have since attempted to reclassify themselves. They have reduced their emphasis on defining characteristics such as sexuality, gender and authority—issues that have been largely resolved in society, at least at an ideological level, although not in the hierarchical Church. They, instead, aim to implement models of an encompassing equality connected to broader social and environmental concerns. In contradistinction to fundamentalism, they advocate religious pluralism, affirm human diversity and promote environmental sustainability. This shift and claim to differentiation is also reflected in the way some describe themselves as “progressive,” signalling an advance on liberalism and the capability for religion to evolve and adapt to new historical and cultural conditions. Thus, it is against this background that some research respondents are comfortable with being referred to as “progressive.”

Some others, however, actively reject the description of “progressive,” as did Ruth: *That’s not for me, she said. I think I am right at the core of Christianity. I’m holding onto the catholicity of the spirit of Vatican II. For me, “progressive” means striking out.* Ruth and a few others interpret “progressive” as a questionable or heretical offshoot of Catholicism. They argue that it is they who have maintained continuity with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and that it is the Popes who have deviated from the projected path. Another respondent, Kevin, a retired scholar, also objects to “progressive.” *“Progressive Catholicism” carries an underlying assumption that Catholicism is progressing, or has or will do so, or maybe has or can or will go backwards.* In this view, “progressive” can be equally self-applied by those who reject, modify or uphold the current orthodoxy in the Church. Another, Edna, an educator, questioned the idea of “progressive” in relation to its application in society: *Some progressives used*

to think that all change was progress. I doubt anyone seriously thinks that now. He refers to instances where rational thinking has resulted in destruction and violence. In fact, “progressive” turned out to be too slippery for this group, with some respondents voicing their reluctance to be locked into this classification. As a label, it limits their search for meaning and attempts to bring about change.

Yet, for the practical purposes of this research, I needed to describe this group of respondents and have, since, chosen the more neutral term of “Innovative Catholics.” This term accommodates the shared disposition of research respondents to “innovate,” to produce religion that is new and creative. As “Innovative Catholics,” they retain the *zeitgeist* of an earlier countercultural era in their ongoing endeavours to invigorate their project of equality in religion and society.

### **The Research and Pope Francis**

The fieldwork for this research was undertaken during the reign of Pope Benedict, and analysis was underway when Pope Francis was inaugurated. In terms of assessing the current relevancy of this work, it is worth noting that many Innovative Catholics, while welcoming the *more gentle approach* of this Pope to Church administration and ministry, question the extent to which he can bring about the desired change. They acknowledge that Pope Francis is saying “tone it down” in his call for less scrutiny and judgement of marginal Catholics, and they welcome his emphasis on social justice as exemplified in his repeated calls for the Church to reengage with the poor and vulnerable. They also recognise that his pontificate represents a shift from the more muscular approaches of his predecessors (Fox 2014). But many also consider that he is unlikely or unable to launch substantial reform needed for bringing about greater accord between the Church and secular society (Collins 2014). Their usual appraisal is that Pope Francis is committed to maintaining the traditional understanding of the human condition as is expressed in his conventional references to the family, women and the Church (Duffy 2015). At best, Innovative Catholics see his pontificate as an initial step in a long journey towards systemic change.

### **Methodological Considerations**

In social anthropology there are certain conventions which this research project utilises, with one being fieldwork. In this ethnographic enterprise, I supplemented broad-ranging participant observations with a large number of in-depth interviews which helped me to make sense of respondents’ actions and rhetorics. I carried out multisited fieldwork in four states and one territory of Australia, beginning October 2011 and ending January 2013. Thereafter, I maintained contact with key informants throughout the duration of writing this book.

The second convention of anthropology used in this research is that of comparative methodology. Normally a comparison is made between two different groups, but this project expands on that endeavour to understand the panorama of human existence. The methodological approach I adopt is captured in the image of Janus, the Roman God, who is depicted as having two faces, enabling him to simultaneously look in two different directions. Similarly, I attempt to capture the dual gaze of Innovative Catholics, who frequently direct their attention in a bi-focused dialectic on both hegemonies of religious and secular orthodoxy.

In one “face” of the comparison, I examine the differences between Innovative Catholics and Popes John Paul and Benedict. These Popes maintained a particular internal logic of Catholicism which, for example, had a structural result in strongly bounded communities and a clearly defined hierarchy. Such logic is reflected in the rhetorics of these Popes, which I subsequently examine and analyse as ethnographic data, not as theological treatises. Innovative Catholics, conversely, promote and practise a kind of democratic Church sustained by the voluntary participation, and likewise, I examine their rhetorics.

In the second “face,” I investigate how Innovative Catholics view secular society by examining their rhetorics, which are composed critically. They welcome in principle changes to society that have resulted from the Enlightenment; indeed, they maintain that some or many of these developments should be adopted and adapted in their religion. However, they also seek to ameliorate adverse effects, as is exemplified in their perceptions of undesirable pressures on the human condition and, in extension, the environment. Moreover, these two “faces” are examined through the use of various grand theories such as that advanced by Giddens (1991), Foucault (1977) and Turner (1969). In each chapter, a select theory is used to analyse a particular characteristic of religion and society as is to be found in the ethnographic field. These theories pull the data for analysis together, which is further directed to the main theoretical scheme.

A third convention used in this book is that of maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of research respondents. Given that their contributions may make them vulnerable to criticism or censure, I have protected their identities by using pseudonyms, with the exception of those who have formally published their writings. I have also, at times, combined the contribution of one respondent with another to create composite identities which further work to ensure anonymity.

Finally, there is the convention of disclosure. Research is conducted to further our understanding of others, and often inadvertently, it informs the person of the researcher. My own decision to study religion on the margins of the hierarchical Church was partly motivated by a desire to know how other Catholics were trying to resolve the task of updating their religion. While, I, as a Catholic, could be described as “progressive,” my background sets me apart from the majority of respondents. I have a Methodist/Uniting Church

heritage and no Irish ancestry. I was raised in the Australian bush, remote from educational and social opportunities, and have come relatively late to tertiary education. These differences between me and my research respondents have prompted my interest in studying the scope of the evolving intercultural movement and learning from it.

## Chapter Outline

In addressing key questions about the relationship between religion and society, I have organised this book in three parts. The first, composed of two chapters, considers how Innovative Catholics consider divergent foundational concepts used to describe and understand the human condition. In the first chapter, analysis is given to how they approach and move on from using the conventional notion of the “collective person,” as implied or indicated in the rhetorics of recent Popes, to one that is more individuated. The second chapter investigates how they conceptualise and revise the individual self, as idealised in secular society, as a “relational person.”

The second part, consisting of three chapters, considers how Innovative Catholics use hybridising processes to revise identities, moralities and structures. In the Church, strong identities, a fixed morality and autocratic structures are enforced to secure the “collective person” to community and hierarchy. In Western society, identity is individuated and thus weak, morality is constituted in the right of the individual to act autonomously, and these freedoms are enshrined in democracy. These chapters examine how Innovative Catholics navigate a middle path between religious and social expectations to produce an alternative approach to boundary making.

In the third part, arranged in two chapters, I examine, respectively, how Innovative Catholics are ritualising the human condition and producing a worldview to comprehend concrete reality. While Popes John Paul and Benedict used ceremony and doctrine to maintain religious orthodoxy, Innovative Catholics use ritual and myth to make albeit imperfect resemblances between reason and religious conviction to charter a modified course for modern society.

## Notes

- 1 “Religious” is a contemporary term for referring to nuns or sisters and brothers belonging to a Religious order.
- 2 At the time of the dialectic, Cardinal Ratzinger was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which defends and affirms official Catholic doctrine.
- 3 Subsidiarity is a principle in Catholic social doctrine which holds that nothing should be done by a higher agency that can be done as well or better by a lower agency.
- 4 During fieldwork, one group of Innovative Meditators who were interviewed used a type of meditative prayer developed by Fr. Justin Bellitz, OFM.
- 5 The conciliar declarations were developed further in “The Synod for Justice in the World” (1971), which taught that “justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel” (Himes 2005, 349).

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## 2 Reconceptualising the Person

Pat was a well-educated, well-travelled young priest during the 1960s who embraced wholeheartedly the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. His liberal ethos had been cultivated early in his vocation: *I went to Mass one Sunday in 1963 at a mining village in Belgium. The priest celebrated Mass in French from beginning to end, and I had never seen a local Church community so involved in the liturgy. Although I was impressed, I had to ask the priest how he justified using the vernacular when it was still forbidden under pain of mortal sin. He replied, "Simply because it is a mortal sin for me not to speak to my people in a language they understand." That gave me my first insight into the authority of each community of faith, an authority then and now rejected by officialdom.*

Pat would become further inspired by the Second Vatican Council, including how it affirmed *the individual and political liberty of its members*. Once back in Australia, he soon applied these messages in his advocacy for revisions in liturgy and catechesis. He was among the first of the clergy to introduce laypeople to the Church sanctuary and administrative boards of his large parish and to publicly criticise the 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, reaffirming the traditional teaching of the Church on birth control (Paul VI 1968).

In the early 1970s, Pat became the target of *rearguard action to restore and maintain pre-Vatican structures*. *It was exhilarating during the sixties to be part of the life of a Church, but the opposition has [since] succeeded in assigning obsolete theology and structures [to] the status of true Catholic faith*. The result of the challenge to new ideas and practices was his removal from his position as parish priest. He thereafter resigned on his own volition, married a widow and shifted to regional Australia, where he gave much consideration to the human condition. *The Church*, he said, *does not live apart from the tide of history or the almost daily new and significant insights gained into the nature of our being and our place in the universe. Indeed, there would be no Church without the wisdom of the secret hearts of people. . . . The role of Church is to create an environment in which the inner being of people of faith can flourish [for] God [is] with us as the wisdom of our sacred hearts, of our deepest, truest selves.*



## Introducing Competing Views of the Human Condition

Pat's account illustrates the struggle over which understanding of the human condition is to prevail. Throughout history, one key concept used to describe the human condition has been that of the "person." On the one hand, traditional religion considers the content of this notion to be unchanging, immutable and eternal. On the other hand, secular society asserts that it is a product of culture and history; hence, the idea of the person is to be subjected to periodic transformation. This chapter opens with a brief survey of the development of "person" in Western society as a background to the contemporary contest between religion and secular society over how the human condition is to be apprehended and lived.

Popes John Paul and Benedict asserted that the human condition is predetermined in the "collective person," a term which conveys the idea that the human being is most fully constituted in an established pattern in a community. Secular society, alternatively, emphasises the "autonomous individual," where the human being is expected to achieve independently his or her position in society. Innovative Catholics, however, find themselves caught in the middle of these two understandings of the human condition, pressuring them to reconcile these polarised views by producing a hybridised concept of the human person. In this endeavour, they contend that there is a need for greater individuation while, at the same time, acknowledging the importance of maintaining social relations, as is exemplified in the creedal-like statement made by Pat: *We are called by God to live by moral principles set down in Scripture, not as a test of our strength as individuals but as a mark of the respect we hold for God and each other.* Nevertheless, recent Popes have suppressed the advocacy of alternative ideas of the human condition, with the consequence of Innovative Catholics being pushed to the margins of their Church.

## An Historical Review of the Human Person

The question of how to conceptualise the human condition reaches back millennia. The following review looks at how that challenge has been ongoing and serves to introduce and highlight the inherited difficulties that Innovative Catholics are required to engage with. One of the most enduring concepts used to socially organise the human condition is that of the "person." According to Richardson (1986, 228), person has its origin in the circa 700 BCE Etruscan word "phersu," meaning mask. In this culture, no freedom was granted to the individual, but there was, as Nolan (1987, 257) states, an emergence of the person from anonymity in his or her struggle with fate. A person was considered to have identity in a role that was acted by addressing and relating to others in a religious setting. Thereafter, in subsequent centuries, the Romans adapted the concept of person for their own purposes, as was expressed in the Latin "persona," also meaning "mask."

Marcel Mauss, a sociologist, states that the Roman Empire used *persona* in the second century to establish and maintain the juridical person in codes of conduct and social rankings. Free men, for example, were given forenames, surnames and nicknames to connect them to a clan and designate their role or position within it (Mauss 1985, 16).

Early Christian believers, according to Mauss (1985, 16–18), modified the legal identity by introducing to the person a metaphysical foundation, thereby asserting that the human person was situated in both society and the supernatural realm. This dual nature was recognised in the tying of the person to the overarching figure of Jesus Christ, as is recorded in the New Testament, “You are, with respect to the one, neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman, male nor female, for you are one person . . . in Christ Jesus” (1985, 18–19). Louis Dumont, another sociologist, holds a somewhat different view about how early Christians conceived of the person, arguing that these early believers, who were often persecuted by the Romans, had an ambivalent relationship with ordinary life. For them, the world was a necessary but imperfect place which they further tempered by the belief that they would be eventually united with a transcendent, otherworldly God (1985, 103). To resolve this conflict, they interpreted the person as having a social role but one that was relativised to a supernatural destiny.

In the fourth century, the natural-supernatural or inworldly-otherworldly arrangement was complicated when Roman rulers changed their policies and agreed to treat Christians benevolently. Emperor Constantine considered Christianity as a stabilising force for the Roman Empire, but the latter gave the social advance a more circumspect assessment. Christians enjoyed their inclusion in Roman society but retained a view that this form of existence was inferior to the one they hoped for in the afterlife (Dumont 1985, 103, 106). Influential Christians such as Augustine of Hippo (354–450 AD) also developed the dimension of relationship inherent in the concept of person, as exemplified in his theology of the Trinity (Nolan 1987, 758). In his treatise, God is principally understood to be the Supreme Being who has a tripartite nature, and each part as person is dependent on the other (Ayres 2010, 233). The association of a God as Father, Son and Spirit was to be emulated by the human person, who was considered to have a dual nature (Kasper 1989, 36). In the natural world, he as a body was to take his place in a community and hierarchy. At the same time, he was to direct himself to becoming one with Christ, who existed in the transcendent community of the Trinity (Clark 1998).

Almost a millennium later, a scholar monk, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), revised the concept of the person by emphasising the role of reason in religious conviction. This act of redefinition has one explanation in changing social conditions. Settled areas were being organised in towns and townships, which provided conditions for producing an educated merchant class, promoting a revival of Latin and Greek knowledge and establishing the first European universities. In this era, reason was in the ascendancy

and demanded a revised explanation of faith. Hence, Aquinas asserted that there was no substantial distinction between the natural and supernatural worlds: All creation—revealed and rational, emanated from God. In this view, the human person could comprehend reason insofar as he directed himself towards the will of God (Nolan 1987, 758). The logic was further reflected in the revision Aquinas gave to the doctrine of the Trinity. He considered God to be one, but, in contrast to Augustine, he asserted that the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, were distinct and not different manifestations of the divine being (Floyd 2010). In this theological model, the independent human person was inclined to a relationship, which in the collective ideal, was with a unified God.

During the period known as Christendom (1300–1650 AD), the Church experienced both triumph and decline. The Popes acquired massive temporal and religious power, but their monopoly was challenged by schism in the Church and civil unrest. One consequence of this volatility was the emergence of seminal personalities like the monk-priest Martin Luther (1483–1546), who accentuated the individual person in a theology of an interior self. Luther was not concerned with the metaphysical explanation of the Trinity but with how it was manifested (Bainton 1978, 219–220). His emphasis was placed not on structure but on character, both of God and the human person. He argued that Jesus, as the incarnation of God, was the sole revealer of a transcendent God. The human person was, therefore, to model himself on the singular exemplar of the human condition. In this doctrine, God could be accessed through the faith, love and reason of the human person (Dumont 1985, 114). In emphasising these characteristics, Luther effectively de-emphasised the collective character of the person, which moreover, undermined the intermediary role of priests and their capacity to control social norms.

The concept of person was now dichotomised in Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church maintained a theology of the human being as a collective entity, while Protestant reformers assigned him greater individuation. The Protestant pastor John Calvin (1509–1564) then went a step further than Luther. He displaced the role of love and suppressed emotion and mysticism to emphasise the role of reason in knowing God. The result was a concentration of the notion of otherworldliness in the will of an individual. The sociologist Max Weber later identified this human-divine relationship as inwardly asceticism, an idea which he developed in his Protestant ethic thesis.<sup>1</sup> This interiorly directed focus replaced the mediated contemplation of an otherworldly God. The individual was now wholly in the world, and his relationship to the supernatural was now dependent on him subjecting himself to a remote God. Additionally, the identification of the will of the individual with the will of God produced a sense of otherworldliness which operated extrinsically on the world, an understanding which Max Weber would call “modern rationality” (Dumont 1985, 113–116).

The emphasis on reason was increased in the Enlightenment philosophy of the eighteenth century. Enlightenment philosophers collapsed the concept

of person into the rational individual who was required to set aside the implementing of the design ostensibly produced by God for “man.” The individual self was now considered to be conscious, rational and autonomous; indeed, “self” is of Proto-Germanic derivation, meaning “one’s own person” (Harper 2001–2014). In this revision, external conditions or social differences were not to interfere with how an individual was to function. He was to disregard reference to society and to concentrate exclusively on his inner self, wherein autonomous convictions could be assessed and pursued. In effect, the individual was allied with “consciousness”; thus, a human being was to know himself through reason, which was considered the highest form of mental function and the only objective norm (Mauss 1985, 20). Moreover, the mode of knowledge produced by the rational self was science, which claimed that it alone could provide universal truths about the world. This worldview, known as modernity, conceptualised the human as being completely independent of God.

Meanwhile, the Church, to avoid conflict with the pre-eminence given to reason in Protestantism and secular society, emphasised an inner subjective experience which was considered an objective intervention of God. This orientation played down the natural world, requiring a Catholic believer to focus his ultimate hope in otherworldly or eternal salvation (Sharpe 1984, 5). It also revised the notion of the Trinity, which continued to uphold the oneness of God, but the three parts were now to be identified as a subsistent relation of opposition: The Father God is *paternity*, Christ the Son *filiation*, and the Holy Spirit *spiration*. In this understanding, each of the three persons was considered independent yet interrelated (Nolan 1987, 759). In temporal application, the human person was recognised as having individuated freedom but was constrained by a notion of the collective person limited to a predetermined role in community and hierarchy. During the next four centuries, this concept of the person operated to sustain a strong sense of community in which a person existed, lived out and was regulated through interrelationship.

### Early Formation of Innovative Catholics

Across the Western world in the 1950s, religious observance was high. Catholics commonly *went to Mass*, numbers of vocations to the priesthood and religious life were rising, Catholic schools were bulging with students, and the rosary was regularly recited in the home. Catholic culture was viewed largely as a homogenous stronghold enlivened by an atmosphere of optimism and eagerness. One Innovative Catholic, Judith, remembers how such commonality was lived out. *When I was younger we did everything within the realms of the Church. All your family was Catholic, and so were your friends. As kids you went to Catholic school. As teenagers, you joined [Catholic groups]. You prayed, worked and played together. There was nothing outside of Catholic.* In this setting, Innovative Catholics placed

great importance on loyalty and their affection for the *Catholic family* was a source of strength and support.

Nuns and brothers played their parts in upholding the Catholic community. They were determined to overthrow the Protestant monopoly which sustained a strong anti-Catholic prejudice that was especially evident in corporate life, conservative politics and established society (Mackay 2007, 145). These Religious worked hard to ensure their young pupils would receive a good education to advance them. Aaron, now a retired lawyer and advocate for the marginalised, commented that *you can see why we aspired to greater things . . . because we weren't accepted; we were put down. So we said . . . "We're going to show you that we're here." . . . [At school], Brother taught us manners and inspired us to learn well and get on in life. He fashioned many sons of labourers like me, and it was due mostly to him that we achieved what we did.* Many Innovative Catholics as children applied themselves studiously and cultivated skills and habits to further the possibility of participation. They yearned to be more integrated in society, not in a way that put their own selves forward but, rather, to become better integrated as a community alongside a Protestant one.

The universal method for teaching students during the 1950s was that of rote learning in the subjects of reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and religion. Teachers, who were regarded as the fount of all knowledge, were required to pour information into the heads of pupils who, in return, were expected to regurgitate the content in tests and exams. In Catholic schools, rote learning of a pre-conciliar edition of the *Catechism* was given special emphasis. Some of what pupils learnt was aimed at refuting the claims of Protestants and the control they exercised in society. Leon recalled that *at least in the nuns' minds, thinking for yourself was a violent crime which led to Protestantism.* Rote learning avoided demands for understanding and inspired pupils to defer to external instruction, which facilitated strong, almost tribal allegiance. The duty of the person was to accept received wisdom or "the truth" to remain in solidarity with the Catholic community.

The young students were further socialised as collective persons in predetermined gender roles and sex stereotyped expectations, which structured their ideas about the human condition in fundamental respects. At home, they were taught by their parents to exercise rigorous sexual discipline, retain sexual innocence and strive for sexual "purity," all of which served to sustain severely restricted gender roles. In the school environment, nuns and brothers similarly policed gender identities and sexuality. The nuns enforced modesty of dress on the girls, while according to Joseph, the brothers *warned the boys about girls* and forbade their association. He also said they were counselled about the sinful nature of erotic stimulation, either in sexual fantasies or masturbation, although accordingly, the idea of mortal danger being attached to sexual excitement only made it more intriguing! Such strict regard for prescribed norms prepared these Catholics for taking their place in the hierarchical Church and for maintaining the collective person.

A few Innovative Catholics indicated that there were breaches in the gendered system. Brigid, for example, said she attended a Catholic secondary school run by *a very famous principal who had come from Ireland. Mother M had actually been a governess on the Continent for some years. . . . She would say, "Yes, marriage is important, but so are other forms of participation in the world."* In the 1950s and early 1960s this was unusual. At the time, these girls had the idea that the only honourable vocations in life were marriage or religious life. Unlike men, who could attain the fullness of personhood as priests,<sup>2</sup> women could only achieve a limited form in domestic roles or as subordinates to clericalised men. But as Mother M foretold, the acceptance of this restriction on gender roles was soon to be challenged. Many young women would pursue life courses of their own choosing. They, alongside other educated citizens, would raise questions about the human person being ordered to predetermined roles, statuses and functions.

### The Second Vatican Council and the Person

Pope John XXIII (1958–1963) inherited a highly centralised religion that was finding it increasingly difficult to navigate a pluralistic Church and world. Hastings lists some of the major problems that were confronting the institution: “the growth of the liturgical movement, the lay apostolate, biblical scholarship, the need for Catholics to participate in democratic politics at least in order to protect Catholic rights, the urgency of collaborating locally with non-Catholics. . . . [A]ll this and much else had produced a profoundly altered consciousness within the more wide-awake parts of the Church” (1991, 3). In his previous capacity as papal diplomat, Pope John had become highly aware of the social changes taking place and the gravity of their implications. Not long into his papacy, and despite strong resistance from the Curia (Vatican officials), John called for an ecumenical council, signalling a radical turning point (Bokenkotter 2004, 2–3). He proposed that the council would not be directed to the defence of the Church, as was common to previous councils, but to engagement with many other religious believers and the modern world.

The announcement made by Pope John XXIII surprised Catholics around the world. All had appeared to be going well for the Church, given its expansion in the postwar years, even though that growth had presented its own difficulties. In Australia, for example, the Church was experiencing an overwhelming influx of non-English speaking migrants. Their arrival greatly pressured the Catholic school system, which had no access to state funding, strained the infrastructure and personnel of parishes and threatened the long-established Irish character of the Church (O’Farrell 1977, 407). There were also political tensions that threatened the Catholic community. An internecine conflict occurred between “the Movement,” which was concerned with the threat of communism, and others who wanted a broader engagement with working-class issues (O’Farrell 1977, 401).

From the outset of the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers, as the attending senior clergy were known, endeavoured to address not just Catholics but a global audience in their discernment of what humans believed about themselves. Instead of issuing new dogmas and declaring anathemas, as had been the case in previous councils, this event was to be known for its renewal of doctrine. These changes were deliberated among the Council Fathers and were subsequently voted on, compiled and published as Documents of the Council. The documents reflected competing theologies and were filled with compromise and ambiguous language, ensuring that they would be accepted and approved by large majorities (Huebsch 1996, 116–146). For example, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), which spoke about the hopes and dreams of “mankind,” underwent considerable debate over the almost entire course of the council (Vatican II 1965, 199). It was constantly revised and eventually accepted by the Church Fathers on December 7, 1965, by a vote of 2,309 to 75 (Huebsch 1996, 153).

The Council Fathers gave great importance to the human person as was expressed in the first and second chapters of the aforementioned *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II 1965, 199–231). The first chapter sought to emphasise the personal quality of each human being as exemplified in the representation of “man [as] created ‘to the image of God,’ [who] is capable of knowing and loving his Creator” (Vatican II 1965, 210). It declared that the human person was constituted holistically in body and soul. Within the core of this complete person was the conscience, which made moral assessments and resisted both impulsiveness and acquiescence to worldly externalities. The pursuit of this encompassing consideration was advanced as being vital for happiness and fulfilment. The ideal human being was personally and interiorly acquainted with a transcendent “Father God,” known through the “incarnate Son,” although the fullness of that relationship was to be anticipated in a community supervised by a hierarchy (Vatican II 1965, 205–206, 213–214).

The second chapter of *Gaudium et Spes* concentrated on the social dimension of the human being whom the Council Fathers did not conceptualise as independent and isolated (Vatican II 1965, 222–231). They distrusted the Western idea of the autonomous individual, stressing, instead, the significance of relationship for realising personhood (Battaglia 1994, 338). However, the attempt to address the socialising dimension was limited. They acknowledged there was a growing interdependence among peoples due to modern communications and technology but deferred to the Church’s teaching authority about human society by recalling some abstract principles such as love of God and love of neighbour (Vatican II 1965, 223–235). The theme of interconnecting love was repeated in historical examples and highlighted in relationships of reciprocity and mutual dependency. Social institutions were said to enhance the lives of human persons, as did consideration of the common good, which made human fulfilment possible. Yet

questions about how the human person was to be ordered to harmonise personal qualities and the common good were set aside. The Council Fathers insisted that the potential of the person was realised in a community, but they gave no attention to the problems associated with collectivism.

The Council Fathers extended the themes of the human person in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) (Vatican II 1964), which asserted that the Christian Church subsists in the Catholic Church, that it is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him and that elements of truth are also to be found outside of its structure. They replaced the pre-conciliar image of the Church as an objectively ordered society (even a juridically “perfect society”) with the biblical image of the “People of God,” which indicated the possibility of salvation for all “men” (Hastings 1991, 57–58). The highly debated use of this representation was drawn from the Old or Hebrew Testament to communicate notions of holism and biblical continuity. This image was developed in an entire chapter in *Lumen Gentium*, titled the “People of God,” and was situated prior to that of a chapter on the hierarchy. The Church was now to be identified with the entire “People of God,” who was said to have a “share . . . in Christ’s prophetic office” and not just with the clergy, as had been previously the case (Vatican II Council 1964, 29–32, 34–35, 37–38, 74–75).

Nonetheless, the introduction of personalising themes created ambiguity in the Church. Firstly, the image of “People of God” conveyed notions of subjectivity and equality. Catholics, other Christians and all people of goodwill could now be accommodated in this representation through their thinking for themselves about what goals were to be considered objective and what were not (Vatican II Council 1964, 27–29). These notions, however, contrasted with those representations preferred by senior clergy that ordered all peoples in objective relations to a hierarchy. Secondly, the arrangement of the chapters in *Lumen Gentium* implied that the hierarchy was oriented to serving the “People of God,” challenging the convention of the laity revering them as mediators of an otherworldly God. Thirdly, the renovated image and its placement in *Lumen Gentium* introduced reservations about truth being handed “down” from God and authoritatively administered through Pope, bishops and priests to the laity. The implication was that all could now share in the discernment of truth (Ebaugh 1991, 3, 8).

The Council Fathers produced other personalising themes, which have been identified by the historian John O’Malley (2008, 50). They include horizontal words, equality words, reciprocity words and interiority words. Firstly, the personalising of horizontal and equality words was conveyed in terms such as “brothers and sisters,” the “priesthood of all believers” and in the ardently contested idea of “collegiality.” As with the “People of God,” these expressions implied the importance of a person actively participating in the Church, which contrasted with pre-conciliar postures of deference and docility. As levelling concepts, they also had the potential for



decentralising the papacy, promoting conversation and opening up options in relations between clergy and laity, between Catholics and other Christians, and between Christians and the world. Secondly, the personalising of a reciprocal relationship was communicated in words such as “cooperation,” “partnership” and “collaboration.” The use of such language reflected ideas of mutual interchange, contrary to the earlier emphasis on monologues informed by the unilateral decision making of the hierarchy.

Personalisation was also reproduced through the use of interiority words such as “conscience” and “the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties,” which were the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II 1965, 199). These interior words signalled the value of subjective capacity and the importance of individual discernment. The basis for reflection differed from that of the pre-conciliar Church, which had emphasised an ahistorical and acultural perspective and had compelled the human person to apply abstract thinking regardless of his or her circumstance and situation. The conciliar approach, on the contrary, indicated a relaxation of ties in the hierarchical Church to facilitate individual conscience and personal connections.

### **Impact of the Council in Introspective Religion**

The impact of the council on Innovative Catholics was to have lifelong significance in that it would lead to ongoing change to their self-understanding and relationships. As well-educated young people, eager to engage with the world, they were invigorated by the images and messages of the council, which were made available not just through the clergy but through radio and especially television.<sup>3</sup> A few Innovative Catholics recalled the fascination of watching what they had never dreamt of seeing. The transparency of the international media gave the impression that the Church in the Vatican was like them, willing and eager to greet and meet a complex world. It was a model and message with which they identified closely because they, too, were stepping into modern society, where they would come to enjoy full employment, material affluence and a measure of racial, religious and gender equality which had been previously unimaginable.

In taking into account their new situation, some Innovative Catholics interpreted the personalising themes of the council to mean that they themselves could renegotiate what it meant to be Catholic. The shift in self-perception was coupled with the assumption that they could change the way in which they related to others. It was a view that Bill, a freshly ordained priest in the 1960s, was eager to implement. *I was charged with a sense of great responsibility and great excitement about what was to come, and I immersed myself into updating the parish.* Some priests moved away from the pre-conciliar model of priesthood, which was cultic and paternalistic, to one that was ministerial or pastoral in style. This revised form enabled them to respond to the aspirations of often tertiary-educated laity and collaborate with them in leading parish life. In these modified connections, these priests took into

account their own and others' perspectives, experiences, feelings, beliefs and desires (Solomon 2005, 857).

Some laity also assumed an unprecedented freedom to interpret and implement conciliar ideas because, as Margaret said, *The most radical of the Council's teachings was its recognition of the role of the laity. We, who were at least 98 percent of the community, were no longer to be considered second rate! Ours was a vocation, a special call, with its own rights and responsibilities, one of which was to participate, with our own particular expertise, in discussions and decision making about the life of the Church.* Catherine, who at the time was a committed member of the Young Christian Worker movement,<sup>4</sup> added, *And some of us did read the Council documents; although the language and the arguments could be pretty torturous, we found some gems that continue to energise us still!* Some took to heart the conciliar themes that they should take up their rightful place in the Church and its mission in the world. They did not wait for direction from their clerical superiors but used their own initiative (as was expected of them in their professional roles) to think and engage with fellow Catholics, Christians, people of other faiths and of no faith.

For some others, their accommodation of conciliar ideas was spurred on by their involvement in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), which began with an event of about twenty Christians at Duquesne University in the US, in February 1967. That group then went on to actively spread this syncretic "Pentecostal-Catholic" experience to parishes across North America and, eventually, to all continents, including Australia. According to anthropologist Thomas Csordas (2001, 4), the "new 'Catholic Pentecostals' claimed to offer a unique spiritual experience to individuals and promised a dramatic renewal of Church life based on a born-again spirituality of 'personal relationship' with Jesus and direct access to divine power and inspiration through a variety of 'spiritual gifts,' or 'charisms.'" This movement was fuelled by a belief that the Holy Spirit, as had been the case for the original disciples of Jesus in the upper room in the first century,<sup>5</sup> was available to all. The unmediated, divine force was considered to have bestowed on individual believers healing and empowerment (2001, 49).

At first, the charismatic movement operated in a loosely organised network of prayer groups connected primarily through personal associations. It was then, after much debate in the Vatican, given approval, most notably by Pope Paul VI (1963–1978). Later, Pope John Paul was known to be generally supportive while encouraging a conservative wing of the movement (Csordas 2001, 7, 12). Thereafter, during the 1970s, CCR initiated a process of being formalised, which the sociologist Max Weber would have recognised as the "routinisation of charisma." In this theory, the charismatic or extraordinary actions of a (heroic or prophetic) person, is, over time, transferred to a designated (priestly) person in a religion, and it is in the context of these (clerical) offices that they perform these routinised activities, wherein "charisma" is then seen to reside (Gerth and Mills 1974,

53–54, 297). In summary application to CCR, the personal authority of its leaders and members was eventually regularised by the official administration of the hierarchical Church.

CCR offered Innovative Catholics, such as Val, then a young woman, an emotionally exuberant experience in ritualised reenactments of the Pentecost. That encounter proved significant. It was, for her, a time of *personal conversion*. *I was just full of the Spirit and wanting to share it with everybody. I mean we were praying over each other, and tears were just streaming from me . . . and I decided then that I would be more involved because, up until then, I'd just go to Mass and go home.* Sean reported that his experience of CCR was *a whole opening of the personal experience of the living Scriptures*. In acknowledging their feelings and emotions, these respondents shifted from passive involvement to one that was characterised by personalised activity. They were now less inclined to “go to Mass” out of an obligation to external direction and more disposed to participating out of volition.

Some research respondents recollected a form of development in that charismatic process in the *Renewal of Faith* (O'Donnell 1972), a program which aimed to help Catholics to “deepen” their faith—“deepen” meaning an emphasis on the interiority of the religious believer. The catechesis, which they had received during their school years, was once considered sufficient for the entirety of the life course. However, after the Second Vatican Council, ongoing learning about religion was viewed as paramount for a dynamic faith. Faith was no longer being defined by Innovative Catholics as giving assent to externally produced dogma and belief but to cultivating an interior experience and making a personal commitment to a related idea of God.

In the context of small groups, pastoral minded clergy and designated laity used the *Renewal of Faith* material to “guide,” rather than “instruct,” other Catholics, encouraging them to personalise their faith. They were not just given information but urged to “grow” and “change,” to “experience” and “understand,” to “feel” and “love,” to develop and explore one's own conscience, defined as “myself judging about whether a certain action is right or wrong” (O'Donnell 1972). They also learnt that the divine power of the Holy Spirit, known also as the advocate or helper, was directly accessible. This rerouting of the divine to the individual self was described by John as *spiritual therapy* and having a consequence in *a realisation of God's presence all the time*. God was now to be less likely to be understood as a mediated otherworldly being and more likely to be recognised as an inworldly or immanent force that was directly accessible (the subject of God will be elaborated on in Chapter 8).

John added, *You learnt some things, but it left you searching for more*. In some cases, Innovative Catholics continued to meet after the program was completed. In these small groups, bonded by thoughtfulness and affection for one another, they would explore subjectively their lived experience, affirm each other and share knowledge. But it was an experience and knowledge that a priest might not have. As a result, some became less dependent

on clergy and more reliant on fellow Catholics when it came to anticipating religious and social needs. In an increasingly complex society, populated with knowledgeable citizens, the role of priest as counsel waned.

### Revising Approaches to Religious Knowledge

By the early 1980s, new approaches to religious knowledge that factored in subjective enquiry were becoming formalised in the Church, at least at the local level. This revision was to become known as “Adult Faith Education” and was commonly comprised of theological knowledge, religious literacy, scriptural reflection and social action. In this form of education, modern sources of knowledge about the human condition, including those drawn from the social sciences (e.g., history and psychology), were often introduced and connected to the religious project. One consequence was the scrutiny of the hierarchical Church with conventional categories of participation in community and hierarchy making less sense. Innovative Catholics now had a broadened sense of purpose, prompting them, as individuals, to leave their mark, often through creative, altruistic or spiritual pursuits: a perspective that resonated with the Enlightenment project of making something of one’s own self. The desire to express their revitalised faith, undergirded by penetrating new insights, was commonly directed to their local communities or parishes. Not only did they seek their own development, they also sought to promote collective growth in religion and society.

Peter was one Innovative Advocate who reconsidered how he could pursue the religious project in social advancement. *I was a teacher in an inner-city school of 89 different nationalities, with a lot of poverty. . . . You started making connections and valuing people. . . . And then I went to India and saw the unbelievable poverty, and then I made the link between the poverty that 80 percent has to live in because 3 percent [in the Western world] want to live like this.* Peter connected personal experience, informed further by modern reason, to religious conviction, posing critical questions with the aim of attending what he considered to be solvable problems. He quit his job as a teacher to become a full-time advocate for the poor and the marginalised, and in the ensuing decades, he has been involved in human rights education, peace and reconciliation work and advocacy on climate change.

Some others pursued the change in self-understanding by becoming professionals with the intention of serving the Church community, spurred on by the belief that conventional religious knowledge was inadequate for post-conciliar circumstances. They were often of the opinion that the cleric as a generalist had a limited place in a highly specialised society. These people saw a need for gaining expertise and attained academic degrees in areas such as theology, pastoral care and counselling. Those Innovative Catholics who were priests and Religious took on a hyphenated identity and were referred to as the “professional-priest” or the “professional-sister.” Those who were laity, and who had been prior to the council excluded from

theological colleges, could now pursue tertiary qualifications. Many did so at their own expense, and these ministerial-minded students soon outnumbered seminarians. Upon graduation, some moved into newly opened positions in local churches and were known as “parish administrators” and “pastoral associates.”

The acquisition of rational knowledge by Innovative Catholics led to a greater democratisation of relationships in the Church. Firstly, their inclusion in its administration effectively de-emphasised conventional conduits for becoming a priest or Religious and blurred the assumption that ordination, consecration and perpetual chastity (celibacy) were needed for ministry. Secondly, the insertion of professional lay Innovative Catholics challenged Church rankings. In contrast to clergy, who are consigned to a multitude of immediately recognisable divisions (e.g., Pope, cardinals, bishops and priests), these laity are assigned essentially to one. These Innovative Catholics challenged that pattern. In its place, they created an institutionally unacknowledged middle rank in the hierarchical Church which had similitude with their assignment to the middle-class in society. These people took up ministry positions, commonly informed by their tertiary education and professional knowledge, in diverse fields such as pastoral care, finance, administration, liturgy and education. In this middle rank, they forged new links between clergy and ordinary Catholics, experienced pastors and passive pew sitters, bishops and those who sought social betterment, and tribal Catholics and ecumenists. This adjustment to how they participated in the Church was to have a significant impact on how relationships between peers and elites were to be navigated.

Some considered that this shift in responsibility and change in relationships should be incorporated formally into the hierarchical Church. Those who were laypersons believed that their ministries were as important as those of the clergy and that their input and experience should be included and acknowledged in an expansion of leadership and decision-making roles. In effect, some Innovative Catholics had revised the idea of the collective person by incorporating greater degrees of individuality and situating them in roles and ranks of the hierarchical Church, and they sought to have these changes in thought and practice recognised officially.

### **Exploring Psychospiritual Knowledge**

In the 1980s, there emerged another form of knowledge, psychospirituality, which would further prompt changes in the understanding of the human condition. This type of knowledge, which has its origins in “wisdom traditions”<sup>6</sup> as well as in the findings of modern psychology, tends to move the human from perceiving him- or herself as a collective person to that of an individual self (Rohr and Ebert 2009). Psychospirituality emphasises the idea that the human condition can be understood through introspection rather than through external doctrine. Such knowledge sets aside pieties,

which direct the attention of the believer to an otherworldly transcendent God and, instead, plumbs the depths of the self, wherein God is considered to be found.

Religious, particularly the sisters who had come out from beneath the supervision of male clergy in the post-conciliar era, were leaders in this field. They commonly offered psychospiritual courses in parishes and retreat houses that they managed, and the most popular among them were those that adopted a Jungian approach to psychology, which included the Myers–Briggs Personality Inventory and the Enneagram system. The Jungian approach originated from the ideas of Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, who produced an analytical method which has individuation as its central concept. Accordingly, the interior process demands the integration of opposites, including the conscious with the unconscious, while still maintaining their relative autonomy (Jung 2011, 209). For example, Jung recognised two primary archetypes of anima and animus existing in the human person. Males are said to be able to identify a feminine inner personality—the anima; equivalently, in the unconscious of the female, it is expressed as a masculine personality—the animus. Jung also believed that the human psyche is “by nature religious” and sought to explore that phenomenon through dreams, art, science, mythology and philosophy (Lightfoot 2010, 90).

In 1943, Katharine Cook Briggs began developing an inventory of personality known as the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers with Myers 1995, xiii). The inventory is underpinned by Jungian theory that contends that there are four principal psychological functions by which the individual experiences the world: sensation, intuition, feeling and thinking, with one of these four functions being dominant most of the time. The inventory is used to measure psychological preferences in how individuals perceive the world and make decisions. Isabelle Briggs Myer, the daughter of Katherine and co-creator of the system, was convinced that the inventory could help overcome “misunderstandings among generally well-intention people” and lead to “greater cooperation and harmony” (Myers with Myers 1995, xiv).

The Enneagram, which is a study of nine basic types of people, was introduced to Europe in the 1920s and arrived in the US in the 1960s, where it was adapted by religious seekers, including Catholics. Religious who attended retreat houses in the US were instrumental in introducing this psychospiritual approach to Australia. The Enneagram serves as a guide for self-understanding and development and has its aim in maximising the well-being and relationships of the person. The classificatory system provides an opportunity for learning how the individual thinks, feels and experiences, leading to the discovery of a personality type—an understanding that is looked upon as important for improving relationships (Rohr and Ebert 2009).<sup>7</sup>

These psychospiritual approaches presented a view of the individual self as having a range of subjectivities, challenging the hegemony of the collective person and a related homogenous subjectivity. They indicated a

far greater differentiation in the human person than was acknowledged or accepted in the hierarchical Church. The Jungian archetypes of anima and animus, for example, deflected from the external categories of male and female and, instead, positioned these respective characteristics within the individual. The MBTI and the Enneagram were similar in effect and challenged, for example, the minimal category of a woman as wife and mother, traditionally characterised as a domestic caretaker and nurturer. A person could now, for example, view herself as a “Questioner”: code for being a “discoverer of new ideas . . . objective, questioning, and interested in exploring things in detail” (Rohr and Ebert 2009, 115). Or, alternatively, she could identify as an “ENFJ,” code for extraverted feeling with introverted intuition (Quenk 2009, 20).

The introduction of psychospiritual knowledges has made it possible for Innovative Catholics to move away from predetermined roles to self-understanding as a prerequisite for development or achievement. One respondent, Catherine, spoke of her excitement at learning the Enneagram. *It helped me move on from the rigors and trials of being a woman. I recognised the strengths and weaknesses of my personality, and I was excited by that. I also learnt to accept that others could be different and had their own struggles. It was so freeing.* By recognising aspects of the self, an individual could be more conscious of personal compulsions and biases as well as those of others. Sophie, who was once a Religious, recalled how, after doing the Enneagram, she and the other sisters would happily refer to each other by their Enneagram number, presumably because it was a liberating experience. In creating a more complex awareness of the human condition, Innovative Catholics could revise their identities and make ethical decisions about their lives in relation to others who were now understood to be multifaceted beings. Rather than just looking to Church authorities for direction, they could now draw on the support of alternative religious advisors and their self-knowledge to navigate new pathways for their lives.

### **Pope John Paul and “the Person”**

A conservative constituency in the Church was not well disposed to the council or post-conciliar novelty. Traditionalists were troubled by alternative sources of authority in the individual self, believing they were a threat to the stability of the Church (Arbuckle 1993, 49). Some older laity, newly arrived migrants and the socially dislocated wanted to retain the assurance of priestly paternalism, the comfort of previous ritual arrangements and the certainty and security of a static Church. Some priests also found the post-conciliar changes discomfiting. They were expected to retain a celibate lifestyle while revising the way they should collaborate with women and laymen, presupposing skills they might not have had (Anderson 2012, 29). Vatican Curialists viewed post-conciliar innovations as calamitous and contrary to “the Faith.” They believed that fidelity to Christ and Church meant

upholding long-established structures and rules. They objected to the conciliar revisions of collegiality, spontaneity and subsidiarity, and they criticised bishops who gave licence to local Catholics to make pastoral discernments and cultural adjustments (Hellwig 2003, 127).

Many conservative believers envisaged an end to their concerns when Pope John Paul was elected in 1978. The Pope brought with him a set of beliefs that were vitalised by a unique combination of clerical and Polish influences (Collins 1986, 154–176). On the one hand, he considered these beliefs had served as a beacon of hope during the Soviet communist regime, leading him to believe that the intersections between religion and culture held a people together. On the other hand, he was concerned about the encroachment of secularisation, which he thought was the result of atheistic governance. Moreover, he identified these types of disassociations from religion with “horizontalism” (Hebblethwaite 1991). The doctrine of “horizontalism” can be defined as a demand for democratic engagement and striving for consensus by the people for the people, in contrast to one that insists on (religious) hierarchies making decisions for the people. This redistribution imperilled the relationship between a mediated, otherworldly God and “mankind,” and, hence, was to be corrected wherever it was to be found. The Pope also identified this threat within the Church, where efforts were being made by reformist-minded Catholics to disperse power collectively and in a more democratic fashion (Hebblethwaite 1991).

Pope John Paul not only drew on the traditional and legal sources of papal authority to administer the Church, he also invested his own personality with governing authority, as was reflected in his unique perceptions about religion and society and magnified through his extensive travels. Over the years, the Pope travelled to 129 countries and combined with 143 trips within Italy; he covered a total distance equivalent to circumnavigating the earth 28 times (Vatican Information Service 2005). Wherever he went it became a media event, wherein he used his personalist style to work a crowd and banter with the audience (Collins 1997). In these personalised engagements, the Pope communicated the distinctive reality and worth of the human person. These connections were underpinned by the belief that the human was a subject experiencing his or her acts and inner happenings who was able “to reflect the entirety of the human condition . . . to form the concept of self in relation to others and to the world (Coughlin 2003, 67). Furthermore, the Pope considered that this ideal of the human condition transcended history and culture and, thus, had a metaphysical quality. The fullness of humanity, accordingly, could be elevated, purified and perfected if the laws which came from God were observed and which were essentialised in the collective person (Collins 1986, 168–169).

Pope John Paul communicated his personalist view of the human condition regularly, especially through his writings. During his pontificate he wrote 14 encyclicals, 14 apostolic exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions, 42 apostolic letters and 28 *Motu proprio*<sup>8</sup> in addition to hundreds of other



messages and letters (Vatican Information Service 2005). One particular example is that of the Holy Thursday letters written between 1979 and 2005. In these annual addresses to clergy, he sought to personalise connections between himself and his “brother priests,” the effect of which re-established a clear separation between clergy and laity. Another example is found in his addresses to women. “I would now like to *speak directly to every woman*, to reflect with her on the problems and the prospects of what it means to be a woman in our time [original emphasis]” (John Paul II 1995). Structurally, however, women were to be confined to tradition, as pronounced in the encyclical, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (Priestly Ordination). In this document, the Pope wrote, “I declare that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitely held by all the faithful,” the latter an idiom for the laity (John Paul II 1994). During his pontificate, condemnation was also levelled at those who cultivated an alternative view of the interior person. Psychospiritual practices, for instance, were strongly criticised for introducing perceived contradictions and confusions to Christianity. The Enneagram, for example, was faulted for promoting “an ambiguity in the doctrine and the life of the Christian faith” (Pontifical Council for Culture 2003).

Pope John Paul effectively directed his personalist view to restoring the collective person, that is, a person who knows him- or herself in relation to an established community and hierarchy. The Pope considered the turn towards exploring the interior of the individual was detrimental to social order, and, as well, it left the human person without the help of a paternalistic Church and a transcendent God (Hebblethwaite 1991, 447–456). As “*il Papa*” (Italian for both Pope and father), which he was often called, he took seriously the idea that every person was a child of God for whom he had earthly and paternal responsibility. However, this arrangement was one that was contrary to the concerns of Western Catholicism, where religion and culture had been disconnected centuries earlier in Church-State divisions (Collins 1986, 157–158, 169). The view of the Pope also contradicted efforts made by Innovative Catholics who were trying to adapt the person to attain greater consonance between religion and society.

### Cardinal Ratzinger and “the Person”

In 1981, Pope John Paul appointed Cardinal Ratzinger to the premier position of Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). This curial office, which is charged with promoting and safeguarding faith and morals, is considered the most powerful in the Vatican. In this role, Cardinal Ratzinger was to protect doctrine and guard against error by monitoring the works and actions of those who held teaching positions in the worldwide Church (Reese 1996, 143). During his tenure as prefect, he defended conciliar interpretations which prioritised spiritual purification of existing religious ideas over and against those which were concerned with applying religious responses to actual difficulties and real-life experiences (Rausch 2009). The ahistorical

approach has a pertinent example in his concept of the human person, and as he advanced in an essay, titled “Retrieving the Tradition: Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology” (Ratzinger 1990).

Ratzinger introduces his understanding of the human condition with an exegesis on a Johannine text, which provides a basis on which to assert the a priori character of the person. “It did not simply grow out of mere human philosophising,” writes Ratzinger, “but out of the interplay between philosophy and the antecedent given of faith, especially Scripture” (1990, 439). Ratzinger went on to bolster this view in a theology of the Trinity: “God is *“una substantia-tres personae”* (Latin for one substance, three persons). Accordingly, it took centuries to penetrate and digest the metaphysical condition of the person, with this revelation first being recognised by Greek poets and early Christian writers. These forebears identified that God was constantly in dialogue as both one (in the plural sense of *we* and *us*) and as three separate persons (God, Son and Spirit). In this abstract thought, the God, who is one, is transcendent, universal and eternal and, without lessening the character of God as one, God as three are also distinctive persons in unity. In grounding this theological synthesis in ancient origins, Ratzinger could confidently say that the idea of the collective person was given and fixed in a strongly bounded community.

Ratzinger then turned his attention to the individual, claiming that such a unit, in being autonomous, remained an incomplete person because there is no bond of communication and therefore no faith, for faith “[brings] the personal phenomenon into view” (1990, 445). He contends that Christ said, “Without me you can do nothing”; there is no permit given “to form the substance of the closed self.” In the theology of Ratzinger, an individual person cannot claim authority for his or her own actions. The incomplete person can only take direction from the authority of Christ, who accordingly, “cannot do anything of himself” for he is “*in* total relativity toward him (the Father), and constitutes nothing but relativity toward him. . . . [T]hey are one” [original emphasis] (1990, 445). The ideal person is constantly directed to the frame of reference as communicated in *una substantia-tres personae*.

Ratzinger emphasised the triune nature of the human person by asserting the communitarian *we* and criticising the *I-thou* relationship—the latter being the mode of relating the modern person commonly uses.

In Christianity there was not simply a dialogical principle in the modern sense of a pure *I-thou* relationship, neither on the part of the human person that had its place in the historical *we* that bears it; nor was there such a mere dialogical principle on God’s part who is, in turn, no simple *I* but the *we* of Father, Son, and Spirit. There is no pure *I* nor pure *you*, there can be only a greater *we*. (1990, 453)

Ratzinger asserts that not even God can be understood as merely an *I* and that God is completed in *we*. Thus, he concludes that an *I-thou* relationship

is an insufficient representation of Christianity. It is only in the collective *we* that the person can fully attain a relation in unity. A pure *you*, on the other hand, is reductive because it renders the *you* as an object rather than as a subject, leaving *you* incomplete and alienated.

Ratzinger concluded the essay with an assertion that the Trinitarian concept “was one of the momentous developments of the Western Church” but that today, the concept of the person had deviated so far in the direction of *I* that it has lost sight not only of the *you* but also of the *we* that opened up to *personal reality* (1990, 454). Similarly, in this configuration of relation, the type of thought associated with modern reason had also blurred eternal reason. In this work, Ratzinger displayed a resolute keenness to challenge the prevailing concept of the autonomous and rational individual who, even in connection to the second person of *you*, could retain singularity. It was his contention that it is only in the givenness of the communitarian *we* that the human person can claim completeness.

### The Human Person: Contradictions and Consequences

The way in which Popes John Paul and Benedict located the concept of person in a strongly bounded communitarian *we* proved difficult for Innovative Catholics as young adults. They found themselves, on the one hand, having to submit to being a collective person in an established community and hierarchy. On the other hand, in secular society, they were expected to draw on the sources of the individual self to create their own identity and status. Some responded to such dissonance, over time, by revising their understanding of the human condition. They drew from the council documents those notions that emphasised the subjective capacity of the person to discern the moral life and linked those interpretations to religious service and social life. This revision also led many to reassess their involvement in the hierarchal Church, with some continuing to maintain their weekly observance in attending Mass but, at the same time, distancing themselves ideologically from the dictates of the clergy.

Some others put an end to their participation in the hierarchical Church. Anne’s account is typical:

*The parish that I have been most involved in started out as forty people meeting at the public school hall. We eventually built a parish and then a school. . . . There was a lot of me invested in that community. I was very involved in all aspects of the Church. I was on the pastoral council, in youth groups, in liturgy, in teaching in the school. . . . But everything has changed. A new priest came in, and the parish dissolved. The liturgy team dissolved, the pastoral council dissolved—all of that. . . . And I am no longer involved.*

In her narrative, Anne makes mention of an objective *me*, that which gives form to the self in materiality, sociality and spirituality (Spiro 1993). Anne

as a *me* knew herself through the satisfaction she had gained from her involvement in the parish. But when she could no longer invest herself as an *I* and know herself as a *me*, she found it difficult to experience a sense of fulfilment and sustain a connection to her faith community. In fact, her subjective ties with the parish quite literally dissolved.

Some are bitter about the dominating pressures imposed on them by the hierarchy, believing it was these that forced them to sever valued associations. Michael, for instance, had made significant personal sacrifices to bring about conciliar changes, interpreted by him to mean that the hierarchical Church should divest itself of “selfish attributes” (Turner 2009, 184). But his efforts were subsequently undermined, the blame for which he rests on the shoulders of recent Popes. *JPII and BXVI, who inherited the mantle of totalitarian thinking that was so influential in their homelands during their youth, cannot see that they themselves think and act in the ways of totalitarian overlords.* Innovative Reformers like Michael consider that these Popes have abandoned the project of updating the Church in ways that integrate Enlightenment principles with Catholic thinking and teaching. Luke, a priest who has given five decades of pastoral service, lamented, *[the Popes have] wrecked us really.*

Some like Ruth have worked through their anger and grief and have adopted a prophetic stance”

*The Gospels finish with the empty tomb and with women outside the empty tomb. And the angel says to the women, “He (Jesus Christ) is not here. Go back to where you came from, and there you will find him.” And that is my inspiration. We live in the times after the resurrection. We are the people on the other side of the empty tomb. It is empty. The Church is not there. Go back to where you belong, back to your homes. And that’s where you will find him. You will find him where you belong.*

Ruth considers her religion is undergoing a significant transition and that the current model of Church faces an inevitable demise. She considers that the necessary pioneering work has to happen at the grassroots. It is in this space where they can freely practise *I-you* relationships, where the *me* is realised most fully through the giving and therefore relational *I*. For her, the destiny of Catholicism is utopian in dimension and not merely reducible to ensuring the longevity of the hierarchical Church.

## Concluding Remarks

From their anti-structural position, Innovative Catholics continue to revise the human condition to overcome divergent concepts of the person. Earlier in their religious formation, they accepted the idea of the collective person, but religious and social changes have prompted them to explore the concept of the individual self. The Church, too, at the Second Vatican Council,

revised the notion of the human condition in an acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and the subjective character of relations.

Innovative Catholics were invigorated by the approach of the council to personhood because it resonated with the revisions that they themselves were making in their entry to society. They subsequently gave considerable thought to the human condition and identified rational, emotional and psychospiritual elements of the individual self. In factoring rational knowledge into their religious perspectives, they granted greater individuation to the human person. In exploring psychospirituality, they expanded their awareness of diversity in humanity which they acknowledged in their egalitarian ideals and practices. The overall result was that Innovative Catholics began claiming personal authority for determining moral and spiritual pathways and having a preference for subjective relationships.

The emphasis Innovative Catholics placed on greater individuation and enhanced participation was, however, rejected by Popes John Paul and Benedict. The preference of John Paul was for a personalist approach within a traditional or objective moral framework, which worked to reinstate the collective person and restore inequalities in the hierarchical Church. Benedict stressed the importance of a communitarian *we* while criticising *I-you* arrangements favoured by modern citizens. The resulting constraints impacted significantly on Innovative Catholics, but they were not prepared to withdraw from their endeavours to accommodate individuality, diversity and parity. In the next chapter, I consider how they negotiated the consequence of their search in their being shunted to the margins of their Church, where they gave increased focus to the individual self.

## Notes

- 1 The Protestant work ethic, as advanced by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, emphasises hard work, frugality and diligence as a constant display of a Christian's salvation in contrast to the Catholic focus upon religious attendance, Confession and reception of the Sacraments.
- 2 The priesthood offered men a full range of ritual powers, which were (and still are) not made available to women.
- 3 This new technology was introduced to Australia in 1956 and made available in all states and territories by 1962.
- 4 The Young Christian Worker movement was the result of efforts made in 1912 by Father (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn to train workers to evangelise and to help them adjust to the work conditions in offices and factories. The organisation flourished in subsequent decades. They are known for using the formula "see-judge-act."
- 5 The event of the original Pentecost is recounted in the Bible, Acts 2:1–6.
- 6 Wisdom traditions are found in religion, as in the contemplative traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Vedanta, Daoism and Sufism.
- 7 The different personality types of the Enneagram can be referred to as: the Perfectionist, the Helper, the Achiever, the Romantic, the Observer, the Questioner, the Adventurer, the Asserter and the Peacemaker.

- 8 *A motu proprio* (Latin for “on his own impulse”) is a document issued by the Pope on his own initiative and personally signed by him. When issued by the Pope, a *motu proprio* may be addressed to the whole Church, to part of it, or to some individuals (Cross and Livingstone 2005, 1127).

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### 3 Revising the Self

*The Church does not allow you to be yourself. It demands you be Catholic.*

—Des

*The cultivation of an interior life is . . . a necessity for today's Christians.*

—Joan

*I started reading academically respectable analyses that showed the merit of positions other than that of the Church. There was scope for some [reactionary] letters to the editor, but these were also considered. It was during this exposure I started to understand the supremacy of the personal conscience. It dawned on me that I had beaten myself up unnecessarily for decades.*

—Paul

In the borderlands of the hierarchical Church, Innovative Catholics, like Des, Joan and Paul, engage in introspection, exploring troubling experiences and agitating questions. Their changed circumstance has prompted them to re-evaluate their position not only in relation to the Church but also to society. They question the preference of recent Popes for the collective person while examining the secular-favoured, autonomous individual. One result is a capacity to resituate themselves as progressive religious citizens. Another is a revised concept of the person who is concerned to broaden and develop connections in religion and society and with the environment.

#### **The Social Production of the Reflexive Self**

Innovative Catholics, who in finding themselves marginalised, commonly experience grief and isolation; they feel deeply the dissonance between their espoused values and those of the hierarchical Church. The sense of loss and alienation typically prompts an interior dialogue, and this having a conversation with one's own self is referred to in the social sciences as reflexivity. These people, like other modern citizens, have the reflexive capacity to observe relationships and structures and their impact on the self. They,

then, process their two-way examination through an interior discussion. Such dialogue can potentially lead to dynamic change. By incorporating new information, they can recompose how they understand themselves in relation to others in the world.

The emphasis on this internal mode of thinking has a wider explanation in the social changes brought about by the Enlightenment. In this eighteenth-century movement, philosophers, who were public intellectuals and not members of the clergy, began to critically analyse and question the major premises upon which Western civilisation had based its beliefs. Relatedly, and just prior to the Enlightenment, Newton created calculus and produced a theory on universal gravitation which would provide the framework of the scientific revolution. This theory helped to prove heliocentrism, the model of Earth and other planets orbiting the sun, and disprove many religious and traditional beliefs: It was these ideas that influenced the Enlightenment philosophers.

Anthony Giddens, a sociologist, explains that the philosophers sought to partly challenge the circumscribed thinking of religious dogma and related habits and customs with the certitude of reason and analysis (1991, 21). They argued that authority should not be invested in kings and Popes, nor should it be called to account by an otherworldly God. Instead, it should be located in intellectual knowledge tested by doubt. In application of this method, questions were to be asked about what should be included in a reconstructed foundation for society. These assessments were, furthermore, to be always open to revision so that new theories or facts might be accommodated. The incorporation of doubt into this method, nonetheless, undermined the certainty of all knowledge, with the resulting suspicion of objective claims or fixed knowledge leading to reflexivity. By concentrating thinking and discussing on the self, the individual could revise the human condition without having to take into account the constraints of tradition and culture.

The emphasis on the uncertainty of knowledge became particularly prominent after World War II. Many recognised that science had been instrumental in two of the greatest atrocities known to humanity: Nazis using technology to “process” Jews and Western powers attacking the Japanese with atomic bombs. Since then, Western society has given scrutiny to claims made by reason by reflecting upon its historical position, taking into account a myriad of objections, contradictions and consequences of ongoing developments (Beck 1992). Indeed, individuals are constantly pressured to give considerable time and energy to “mastering” complex circumstances, requiring them to make “consequential decisions” (Giddens 1991, 143).

Christianity was also heavily criticised in the aftermath of the war for not having been a sufficient moral force to prevent the appalling violence (Bokenkotter 2004, 481–483). The hierarchical Church subsequently shifted from its strongly held position of orthodoxy to one that was more humble, as was reflected in the Second Vatican Council. Instead of maintaining its customary defensive posture against the world, as exemplified in

claims to absolute truth and invoking anathemas, the council encouraged a missionary mandate of dialogue and engagement with modern society. It also demonstrated this attitude and approach within the Church, as shown by the council in its support of consultation, collaboration and creativity (Bokenkotter 2004, 393–395).

Nonetheless, the reduction of certitude was resisted by conservative believers. They were uncomfortable with ambiguity and compromise and looked for a tangible foundation from which to steer their lives in a rapidly changing world. It was a need and strong demand which Popes John Paul and Benedict would attend. The Popes sought to mend the evident fissure between those who sought external direction and those who engaged reflexivity by asserting the certainty of their position. The implication of their determination was that those Catholics given to practising reflexivity would not be allowed to touch upon core elements of Church teaching needed to sustain its static view of the human condition.

### **Accommodating Reflexivity in Religious Practice**

In their youth, Innovative Catholics accepted doctrines as found in the *Catechism* and which included tenets of the Creed, Ten Commandments, Beatitudes and sacraments. These rules and rituals had been produced by generations of clergy and had proved particularly useful for maintaining morality and authority structures. The timeless and true premises were received by these young people as objective realities and considered plausible. Back then, *life was so straightforward, clear, well-defined, logical, documented, explainable. . . . Life was so much simpler within the walls* (Chuchman 2015).

Nevertheless, the new social conditions required Innovative Catholics to engage with knowledge reflexively. When they went to university in the 1960s and 1970s, they started to engage critically with Church teachings. Liam explains succinctly this turnaround in thought processes: *I had to learn from the inside out instead of being told from the outside in*. John's reflection is also insightful: *Church gave me so many answers; life outside, so many questions* (Chuchman 2015). Innovative Catholics were confronted with two conflicting notions of the human condition. On the one hand, they were expected to have an inclination, bolstered by doctrine, towards being a collective person. On the other hand, they were to expand the self according to practices utilised in modern reason. Each individual was to consciously make sense of things, apply logic, establish and verify facts, and change or justify beliefs, activities and institutions based on new or existing information (Kompridis 2000). They were required to exercise reason autonomously so as to discover and live according to the basic principles of knowledge and action without divine support or intervention.

Contradictory notions were a source of confusion and difficulty for Innovative Catholics: *Life outside the institution seem[ed] so ambiguous,*

*unclear, amorphous, scary, undefined* (Chuchman 2015). The dissonance was particularly felt when they began to associate with work colleagues who had different religious and ethnic heritages or when they married non-Catholics. Gemma, a newly graduated teacher, was posted to a non-Catholic school and married a Protestant. These new affinities demanded openness to an alternative understanding of the human condition, and so, *I started to question and think for myself*. She set aside religious expectations and reconsidered who she was in relation to these people. In this meaning-making project, she transformed her ideas about herself and new-found relationships. As a *Church goer, but free thinker*, she said, *this is my faith, and I don't agree with some of the hierarchy, and my conscious says what I'm doing is right. Today, I've got a lot of great friends who are not Catholic, who are good people, and I think you don't have to be Catholic to be a good person*. Her subjective knowledge not only expanded the self and the range of valued relationships; it empowered her to relate with her spouse and colleagues on a more mutual basis.

The cultivation of the self facilitated a change in the way some regarded and practised their religion. Claire remarked, *I didn't question anything until I went to university. I think that was the defining point in my own personal spiritual journey but also in being suddenly awakened to the things that went on*. She had been earlier encouraged by the declaration made at the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, “that every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent” (Vatican II 1965, 227–228). That statement was interpreted subjectively: It meant that she as a woman would no longer be discriminated against. In the post-conciliar era, she had felt privileged to serve as a lector and Eucharistic minister, but the fact that women continued to be positioned primarily as wives and mothers in the hierarchical Church rankled, as did the prohibition on the ordination of women. She was frustrated by the idea that she as a woman was not regarded equal to a man or that she as an individual could not be viewed as someone other than what the ascribed category dictated.

Claire found one solution to her dilemma of how to construct her own self in her study of the social sciences. She had previously accepted that natural law was the objective basis of morality, but a thoroughgoing reflexivity produced another perspective. She now looks upon natural law as a social construct created by particular men who have subverted and institutionalised the biology of women as tradition. Claire has since revised her place in the hierarchical Church, asserting that she as a human being possesses full personhood. In this challenge, she not only contests the established idea that only male clergy provide social commentary, she also asserts the validity of the authority of the self.

Sean took a similar approach to that of Claire. Through development of the reflexive self, he transformed his ideas about being a priest and how he

was to relate to impoverished parishioners in Africa. He went about that change by combining a Christian concept of *building the Kingdom of God* with the educational methods of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher who was a leading advocate of critical pedagogy.<sup>1</sup> Sean said that Freire *taught that education is either designed to maintain the existing situation, imposing on people the values and culture of the dominant class, or education is destined to liberate people, helping them to be creative, critical, active and responsible members of society*. He implemented the principles of Freire to overcome *hot issues* resulting from endemic poverty, requiring him and his fellow parishioners to *stop; reflect critically upon what they were doing; get new information, skills, and training and then plan action*.

For Sean, the result of this reflexive process was that *it was no longer about dispensing information to people; it was about believing that people could with some assistance work out practical ways to change their situation for the better*. In this approach, he minimised his role as paternal overseer and expanded his connections with the laity, resulting in outcomes of personal and shared growth. Together, he and parishioners used reflexivity to resist the idea that one size religion fits all and every occasion. In applying modern knowledge to matters of faith, they began viewing religion as having a connection with and being a response to local circumstances in modern contexts, which they were required to negotiate and navigate.

### Reflexivity and the Revision of Images

Innovative Catholics commonly distance themselves from traditional images that deflect from the individual self. They remain aloof, for example, from the image of the *Church as family*, which, conventionally, calls forth idealised and comforting images of warmth, safety, loyalty and love and conveys the idea that members will be protected and cared for (Rigney 2001, 15). This message has some underlying assumptions in that a member will willingly incorporate him- or herself among Catholic kin and that he or she has an accompanying felt-closeness (Dowling 2002, 60). But this is often not the experience of Innovative Catholics. As one research respondent said, after having been pilloried by senior clergy for his reformist views, *the Church is definitely not my mother* [original emphasis]. Another said, *Institutions never love you*. Innovative Catholics experience the hierarchical Church not as a welcoming, family-like community and hierarchy but as an organisation and bureaucracy protective of its own interests.

Some have moved away from the traditional idea of the family because their experience and knowledge of this social unit have taken a different course. A few have suffered incest and domestic violence; others have separated, divorced and remarried—the former which was previously not spoken of in Church circles to protect reputations ergo social order, the latter often condemned. Even those whose marriage has been ongoing and “successful” have produced contrasting images of family, as did Ruth. *You’ve*

*got to grow up at some stage, and you move out of the nest. And sometimes your parents push you out. . . . [The Church] has forced us out because it is so out of touch, but we learn to respect what we have been given. . . . And, you know, I am flourishing.*

Innovative Catholics have been expected by society to create nuclear families constituted in revised notions of partnership and parenthood. Husbands and wives are now viewed as equal partners, and as parents, they are expected to exercise joint care of their offspring. This idea of family has also resulted in significant numbers residing away from their kinfolk, as do their children, many of whom no longer attend Church services. Innovative Catholics have since produced a refurbished notion of family which requires of its members a certain maturity. Each person is expected to develop the self and exercise a certain degree of independence. Thus, the image of *Church as family* has limited significance. It does not have the ability to accommodate an expanded individual consciousness, dynamic contexts and a revision of how kin relationships are to be conducted.

Other familial images, which some are uncomfortable with or reject, are those of "Father" and "child." The hierarchical Church is socially organised in a patriarchy, and in this system, Father has supreme authority: God, Pope, bishop and priest are all referred to as Father. In each and every use of the salutation, the implication is that the subordinate addressee will take on the posture of a submissive child who is to believe that *Father knows all/best*. Priests who address other priests also and often maintain familial assignation and position by saluting each other as Father. Innovative Catholics view these images as suppressing the individual self, preventing a person from using their reason and limiting the scope of relationships. They tend to understand and experience the image of Father as authoritarian and geared to maintaining existing religious and social arrangements.

Innovative Catholics do not look to a paternal God and clergy for patronly direction; rather, they desire a religion that produces images that acknowledge their human development. *We seemed to have spent so much of our lives like children being told*, said Liam. *That's probably an attitude that has been inculcated into us, that we really don't know what we're doing and we need someone to tell us, and there have always been people happy to tell somebody else. But the end result is that the culture we grew up in as Catholics, well . . . we need to be moving on. The faith journey needs to start being a personalised one, but the Church hasn't readily allowed that. In fact it seems to have actively discouraged it.* Liam thinks that recent Popes have perpetuated the ignorance of its members, resulting in stunted religious and moral growth. Brian concurs. *So much emphasis is placed on the line of Jesus, about suffer the little children, to the point where we have been blinded to his larger message which simply said, grow up!* Innovative Catholics, most of whom are parents, grandparents and professionals, assert that the maintenance of traditional notions prohibits their inclusion as mature adults or individuals. They reject images that fail to acknowledge

the human capacity for achieving a level of development above and beyond that which is expected of an obedient child who non-consciously accepts a rigid and externalised set of directions from patriarchal figures.

In their attempt to cultivate self-awareness, some accommodate an evolutionary model of the human condition which asserts the idea that the self should ideally change over time. The notion of dynamism is implied in Mary's account, *God picks up this child, and carries the child, and allows the child to feel all the warmth and the love. And then you are put down and made to walk.* In this image, God is a parent God who establishes rules and guidelines for children to follow. This God has a more democratic inclination in that such a divine character is more receptive to questions and, in the case of failure, is more nurturing, forgiving and supportive, rather than being judgemental and punishing. Such a God wants actual children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, self-regulated as well as cooperative (Baumrind 1991). Such preparation is, furthermore, directed towards enabling the individual self to relate with others as a complex and capable adult.

A favoured image of Innovative Catholics and one that reflects their altered social status is that of *adult thinking Catholic*. The image is inspired by their involvement as modern citizens in democratic society, where personal and local determinations and sentiments are prioritised over an ethic of dominance and universal or abstract values. Individuals are given latitude to say no, to speak their mind, and to have their own ideas, concepts, goals and personalities. It is a prerogative that Liam alludes to in his attempt to reconcile past childlike associations with his endeavour to live a productive adulthood. *So belatedly in my life, I feel more adult in my relationships. There are many ways in which I am still a child, but even a child has got an adult [as in] an independence of thought [and in] discernment that allows us to make decisions for one's self. I have found that exciting [to be] given insights into things, not because I have been told but because there have been some inner changes.* Liam makes use of the reflexive self to move from a position of passivity and personal compromise to one of active participation in the social project.

The motif of an obedient child was of great concern to Pope Benedict. "In the last few decades," he said, "the expression *grown-up faith* has become a slogan. . . . [It is] often used in relation to the attitudes of those who no longer pay attention to what the Church and its pastors say" [original emphasis] (Mickens 2009). He further criticised how "expressing oneself against the Magisterium of the Church is presented as a sort of *courage*, and that it was adherence to doctrine and non-conformism to the pattern of today's world that was really courageous." He concluded, "*grown-up faith* . . . [which] follow[s] the prevailing winds and currents of the time is *childish*" [original emphasis] (Mickens 2009). When Pope Benedict asserted that Catholics were not to claim a "*grown-up faith*," he implied that they do not have the wherewithal to make decisions for themselves, and any attempt

to do otherwise was to misbehave as a child might to a parent. Instead, Catholics were required to give unquestioning loyalty to, and rely on, papal teachings and canon law in every circumstance and situation. They were to accept that they had neither the right nor the freedom to differ from *the Holy Father*, the Pope; they were not to assume the latitude to self-regulate and negotiate modern complexities.

Innovative Catholics remain determined to explore what it means to be an *adult* religious citizen, an image which they use to foil the infantilising consequences of patriarchy. In referring to themselves as *adult thinking Catholics*, they assert that images of change and ideas of maturity should be included in ecclesial teachings or guidelines. They also imply that their thinking should be considered and taken seriously by senior clergy, given that they are contributing substantial thought as to how their religion and society might be reconciled.

### Determining the Authentic Self

After having been aroused from uncritically accepting what Popes have claimed for the human condition, Innovative Catholics assume personal responsibility for putting into practice what they think and believe to be authentic. Their challenge is also similar to that of the modern citizen. Charles Taylor, an eminent philosopher, argues that for the modern individual, the process of becoming authentic involves creativity and construction as well as discovery and originality (1991, 66). But the quest for what is genuine often contests what the Popes have declared to be true, as is well illustrated by the following narrative. Ruth had a deep-seated desire to become a priest. She recounted how, when she was a small child and went to Mass, *my brother was allowed to be an altar boy, [but] I wasn't. . . . And I would have loved it. I knew the Latin; I could say it better than him. He was offhand, he had to be dug out of bed, sent up to the Church, and he couldn't have cared less.* The desire for priesthood stayed with Ruth, but it remained stifled by the Popes' insistence on an exclusively male priesthood (see John Paul II 1994).

Nonetheless, Ruth maintained her reflexive project. *Instead of being crushed by that*, Ruth said, *I thought, no, this is real for me. I have to bring about, not the [Church] framework, but the Scriptures . . . into dialogue with my life.* Ruth drew on biblical sources, which record the leadership roles of women, to imaginatively define and assert her authentic self. She translated her thoughts into action and expressed herself as a priest who ministers to her husband and children and, later, in a Eucharistic community which she co-founded. She understood that she not only “made” bread for her family but also “broke” it; it was a celebration that she gave concrete form to in an open house of hospitality each Sunday evening.

Some are also keen to overcome those aspects of Church practice which they deem inauthentic. They consider that these dubious performances



not only retain calcifications of a past religious disposition, they also disguise truths about the individual. Miriam was confronted with these truth-denying effects when her parish priest, with whom she had worked closely, left his post unexpectedly. He had previously maintained the façade of a celibate priesthood, which had secured his priestly reputation, ministry, domestic security and fraternal association. But all of that had given way to a love relationship. *[His leaving] shook me up quite a bit*, said Miriam. *[It] caused me to reassess lots of things*. One consequence of her expanded self-awareness was that of severing her association with the local parish. *He [the priest] championed and encouraged lay leadership in the parish and was a good spiritual director. The new priest didn't have the intelligence, nor did he have leadership qualities, so everything went back to being bland and uninspiring. Every time I went to Mass I felt angry, angry at the lack of inclusive language in the liturgy, angry because I felt we were being treated like children. So I left for my own peace of mind*. Miriam considers her revised religious perspective to be authentic. She still looks for leadership and direction but not at the expense of her adult, individual self, characterised in part by her capacity to critically think about what is being said and implied. Today, Miriam finds these qualities in rudimentary communities: She participates in a meditation community and two “catholic” cyber communities. Within these relationships, she is able to knit together her intellectual acumen and daily practices of meditation and Scripture reflection.

Miriam's quest for the authentic self has had another outcome in her reconciliation with her former parish priest. On occasion they meet to discuss life. When I asked her what had changed in their relationship, she said, *He's more humble in that he no longer has an air of authority, while I am more confident to follow Christ in a way I think is more authentic. . . . We treat each other as equals; he listens to me, and I listen to him. We don't always agree, but we respect one another*. Her reflexivity has had a personal consequence in the evolution of the self. Miriam attributes more worth to her own self, resulting in increased confidence in her ability to reason and assert her opinion. This expansion of the self has also produced a greater understanding between the former priest and herself. These two individuals no longer submerge themselves in predetermined roles; instead, they generate genuine communication. In making the self visible in conversation, Miriam and the former priest give moral performances that are deemed by each other to be authentic.

Innovative Catholics recognise authenticity to be a marker of personal religion, which has implications for how truth is to be constituted. But their coming to this revised position also has a background in the Second Vatican Council, which overhauled how truth was defined, as was recorded in the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) (Vatican II 1964, 341–366). This document attempted to open the door to restoring Christian unity, advance ecumenical relationships and provide the principles for how that might be negotiated. Such outreach pressured the question of where truth

resides. Of importance to Innovative Catholics was the statement, “When comparing doctrines with one another, [theologians] should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a hierarchy of truth, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith” (1964, 354). They understand this text to mean that some beliefs are more central to the Christian faith than others and that doctrine can be re-evaluated. Some also considered the note validated debate about which teachings are to apply to their lives and the Church.

Popes John Paul and Benedict, however, perceived truth differently, arguing that, a “hierarchy of truth” does not mean a “principle of subtraction.” They were concerned that faith could be reduced to some essentials, whereas the rest was left free or even dismissed as not being significant. The “hierarchy of truth,” said Cardinal Ratzinger, “is a principle of organic structure” (Ratzinger and Schönborn 1994, 42). The official position is that the Magisterium alone has the power to define the meaning and importance of matters of faith and morals, and therefore, doctrines are to be maintained in their entirety (Doyle 2009, 104). Popes John Paul and Benedict held a monolithic and abstract view of truth which was predetermined, permanent and unalterable (*Catechism* 1994, 216). They considered themselves duty-bound as custodians of doctrine to ban the discussion of various topics which would threaten absolute truths. But one result of this position was that ideas pertaining to truth were polarised in the hierarchical Church.

From their anti-structural position, Innovative Catholics are critical of the way in which Popes uphold truth. They contest, for example, conventional interpretations of the doctrine of papal infallibility, meaning that the Pope cannot make a mistake when defining a doctrine of faith or morals for the Church. Some reject the doctrine outright. Others like Pierre take a more nuanced view, arguing, *The first thing to appreciate is that infallibility is not a charism of the Pope. It's a charism of the Church. Catholics (and not just Catholics) understand this as an assurance that the Church will not err so much as to depart entirely from the truth revealed by Christ. There may be doubt in the Church; there may be disagreement; there may be schism. But when the Church as a whole accepts a particular view, we have faith that we are inspired and guided to that view by the Spirit.* Pierre argues that the doctrine of infallibility can only apply when it has a connection to the *sensus fidelium* (Latin for “sense of the faithful”) or Church membership. Furthermore, it does not discount the exercise of reason but provides scope for pursuing the religious project with optimism and determination. Such a view also accommodates the intellectual quest of Innovative Catholics who set aside fixed notions of truth to accommodate a revised and dynamic one.

During field work, I asked a group of Innovative Meditators what they thought of the view that the Pope can hold the fullness of truth. They laughed spontaneously. Mary then said, *I think you've lost us at that point.* She went on to explain. *[In our meditation], we're pursuing an authentic mode of prayer, and whether that's Catholic dogma or not, I wouldn't have*

a clue, but truth is much bigger than whatever the Catholic hierarchy says it is. Authenticity is a defining condition of truth for these meditators, as Pauline indicated, *To thine own self be true: Therefore, you can go and love and serve the Lord. . . . And always, to my mind, authenticity will lead to what we would call moral behaviour.* Accordingly, truth is not an external verity; rather, each authentic self holds a strand of what can be determined as truth. But each filament remains isolated until that truth is communicated and accepted religiously and socially in a larger truth.

Innovative Catholics effectively challenge the assertion of Ratzinger that authentic religion stands outside of concrete realities and is removed from history and free from culture (Arbuckle 1993, 28). They, instead, contend authentic religion is to be best known in a particular time and place, where the *presence [of God]* (see chapter 8) can be seen to be working within the self and through connections with society and the environment. For them, truth cannot be exclusively possessed, nor can truth be oppositional: One individual or one group, no matter who that person or group is, cannot hold the entirety of truth. Truth is to be arrived at through discourse in the context of a relationship; it is dependent on agreement between interested parties, as further indicated by Sean: *There are two sides to every story, and then there's the truth.* Each person or group must persuade the other of their performance of truth. Truth is to be refracted in the disclosure of the authentic self to another authentic self and mutually acknowledged as such.

### **Harnessing Doubt to the Religious Quest**

The ability of Innovative Catholics to advance truth is preceded by, and relies upon, the capacity to doubt. Although the accommodation of uncertainty and vagueness may at times threaten the self, they generally consider the facility to question as integral to the religious quest. David, a Religious and advocate for the marginalised, enlightened me as to how doubt might work in relation to religious conviction. *You can't have faith if you believe in God, he said. If you believe in God, you don't need faith. Faith is when you don't believe in God.* In this comment, David refers to and rejects a traditional concept of God as a source of certitude who communicates absolute truth. In this view, there is no room for questioning or deviating from doctrines and laws under any circumstance. David considers claims for God as a synonym for certainty to be a reductive notion; it narrows and even blocks the religious path. Doubt, conversely, anticipates something greater than static claims and communicates potential for knowing more. Faith, accordingly, is a slight or partial knowledge of where the human person might venture and what might be encountered. Thus, the pursuit of truth relies on and is energised by novel insights, up-to-the-minute knowledge and intellectual advancement. In short, faith is secured in a view of the universe as being constantly in flux, implying there is potential in religion for new insights and discoveries.

Innovative Catholics, as a liminal people, recognise doubt plays an essential role in maintaining the evolutionary character of their faith. Such scepticism operates as an instrument of evaluation and adaptation, one which Kevina, a layperson, used to revitalise her faith journey: *I found myself at odds with the Church. I had doubts. I could no longer tolerate the dogmatism and intolerance. I lived with the dissonance for several years, but it became so unbearable that I sought the help of a spiritual director. She heard my doubts and lent me James Fowler's Stages of Faith (1981). I read that there are different stages of faith. I realised that my doubts stemmed from growth. I realised the conflicts were the conflicts of maturity, not of backsliding.* Kevina considers doubt to be a positive source of inspiration insofar as it plays a role in transforming the self from infantile faith to a more mature one. Such a view effectively creates a similitude between the religious quest and modern reason. Just as intellectual pursuits discover and build knowledge, so too does creative religion discern more about the human condition.

Kevina continued. *I am [now] inclined to think that religious truth and spiritual growth are inextricably bound up with unanswerable questions; our challenge is to never flag in asking them, even as we fail to find definitive answers.* She is experiencing what I found in so many Innovative Catholics: They are circumspect about doctrines that attempt to cover every contingency. They no longer accept them unthinkingly or bow to pressure to observe traditions. Instead, they consult a broad encyclopaedia of knowledge to guide them through complex life courses. In that endeavour they author their own biographies which are not directed towards an eternal past already foretold but to an expanding future still in the making.

Whereas doubt allows for spring-cleaning inherited beliefs and clearing away unwanted or irrelevant doctrines, it also forces some to determine what beliefs might fill the vacated space and how they are to be implemented. Graham, who during his career helped to build the Catholic education system, commented on what can be a perplexing task. *[There is a need for] a mature capacity to deal with doubt and to hold one's own beliefs without absolutising them or abandoning all warranted assertion in the face of nihilism and relativism* (Young cited in English 2010). He went on to say that *a lifelong critical [approach] is the only life-giving way for me to go.* Graham is wary of extreme or rigid claims made by religion and, likewise, those that are so overwhelmingly ambivalent that they inhibit the religious quest altogether. In exploring an acceptable path for the self, he manages existential doubt by resisting inflexible beliefs and rejecting those that are nebulous. In this venture, he navigates past changeless religion while feeling compelled to explore potentially viable courses in an ocean of transitory religion.

### Cultivating Emotional Reflexivity

The internal conversations and considerations of Innovative Catholics are not only constituted in reason; they are also informed by emotions. This

affective disposition influences individual considerations and shared commentary. However, the current range of emotions from which they draw has not always been available to the individual self. Around the time of the Second Vatican Council, Innovative Catholics had low levels of emotional reflexivity in that their emotions were shaped largely by their environment. When asked what emotions they predominantly expressed as young Catholics, they commonly responded with accounts of fear and guilt, as Sean did. *There was fear of God especially in Church. The Redemptorists would bang the pulpit and breathe fire and brimstone. The fear of having done something wrong would result in guilt which would drive you to Confession.* This limited range of emotional choices served to control Church membership: *God was continually watching you and calling you to account for both the good and the bad.* God effectively operated as an all-powerful, all-knowing and all-seeing policeman who would regulate their conduct. As young Catholics, their concern about their behaviour was not just confined to examining their thinking and lives; they also subscribed to a narrow range of permissible feelings to maintain conformity.

Andrew recalled how, as a young man, his emotional response to his failure to uphold sexual teachings had had a crippling effect on him. To illustrate his difficulty, he recounted how on one occasion he [*drove*] *thirty miles to Confession just to confess an impure thought. Unfortunately, I think I committed an equally serious sin on the drive home when another such impure thought reared its ugly head.* Andrew showed a strict regard for doctrine forbidding all sexual expression outside of marriage, including masturbation and having erotic fantasies. On those occasions when he could not fulfill the law exactly he would *suffer from scruples*. His failure to meet the required standard was accompanied by acute anxiety. The burden of these emotions could only be alleviated through the Sacrament of Confession where his confessor would accuse him of selfishness and sinfulness. Relief only came when the priest absolved him of his sins. Whereas the emotions of dread and fear associated with guilt ensured his loyalty to the hierarchical Church, they prevented a personal appraisal of the impact of these teachings. Andrew reported how he had suffered for decades from low self-esteem and depression. He had also experienced difficulties with making decisions about fundamental aspects of his life, particularly in the areas of sexuality and intimate relationships. He concluded that it had taken considerable effort to challenge uncomfortable emotions and foster those which produced self-confidence and self-care.

As Innovative Catholics became more involved in secular society, they were expected to develop higher levels of emotional responsiveness, which were to be directed to attending the self. They were required to cultivate their feelings and become aware of their emotions to ascertain what they as individuals had a taste for and desired. Furthermore, the historical and social conditions in which they found themselves played their part in shaping their responses. For instance, in previous generations, Catholics had turned

to an omnipotent God to alleviate a range of fears associated with disease, poverty and violence. Innovative Catholics, in contrast, were protected to an extent from these anxieties. They had access to modern medicine, which prevented or cured many physical ailments; similarly, psychiatry attended mental illness, and psychology promoted subjective well-being. Meantime, the social sciences exposed how emotions as a cultural apparatus maintained a range of hegemonies.

Sarah was one such person who responded enthusiastically to the new social conditions. In her youth, she had expressed her anger about the way in which she, all women and minorities were discriminated against in religion and society. She was *initiated into feminism, social justice [and] multiculturalism*. In her aspirations for greater social equality, she gave voice to *optimism, hope and a faith that goodness and good people can and do transform the world*. In her career as an adult educator of migrants, Sarah realised the potential and power of communicating and expressing positive emotions. She and many of her students were determined to advance themselves in society, and they did by affirming and celebrating individual achievements. Today, Sarah continues to assert the worth of individuals through her profession and advocacy for refugees and other marginalised persons. Nonetheless, the potential of her emotions has been thwarted in the hierarchical Church. She no longer identifies with her inherited religion because it continues to discriminate against women; hence, *I no longer call myself "a Catholic."*

The Second Vatican Council signalled a novel approach to emotion by introducing a new theology of sin that shifted the focus from personal shortcomings to the unconditional love of God. Catholics were to change the basis of their membership in the Church from fear and obligation to one of commitment and affection (Vatican II 1965, 210–215). This theology resonated with the aspirations of Innovative Catholics who sought to give expression to an expanded range of relationships. Maurice, a gay man and priest, could therefore say, *All love is of God, and wherever love is, God dwells*. Unconditional love as an affective state of consciousness implied radical inclusivity which, in effect, challenged traditional categories of the human person. A person could now step outside the boundaries of predetermined roles and still maintain the view that *God loves me*. In embracing the ideal that no one exists outside of the love of God, they attributed parity to all individual selves, thus lessening the efforts of Church authorities who sought to maintain the collective person.

The liberal application of the revised approach of the council to emotion was challenged by Pope John Paul (1990), who wrote at length on how the love of God was to be considered. In his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer), he stated, "The mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption is thus described as a total self-emptying which leads Christ to experience fully the human condition and to accept totally the Father's plan. This is an emptying of self which is permeated by love and expresses love."

For the Pope, a person who loves renounces “himself and everything that up to this point he considered as his own, and to make himself everything to everyone.” The corollary of this view of love is that expressions of love which do not adhere to the social order or are directed to the individual self are defective.

Pope Benedict (2005) also produced “correctives” to the focus on the individual self. In his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (Latin for “God is love”), he wrote, “Love is indeed “ecstasy”, not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.” In this view, love must not be self-seeking. Instead, it yearns to always seek the good of the other. Love, thus, demands renunciation of the self. In effect, Pope Benedict reiterated the view of his predecessor which aimed to challenge the secular ideal of the autonomous individual who is expected to focus on self-actualisation. His remedy to what he perceived as excessive concentration on the self was to return to the notion of the collective person, wherein an experience of love is what the human person receives from an external source, not what the individual can give to one’s own self.

The reinvigoration of a conventional approach to emotion, encapsulated in a view of love as unity, has been largely ignored by Innovative Catholics because their emotional reference is no longer geared to upholding those connections that sustain established categories. Instead, they express their emotions in ways that seek to enable harmonious relationships between individuals. Catherine, for instance, had learnt well the lesson in childhood that *women should exercise greater self-control than men and that they should take the lion’s share in keeping relationships together. You know, the wife should sacrifice herself for the sake of her husband, and she as mother should do the same for “his” children.* She applied this knowledge and experience to her marriage, but it proved inadequate: *I was a doormat to what he wanted out of life, and when that didn’t happen, I bore the brunt of his frustration. As was expected, I tried to keep the peace, but problems were never resolved.* Catherine recognised that her subordination, maintained by the trauma of domestic violence, frustrated her attempts to deal with difficulties in the marriage.

In due course, Catherine made the difficult decision to leave her husband and remove their children from the harmful consequences of that relationship. The events and hurt suffered contributed to her making that choice; *it was also the personal experience of pain that said enough. So, I found those painful periods, actually, were some of the most important periods for me in my life because they helped me interrupt that situation and start living.* Catherine indicated that reason, either in its religious or social forms, was not sufficient in or of itself to deal with what was happening in her marriage and family. Rather, it was the catalyst of emotion that prompted her to reject doctrines and thinking which sustained her submission as wife and mother.

She subsequently revised her own understanding of the self. Nowadays, Catherine engages in relationships where power and control are more evenly distributed, arguing that for her, this has had positive consequences for her, her former spouse and their children.

Chloe's story is also indicative of how some utilise emotion. She was once a highly successful business person who had *[drawn] on my rational side, [but] it cracked because the creativity was not being expressed*. One consequence was that she suffered from *a lot of depression and psychosis*. Another later one was that she reconfigured her life as a Religious, devoting herself to advancing eco-spirituality and pursuing eco-justice. Now, her primary goal is to communicate to others the natural value of forests and the importance of conservation and sustainable management, and her emotions feature as sources of energy and inspiration in that quest. *We have lost that wildness to the rational, but we are now, very strongly, moving into this integral consciousness, of embracing the whole. . . . Native forests need to be valued as a whole system, not just as sawed log with chipped value. Similarly, how do we value things in life? If we keep treating our resources as objects and do not appreciate their value, we are doomed*. Chloe is critical of how reason is used to objectify the natural world and challenges the resulting hegemony. These emotions are a source of imaginative knowledge and provide energy for pursuing what she as an Innovative Advocate considers important. In effect, higher levels of emotional reflexivity have inspired her to exercise personal initiative, attend things that matter, and expand the range of connections.

Some also speak of the destructive potential of emotions. Pauline, an Innovative Meditator, recounted how she had had strong emotions but has since found a way to subdue them. *If you meditate regularly . . . you can detach to some extent from the rawness of human emotion because you've got a calmer centre. . . . Five, ten years ago, I would have burst into tears and probably slammed doors and done things like that. Now, I can just go, "Oh well, let's have a cup of tea and sort this out."* Pauline has learnt to discipline her emotions in such a way that they are not overly directed to the self and, instead, work to evaluate the mutuality of relationships.

### Developing Spiritual Reflexivity

Some Innovative Catholics make specific reference to how reflexivity is informed by spirituality, which accordingly, is a component of the human person accessed through interiorly focused prayer that can yield penetrating insight. Such prayer often takes the form of meditation (see also Chapters 6 and 7) wherein practitioners quieten the rational mind and subdue emotions to create a condition for enabling penetrating discernment at the subconscious level. In the concentrated silence of interiorised prayer, such introspection aims to crystallise knowledge and experience, including the potential experience and knowledge of God.



In this process of spiritual reflexivity, important elements of the life of the individual in relationship with others are distinguished from less essential ones. Those elements are constituted in slivers of reason and emotion along with other components of experience, such as memory and imagery, and are filtered and assembled in ways that are relevant and meaningful. In effect, spiritual reflexivity aims to lead the meditator to transformative understanding, as Sean indicated. *Prayer! It is not a technique for changing the mind of God. Prayer is not a means of giving God information. Prayer is not a matter of drawing God's attention to something that we think God has been too busy to notice. . . . I like to think that prayer can change things by opening up new ways within us for God to act in our lives.* Meditative prayer yields a spiritual basis from which Innovative Catholics can navigate their life course. In plumbing the depths of the self, the meditator cultivates a capacity to resituate the self in relationship to other selves.

### **Extending Compassion**

Innovative Catholics, who in directing the thinking feeling self to others, often exercise compassion, and they do so when the affective focus on the self is shifted to the gravity of another's distress. In this scenario, some feel the sufferings or misfortunes of another, but such sentiment is not merely confined to understanding their plight, as in empathy. They often have a felt urge to do something to alleviate the situation of the sufferer, regardless of barriers which work to prevent such action. Moreover, in contradistinction to the hierarchical Church, they tend not to talk about mercy which implies wrongdoing has occurred. Thus, in the case of a merciful person, he or she is disposed to lessen or forgo the punishment due to the wrongdoer or sinner. Compassion, on the other hand, does not stand in judgement but directs deep feeling to the plight of another. For Innovative Catholics, compassion is both a sentiment and an action that operates to enhance interconnection and bring about a more harmonious sociality.

The notion of being compassionate is not simply an abstract good but is informed by historical and social circumstances. In this consideration, Innovative Catholics take their place alongside many other liberal-minded citizens who attend social and environmental inequalities. Giddens, in his analysis of the self, provides a partial explanation for this phenomenon (1991, 80–81). He argues that in the premodern era, tradition ordered social life within relatively fixed parameters, suggesting that the exercise of compassion was also similarly restrained. In late modernity, however, individuals are confronted with seemingly endless choices, which they must make without the assistance of an external authority. They are required to produce an individuated lifestyle where everyday routines are to be acted out in unique combinations. As well, these lifestyle choices must remain reflexively open to change in light of the mobile nature of society.

An Innovative Catholic is like every other citizen who is faced with the pressures of making choices. But he or she, along with some other progressive citizens, mitigates the material and social forces on the individual self by directing thoughts and feelings to those who suffer. For a variety of personal reasons, compassionate citizens refuse to restrict themselves to cultivating self-care and maintaining the boundary of the individual. Instead, they expand their consciousness to take into account the human condition of another, demonstrating willingness, often in practice, to suffer with another.

The question of what drives some to be compassionate has an answer in ideals shaped by their preference for subjective connections, as Madeline indicates:

*My upbringing was very traditional . . . Mass each week, family rosary and fish and chips every Friday night; [we had the] local PP [parish priest] to meals at our home often . . . primary/secondary/[tertiary]training all at RC institutions. Our family lived in a small, rural setting and had a strong commitment to social justice—all the swaggies knew they could get a meal at our place when they passed through; my dad was a [professional] and did a lot of work for people at no cost; my mother supported the local nuns with food, company, and driving them around to do their social and spiritual work as they trusted her capacity for confidentiality.*

Madeline eventually married a non-Catholic, and her life choices went beyond what was considered acceptable in a strongly bounded religious community. She resisted the idea that she should sacrifice love and suffer for the sake of upholding exclusionary beliefs. In that far-reaching journey, she adapted her ideas, activities and religious conviction to help with the navigation of her life course. These innovations, however, continued to attract criticism, firstly, from *my mother, now 98, [who] still holds me to account about my beliefs and actions which differ greatly these days*, and secondly, from the hierarchical Church in its *disapproval* of difference; consequently, *I've lost my faith a couple of times*.

Nonetheless, Madeline has persisted in travelling the road less travelled, describing this route as *this tectonic civilisation transition we are all in*. She moved on from attending Mass and took up what she considers more attune with her journey, namely, *meditation and contemplation and theological reflection on a daily basis*. These anti-structural religious practices not only indicate her determination to fathom complex questions about modern life, they also serve as a basis from which to make thinking-feeling connections. For example, Madeline has made deliberate choices to pursue purposeful actions that aim to alleviate suffering and hardship. *I have helped to establish community care services. . . . I'm currently involved in a compassionate communities network . . . [and] I have always volunteered locally*. As an individual, she has disciplined herself to select options that are other directed, thus lessening the demands of late modernity on the self.

Herb, an Innovative Reformer, expands on Madeline's view that compassion as a social force has its source in interiorised religious conviction: *Compassion and love in a caring community*, he asserted, *are the thick, inner core virtues of Christianity, of all religion really*. Herb considers that compassion is sourced interiorly and not as a result of submission to external direction. Thomas similarly said, *Compassion is one of the most practical manifestations of God's presence. . . . Compassion motivates me to be involved*. Thomas considers compassion is a cosmological expression that interiorly directs the self to an expanded sociality. Compassion, as a perfected use of emotion, encourages the human person to go beyond the limits of a socially disengaged self.

Dominic, a long-time practitioner of Christian meditation, commented on how a personal emphasis on compassion has profoundly shaped his life. He was once a highly successful professional whose intellectual acumen and skills were well recognised. But when he was offered an opportunity to increase his earning capacity, he resisted its lure. He could not see a virtue in the potential of expanded consumption and extended material accumulation. He also recognised a danger in the invitation in that he might be required to sacrifice his primary relationships for the demands of his work. In acting on this knowledge and insight, he subsequently made a choice to redirect his life to altruistic endeavours: *I mean this sense of living more compassionately, this sense of giving service*, he said, *the absolute priority of relationship, the sense . . . of recognising the sacred in everything; it is becoming more palpable. I know I am not there and will never get there, but there is more and more that sense around*. Dominic thereafter recounted how, in directing his life in acts of compassion, he has broadened his experience of life, become less self-conscious and developed a penetrating consciousness of being in relationship. This acute sense of connection has become so pronounced at times that he glimpses a related spiritual dimension, compelling him to move towards what he considers to be ultimate union.

The reflexive decisions of Innovative Catholics to pursue a compassionate course take a different path from that which recent Popes have encouraged. These Popes argued that demonstrations of compassion should work to restore the human person. Pope Benedict exemplifies this view in *Deus Caritas Est*, "It is precisely at this point that God is revealed to be God and not man: 'How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! . . . My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst' (Hos 11:8–9)." The Pope implies in this note that compassionate and merciful outreach would result in a return to God and to the observance of His will (Benedict XVI 2005). In this understanding, a person who stands outside of the hierarchical Church is to be pitied, for accordingly, the good of each person is bound up with the good of the community (Hollenbach 1994, 192).

Some are highly critical of the messages and leadership styles of Popes John Paul and Benedict: *The Church is out of step, backward and embracing rules that are not compassionate: divorce, premarital sex, gays, abortion, birth control, HIV prevention, use of stem cells . . . the list goes on and on.* Likewise Eric said, *[The Pope is] too mechanical and too moralistic. There's no room for movement (grey areas). They're too black and white. There's no compassion in practice.* Innovative Catholics identify in the Popes' rhetorics of compassion and mercy as a ploy to encourage individuals to return to the hierarchical Church and restore their roles and identities as collective persons. But these tactics are viewed as being indifferent to the complex dilemmas facing the modern citizen. Some also consider that recent Popes, who in insisting on the maintenance of doctrines and rules, have contributed to, rather than alleviated, suffering. In effect, they reject the imposition of abstract ideals and related condemnation that is removed from the reality of social life.

The priority which Innovative Catholics give to compassion also has a consequence in their scrutiny of the emphasis on individual autonomy in secular society. They view those who make exclusive, self-directed choices to be excessively loose. One Innovative Advocate, Peter, for example, criticises those who prioritise the procurement of things over and above that of people and the environment:

*We must be able to make a compelling sales pitch for why our perspective on faith and life is good and true. We must be willing and able to speak out about why the religion of the market is false. We make that proclamation, not only from the pulpit and in political advocacy but also through our everyday lives when we joyously choose sufficiency instead of excess, when we are offended by advertising instead of being seduced, when we ground our lives in compassion instead of privilege.*

Peter not only calls into question the material ethos of an autonomous individual; he also attempts to ameliorate its effects by choosing to live modestly. For him, compassion is a sentiment and action to be witnessed in a more even sociality and sustainable living. He, himself, practises self-discipline in conjunction with compassion to curtail the unbounded aspirations of late modern society and to redress the consequences of seemingly open-ended choices.

## Revising the Human as Relational Person

In the previous chapter, we looked at how the concept of person was developed in history and culture and how Innovative Catholics have redefined the human condition in greater individuality. They have enjoyed the freedom and privileges that this change in thought and practice has brought them, but the value they attribute to the individual is not absolute, as Matthew

indicates. As a child, he considered the ideal person was a collective person, as was informed by *constant reminders of the faith*. That notion would also inform his decision to enter the seminary, but it was during this time—the 1960s—that he began changing his understanding of the human condition:

*I thought more of being an individual. . . . In the seminary regime of that time, uniformity was king. At recreation times, the custom was to wear sandshoes, white T-shirts and black footy shorts to the oval. At times, I would wear a black T-shirt and white shorts. I thought I was making an individual statement, but I'm sure my colleagues saw it simply as being a smart-arse.*

*Later, in the early 1970s, the idea of the self was gaining currency. I was wondering if I was [a self] or had [a self]. I remember being annoyed when a sister, a teacher at the parish school, insisted on knowing my inner self. I knew that the sisters had been starved of education, professional development, and respect, and in the post Vatican II climate, they were hungry to make up time. But this one was a bit aggressive, and I wasn't too keen to have someone inexpertly trampling around my psyche, or inner self, especially as I didn't even know what that was. I was too busy trying to fulfill the role(s) into which I had been cast, and I probably had very little inner life anyway.*

During the 1970s, Matthew reconceptualised the human person as an individual self. Interior wants, needs and desires conflicted with his commitment to the priestly role, which he resolved by prioritising individual achievement. He subsequently left the priesthood, married, fathered children and worked as a secondary school teacher.

Sometime later, Matthew began to question the idea that the individual self should be the primary focus of attention. *The self is too much associated in my mind with neighbours/school counsellor dialogue—not that there's anything wrong with that. But I didn't like having to deal with students who were carrying their self-esteem the way Paul Keating was said to carry his ambition.*<sup>2</sup> While Matthew recognised that a concentration of consideration for the self could enlarge the human condition, he rejected the idea that that focus should be exclusive. He considers there are dangers in maintaining a belief about the inherent worth of one's own self over and above others and, likewise, retaining an illusion of self-importance insofar as it can limit development.

Matthew now identifies himself differently. *It is ironic that as I have [now] come to see myself as a person, I am no longer a parson, as I'm told the two words share a derivation.* His preferred concept of person is no longer aligned with that of the collective one. *Even in the secular and vaguely anti-Catholic world of the education department, said Matthew, I found that my colleagues recognised me as Catholic and in a positive way. It seems that I had absorbed concepts of fairness, social justice, integrity*

*and the like.* Matthew's aim was to advance the life chances of those who suffered misfortune. Such efforts have had a practical effect of challenging discriminations in religion and society. *Being a person seems to me to mean a movement in social views since those days. Roles are less likely to be so rigid. . . . I am no longer so role constrained, and I know that I have had an adult's responsibilities and met them.*

As a priest, Matthew sought more flexibility than what the collective person offered, so he moved on from those constraints. But then he encountered the open-endedness of the autonomous individual, prompting him to consider limits to the human condition. Matthew, in short, progressed along life's path from a "person as *parson*" to an "individual self" to a "person" who values social bonds defined by equality and equity. Such a person can be described as a "relational person," that is, someone who exercises personal responsibility for creating social connections in dynamic and evolving contexts.

The example of Matthew's life course well illustrates one thesis of this research. He has navigated a hybrid, midway position between religion and society. He neither anchors himself in the implicit assumption of Habermas that the individual will continue to be advanced by reason alone, nor does he secure the human person to a fixed conception. Matthew contends, instead, that excessive individualism should be restrained. He is of the view that social roles should be flexible enough to allow for an individual's enrichment while, at the same time, recognising that such enhancement is dependent on the individual making a social contribution.

### The Person in Nature

While undertaking fieldwork, I noticed that some, whose interest in the environment was uppermost, were constructing another concept of the person. They extend characteristics commonly attributed to the human person to animate and inanimate entities in the natural world. Patrick is one such research respondent who applies person to the non-human; the motivation of which can be further understood from a brief review of his life history. He was a son of farmers and later taught as a brother in Catholic schools. Over the course of his life, he continued to retain a strongly felt link to the land, and after his teaching career, he chose to live at a Centre for Ecology situated in native woodland.

Patrick communicated to me how he uses the technique of transferring person to an ecological dimension. [*Here in this forest,*] *there are no objects; everybody that's alive has a name and has a belonging and has a place.* In making subjective connections through transpersonal dialogue with *even say trees, or rocks or something like that,* Patrick would ask, "What are you doing here? Who are you?" I'll never say, "What are you?" Patrick does not look upon the natural world as something that is inert, an object or merely useful to human beings. He discards the anthropocentric idea of the human

person who gazes on nature as an object of thought. Instead, he promotes the notion of the human who is immersed in the community of the natural world. The human condition, for him, is fundamentally connected to the condition of the environment.

Patrick's personal connection to the natural world has a philosophical counterpart in Martin Buber's work, *I and Thou* (1996) on the nature of existence. Buber argues that in an *I-it* relationship, the *it* is an object that is separate from the subject and is either used or experienced. But in the *I-thou* relationship an attachment is created: The individual *I* stands in direct relationship with another *I*. In a subject-to-subject relationship, the constraints of objectivity are set aside. Buber illustrates this with an example of a tree. As an object, a tree can be considered a part of the movement of the planet's life cycle, a biological specimen, a perspectival entity, an object of a particular perspective, a quantifiable experience. But as a subject regarded by another subject, a tree can be loved, and such love can bring about unity of being.

Patrick communicated Buber's idea of unity of being in another poignant example. When he told me about Katy, he spoke of "her" in a tone that conveyed deep affection, indeed, love for "her."

*The creek is so beautifully named "Katy." "Katy's Creek": like, the name gives it life in a way. So we would always talk about Katy, "She's doing well," and "Katy's doing this," and "Katy's overflowed." And then for two years, Katy died—no water. It was so sad. And it had a really strong impact on us of the life-giving nature of the flowing water. Then she came back to life. It was a great enrichment of my life when Katy returned. I started singing. . . . Yes, she's so special.*

In thinking of himself as an *I* in relation to Katy as a *you*, Patrick produced representations of interconnection and nearness. He identifies himself as a relational person who has an intimate bonding with the creek as another person. The significance of creating and personalising associations with the natural world is, furthermore, not lost on Patrick, who advocates for ecological justice and stands in solidarity with the environment. He, as a relational person, considers that he has a personal responsibility to prevent further destruction of the natural world. Through their agency, Innovative Catholics like Patrick pose a multitude of challenges which, at base, seek to surpass the current arrangements of religion and society with the environment.

## Concluding Remarks

Innovative Catholics were inspired by the Second Vatican Council to exercise their consciences when making decisions about their lives. The encouragement resulted in their limiting communitarian ideals and abstract

determinations and emphasising those that were personal and concrete. This approach was further established when they as young adults encountered a broader range of people and established substantial relationships. Their recourse to tools of critical thinking and new social arrangements made it difficult for Popes John Paul and Benedict to restore in Innovative Catholics a belief in the value of the collective person.

Innovative Catholics, from an anti-structural position, resist directions given by clergy to cultivate new images of the authentic self. In prioritising these concepts, they can scrutinise the ideal of absolute truth and reposition it as a product of mutual relationship. They, further, exercise a holistic reflexivity—rational, emotional and spiritual—to develop the interior self, whereas the factoring in of doubt allows them as individuals to navigate complex and evolving social situations. But they resist the idea of individual autonomy and do so by utilising compassion to moderate the individual self and produce a more even sociality in society and with the environment. This expansion of the self has prompted a revision of the concept of the person as a relational person who stands in interrelationship with other persons.

In the next chapter, I consider how Innovative Catholics as relational persons are producing a modern religious identity by navigating a middle path between the constraints of a traditional identity and the seemingly opened freedom of the individual in secular society.

## Notes

- 1 Paulo Freire (1921–1997) is best known for his influential work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which is considered one of the foundational texts of the critical pedagogy movement.
- 2 Paul Keating was an Australian prime minister (1991–1996) who was known for his ambition in party politics.

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## 4 Updating Identity

In earlier decades, Ella was “agen ’em” [*the Protestants*]. *I made sure everyone knew I was a Catholic. I wore a miraculous medal, a cross and a scapular. I also wore a medal on my watch, so I clanked! And of course I didn’t eat meat on Friday. I was truly identifiable. [Over the years] my social life was geared to all things Catholic. I belonged to a Catholic theatre club; I worked for the Catholic Church; I was in the choir; I was on the parish council. . . . That’s how Catholic I was.*

*Then [circa 2000, a pastoral-minded priest] arrived. He opened up the idea that we didn’t have to just sit there and take notice. We had sessions where we discussed the Gospel, and I started to understand that there was more to it than just attending Church, saying “Yes Father, no Father,” and going to Confession. And then, I started meeting other like-minded people, and I suddenly realised that I wanted to go beyond what the Church was offering. I couldn’t stay within that very strict parameter anymore because I had grown up. [I no longer identified with] “have to” anymore. A lot of it was duty driven. You had to go to Mass; “not to” was a mortal sin. You had to go to Confession. . . . You had to do this; you had to do that; that was what it was to be Catholic. . . . But I started thinking, “No, I can’t go there anymore.”*

*So I started going to the Tuesday group [populated with some Protestants]. I wanted to listen and share with others; I wanted to have a say in things. Ella also became an administrator of a cyber Christian community so as to reach a worldwide community of shared faith and an active supporter of social and environmental justice initiatives. I [now] exercise the right to say and do things that need to be discussed and done. So many things in the Church aren’t discussed, and it avoids becoming involved; it’s not in the real world. . . . I identify now as a Christian without borders. That’s what I tell people. . . . I really like Catholic theology, and I appreciate there’s a lot of good, but at the same time, there’s always the downside of bishops and priests towing the party line, of not wanting to step out of favour.*

*I’m happier now than I was about who I am. I went through a grief period when I decided not to stay. That was pretty awful. But I’ve gotten over that now. I then asked Ella, “Are you happy to have a more ambiguous identity?” She replied, Yes, because then you’re not locked into this*

*ideology, or having to do what you're told, of having to present to the world this united front.*

Ella, like other Innovative Catholics, has had to modify her identity to accommodate a new-found desire to relate to others on a more mutual basis. As a young Catholic, she had maintained a traditional identity which had been fortified and constrained by hierarchical direction. But later, when she felt the chafing of those limits, she revised her sense of who she understood herself to be. Today, Innovative Catholics commonly realign religious lineages, often using scriptural sources and creating novel images of connection to produce modern religious identities. In effect, they demonstrate a willingness to invest in these novel arrangements and contemplate a nascent ontological basis to their identification as modern religious citizens.

### **An Historical Review of Religious Identity**

Identity as an analytical concept can be defined from two perspectives. A person can produce an individuated conception of him- or herself within a specific social position, tradition or group. Alternatively, a group may attribute to an individual an identity. Both approaches to identity introduce the difficulty which Innovative Catholics encounter when asserting preferred representations. The identities they construct are not accepted in the hierarchical Church, and vice versa, they generally do not accept the identities ascribed to them. Furthermore, in this meaning-making project, they take into account a complex and changing world. Their constructions are not merely confined to attending the tension between self-identification and group identification; they incorporate into their identity a dynamic character that reflects the fluidity of the modern world.

The notion of identity as contested and contingent can be partly explained by a review of differences between a traditional identity and a modern religious identity. Gordon Matthews, an anthropologist, elaborates on the characterisation of traditional identity as downplaying the innate difference and abilities of the individual (2012, 850–852). Traditional identity is predetermined early in a person's life, and there is an accompanying expectation that an individual will sacrifice personal aspirations to maintain what has been ascribed. This status can be based on gender, family economic background and ethnicity and serves the purpose of training individuals for their future function in society (Arminio 2010). In societies where this identity is dominant, stasis, rather than change, is considered the natural state of affairs, resulting in knowledge about the human condition being kept to a minimum.

Matthews comments that one interruption in the stasis of traditional society was the emergence of universal religion, including Christianity. This religion was, at first, revolutionary in that it opened up new realms of individual choice and identity. For example, in the first hundred years after the death of Jesus, early Christians, who as a Jewish religious movement, tried to live out a "discipleship of equals," thus challenging the cultural

patterning of Jewish and Roman societies. But once these societies adopted and established Christianity as their religion, stasis was restored. In this scenario, traditional identity reflected the values and laws of the prevailing society wherein clergy operated to maintain the revised social order (Fiedler 1998, 122). They had the monopoly on arcane knowledge, whereas the laity required only the minimum of instruction. Only priests could know the will of God, perceived as upholding an immutable and unchanging tradition, whereas “the faithful” were required to obey.

The beginnings of Western colonialism in the fifteenth century were to have a significant impact on traditional identity. Western ideas were exported by nations on expeditions for raw materials and slaves and, thus, came to have an impact on cultures throughout the world. Eric Wolf (1982) has written on how Europe’s domination had a global impact, forcing people everywhere to adapt to these historical changes. A subsequent transformation of traditional identity also took place with the emergence of the nation-state: A person was now to belong to the geopolitical entity of the nation rather than an empire, tribe or ethnic group. In effect, the colonisation of traditional societies pressured substantial changes to how the human person was to be understood; each “citizen” was now required to have an affinity or identify with others as belonging to the same nation (Anderson 1991).

The effects of colonisation were pressured by the Enlightenment, which introduced new ideas about how identity was to be determined. Anthony Giddens (1991) argues that these new conditions altered traditional identities in their concentration on individual life. An individual was no longer to be secured to a predetermined role in a static society. Instead, he or she was required to emphasise the individual self to construct a modern identity; he or she was to achieve a social position through individual effort or performance, accomplishment or ability. This transformation was to take place interior to the self and facilitated by reflexivity, wherein the individual could maintain, revise or create one’s own biography. Hence, in modern society, pressure is put on the individual self to construct a personal narrative of “who we are . . . how we have become, and . . . where we are going” (Taylor cited in Giddens 1991, 54). In effect, colonisation combined with Enlightenment worked assiduously to displace identities shaped by traditional authorities and advance those that emphasised “deep horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991, 224).

### **Catholic Identity in the Pre-Conciliar Era**

The formation of a traditional Catholic identity in Australia had its early beginnings in the religious convictions of Irish convicts. The majority were common offenders, whereas a few were political and social prisoners whose felonies were associated largely with the desire for Irish independence. The nationalist yearning was bolstered by their religious affiliation; being Irish and Catholic meant not being British or Anglo-Protestant. The consequent

tension also meant that British authorities were suspicious of Irish Catholics and determined to integrate them into the English colony, compelling them, at first, to attend Church of England services and have their children and orphans supervised by Anglicans (Reid, n.d.).

An Irish Catholic identity was hard-won during early settlement. When Irish Catholics were eventually allowed to practice their religion, the British placed them under the jurisdiction of a Catholic bishop who was English. But it was an Irish clergy, nuns and brothers, who would minister to an increasing population. Back in their homeland, the Irish had suffered under English occupation; this new situation, however, held utopian promise. Together, they built and staffed parishes across the continent which were overseen by an Irish episcopacy that gave primacy to Irish traditions (O'Farrell 1977, 29). Such was the strength of that sentiment that it was not until the 1930s that Australian-born priests began to challenge the Irish monopoly, although change was slow to come (Dixon 1996, 3).

A traditional Catholic identity was forged in sectarianism. This polarizing force was an early feature of Australian society and reflected the political animosity between the British and Irish. The largely Anglo-Protestant majority, who aligned themselves with the British Empire, questioned the loyalty of Catholics who were of Irish descent. That suspicion had its consequence in Catholics being prevented from entering professions that carried greater status, income and opportunity. Conversely, Catholics reacted to their social and economic exclusion by devoting themselves to the *Catholic tribe*. Their allegiance fostered a determination to advance their group by pursuing education and sporting prowess, promoting cultural institutions and upholding a strict moral code to deflect slurs made against them by some Protestants.

The existing separate Catholic education system was established circa 1820 and sustained Catholic identity (Dixon 1996, 4). All children learnt the *Catechism*, which emphasised the acceptance of authority and recognition of prescribed obligations, knowledge which was also considered to have divine attribution. Catechetical content was commonly included in the frequent rituals of Mass attendance, devotions and prayers. The atmosphere of intense piety ensured that these children gave dutiful respect to an ascending hierarchy of parents, Religious and clergy. Additionally, the strength of traditional identity, cultivated over generations, meant that Catholics were virtually segregated from the secular world up until the 1950s, when mass migration of non-English and non-Irish peoples and a postwar boom time began opening up society.

Many Innovative Catholics were children or adolescents in the 1950s. Graham English (2013) captures how some would have identified themselves during this period.

*Until about 1955 Catholics did go to Mass on Sundays—well over 60 percent of us—and we were about 25 percent of the people in Australia. We nearly all had Irish surnames and Christian first and or*

*second names. The girls were Mary, Bernadette, Patricia or Margaret or, in really Catholic families, Jacinta, Maria Goretti or Lourdes. The boys were Patrick, Paul or John with the occasional Dominic or Francis. At confirmation we took the names of the latest canonised saint or whoever was saint of the month in the Catholic Weekly.*

*We were also mostly working class except for those rich enough to send their children to the Jesuits or the Loreto or Sacre Coeur sisters. We mostly voted Labor, again except those sending their children to the Jesuits and so on. We also identified as Christian, Marist, De La Salle or Patrician Brothers boys or Brigidine, Mercy, Josephite or Sisters of Charity girls. And we were tribal. In some cases we even had our own football teams, Norths and the Bulldogs in Sydney, for example, or Collingwood in Melbourne.*

*And we could be belligerent, even in the Australian cricket team if we felt we were not getting a fair go. There were even towns, suburbs and whole districts that were more than usually Catholic and those that were not. This almost always depended on whether they had been settled by the Irish.*

*We had our own language too. We pronounced "decade" with the emphasis on the first syllable, as in "a decade of the rosary," while the rest of the country put the emphasis on the second syllable. We pronounced "aitch" as "haitch." One Catholic rugby commentator gave the whole country one of our phrases. When a player passed the ball without looking or passed it to a player who immediately got flattened, he called this "a Hail Mary pass," as in he passed it and prayed it would land somewhere useful.*

*[We] didn't call this "Catholic identity" because then we all knew who we were. Like "community," we did not talk about it because we presumed we had it.*

Catholic identity was strengthened in representations of perfection and distinction. In taking on the names of saints, impressionable young Catholics were provided with an ideal identity which they were to embody. These names also represented their membership in the community and specific position within the hierarchy; they were not considered an expression of an original identity of an individual self but signifiers of an exemplary collective identity.

Other markers were similarly instrumental in establishing a strong Catholic identity. Working-class children took pride in and drew kudos from their associations with a particular Religious order. These alliances were consolidated in their patronage of politics, sport and religion and their shared aspirations for advancement, all of which communicated a competitive edge over rival

Protestant groups. In these postwar years, Catholic identity was considered inherent. *We had what seemed like a complete and everlasting system*, said Graham. In identifying strongly with a community and hierarchy, which prescribed limits on individual determination, these young people could be protected, nurtured and promoted in an insecure but changing world.

### Identity in the Post-Conciliar Era

Catholic identity for many changed in the 1960s and 1970s. When Innovative Catholics were given an opportunity to become economically successful and achieve an elevated social status, they became less interested in defending the religious bastion and more focused on building their lives. In their revised endeavour, they tended to stress what they held in common with non-Catholics, lessening their total identification with the hierarchical Church. They no longer characterised themselves as having Irish roots, being working class and possessing *the one true faith*; rather, they understood themselves to be Australian, educated and modern (Walsh 1998, 294–324).

The new social situation also produced other identities which were to have an impact on Innovative Catholics. When entering the labour market, they took on a variety of specialised roles necessary for performing the particular functions of their employment, requiring them to set aside traditional identities. For example, a woman's identity as wife and mother was not considered relevant to her identity as a doctor: A man's identity as father and breadwinner was now to be considered different from his identity as an economist (Northbourne 1963, 252–253). As well, in the workplace, Innovative Catholics encountered novel hierarchies, dictating expectations in social behaviours and relegating religious considerations to the periphery. For many, that meant experiencing a conflict between the demands of traditional Catholic identity and an identity as a modern religious citizen.

Meantime, internal to the Church, an examination was given to Catholic identity. The Second Vatican Council prompted, at least to some degree, changes that were happening in a pluralist democracy. For example, in the document Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*), the Council Fathers sought the reform of Religious life to address the needs of the contemporary Church (Vatican II 1965, 466–482). Those reforms were further developed in the post-conciliar era, especially by progressive members. The well-educated professional priest, Religious or layperson produced new ministries of education, care and service that recognised the pastoral and spiritual needs of contemporary Catholics. For example, the Ministry to Divorced and Separated Catholics and Ministry to Gay Catholics were created, with these novelties reflecting a revised personhood and new, modern religious identities.

Cherished identities were also being challenged, with increasing numbers assessing who they understood themselves to be, as was the case for Fr. Tom. *I remember Margarita [a Spanish nun] saying to me, "Tomás, you are a hombre*

[man]”—a simple statement—but it really hit me. I thought about it a lot, and I think that in many ways, it was the seed that led to me leaving the priestly ministry. Before that, strange as it may seem, I don't think I had really explored what it was to be a man, a *hombre*, with all that entails. The egalitarian effects of the countercultural movement along with the post-conciliar emphasis on the subjective person provided the conditions for Tom to revise his self-understanding, suggesting that the totalising identity of priest had become overly confining. In was in that context that Margarita introduced him to the potential of a new identity. Tom had considered himself to be a priest, that is, a person who was the role and status to which he had been consigned. But by internalising the identity of being a *man*, he could explore alternative possibilities, and thereafter, he produced personal and professional identities and became known as a married man, parent, scholar and businessperson.

### The Popes and Traditional Identity

The democratising reforms of the council undermined the entire structure on which Catholic identity had heretofore rested (Jay 1992, 114). Catholics exercised their conscience, with priests resigning en masse and laypeople dissenting from doctrinal positions. In the post-conciliar era, the corporate identity of the Church was pressured to take on and formalise characteristics that were recognisable in and by the modern world. Nonetheless, Pope John Paul was determined to reinstate a traditional Catholic identity by offering a coherent account of what it meant to be Catholic. In doing so, he reiterated the conciliar message that the Church was to remain open to the world to “collaborate in building the solid basis of society” (cited in Arbuckle 1993, 3). However, the engagement was to be based on a conviction that traditional identities as defined by the Magisterium were non-negotiable.

Pope John Paul made the restoration of a traditional Catholic identity evident especially in the way he favoured conservative believers. Clergy who accepted and upheld the Pope's views were promoted to the episcopate. During his twenty-seven-year reign, he oversaw the appointment of 3,500 of the world's nearly 4,200 bishops and created 232 cardinals (who acted as a consultative body (Reese 1996, 66). He also created all but three of the 117 cardinal electors (those eligible to elect the future Pope), insuring the continuity of traditional Catholic identity beyond his reign (Vatican Information Service 2005). The Pope also encouraged a new generation of priests who were averse to adapting Catholicism to the culture in which they served. They identified as “John Paul” priests and believed that they were “above” culture, orthodox (unlike the earlier and aging “Vatican II” priests) and fundamentally different from the laity (Hoge and Wenger 2003, 114).

Pope John Paul further strengthened a traditional Catholic identity by exercising his preference for fundamentalist movements hostile to the council. For instance, he granted *Opus Dei*, the unusual status of a personal prelature,<sup>1</sup> enabling it to circumvent the normal authority structures under bishops, some of



whom retained a pastoral rather than canonical or legalistic preference. *Opus Dei* only had to report to him as Pope, structurally freeing members to evangelise other Catholics and expand their universalising networks (Gillis 2006, 28). Another example is the *Neo-Catechumenal Way*, which is now located in significant numbers of parishes in Australia. This organisation demands independence from parochial authorities and responsibilities, allows for no adaption to local conditions or culture and seeks to restore a clear sense of what it is to be Catholic (Arbuckle 1993, 52). As well, conservative parishioners were given considerable latitude in their assumption that they were entitled to police the activities of priests and bishops. When their standards were not met, they complained directly to sympathetic Vatican officials about the lack of doctrinal orthodoxy in their parish or diocese (Anderson 2012). The result of this multilayered in-group/out-group mentality was a restored traditional Catholic identity.

Pope Benedict continued with his predecessor's project of consolidating a traditional Catholic identity, holding that the relative and secular character of society subverted and compromised its Christian basis. On the eve of his election to the papacy in 2005, Benedict declared, "We are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism, which does not recognise anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires" (Meichtry 2005). The Pope also warned, "The seriousness of these threats [of radical secularism] needs to be clearly appreciated" (Benedict XVI 2012). Believing that modern society was plagued by moral confusion and fragmentation, his panacea for this disorder was the establishment of a traditional religious identity that would transcend culturally informed or modern religious identities. He aimed to provide Catholics with an experience of communal closeness which was hierarchically ordered to the eternal will of God. He believed that this "vertical" trajectory would keep at bay the presumed permissiveness and meaninglessness of modern existence.

### **Resisting Traditional Identities**

During the 1980s and 1990s, some Innovative Catholics were able to temporarily avoid Pope John Paul's reassertion of a traditional Catholic identity. Their access to travel and communications technology gave them the facility to "shop around" for parishes that suited their needs. They did not view these endeavours as inconsistent with Catholicism or relativistic; rather, they were looked upon as an authentic response to their experience defined by culture and context. They lived in a society that favoured the personal and the local over the collective and the universal, and they needed a religion to help them navigate those demands. The locating of liberal parishes and pastoral-minded priests meant that they could prioritise their preferences in subjective and cultural expressions of religion.

In their novel approaches, some produced religious biographies which gave voice to local Catholic identities, not Roman. Ted Kennedy, a priest

of St Vincent's Church in the Sydney inner-city suburb of Redfern, was one such identity. Kennedy preached and taught against the exclusion and marginalisation of all peoples, and progressive Catholics from all over Sydney would mobilise themselves and travel each Sunday, crossing one or many parish boundaries, to be part of the Redfern parish community. But the avoidance strategies of Innovative Catholics were soon circumvented by the hierarchy. The papal policy of restoring a traditional Catholic identity became more pervasive with the increasing numbers of appointments of conservative bishops and priests who were encouraged and supported by conservative laity.

The attempt Innovative Catholics made to adapt their religious identity to the local culture was also limited by an influx of migrants. Peter Wilkinson, a missiologist,<sup>2</sup> states that in the immediate postwar years, most Catholic immigrants came from Europe, particularly Italy, UK, Poland, Hungary, Ireland, Malta and the former Yugoslavia. More recently they have come from Vietnam, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, South Korea, China, Indonesia, the Middle East, and Hispanic and African countries (2012, 4). From one perspective, these different populations of migrants have contributed to an eclectic Catholic identity, whereas from another, it has maintained a traditional one. Migrants, and to a lesser extent their children born in Australia, have a cultural and religious affinity for sentimental piety and an unquestioning doctrinal certainty (Arbuckle 1990, 81). The shared sense of belonging offers spiritual support and social security in an unfamiliar culture, while attempts are made to acquire social acceptance as an individual. This preference for a traditional Catholic identity coalesced with that of recent Popes, resulting in added pressure on Innovative Catholics, who now constitute an Anglo-Celtic minority, to desist from producing and promoting modified religious identities.

The contest over identities was increased by the export of foreign-born priests from developing countries to the Western world. Pope John Paul used this strategy to alleviate growing shortages of priests and, by extension, to maintain the established celibate male priest identity (Anderson 2005, 120–145). These so-called international priests are increasingly populating the parishes of Europe, the United States and Australia (Hoge and Okure 2006). Accurate information regarding the numbers of migrant priests is not available in Australia, although Wilkinson (2012, 17) indicates that 20 to 22 percent of all priests active in parish ministry are overseas sourced, and that figure is set to rise. In a few dioceses, these priests are already in the majority. Foreign-born priests have the power and often the preference for transplanting cultural and religious beliefs, values and practices from “back home” to their parishes in Australia. When these priests first take up their positions in parishes, they tend not to be culturally representative of the parishioners they serve. But over time, they attract ethnic groups with the same or similar views which eventually monopolise congregations. Today, Innovative Catholics find themselves standing alongside migrants in

the pews and being preached to by foreign-born priests, each of whom, at least from a hierarchical perspective, maintain a traditional identity, leaving many feeling they are aliens in their own Church.

### Creating Novel Identities

Innovative Catholics actively resist traditional Catholic identities, by producing their own modern ones. One representation they favoured in the late 1990s and early 2000s was that of *Roamin[g] Catholic*. Its whimsical character communicated the underlying seriousness of their plight and indicated, in their exodus, their joining a progressive religious movement. They used this identity to voice their dissatisfaction with the static character of “Roman Catholic” and, as well, indicated in their rambling that they were looking for a more appropriate identity. *Roamin[g]* also proved prophetic as many increasingly became a diaspora. These people were generally not interested in joining other denominations or religions. Only one of my respondents made mention of attending another denomination’s Church service, with the attraction being its progressive content, not the security of belonging to an established faith community. Another respondent became exasperated when I asked, “Why not go to another Church?” The retort was that *they have the same problems as we do. We need new models, not old models elsewhere!* Innovative Catholics value their religious heritage but seek to adapt their identity to present and fluid social conditions.

Today, as a liminal people, Innovative Catholics are constructing modern religious identities that resonate with the types of interactions they are making in a pluralist democracy. In creating this similitude, they often use tropes. The rhetorical device sets aside the literal or orthodox meaning of a word to advance an alternative. One such trope that is commonly used is that of *catholic*, as is exemplified in the following comments made by three Innovative Catholics: *I’m more of a catholic with a little c; it’s more of a Catholicism with a small c; [it’s] not Catholic but more catholic* [original emphasis]. These respondents deconstruct their identity as *Catholics* with a big C, which signifies specificity or exclusivity, and replace it with the more generalised or inclusive *catholic* with a little c. In making this distinction, they as unstructured persons are able to produce novel correspondences with other groups and individuals. In effect, Innovative Catholics signal their desire for an expanded sense of self, personable connections and an expanded range of relationships.

The emphasis Innovative Catholics place on a plurality of connections is magnified in the following example. Martin, a Catholic priest, who has a decades-long interest in spiritual development and social action, produced a trope to refurbish religious identity as an inclusive category. *When I’m preparing couples for marriage, it’s not a Catholic ceremony, but it’s radically catholic because it’s radically universal.* Martin then said, *All of us are baptised catholic, the actual ritual has small-c catholic and the creed that we*

*pray on Sundays is small-c catholic—it's universal, and so you think of the universe—uni-verse—one voice: the whole cosmos equals one voice.* In this play on words, Martin proposes that *catholic* as an identity is broad ranging or universal in extent; that is, no person or thing can exist outside of the created order. He elaborates on this idea further in his proposal: *If we can align ourselves with [the universe], we can help humanity survive and transfigure it.* Catholic identity is considered evolutionary in character insofar as it promotes transformation. Accordingly, everyone and everything is in a state of dynamic relationship: *Catholic* cannot restrain *catholic*; *Catholic* can only point to and be more fully realised in *catholic*.

### Revising Religious Biography

The experience of being marginalised has compelled Innovative Catholics to reassess how religion has played its part in their life stories and how it is to be understood as an ongoing feature of their personal narrative. Anthony Giddens (1991, 54) provides an explanation as to why the task of revising religious identity has social value. He argues that a modern identity, which might otherwise be viewed as a break from the past, does have the capacity to retain a sense of biographical continuity. But such an account is reliant on an individual being able to recognise or establish reflexively a succession plan or continuity of association which, at the same time, communicates the integrity of the self. The biographical account aims to explain the past to reorient the individual self towards an anticipated future (Gauntlett 2002, 107). Furthermore, Giddens considers this revision to be an imperative. The alternative is an unstable identity characterised by a lack of connection with the past and anxiety. He identifies one solution in merging with the status quo, thus deflecting attention away from obsessive self-scrutiny. The alternative course is to trust in the integrity of the self, respect the self and exercise reflexive control (Giddens 1991, 54).

When Innovative Catholics revise their biography, they often edit out their “Roman Catholic” identity, replacing it with a “catholic” one that has a personal or local character. Liam, for instance, refreshed his life story by foregrounding the religious genealogy of his biological family, tracing it to his Irish Catholic great grandmother. *Certainly that is how [my identity] has come to be entrenched into my life*, said Liam. *It's easily traced through those four generations to me.* Liam, moreover, consolidated biographical continuity with the Catholic matriarch by identifying a lineage of familial characteristics. *I think my family was a good family. . . . They came from farming stock and have been in Australia for four or five generations. And I think they were conscientious and hard-working. They never started the revolution, but they were part of the fabric of society.* His forebears were temperate, industrious and generous religious citizens, and it is these traits which he identified within his own self. He spoke of how he had given loyal and dedicated service to his profession and, now in his retirement, volunteers

constantly his expertise to those less fortunate. In constructing a revised sense of the self, he limits his association with a Roman Catholic identity and maximises his connection with one that is personally familiar. In rerouting his lineage, he no longer feels compelled to acquiesce to hierarchical direction; instead, he feels freer to emulate the actions of his forebears.

The range of modern religious identities that inform the biographies of Innovative Catholics can be extensive. Gerard, for instance, plumbed a different lineage to create an alternative sense of the self. In revising his story, he draws on the Australian myth of mateship, egalitarianism and the belief in a “fair go.” The founding myth has its origins in Irish Catholic convicts who, in nurturing a disdain for British dominance, asserted that society could be harmonious if its citizens resisted feelings of superiority and inferiority and, in its place, reached out to support and accommodate the poor and marginalised. *I describe myself as an Australian Catholic*, said Gerard. *In other words, Catholic is a dominant feature of my identity, but that identity is a very broad and very rich thing. . . . [There is] the influence of Australian culture. . . . You don't do rules literally, and you recognise the importance of conscience and making your own decisions . . . rather than relying on what Father or the nuns told you.* In the process of describing himself, Gerard validated his modified religious identity, not by aligning himself to vertical relationships but horizontally in acts of assisting refugees and those who are economically disadvantaged. In effect, he creates a connection between the original Irish migrants and those whom he now serves. In revising his biography, he situates his religious identity alongside that of a local or national one rather than aligning it with one situated in the distant Vatican.

The revisions which Innovative Catholics make to their life stories are, more pointedly, a rejection of traditional religious identities. Liam's identification with a female lineage might be considered a direct challenge to the insistence of recent Popes on maintaining the pre-eminence of a male lineage. Gerard's identity can be looked upon as contesting the hierarchy's suppression of national and cultural identities. Innovative Catholics demonstrate their motivation and ability to construct modern religious identities that work to advance the integrity of the individual self and attend the society in which they live. Moreover, these modifications signal their own potential as progenitors of lineages for subsequent generations.

### **Producing Principled Identities**

Innovative Catholics not only draw on familial, national and cultural origins to construct modern religious identities, they also select from the past representations of perfect moral behaviour which they link to their understanding of the ideal modern individual. The idea behind the process of drawing on nostalgia is driven, for example, by the belief that Jesus, as moral exemplar, demonstrated the highest standard of reciprocity to bring about social harmony. Innovative Catholics seek to replicate that

consummate mutuality in a modern religious identity, which they not only attempt to reconstruct for the sake of their own edification but also to persuade others of the veracity of this identity.

Maitland provides an example of how Innovative Catholics use nostalgia to produce principled identities in his rendition of a parable purportedly recounted by Jesus. *The story of the Good Samaritan suggests that the question we begin with should not be about [Catholic] identity but about how we meet the needs of the people who present themselves to us. . . . Only from that perspective can we safely reflect on our group. This story, which encapsulates Jesus's ethic, suggests that groups inspired by a Christian motivation should always begin by looking outwards to ask who in their world are in need of healing, freedom and love and asking how we can reach them.* In the recounting of the parable, Maitland rejects a traditional identity, which he considers is given to excessive introspection and a lack of broader consideration. He then advances a perfected identity which is constructed from the consequences of self-examination in relation to vulnerable others. In effect, Maitland implies that the modern Christian should pursue an expanded reciprocity, as the Good Samaritan did, by being compassionate and crossing boundaries in order to give service.

Ruth has a similar idea but applies it to the different context of denominational religion. *Jesus came out of that tradition, she said, [where] he trusted in the God of the Scriptures, who was the Creator . . . [and he] probably got to where we are now, where the overbearing structures are squeezing the life out of what we've been given by God.* Ruth considers Jesus to be an archetypal character whose lineage can be traced to an epithet of God as *Creator*, symbolising the origins and goodness of all life. The implication is that Jesus is considered to have recognised that the *Creator's* created are radically equal, and therefore fellowship must be extended to all. However, when asserting this fundamental unity, Jesus experienced pushback from some religious leaders who maintained non-egalitarian and patronal arrangements (Crossan 1994, 66–74, 133). Ruth continued, saying that she now *belongs to a much broader family; so, there are strengths. The Catholics have strengths, and the Baptists have strengths, and the Uniting Churches have strengths. So, together, we've got all these gifts and so much to draw on.* Ruth creates two contrasting sets of moral constructs: a negative one that links the rivals of Jesus to an exclusive and sectarian Church and a positive one that connects Jesus with modern Christians who hold to a broad Church. In making these representations, Ruth indicates that a partisan religious identity is no longer satisfactory, whereas encompassing religious identity that seeks to widen connections signals vitality.

### Refreshing Identity in Friendship

Innovative Catholics revise their religious identity by modifying the way they describe their contemporary connections. In their youth, they used the

salutations, “Father,” “Sister” and “Brother” to describe their primary relationships. But these ties, signalling disproportionate power, were loosened in the post-conciliar era. Many then began to address religious peers, irrespective of role and status, as “brothers and sisters.” These egalitarian representations communicated the idea that there was equality within the “Church as family.” However, significant numbers have since moved on from using familial identities.

Today, Innovative Catholics often refer to those they connect with as *friends*, which are constituted in sociological ties or are achieved identities rather than those that are biological or are ascribed in traditional ones. In using this salutation, Innovative Catholics assert an alternative religious and social arrangement and signify a willingness to communicate with those who are broadly like-minded. Maurice, a Catholic priest, for example, dispatches daily an email whose content includes breaking news about global events and which emphasises the perspective of the poor, the suffering and the disenfranchised. He addresses the email, *Dear Friends* because, as he said, *There are 600 people on my email list. . . . I don't know them. . . . I think brothers and sisters might be a little familiar. But the other thing I react to is people not using people's names. Sometimes, they don't even put a "Hi" or "Hello M", so when I send an email, I'm sending it as a letter. . . . I try to be inclusive.* In using *friends*, Maurice indicates an effort to create styles of interaction that make people appear as though they have equal worth (Hruschka 2010, 66; Turner 2009, 131). This attempt undermines or camouflages, firstly, the exclusivity currently in operation in community and hierarchy. In effect, Maurice seeks to affirm the parity of individuals because to greet someone as *friend* is to effectively invite that person to engage in a mutual relationship.

Secondly, the use of *friends* points to Maurice's readiness to extend the range of a modern religious identity while maintaining a qualitative regard for those with whom he makes contact. In his initiative, he directs his attention to expanding, as far as possible, connections to facilitate his and what he hopes are shared interests. Being a friend, after all, implies that one is not so much concerned with rules and regulations, as evident in a traditional identity, but with making and maintaining a mutual relationship. Thirdly, Maurice refuses to send out emails with no salutation and, thus, challenges a secular tendency for disregarding the personal. In asserting a connection of friendship, he limits an individual's experience of detachment in modern society, which is increasingly characterised by daily interactions with strangers (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1994, 14). Maurice, effectively, promotes a modern religious identity aimed at making multiple, subjective and, seemingly, open-ended relationships.

Being a *friend* does not mean that an individual has unrestricted access to the details of another's life. As a mode of relationship, each person is given scope to negotiate the terms of that connection. Such is the case for Innovative Catholics who put limits on how much of the self is revealed. Dominic,

an Innovative Mediator, gives his reason for maintaining the boundaries of the self: *I'm happy to be a bit more ambiguous, [and] I suppose it may be a response to coming through the system with all the rules and doctrines and everything in boxes, and all these piling up upon one another, and the sense that's not really what our spiritual journeys are about.* Dominic has relaxed the ties which he once had with other Catholics, and he is determined to keep them that way. He now has a preference for a more fluid and dynamic relationship which facilitates and gives impetus to his religious quest.

From the critical perspective of conservative Catholics, Dominic's social connections are tenuous and fragile. Such vulnerability would be considered a weakness by those who would prefer to protect themselves or the Church from a chaotic modern world. Yet weak ties are appropriate for Innovative Catholics who look to navigate an extended range of relationships in a constantly changing world. The sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) argues that weak ties allow an individual to reach populations and audiences—and their knowledges, which are not accessible via strong ties as to be found in the hierarchical Church. Dominic would concur. He has many friends: connections that go beyond established boundaries and that act as conduits for personal development and spiritual discovery. In preserving a modicum of obscurity, he is able to cultivate and produce a modern religious identity.

### Creating Relations of Trust

The construction of an identity is reliant upon there being a pre-existing foundational idea of the nature of existence. This basic system of organisation provides a common underpinning for how social relations are to be ordered. It is from this groundwork that a human person knows intuitively how to make sense of connections and relationships. For example, Popes John Paul and Benedict were instinctively sure that the nature of human existence should be ordered to a community and governed by a hierarchy (*Catechism* 1994, 463–466). They, thus, constructed traditional identities for Catholics. Innovative Catholics, too, once considered that this form of organisation was obvious and absolute. But now they question the viability of that “rock-solid” foundation. They find it difficult to imagine how this basis can withstand or stabilise modern society; indeed, they question the suitability of this ontology for existence (Giddens 1991, 35–48).

Such was the case for Brendan, a Christian brother, who recounted how he had earlier mistrusted the identity claims made by some brothers in his Religious order. In the late 1980s, Brendan was given a mandate to turn around the culture of violence in a Catholic school. In this environment, *one of the brothers would beat several of the senior boys, who in turn would beat those below them.* That bullying had a domino effect, with some middle-school students humiliating or assaulting vulnerable junior students. The wider community was also complicit. *The brothers could do no wrong*, reported Brendan. In the regional city, where the school was



situated, citizens admired and deferred to the brothers. They effectively sustained a social hierarchy in which criticism would not be countenanced. *And the brothers were keen to maintain that*, added Brendan, *so even the fire brigade wasn't allowed into the school during one incident*. In this city, all observed the established order, and violence played a role in maintaining that hierarchy.

Although Brendan did have a small success in having one abuser taken to court, he was unable to change the culture of the school. This situation troubled him greatly. He was torn between the loyalty he felt toward the brothers and a loyalty to students affected by the intolerable situation. *I did a lot of soul-searching after that*, he said. Brendan's experience had increased his anxiety, not just with regards the school but also in terms of his own religious vocation. Another brother, Vince, shared Brendan's anxiety. *We lost sight of the original vision of the founder, Edmund Rice, to teach the children of the poor. We ended up running private schools for the rich. It was a mistake. We were too comfortable and couldn't see beyond the schools. We couldn't find a contemporary context for implementing Rice's vision*. Moreover, the thoughts and practices that sustained their identity contributed to the downfall of the Christian Brothers. The routine beating of a few students to ensure the rest would comply became less and less acceptable as society changed its view about the human condition.

Brendan's persistent anxiety prevented him from continuing to teach in Catholic schools. There was no turning back to what had once been. His framework of meaning was no longer sustainable, resulting in him having to face the problem of who he understood himself to be and what to do next. Brendan explored a range of options over the next two years. He travelled to Ireland where *children were passing parcels (bombs)* and to South America, where *street children were being shot*. As part of that journey he recovered and reinterpreted the ethos of the founder of the Christian Brothers, Edmund Rice, who cared for and educated impoverished children. In his willingness to embrace novel, albeit tragic, experiences, Brendan maximised his options. The pronounced realities of real-life encounters and the revision of an originating ontology prompted creative possibilities.

On return to Australia, Brendan acted on a revitalised consciousness anchored to a refurbished basis of how social life should be ordered. With the support of some brothers, he set up *a refuge for homeless kids under fifteen who had fallen through the cracks. We couldn't get money for schooling because it was a non-government facility, but people helped us to get funding*. This orientation to practical action provided a basis from which Brendan could give answers to questions about his existence in relation to vulnerable children. These answers were not merely formed by reason alone but also by sentiment. His compassion for troubled youth generated sufficient trust, hope and courage needed to make the transition from his earlier identity. By doing so, he dismissed problems to which he could not realistically attend and pursued a "natural attitude" in his everyday life—that

of giving service (Giddens 1991, 35). He, thereafter, produced a range of possibilities that were accepted not only by his peers but by the residents themselves. Brendan chuckled when he recounted how *one of the girls wrote on a wall, "This is my school. Fuck off."* The sense of a shared reality contributed both to the strength and vulnerability of day-to-day practices. *They were great times*, said Brendan.

Nonetheless, Brendan's service was susceptible to moral attack. *[Setting up the refuge] happened at the height of the [child sexual] abuse scandal. We thought of closing it down*, he said. *But the people that worked there said there were too many urgent needs. These kids had no other options. So we [the brothers] decided that we would step back from the limelight, while at the same time facilitating the system.* The breach of trust between the public and the brothers was so dramatic that Brendan had to deal with his own heightened anxiety about how to conduct himself in his ordinary, everyday activities. To counter the withering gaze of the public, Brendan resigned from his institutional and civic roles and, subsequently, avoided taking up these positions. In this way, he was able to maintain his revised attitude and focus.

The refuge for at-risk youth is still operating, but Brendan has since moved on. He, along with some other Christian Brothers, lay staff and volunteers, have set up the Centre for Justice, where they advocate for social and environmental change (the activities of the centre are further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). At the centre, half the advocates have a Catholic heritage, and half have a mixed religious background or none. Their ages range from the twenties to the eighties. Both genders are equally represented, as is a multiplicity of ethnic groups. Sexual status and orientation are not attributed any great importance. Those differences pose a significant challenge to a traditional religious identity. In this modified religious identity, the emphasis is not on ascribed categories but on the capacity of the individual to give or achieve service. Brendan now looks upon this diversity as enhancing the centre's work, informing its activities, providing relevancy, expanding its knowledge base and broadening its membership. Through these daily routines, which play a fundamental role in forging a new set of conventions, he and his fellow Innovative Advocates pursue existential concerns through expanded affection and novel thought and action. Their encompassing consciousness is tied closely to the ability to trust peers to pursue the shared goals of advocacy and is secured in a foundational idea that diverse groups can go beyond traditional identities to create new, modern ones.

### Searching for Ontological Security

Attempts made by Innovative Catholics to discover an ontological basis for their modern religious identities are substantiated in a new sense of self. In creating a hybrid understanding of the nature of human existence, they draw from both religious and social sources. Giddens provides an explanation as

to why this quest is important and argues that an individual can be ontologically secure only if one's own self possesses, at an unconscious level, answers to existential questions. Giddens considers that in secular society, those answers "come from the very 'faith' in the independent existence of persons and objects that ontological security implies" (1991, 47–48). Such a view suggests that at the most fundamental level, the human condition is reflected in the freedom of the person who communicates individuality. From this perspective, the individual has a basic intuition about the pre-eminence of that self.

Popes John Paul and Benedict assert a different view to the modern citizen. For them, ontological security is invested in the belief and knowledge of God "[who] gives to all things a certain way of existing; on this [mankind's] whole reality depends" (Collins 1987, 656). "Mankind" is considered to be totally dependent on the reality of God, who is looked upon as the original source and final arbiter of all existence. In this view, humanity has no ontological security outside of God and, therefore, remains a contingent being (Latini 2011, 136). The *Catechism* further states, "[God] calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church" (1994, 7). The human person is said to be in safekeeping and free of fear and doubt when his or her identity is fully located in the foundational reality and ultimate truth of a transcendent God.

Innovative Catholics recognise a different ontological framework for understanding the human condition: one which challenges those claimed, respectively, for individual and collective or traditional identities. Sean, for instance, produces a hybrid ontology that attempts to resolve existing tensions between these two views of the human condition. He overcomes the disagreement by first acknowledging that in the past, family and society dominated but that *today, the centre of value has shifted from the group to the individual*. He then asserts that there is an advantage in the increased freedom of the individual because the hegemony of religious and social dominance, as is represented in the following axiom, can undermine society, "*This is the way my parents did it*" stops progress in its tracks, he said. *Maintaining the status quo as sacred is the enemy of all change*. Sean, thereafter, advances an image of Jesus, who as an exemplary model of the human condition, is said to be *critical of people who took too much pride in their parentage. . . . Jesus set aside such appeals to parentage in favour of the way people live their lives*. In this exegesis, Sean suggests there are limits to upholding the correctness of an inherited social order and emphasising the static quality of a respectable sociality. He then goes on to say, *I am justified by my life, not by my ancestors*. In this claim, he defends the idea that it is ultimately up to the individual to demonstrate the merit of his or her life. The responsibility lies with the human person as to how he or she might engage in social life, with the corollary being that he or she is not to act in a way that is slavish to external direction.

Sean is not, however, arguing for the pre-eminence of an individual identity. *There is no such thing as the self-made person, and certainly I am not*

one, he said. Sean recognises that the individual is not entirely constituted through independent effort but is also formed by others in history and culture: *I recall faces and voices of parents, siblings, teachers, schoolmates and [colleagues]. It is these I have tried to serve, for they have been God's special people in my life.* In his acknowledgement of these connections, Sean recognises a sense of obligation to live life well and in a way that reflects the qualities of those mentors or supporters whom he admires and respects, the idea of which Sean elaborates upon in the following condensed homily:

*Everyone who has played Monopoly can remember the chagrin of landing on the spot that says "Go to jail—do not pass go, and don't collect \$200." Likewise, there is the relief of getting the "Get out of jail free" card. No cost! But life seldom treats us that way. We can't cancel our debts as if we bear no blame. We don't get out of our self-made prisons without paying a price. That is the nature of salvation! Yes, we have been freed from sin by the death and resurrection of Christ, but that freedom is not to be spent in selfishness. We are freed in order to be of service to others. Maybe we have put too much stress on what we are free from, but insufficient on what we are free for. It is the freedom to take risks in the cause of justice. We are free to champion the poor and powerless. There is always a price to pay for getting out of jail!*

The fundamental nature of the individual, according to Sean, is geared to a social response. It is not supposed to be focused solely on projects of the self, which can produce self-respect and self-worth or, alternatively, self-accusation and self-flagellation. Instead, the basic constitution of the individual self is to be directed to personal bonds and building social ties that contribute to creating a just society.

Sean maintains that a flawed expression of the human person is to be recognised in narcissistic behaviour. In this case, the individual becomes so absorbed in one's own self that it comes at the expense of the needs, wants and desires of other selves. Such arrogance and egotism prevents the potential of the person to contribute to social and environmental concord. Sean asserts that the ontological nature of the individual self is realised in altruistic pursuits and indicated in acts of self-disclosure, self-giving and compassion. Additionally, this hybrid understanding of the nature of being surpasses those of both Church and secular society. Ontological security is not to be found in privatised thoughts and idiosyncratic practices, nor is it to be secured to an established community and hierarchy. Instead, it is communicated in the conviction that religious and social connections are best initiated and maintained in personal and altruistic relationships. Moreover, Sean challenges the view of Habermas that it is sufficient to draw on religious ideas to vitalise the project of secular society. He effectively shows that a comprehensive approach is required and that there is a need to revise the basis for solidarity.

## Concluding Remarks

In their youth, Innovative Catholics were encouraged by the hierarchical Church to retain a traditional Catholic identity, which worked to sustain collective aspirations and social competition. But later, in the 1960s and 1970s, when they shifted into mainstream society, they cultivated identities that reflected their new situation. The Second Vatican Council further encouraged them to revise their religious identity with the world. But conservative believers considered that these changes weakened the sense of being Roman Catholic. In attempts to restore a strong Catholic identity, Popes John Paul and Benedict favoured clergy and groups that would discourage emerging modern religious identities which had an apparent coalescence with those in secular society.

As a liminal people, Innovative Catholics continue with their project of constructing modern religious identities. In this endeavour, they demonstrate a willingness to expand their sense of self to accommodate an enlarged range of identities. These are fortified in revised biographies and the identity of “friend,” both of which advance the individual self in a desired plurality of connections. In sum, Innovative Catholics seek to replace traditional Catholic identities established in a previous era with modern religious ones that are sensitive to contemporary social arrangements. They secure these identities in personal and altruistic relationships, cultivate connections with a diverse range of people, and endeavour to give service unconstrained by established boundaries.

In the next chapter, I consider how Innovative Catholics extend their modern religious identities in a focus on ethics, values and morality.

## Notes

- 1 A personal prelature is like a non-geographical diocese that has its own bishop, priests and laity.
- 2 Missiologists are practical theologians who investigate the mandate, message and mission of Christianity.

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## 5 Modernising Morality

*“Sin” was broadly viewed as something “bad” you did rather than being anything connected with day-to-day decisions a person might have to make.*

—Brian

*There has to be radical updating of the Church’s teaching on sexual morality. Most Catholics consider it medieval and remote from today’s reality. At times, it is downright dangerous to life and love.*

—Catherine

*Once we were sure what was moral and what was not. Now we are left with questions. And one of the most pressing is: How do we make moral decisions in our everyday lives?*

—Miriam

Innovative Catholics seek to produce codes of conduct that communicate principles for living, but the task is not easy. They are faced with the dilemma of resolving two contradictory approaches to moral behaviour, which are respectively produced by the hierarchical Church and secular society. Popes John Paul and Benedict asserted a classical morality, emphasising the containment of “man” in a predetermined social order, whereas society promotes the idea that the individual’s exercise of reason is sufficient for determining conduct in a changing society. Innovative Catholics, however, consider a third option in their endeavour to create a contemporary morality that avoids absolute foci on classical and modern codes of conduct.

Moreover, in creating a hybrid code, Innovative Catholics challenge the theoretical positions of Ratzinger and Habermas. They contest the respective assertions that the general rules of “man” are fixed eternally and that communicative rationality is sufficient for realising morality. They are, instead, more inclined towards the theory of Anthony Giddens (1991), which speaks of a reflexive relationship that prompts movement out of a fixed structure to one that has present-day resonance. As indicated in the field, Innovative Catholics go about this by disengaging values from both religious and social



codes of conduct to constitute the ethical self. Once freed from their origins, values can be used to navigate contemporary social conditions and advance a revised morality.

### **An Historical Review of Moral Conflicts**

The basic disagreement between recent Popes and Innovative Catholics is backgrounded by a history of clerical predecessors who have claimed that morality is grounded in the unchanging norms of God's will, meaning all humans are expected to observe immutable and eternal principles (Fox 1995, 339). The corollary of classical morality is that each generation is required to discover the original and only divine plan and its objective truths. The code of conduct is also thought to be readily disclosed in natural law, which is founded on the belief that there exists in human nature a rational order that provides intelligible moral statements independent of human will (Nicholls 1987, 678). Thus, human beings are expected to know what is basically moral and to act upon that sense of right and wrong. Nonetheless, Popes throughout history have been concerned that human beings are unlikely to succeed in this venture and have, thus, considered it necessary to teach people what needs to be known for making correct moral judgements (Woods 1994, 224). Catholics and all others are therefore to accept that their conscience or human reason is not sufficient for determining morality and that they are to accept doctrines and laws as the basis for making moral judgements.

Looking back to the medieval period, a classical morality worked to uphold a two-tiered social order. Those who administered the universal system were required to observe a higher moral standard than ordinary people, obliging priests and especially Religious to uphold the counsels of perfection as exemplified in poverty, chastity and obedience. These counsels were considered important for pursuing spiritual aspirations and undertaking pastoral works such as tending the sick, helping the poor and educating children. From the perspective of this assumed exemplary position, they were to give pastoral attention to ordinary people, helping them to understand the demands of right living and weaning them from actions that challenged the established code of conduct (Nicholls 1987). In this regard, they not only encouraged people to live according to the respective demands of classical morality, they also sustained it through the giving of charity or doing good deeds (Seasoltz 2012, 100).

During the Reformation, Protestants contested the immutability of the two-tiered social order which had a social consequence in two conventions. The first convention upheld the idea that the existing arrangements, characterised by an uneven distribution of burdens, was fixed for eternity. The second assumed that society was made up of different and complementary orders, where nobles and senior clergy were considered to have greater dignity and value than the peasantry. Protestants, instead, sought to raise every

person to the highest level of religious devotion, demanding that all Christians be totally dedicated (Taylor 2007, 77). Such devotion was particularly emphasised by the Calvinists and Puritans, who urged every person to take responsibility for living a moral life and to display that in piety, worship and doctrine (2007, 106). They viewed faith as primary and good works the result of that godly alliance. This arrangement was informed by a concern to avoid the sin of pride, which emphasised superiority over others, as might, for example, result from being charitable. Hence, Protestants refused to admit that human acts had any intrinsic value; thus, charitable works were looked upon as belonging solely to Jesus Christ (Seasoltz 2012, 98).

In the eighteenth century, the Protestant moral code was secularised. According to Charles Taylor, the Enlightenment philosophers produced, firstly, a conception of freedom, wherein the individual could stand back from his or her situation to reshape his or her identity in light of personal desires and convictions. This ability prompted an independent and critical assessment of tradition and nature: a position aimed at undermining superstition and unquestioned obedience to Church authorities (Smith 2002, 205–206). Secondly, ordinary life was not to be looked upon as a lower form of existence but one that had intrinsic dignity. In the medieval era, a person had to transcend the ordinary life of production and the family to attain the highest moral ideal. But from the perspective of Enlightenment thinkers, ordinary life was not to be scorned or denigrated as a lower form of existence. Economic activity and family life were now to be considered worthwhile goals. Thirdly, the moral life was to be directed towards alleviating the suffering of the whole of humanity and implementing a system of universal justice. This contrasted with the Church's conception of the "higher" being contemplation of the divine or God and the good society being hierarchically structured, arrangements that protected the inherited privileges of Church and state elites. Ordinary people were now to recognise and use their abilities to take control of their situations through objective assessment. Émile Durkheim, a founding figure of sociology, considered this personal code as having the greatest moral value in modern society (Karsenti 2012, 28). Two eventual outcomes of this moral code were human rights and the welfare system.

The code of conduct determined by Enlightenment philosophers was to become increasingly central to Western society and, according to anthropologist Jentri Anders, was maximised in expressive individualism in the 1960s and 1970s, when an orientation to the self became widespread. Within the countercultural movement and, increasingly, in wider society, individuals assumed, the "freedom to explore one's potential, freedom to create one's self, freedom of personal expression, freedom from scheduling, freedom from rigidly defined roles and hierarchical statuses, freedom to adjust everyday behaviour to personally experienced time and biorhythms, and freedom to fully explore the potential of relationships" (Anders 1990, 289). Nevertheless, this individualist code was not without difficulties. Taylor refers to

a consequence of malaise resulting from a sense that “something” has been lost and an unease about radical individuation (2007, 492–495).

### Early Formation in Classical Morality

In their youth, Innovative Catholics understood morality to be a fixed code to which they were to give unquestionable assent. These conventions were administered and overseen by priests and Religious who gave a negative assessment to the individual and positive appraisal to community. Nicholas gave the following account of how he as a child was given moral instruction:

*We were taught in the home, at school and during Mass about the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church. And we learnt that breaking these was a sin and a matter of Confession. We didn't know what adultery [the Sixth Commandment] was, but we learnt about bad thoughts, idleness and keeping bad company. We also learnt it was a sin not to go to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and to eat meat on Fridays. We were taught the distinction between mortal sin and venial sin and that the condition of mortal sin was a serious transgression in thought, word, deed or omission that is contrary to the law of God. The greatest fear was that if you died in the state of mortal sin, meaning you didn't confess your sins, you went to Hell; if it was venial sin, you were sent to purgatory. All this was a deciding factor in how you lived your life.*

Many Innovative Catholics considered morality to be a list of rules and regulations that worked to maintain their submission to an ascending hierarchy of parents, Religious, priests and Pope.

Morality was (and continues to be) particularly emphasised in sexual conduct, which worked to maintain the hierarchical Church. At the apex of the Church were sacred elites, all of whom were (and still are) obliged to observe perpetual chastity in celibacy; thus, the Pope was looked upon as godlike, priests as an *alter Christus* (Latin for “another Christ”) and Religious as paragons of virtue. Their (sexual) “purity” set them apart and above the laity who lived in the profane world. Nonetheless, “under pain of eternal damnation,” ordinary Catholics were to aim at perfection, meaning they were expected to retain chastity in marriage, enabling them to discipline lust, procreate and maintain the male lineage. This arrangement also emphasised male headship over women who were confined to roles of (Religious) mother and sister, wife and mother. Any sexual conduct in Religious life or outside of marriage was considered contrary to the moral order and, therefore, mortally sinful, as were masturbation, premarital and extramarital sex, homosexual relations, divorce, birth control and abortion. One respondent concluded, *We were authorities on sin!*

Some research respondents made mention that they as children were taught the social dimension of classical morality and were required to learn by rote

the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Golden Rule, Six Commandments of the Church, Seven Sacraments and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> One respondent demonstrated that, despite the passing of decades, he could still recite flawlessly these lists. These general principles had a more systematic expression in Catholic social teaching, which had its original expression in Pope Leo XII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891). The document focused on the abysmal conditions of the industrial era and argued for the granting of certain rights to all workers so that they might procure what was required for them to live (Hogan 1998, 34–37). The encyclical introduced the principle of the priority of the human person, but it limited it to an endorsement of existing hierarchies, thereby minimising democratic implications. It also focused on the relationship between Church and state. The role of the state, it said, was to promote justice through the protection of rights, whereas the Church was obliged to speak out on social issues to teach correct social principles and ensure class harmony. Thereafter, successive Popes added to a classical social morality principally through the promulgation of encyclicals, with their approach remaining essentially the same up until the Second Vatican Council.

Nonetheless, the idea that priests and Religious were moral exemplars, whereas the laity were morally suspect and simply required to submit and obey, became increasingly difficult to sustain, if not from the hierarchy's perspective then certainly in the view of the laity. In the twentieth century, massive social change, informed to a large degree by the availability of public (secular) information, not only challenged classical ideas of moral perfection but also raised the idea that the layperson should be engaged in moral decision making.

### The Council and Its Reception

The Second Vatican Council moved the hierarchical Church away from its preoccupation with a legalistic approach to morality, sin and culpability, to focus more upon moral freedom, the virtues, spiritual discernment and the role of conscience (Seasoltz 2012). It was this latter aspect that was to prove most contentious, especially with regard to conscience being a moral arbiter. Richard McBrien, a noted Catholic theologian, sums up the conciliar teaching on the matter,

Conscience is what summons us to love good and avoid evil, to do this and shun that. "To obey it is the very dignity of the human person; according to it the person will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There the person is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of the person." But conscience is no infallible guide. It frequently errs from invincible ignorance (i.e., ignorance for which we are not morally responsible). Christians searched the truth and for the genuine solution of problems in collaboration with others and in fidelity to conscience. (1994, 970–971)

The shift in the conciliar teaching on conscience was accounted for in an acknowledgement that there was a widespread availability of higher education and that many laypeople have special expertise and can relate this expertise to doctrinal issues (Vatican II 1965c, 242–245). A person's conscience was, henceforth, to be regarded as the pre-eminent guide for discerning right from wrong.

In the areas of gender and sexuality, the council maintained the basics of a classical morality. Male headship in Church and family was retained, with women, although in theory considered equal to men, confined to traditional roles (Vatican II 1965c, 257–258, 275–276). Celibacy was upheld for priests (Vatican II 1964, 55–56). There was, however, a subtle shift towards a more positive focus on sexuality. The Council Fathers emphasised love within marriage and admitted married sex had other functions besides the begetting of children (Vatican II 1965c, 253–255). Sexual expression outside of marriage remained taboo. Essentially, little had changed in the area of sexual morality.

The council, in advancing a revision of classical social morality, encouraged the laity in particular to become involved in social action. In this regard, the Church Fathers devoted an entire document to the laity, although none were consulted on its production, emphasising their essential role in the Church and world (Huebsch 1996, 18). In the document, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), the laity were exhorted to extend charity as a “duty and right” in their pity for the needy, care of the sick and in other good works (Vatican II 1965b, 498–500). They were also to meet the demands of justice, thus alleviating the need for future charity by eliminating the root causes of poverty or pain. The declarations of solidarity with the poor were later developed in *The Synod for Justice in the World* (1971), which taught that “justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel” (Himes 2005, 349).

As young adults, Innovative Catholics welcomed the changes. They considered that the council's emphasis on an informed conscience was a better approach to discerning morality. The prominence given to this teaching also alleviated priests from having to supply answers to complex practical and moral problems (Briggs 1998, 30). The result was that many began to *exercise their conscience*, factoring into their moral decision making broader areas of learning, including fields of knowledge that were outside the purview of clergy. Over time, significant numbers of Innovative Catholics would come to consider themselves to be moral beings in their own right.

The reforms to classical social morality also inspired many Innovative Catholics to give specialised service to the poor, the marginalised and victims of injustice. They formed social justice committees and focused on educating others about the needs of the vulnerable and the importance of empowerment and justice. Some also turned the ideas about justice inward to the Church and demanded structural reform. They called for greater community involvement underpinned by the active participation of its members and

encouraged leadership and decision making that represented diverse and local views. Innovative Catholics recognised within the council documents a contemporary social morality which they were keen to promote and practise.

### Post-Conciliar Popes and Morality

Pope Paul VI (1963–78) published two encyclicals on two issues that he did not want discussed at the Second Vatican Council. The first of these was *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* (Priestly Celibacy) (1967), which maintained maleness and celibacy for priests. The second was *Humanae Vitae* (Human Life) (1968), which prohibited the use of artificial contraception and, more broadly, preserved the ideal of women as wives and mothers. Paul VI essentially maintained a classical sexual morality which allowed for little or no scope for the individual to exercise his or her conscience, rendering any variation to the teaching as immoral. The other implication was that ordinary people lacked the intellectual capacity to make moral decisions in this area of their lives and were vulnerable to sexual urges.

Both encyclicals were unexpectedly rebuffed. Many priests and Religious left their posts to marry, and an overwhelming number of lay Catholics, including those who asserted their loyalty to the Church in other teachings, rejected the arbitrary regulation of their sexuality and family size. The rejection of *Humanae Vitae* proved to be an enduring catalyst for dismantling a classical sexual morality, as Enda explains, *It was for many the first time that [Catholics] seriously doubted the authority of the Church. . . . Suddenly and with much pain, adult Catholics were forced to think for themselves on an issue they knew a lot about. Then they began doing it on other issues.* Innovative Catholics moved away from an acceptance of a fixed human nature and gave greater attention to their experience and the historical and cultural context in which they found themselves (McBrien 1994, 962).

Like his predecessor, Pope John Paul attempted to restore a classical morality, thus muting conciliar teaching on conscience and returning it to an emphasis on the conformity of right conscience to what the Magisterium teaches (Briggs 1998, 30). The Pope made his teaching particularly known in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (Splendour of Truth, 1993), contending that natural law has a fundamental clarity for every age and human culture. One inference was that there could be no moral evolution, only the discovery of an objective moral truth. Another was that the free exercise of conscience disconnected from moral law is both destructive of the human condition and of society because the right to self-determination undermines the common good. The individual was to acquiesce to the direction of the Magisterium, which accordingly, never errs in its moral judgement because it is not vulnerable to the ignorance of the subjective conscience.

Pope Benedict was also critical of moral ideas and behaviours which differed from those of the Magisterium, arguing that these threatened social norms and undermined the transcendent order, leaving people vulnerable to

chaos and evil (Meichtry 2005). He expressed his criticism whenever there was a relaxation or revision of the Church's moral law in society, believing these efforts were necessary to prevent the collapse of civic morality. Any bid to negotiate nuanced or different moral positions, such as those informed by an individual's conscience and practical reason (in which cultural demands and personal circumstances are taken into account) and claims to religious freedom and human rights, were dismissed as a dilution of moral law (DeCosse 2012). As for a classical social morality, Pope Benedict argued in *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) that justice was the defining concern of the state and the central concern of politics—and not of the Church, which has charity as its central concern. The Church's role was to inform the debates about justice and provide moral and spiritual formation for those in politics, whereas the laity was to take into account guidance given by clergy and pursue justice in civil society.

### The Reflexive Production of the Ethical Self

When the increasingly centralised control of morality worked against them, Innovative Catholics launched their own search for a code of conduct which would bolster the value of the individual and work towards greater equality. They gave that quest form in an intention to work on the self by subjecting it to an alternative standard of moral approval, which they consider exists in modern life. By focusing on the self, they could evaluate their own ethical conduct, from which they could then revise an understanding of moral agency (Robinson 2011). This self-forming activity has its purpose in directing the individual self towards becoming a moral being and producing moral conduct. In this bid to re-create a consistent standard of behaviour, they effectively contend that morality is not established a priori, as is claimed by the custodians of a classical morality. Rather, a moral code emanates from the particularity of the ethical self who works towards a general code of conduct.

In determining how they might compose themselves as ethical subjects, Innovative Catholics look to moral sources that have the capacity to produce conviction. That search has resulted in their demoting the place of official statements produced by the Popes. They may read them, insofar as some are interested and like to be informed by what has been said, but they tend not to consider them as having the last word on what constitutes morality. Some, though, ignore them altogether, as Miriam indicates: *I'm not interested in whatever [the Pope] has to say as his life experience is so far removed from mine.* They have grown tired of waiting for what they consider an adequate response to various life issues.

As an alternative, some go to the Bible as an original source of moral inspiration. Miriam, for example, reads the Bible daily along with a locally produced Catholic commentary. A few also pointed out that this activity was encouraged by the Second Vatican Council and stipulated in the document,

the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) (Vatican II 1965a, 111–128). The Church Fathers had revised the long-held view that revelation comes from the dual sources of Scripture and tradition, claiming instead that it emanates from the single source of the Gospel, or “the word of God,” which was said to be contained in both Scripture and “the faith and life of the Church.” They had affirmed its central and fundamental place in Catholic belief, worship and teaching, settled some outstanding questions on principles of interpretation and encouraged a biblical revival (Murray 2004).

Additionally, Innovative Catholics recall that as young students, they were exposed to biblical principles. Miriam recounted how the Bible was not considered a primary source during those years but was regarded as a supplement to the *Catechism*. When it was studied directly, it *was always guided by the nuns; you would never interpret it by yourself, and it very much focused on moral behaviour*. Since then, she has given appraisal to these principles and their application. Miriam now personally determines that select biblical principles are a basis for conducting one’s own self in relationship to others in religion and society: *They operate as guidelines in so far as how you are to treat people. It’s a relational thing*. Stephen made a similar case when he identified the Ten Commandments as a basis for constituting the ethical self: *Most people understand that there are some basic underlying rules. . . . You don’t steal, lie, kill; you don’t bad-mouth somebody; honesty is important*. In appropriating this moral source for the purpose of constituting present-day conduct, Stephen declares that it is an unproblematic course of action for the self.

Another characteristic of their scriptural selections is that they tend to focus on types of social behaviour that can be broadly applied. For example, Basil, once a priest and now married with adult children, referred to the biblical passage as a basis for ethical living, *to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God*.<sup>2</sup> He added, *[Today,] we are tending to get down to limited basics*. In advancing the most basic instruction, they maximise their capacity to recognise themselves as moral agents capable of ethically negotiating a range of relationships with complex individuals who hold diverse beliefs and values. *It’s about [giving scope to] valuing and respecting people*, said Miriam. Innovative Catholics are convinced that these codes of conduct are sufficient and relevant for constituting the ethical self. They commonly choose scriptural codes, but in their application, they deviate from the demands of Popes to use them in ways that uphold a classical morality. Instead, Innovative Catholics accommodate these ancient codes in ways that produce an ethical individual who lives and relates to others in the context of a pluralist democracy (as will be elaborated in Chapter 6).

## Communicating Ethical Substance

When Innovative Catholics revise the code of conduct, they assert the freedom to be a moral being (Robinson 2011). But that freedom comes at a cost.



They are often anxious about the implications of their conduct, compelling them to constantly monitor the self to make sure it communicates ethical substance. Emma, for instance, uses Christian meditation to refine her preferred mode of conduct. *I like to be in a place of simplicity, poverty and humility. Even though it doesn't sound attractive, it's very freeing. And you come back to what Paul said: "When I am weak then I am strong."<sup>3</sup> . . . You get more clarity about what is real and important, and your priorities become much clearer.* Emma acknowledges the difficulties of being ethical. She is often tempted to shop *for things I don't need* and to indulge herself with *too much food and drink*. To alleviate the lure of these enticements, she uses meditation to compose disciplines that assist her in their avoidance. In her act of prayer, Emma deflects herself away from narcissistic behaviour that would otherwise weaken her resolve to lead a principled life.

Sean also demonstrates a concern for demonstrating ethical substance. He considers such anxiety about one's own moral conduct cannot be fully alleviated if it is not grounded in a personal response to real and concrete situations.

*When Christians speak of spirituality, it is to this inward quest they usually refer. However, the spiritual world can be dangerous—it can be a harmful diversion from the living God, from the demands of justice, from engagement with reality. . . . Any spirituality which does not incorporate social involvement is to that extent false. Similarly, social and environmental action which lacks a solid theoretical base and a persistent reflective dimension is not only phony but dangerous.*

Sean claims that the preoccupied self can be spiritually counterproductive. Without an expansion of consciousness, which is gained from social involvement, there is a danger of the ethical code becoming truncated and bogus. For him, the constituting of the ethical self has its direction and purpose in social and environmental action.

### Undertaking Ethical Work

When Innovative Catholics speak of ethical work, they refer to those activities that moderate the self. These practices of restraint and denial indicate a willingness to engage in the moral reform of religion and society. Lydia, for example, chose not to continue with her lucrative profession, replacing it with work in a Catholic aid and development agency: *I don't need any more than I've got. We've got a comfortable house; we have three meals a day; my children have all moved. So why would I want to work in a commercial environment just to earn money?* Lydia identified the moral motivation for her ethical choice in *the Gospel, [which is] absolutely core and central. If we're not seeking justice, and not trying to transform the world, then we haven't heard the Gospel. To me, there's nothing else; that's what it is.* Lydia trained herself

to resist the social doctrines of materiality and consumption, turning herself away from what she now considers a superficial life to one that has personal and social significance. In her ethical work, she communicates a social message as to how the individual self might work towards a principled life.

Pauline, an Innovative Meditator, provides another example of the importance of undertaking ethical work from the different perspective of intense introspection. By immersing herself in meditative prayer, she said, *You do become aware of the flotsam and jetsam that comes up . . . [but] you sort of put them aside and you go back to the mantra* (which is commonly *Ma-rana-tha* (Aramaic for “Come Lord”). In this work, Pauline subjects herself to the moral authority of Jesus. In putting this exemplary figure at the centre of her attention, she creates a basis from which to compare and deal with those mental and emotional states of the self that are considered morally suspect.

Pauline reported that one consequence of her ethical revision is a simpler and slower-paced life. *We have made busyness such a virtue*, she said, *that people look askance and say “I am too busy to pray.” [That’s a] pity, because if we all slowed down and became more thoughtful, it would change the way we view the world.* Pauline considers that secular citizens, in having distanced themselves from religion or God, have restricted opportunities for undertaking ethical work. As a result of her own, she has been able to resist the exterior dictates of moving hastily and living on the surface of social life. Moreover, the effects of her efforts broadcast the message that time spent in penetrating the depths of the self and savouring inner experience has transformative value for the human person.

## The Goal of Self-Realisation

The goal of the ethical self is to realise an ideal state of being, which for Innovative Catholics, is reflected in their desire to advance social equality, although they are not unaware of the utopian proportions of their objective (Robinson 2011). Many recall memories of earlier decades and how difficult it was to give concrete form to their aim. Back then, they had the vision and hope that positive change could be implemented. Their idealism seemed boundless and open-ended. *All we had to do was get everyone educated and converted, and that was just a matter of time*, said Catherine. Those dreams have since been scattered; *we are faced with the same battles and increasingly so*, she said. *The rich-poor divide is escalating, women still hit glass ceilings, minorities continue to be persecuted [and] environmental degradation is rife. And then there is religion!* In hindsight, Innovative Catholics realised that they had been naïve and had lacked experience and insight. Nevertheless, they continue to maintain ideals that are bolstered somewhat by the thought of alarming alternatives. Today, they approach their idealism with an understanding that change is complex and difficult to navigate.

In the pursuit of their ideals, some resist obsessive attitudes and moderate their energies so as to sustain revised commitments. One group of advocates

who work at the centre (as mentioned in Chapter 4), for instance, stop work at 3 p.m. every Friday and engage in convivial activities. As Eileen said, *[These gatherings are] fundamentally important because this work never ends. It is very easy for people to get caught up in the importance of what they're doing and burn out.* She recognises that ethical work does not mean eliminating all of one's desires or pleasures. Another volunteer quipped, *The Messiah came two thousand years ago*, implying that she, alone, does not have to *save the world*. These respondents indicate that being compulsive could jeopardise their work, and thus, recreation and rest are considered necessary for persisting with their goals.

The goal of self-realisation is commonly expressed in metaphors of smallness and constancy which are used to regulate the pace of ethical work. Miriam, an Innovative Meditator, describes such formation as being like a *small drop of water that's wearing away the stone—it's a drip, drip, drip thing—so meditators contribute in minute ways to increasing levels of consciousness in society by the presence of our being in our interactions with others.* Lydia has a similar view. As an Innovative Advocate for the vulnerable and poor, she has become acutely aware of huge inequalities both near and afar. It is a situation that she feels compelled to attend, *Some of us have got to try to correct the imbalance*, she said. *I might be going nowhere, but at least I'll die thinking, "Well, I tried." . . . In fact that's what I want on my tombstone: "She tried!"* Such metaphors indicate how piecemeal efforts contribute to the making of an ethical self. Innovative Catholics like Miriam and Lydia take it upon themselves to emulate their goal of revising religious and social norms. In that endeavour, they not only self-direct their efforts, they also communicate how the less fortunate might prosper. In these attempts, they manage the ethical self in relation to others in meaningful ways so as to exercise authority and influence over time.

### Caring for the Self

Innovative Catholics take a particular position on what the care of the self might mean and are critical of the idea that it involves an exclusive focus on "me." Similarly, they question the collective approach to caring for the person. They generally consider the conventions to be limited in that they establish ranked categories of care. For example, women are commonly expected to care for others before themselves; men are expected to put aside individual aspirations to provide for others. Innovative Catholics, instead, prefer a nuanced approach to self-care, as Donald indicates, *I think I've had to learn to be more selfish in order to just have the ambition to move forward in my life . . . selfish in the sense that I'm not going to focus so much on other people and their needs but on my needs—not that I'm ignoring other people or neglecting them but just getting more of a balance.* Previously, Donald took the ideal of self-sacrifice, as advanced in a classical morality, so seriously that he denied himself self-advancement. But he has

since learnt to moderate this perspective midway between “me” and “we.” He is now convinced that the care of the self happens best in a mutual relationship, underscored by a sense of equality.

Several Innovative Catholics also emphasised the relational character of caring for the self. Catherine said she now has *a much more fertile, alive and holistic way of seeing the world and understanding my place in it, my connectedness with all of creation*. Her vivid sense of cosmic attachment to a single reality communicates the idea that the well-being of one element is dependent on the well-being of other elements. Hugh, likewise, said, *Whoever holds on selfishly to life will lose it; whoever knows how to surrender it generously will create more life. It's not hard to prove. Whoever lives exclusively for his or her well-being, money or success ends up living an average and barren life. Whoever dares to live openly and generously advances life, radiates joy and helps others to live*. Hugh recognises in this paradox that living exclusively for one's own self can lead to ruin, whereas limiting personal advancement can result not only in the common good but in one's own good. Innovative Catholics avoid the extremes of asceticism and indulgence in the hope of achieving a balanced reciprocity between the care of self and the care of other. They do not choose the dualistic “either/or” but attempt to embrace a unifying “both/and.” In realising this equilibrium, they assert that personal risk and material limits are necessary for making meaningful connections and maximising relationships.

### Emphasising Values

During fieldwork, I recognised that Innovative Catholics tended to use the term “values” rather than “morality.” Myles, a retired educator and trained philosopher, provided an explanation as to why. *You are probably going to run into conflict with modern people . . . when you try and put up an inflexible set of beliefs that are morally binding than if you start off with general core values such as relationships. . . . You're likely to get more agreement on values than you are on beliefs*. Myles suggests that modern citizens consider morality to be synonymous with dogma or irrational thought, which undercuts any need for convincing others of its merit. Values, on the other hand, are recognised as being flexible and able to be negotiated rationally.

The emphasis on values rather than morality also suggests an ongoing revision of the code of conduct in religion and society. As we have seen, the ethical self detaches values from classical morality and internalises them to navigate through moral change and crisis. One group of Innovative Catholics exemplifies well how values have become pre-eminent. At the Centre for Justice, advocates are inspired by a set of core values: *Presence, Compassion and Liberation*, which are inscribed on their stationery, posters, website and the front door of the building. Every time a person enters the premises, these values act as a silent herald and subtle subtext for subsequent encounters. They stipulate an idiosyncratic selection of what advocates and

visitors consider they “ought” to want to do or request. As “conceptions of the desirable,” values influence and shape choices to be made and practised (Graeber 2001, 1, 3). They frame principles of action which are judged to be legitimate or acceptable and worthwhile.

The core values of the centre are the consequence of a constructive tension between the idealism of faith and the realism of honest insight. David, a Christian Brother and volunteer at the centre, recounted how these values were chosen. *When I joined the brothers in the 1960s, they hardly talked about Edmund Rice. . . . In the 1940s, the brothers found out that he was a married man with a child. That was a bit of a shock [for celibate men], so they kept that pretty quiet!* As the founder of the Christian Brothers, Edmund Rice (1762–1844) did not conform to established ideas of the perfect Religious. But in the late twentieth century, at the height of revelations of child sexual abuse in the Religious order, the historical details of Rice’s life were once again disinterred to confront systemic difficulties and determine new pathways.

Edmund Rice had demonstrated moral authority in the face of considerable hardship. He had been deeply affected by the death of his wife and injury to their only child, the result of which led him to use his substantial wealth to alleviate the plight of the poor. He also overcame many political, religious and social difficulties when establishing schools for underprivileged boys. Nearly two centuries later, such hardships resonated with the brothers. They were deeply affected by the aforementioned scandal and, as a consequence, were determined to use their remaining assets to attend the needs of the contemporary poor and disadvantaged. In endeavours to reconstitute themselves as moral beings, they recognised and appropriated what they determined were the values of Edmund Rice:

first . . . a radical faith in the divine presence in his own life; the second, a profound sense of the dignity of every human person; and, the third, a heightened sensitivity to the poor and marginal. . . . We can [then] speak of a charisma which highlights the primacy of God (presence), cultivates a communal ethic of care (compassion), and is committed to humanised action based on justice (liberation).

(McLaughlin 2006, 2007)

In valorising idioms of *Presence, Compassion and Liberation*, the brothers not only rejuvenated the moral basis of their service, they also switched from an emphasis on traditional roles to one that advanced the ethical self. This ideal individual is required to develop an internal authority underpinned by core values that aim to bring about just relations.

The brothers have since advanced the role of these values in their mission, essentially sidelining classical morality. One consequence is that they have been able to attract a broad range of people to the centre. These advocates are not obliged to subscribe to the expectations of an external and single

moral authority, as exemplified in the hierarchical Church. Observance of a classical morality is left to the discretion of each individual person. Another result is that the brothers can be flexible in their mission and ministry. It is a priority to which Brendan attributes great importance, *Today, it's about meeting immediate needs*, he said, *rather than pushing the party line*. Their values are directed to contemporary concerns, which are not necessarily those of the hierarchical Church.

The brothers are not the only people producing values at the centre. Helena was a child of postwar migrants who had arrived in Australia with only their suitcases. She became a primary school teacher, specialising in the education of disadvantaged children, and pursued a later interest in community education. In 2003, Helena visited the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. *I was gobsmacked*, she said. *I had no idea that this was happening. I went in and met a young man. I listened to his story and put a human face to it. It just changed everything. . . . It opened my eyes. I remember, afterwards, sitting outside and looking at the razor wire, thinking, "This is wrong. This is Australia. This is a detention centre. These are human beings."* During this intense encounter, Helena was deeply affected by the disjuncture between the humanity of the detained person and the inhumane conditions of the detention centre. *Migrants like those who come here today, they're starting out. Some don't even have suitcases. My heart goes out to them. I think [to myself], "You want a new life just like my parents did."* Her empathy for the plight of the refugee created both continuity with her own migrant heritage and discontinuity in the radically different outcomes. Her parents had been welcomed. This young man was not. The disparity signified an immense gulf between how she, herself, valued Australia and the reality of its policy of imprisoning asylum seekers.

Fuelled by moral indignation, Helena undertook postgraduate studies in Catholic social teaching and human rights. This not only contributed to her understanding of the plight of asylum seekers but also provided a source of systemised values which she, as an ethical self, could internalise. She then became a volunteer at the centre, which provided communal support for her egalitarian aspirations and an opportunity to work closely with the disenfranchised, including refugees. By giving structural shape to her effervescing values, Helena has been able to communicate a direct effect of her transformation as a moral being.

The values Helena holds to are not singularly hers. They are similar to those held by others who work at the centre. *All people here are involved in different things*, she said. . . . *We feel like we are all on the same wavelength from the point of view of what we are doing, and what motivates us in what we do, and why we're here* [my emphasis]. In identifying with other advocates, and in creating a dynamic basis for solidarity, Helena consolidates her values in a shared morality. Values, as principles of conduct, not only connect the ethical self to other ethical selves; they also have the potential to produce a cooperative "we." And once values are collectively affirmed, they

begin to take on an objective character; that is, they are able to stand outside of the self and act as a moral guide for the collective.

### **Ratzinger: Subordinating Values to Morality**

Cardinal Ratzinger, subsequently Pope Benedict, was well aware of the propensity of modern citizens to prioritise values and sought to arbitrate that preference by subordinating values to a classical morality. In 2004, he made an address to the Italian Senate which summarised his proposal to have included in the European Union's Constitution, a reference to Europe's Christian heritage. In the attempt to restore classical morality, Ratzinger traced a cultural and religious lineage of "moral values" to the transformative effects of Christianity, structured in a hierarchical Church, on the Roman Empire. He noted, though, that the legacy of the original lineage was jeopardised by the split between Protestants and Catholics and the French Revolution, which produced two separate models: the dominant secular model founded on reason and the restricted religious one confined to the private sphere "of feelings and not that of reason." Ratzinger argued that the severance of religion from the moral foundations of Europe had grave consequences, most notably in the moral sufferings of the twentieth century, the globalisation of secularism, and a resistance to having children to secure the future. Nevertheless, the continuity of classical morality had remained pure, he said, albeit jeopardised by alien values and the lack of deference.

Ratzinger, thereafter, argued that Europe, in having turned away from the religious path, had replaced it with a materialistic and atheistic philosophy of history that, as a source of alien values, had promoted a secular morality that aligned itself uncritically to social pursuits. As a radical deviation from "the overall moral tradition" of "man," Europe had produced a negative morality where there were no constraints on the endless activity of so-called improvement or development (Ratzinger 2004). Thereafter, he argued for the necessity of a universal morality from which all values can be adjudicated to ensure social cohesion. Because reason alone had failed to produce a coherent code of conduct, the hope for Europe was in a present mindfulness of its historical roots and particularly its religious foundation. He added that any strength Europe had was due to a residue of "old moral conscience" which could make moral consensus possible.

Having sketched a bleak picture of harmful moralities and delinquent values, Ratzinger went on to assert the importance of inserting into the constitution elements of a morality that is rooted permanently in a primordial alliance between the Christian faith and Roman and Greek thought. Such a foundation, he argued, has produced the non-negotiable values of human dignity and human rights, which though not synonymous with classical morality, are similar and share a claim to divine origins. These values were under threat from, among other things, genetic engineering and modern slavery.

Ratzinger also made mention of the social foundation of heterosexual marriage in the reproductive function but which he saw was being imperiled by “homosexual union.” He argued forcefully for a classical morality that maintained the traditional family whose proper function was as a domestic unit of the community in which human dignity, human rights and the value of the individual were to remain subordinate. Ratzinger concluded his address with both a prediction that “a Godless world has no future” and a statement of hope that orthodox Christian religious citizens could act as a creative force for restoring the vitality of classical morality.

### Negotiating Values in Religion and Society

Frank Purcell, an Innovative Reformer and scholar of religion, proposes a set of values which he considers has objective merit in providing a vibrant and contemporary basis for solidarity. He draws these values from collective experience and social practice in the nation-state of Australia, as compared to those which Cardinal Ratzinger has advanced and tied to authority and belief. Purcell makes his recommendations in his exploratory essay “The Best of Australian Values: An Integral Part of Australian Catholicism” (2011). He, like Ratzinger, initiates his argument for a reinvigorated morality in a genealogy that can be traced to the primordial roots of Greek philosophy. He then adroitly draws on a related argument in which he contends that reason plays a role in determining faith, a claim that is secured in an idea originally proposed by Ratzinger as Benedict XVI (2006) that *the best of Greek thought is an integral part of the Christian faith*. Purcell then adapts this thought to a different context, hence, *the best of Australian values [are] an integral part of Australian Catholicism*. In adjusting this assertion for his own purposes, Purcell advances the Australian-Catholic nexus from which he proceeds to build his case.

In promoting his idea of how Catholicism might refresh its relationship with society, Purcell connects reason to action, challenging Catholics to be evangelists through the witness of their enterprise informed by *radical inculturation*.<sup>4</sup> Such endeavours are, accordingly, to be found in shared identification and interpretation: *This involves [Catholicism] becoming part of, influencing and assisting Australian society in growing to be an ever more compassionate, just and egalitarian society*. He illustrates this bridge-building exercise with three stories which represent inculturated encounters between religious practitioners and social citizens. The first narrative reflects hope in the face of loss and grief. In this example, Purcell recounts the unwavering hope of a dying mother that her terminally ill son returns to Christianity. He did then die. The doctor, who had never witnessed deaths like that of these two Christians, asked, *What is it?* Purcell responds, *Had he experienced their sense of hope from their belief in the risen Christ?*

The second story endorses an encompassing lifestyle that reduces self-centredness, provides healing and promotes health and well-being. Purcell



recalls how early Christians recognised that their religion was not only superior to that of the discredited, *selfish, traditional gods*, but its ethos of care enabled many to survive threats, oppression and persecution. The third encourages a productive alliance between religion and society. In this example, Purcell highlights how *St. Paul built his presentation of the good news on [the] encounter . . . between genuine non-Christian enlightenment and Christianity [which] took place within Greek culture*. In advancing three summarising values of tender-heartedness, emancipation and mutuality, Purcell demonstrates how connections can be reinvigorated by promoting religion in ways that contribute and enrich social life. Whereas these values may already be operating within society, the purpose of religion is to vivify them.

Purcell then explores the other side of inculturation, where religion learns from society. The core values of the nation-state, he said, have their roots in earlier religious and secular influences. *[They] are implied in the title of Australia's federal system—the Commonwealth of Australia, [which] flows from the Westminster political system and follows from Australia's acknowledgment of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights: a commitment to the common good, the sovereignty of the people, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, equality of all under the law, and a separation of Church and state*. In recognising a common base of values and having adapted them in light of new knowledge and cultural developments, the nation-state has been able to maintain a vital code of conduct. The hierarchical Church, in contrast, has resisted developing its structures by refusing to countenance an evolution in thought and practice. Purcell contends that this inertia has alienated many Catholics and produced a *lack [of] credibility in [the Church's] relationship with the wider community*.

Purcell next addresses sexual morality. He asserts that, with the exception of a morality that upholds human or individual dignity, the classical code is subject to *uncertainty, conflict and confusion* and has limited social application. Church leadership should confine itself to focusing on the *conscientisation of its members and of society generally on the principles and basic values needed for "building a society worthy of man."* Purcell proposes a new structure for how religion operates in society, moving Catholicism away from a position that assumes a monopoly on morality to one that plays its part alongside other social institutions in modifying personal behaviour. Religion should function as one institution among others that inspires individuals and groups to act benevolently and beneficently towards one another.

Purcell concludes his essay with examples of values in the nation-state which he considers should be inculturated into Catholicism. Firstly, it has a separation of powers among the three branches of government (the ministry, the legislature, and the judiciary). The hierarchical Church, in comparison, is controlled by the single authority of the Pope. Purcell argues that the Church should introduce checks and balances to institutional power.

Secondly, freedom of speech is considered fundamental to guaranteeing civil liberty and protects the individual's ability to think, speak and write. Popes, in contrast, constrain that freedom to orthodoxy. Purcell asserts that these limitations and prohibitions must be lifted because they *weaken the quality of public debate in civil society [and] undermine the credibility of the Church's moral teaching on other important issues and, with that, the quality of democracy*. He contends that it is imperative that these suppressions be removed. The ability to exercise these freedoms would facilitate the exploration of the possibility of a consensus of belief among religious citizens and expand their range and capacity to contribute to contemporary moral debates and social development.

### A Hybrid Sexual Morality

Innovative Catholics, in exercising two elements of principled living in the cultivation of the ethical self and in proposing dynamic values, direct these codes towards a contemporary morality. Unlike that of recent Popes, who have a preference for fixity, they contend that morality is being revealed constantly in history and culture. In the area of sexuality, some respondents reported that they had included scientific knowledge in their moral evaluations, as exemplified by Freud, Jung, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and Hite. A few also identified themselves by their gender, sexual status and sexual orientation: ethical categories that communicate greater complexity in the human condition compared to that acknowledged by Catholic orthodoxy. Thus, for example, "female," "woman" and erotic inclination can no longer be conflated or contained in "wife" and "mother." A few also indicated they have gay and lesbian children, relations and friends and accept these identities not only as authentic but also as moral. Some also referred to sexuality in relation to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, and the inevitable conclusion in an overpopulated planet and devastated environment.

Innovative Catholics take the view that as humanity learns more about the world and its condition, so too does moral truth become more apparent. In this evolution, human reason plays an important component in the determination of morality. In opposition to classical morality, which is concerned with what is already known, their moral focus takes into account the complexity of individuals, their capacity to make moral judgements and concrete realities. Hence, in determining morality, they tie conscience, formed less by abstract doctrine and more by experience, to reason. In selecting perceived qualities, Innovative Catholics attempt to increase moral vigour in religion and society.

When Innovative Catholics criticise classical sexual morality, they argue that it inhibits Church and society from benefitting from the breadth of attributes an individual self has or can develop. For example, from the perspective of the hierarchical Church, Pauline has fulfilled the expectations of daughter, wife and mother. She cares for her ailing parents and in-laws;

her marriage is stable and loving, and she has mothered her children well. She was also once considered a pillar of the parish. But from Pauline's anti-structural viewpoint, she experiences the rules of conduct that bind her to a traditional notion of being female as stifling.

*In the Church the very language is a starting point of discrimination—[the] exclusive male-directed language, particularity in relation to the divine [suppresses the female.] Over the years, having heard and earlier on taken on all the guff about weak, uneducated, helpless, or temptress “woman,” [and] the whole subservient “Mary” mythology . . . I know I react [to this] out of my femaleness, not my individual self. The antennae are highly tuned to discriminatory texts, examples, descriptions and so on. I feel affronted as a woman too often in Church situations. So I moved on out of self-respect!*

In revising her understanding of morality, Pauline now considers her femaleness to be one attribute among many she possesses. She no longer considers that she as an individual should be circumscribed by traditional notions of being a woman. Such limits are viewed negatively insofar as they can constrain a person's capability, character and integrity.

Pauline's revised moral position has been influenced by her participation in secular society. *The contrast [between the Church and] the secular world (whilst not perfect re woman) makes it all the more stark and archaic, she said, the bitter irony being that if the Church valued women and “let” women participate on equal terms, the whole [Church] may have flourished.* Pauline, like many women and increasing numbers of men, believe that the current constraints of a classical morality are unconscionable. Women do the bulk of the work to maintain most parishes. They outnumber men in theology and spirituality courses. Women predominate in non-sacramental ministries. Yet, the extent of their experience, training and devotion remains under-acknowledged, under-utilised and under-valued. Other individuals, such as those who are homosexual or in unconventional relationships, are similarly restricted. Innovative Catholics consider a person's gender and sexual orientation and often their sexual status to be secondary to their ability to minister. In short, a classical morality is looked upon as having a deleterious effect on mission and service.

Nevertheless, Innovative Catholics do not consider that the moral code they prescribe for the individual has equivalence to that of the individual as advanced in secular society. They generally question the way in which the secular code sexualises the human person. Pauline says,

*You don't see too many blokes doing what Lady Gaga did in that raunchy display . . . completely naked on a large ball . . . supposedly to sell her new album. Trouble is they do sell . . . and give “mixed signals” . . . to say nothing of making it seem normal behavior. . . . [Then there is] all*

*the “sexting” that seems to be required [from a girl] to hook and keep a boy—[they] then get dumped . . . [and] explicit images of the girl [are] flashed around their mates . . . or the sexualising of young girls [as in the sale of] trainer bras for eight-year-olds.*

Pauline considers these sexualised identities to be destructive in that they reduce the complexity of the human person to sexual preoccupations. Such identities promote “me-ism,” encourage self-satisfaction with little or no regard for those who are sexually objectified and restrict the breadth and quality of intimate connections. Innovative Catholics, instead, assert a contemporary morality that cultivates the well-being of the complex individual in mutual relationships. In this approach to morality, they advance the idea that the individual not only has moral rights but also moral responsibilities.

### A Hybrid Social Morality

Innovative Catholics recognise that the Church has long been active in the care of the poor and disadvantaged. But they also consider that the particular emphases which Popes John Paul and Benedict have given to morality have been a distraction. As Peter said, *You get all sorts of pronouncements of the evils of peoples’ sex lives, but you hear bugger all about the need to defend the human rights of the world’s most vulnerable people, which I thought was a fundamental message of the Gospel.* Peter, an Innovative Advocate who has directed much of his adult life to expanding opportunities for the marginalised, is discouraged by a generalised inaction of the Catholic community and hierarchy to attend entrenched unfairness, prejudice and inequality. It is a complaint that Peter himself tries to overcome. *[It’s about] getting back to the main game of proclaiming a Gospel of life, of love and welcome.* Peter’s grievance is a plea to Catholics and others to redirect their attention from conservatism to pursuing a contemporary morality that demands an expanded religious and social consciousness.

The attention that Peter gives to social morality is also directed to secular society. In Australia, for instance, there is an increasing intolerance for asylum seekers, with these people being looked upon as irritants to social anxieties (Markus 2013, 41). One consequence of this narrowing attitude is the depersonalisation of the asylum applicant. Peter illustrates this strategy in his narrative about a father who had tried to protect his two daughters in Afghanistan. He failed. They were killed. The remaining members of the family fled and made their way to Australia by boat. When the father told the story to immigration officials, it was dismissed, which worked to undermine their application for asylum. *[They are] faceless, nameless, numberless. . . . These people aren’t seen to be human,* said Peter. . . . *We just saw Rupert Murdoch sitting in the dock.<sup>5</sup> . . . There’s no barrier to him moving his money. But when it comes to moving people around, particularly people who are fleeing from oppression, all sorts of walls and barriers go up.*

Peter shows how the poor and vulnerable, who threaten a moneyed society, have their claims for entry voided. Conversely, the wealthy, who uphold a materialist morality, are welcomed. It is a situation he seeks to contradict in espousing an alternative code that values the human person regardless of his or her material worth. *We made a film*, he said, *and one of the things we did was put names to faces, faces to names, to find out who loves these people, who they love, and so on*. By promoting the personal, Peter hopes Australians will make subjective connections by seeing these people and their situations in new ways. By drawing attention to similarities between these people and Australian citizens, he anticipates some citizens will be compelled to address their plight.

Some Innovative Catholics also produce a contemporary morality that takes into account the environment. Eamon, in a conversation about social inclusion, reminded me of the problem of anthropocentrism. *There has to be a re-evaluation of the moral relationship between humans and the natural environment. Our greed has been devastating, and this marauding cannot continue. Not only is our survival threatened, so too is that of other species. We have to recognise the intrinsic worth of all living things*. Eamon propounds a morality which forges interspecies connection. He argues that the anthropomorphic effect should not simply be directed to conservation but also to establishing a code of conduct for the human person in relation to the environment.

Innovative Catholics regard classical and rational moralities as insufficient for promoting a moral code that accommodates significant changes in and across society and with regard to the environment. They often find it confusing and inconsistent to categorise one human person differently from another human person and have since moved on from exclusionary categories. Some also consider the same principle of consistency should be operative in interspecies relationships in the environment.

## Concluding Remarks

In their youth, Innovative Catholics were committed to upholding a classical morality, but developments in Church and society prompted them to revise that code as well as that of rational morality. In this task, they drew on selected moral sources to constitute the ethical self, communicate ethical substance, and sustain ethical work, incorporating also into this ethic the care of the self to attain a balanced reciprocity. Secondly, they detached values from classical and rational moralities in an attempt to produce and promote moral vigour. While Pope Benedict insisted on subordinating values to classical morality, Frank Purcell considers that hybridising of values has a role in reinvigorating morality. He argues that society can take from religion those values which enhance social life, whereas vice versa religion should accommodate a range of egalitarian values that are idealised in democratic society.

Innovative Catholics, in having selected and adapted values, propose a contemporary morality that asserts, firstly, the well-being of the complex individual, who in a relationship characterised by mutuality, has both moral rights and moral responsibilities. They also consider that all individuals have value and that this should be demonstrated in social action. Some also foster an encompassing moral code for the environment that goes beyond anthropocentrism. Innovative Catholics endeavour to promote a contemporary moral code for the modern citizen that reflects internal consistency and coherence across religious, social and environmental contexts.

In the next chapter I consider how codes of conduct are being structured in the administration of the Church.

## Notes

- 1 The Golden Rule refers to “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The Six Commandments of the Church include: to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; to fast and abstain on the days appointed; to confess at least once a year; to receive the Holy Eucharist during Easter time; to contribute to the support of our pastors; not to marry persons who are not Catholics or who are related to us within three degrees of kindred or privately without witnesses or to solemnise marriage at forbidden times. The Seven Sacraments include baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, Holy Orders, and matrimony. Gifts of the Holy Spirit include wisdom, understanding, right judgement, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (awe).
- 2 The quote is drawn from a biblical verse, Micah 6, 8.
- 3 The reference comes from the Bible, 2 Corinthians 12, 10: “For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
- 4 The specific term “inculturation” was used at the Second Vatican Council. Arrupe, cited in Arbuckle (2010, 167), defines inculturation as a process in which religious beliefs are manifested in a culture “in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming, and remaking it so as being about a ‘new creation.’”
- 5 Rupert Murdoch is a business magnate whose media enterprise is globally distributed. Murdoch is the thirty-third richest person in the US and the ninety-first richest person in the world, with a net worth of \$13.4 billion (Rupert Murdoch profile. *Forbes*, 2012) In 2011 Murdoch faced allegations that his companies had hacked the phones of citizens and has since been investigated by UK and US governments.

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## 6 Adapting Governance

*With regard to structures, acceptance of the collegiality of bishops [at the council] opened the way to the future, mainly because it meant that the voices of local communities of faith would be heard and their priesthood treated with due respect. Rearguard action to restore and maintain pre-Vatican structures has prevailed. This has been to the detriment of the Church as a whole which has lost its clergy, its status in the community and the younger generation. There are signs of hope in the deep and contemporary faith of many local communities. There are no signs of hope in the determination of the official Church to persist with its fundamental obsolescence.*

—Pat

*The papacy argues that the Church is not now, nor has it ever been, a democracy. . . . But in the twenty-first century, this obvious disregard of democratic principles is exasperating.*

—Margaret

*The papacy cannot presume to tell our democracy how it should be run if it is not prepared to do the hard work of being democratic itself.*

—Sophie

Innovative Catholics like Pat, Sophie and Catherine extend their ideas about identity and morality in a revision of the governance of the hierarchical Church. They have been confounded by its current arrangement as a complex autocracy, where Popes have “supreme and full authority over the universal Church” (*Catechism* 1994, 234). The form of administration, which is commonly referred to as “hierarchy,” is considered by recent Popes to be divinely sanctioned and absolutely necessary for the administration of the Church (D’Antonio 1994). Innovative Catholics, however, argue the necessity for democratic reforms, which have a further aim in overcoming structural disjunctions between Church and state.

The constitution of governance is not just contained in official forms of administration but is also instrumentalised in conventions that control the

production and dispersal of knowledge about the human condition. Recent Popes used autocratic mechanisms of surveillance to monopolise knowledge and its uses within the Church, with the result of maintaining community and hierarchy. Innovative Catholics, in contrast, use a variety of democratic mechanisms to create and distribute knowledge to shape and supervise the individual self and build personal relationships.

### Scriptural Tensions over Governance

The current tension between recent Popes and Innovative Catholics as to how the Church should be governed is illustrated by the way they respectively interpret biblical sources. These sources of knowledge purportedly stipulate how the primordial Christian community was governed and how that legacy is to be honoured and maintained.

The Popes, from the apex of the hierarchical Church, were able to sustain their preference for autocratic structures by arguing that it was Jesus Christ himself who founded a “college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed the Apostle Peter” (*Catechism* 1994, 233). In making the claim, they effectively crafted an image of Peter as the first Pope, a position which allegedly had a supernatural basis and provided a constant and enduring model for the administration of the Church. On this basis, recent Popes could assert their legitimacy as the respective “heads” because only they could claim to be the direct descendents of the first Pope. In validating this unilineal descent pattern, they were also able to restrict other claims made of Peter while exerting their extraordinary power and influence to govern the lives of others.

In contrast, some Innovative Catholics reject the way in which Popes have constructed the basis of Church administration. Catherine, for instance, said, *The idea that Peter, as a leader of a band of apostles and disciples, has any relation to the primacy of the Pope is, quite frankly, farfetched.* She contends that Christianity was primarily a religious movement which took shape in ancient rudimentary communities constituted in egalitarian membership. Catherine bolstered that view by asserting that there is no evidence of an autocracy in the early Church and that any continuity drawn from such a belief is baseless. She argues that the current administration glosses over a variety of ways in which the Church has been governed and, ergo, might be in the future. Such ideas are essentially drawn from historical sources and used to counter papal claims and promote their own. They recognise within these early Christian communities a diversity of leaders and administrative styles, some of which they draw upon and adapt to substantiate their own claims for democratic reforms.

Some draw attention to the Apostle Paul, identifying him as a liminal person and an exemplar of leadership. Paul experienced his conversion and authority on the road to Damascus,<sup>1</sup> where Jesus purportedly commanded him to seek instruction, subsequently embarking on a quest of founding small Christian communities. It is on this basis that Sean advances Paul as a

credible alternative to Petrine leadership. *Paul changed the whole direction of the Jesus movement*, he said. *Without him, we would be still in the Upper Room, all mummified!* Sean continued,

*Paul is a paradigm of mutual and respectful cooperation. We see how he was dependent on co-workers; [he] delighted at the success of others, like Peter or Apollos. He didn't see them as being in competition. . . . Paul had no concept of two classes of Christians—those who minister to and those ministered to. . . . between Jews/Gentile, slave/free, male/female. . . . [Paul] constantly adapted the proclamation to changing circumstances . . . [and his] leadership [was] through persuasion. Rarely does he “come the heavy.”*

Sean contends that the Apostle Paul exercised a form of leadership that reflected a more democratic approach to administration, thus asserting different possibilities for the Church.

In laying claim to democratic arrangements, Innovative Catholics represent the early Christian community as a progressive Jewish movement that took form in small communities with local administrations and a network of itinerant apostles. In using this rhetoric, they trace their lineage not to one ancestor but many. The implication is a multilineal descent pattern that suggests rule by the people rather than by one person or Pope. Early Christian communities are said to have been established on the basis of cooperation among members, with leadership resulting from and taking place within communities, not from above or outside. In emphasising these encompassing arrangements, Innovative Catholics assert the validity of alternative forms of governance for the contemporary Church where authority and control are diffuse.

## **An Historical Review of Governance**

The following brief history of the Popes provides a background to the struggles between recent Popes and Innovative Catholics. In the second century, efforts were made to present Christians as ideal citizens of the Roman Empire, resulting in the patriarchal ordering of communities. The pressure to conform was also reflected in Church administration which increasingly experienced an approximation with its imperial bureaucracy (Ruether 1998). At metropolitan and provincial levels, functionaries were originally elected by local clergy, popularly acclaimed by the laity and validated by regional assemblies of bishops (Bianchi 1993, 36–37). This process was similarly used to elect the Bishop of Rome or Pope, who essentially remained the local functionary. By the fourth and fifth centuries, Popes began asserting their claim to primacy over the whole Church, emulating the emperor's rule over the empire. Their religious influence grew with the commensurate accumulation of temporal power; they were given endowments of land and

inherited territories, enabling them to assert authority and control (Bokenkotter 2004, 84).

By the tenth century, threats to the papal stronghold took on major proportions. Aristocratic families challenged the Popes with their involvement in Church affairs (Bianchi 1993, 40). To counter their interference, Cardinals (clerics who reside in the Vatican and not in dioceses) were given the right to elect Popes. Over time, this resulted in the papacy becoming centralised, but such concentration of power proved unworkable. By the fifteenth century, a reform movement, armed with a theory of conciliarism, attempted to promote a democratic-like form of governance. This form of authority was to be based on a Church parliament, with the papacy reformed as a constitutional monarchy elected by and responsible to the parliament.

The Renaissance Popes resisted the conciliar reforms, reasserting their claim to absolute power. But in reality they were dependent on playing powerful Catholic monarchs, such as the French, Spanish and Austrians, against one another. The national episcopacies and Catholic princes largely controlled clerical appointments. Indeed, it was only when democratic revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries dismantled Catholic monarchies and separated Church from state, that the papacy could free itself from their influence. Nonetheless, democracy was viewed as a threat to Christianity and hostile to the Church. To counter its burgeoning power, Popes, *inter alia*, revised how they considered themselves, declaring themselves infallible (Bokenkotter 1998, 39–81).<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, episcopal appointments were made among trusted insiders and denied to those who seemed too liberal, while theologians, who challenged Popes, were silenced, judged and sometimes expelled (Bokenkotter 2004, 346–354).

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the Second Vatican Council tried to scale back the centralisation of papal power by promoting the image of “People of God,” signifying that the Church was primarily a community and that leadership was to be placed in it, not above. It also promoted the concept of collegial subsidiarity, thereby reorienting the relationship between the Pope and bishops, and introduced the Synod of Bishops to assist the Pope and to act in the name of all bishops (Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church [*Christus Dominus*]) (Vatican II 1965a). Collegiality had implications for how dioceses and parishes would run. In practice, Pope and bishops would confer through synods, bishops would consult with lower clergy through councils of priests, and priests would listen to the laity through parish councils. But as Paul Collins indicates, the council effectively merged two different and incompatible worldviews by grafting a democratic-synodal structure onto an autocratic-hierarchical Church (1997, 99). The first implies a sharing of power, while the latter uses power to dominate, a combination that would prove unworkable.

Pope John Paul was concerned to limit democratising ideas and actions in the post-conciliar Church, believing that the promotion of the “horizontal dimension” lacked redemptive capacity (John Paul II 1990). He made it

clear that he as Pope was the exclusive “heir to the mission of Peter” and the “perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity” (John Paul II 1995). From this peerless position, he introduced correctives in the restoration of multiple tiers of monitoring clergy. Cardinals, who formed the Roman Curia and assisted the Pope, oversaw all other bishops. Archbishops and bishops managed parish priests who, in turn, subjected subordinates to downward flows of information. In contrast, any Catholic who raised queries or highlighted problems had to travel up the chain of command. In pursuing this route, they invariably encountered clergy whose allegiance was to the hierarchy and ultimately the Pope. In summary, Pope John Paul and, later, his successor, Pope Benedict, were convinced of the necessity of autocratic administration, making sure that this deferential system was well insulated against democratising influences. They communicated to all that the only legitimate structure was one which recognised God as supreme leader, and the Pope, subordinate to “Him,” was the pre-eminent mediator, requiring of the human person total obedience (Rausch 2009, 45).

### **Conflicting Styles of Governance in Parishes**

The post-conciliar tension between autocratic and democratic styles of governance has been played out in the different ways that priests govern parishes. In the pre-conciliar parish, attention was focused on the cultic figure of the priest, whose sovereign position accorded him the almost exclusive right to produce homilies, make moral judgements and give directorial instructions. Such supervision assumed command and control of the lives of parishioners and produced an expectation of submission and compliance. During this era, “What would Father say?” was the common refrain of parishioners.

The Second Vatican Council drew back from this exaggerated position by acknowledging that “the faithful” had a “common priesthood” and that it was interrelated with “the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood” (Vatican II 1964, 26–27). The implication of a decreased distinction between clergy and laity was also signalled in the priest being redefined as “servant-leader” (Vatican II 1965c, 554–555, 563–565). This approach to leadership recognises the common basis to ministry, implying an intention of creating relationships of trust and helping non-clergy to learn, grow and develop into leaders themselves. In this commitment to the development of others, these servant-leader priests permitted and even encouraged experimentation, and where mistakes occurred, they resisted meting out punishment (Ebener 2010, 11–12).

In the post-conciliar era, newly liberalised priests modified their identities, refocusing attention away from themselves as priests to allow for an increased focus on motivated laypeople. These laity, who were given access to and shifted into positions of ministry and parish administration, moved from relative anonymity to being distinctive characters. As ministers in their

own right, they produced democratic discourse, not simply as a response to the directives of the council but as a result of interior scrutiny which focused on how best to give professional service. From this heightened sense of personal responsibility, civic engagement and sense of community, they applied their skills in a system oriented to giving pastoral care. From the perspective of a nascent democratic Church, these ministers considered the development a logical consequence to a religion open to the world.

The expansion of individualisation was taken a step further by the creation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) within parishes.<sup>3</sup> This new model encouraged parishioners to move from often large communities controlled by the discourse of the ordained to small groups which generated the discourse of the baptised. In Australia, Archbishop Leonard Faulkner of Adelaide (1985–2001) was instrumental in promoting a form of SCCs. In 1988, he renovated archdiocesan and parish structures to accommodate the “Neighbourhood Church.” Four professionals and hundreds of volunteers were recruited to assist in making these changes and persuade priests and parishioners to establish small groups. In SCCs, members were to reflect on and share details of their lives in the light of the Bible and, in so doing gain “support, direction and solidarity to live out their Christian mission in daily life” (Faulkner 2001). Two consequences were that they moderated the influence of papal pronouncements and advanced personal and local considerations. Members were more interested in speaking about themselves and conversing with others than listening to what was being said by clergy.

Pope John Paul and like-minded clergy considered SCCs to be too democratic and, therefore, questionable (Lernoux 1990, 95). They demanded that all innovations in parishes should operate within autocratic structures. Today, in the Archdiocese, SCCs are weakened by the top-down discourse of new leadership which works against that which is side by side. As one long-time participant observed, *I have found that many people are nervous expressing their own views too publicly. But in private conversation, you realise that many find the Church too closed on many of the issues that perhaps society has moved forward. Many do not take too kindly to the various directives from Rome because they don't fit with [our] culture.* Structural revisions have resulted in a return to a clerical monopoly and an anonymous laity, some of whom harbour existential questions and maintain residual resentment.

### Advancing a Democratic Alternative

From their anti-structural position, Innovative Catholics produce exploratory discourse, a prime example of which is articulated in *A Democratic Church* (2008) written by Max Charlesworth, to explore how the Church might integrate democratic elements. Charlesworth rejects the idea that the Church should retain an autocratic structure. He particularly criticises

the rhetoric of Pope Benedict, who holds the view that it is impossible for believers in a liberal democracy to determine what is meant by “Church.” They, according to the Pope, are limited to “a dictatorship of relativism . . . that recognises nothing definite and leaves only one’s own life and own desires as the final measure” (Benedict XVI cited in Charlesworth 2008, 8). Charlesworth, however, contends:

this is surely a very primitive view of democracy because, while it is true that the sovereignty of the people is basic to democracy as the source of its power, that sovereignty is exercised within a framework where there is a constitution that specifies the functions and powers of the government, a division of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, and where there is some kind of bill of rights (tacit or explicit) and an array of checks and balances to guard against . . . “the tyranny of the majority.” (2008, 8)

Charlesworth considers the excessive focus on the majority rule made by Pope Benedict fails to take into account the ideas that a democratised Church could impose limitations. The institutions of governance would require members to submit to a framework of restrictions that would insure against abuses of power. Such restraints would work to protect the Church from what the Pope implied are nihilistic consequences of democracy. Charlesworth does not argue for a simple reversal that would shift the Church from an autocratic form to an unqualified democracy. Instead, he urges a redistribution of power in a shared arrangement.

Charlesworth locates his vision of a democratic Church in the Second Vatican Council and with particular reference to its Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatus Humanae*), which emphasises that the act of religious faith is an act of individual conscience (Vatican II 1965b, 680–681). He continues, “One cannot hand over one’s judgement . . . wholly to another, for then one’s acts cease to be human and moral acts” (2008, 47). To be a mature human person, an individual must exercise his or her own conscience. The corollary is the immature person, who in giving unquestioned regard to others and in doing their bidding, is neither moral nor faithful. Charlesworth, thus, creates similitude between the way a liberal democratic society conceptualises the human person as being “free to follow their consciences and make their own life choices for themselves” and the manner in which a moral act can be made (2008, 12). As equal religious citizens, each person acts as ruler of the self, concomitant with the rights and privileges and responsibilities and duties associated with such sovereignty. The Church’s role, therefore, is to make available a repository of Christian experience from which the human person can draw abstract guidelines. These guidelines, along with other experiences and knowledge, are to be adapted to present particularities. They provide a basis for determining how an individual might live a moral and faithful life.

Charlesworth places great emphasis on the importance of the “liberty of the personal conscience” and its potential for expanding one’s ability to exercise self-determination and moral agency. This position, of course, runs counter to that of the papacy, which constrains the freedom of the religious believer to the direction of those in superior positions and, in so doing, positions moral policing outside the self in an “objective good.” Charlesworth argues that in reducing the “subjective,” there is a lessening of one’s ability to scrutinise “objective” positions, which results in undermining the development of an individual’s conscience. Nevertheless, Charlesworth does not advocate the exclusivity of “private judgement.” The development of the conscience means taking advice and factoring these recommendations into actions to produce a moral judgement. The resulting decision, at least ideally, neither privileges a collective morality nor an individualised morality. In a democratic Church, moral decisions are contextualised decisions. They have a hybrid character produced from combinations of abstract possibilities and local specificities.

Charlesworth acknowledges the limit of his discourse. He recognises the necessity to develop ecclesial institutions that would serve to expand thinking and learning needed for producing and sustaining a democratic Church. One such institution is education. The ideal of a dignified, equal person who is responsible for his or her own governance has to be promulgated and learnt through family and community education. Two other institutions he suggests should also be developed to ensure good governance: They are the political and the juridical, both of which are currently conflated in the Church. In the political institution, elections should be used to fill all administrative offices, including that of Pope and bishop (2008, 8). These elected offices should be constrained by limited terms. There should also be some sort of parliamentary system where adversaries can resolve conflicts. The reform would allow for greater participation of members and could work to alleviate clerical nepotism and poor performance. In the juridical court, all members should be considered equal in law, which would work to nullify current discriminations between, for example, clergy and laity, men and women (2008, 24–33). Charlesworth contends that in implementing these democratic structures of governance, the Church would be more transparent and accountable to its members and less susceptible to abuses of power.

Another democratic element that Charlesworth proposes be introduced is freedom of speech, which would serve to produce robust debate and revitalise and resituate religion in society. Firstly, scholars, who have produced critical knowledge and conclusions that differ from the current orthodoxy, would have to be included in spheres of influence to ensure a comprehensive appraisal of Church policies and doctrines. Secondly, the notion of freedom of speech should be extended to the ecumenical sphere and not confined to conservative Orthodox Churches, as is now the case. Charlesworth encourages dialogue or a *quid pro quo* process with other Christian denominations and religions, including indigenous forms (2008, 38–41). He envisages that



in this mutual exchange, Catholicism could engage imaginatively with the discourse of other religions to understand not just the other but something about its own worldview. Thirdly, as an outreach to a pluralist democracy, the Church should take its place alongside other religious bodies and social institutions with regard to moral or pastoral issues rather than assuming a privileged position (2008, 42).

### Recent Popes and Surveillance

The idea of governance is not confined to style but is also informed by assumptions about who should be in charge of knowledge and how it should guide and discipline the behaviour of the human person (Foucault 1977).<sup>4</sup> For centuries, Popes have controlled and commanded religious knowledge, believing that this approach is necessary for governing the human person. These rationales were further sustained by Catholics who assumed that Popes, bishops and priests have special access to arcane knowledge about God. In recent times, these hegemonic forces played to Pope Benedict's advantage. Known as the "teaching Pope," he regularly instructed "the faithful" to observe rules and regulations (Allen 2013). In communicating these lessons, he identified aberrations and corrected threats to orthodoxy. Bishops, in particular, were required to take their lead from the Pope and monitor their dioceses. In the event of discovering problems, they were to draw solutions not from local churches or the surrounding culture but from centralised directives. Coercive methods were then employed to ensure structural order was restored. Those to whom these directives were given were required to make an inner conversion to external expectations without complaint or opposition and irrespective of conscience, circumstance and situation.

The disciplinary texts of Popes are informed by the Quinquennial Report, which precedes and is part of the preparation for a bishop's *quinquennial visit ad limina* or five-yearly visit to the Vatican. This "visit" fulfils an obligation of residential diocesan bishops to meet the Pope to report on the state of their dioceses and has the effect of encouraging bonds between senior clergy and their sense of unity. According to Reese (1996, 242–43), before the visit each bishop and his staff fill out a detailed questionnaire which is divided into thirteen sections asking for information on (1) pastoral and administrative organisation, (2) the general religious situation, (3) the economic situation of the diocese, (4) liturgical and sacramental practice, (5) the clergy, (6) religious and secular institutes, (7) cooperation with the missions, (8) seminaries and universities, (9) Catholic education, (10) the life and apostolic action of the laity, (11) ecumenism, (12) social assistance, and (13) other pastoral questions. In addition, the report asks for statistical data on advisory councils, the tribunal, publications, the clergy and educational institutions.

The effect of the Quinquennial Report is reductive in that it objectifies the individual Catholic as a collective person or unit of the community. The

mechanism overlooks specificities such as personal character, contingent circumstances and cultural complexities, details which could be otherwise used to determine alternative categories and classifications. Moreover, the report is strictly one way (Reese 1996, 244). The data or its conclusions are not dispersed in local churches but is restricted to the use of the Pope. No questions are raised as to whether these reports should be disclosed to the wider Church. He uses this knowledge to examine a particular local church and communicate conclusions to secure universal norms. The resulting texts are not responses to bishops' (or the wider Church's) concerns but are directives for action that they must take (Collins 2008, 124–25). Bishops are required to give local-level supervision which qualifies, classifies and punishes. The directed are to obey.

### Supervising the Individual Self in Meditation

Innovative Catholics have different ideas from the Popes about how to supervise the human person. Their experience of a post-conciliar Church and democratic society has altered their understanding of how social bonds are to be governed. Their preference is for the policing of individuals rather than that of the collective person, implying here a democratic approach to Church governance. Innovative Meditators, for example, impose this form of surveillance on their own selves insofar as their practice of prayer emphasises the value of the individual. Each meditator is expected to engage in a regimen of twice-daily meditation to foster self-discipline. The practitioner facilitates this internal training by removing him- or herself from everyday life and going to a quiet place. There, the meditator adopts a posture of attentiveness which is directed interiorly. The focus on the self is emphasised in the brief suspension of one's senses: eyes are closed, the mouth is shut; extraneous noise is ignored. Internal to the self, the practitioner employs a mantra that operates to police “monkey chatter” or “cocky noise”—idioms that refer to the random thoughts of an undisciplined self.

The rationale underlying self-surveillance is that the Innovative Meditator can be directed to go beyond trivia, small mindedness and personal ambition to achieve personal development and a greater sense of social connection. In each and every meditation, there is an opportunity for the practitioner to plumb the multilayered (cognitive, affective and intuitive) self to evaluate and, if necessary, correct the direction taken in daily living. Dominic, for example, contends that regular meditation increases his capacity to identify, monitor and maintain a meaningful life: *Meditation helps me to let go of the stuff of the day and come back to some sort of sense of who one is and what it's all about.* During meditation, Dominic demonstrates a willingness to remain silent in the face of multiple expectations associated with modern life. The purpose of silence is to cultivate an interior space that makes it possible for him to give penetrating focus to rational thoughts, emotions and feelings. Thus, for him and many other Innovative Meditators, one

outcome of this form of prayer can be a production of knowledge, sometimes described as “innate intuitive knowing” or “spiritual wisdom.” In this ritual of supervising the self, they plumb foundational knowledge to guide and direct their behaviour towards a more measured existence.

The supervisory element of meditation upon the individual self is often intensified in weekly group meditation, suggesting that such governance remains essentially a collective enterprise. Innovative Meditators regularly congregate for group meditation in parish centres (where accepted) or in practitioners’ homes. At the beginning of each of these rituals, they greet each other with enquiries of well-being, although civility is not an invitation to launch into a personal conversation. Rather, it aims to subdue the preoccupations of the self. Once seated, there is a short reading from a religious text, which draws focus away “from the world” and provides a common starting point for the meditation. In effect, this preparation allows Innovative Meditators to move from concentrating on daily life to a more profound consciousness of the individual self in relationship to immediate others.

The circular layout of seating for a group meditation suggests that practitioners are democratising their religious practice. The circle has no apex but maintains a base character. In this structure, egalitarian encounter is emphasised, and accountability and transparency are heightened. It is the collective membership, rather than one powerful individual, who supervises a person’s behaviour, as Dominic indicates, *[In this group] we can enter more deeply into each other’s personality*. He goes on to say why he regards such meetings as important. *I’m not going off on my journey somehow and doing it myself on my own. . . . It [is] very much an understanding that my journey happens in relationship with other people’s journeys. For me there [is] no such thing as an individual’s personal journey. You only journey in community*. Innovative Meditators recognise the usefulness of dispersing the challenge of supervising the individual self among fellow practitioners.

Group surveillance assists individual practitioners to hone their capacity to meditate. As a liminal people, they value the opportunity to assess the self in relation to others and advance the growth of a relational being rather than an autonomous one. In this supervisory practice, there is an expectation that the self-production of knowledge will be directed to an evolving common good, which has resonance with democratic values. Some Innovative Meditators make that evident immediately after the group prayer is finished. In the subsequent social interaction, each individual appears entirely grounded in the self but not in a way that imposes the latter onto the connections they genuinely desire and make. It is as though they expand the individual self in their becoming a relational person.

### **Manifesting Surveillance in Physical Structures**

The types of structures and the related systems of supervisions that religious citizens prefer are manifested in the styles of architecture they inhabit.

Conservative believers, for example, have a preference for autocratic structures that are supervised by a centralised papacy. Those arrangements are reflected in their choice of Church building, that is, one that has pyramidal design as is exemplified in high ceilings, towers and spires. The broad base of this structure communicates solidity and steadfastness that is directed to one vertical point. The focus of these single-purpose buildings is further indicated in the priest positioned in the somewhat elevated sanctuary, which emphasises his superior rank to the laity in the nave. This design promotes an autocratic model, wherein the multitudes defer to the preeminent one—the priest or God.

In contrast, Innovative Catholics favour democratic arrangements and a related approach to supervising the individual self. That choice is expressed in a preferred style of building, which commonly takes form in “the centre.” This structure, with its horizontal proportions, tends to foster mutual relationships. Not long ago, many frequented parish centres which were built as a response to post-conciliar aspirations of greater equality. However, these centres are now, generally, policed by cultic priests and conservative believers. Consequently, progressive activities and literature have been banned or purged, suggesting that questioning and learning are no longer acceptable. Now, Innovative Catholics pursue their religious activities in their homes—the hearth centre, or in centres belonging to a remaining few progressive Religious orders.

The centre promotes a particular form of democratic surveillance in facilitation. Facilitation produces two major effects in the individual, namely, an expansion of self-awareness and an emphasis on personable participation. Collectively, it gives scope to a diversification of abilities and outcomes. The director of the centre comments how such supervision works:

*[It's about] giving people space to unearth their common good. The relationship model enables it to happen. . . . [Advocates here have] worked in major fields and have major leadership roles in other parts of their lives. So they come with that background experience in having been in positions of authority, management and leadership. . . . and you trust them to do the work [of advocacy]. And if they fall into difficulty, you pretty soon find out. And you can provide support or whatever.*

The director, in using the facilitatory mechanism, is able to assess the expertise, motivation and proficiency of volunteers. These people, accordingly, have successfully navigated the modern project of self-making and now seek to redirect their knowledge to advocacy. The director's role is not primarily one of oversight but insight. He does not extrinsically direct volunteers, assigning them tasks and expecting them to fulfil his demands. Rather, he uses his perception of a volunteer's character to facilitate that person's capacity to produce and direct knowledge to collective purposes. In the centre, each volunteer is provided with resources, support and overarching

collective goals to assist in the creative pursuit and application of his or her individual interests. In return, each volunteer puts resulting knowledges to the disposal of the centre, effectively diversifying and multiplying the knowledge portfolio of the organisation. Hence, in a supervisory role, the director facilitates both the goals of the individual and the organisation, aiming to advance particular knowledges to bring about a more just society.

At the centre, there is a large central space that features a huge table around which staff and volunteers congregate during rest periods, social occasions and regular meetings. On Friday mornings, there is a mandatory assembly. All workers are obliged to stop whatever they are doing, take their places at the table, and comport themselves appropriately. *You find the commonalities are there*, said the director, *[but you need] a space where people can meet together on a level playing field*. Judith, a volunteer, made a similar remark. *I think [that] without attention to what holds us together*, she said, *you could just get on with your own thing*. This gathering indicates a level of formality but in a way that is anti-structural in design and focus. At the table, no one sits above or below another. No one sits apart, not even visitors. All sit together, facing each other. In this arrangement, classifications used in religion and society are suppressed. A person's ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, social status and religion are considered secondary to the achieved role of being an individual advocate. There is, as Turner theorised, an evident "relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion" (Turner and Turner 1978, 251).

During the meeting, the director enjoins on everyone to be involved by way of listening and hearing all who speak, which further operates as a mechanism for democratising relationships. In promoting the worth and merit of each person, it is the majority members who supervise the individual. Thus, each Innovative Advocate is required to give a report of how his or her work has proceeded in the past week. As each person takes a turn, a sense of equivalence is generated in the group. Each speaker talks without interruption, while other participants listen attentively. The rhythm of these contributions prompts quieter members and modulates the vociferous. In these disclosures of the individual self, successes can be communicated, and problems can be aired. Listeners, on the other hand, can experience vicariously the thoughts and feelings of the speaker. Discussion follows, particularly of difficult issues. Such dialogue encourages "democratic" participation by promoting understanding of the variety of issues involved. Germaine said, *Everyone here is involved in different things, but when we come together [at the table] you learn so much about other people's journeys*. The effect of this type of supervision brings together those who can have quite different views and experiences, requiring individuals to develop their knowledge.

Those at the centre commonly welcome facilitation as a supervisory mechanism, believing that it contributes to individual development and the promotion of group cohesion. Germaine reported that such supervision has

had a positive consequence in *a real learning curve for me*. Donald similarly indicated, *I think this place has helped me build up self-esteem. . . . In this environment, I have been able to do a lot of stuff*. Facilitation effectively expanded their capacity to pursue their goals, which relatedly promotes a person's ability and growth. Facilitation is additionally looked upon as providing a bridging mechanism between the individual and the collective. Germaine continued, *There is a lot of life among us; we feel like we are all on the same wavelength from the point of view of what we are doing, what motivates us, what we do and why we're here*. In the centre, each participant tacitly agrees to surrender some, but not all, his or her autonomy to the purposes and goals of the centre. The trade-off is that these volunteers have exceeded what they as autonomous individuals had expected of themselves.

### Threatening Surveillance in Innovative Relations

As we have seen, the supervisory mechanism of facilitation promotes individual development and collective goals. In the logic of this approach, the individual self is both extended and hindered. However, these pressures can be subject to difficulties. A member of a group may, for instance, feel overly constrained. For example, at a meeting of one reformist-minded group, two members engaged in a heated disagreement over whether a particular bishop should or should not be invited to a progressive function. Jack argued for his inclusion, believing that he was friendly and that such hospitality would attract episcopal favour. Jill, though, disputed the idea, asserting that his presence would likely result in unwanted scrutiny of the group's progressive activities. Her response irritated Jack. He considered his case for a potentially expanded inclusion was not being accorded the merit it deserved, concluding, *You don't know what you're talking about*. Jill retorted, *So, you've got all the answers?* By humiliating Jack, Jill restored a superficial equivalence between them in a shallow peace. The wider group then took charge of resolving the issue of the invitation. Nevertheless, the ongoing tension between Jill and Jack remained. Both considered the worth of their knowledge was unduly constrained, while collectively, the breach remained buried within the group.

The group, in claiming the privilege of supervision, can be destructive when it takes on an autocratic approach, as Jerome indicated. *You have to be careful [the group] doesn't become a vicious circle. A vicious circle might become "This is a community where we care for everybody here—if you're raising uncomfortable questions that make other people uncomfortable, you're upsetting them. So please don't rock the boat."* *It's a vicious circle in the sense of raising a question which is perceived as a threat to other people's comfort or a threat to their security*. In this example, the wrath of members was incurred when one participant advanced information which challenged the status quo, resulting in expulsion. This particular situation was later resolved in the reconciliation of members, but such acts of eviction

can be deleterious. When members club together to police or reject the authentic input of an individual, they can suppress or undermine the vitality of the group. These majority actions, sometimes known as “mob rule,” limit the influx of new knowledge needed to navigate complex bonds of shifting relationships, thereby potentially sowing the seeds of group destruction.

Innovative Catholics are highly sensitive to any form of autocratic surveillance and work actively to return supervision to a more democratic one. This situation is brought to the fore in Miriam’s account. *Our new coordinator started running our meetings as if he was still a big gun in [his company]. . . . He had good ideas and strategies, but he implemented them as if it were a military operation.* The coordinator effectively operated as a bureaucrat, enabling him to delegate and deputise but not facilitate and develop. Miriam and other members considered this type of supervision prevented their individual participation and preference for building subjective relationships. They asserted that these conditions were a prerequisite for achieving the shared goals of individual members.

Miriam recounted how she and her peers, who were determined to restore mutual involvement, devised a plan in the hope of producing more democratic arrangements:

*[The coordinator] would sit at the “head” of the table as if he was in command. From there, he delegated. . . . We knew we had to break this “top-down” form of leadership, so [we] decided we should reorganise the seating arrangements for the next meeting. [One of us] sat at the head of the table, and [my friend] sat the other end, so [the coordinator] had to join the rest of us round the table and become one of us.*

Group members resented being dictated to as subordinates, but it was difficult for them to confront the coordinator. They were reluctant to speak of their discomfort because such disclosure might not only thwart their aspiration for greater participation, but it could also undermine their desire for a more even sense of relationship. Instead, these Innovative Catholics resorted to modelling their desired type of organisation in the hope that this subtle demonstration would resolve the difficulty.

### Governing through Networking

Innovative Catholics generally view both Church and state bureaucracies as indifferent to personal circumstances and incapable of dealing with spontaneous demands. They feel constrained and frustrated by governing authorities who emphasise the maintenance of the respective existing social patterns and the related performance of functions. Instead, they prefer networking, which allows each person to concentrate on making democratic-like connections and engaging in processes, as Germaine illustrates (Wolfe 1978). *One of the good things about networking is that we stop thinking about our*

*own little preserve and think about the common good and the picture of trying to sway government, of trying to help people and make certain that no person slips through.* Innovative Catholics experience a personal freedom in networking, enabling them to respond to unstructured happenings and unforeseen events. They use their knowledge to flex and blur boundaries to constitute an unprecedented range of connections and potential solutions, which effectively advances their initiatives.

Networking has been facilitated by modern communications technology and especially by the Web, which has had significant implications for religion. Each Innovative Catholic uses the Internet to track down information, interact with friends and strangers both near and far, and share views, advice and prayer support. Often they come together on discussion boards to talk religion, to challenge what they view as *deep-rooted ignorance* and to explore possibilities that alternative arrangements can offer. In effect, they create new forms of community, which in the cyber realm can cross national borders. While religious purists may consider their use of social media to be superficial, the collective effect Innovative Reformers produce is not only appropriate to the technology, but it also emphasises an individual's self-discovery through ongoing interaction with like-minded peers. They previously considered their identities were fixed in traditional categories. Today, they assemble themselves in ways that are dynamic and relational.

Pope John Paul was quick to recognise the importance of the Web and launched Catholicism's presence on the Internet in the 1980s. The Vatican has an enormous and elaborate website, which is encyclopaedic in proportion. *Vatican.va* provides searchable access to a huge range of documents as well as information about nearly every aspect of the Church (Last 2005). Ethical guidelines on the proper use of the Internet have since been produced by various Vatican spokespersons, who commonly assert that the virtue of the technology resides in realising solidarity and underpinning the common good (Foley 2002). The non-interactive website also reflects the age-old position that the Magisterium disseminates knowledge to "the faithful" through top-down lines of communication. Nevertheless, efforts to supervise thoughts and practices in cyberspace are limited. This universalising medium operates as a type of leveller, where each global citizen can at least in theory contribute to discussion. The lines of communication on the Web do not conform to autocratic arrangements but are configured to multiple connections. Similarly, the content of the Web is not considered arcane or mysterious, but accessible and available for use.

In Australia, one of the most innovative religious websites is that of *Catholica*, which was founded by Brian Coyne and Amanda McKenna in 2006. *Catholica* hosts a discussion board where vigorous conversation is given to daily commentaries and breaking news. Its popularity has steadily increased over subsequent years with 59,218 visitors in 2007 and 370,470 in 2012 (Coyne 2012). Whereas most bloggers are from Australia, it is not uncommon for those from other countries, such as the UK and US,



to contribute to the discussion board. According to Brian, the webmaster, *Catholica* is populated by *educated, questioning and . . . “opinion” leaders [who have] dropped out of participation in the Church* (Coyne and McKenna n.d.). The website deliberately maintains independence, *simply because*, as Brian said, *what needs to be said at the moment requires us to be free of hierarchical interference and from those elements in the lay Church that seem intent on suppressing all intelligent conversation*. On *Catholica*, bloggers have a pulpit from which they can discuss often-controversial topics that concern them. Collectively, they exercise the freedom to generate and distribute meaningful knowledge. Once it was accepted that the Pope had a monopoly on the production and control of knowledge in the Church. Now Innovative Reformers assume, advocate and practise a democratised form of religious discourse.

### Surveillance in Networking

In physical space, surveillance of the human person is maintained through the practice of watching, but in cyber space, it is conducted through assessments of representations of the individual self, as is made by bloggers. Such is the case for Innovative Reformers, many of whom congregate via their commentary, at least on occasion, on the *Catholica* discussion board. In previous years, some of these practitioners have levelled their complaints towards the hierarchy, but their efforts proved fruitless in the face of determined orthodoxy. Today, these Innovative Reformers direct the bulk of their energies to building relationships in cyberspace, requiring them to enact informal rules for participation governed by informal supervisory mechanisms.

On this website, two forms of surveillance that resonate democratic sensibilities are in operation. Firstly, there is facilitatory supervision which Brian, the webmaster, practises and which is similar to that practised by the aforementioned director at the centre. Brian offers personal, not paternal, support and inspiration to bloggers who are essentially voluntary participants. These types of control are aimed at creating an attractive and common basis on which individual bloggers can pursue their religious projects while promoting the collective goals of *Catholica*. The democratic dimensions of this surveillance are also highlighted in criticisms that are levelled at those who merely browse the website but resist the invitation to participate, as is exemplified in Margaret’s criticism. *If you just “sit” there passively reading and not making any comment, then you’re as bad as the people sitting in the pews. . . . You’re just sitting there and being told to be good*. She argues that the modern religious citizen has a responsibility and duty to contribute actively to the group; to do otherwise is to hinder democratised religion.

One such mechanism of management is made evident in *Catholica*’s “netiquette” policy. *We see ourselves as a community of individuals seeking to provide mutual support to one another in that lifelong and often difficult*

*journey we all share of becoming nobler, fulfilled and Christ-like individuals* [original emphasis]. Innovative Reformers are required to maintain their own individuality while honouring that same value in their peers. At the same time, they are to pursue the collective aim of providing support for each other, building a community and searching for a new religious horizon. In this regard, Brian as webmaster also requires bloggers to register themselves, which works to facilitate the genuine disclosures of an individual self, the corollary being that the mechanism can be used to censor those who offend against these values. The mechanism effectively operates to cultivate an expanded range of viewpoints, which are seen as evidence of individual growth and collective cooperation. Such a nexus, which is vitalised often by a constructive tension, is useful for pursuing truth and finding rational and creative solutions to the problems that perplex Innovative Reformers.

The second form of surveillance practised by Innovative Reformers on the *Catholica* discussion board is that of participatory surveillance, which uses peer relationships to supervise conduct (Albrechtslund 2008). Fellow bloggers effectively censor each other's representations to encourage conformity to the rules of engagement. This form of censoring is evident in the way bloggers respond to another's contribution. *The best bloggers don't waffle*, said Margaret, a regular contributor to the website. *They get straight to the point*. Jack is also attracted to bloggers who have *intelligence coupled with an informed conscience*. The expectation of the cyber community is that individual bloggers are able to articulate their own ideas, rather than repeat or imitate those of others, and that this rational discourse is characterised by sobriety and fact. Indeed, the most successful bloggers have a reputation for contributing original knowledge and, at the same time, are able to persuade others that their blogs are worth reading and responding to.

Participatory surveillance also monitors the emotions of Innovative Reformers. High rates of approval are given to those who make compassionate and helpful responses. Margaret, for instance, said she looks for bloggers who produce *quality of thinking and how sensitively a topic is handled. Compassion and charity do matter*. She implies that rational religion should be coupled with humane and constructive responses. Margaret contends that bloggers should signal their friendliness and good intentions to their peers. They are to be courteous, even when they don't agree with another's viewpoint. Indeed, she reported that in the event that a blogger was experiencing a crisis, it was not uncommon for some fellow bloggers to contact that individual by telephone or email to deepen listening, commiserate or offer help.

Participatory surveillance also promotes spiritual reflexivity or the recounting of penetrating insight, which can have a unifying effect. As Margaret indicated, such bloggers communicate that *there is "more than" to life, and you get glimpses of that on Catholica*. She continued, saying that some commentary highlights that *we are Christ to one another*. Accordingly, *deep thinkers* produce blogs that not only penetrate the thinking and

feeling of their cyber peers; they are also capable of expanding individual consciousness, generating feelings of amity and binding the cyber community together. In effect, exemplary bloggers bolster both their own standing as well as attending the existential concerns of blogging peers. Such surveillance aims to have a transformative effect on the readers of *Catholica* and contributors to the discussion board.

Innovative Reformers use participatory surveillance to exact penalties when the limits of conduct are breached. Such was the case when one blogger, a troll,<sup>5</sup> insisted that Catholic orthodoxy was non-negotiable and attacked the reputation of a revered reformist-minded bishop. The troll made it clear that the position of the bishop, who had raised the prospect of ordaining married men and women, was heretical. The troll's interference resulted in a vigorous debate among regular bloggers as to what constituted a breach of policy. One blogger, a lawyer by profession, drew on civil law to argue the case for the need for a democratically structured limit (compared to canon law, which sustains autocratic administration). *I accept that if [the troll] says something that is clearly defamatory, then it should be censored, for very good practical reasons, because it doesn't just affect him. It affects you and Catholica itself.* In his expert opinion, *Catholica* as a public website could be vulnerable to civil prosecution if an injury to an individual's reputation resulted. In laying out the facts of the matter, he put the onus on all bloggers to conduct themselves in ways that are complimentary rather than condemnatory. Each blogger is to exercise self-discipline and refrain from attacking individual personalities. *Catholica* members effectively exercised democratic surveillance, thus preventing harm to an individual's participation and group cohesion. Brian, the webmaster, subsequently made the rare decision to remove the troll's posts and restore *free and fair* discussion.

### Extending Democracy to Other Species

There is a strand of thinking among some Innovative Catholics who seek to extend notions of democracy to other species. These respondents recognise an importance for representing the environment in political and social debate and decision making. What is implied is that the appropriation of the natural world, and some would say exploitation, requires a refocus in surveillance of how humanity relates to other species. The flagging of supervision of anthropocentric tendencies, although not pursued here, indicates that ideas about how and upon whom surveillance is to be practised is not fixed but is constantly being evaluated.

### Concluding Remarks

From their anti-structural positions and in their rudimentary communities, Innovative Catholics advance democratic discourse, thus rejecting the assertions of Popes John Paul and Benedict that religion must be administered autocratically. They point to the incongruity of an autocratically governed

Church in a democratically governed state. Innovative Catholics as a liminal people are consequently giving substantial thinking to how Catholicism might be restructured so as to redistribute power and authority, which would ensure that members could participate actively in Church governance. In the meantime, the lack of fit between the two types of governance is made evident in parishes where attempts to resolve structural difficulties have been curtailed.

Recent Popes have had recourse to types of surveillance that autocratically control the production and distribution of knowledge, enabling them to impose structural limits that shield the Church from pressures to change. In contrast, Innovative Catholics use democratic forms as exemplified in facilitatory and participatory surveillance. Through these supervisory mechanisms, they both extend and constrain individuals to produce and direct knowledge which has its purpose in developing the self and building subjective relationships. These supervisory practices have a common purpose in expanding knowledges and activities in religion and society to attend difficulties, solve problems and explore alternatives. Such democratic discourse, moreover, indicates that the production of these ideas can have a reciprocal effect, flowing from secular society to that of the religious sphere and vice versa.

The revision of governance, as with identity and morality, is attributed further significance in ritual, which will be examined in the next chapter.

## Notes

- 1 Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles, with his conversion and claim to being an apostle occurring after Jesus's crucifixion (see 1 Corinthians 9, 1–2). For accounts of his conversion on the road to Damascus, see Acts 9, 22, 26.
- 2 Papal infallibility means that the Pope cannot make a mistake when defining a doctrine of faith or morals.
- 3 SCCs are also known as Basic Ecclesial Communities, House Churches, Intentional Christian Communities and Grassroots Churches. They came to prominence in the late 1950s in Brazil, quickly spreading to other parts of South and Central America, West and East Africa, the Philippines and to a lesser degree in parts of the First World. The movement was spurred on by the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, which emphasised the active participation of all the baptised.
- 4 This and following sections are inspired by Michel Foucault's concept of "governmentality" (1977). Governmentality is a theoretical concept that explores the practices of governments and their effects on the people who are governed. Governmentality is not concerned with the simple act of governing but focuses on the way people govern themselves and how these external and interior forces are intertwined.
- 5 A troll is a person who sows discord on the Internet by posting inflammatory messages that aim to provoke readers.

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## 7 Reconfiguring Ritual

Miriam wrote, *There is no doubt that the Catholic Church does ritual extremely well, from the colours of the vestments, the flowers adorning the altar, to the words of the liturgy itself. The priest is the special person who intercedes between us and God and takes centre stage during the Eucharistic celebration. The laity sit passively listening to the priest's homily—whether good or bad. This is what is experienced week after week by those Catholics who still attend the Eucharist.*

*It came to me a few years ago that I was no longer being nourished by the ritual of the Eucharist. In fact I was becoming angry at the exclusion of my gender from full participation in the liturgy. Yes, I could be a reader and a special Eucharistic minister and an RCIA Catechist, but no, I could not be a priest because of my gender. Also, there has been no attempt in the translations used in the readings to use inclusive language, which alienated me even more.*

*I made the decision to no longer attend the Eucharistic celebration at the advent of the New Translation during Advent 2011. It was an attempt by the conservatives in the hierarchy to make the English translation as close to a literal translation from the Latin as possible, their idea being that it would make the liturgy more reverent, as if Latin itself was a “holy” language! It also elevated the priest to another being; that is, the priest would start the celebration by saying, “The Lord be with you,” and the laity replied, “And also with you.” Now with the New Translation, the reply was to be “And also with your spirit”—as though we didn't have bodies!*

*It was not an easy decision for me to make; after all, I had been attending Sunday Mass faithfully ever since I was baptised as a 19-year-old. But I could no longer, in all honesty, stay and repeat in parrot fashion words that meant tiddly squat to me.*

*What gave me the courage to leave was Christian meditation. The practice of meditating twice daily deepened my spirituality and a thirst for authenticity. It demands very little ritual except that of stillness, silence and simplicity. This is where I can find God, not in the chatter of liturgy but in the silence of the heart.*

*When I became a Catholic I thought that to be a good Catholic I would have to attend Sunday Mass and go to Confession or else God wouldn't love*

*me! But gradually over the years, through good spiritual direction, reading people such as Joan Chittister, John Main, Laurence Freeman and many other good spiritual writers, I began to grow up in my faith. I am still a catholic Christian but not a Catholic.*

*I am no longer captured by dogmatic laws but have instead been given the gift of the freedom of the law of love. And I'll say "Amen" to that!*

Innovative Catholics, like Miriam, attribute great significance to ritual, for it is within this type of performance that they gain a sense of the spiritual. In these sacred spaces they can touch upon fundamental concerns, deep emotions and a passionate interest in the human condition. They are revising, creating and practising rituals which plumb their experience of modern realities. These rituals focus on the self and their diverse relationships. A few are also venturing into secular society as civil celebrants, offering rites of passage to a broad range of citizens. Nevertheless, their approach and practice of ritual differs from that of Popes John Paul and Benedict, who have endeavoured to restore elements of previously established ritual configurations.

### **The Disagreement over Eucharistic Interpretations**

The theory of anthropologist Victor Turner, as has been partly presented in Chapter 1, provides a framework for understanding the disagreement over how the principal ritual of the Church, the Eucharist, is viewed and practiced. Turner defined ritual as a social practice wherein "actions, objects, events, words, and the like" are employed to communicate "with the invisible powers, regarded as the origin and purpose of all effects, particularly of prosperity or adversity" (Turner and Turner 1978, 244). Moreover, ritual functions as a site of power. On the one hand, a participant can access that power by engaging uncritically in the performance, giving one's own self entirely to a potentially transformative process. On the other hand, designated persons who control this practice can act upon and change participants in significant ways. However, while some may willingly subject themselves to manipulation, others may actively resist (Schultz and Lavenda 2009, 190–191).

In the Eucharist, bread and wine are manipulated by priests of behalf of the community as symbols of significance. They are declared sacred and, after having been venerated, are consumed by all or many to commemorate the last Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. The ritual can be simultaneously conceptualised as a reenactment of the sacrifice of Jesus and a thanksgiving meal that strengthens the social bonds between God and the Church and among peoples. However, there exists in this conception a dialectical tension as to which interpretation should take precedence, for what is at stake in this contest is the communication of a divergent and crucial set of religious and social values that inform the human condition.

Conservative believers tend to emphasise the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. Pope John Paul (2003), for example, has claimed that ritual



sacrifice has its basis in the instruction of Jesus Christ, who told the apostles to offer “His Body and Blood.” The sacrifice was not to be considered “merely” an offering of thanksgiving for the life of Jesus or simply a memorial of the death of Jesus on the Cross. Rather, Jesus instituted the Eucharist “to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages” (*Catechism* 1994, 334). For him, Eucharist-as-sacrifice has an eternal dimension and, therefore, cannot be changed or contested.

The Eucharist-as-sacrifice has a religious and social purpose in ordering Catholics in a community and hierarchy, as is symbolised in the following arrangement and process. In a Church building, a place that is set off from other routinised spaces in everyday life, the Eucharist as a symbolic act is made exclusively by a priest who stands in the sanctuary at the altar, while the laity kneels in the nave. In this rite, the priest acts not as an ordinary or profane man but one who is extraordinary or sacred; indeed, he acts “*in persona Christi Capitus*” (Latin for “in the person of Christ the Head”). As a supernatural mediator between God and the laity, he alone offers petitions and prayers over the bread and wine to create symbolic equivalences with the body and blood of Christ. The transubstantiated elements are then offered to God to cleanse the sins of the Church. Such expiation rids the community and hierarchy of those attitudes and behaviours that damage the established order, while communion restores it. Thus, “man” is subordinated to a mediated otherworldly God, which is further reflected in the layperson being secondary to priest, woman to man, and married to celibate, while those that stand outside of what is required of them are excluded from the fold.

Yet, the efforts made by recent Popes to maintain the Eucharistic sacrifice in perpetuity were threatened in part by the Second Vatican Council, which shifted away from the verticalising theology of the Council of Trent (1545–1564). Trent defended the established order of the hierarchical Church from the Protestants by asserting that the Mass<sup>1</sup> was not only a sacrifice; it was the same sacrifice as that of the Cross on which Jesus died, though offered in a different manner (Moloney 1987, 350). Over the next four centuries, the primary ritual of the Church was completely focused on the “sacrifice of the Mass.” In this rite, everything centred on the priest, who stood with his back to the congregation, facing the altar, to which he alone had exclusive access. After having consecrated the bread and wine in Latin (the language of the elite) and having eaten the “body of Christ” and drunk the “blood of Christ,” the “body of Christ” alone was then distributed to the laity, who received “the host” while kneeling at the communion rail. They, effectively, were expected to be satisfied by just being there and gathering the “fruits” of ritual sacrifice to themselves. But this sacrificial emphasis along with the established order could not be fully sustained in the modern era.

At the Second Vatican Council, revision was given to the Mass by the Council Fathers, who adopted a theology of Church as community based on sources from the New Testament. The modification put an emphasis on

the rituals of the early Christian communities which hosted Eucharistic or thanksgiving meals (Jay 1992, 115, 118). The council documents brought to the fore the idea that “the Lord provides a meal of brotherly solidarity” and that the apostles enjoyed the “communion of the breaking of the bread” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*]) (Vatican II 1963, 140). These symbols suggested radical commensality, where all could eat from the same table (Crossan 1994, 69). The pattern of interaction implied that social relationships were to be expressed in inclusivity; that is, that all people should enjoy equal rights and opportunities in religion and society. But the implication of this revised symbol was not as apparent as might be indicated. The Council Fathers had grafted the idea of Eucharist-as-meal onto Eucharist-as-sacrifice with the hierarchical arrangements of the latter, creating ambiguity that was to have far-reaching ramifications.

In the immediate aftermath of the council, the revised Eucharistic ritual proved popular among liberal Catholics. The priest was now required to face the congregation and could speak mostly in the vernacular, while the laity could say the “Prayers of the Faithful” (an idiom for the prayers of the laity), receive communion of both kinds (bread and wine), and contribute more in speaking and singing (Vatican II 1963, 154–157). In 1969, a revised Order of Mass promoted even greater participation of the laity. The priest was now to be less associated with the altar, the communion rail was removed, and the laity received Eucharist standing. The Council Fathers from English-speaking countries also set up the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) to translate Latin texts to facilitate the conciliar demand for “full, conscious, and active participation” (Vatican II 1963, 144). The members of this commission dispensed totally with Latin, believing it stymied communal development (Wilkins 2005). These ongoing reforms increased comprehension of the Eucharist, inspired inner conviction and amplified connection in an enlarged range of liturgical roles, allowing some laity entry to the sanctuary (Collins 2009).

The complex ideas surrounding Eucharist emanating from the council were not welcomed by conservative believers. They were disturbed by the loss of the Latin, which they regarded as a sacred language in contrast to the banal vernacular. They missed the apparent absence of mystery, which they found in reverential silence and acceptance but which was usurped by noisy “performances” and an obsession for understanding. They disliked the communal sharing, resulting from an emphasis on Eucharist-as-meal and the related blurring of differences between priesthood and laity, which had been maintained in Eucharist-as-sacrifice. For many, the setting aside of these traditional practices, which had given senses of order and predictability, produced senses of chaos and unease. Some considered these adaptations as surrendering to Protestantism or as a negative compromise with the modern world (Collins 2009).

The concerns of conservative believers were subdued during the reign of Pope John Paul, who launched what became known as “the reform of the

reform.” In his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Church from the Eucharist) (2003), the Pope asserted that the communion meal of the Last Supper was already a sacrificial meal and that sacrifice was the primary means of unity. He also allowed for the restricted use of the Tridentine Mass, the ritual response to the reforms made at the Council of Trent and which had been set aside in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments 1984). Conversely, the Pope refused to give approval to revised English translations made by ICEL that had taken into account Western sensitivities about sexist language. He also replaced members of ICEL with those more deferential to the Vatican, and he blocked thriving ecumenical communications with Anglican and Protestant churches (Thavis 2005).

Pope Benedict followed his predecessor in upholding the pre-eminence of Eucharist-as-sacrifice. He acknowledged that sacrifice was no longer popular: “However,” he said, “properly understood, [sacrifice] is and remains fundamental, because it reveals to us with what love God loves us in Christ.” He continued, “[sacrifice expresses] concrete this reality of the revelation of the body and blood of Christ” (*Eucharist is not understood* 2010). For this Pope, Eucharist-as-sacrifice revealed the reality of God’s saving plan for “mankind.” During his papacy, Benedict increased access to the Tridentine Mass and, in 2011, introduced the “New English Language Translation of the Roman Missal.” Colloquially known as the “New Translation,” the liturgical revision claimed to be a near-literal interpretation of the original Latin text, which further intensified the use of sacrificial language and images. The purpose of Eucharist-as-sacrifice was, accordingly, to penetrate the laity so that they might be ritually assisted in taking their ascribed place in religion and society.

### Contesting Eucharistic Sacrifice

The struggle over which interpretation of Eucharist is to predominate in the Church has been complicated by changes in modern society. Nancy Jay, a feminist scholar, argues that the conditions that previously upheld ritual sacrifice are no longer present. She states that “regular sacrificial practice has never been separable from clearly defined hierarchical social structure organised in unilineal ‘eternal’ continuity of descent between males: the Apostolic Succession of the sacrificing priesthood” (1992, 112). The rite was previously sustained by feudal and monarchical societies which had a plausible correspondence with the hierarchical descent pattern of the Church. But since the French Revolution, the Western world has lacked the social structures necessary for accepting sacrificial practice uncritically. In the post-conciliar Church, that difficulty became pronounced. Pluralist democracies driven by industrialisation and technology are not organised in descent systems based on male privilege (1992, 113). These societies are constituted in multiple groups with multiple interests, and even where there

is a monopoly of elite groupings, universal education, the welfare sector and democratic institutions work to undermine their dominance.

Innovative Catholics reflect the modern difficulties with Eucharist-as-sacrifice in their rejection of its emphasis and practice. In the past, they were confident that in entering into the sacrament, they would, at least momentarily, realise a sense of perfection or contentment. There, in that liminal space, where they willingly subjected themselves to external and lofty direction, they could aim for personal transformation. In that “in between” state, they could reconcile the shortcomings of their old self to the advantage of becoming a perfected collective person. But, today, they can no longer realise spiritual satisfaction from Eucharist-as-sacrifice, as is reflected in the respective comments of Margaret and Dominic: *I am pulling away from attending Mass as if only the priest can “give me God”; this idea for me that somehow God or Christ is miraculously called down by the priest . . . just doesn’t do it for me.* Now, when engaging in a Eucharist-as-sacrifice, they experience discomfort. The rite compels them to take their place in an established community and hierarchy or, as another respondent said, *a Roman view* of the human condition. This placement runs counter to their search for understanding themselves as complex individuals with multiple connections in a constantly changing world. For them, Eucharist-as-sacrifice obfuscates their desire to move on from the shortcomings of the “old self” to the advantage of becoming an ideal modern citizen.

The difficulty which many have with Eucharist-as-sacrifice has become pronounced with the introduction of “The New Translation.” The refurbished ritual takes them further away from their preferred focus on a Eucharist that signifies social inclusivity. Sean, for instance, finds this recent modification to the Eucharist to be *lacking in balance. Sacrifice is often good and needed in life to help other people and the planet but not when it focuses so much on self. The New Translation is all about me.* From the perspective of the Popes, the human condition is fundamentally flawed and can only be redeemed through the sacrifice of a perfect man to a transcendent God. It is a view that Sean rejects. *Benedict’s attitude is that the modern world is a vale of tears, and so we must mortify ourselves and stick to the narrow road.* Sean identifies a consequence of the sacrificial emphasis in an individual worshipper’s concentration on personal salvation, required for acquiescing to external demands. He considers that this approach not only inflates the worshipper’s worth disproportionate to that of other people; it also deflects from participating in the modern world.

Some who continue to participate in Eucharist-as-sacrifice often do so for alternative purposes. Some attend because they want to sustain cherished personal bonds. As Agnes said, *I really go now for the social contact over a cup of coffee afterwards which is a much better “communion service.”* Elisabeth, a Religious, disclosed, *I think one of the reasons I still go to Mass is to avoid the conflict of upsetting other people [if I don’t go].* Some approach the demands made of them by switching off from clerical instruction. *There*

were times when I just went blank, said Catherine. *It was also a good time to review my week or plan the next.* These people have been able to sustain their involvement by not engaging wholeheartedly with the ritual. Some others reimagine their participation, as does Dominic. *[W]hen . . . I receive Eucharist and I see others [doing the same], I'm trying to bring into consciousness for myself that we are all the Body of Christ.* Dominic focuses on reducing structural discriminations and forging egalitarian connections. Superficial ritual compliance is the price that these Innovative Catholics grudgingly pay to retain valued relationships.

Nonetheless, significant numbers have been unable or unwilling to comply with the demands made of Eucharist-as-sacrifice and have ceased participating. Elisha gives his reasons as to why. *I subscribe to the view that Eucharist is food for the journey, not a reward for good behaviour.* Elisha uses alimentary symbols to represent the Eucharist as a source of spiritual sustenance for navigating his life in a contingent world and not as a form of compensation for complying with sacrificial expectations that uphold a static one. Pauline similarly stated, *I go to the Eucharist to be fed, but I left because I am no longer nourished or challenged or encouraged.* Pauline now considers that the Eucharist-as-sacrifice makes no justifiable demands on her, nor is it deemed a source of motivation for living a life of substance. Each of these respondents uses alimentary symbols to highlight the importance they give to Eucharist-as-meal, indicating both their rejection of the established ritual order and desire for one that extends communion in modern arrangements.

### **Ritualising the Self in *Communitas***

One possible consequence of the unsuccessful Eucharist-as-sacrifice for Innovative Catholics is that they as a liminal people can find themselves stuck in limbo, although this is not necessarily an end point for them. Rather, such irresolution can be looked upon as a part of a broader process that they undergo in their quest for relevant and meaningful religion. For instance, in the event that they connect and congregate with fellow pilgrims, they create rudimentary communities characterised by relations of equality and solidarity. In these anti-structural arrangements, Innovative Catholics can find the freedom to experiment with new social structures and explore different ways of connecting, communicating and caring, and ritual can feature strongly in that quest.

One example of *communitas* is to be found among Innovative Meditators. In rudimentary communities, they focus interiorly on the self rather than exteriorly on the collective person: a ritual that can be further recognised as bolstering the ideal modern citizen in a pluralist democracy. Some of these people first began experimenting with meditation in the 1990s while continuing to attend Eucharist. The bi-ritual activity served a need for accessing a religious foundation on which to cultivate an authentic self and maintain

participation in a faith community. But, as Pauline said, *We laypeople felt the constraints of JP II imposing control. . . . As adults we knew what was authentic and what wasn't.* Some, in experiencing a widening gap between their understanding of the individual self and the collective person, gradually or suddenly ceased their Eucharistic practice.

The cessation of ritual involvement has not come easily for some, given that they have participated in this ritual since childhood. Pauline, for instance, maintains a *hope that my private mediation does lead me back to the Eucharist because an overtly communal ritual does matter.* She continues to stress the importance of ritualised sociality but not in the sense of maintaining those types of connections that reduce the individual self to predetermined categories. Rather, she reroutes that trajectory. Pauline, in effect, replaces the convention of directing community to or imposing itself on the self by cultivating an expanded self as a means to becoming a relational person who may congregate, if the opportunity arises, in rudimentary Eucharistic communities (examples of which are given next).

Some, though, don't hanker for Eucharist and consider the ritual of meditation sufficient. Beth, for example, recognises advantages in non-attendance, of moving away from clerical instruction and confessional constraint to exploring and expanding the spiritual in the breadth and depth of the self. In comparison to priests' homilies, she said, *I like the idea that we do not need words or images [as in meditation], which after all, are only distortions and distractions. No, there is something to be said for focusing on a simple word and letting all the distractions "fall to the ground" as it were. . . . In meditating for twenty minutes we set aside our obsessive way of thinking.* When Beth enters into the ritual of meditative prayer, she disciplines the reasoned enterprise at play in Church and society in the hope of moving on to an alternative possibility of an enhanced human condition.

The goal of meditation is a form of union with God, the latter which will be examined in the next chapter. However, that union is not exclusively considered by Innovative Catholics to reside outside of the self, as is traditionally understood. Indeed, in meditation such union is considered, potentially, to take place deep within the self, as Anne attests to, *There is a realm of consciousness [of] which we're not conscious. . . . Even our subconscious or when we're unconscious, we're not conscious of it. So I'm quite happy with the idea that there's another realm.* But achieving this utopian consciousness of what resides at the core of the self is considered elusive. Dominic, who has practised meditation for more than twenty years, acknowledges the obscurity of this phenomenon. *Contemplation is being in union with God,* he said, *[and] for most of us, if we're fortunate, we might get a couple of minutes of that in a lifetime.* These Innovative Catholics suggest that *union with God* is not to be found in an individual's grasp of modern reason or in having super-rational understanding. It is to be found beyond those limits in a radical openness of the self to the interiorised presence of God.

When Innovative Meditators have finished their prayer and have reincorporated themselves into their everyday lives, they contend they are more able to navigate various expectations and competing demands. Pauline described her experience of this outcome like this: *The discipline of learning to be still and appreciate silence sets the conditions for more discerning “thinking.” Often when walking home from a group meditation, I find I mull over an issue and come to a reasonable decision.* She adds that meditation *allows [her] to discern what is really important, to see the direction in which things are going, to discard things which are trivial or distracting from the “main game.”* Pauline indicates that her ritual practice assists her in dealing with the contradictory demands of reason and doctrine. Her meditative prayer provides the condition to penetrate the limits of the self and achieve a more profound perspective. There, she is able to identify what is authentic for her and what may be mutually acceptable for the other, as opposed to what may be possible collectively but is nevertheless questionable. Thus, Innovative Meditators use ritual to transform the individual self to a relational person and in ways that work to produce a more mutual basis for solidarity.

### Revising the Eucharistic Meal

During fieldwork, I came across rudimentary communities who perform Eucharistic rituals that emphasise the meal aspect. Anecdotal reports suggest that these rituals were originally a reaction to the restorationist policies of Pope John Paul. There were, apparently, many such groups in the 1980s and 1990s, but these were reportedly curtailed by the Pope’s rejection of so-called liturgical abuses, the related conservative scrutiny of such rituals at the local level and the exhaustion that came with maintaining this unsupported innovation. Nevertheless, there remains a persistent remnant that operates under the radar of ecclesiastical supervision or in the borderlands of the hierarchical Church (Coyne 2010).

One such Eucharistic group was initiated in the late 1990s by two lay-people, Ruth and Stephen, and continues to this day. In launching their community, they drew on their prior experience. *We would go to a teams meeting<sup>2</sup> on a monthly basis,* said Stephen. *We were having Eucharist there, and maybe a priest would come in [for a Home Mass].* The couple then adapted that approach to their own initiative, and today, they and their friends still *meet in each other’s homes. . . . and we make that [meeting] a priority.* For them, Eucharist is important, not because it meets external demands but because it attends and nurtures personal bonds, as will be made evident. Moreover, instead of resorting to the services of an ordained priest, they take turns at being leader. In this role, the leader facilitates the voluntary participation of members, which contrasts with that of a cultic priest who commands involvement of parishioners.

The ritual arrangement that Ruth and Stephen foster can be further examined by comparing it with what transpires in local churches. There,

parishioners take their place in pews, facing the sanctuary. During the ceremony, a paten holding wafers or token food and a chalice filled with fortified wine are placed on the altar and consecrated by a priest dressed in elaborate vestments, sometimes with the assistance of a male deacon or acolyte. Women, who after the council, had access to the sanctuary as liturgical assistants, have now, largely, been moved back to the pews. In contrast, the Eucharistic group holds the ritual in the home of one of its members, the latter whom are not defined by role and rank but by equality of friendship. Casually, albeit consciously, dressed, they gather round a dining table where meals are often eaten. The items they use are an ordinary plate on which is placed leavened bread (the type that is commonly consumed in daily life) and a wine glass filled with regular wine. In this comparison there is also the suggestion that in going to Church, the human person moves away from a profane life to one that is sacred. The Eucharistic group, though, in celebrating their ritual in the home, signifies that ordinary, everyday life is to be appreciated and has a sacred quality.

In their Eucharistic ritual, the group follows a conventional pattern, but their participation in this process is more evenly distributed than that which is to be found in the orthodox equivalent. Seated around the table, they open their Eucharist with a Liturgy of the Word (that part of the ritual which focuses on the proclamation of religious texts). There, they *take time to reflect on the Scriptures, which is often followed by silence*, said Ruth. *Then someone says, "This passage really troubles me," [and then there is] heart-felt discussion.* In this activity, the participants try to overcome perceived contradictions between actual life and their ideal by attempting to make resemblances between their own understanding and what the Scriptures say, believing that these religious texts have revelatory capacity. At times, there are difficulties in making desired associations, and it is then that a member can turn to the group for assistance. These friends bring considerable experience and expertise to their dialogue, much or all of which is likely to be historically and culturally sensitive. This dialogic process, moreover, contrasts with that of an orthodox Eucharist ritual, wherein a priest commonly draws on "Scripture and tradition" (as interpreted in doctrine) to give monologic instruction.

The second part of their Eucharistic ritual focuses on a communion in commensality. *We say together the words of consecration*, said Ruth, *and then we distribute communion to each other.* In creating a resemblance between their Eucharist meal and that hosted by Jesus at the Last Supper, and in sharing the bread and wine, they transform themselves as individuals, willing to undertake self-development into human persons who are in relationships of substance. Indeed, this real food and drink is directly related to the vitality and growth of each member and the connections that bind them together. The resemblance made is ritually deepened and expanded through the appropriation and corporeal incorporation of food and drink. Eucharist-as-meal is also an act of reciprocity. In their sharing from the one



loaf of bread and one cup of wine, they incorporate each other as friends into the individual self and vice versa. They are ritually tied to each other in that boundaries between self and other are blurred. In this ritual act, the significance of personal development and a mutual basis for solidarity are confirmed.

In the rudimentary community, these friends can remove the masks which they are required to wear in religious and social worlds. In this statusless space, where they are free of the restraints of obligation, they can diminish or even reverse their normal role and status. This can be partly achieved by adopting a transient humility, allowing each person to aim for a higher position; for in *communitas*, the weak and silenced can become strong and articulate; they can assume and take their place alongside other equals. Such momentary change was made particularly evident in one group member, Monica, who welcomes the opportunity to doff the mask. In the public sphere, Monica works in a Catholic institution and is paid *a woman's wage*, meaning low-paid. In the private sphere, she is the primary care-giver to twin siblings who suffer from a rare disease. The burden of caregiving contributed to the end of her marriage and forced her into accepting a meagre, but reliable, income. From the viewpoint of society, her status is obscured by relative poverty and gender discrimination. From the perspective of the hierarchical Church, Monica is an anomalous character who takes on the woman's role of caring for the family, but not as a nun, wife or mother.

However, when Monica participates in the Eucharistic group, it provides her with *a space for me [where I can realise] a sense of peace, a sense of belonging: a place where you can talk about your life*. In normal life, Monica's personhood is compartmentalised in reductive and confining categories. But in this rudimentary community, she can reassemble herself as an authentic self who is looked upon as a person of substance. Indeed, Monica is considered by her friends to be a truly admirable person, a view that she accepts with evident humility. Despite the limits placed on her in religious and social worlds, Monica has not only juggled the roles of provider and carer with evident skill, she has also lobbied successfully for services needed for her siblings and similarly afflicted others.

Monica's participation in the rudimentary community provides her with the spiritual nourishment and communal support needed for what might be described as considerable personal sacrifice. Indeed, Innovative Catholics do not eschew sacrifice, but they are sensitive to how that might be understood. As an extension of Eucharist-as-sacrifice, Catholics are required to sacrifice themselves in their daily living, meaning they are to forgo or "give up" something of the self for the sake of an established common good. But for some, that notion runs counter to the attributions they accord to the individual. They ascribe to the self innate worth and value, which as a primary source, is to be drawn upon and developed to give service. In Eucharist-as-meal, Innovative Catholics nourish the self to maximise one's own authentic giving in relationship in a revised common good.

## Ritualising Ordinary, Everyday Life

Other Innovative Catholics are experimenting with Eucharist-as-meal, and in so doing, they work toward consolidating and celebrating subjective bonds encountered in ordinary, everyday life. One group of Innovative Meditators, for example, incorporate an abbreviated Eucharistic ritual in a Seder Meal on Maunday Thursday.<sup>3</sup> This adapted ritual commemorates the liberation of the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt and extends that myth of freedom in a Christian continuum. During this ritual, these Innovative Catholics celebrate elements of the Passover meal that culminate in a Eucharistic rite and conclude with a final blessing. In this closing verse, which gives voice to a last hurrah, there are outpourings of joy and cheer, love for each other, a promise of fellowship and a commitment to meet next year. To ensure the continuity of their fellowship, this group uses ritual to reach back into ancient sources, not just to their Christian beginnings but to Jewish origins. In creating this sense of timelessness, they lessen the pressures and burdens that come from being a part of a relatively younger Church. In creating an eternal now, where the normal view of time does not apply, they can momentarily overcome current difficulties in a perfected present where group solidarity is secure and harmonious.

Some also celebrate a Eucharist in the context of the family or a gathering of friends. Christopher, for example, spoke of how he and his family celebrate an “agape meal,”<sup>4</sup> an alternative description for the ritualised meal. Another married couple chose to celebrate a Eucharist as a response to an unexpected event. *John and I were too sick to attend Church for a few weeks, so he did a home-Eucharist for us.* Yet another couple, Adam and Evelyn, have long assumed responsibility for *breaking bread in Jesus’s name at the family table.* These rituals tend to be basic and flexible. Ritual participants commonly light a candle, share in prayer whatever is concerning them, and say together an adapted Eucharistic verse. A small roll or slice of bread is then passed around, followed by a glass of wine. They end the ritual with a joining of hands and saying grace. Such a celebration operates to support each person’s spirituality and sustain and strengthen the bonds of family and friends.

In giving critical appraisal to these Eucharistic meals, a conservative believer might argue that they are secular or quasi Eucharists. But Innovative Catholics would respond saying that their rituals are as sacred as that of Eucharist-as-sacrifice and, furthermore, that they are undertaking the necessary task of revivifying the Eucharist in new and needed conventions of the sacred. Beth said, *I think the Church has narrowed the word “sacraments” to certain actions, but when you think that every time we sit down for a meal with friends or family or just two or three, that’s a sacrament.* Consistent with their identity as small-c catholics (see Chapter 4), these small-e eucharists reflect a desire for social inclusivity. In their rituals, Innovative Catholics attempt to create synonymy between ritual meals and

social meals, between spiritual life and ordinary life and between religion and society. They consider modern life to be sacred and that it should be ritually organised.

### Ritualising Environmental Relations

The desire of Innovative Catholics to expand the range of relationships can extend to establishing mutual, rather than masterful, connections to the natural world. In this endeavour, those connections are commonly given form in advocacy for the environment, but some also complement them with ritual. During fieldwork, I was invited to participate in a Eucharistic ritual presided over by an environmentally conscious priest. The ritual was distinctively influenced by Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and palaeontologist who wrote a meditation in 1923 titled, "The Mass on the World." In this ritual, he would pray, "I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labors and sufferings of the world" (Teilhard 1965, 19). The sacrificial character of the Mass demanded that "man" submit "himself" to a revised order in which acknowledgement is given to an expanded sense of relationship that is evolutionary and convergent rather than static and fragmented by sin (Corpus Reports 2011). This idea of development was recognised in a psychic component, characterised in part by an unfolding intelligibility with human intelligence standing at the apex of that movement. But it is this anthropocentric view that some Innovative Catholics, especially those who pursue a more egalitarian trajectory, perceive a limit. In Teilhard's Mass, "man," who in recognising the "wonder of God's creation," is entrusted with the stewardship of the environment, whereas these respondents have a preference for ritual that reflects a cooperative arrangement that works to foster a human-earth relationship (Corpus Reports 2011).

The rituals, in which ecologically minded Innovative Catholics participate, have their purpose in reducing the anthropomorphic effects of both the collective person and the individual self, who respectively, dominate and objectify the planet. These people seek to create a sense of subjective relationship with an ecological other, as Elizabeth indicates, *[We need to] really experience our intimate connection with nature*. This personalising effect suggests she looks to revivify her relationship with the environment, not in a way that worships nature, as in pantheism, but in an approach that recognises a sacred dimension to nature, as in panentheism. Or, as Ethel put it, *God is not nature but represented in nature*, and as Elizabeth said, *The earth exists in the womb of God*. The natural world, which includes the human being, is considered by these respondents to be an apparently superficial expression of one that is more substantial, somewhat different but, paradoxically, intricately connected.

Some of the rituals employed by ecologically minded Innovative Catholics have been disinterred from ancient sources. One example is the Labyrinth

Walk, which dates back to 3000 to 4000 BC. By drawing on its primordial depth, eternal weight is given to advocacy for a revised ecological order. At the Centre of Ecology and Spirituality, this ritual is conducted on a bare patch of land scarified with a labyrinthian pattern, bordered by virgin woodland. In this rite, a person is invited to walk a coiling helical curve and, in that process, review and renew the self in relation to the environment. Thus, the individual separates from controlling interests in religion and society and enters into a liminal space of liberating, but subjective, unfamiliarity. The meditative walk eventually leads a person to the centre or “heart” of the labyrinth. In this silent, still and sentimental space, all anxieties and expectations are subdued, leading to the view that all is at one with the universe. After being revived by the knowledge that the human person is thoroughly tied to the natural world, the ritual practitioner retraces his or her pathway to the labyrinth’s exit. This reincorporation into the social world is accompanied, ideally, by a clear sense of one’s place in the natural world and in relation to other ecological subjects.

New ecologically oriented rituals are also being devised, as is exemplified in the “Cosmic Walk,” which invites the ritual practitioner to experience symbolically the evolution of the universe from its beginnings 13.7 billion years ago up to the present.<sup>5</sup> At the centre, this ritual takes place on an enlarged spiral, representing the entire cosmic unfolding of the universe, mapped onto a long pathway spread over the natural landscape. The Cosmic Walk is further interspersed by stations, with the first representing the first “Flaring Forth of the Universe.” The ritual practitioner walks the contours of the spiral and, at each station, meditates on major events in the history of the universe in which the earth features.

The intention of the ritual of the Cosmic Walk is to create a close identification with the unfolding cosmos, provide a symbolic experience of common origins and interdependence and produce a transformed consciousness of the recent place of humanity in that history. Elizabeth relates the following account of her experience of the ritual:

*This story [of our universe] must surely move us to think of what Homo sapiens is doing to the planet in our time. . . . When we see the planned destruction of the forests, the violence done to the earth [by] industrial giants . . . the cluttering of our oceans with waste products, doesn't it make it urgent that we find ways to protect this wondrous gift? That we treat the world not as something over which we have dominion, but as the place [where we are] partners? . . . We are part of this earth—it is part of us. We are in relationship with the earth—we are kin. Is this the way to treat our kin?*

In her account of the Cosmic Walk, Elisabeth is prompted to experience subjectively an alternative approach to life on small-e earth (the lower-case “e” signifying a universal that seemingly represents an inclusive relationship

between humans and the living planet). In entering the liminal stage of this ritual, she shifts from asserting a duality of “I” and “it” to one that is an undifferentiated “we” and “us.” What was once considered an inert material thing is now recognised as having corporeal existence similar to that of the human. Thus, *Homo sapiens* is no longer considered separate and superior, dominant and monopolising, but aligned in an interdependent relationship with the natural world. In this ritual, these Innovative Catholics combine rational thought, sentiment and a moral perspective to develop a subjective relationship with the earth and its manifold inhabitants.

### **Celebrancy and Rituals for Secular Society**

A few Innovative Catholics are not only producing rituals in the private spheres of centre and home; they are also offering them in the public sphere. They have become civil celebrants and are devising rites of passage for modern citizens who wish to signify transitions to new roles and statuses. In this venture, these ritual specialists attend a gap between established religion and secular society: a limit that has its origins in European history. Prior to the Enlightenment, ritual was considered by both Church and state to be essential for controlling human organisation and directing communal, political and economic life. Religious ceremony marked important social and environmental events, ranging from birth to death and from peaceful relations to those of conflict, in assuming various occupational and political roles and in acknowledging seasonal changes and anniversaries (Fitzpatrick et al. 2004).

However, during the Enlightenment, philosophers attempted to make the state independent of religion or moral communities it was to govern. One result was a split between the public sphere, where reason instead of ritual operates as the hub of society, and the private sphere, where belief is considered uppermost. Another outcome was that each individual was to make something of him- or herself to achieve his potential. Such development required hard work, and material endeavours over and above other social activities were now lumped together as leisure, meaning spare time that was not work. In this private sphere, people could participate in activities of their choice, with one option being religion.

Against a background of unprecedented economic, political and social change, religion needed to legitimatise its place in society. While it could be called on by secular society to conduct special ritual occasions, as in the example of clergy who regularly officiated at public funerals, its participation was mostly confined to an ancillary role. So, consequently, religion concentrated its sources and energies on the private sphere, directing them especially to the ongoing maintenance of the godly family, defined primarily as a patriarchal institution. The logic of this social form was that the male father figure was the primary authority figure, the female mother was the “natural” caregiver, and marriage was the sole legitimate locus for

child-rearing (Fineman 1995). The hierarchical Church was able to uphold this arrangement by producing doctrines and providing rituals which conveyed the message that the family was the fundamental unit of society as against that of the individual.

In the 1960s, the countercultural movement scrutinised established institutions. Questions were asked as to why, for instance, churches should monopolise the delivery and control of the content of many rituals. (Some secular institutions had their own rituals, such as university graduations and citizenship ceremonies.) Similarly, the patriarchal family was interrogated. Feminists held strong objections to marriage and to the wording of the marriage ceremony which subjugated women as wives to their spouses. Additionally, there was increasing dissatisfaction about how divorced persons and those in mixed marriages were treated by religious and secular authorities. Some citizens also declared that they had no religion but wanted access to appropriate rites of passage (Celebrant [Australia] 2014).

The Australian Commonwealth attorney general, Lionel Murphy, responded to these concerns in 1973 by legislating for civil celebrancy. These laws authorised a private person to perform “dignified and culturally acceptable” rituals, for example, weddings and funerals, mainly for the benefit of secular people but also for religious believers who looked for alternative approaches (Celebrant [Australia] 2014). Women, indigenous Australians and young people could now operate as celebrants which challenged the prerogative of patriarchs to conduct rites. Those seeking to participate in these rituals could choose their celebrant and decide on the content of the ritual, something previously unheard of. Today, civil marriage celebrants are accepted as ritual practitioners in society as is evidenced in the 2012 marriage statistics, with 71.9 percent of marriages being performed by civil celebrants compared with 8.9 percent of the total conducted by Catholic clergy (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013).

## The Challenge of Celebrancy

From the perspective of Popes John Paul and Benedict, celebrancy can be viewed as an anti-structural development, meaning in this case a rejection of traditional religion. But in the view of Innovative Catholics who have become celebrants, their profession signals transformation, not just in the social sphere but also in religion. Celebrancy is about creating new rituals, which challenges, for example, the assumption of what prerequisites are required for conducting them. Eunice is a case in point. In 2000, she added to her extensive track record of religious endeavours, including producing rituals for family and friends, gaining a theology degree and advocating for women’s ordination, by launching a career in celebrancy. She gained a postgraduate diploma in civil ceremonies and *commenced this very satisfying work of assisting people to celebrate and ritually honour their rites of passage.*

Unlike in the hierarchical Church, the profession of the celebrant is not dependent on gender, relationship status, sexual orientation or ordination. What are required are the appropriate motivation, training and certification. Eunice, however, did mention that her life experience provides her celebrancy with a foundation of significance. She made that apparent when comparing the wedding ceremony she conducts with that of Catholic priests, *[The wedding] was lovely, but relationships . . . well, [priests] just don't know. Male celibates don't have the freedom to bring to the ceremony their insights and experience; even if they have a special love . . . they can't name it.* Eunice implies that a celebrant with an achieved capacity and subjective depth has more to offer than a priest who is constrained by the directives of the hierarchical Church. Innovative Celebrants are effectively revising the prerequisites for ritual specialisation and producing new standards for delivering service.

In comparison to ritual practitioners in the hierarchical Church, Innovative Celebrants make different assumptions about who can have access to rites of passage. They generally have an open-door policy when it comes to people requesting their services, relying on the latter to take the initiative to contact them. According to Eunice, “clients” range from those who have no religious upbringing to those who are disillusioned with traditional religion. Popes John Paul and Benedict, conversely, assumed that “the party” contracting a service was at least a baptised Christian and practising Catholic. Other restrictions might also be placed on “the party” dependent on their “sex,” marital status, physical capacity and position in the community and hierarchy. Hence, they exclude the following groups of people: priests, Religious, divorced persons, homosexuals and the impotent, with such prohibitions operating to preserve the collective person.

Innovative Celebrants and Catholic clergy also differ somewhat over the types of rituals they offer. In the hierarchical Church, those which are attributed with the greatest sacred character are known as “sacraments,” including baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, marriage, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick. These rites can be explained as “a visible sign of God’s invisible presence,” through which the Church manifests and celebrates its faith and communicates the saving grace of God (McBrien 1994, 1250). Of lesser importance are the so-called sacramentals, including blessings, dedications and exorcisms. These, too, are considered grace-bearing signs and sources of spiritual encouragement, but they do not express fully the sacred character of the event as does a sacrament, which essentially, sacralises traditional social order (*Catechism* 1994, 415–416).

In comparison, Innovative Celebrants offer rituals that aim to attend the diverse needs and requests of modern citizens. Eunice gave me a list of rituals she has conducted to date: *baby naming ceremonies, birthdays, house blessings, marriage [heterosexual and “same-sex”], renewal of marriage vows, divorce or separation rites, starting a business, a sea change, and retirement or having to place your loved family member into care, funerals.*

Innovative Celebrants concentrate on supplying a range of rites to assist transitions that modern citizens make, factoring into these rites the reality of changes in a person's life and their relationships. These events suggest a ritualising of democratic arrangements, as is evident in their responding to the complexities of individual lives that are marked by economic and social transitions. The ritual practices also indicate a reciprocal effect between religion and society, and in this case, the flow is from the private sphere to that of the public.

The revision of ritual extends to its practical detail. In the hierarchical Church, for example, it is expected that the marriage ceremony will take place in the parish Church of one of the spouses, a place that is separate from normal or profane life. As for the content of the ritual, it is formally prescribed with little opportunity for adaptation. There is no option for couples to write their own vows or introduce personal symbols. Non-scriptural readings cannot be substituted for scriptural readings. Eunice, in contrast, asks her clients, *Do you have a sacred space? And inevitably they will say the beach, the outdoors, the gardens, the bush. . . . Some choose historical homes to add gravitas to the occasion . . . [and] I love it when a couple chooses to have their wedding in their own home. Then I'm aware that the couple is making a statement about their home as a sacred site, their own sacred site that grounds their relationship.* Instead of choosing places that have a transcendent or otherworldly character, her clients chose sites that have immanent or inworldly significance. Eunice also devotes considerable time and attention to guiding and encouraging couples to compose the content of their marriage rite. *I don't have a one-size-fits all ceremony. . . . No, I need to hear your story.* Eunice endeavours to tailor the ritual to a couple's wishes by encouraging them to plumb their subjective depths. This personal work effectively prepares them to enter into the ritual with the aim of transitioning both selves to a new relationship or state in life.

The novel developments that are signified in celebrancy are not just directed to the private sphere but also to the public one. Eunice was asked to prepare a sea change ritual for a couple who had made a decision to escape a high-pressure urban existence for the slower pace of community life. Such a transition can be often motivated by a search for self-fulfilment which moves away from the rational idea that achievement or fulfilment can be realised in materiality or economic prosperity. *So they decided to have a life change [rite],* said Eunice, *to really affirm them in their decision but also to let their family and friends know that they were making a big shift in their life, to let them go.* The sea change rite assisted those immediately affected by the dramatic consequences of this adjustment to process the transformation. In this rite, rationality is not usurped, rather the process works to redirect or moderate its influence by introducing complementary sentimental and spiritual elements. Innovative Celebrants imply that the rational project in secular society can be revitalised when combined with existential considerations and accompanied by appropriate rites of passage.



The sea change ritual had as its theme: *The beginning of discovering a dream is to decide to live as though we are looking for one.* The theme was reflected in the idyllic setting of the beach, at dusk, backgrounded by soft music and the intermittent wash of sea on the sandy shore. Eunice opened the ritual with an acknowledgement of the risk of the transition that the couple were making *a brave decision! [It was] freeing—yes—but also somewhat frightening. . . . Madness? Or revitalising?* Two guests then read an excerpt from the *Curly Pyjama Letters* (Leunig 2006), which features a character who has a restless nature that has compelled him to take a great voyage of discovery. Next, guests were invited to write their well-wishes on small pieces of paper that were attached to the tail of a kite and presented to the couple. A toast was then given *for the journey, roundness of life, love, and space and time to play*, followed by a communion supper of barbequed food and fine wine.

Innovative Celebrants disseminate novel ideas about ritual in other ways. Brendan, another celebrant who was once a Catholic priest indicated that unless he gets permission from those who seek his services, he doesn't mention God. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that *my thinking of faith infuses everything I say.* Eunice said the same: *[I] don't name it as God . . . fair enough. But all the time, you're talking about the love that is at the core of life. As far as I am concerned, Jesus is the human manifestation of the way God loves, and that informs anything I do.* These Celebrants consider religious faith to be a valuable source of inspiration for their service, indicating the potential for a complementary relationship between religion and society and for advancing possibilities for making a correspondence between how a modern person is conceptualised and how that person can be ritualised.

## Concluding Remarks

Popes John Paul and Benedict were intent on maintaining the pre-eminence of the Eucharistic sacrifice to shore up communal distinctions and hierarchical rankings. Innovative Catholics, however, found it increasingly difficult to conform to this ritual which was oriented to maintaining the collective person. Some managed to make subjective modifications to what was exteriorly imposed, but many did not and have since ceased participation.

In the context of rudimentary communities, some are revising or creating a range of rituals that promote social and ecological inclusivity. Some Innovative Catholics focus on a meditative ritual for the individual self who is directed to realising authenticity as well as expanding sociality. Some are also revising Eucharist as a meal with the resulting commensality, encouraging personal development and solidarity in mutual connections and supports. Innovative Advocates are creating rituals that emphasise subjective connections to the earth and universe. Innovative Celebrants are producing and providing rituals that aim to transition modern citizens. All these rituals indicate a preference for an immanent or inworldly focus and a sanctifying

of what was once believed to be ordinary or profane but is now considered substantial and sacred.

In the next chapter, exploration is given to how encoded messages in ritual are consolidated in a revised worldview.

## Notes

- 1 Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Eucharist was commonly referred to as the “Mass,” which colloquially refers to the entire Church service. The council introduced the term “Eucharist,” meaning thanksgiving. The *Catechism* uses both terms, the “Mass” and “Eucharist,” interchangeably.
- 2 In the 1960s, a variety of lay movements emerged in the Church, including Teams of Our Lady, which helped married couples rediscover their marriage as a relationship with each other and with Jesus.
- 3 Maunday Thursday, also known as Holy Thursday, is the day before Good Friday. It is dedicated to the commemoration of the Last Supper or Passover meal Jesus had with the apostles. It was also on the night of Maunday Thursday that Jesus was betrayed by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- 4 In early Christianity, agape meals were ritualised meals which demonstrated affection between and among those gathered (VanderWilt 1998, 32).
- 5 The Cosmic Walk was developed originally by Sister Miriam McGillis of Genesis Farm in New Jersey.

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## 8 Scrutinising Worldviews

*My sense is that many have moved beyond that simplistic understanding of the divine-human relationship. Instead we are still on a “learning curve” trying to better understand the mystery of the divine.*

—Brian

*The notion of a God, with human qualities, who watches over the earth and us, and can be addressed in prayer to alter things—this left me years ago. . . . At very least, God must now be seen as somehow immanent to the cosmos rather than watching over it.*

—Xavier

*(How do you understand God now?) Well, I have to say I don’t know. . . . I have a sense that there really is something more than just goodness in the abstract. So maybe it is the sum of all of that, that together in the world goodness is such a powerful force that we’ve given it a name “God.”*

—Maureen

Innovative Catholics have inherited competing worldviews, arising from the earlier struggle between the Church and the Enlightenment. In their youth, they accepted the bipolarity of these views, but later these two more or less unconsciously held views clashed. The result was that they no longer had a reliable system for interpreting reality and addressing life’s critical questions. Since then, they have attempted to resolve the conflicts imposed, on the one hand, by the Church and, on the other one hand, the secular world. In this endeavour, Innovative Catholics examine and modify symbols identified in Scripture and science, myths about Jesus and metaphors of God. They also give consideration to the classical symbol of the Trinity, which yields both problems and possibilities for producing a hybrid worldview.

### Review of Religious and Scientific Worldviews

In early Western history, Greek philosophers first proposed a universal worldview, arguing that the nature of existence arose from a single first cause, later

identified as God (Armstrong 1994, 46). Plato, for example, was convinced that the divine world was static and changeless and that a rational, morally good, immaterial soul was the cause of the first movement. Aristotle, alternatively, asserted that there must be some eternal and imperishable substance and that this was the single prime mover, which while the source of change, was not itself subject to change (Armstrong 1994, 46–49). He reasoned that a material object can only keep moving through propulsion and therefore, a superpower was needed to keep the cosmos moving. These Greek ideas were to have an immense influence on Christianity and particularly on Augustine, who as has been discussed in Chapter 2, proposed a unifying and communitarian symbol, “the Trinity.” As a foundational concept of a classical worldview, the Trinity represented an absolute and unchanging God, constituted in Father, Son and Spirit, which was used to realise a perfected notion of community.

In the thirteenth century, political expansion, agricultural innovation and urbanisation threatened to depose the classical worldview, but the hierarchical Church was determined to find a way of protecting it. Papacies responded by establishing medieval universities wherein a professional clergy took up the scholastic method to defend doctrine and related perceptions of reality. Thereafter, the Trinity was developed in theories, as exemplified in analogies such as “lover, beloved, love” and “mind, self-knowledge, self-love” (Dobbing 1987, 1058). These closed sets of symbols constituted a system of logic characterised by a nascent rationality that was speculative, critical and scientific.

Among the scholastic thinkers of the fifteenth century was a priest, Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), who hypothesised that the earth, as one planet among others, moved around the sun (Koyré 1973). Known as the heliocentric model, it contradicted the widespread belief that the earth was a stationary sphere in the centre of the universe. Copernicus, in effect, precipitated a challenge to the position of the hierarchical Church, which as custodian of the geocentric view, claimed that a transcendent God had ordained “mankind” to be at the centre of the universe. His ideas proved to be a catalyst for a radical change to how humanity thinks, resulting in the modern view of astronomy and natural science. A century later, an emerging group of scientists, including Kepler, Galileo and Newton, would build on the heliocentric model and produce an alternative and open symbol system, the basis of which was mathematics (Dillistone 1986, 190).

The classical worldview was challenged by the religious movement of Protestants, who in reacting against the corruption and decay in the Church, believed that it could only be reformed through a strict and exacting moral code (Bokenkotter 2004, 199–207). At stake in this struggle were who would control the primary symbols of Christianity and what interpretation would be given to them. Up until the fifteenth century, Roman Catholic clergy had an exclusive monopoly on this task, but that waned with the invention of the printing press. The production of mass communication,

exemplified in vernacular, not Latin, editions of the Bible, encouraged literacy and loosened restrictions on access to knowledge. In these conditions, Martin Luther (1483–1546) turned away from the classical worldview of higher and lower to one that had a more common basis. This biblical worldview emphasised justification, meaning any and all Christians come to God “by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of Scripture alone” (Dillistone 1986, 184–185). This view accentuated the imperfect or sin-ridden individual (who was required to change his or her ways by repressing sensuality and practising austerity) and the moral law of God; it also undercut the authority of the clergy to interpret religious texts and impose doctrines.

The biblical world view was disputed at the Council of Trent (1545–1563). The Council Fathers determined that “faith is strictly supernatural and . . . necessary for justification and salvation; [it is] not simply a matter of intellectual acceptance of truths”; [that is], “faith is not a saving faith apart from hope and charity” (McBrien 1994, 36–37). Essentially, they sought to maintain a collective rather than an individual religious perspective. They also strengthened the classical worldview by revitalising key symbols, including hagiographies of Christ, the Virgin Mother and the saints, to inspire believers to aim for spiritual accomplishment (Dillistone 1986, 193). For the next four centuries, Catholics upheld the revised classical worldview by taking comfort in these doctrines and symbols; they had a clear message and the potential to overcome the biblical and pessimistic view of “man.”

In the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment philosophers cultivated a secular worldview built on the work of the aforementioned early scientists. In this endeavour, they produced an image of a Creator God who, after having wound up the earth like a clock and set it in motion, then stepped back from it. In effect, the philosophers distanced humanity from God, providing scope for revising truth and values. Thereafter, objective knowledge was considered to reside solely in the hands of scientists, and in their secular worldview, they gave emphasis to the object, as exemplified in technology used in industry. Conversely, religious worldviews were to remain in the private sphere and concern themselves with meaning and ultimate existence (Hefling 1994, 942). In subsequent centuries, science produced symbols that communicated a realistic certainty that the world and its inhabitants were the result of, and controlled by, physical or natural forces.

### Early Formation in Two Worldviews

During their school years, Innovative Catholics were introduced to both religious and scientific worldviews, considered complementary rather than independent systems of thought. *We were taught evolution was the best way of explaining the diversity of life in the natural world*, said Brigid, *[and] that God had no problems with science as long as it wasn't trying to find out more ways to kill people*. Science, via equations and theories, and religion,

as in doctrine and hagiographies, communicated certainty about the universality of their respective claims. In an education system, which in the 1950s and 1960s emphasised rote learning and suppressed questioning, these young people were able to uphold both worldviews.

When many entered tertiary institutions, they began having difficulty with sustaining coexisting worldviews. *Once you started getting into the scientific method*, said Myles, *you start getting analytical*, which resulted in scrutiny of evident contradictions. During his seminary years, Sean began to realise that *the Church was so wrong on a number of things. . . . Galileo is one such example!* He was able to resolve this predicament by realising that *[o]ne era's certainties was another era's embarrassment*. Thereafter, he attributed science with the capacity to explain the physical world, whereas religion was to discover or comprehend profundities that neither observation nor experiment could reveal directly.

Some looked anew at the correspondence between science and religion via the works of Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard sought to reconcile his scientific and religious beliefs by producing a worldview which has as its basic premise that all of reality, the whole of the cosmic order, is moving towards a goal (the "Omega Point"). In this evolutionary pattern, each stage of development is more unified, with human life being the most developed form (McBrien 1994, 140). Teilhard's use of open and flexible symbols appealed to Dominic as a young science student. The Phenomenon of Man [*written by Teilhard*] *was absolutely mind-blowing. All of a sudden there was someone speaking my language. . . . He was a scientist using the language of evolution. . . . [Now] there was a way that you could build a theology that actually made sense*. Dominic recognised that science could be useful as a foundation for revising and reinvigorating his conviction about the value of religion as a signifier of something more than is rationally conceived.

## The Disagreement over Worldviews

At the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers determined that the doctrinal system of the Church could be revitalised by novel symbols sourced in the Bible. Select symbols from this religious text were to be used to communicate a more immanent trajectory rather than one that was transcendent and otherworldly. For instance, they drew from the Bible historical depictions of Jesus which they incorporated into conciliar documents. These representations countered those of the pre-conciliar Church which had emphasised a highly divinised Christ to which religious believers were to give devotion (Loewe 1987, 541). Other established symbols were also given reappraisal. The Council Fathers considered the veneration of the saints and the Virgin Mary to be legitimate, but they warned of "abuses, excesses, or defects which may have crept in here and there" and urged that the cult of saints be subordinated "to a more ample praise of Christ and of God" (Vatican II

1964, 83–85). Saints were to be now looked upon as disciples of Jesus rather than higher-ranked intermediaries (McBrien 1994, 1114).

Nevertheless, the Council Fathers were naive to think that their interpretation of these revitalised symbols could be contained in a rapidly changing world. Young Innovative Catholics, for instance, viewed the Bible as a radical text replete with open symbols, signalling the potential for theological and pastoral innovation. Some set about inculturating the Gospel, meaning they attempted to adapt the Christian message to the culture in which they found themselves, and to the influence of that culture on the evolution of that message. For Sean, that meant giving more self-effacing service in solidarity with the poor and making a commitment to social justice, which significantly shaped his priesthood. For three decades he ministered in the poorest countries, serving urban dwellers and outlying villages. Alternatively, some directed the Gospel to the workings of the Church, seeking to replace traditional emphases that maintained community and hierarchy with biblical symbols of equality and a more collegial exercise of authority, which implied more democratic arrangements.

Pope John Paul, however, was concerned to control the meaning of conciliar symbols, an action which he legitimated by asserting that the Magisterium was the servant of “the Word,” as had been stipulated at the council (Vatican II 1965a, 115–117), but inferring this to mean it had a duty to govern how the Bible was to be interpreted. His efforts, according to McGovern (1991) were directed to reining in “a widespread *sola Scriptura* mentality” and addressing the “resulting cleavage between the Bible and the Church.” In effect, the Pope sought to curb historical and cultural interpretations of biblical and other conventional symbols and direct them to universal application. He held, for example, that there were limits and dangers in using historical images of Jesus, claiming that this symbol was “insufficiently attentive to the dynamic aspect of meaning and to the possibility that meaning can continue to develop.” For him, such interpretation was to be managed by “*theological discipline* [original emphasis]” (Pontifical Biblical Commission 1994). The constraints placed on an historical view of Jesus meant that believers were required to minimise their focus on Jesus as an immanent figure and maximise one that emphasised the transcendental nature of Christ.

Pope John Paul also reworked conciliar symbols by reviving traditional hagiographies to stimulate desires and feelings of believers. He encouraged the devotion of the Virgin Mary by placing the rosary at the centre of Catholic spirituality, to which he added additional prayers. He emphasised the role of saints, for example, in proclaiming 1,339 Blesseds<sup>1</sup> and canonising 483 Saints, more than the combined tally of all his predecessors, many of whom were martyrs to the “the faith” (Vatican Information Service 2005; Woodward 1990, 127–155). His successor, Pope Benedict, would likewise produce considerable catechetical instruction to persuade the laity to maintain correct biblical interpretation and emulate the saints (Benedict XVI 2011).



The symbols produced by recent Popes remained semantically open to verticalised aspirations. They gave emphasis to transcendent notions, as exemplified in the reappraisal Pope John Paul gave to heaven, hell and purgatory. In three audiences, the Pope pointed out that these are “states” of a spirit or human soul rather than “places,” as commonly perceived. This language of place was considered inadequate for describing the realities involved because it was tied to the temporal order (John Paul II 1999a). However, the favour given to these types of notions blocked the articulation of ideas that Innovative Catholics were considering. The ethereal language used by the Pope did not have the capacity, as will be discussed, to include meanings and purposes derived from knowledge and experiences in modern life.

### The Popes and Science

Since the eighteenth century, Popes have been keen to restore a relationship between the classical worldview and the scientific worldview but on their own terms. As written in the current *Catechism* (1994, 43), produced under the reign of Pope John Paul II, the classical worldview is “more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie.” The Pope was confident that no amount of problems, alternative arguments or contrary experience could shake that view, for “ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt” (1994, 43). In asserting *a priori knowledge*, he could therefore argue that science should be guided by a Catholic worldview:

Science and technology are precious resources when placed at the service of man and promote his integral development for the benefit of all. . . . [But] science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria. They must be at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, of his true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and the will of God.

(*Catechism* 1994, 552)

Pope John Paul took on the difficult task of promoting religion as the paternal guide of science by revising the position of the Church with regard to evolution. Previous Popes had condemned, ignored or given grudging acceptance to, for example, the ideas made famous by Charles Darwin in his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859) (Haught 1998, 181). In his revision, he tempered the views of his predecessors by arguing that “theories of evolution which, because of the philosophies which inspire them, regard the spirit either as emerging from the forces of living matter, or as a simple epiphenomenon of that matter, are incompatible with the truth about man. . . . With man, we find ourselves facing a different ontological order—an ontological leap, we could say” (John Paul II 1996). He was concerned to maintain the primacy of the spiritual character of the human person and

not reduce it to a symptom of nature, effectively arguing that “man” was a special creation.

The idea that “man” has supernatural potential had a corollary in recent Popes being able to overlook or discount scientific research and conclusions that contradict this view. For example, bishops in the US sponsored a nine-year sociological study on the shortage of priests, based on a meticulous census registry of some 36,000 diocesan clergy in eighty-six dioceses from 1966 to 1984 (Schoenherr and Young 1993). Research findings were gradually released through private interim reports to the bishops, but some were irritated by the gloomy projections, and funding was withdrawn. One researcher of the study, Richard Schoenherr, who had been a priest, was accused by a senior cleric of using the study to push optional celibacy. Schoenherr and his fellow researcher, Lawrence Young, responded that they had scrupulously adhered to the data, reserving their personal conclusions to the last three pages of the book, where they declared:

We believe the church is being confronted with a choice between its sacramental tradition and its commitment to an exclusively male celibate priesthood. One of the most critical aspects of this confrontation is that most church leaders have failed to accept responsibility for the choice. Instead, they focus on stopgap solutions to the ever-worsening priest shortage while hoping for a dramatic increase in vocations. . . . The need to decide whether to preserve the eucharistic tradition or to maintain compulsory celibacy and male exclusivity looms ever larger as the priest shortage grows.

(Schoenherr and Young 1993, 353, 355)

Though sociologists have not challenged the figures and projections in the study, criticisms similar to that of the aforementioned senior cleric have appeared with some regularity in diocesan and other Church publications (McClory 1998). Today, the problem of sufficient and suitable priests continues to be a serious one in the Western world. Peter Wilkinson, in his quantitative study on the Catholic parish in Australia, concludes that the shortage and situation of priests has “suffered serious slippage and there is unquestionably a crisis, verging on disaster” (Wilkinson 2012, 25–26). These scholars are but a small sample of individuals whose work highlights problems with the application of an unchanging classical worldview. But when senior clergy are confronted with knowledge that cannot be controlled, they prefer to cast doubt on the messenger and limit or suppress knowledge to maintain the existing one.

## **Reappraising Worldviews**

A worldview is constituted in a more or less unconscious attitude toward life, so when that interpretation of reality breaks down, it can be quite

traumatic. Such was the case for Innovative Catholics at an earlier stage of their lives, as exemplified in the narrative produced by Graham English (2011). *For the alcoholic [the hair of the dog]<sup>2</sup> is a form of topping up so that he or she will never be sober and have to face the world as it is.* That image is said to have a parallel in the *hair of the dogma: a condition found in Catholics who have spent a lot of their spiritual energy over a long time trying to believe things that are unbelievable, and so they have limited their chance to face the world as it is.* Graham had previously imbibed *hair of the dogma*, but, eventually, he collapsed under its weight. *After years of people trying to impose on me fear that I was trying desperately to avoid, and trying to impose on me piety, beliefs and actions that were bad for me, my psyche screamed out "Enough!"*

Graham's remedy to imbibing *the hair of the dog* was to recognise and affirm *some part of [me that] has always doubted.* Thereafter, he questioned claims of *things as facts that the teller could not possibly know.* Graham became painfully aware that a classical worldview could no longer be trusted as a guide for life. He subsequently affirmed his capacity to think. Drawing from a significant bank of knowledge and experience, he began to examine his religious beliefs, and when they could not be sustained by his own analysis of their assumptions, he jettisoned them.

In revising their worldview, Innovative Catholics not only scrutinise beliefs but also cultivate fresh possibilities by anchoring religious symbols in scientific ones, as their preferred reading material bears out. Some respondents to this research cited the following authors who draw on science, including social science, to inform their religious perspectives: Thomas Berry (cultural history), Joan Chittister (feminist theory), Paul Collins (history), Diarmuid O'Murchu (social psychology), Richard Rohr (Jungian psychology) and Brian Swimme (mathematics). Morris explained why these works inspire. *Science is the area of life that currently produces the most new information and new concepts. It would be a mistake for faith to ignore the tools that science provides.* Terry was even more emphatic in his explanation: *Science and faith must go hand in hand. One does not contradict the other. Both are the revelations of God. God is not static, not stagnant. God is always [being revealed] in the progress of science [original emphasis].* Some demonstrate a willingness to engage in a process of articulating and refining a religious worldview that has consonance with a scientific one. Their efforts to produce a hybrid view characterised by novel junctures between religion and science perforce revitalises religious discourse.

For someone like Dominic, whose profession is grounded in science, the pursuit of a revised worldview is essential for attending contemporary questions of meaning. *I could not possibly have a worldview or of faith that did not somehow encompass and contain all that science has discovered. I'm not talking about way-out sort of theories. I'm talking about stuff that is solid, and a lot of science is solid. . . . It's not conceivable that you can have a dichotomy, a wall if you like, an inconsistency between what one believes*

*about the infinite and what one experiences through the infinite's Creator. They must be consistent.* The idea of consonance is one that Dominic has pursued through his practice of meditation, wherein [*I'm*] *constantly holding all the pieces of this dynamic jigsaw puzzle.* In this ritual space, he is able to sustain his conviction that the universe is all of one piece by symbolically putting them together. Moreover, this is not a closed project in that all the pieces are at his disposal. In his ongoing attempts to identify, organise and order this ideal universe, he cultivates openness to mystery to maximise the possibility of discovering yet unknowable conditions for realising ultimate relationship.

Some are also mindful of a corollary to their endeavour of revising their religious worldview. They question not just conservative believers who assert the fixity of their worldview but also those who believe in an exclusively scientific one. Dominic, for instance, argues, *Some scientists are fundamentalist. They think the only knowledge is scientific, which is foolish. Richard Dawkins is just as much a fundamentalist as an Islamist. Unfortunately, our culture has taken on board science almost as godlike. [People in society] can easily see that fundamentalist Christians are absolutely mad. [But] they can't see that [fundamentalist] scientists are just as mad.* Dominic asserts that science has the potential to contribute to a lively cosmology, but that potential is undermined when it asserts that it is the only reliable source of knowledge for exploring important questions, including existential concerns. Innovative Catholics remain concerned that scientific belief might prevent encounters with the unknown and perhaps unprovable eventualities.

Some made known concerns about the dominance of a scientific worldview in relation to concrete realities. *We continue to put our faith in progress, believing that science will deliver us from evil and give us each day our daily bread,* said Catherine. *But science unredeemed cannot resist its own ambitions. Its fate lies in the wealth of multinationals and a billion who go hungry. It is the poor who count the losses of a dream that we in the West hoped to resolve by resorting to a rational God.* Similarly, Brian, a trained physicist, argues, *We can never "nail [the mystery] down" in some definition like the law of gravity, or the description of some atom on the periodic table, or any of Euclid's theorems in geometry.* Robert added, *What is proven is more likely to mean highly probable. What this means, really, is that the things that we think are certain in what we might describe as "the real world" are not as certain as they might first appear.*

Catherine, Gerard and Robert, as a liminal people, point to the limits of a scientific worldview. As an overall way of looking at the world, it offers a comprehensive knowledge of the physical world, but that view lacks moral content and ultimate explanatory power. Thus, Catherine implies that science should reach for and be connected to a cosmology of global benefit. Gerard seeks symbolic acknowledgement of there being much more to life than theory and evidence. Robert thinks it impossible to justify claims of certainty. For Innovative Catholics, and as a challenge to the position of Habermas, who considers it adequate to transfer religious concepts into

the language of secular principles, ultimate reality is beyond the reach of science. Science is limited to being a signifier which can point to, but cannot fully disclose, the totality of meaning.

### **Modifying the Jesus Myth**

Worldviews are supported and partly created by myths; that is, they are a particular type of story that attempts to integrate personal experiences with a wider set of assumptions about the way society operates (Schultz and Lavenda 2009, 188). When these myths are codified in doctrine, they sustain, at a naive level, underlying fixed traditions, customs and beliefs of a society. At a more sophisticated level, they are used to prove that of all possible social arrangements, only the one actually adopted is feasible. Nonetheless, myths cannot be fixed to orthodoxy. When social arrangements change, so too do myths, which then attempt to articulate the assumptions of a fledgling worldview (2009, 188). In addition, myths often involve heroic characters who mediate cosmological difficulties, reconcile realities and establish patterns for life. In Christianity, the pre-eminent hero is Jesus Christ, who as a mythical figure, is used to validate or alter a particular view of life and related power relationships in religion and society.

When promoting the myth of a conventional Jesus Christ, Pope Benedict tended to use those biblical texts which emphasised a transcendent character. Principal among these preferred images was that of “Jesus Christ, the *Logos*, that is, the eternal Word, eternal Reason, creative Reason” (Benedict XVI 2007). This view of Jesus Christ was considered to have revealed true knowledge or “eternal wisdom” to “man” about the mysteries of life (McBrien 1994, 238). Having established the immutable and unchanging universal order, he was looked upon as being the progenitor of a priori reason. The Pope, furthermore, emphasised the myth of Jesus Christ as the deified “Son” of a “Father” God (*Catechism* 1994, 106). In this symbolic elaboration, Jesus as the Christ is sent by a transcendent God to represent Him and to accomplish His work on Earth. Christ effectively descends from an ahistorical and acultural position to a historical and cultural situation to act as the universal reference point for all “mankind,” the latter whom are required to listen and follow “behind” (Benedict XVI 2012). Pope Benedict, as the master myth maker of the hierarchical Church, represented Jesus as the eternal *Logos* who instructs and leads “man” in right relationship, as best expressed in the collective person, to a transcendent God. In the case where religious believers interpret this myth literally, it provides them with an existential framework of beginnings and endings and how “man” is to live. No matter how much an individual learns and irrespective of his or her circumstance and situation, the virtuous religious believer is not to rely on her own reason and conscience but is to take direction and find solace in “Jesus Christ, the *Logos*.”

## Promoting Jesus as the Prototypical Human

Innovative Catholics use myth to grapple with social change and to justify modified arrangements. That process of revision began early for some, as was the case for Liam. *[I] always struggled with Jesus as God, he said. I didn't know what that meant, and I got to a point where I had to think it through.* Innovative Catholics search for an accessible myth, one that contains obvious truths and explains why society is as it is and why it cannot and should not be changed. Their search has one source in the Second Vatican Council, wherein emphasis was given to the immanent presence of God (which will be examined in the following section) and concentrated in the embodied or incarnated character of Jesus of Nazareth. This modification, which suppressed the notion of the transcendent Christ, provided the inspiration for Innovative Catholics to consider Jesus was a remarkable human being who had a penetrating insight into the ideas or things of God, and it was his personal, political and social messages, communicated during his life, that they emphasised.

Innovative Catholics find a second source in the historical and, seemingly, truthful accounts of Jesus of Nazareth, which have been produced by some modern biblical scholars. In their reading, they aim to discover who Jesus was, how he operated as a believer and citizen and overcame the besetting contradictions of the society of his time. This identification with their hero and the resulting comprehension provides some with a particular view about how to navigate their own lives and cultivate relationships in the contemporary era. The approach that they give to cultivating an historical and often a cultural view about the life of Jesus has a parallel in the way in which modern or inductive reason produces knowledge. This type of reasoning seeks to supply strong evidence for the truth, although it does not provide absolute proof. Nevertheless, truth derived from induction is considered sufficient for producing myth, as respondents make evident. The myths Innovative Catholics produce are typically concerned with worldly things and are constructed in a way that communicates the idea that they are both truthful and logical.

The following example of a myth written by Enda is typical:

*[Jesus was a] man who preached the Kingdom of God already present among us and who did deeds that were the sign of the Kingdom. He healed bodies and souls and spirits, and he met with his friends. He called the lost sheep of Israel. He believed what all other good Jews did then. Then he died, and his followers believed that he was raised again and taken to be with Yahweh. As far as he knew, he lived and died a good Jew. He didn't know he was a Catholic. The Jerusalem followers did the same and eventually wrote it all down.*

In this myth, Enda produces an interpretation of reality which aims to integrate his own experience and knowledge with assumptions about religion

and society. Enda sets aside the transcendent character of Jesus as *Logos* and replaces it with a substantially historical and cultural idea of him as a protohuman, implying that Jesus is not primarily a deity or God-man but human. In this revised system, Jesus is looked upon as personifying what they consider to be of God, and in this capacity, he is viewed as the original modern religious citizen who demonstrates the very best of what it means to be human.

Enda expands on the idea of Jesus as a protohuman in his weaving of historical and cultural details, which are considered rational, instructive and having cosmological significance. One such theme is that of the *Kingdom of God [being] already present*, where salvation is said to be found in a present now and achieved or worked at, as Jesus did, through good deeds; it is not to be found, at least principally, in a distant eternity, as is communicated in the ascription of Jesus as *Logos*. Another is reflected in the character of Jesus, who as the “first modern person,” had a holistic notion of the human person. He valued relationships, encouraging his friends to join him, and making connections with the poor and marginalised.

A third theme is highlighted in Enda’s wordplay on Jesus’s Jewish identity, where he challenges current religious, political and social arrangements, indicating the importance of engaging with difference and exploring a greater range of connections. Indeed, the implication is that those efforts led to his death and to his resurrection. It is through this mythologising of what he did during his life that communicates its significance for the present day. Jesus as a protohuman is considered a model for contemporary living. In this worldview, Jesus is not so much considered *the Son of God*; he is, instead, viewed as a historical and cultural figure who has taken on mythical proportions because he lived a life of substance worthy of report and of emulation.

In constructing Jesus as the prototype of the human condition, some attribute to him an individual self who directed that self to others. *He owned himself completely and he gave of himself*, said Ruth. *It wasn’t taken by anybody. He gave it out of his own self-possession and self-awareness; he gave that. . . . He was a human being who lived life with the greatest integrity, connected to his God.* In this myth, Jesus is considered to have an authentic self that empowers him to live an ethical and moral life. Miriam and Brian, likewise, articulate a revised mythology of the human condition. They consider Jesus, respectively, to be *an enlightened man* and a *figure onto which humankind . . . has draped its collective wisdom. That process began with the first writers of Scripture—and hasn’t ceased.* These research respondents advance the idea that Jesus as a protohuman constantly learns, uses reason and embodies shared and open-ended knowledge. Jesus did not emphasise preconceived notions of truth but produced a posteriori responses to evolving situations and, thus, determined what is true and right in the circumstance and situation he found himself. In advancing this myth for the modern citizen, Innovative Catholics communicate the importance of knowledge and experience and use these to determine the course of life.

## Renovating God

Innovative Catholics are faced with the unenviable task of having to produce, in their case, a hybrid worldview. It is an undertaking of immense proportions because they are compelled to accommodate the widest possible understanding of how the world works. One way of approaching the magnitude of this project is to explore it through a notion of ultimate reality, namely, God.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, for this reason, Innovative Catholics tend not to be interested in pursuing the question of God's existence. Rather, they are more concerned to explore this symbol of ultimacy in order to go beyond the limits of what classical and scientific worldviews offer.

Significant numbers of Innovative Catholics recall that as children, they had been given an image of God as *an old man sitting on a cloud*. Kevin, however, had a more nuanced view, recalling a lesson he had learnt from the *Catechism* as a boy, "Where is God? God is everywhere." For him, God was omnipresent although hidden. These combined understandings provide an explanation as to why many research respondents held the belief that God was separate or "up there." A mediated priesthood essentially obscured or put God outside the reach of the laity. Hence, later, when Innovative Catholics attempted to reconcile this abstract, intangible image with modern reason, the intelligibility of such a God was challenged. They were unable to comprehend a Supreme Being or otherworldly God in a far-distant place which is conceived today as the universe containing planets, stars, galaxies and the contents of intergalactic space.

Others also mentioned the problems they had with a transcendent God who intervenes in history and culture. Dennis, for instance, *couldn't get this idea of praying . . . to a magician who is going to do things if I am going to say the right words, or do the right things, or something*. For these respondents, God, as a cosmic conjurer who arbitrarily interferes with the laws of physics, is nonsensical. Their dilemma basically has its roots in the secular worldview where science has disestablished classical explanations about God, God's activity and intervention, and God's necessity or lack thereof. The source of their quandary is also compounded by social science, which has demonstrated how ideas about God are culturally situated. Such knowledge about the variety of deities contests claims for the monopoly and finality of a Christian God.

The difficulties which Innovative Catholics encounter around the problems of the intelligibility of God were broached to an extent by the Second Vatican Council. At the council, there was a subtle move away from the emphasis on a transcendent God to one that was immanent. The Council Fathers viewed the world as a product of God's love and also as the place of God's redeeming presence (Vatican II 1965b, 215–217, 230–231, 247–248). Metaphors such as the "People of God" further reflected the idea that God is not "up there" or "above" but "within" the Church (and the world). Pope John Paul, however, made a conservative reading of the conciliar texts



and moved away from immanent notions of God. In his attempt to restore the focus on a transcendent God, mediated by clergy, he, for example, refurbished the concept of “heaven” by advancing the idea that God existed in a “freely and definitively separate” space from “mankind” (see also earlier section in this chapter) (John Paul II 1999b). Pope Benedict similarly revived the notion of a transcendent God as exemplified in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005). He wrote, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4, 16). In a complex survey of three forms of love (eros, agape and philia), the Pope emphasises agapic love, characterising it as descending, oblation love that emanates from a transcendent position. Moreover, the effect of promulgating these ideas of this God is to limit, subordinate or exclude all other notions of God.

The idea of God was also contested by a secular and atheistic movement and came to the fore in response to the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre by religious fundamentalists. This movement renewed its assertion that God is not only unverifiable but that belief in God is irrational and even dangerous. A key spokesperson of the movement, the UK-based Richard Dawkins, argued, “Many of us saw religion as harmless nonsense. Beliefs might lack all supporting evidence but, we thought, if people needed a crutch for consolation, where’s the harm? September 11th changed all that. Revealed faith is not harmless nonsense; it can be lethally dangerous nonsense” (Dawkins 2001). In secular society, God is being put under the public microscope, with religion being examined as though it imperils modern society.

Innovative Catholics now find themselves sandwiched between a secular movement with its anti-religious message and the hierarchical Church determined to retain a classical religious worldview. They feel pressured by polarising forces which they consider are characterised by fundamentalist tendencies. Firstly, they are confronted by conservative believers who often speak about God in mechanical and literal language, and as though God is a “fact.” Some, however, interpret “fact” differently. In the semantic domain of modern reason, a “fact” is equated with material reality, and God cannot be fully fathomed or verified by evidence. God cannot be contained by “facts” as they understand the term. It is a chasm of difference in understanding which Brian highlights, *What I mean by that simple three-lettered word, “God,” might be light years removed from what [another] means by the same word.* Innovative Catholics find the claims made by conservative believers about the certitude of a transcendent or otherworldly God to be incomprehensible. Hence, it is difficult for them to engage with their conservative counterparts because, when they scrutinise God-as-fact, they do so from the semantic domain of modern reason, not from the domain of traditional religion, where notions of God are not to be questioned for fear that life as it is known might collapse.

Innovative Catholics also have problems with the views that are being asserted by secularists. They identify in their interlocutors’ position a similitude with conservative believers in that they too give a narrow reading

to religion. Innovative Catholics reject a one-sided view of religion and its impact on society, tending to prefer a more complex view of Christian and world history. Some assert that religion has and continues to do much good, as Catherine does, *Christianity certainly has a shameful track record, but if it never made the world stage, things would have been much, much worse*. Dennis defends religion by arguing that *Jesus never preached hate or fear*. Respondents also make reference to secularists who invest inordinate confidence in modern reason, pointing to examples where technology has had a devastating impact on humanity and the environment. And it is because of these limits that Brian turns towards religion: *Religion is not science. . . . It is rooted in the biggest mystery there is in all Creation* (Coyne 2014). While Innovative Catholics recognise modern reason contributes to the understanding of ultimate reality, they consider it incapable of producing total or encompassing explanations.

### Comprehending God as Metaphor

In their exploration of ultimate reality, Innovative Catholics commonly employ metaphor to aid in comprehending ideas about God, who or which they can only remotely grasp. This literary device makes it possible for them to assert the existence of meaningful links between the two different semantic domains of religion and reason (Schultz and Lavenda 2009, 202). In creating a metaphor, they select elements from each domain which are considered comparable. In making this resemblance, they create a link between something that is unproblematic and something which is difficult to understand. Moreover, when metaphor is used to comprehend God, it can operate as a potential basis for revising a worldview. Hence, when Innovative Catholics construct metaphors of God, they generate revelatory power. In making these acts of disclosure, they leave behind a classical religious worldview and the limits of a secular worldview and shift to a modern religious one deemed existentially responsive to modern questions about meaning and life.

Some believe that religion and science can be compatible, as Deborah explains:

*Take a great piece of music, for example. It could be explained in scientific terms how each instrumental sound is made, the timbre of each instrument, the pitch, duration and dynamic of the note. But this explanation loses the sense of everything that moves people when they hear a great piece of music. Well it's the same with God. The natural and the supernatural are not mutually exclusive.*

In her explanation of how science and religion might be well matched, Deborah creates a resemblance between the scientific fact of technical detail and a rapturous encounter. She roots her semiotic work in slivers of scientific knowledge to which she adds an encompassing understanding of that which is

signified. In effect, she moves from the signifier of the rational grasp of a *great piece of music* to that signified in a rapturous experience of such music. Deborah shifts from knowing *about* the music to *knowing* the music, from studying it to entering into communion with it. Whereas the resemblance between scientific reason and religious conviction may at best be considered an imperfect likeness, it is this possibility of difference that produces symbolic vitality. By engaging creatively with such tension, and working through complex bonds of shifting beliefs, Innovative Catholics can invigorate ideas about God.

## Representing God as Presence

An analysis of the ethnographic data indicates that the most favoured image of God produced by Innovative Catholics is that of *presence*. As a wordplay, it suggests that God is present, immediate and vibrant: a divine character who or which, as an intangible reality or spirit, attends concrete reality, permeating the natural world, including the human person. This representation is exemplified in the following account, made by Emma, who is an advocate for the environment.

Emma substantiates her wordplay in metaphors by creating resemblances between the natural world and God. *We very much believe in God but not the reductionist, theistic, "out there" God. . . . Rather God is everywhere; there is nowhere God is not present. . . . For me, the reality of God is in the experience of everyday living, the people I meet, the visible Creation that surrounds me, the new discoveries and insights made by scientists.* In producing this metaphor, Emma reconceptualises God as immanent whose *presence* is understood to be an actual, innate and universal component of existence. She does not reduce God to nature (or the material or physical); rather, she recognises the latter as having an iconic property. In effect, nature-as-material points to and discloses nature-as-whole—meaning nature has both material and immaterial qualities and, thus, is constituted in more than what is ordinarily understood. Nature-as-whole is recognised as having an indwelling, enigmatic quality that is present and active. For Emma and many Innovative Catholics, they recognise the universe as being infused with more than what can be rationally described and which they conceptualise in a notion of God as *presence*.

When producing metaphors of God as *presence*, some attempt to direct sceptical individuals to belief, as did Elisabeth to her nephew. She attempted to make links between what could be comprehended by reason and what could be recognised as spiritual, meaning that knowledge which conveys penetrating insight. One afternoon when she was helping her nephew with his homework,

*I looked out of the window, and there was this beautiful rainbow right down at the bottom of the property. . . . I said, "Look at that, Gareth. Isn't that beautiful?" "Oh yes," he said, "it is, isn't it?" I replied, "That for me is a God moment." We left it at that and went on with our work.*

*Later, when we were having afternoon tea, Gareth said to his mother, "We saw a rainbow, and Aunty Elisabeth called that a God moment." He remembered that. I hope now that when he sees something beautiful, he'll think of it as a God moment.*

When Elisabeth constructed her metaphor, she articulated an understanding of her experience in a form that was intelligible to Gareth, asserting that the rainbow was not only an arc of prismatic colour; it also had a numinous quality. When making this resemblance, she advanced a religious notion that the natural world is potentially and actually an expression of the *presence of God*. Gareth, in turn, sympathetically interiorised what his aunt had to say and likewise drew meaning from the event. Hence, an individual can educate another about rainbows and teach about God, but when communicating "an experience" of a *God moment*, it requires a more complex disclosure of knowledge, including those forms that are non-rational, to elaborate the significance of what is being referenced.

Elisabeth is concerned about *the continued survival of humankind and the planet as we know it*. To counteract that anxiety and concern, she produces metaphors which communicate subtle messages of hope and meaning. In making this powerful metaphor, she aims to inspire her nephew to seek after Edenic perfection in the natural world, anticipating that he will make a personal pledge to work towards and live in harmony with a pristine world. A metaphor of *presence*, then, is unlike that which is communicated in a metaphor of a transcendent God who is separate and distant from the natural world. The God which Elisabeth propounds is fundamentally connected with the created world. In attributing God with palpable existence, she suggests that the human person should have a deep respect, regard, understanding and care for the natural world. The natural world, hence, is not to be objectified for the purposes of humanity but is a subject of a significant relationship. Indeed, God as *presence* does not need to be mediated by a priestly caste but is accessible to all, the availability of which both implies all can be recipients of its influence and all have a responsibility to communicate the compelling force. This is further evidenced in many who make mention of their *wonder* and *awe* of nature; for them, it is as though they are *entering into sacred awareness*, suggesting here that they are making a penetrating assessment of the natural world.

When Innovative Catholics speak of the *presence of God* in nature, they include themselves in the encompassing divinity, as Pauline does, *I do have a sense of my own holiness and more significantly my "wholeness"—imperfect, fractured and transient as it may be at times!* Tom likewise explained, *"Wholeness" [as a term which] encompasses my understanding of myself as both body and spirit, with . . . changing, growing, and groaning to become better in the creative sense.* In constructing metaphors that link religion and the natural world, respondents create a resemblance to convey the idea that God is not fundamentally separate from human beings; that is, God is interiorly "known" in an often momentary way or, as commonly expressed, is a *presence* within

the self. This contrasts with classical religion, which conceptualises the dualism of profane humanity and a transcendent God (Taylor 1989, 220). In short, Innovative Catholics emphasise a God-with-us in contrast to a God-beyond-us. In making the resemblance, they enjoin body and spirit, referred to as “wholeness” or “completeness,” to end the conflict encountered in dualism.

When some respondents were pressed to give more explanation to what is signified in their metaphors, they often respond that *God is ultimately mystery*. As a metaphorical subject, God is not easily understood. It is a view that, at least, superficially, they hold in common with Popes John Paul and Benedict. But at a more substantial level, mystery is viewed differently, as is made evident in an excerpt from the *Catechism* (1994, 277), “the mystery of the . . . plan of God’s ‘good pleasure’” for all creation has already been accomplished. It is up to “mankind” to understand how mystery has been “revealed and fulfilled in history according to the wisely ordered plan that St. Paul calls the ‘plan of mystery’” The Popes consider mystery to be an ahistorical reality requiring of history conformity. Thus, those who do not believe in the absolute and eternal “will of God” have failed to plumb this ahistorically prescribed mystery. Furthermore, because people in history do not have the required arcane knowledge, they cannot know it. Only clergy, as mediators of the ahistorical, can know the will of God which, accordingly, has been established once and forever.

At a more profound level, Innovative Catholics tend to have a different view of mystery in that they regard it as a constituent of history, as is exemplified in Enda’s personal creed, *I believe in a mysterious presence beyond my imagination that I call God, who is in the millions of galaxies and everything that is. How we got here and why also mystifies me, and I am content with the mystery*. He contends there is a fundamental link between religion and reason. Reason is constituted in the knowledge of *millions of galaxies and everything that is*. But reason is limited. It is there where religion comes into its own because it has the capacity to accommodate mystery. Indeed, he asserts that the idea of mystery must remain unrestricted because *[a]nything we say is a human construct after all. It is not God*. He recognises the limits of a classical worldview and a rational one, indicating that there is much that humanity cannot explain and does not know. When speaking of *God as mystery*, Innovative Catholics produce and promote a non-explanatory God that does not supply predetermined answers or evidentiary fact but, instead, inspires the human person to venture in historical time towards promising but still unfathomable frontiers.

For some, the invitation to explore *mysterious* horizons has a related pragmatic application. Maurice, an Innovative Advocate, suggested that entering into *mystery* has a practical consequence in opening up frontiers in the present now: those that currently close off opportunities for the poor, vulnerable and marginalised to have wholesome lives. He thinks and believes that those boundaries can be overcome by *offering hospitality to the stranger and the alien*. Patrick, an Innovative Advocate for the environment,

similarly, proposes a basic activity to reinvigorate the relationship between humans and the environment. *Put a little seed in the ground. Two weeks later, up comes a little plant. Just spending time with that . . . leaves me . . . in the midst of a mystery.* These respondents assert the importance of leaving behind thresholds of familiarity and entering into novel and unforeseen relationships. Religion, which means “to bind,” has, accordingly, an expansive capacity, requiring people to bind themselves to the natural world and its inhabitants. They contend that the *God of mystery* entices the human person towards transformation in open-ended relationships, which as one respondent said, *[requires] a lifelong quest to enter deeper into the mystery.*

Innovative Catholics maintain a conviction that there is more to life than what is presented by classical and rational or scientific worldviews. The former is experienced as moribund, whereas the latter’s production of evidentiary proof is useful but not fully sufficient for navigating the course of life. In responding to these deficits, they have attempted to produce a modern religious worldview. Nevertheless, they recognise that their efforts of realising understanding and meaning, as is provided in the resemblances they make, can only take them so far. And at that point, they cut the metaphorical subject of an immanent God from its predicate, knowing that such a God can only be fully accepted on faith. Thus, Innovative Catholics strive to speak about religious and social matters from the perspective of a modern religious worldview, which says, in effect, “God is with us.” They believe that just as science has much to discover, so too does religion, and it is to a belief in the *God of mystery* that these people ultimately entrust their quest.

### Assessing Trinitarian Interpretations

Recent Popes have invested heavily in their interpretation of the key symbol of the Trinity and have promoted this expression of the cosmic order as an unquestionable theory of faith. They validate this assertion by drawing attention to its antiquity, tracing it back to the “the early council,” the early Church Fathers and “Christian people’s sense of the faith” (*Catechism* 1994, 250). The Trinity is said to encapsulate essential elements of Christian belief: “[T]he mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (1994, 261). The Trinity is considered a fundamental tenet of religious faith, implying that there can be no other interpretation or configuration of this principle or, indeed, that there can be no other key symbol or theory of religion that can compete with it.

Nonetheless, many indicate they have difficulties with the symbol of the Trinity. Brian considers, *[Trinitarian] language is not metaphorical at all, but you have to believe it as some kind of scientific fact!* The doctrinal assertion of the Trinity has made it difficult for him to accept what this symbol claims. He cannot elucidate it rationally, nor has he had “an experience”

of the Trinity. Some respondents are also concerned about the political and social ramifications of reifying the Trinity. *The concept*, said Margaret, *was too much involved with the power of the state*. (In circa 300, Constantine drew on the Trinity to persecute those who did not subscribe to the social rankings that were implied.) *It's the same today. The Trinity is used to maintain the power of the Church*. She and others assert that this symbol works to maintain the domination of men, patriarchal notions of maleness and the subjugation of women. That refrain is repeated in a parody of the Trinity made by two other respondents as *two men and a bird*.<sup>4</sup> Significant numbers of Innovative Catholics are confounded by the classical implications of the Trinity and consider it operates as a bulwark against their desire and inclination to reassess religion in light of modern knowledge.

Some are attempting to refine their understanding of God in summarising metaphors. The work of the Catholic theologian, David Tracy, provides a useful analytical framework for examining how they are variously going about that task. According to Tracy, the central religious symbol is God, and a person's "picture" of God is a metaphorical narrative of God's relationship with the world and the individual self (Greeley 1989). These metaphors can be constructed in two types of imaginative language: analogical and dialectical. Analogical language views reality in ordered relationships that express a similarity in difference. This semantic domain emphasises the idea that there are similarities between the divine and human, and therefore, humans can respond to God socially. Dialectical language, on the other hand, views reality through the lens of the human person, who is in need of deconstruction, so that flaws might be exposed. The person only considers herself to be fully human when he or she is able to break away from personal limits and relate to God as a free individual. Tracy, moreover, argues that when analogical and dialectical imaginations engage with each other in dialogue, the more likelihood there is of producing constructive interpretations of contemporary life (Bosco 2004, 12).

During my interview program, two Innovative Catholics produced metaphors that can be identified respectively as dialectical and analogical. Each respondent provides an insight to the problems and possibilities surrounding the symbol of the Trinity, which further reflect the difficulties they endeavour to resolve in the modern religious worldview. For example, Pauline, an Innovative Meditator, uses the dialectical approach, which had its catalyst in a reaction to *exclusive language, actually—God = Father, He, Him, His, Jesus, Son, Holy Spirit, et al.* "Naming" the deity was/is constraining at the best of times, but I needed a non-gender-specific, more widely encompassing "name" that was authentic to me and acceptable to people to whom I was speaking. She has since produced imaginative language to communicate her revised notion of God as *the Holy Other*, and explains the metaphor like this:

[In] understanding myself in relation to the Holy Other . . . aspects of the Other are in me—[such as] compassion, forgiveness, love. . . . I reflect the

*Other when I demonstrate those gifts. I [also] recognise the Holy Other in people who also reflect those attributes—[Catholic] or not. . . . A metaphor I found useful is that of a mirror, where I am the image in the mirror not the maker of the image. So if the Holy Other is not there, there is no reflection, that is, me. . . . I reflect the Other only when connected.*

In this metaphor, Pauline makes a resemblance between the human person who practises the *gifts of the Spirit* and God as *Holy Other*.<sup>5</sup> When she perceives a personal failure in not demonstrating *the gifts*, she believes she is not reflecting the *presence* of God. The metaphor Pauline constructs not only challenges the classical view of the Trinity, which assumes an exclusive communitarian ethos, it also advances the idea of the value of the principled individual in a dyadic relationship with God, suggesting here a more immanent relationship. These emphases speak into the concrete reality of the human condition as is understood in democratic society, communicating an ideal person who *demonstrates those gifts* in relationship with other, which is further sacralised as Other. They imply a more encompassing definition of catholic, meaning they are to be universally applied across religion and society.

Sean applies the alternative analogical approach to the Trinity in his production of a metaphor. In introducing his imaginative cosmic view, he notes that although the Trinity is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, it underpins an attempt by the New Testament authors to communicate what they had meant by God.

*They believed in one true God, but they had experienced God in three ways:*

- *God, Creator and sustainer of all things*
- *God, in Jesus of Nazareth, who walked the land of Palestine*
- *God, the Spirit, who was living in and around them and whose real presence guided, sustained and challenged them*

*Trinity for them was not a doctrine to be believed but an experience to be lived.*

In this metaphor, Sean makes an analogy between “the three persons” and a triad of nature, history and culture. By proposing an immanent God, he is able to advance the idea that the New Testament authors *experienced* the Trinity. This cosmic view was not simply adopted as a theological principle; it was the result of a substantial interior response which they communicated to realise an understanding of communion in the union of God. Furthermore, as it was for these early Christians, so it is for all humanity. Thus, the Trinitarian symbol summarises the essential elements of a modern religious worldview. God is manifested in the corporeality of nature, the ideal human person and animated living.



## Concluding Remarks

Innovative Catholics inherited what were originally considered complementary worldviews but which later proved irreconcilable. Meantime, the Second Vatican Council gave greater emphasis to the biblical symbol of “the Word,” which they viewed positively and used to adapt religion to the historical and cultural circumstances and situations in which they found themselves. However, subsequently, Popes John Paul and Benedict harnessed the use of “the Word” to *theological discipline*, which worked to restore verticalised aspiration (Pontifical Biblical Commission 1994).

In the borderlands of their Church, Innovative Catholics aim to discover a worldview that makes sense of their contemporary experience, and they do so by drawing on those from science and modifying religious sources. Key elements of their religious worldview are communicated in the myth of Jesus as a protohuman and refurbished concepts of God, which aim to empower human responsibility, encourage universal hospitality and promote reverence for the natural world. In sum, Innovative Catholics attempt to produce persuasive disclosures of an immanent God, and it is to this *presence* that they ultimately entrust their quest.

## Notes

- 1 A Blessed is a person who has been beatified, meaning that the Church recognises this dead person is able to intercede on behalf of living individuals.
- 2 *Hair of the dog* is a colloquialism used to describe the consumption of alcohol for the purpose of avoiding a hangover.
- 3 Innovative Catholics tend not to be interested in pursuing the question of God’s existence; rather, they are concerned with what God might mean for the modern religious citizen.
- 4 The joke has its origins in an article written by Sandra Schneiders (1990). The two men refer to God as Father and Jesus as Son, with the bird (traditionally imaged as a dove) representing the Holy Spirit.
- 5 In Christianity, spiritual gifts are believed to be attributes bestowed on a religious believer by the Holy Spirit. They are described in the New Testament, primarily in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4.

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# Conclusion

I opened this work with an ethnographic interest in a remnant of the countercultural movement, which today, can be further identified in a subsidiary progressive religious movement of Innovative Catholics. Their anti-structural ideas and practices, which I have described as being the result of a bi-focused dialectic, are linked to a theoretical discussion between Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger (2006). I then proposed some hypotheses informed by the field about how the relationship between religion and society might be revitalised, and it is to these that I now return.

Habermas had previously expressed his concern about the inability of secular society to stand outside of itself to evaluate its motivations and conclusions. He considered a solution to this weakness in the mining of religious sources, and he pursued it by inviting Ratzinger to debate and discuss aspects of secularisation and also the role of reason and religion in a free society. Habermas conditioned his discourse with the argument that all religious ideas are to be scrutinised and that modern advances are to be retained. Conversely, Ratzinger envisaged an answer to the problem of secular society in a return to immutable universal laws and unchanging moral principles that are given form in traditional social arrangements and conventional ideas about the common good.

In the analysis of ethnographic data, which is further focused in Turner's ([1969] 2009) theory of anti-structure, I have shown how Innovative Catholics have been willing to contribute to dialectics on religion and society. However, unlike their counterparts, Habermas and Ratzinger, they, as a liminal people, have been blocked from participating in such debates directed to pursuing truth. They have not been granted a space in which to persuade recent Popes to consider their hybrid views, and similarly, secular society has not allowed them to introduce their modified religious convictions. Consequently, they are faced with the quandary of how to advance their ideas and practices and persuade others of the veracity and validity of a revised cosmology and its potential for invigorating religion and society.

Nevertheless, Innovative Catholics have responded to far-reaching social changes creatively. They recognised at an earlier stage that they could no longer maintain discordant worldviews and were encouraged by the Second

Vatican Council to reconcile these and related differences of position. Despite their subsequent endeavours being derailed by recent Popes, they recognised that they could not revert to religious orthodoxy as was expected of them, nor could they abandon their religious convictions to an exclusive rationality. They have thus persisted with the difficult task of creating a synthesis between adaptations of their inherited religion and rational ideals as advanced in modern society.

Innovative Catholics have since revised their understanding of the human condition, having moved on from the idea of the collective person to one that has greater but not complete resemblance to that of the modern citizen and which has been conceptualised in this work as a relational person. The relational person is evidenced variously in the sub-movements of the progressive religious movement. Innovative Meditators tend to emphasise the expansion of the individual self in their striving for greater consciousness. But they do not consider that the individual self can realise fulfilment autonomously; rather, it is to be accomplished in personal and mutual relationships. Innovative Reformers often stress the equality of individuals, the value of worth and merit, and the importance of making and sustaining democratic or horizontal connections. Innovative Advocates accentuate the relational person by engaging with the subject and extending the range of connections to overcome hegemonies which are seen to limit or harm the person, human or otherwise, and the bonds between them.

In these hybrid productions and as a unifying enterprise, Innovative Catholics can be seen to have nuanced the assumption of Habermas, which implies that the autonomous individual will continue to advance him- or herself by using reason. They have done the same with Ratzinger's position, which assumes that social solidarity can only be achieved by conforming to the collective person in an established community and hierarchy. In their attempt to create a more satisfying religion and society, they have dispensed with the ideas of the autonomous individual and the collective person and have constructed the relational person. In the application of these dynamic ideas of the human condition, they consider the advancement of the human person to be dependent on the ethical motivation and capacity to plumb the individual self and make egalitarian or democratic-like connections.

In the dialectic of secularisation, Habermas contends that reason can respond to the difficulties encountered in modern society if it is able to draw on the sources of religion to vitalise its project. But, as is demonstrated in the field, this position can be challenged. Reason is considered to have advanced society in significant ways, but it is insufficient for morally tempering the human condition because it restricts the influence of alternative forms of knowledge. Innovative Catholics make that evident, firstly, in an expanded range of reflexive practices. They use a holistic approach, constituted in reason, emotion and spirit, to negotiate religious and social complexities. As a consequence of this meaning-making activity, they alter their position in relation to Church and state (and the environment) and broaden their range

of relationships. These lateral connections, which they regard as principled, challenge existing hegemonies to revise the basis for solidarity.

Secondly, Innovative Catholics argue that reason is not able to provide explanations of ultimate reality. In addressing the difficulties secular society faces, it is not simply a matter of transferring religious concepts into the language of secular principles. Other types of knowledge, resulting from reflexivities deployed, are needed to address existential concerns because they act upon the human person in particular and potentially complementary ways. Whereas reason remains a significant element in the project of revising relations, they assert the importance of producing sentiments of sociality and making symbolic resemblances. In this holistic approach, they emphasise the responsibilities and duties of the individual, the importance of creating and sustaining personally extensive relationships and the value of recognising fundamental connections.

From the different perspective of extra-referential knowledge, Ratzinger asserts that “authentic religion,” as he understands it, stands outside of concrete realities to influence them. Innovative Catholics, though, consider arguments for religious orthodoxy grounded in immutable and unchanging laws to be an insufficient basis for addressing the preoccupations and sensibilities of modern religious citizens. They contend that religion need not be an unchanging source of guidance and proscription. Rather, they view it as a site of dynamic inspiration for navigating change in evolving situations. In effect, they make an argument for an *a posteriori* position to renovate the religious project in the modern world. In this regard, they attempt to produce hybridities from Catholic and Enlightenment principles.

In these hybridities, Innovative Catholics adjust notions of solidarity. Religious orthodoxy imposes the idea that the collective enterprise is best administered from above, which has structural consequences in strong identities, fixed moralities and autocratic governance, ritual sacrifice and a transcendent God. But Innovative Catholics contest that remote capacity to bind a society. In their experience, it has had the opposite effect in fragmentary discriminations and stultifying aspirations. Instead, they consider solidarity can be revitalised by reconfiguring society in flexible identities, a revised moral code, democratic governance, ritual commensality and an immanent God. Thus, in the Church, they seek scope for personal and local determinations so that they might respond imaginatively and practically to the historical and cultural contexts in which they find themselves. They assert that religion is not a disconnected social institution, but one that takes its place alongside others, and in doing so, plays its part in contributing to solidarity.

Habermas promotes the idea that problems in secular society might be remedied by religious concepts, but Innovative Catholics indicate that this position overlooks the effect of reciprocity. In seeking consonance, they assert that society cannot be reinvigorated if religion is not. For this reason, they consider the Church has much to learn from secular society. They are aware that the Second Vatican Council made some moves to incorporate

a modicum of democratic attitudes and actions but that these were undermined by the autocratic preferences of Popes John Paul and Benedict. Innovative Catholics argue that the Church should advance democratising arrangements, not only for its own sake but also for society at large. Their dispute is similarly levelled at the way knowledge has been controlled by recent Popes. Innovative Catholics contend that the Church should welcome progressive ideas and practices, believing that much is to be gained, as has been evidenced in secular society. Thus, if religion were given the freedom to explore frontiers and the opportunity to present these discoveries, a shared benefit would result.

In closing, and in pondering the fate of Innovative Catholics, a key question remains. As members of a progressive religious movement, they operate as an adaptive phenomenon that maintains an operational and meaningful connection between religion and society. But how will their legacy survive the vested interests of traditional religion and secular reason? Turner highlights the gravity of that question in his theory that without structure, a liminal people and rudimentary communities cannot reproduce themselves (2009, 140). Given that the ideas and practices of Innovative Catholics remain marginal, their bequest is vulnerable. But its fate may also be that of established religion and society. A religion that cannot accommodate innovation loses, at minimum, relevance and vitality and, maximally, its *raison d'être*. A society that is not able to tap into sentimental and spiritual dimensions is prone to problems relating to excess, both in the individual and at a social level and, thus, remains unstable. However, the last word must go to Innovative Catholics who are both optimists and realists. In operating out of a spirited conviction, from which they produce and apply their innovations, they demonstrate the possibility that a more accommodating religion and society may someday prevail.

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