REDUCING TENSIONS BETWEEN STORIES OF THE CHURCH: AN EXAMINATION OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN LUMEN GENTIUM

Thesis
Submitted to
The Graduate Division of the College of Arts and Sciences of the UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree
Master of arts in Theological Studies

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Dayton, Ohio
November 2000
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ABSTRACT

REDUCING TENSIONS BETWEEN STORIES OF THE CHURCH: AN EXAMINATION OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN LUMEN GENTIUM

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This project presents a selected examination of Lumen gentium, utilizing concepts drawn from narrative theology that can analyze differing symbolic representations such as images of the Church and the foundation of the Church. Narrative theology will be used to highlight the role of the story aspect within the larger document. This approach will show how Lumen gentium is more than a compromise between progressive and traditional ways of looking at the Church. The goal is to achieve, through recognition of the narrative character of Lumen gentium, an appreciation of the many-layered understanding of the category of the mystery of the Church. This will be accomplished through an examination of narrative theology, the historical composition of Lumen gentium, and practical application of narrative theology to select portions of the document. The concluding analysis will point to a multidimensionality that enables Lumen gentium to elude overly narrow systematic interpretations that privilege tensions and contradictions over an overarching narrative.
"The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called 'the DOMESTIC CHURCH,' a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1666)

Throughout the duration of this project, it is this one thought that has come home to me over and over. Therefore, it is only fitting that I dedicate this work, as I have my entire academic career, to my mother and father who passed from this life to their home in heaven in 1995. It was they who first taught me the meaning of Church by teaching, example, and story. I am who I am because of their love, and ventured into my study of theology bolstered by their love and support. Thank you Mom. Thank you Dad. Pray for me, as I pray for you. Also, to my brother Michael and my sister Diana, your pride in the accomplishments of your little brother is the finest laurel.

As I reflect back over the last 18 months I am joyfully aware of the conversation that I have been in with my Lord and my God. No endeavor such as this is possible without a prayer life that exemplifies the relationship between Creator and being. For all that I am, I pray now that I may be ever mindful of my dependence upon our Father in heaven.
Many others have helped me along the way, and I would like to thank them for all their encouragement. In particular, I thank fellow graduate students Anthony Mominee, and William Hamant, who helped keep me focused and never failed to share their insights, even when we did not agree.

I would like to extend a very heartfelt thank you to my readers, Fr. Bert Buby, and Dr. Terry Tilley. These men gave me the benefit of their knowledge and surely pushed me to my limits.

No such project as this is possible without a willing and skilled advisor. Dr. Dennis Doyle never let me give up, yet always showed willingness to accept what choices I made. To Dennis I owe a deep debt of gratitude, for it was he that taught me to reach beyond myself and become a superior student. There were numerous times when he provided the seeds and left the cultivation up to me. My skills at research and writing have certainly increased under his tutelage.

Throughout all of this time, there has been one person who came to me through the greatest providence of God. With all my heart, I thank you, and I am blessed by you, Elizabeth.

20 November 2000
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Introduction

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is a central Roman Catholic doctrinal statement for understanding what it means to be “Church.” Since the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, many questions have been asked concerning the text’s juxtaposition of traditional versus progressive understandings of what the Church is and how it relates to the world. Traditional understandings of the Church draw most often upon its ecclesial developments over the last 500 years, with a focus on the hierarchical organization and the role of the ordained priesthood. In contrast, progressive apprehensions of the Church switch the emphasis and tend to give equal regard to all members constituting an operative whole. Such an understanding downplays the hierarchical model in favor of a more communal one. This thesis will focus on two primary points in Lumen gentium that reflect the interaction between traditional and progressive elements, 1) the images “People of God” and “Body of Christ”, and 2) the foundation of the Church as presented in section five, and as presented in sections eighteen and nineteen. I propose that there is a way of understanding the document that shows these tensions as healthy and necessary.

I will be basing my argument on the idea that Lumen gentium is telling, in part, the story of the Church, and that this is the story of a community. How does story shape our experience
of being Church? To what extent can the doctrine of the Church in *Lumen gentium* be more deeply appreciated by considering a specifically narrative understanding of the interaction of various parts? It is my goal to show that such a narrative understanding of *Lumen gentium* can help to relieve tensions perceived in the document. In the first chapter of this work, I will explore elements of narrative theology to determine whether a theology designed to explore the theological purpose of story may also serve to provide understanding for a religious document like *Lumen gentium*.

Following this, chapter two, will examine the history of *Lumen gentium*, focusing on issues relevant to a narrative understanding of the document, such as the authorship, development, and structure. I will show the importance of how, under the leadership of John XXIII, Vatican II took a new approach to the development of conciliar documents. Of special interest in chapter two will be the emergence of two contrasting schools of thought with contrasting doctrinal substance and styles. Already in the genesis of the document one can detect a tension between the Church understood, on the one hand, as a Pilgrim Church and the People of God, and, on the other hand, as the Mystical Body of Christ. Taking up these tensions, as well as the insights derived from chapter one, the third chapter of this work will study *Lumen gentium* using an approach derived
from narrative theology. The purpose here will be to use the concept of story to aid in appreciating the many-layered understanding of the mystery of the Church in the multiple images presented in _Lumen gentium_, and to put into a new perspective selected points of tension that remain unresolved in non-narrative approaches to the document. It is not my claim that a narrative understanding will settle these issues or do away with differences, but that a broader perspective may be achieved, allowing for greater insight, and helping somewhat to relieve tensions in the document. Paradoxically, one can sometimes read points which appear to present an insoluble tension or contradiction on the level of rational proposition as creating a healthy complementarity on the level of narrative.

Narrative theology is particularly suited to this since, as will be shown, a narrative approach tends to have an appreciation for various movements within a text and the interaction of its parts. For instance, a narrative approach, when applied to biblical texts, is not trying to take the texts apart and cast doubt on certain events due to possible issues of historical accuracy or the theological interpretations written in by the author, but rather to examine the text in relation to the manner in which it functions as a means of communal remembering and self-understanding, or, as John Shea puts it,
the world "behind the text."\(^1\) I contend that a similar approach can be used for secondary religious documents derived from the primary sources of Scripture and Tradition. This may be especially true due to the manner in which *Lumen gentium* was developed.

I would like to make it clear that I am not attempting to develop a lock-step method for interpreting *Lumen gentium*. What I seek to do is to move towards a methodology for resolving certain tensions within the document by showing how aspects of narrative theology, which are mainly applied to the primary documents of Christianity (i.e. Scripture), can be helpful in understanding the "secondary" documents that flow from the primary. In doing so, this work will favor a Catholic approach that operates out of a mutual support stance between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. *Lumen gentium* can, in one sense, be regarded as a secondary document flowing out of Scripture and Tradition. However, being itself a part of Tradition in that it was a product of an ecumenical council, in which the magisterium of the Church is specially operative, it also serves as a primary document for the Roman Catholic Church.

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Therefore, *Lumen gentium*, along with the other documents of the council, may arguably bear the weighty claim of being a primary document. It has become part of the story of the Church. The task ahead is to determine what kind of story it is and how it tells that story.

The motivation for this study springs from my reading of *Lumen gentium*. I have noticed that parts of the document read like a story of the Catholic Church. Hence, it seems worth exploring the use of a technique from narrative theology to examine the role of story within the larger document. I will be attempting to show how examining *Lumen gentium* in this way will provide a helpful way of interpreting the document.
Chapter 1

An Exploration of the Elements of Narrative Theology

Narrative theology attempts to call our attention to the significance of stories for theology. It does so because stories tell us who we are and have the power to give articulation to experience.\(^2\) We can see how our very personalities tend to grow out of the stories we have chosen and those that are imposed upon us. We construct from our perceptions of what has happened to us (i.e. the world around us), and in turn develop stories that influence our future expectations. Stories also gather together our past, present, and future, thus allowing participation in something larger than ourselves.\(^3\) Through a story, an individual creates meaning out of daily happenings, and this story, in turn, may serve as a basis for anticipation of future events, or even development of an eschatological viewpoint. James McClendon goes so far as to say that "narrative or story is a means of expression uniquely suited to theology,"\(^4\) and Terrence Tilley indicates that a necessary mark of a true narrative theology is that it will


\(^4\) James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 188.
"contribute a new way to explore, transform and proclaim Christian faith." 

With all that has been written over the last few decades, the result has been that the ideas of narrative theology have found a significant place in theological discussion. Narrative theology has the potential to open up many new avenues of study in religion by the manner in which it considers persons in the event. As Roger Hazelton states in Ascending Flame, Descending Dove, "there is far more to the business of being and becoming human than the analysts, statisticians, and explainers have thus far produced." Michael Goldberg goes so far as to claim that narratives are a reflection of the primary structure of existence, make truth claims about that existence, and link members of a community to past events through common human experience. We therefore can begin to see how telling stories becomes part of what it means to live. As Shea points out, it is natural to make stories out of life events. Pain is turned into narrative to make it easier to bear, as is ecstasy, so that it may be prolonged.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with aspects of narrative theology that are useful for an examination

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5 Terrence Tilley, Story Theology, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1985), xvii.
7 Michael Goldberg, Theology and Narrative, (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1982), 244-5.
of parts of *Lumen gentium* that I claim can be read as story. To do so, in the first part of this chapter I will provide an overview of selected concepts of narrative theology, followed by a response to critiques that I feel need to be resolved before continuing. In the second part I will examine certain theologians whose work with narrative will prove helpful in an examination of *Lumen gentium*.

**Part 1: An Overview of Narrative Theology**

Before defining narrative theology, it will be helpful to first understand how narratives function. In its more broad-based approach narrative, as a category, is useful to explain human actions, to illustrate the identity of agents (whether human or divine), to explicate strategies of reading (for our purposes this is applied specifically to biblical texts and "Church" documents), and to show how story telling and myth making is central to the human experience (keeping in mind that the discipline of religious studies has very specific understandings of the term "myth"). More importantly, for our purposes, as Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones point out, narrative may help to account for the historical development of traditions, offer something other than scientific or

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9 In chapter two of John Shea's *Stories of God* he presents a clear understanding of the theological concept of myth by moving the concept of myth from the realm of ancient stories about gods to the modern myth making of contemporary society.
foundational epistemologies as ways of understanding, and develop a means for imposing order on what is otherwise chaos.¹⁰

Trying to pin down exactly what narrative theology is and what its goal might be is not an easy task.¹¹ A significant reason for this is that “narrative theology” has a wide range of uses and applications. One thing that many of those involved in the conversation seem to agree on is that there is a great power in stories to resonate with who and what we are.¹² Although an in-depth history of narrative theology is beyond the scope of this work, it is important that the reader have some awareness of the conversation, and also of certain critiques leveled against narrative theology.

Narrative theology has a number of sources. One strand was a response to the demythologizing of Christian texts.¹³ Another strand attempted a cure for “a variety of Enlightenment illnesses.”¹⁴ Another author found it to be an idea which had come of age to explore new ways of understanding and proclaiming the Christian faith and human experience.¹⁵ I would contend that

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¹⁵ Tilley, 19.
each of these has its own place in the development of narrative theology and have as their locus a movement away from more didactic, structured methods, towards a sense of reclaiming imagination and self and community koinonia. No matter what its origin, it is becoming more and more apparent that it is not simply a theological fad. Narrative theology makes explicit what other theologies of Christianity tend only to presuppose, namely that Christianity's priority is in the story of Jesus Christ.  

In order to understand where narrative theology originated, it is necessary to assign it a place within the history of biblical criticism, especially the quest for the historical Jesus. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) may be the first truly critical scholar of the New Testament. A German deist and rationalist, he represents the Enlightenment's first serious contribution to Jesus research. His arguments may appear uncritical in that he follows the gospel narratives largely on their own terms. He shows no awareness of the Synoptic Problem, much less of the Two-Source Hypothesis as its resolution. But by reading between the lines, especially of the Gospel of Matthew, Reimarus constructs an alternative to the canonical plot of early Christianity and its development. The next step in the

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quest for the historical Jesus was in 1836 when D. F. Strauss published *Das Leben Jesu*, which denied the reliability of the Gospels on the basis of their supernatural elements and contradictions found within them. He labeled much of the Gospels myth, arguing that they record the mythological ideas of early Christians rather than historical information about Jesus' life. This was a dismissal of all things supernatural in scripture. Although Strauss was not well received, it became clear that biblical scholarship was headed in a new direction.  

Although this demythologizing of the gospels and the "quest for the historical Jesus" failed in its first form in the 1800's, it found resurgence in the latter half of the 20th century. It is, in part, to this "demythologizing" of Christianity that narrative theology is responding. Most certainly narrative theology has placed much of its focus on the retelling of the traditional biblical stories as an alternative to more classical forms of biblical criticism.

As a postmodern response to the Enlightenment's approach to Scripture, narrative theology moves away from scientific forms of textual criticism. The focus becomes the stories and the influences of literary criticism and theory. In both Jewish and Christian Scriptures the Bible is seen as composed of stories,
as opposed to the stories simply providing content.\textsuperscript{19} The idea here is that the whole of Scripture is best understood when the story becomes primary.

In addition, narrative theology is as concerned with the human element of Scripture as it is with the stories themselves. The Bible is an expression of Judeo-Christian tradition moving through time. The possibility that narrative is basic to human life, that it is something beyond culture and rooted in nature, is now a matter of serious consideration.\textsuperscript{20} Narrative theology deals directly with human experience in that “our basic convictions about the nature and meaning of our lives find their ground and their intelligibility in some sort of overarching paradigmatic story.”\textsuperscript{21} It becomes increasingly important that one consider that the stories of the Bible not only shape and proclaim, but also help us understand the Christian faith and human experience. As human beings, we are made up of experiences, and these experiences find their way into our stories. Steven Crites claims experience “is itself an incipient story.”\textsuperscript{22} When this process has an end purpose, we may claim that the end is a cause for and an explanation of the process.

\textsuperscript{19} Tilley, 29.
\textsuperscript{20} Loughlin, 64.
\textsuperscript{21} Michael Goldberg, “Exodus 1:13-14 [expository article],” Interpretation, 37, (no. 37, 1983), 391.
In Christianity, and therefore in Christian stories, the end purpose is salvation or redemption; in community, Christians are held together by a common narrative. Narrative theology understands the central figure of Christianity to be Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ continues in the story of the Church. This is a story that continues until today, and is told and retold in many ways. The Church as a community is held together by its common narrative and how it uses that narrative to "nurture and preserve her self-identity." 

In our consideration of the above influences on the development of narrative theology we have seen that it is much more than a new way of studying Scripture. There is something about the stories that makes them a part of who we are as Christians. The stories are unified in the way they place Jesus Christ in the center. However, stories need to be experienced; the experiential quality of human existence reminds us that the stories only have meaning in their telling and retelling. It is the telling that gives the story meaning. If a story is written down and never told again, it has no life. However, when it is told among the community, its meaning can be realized, it has life. All of this calls for a new way of examining where we

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23 Cf. J. Wm. McClendon, Biography as Theology, for the how modern “saints” give a present tense aspect to an expression of religion in story form.
came from by looking at how our story has been told over time. This does not mean that previous methods of examination are to be disposed of, but that we now have a way of examining this from both the outside and the inside. When a purely scientific approach to stories is set aside we are left with a “theology that has no foundation other than the community that tells the story by which it is told.”

As can be seen, a narrative approach offers some very important tools to theology. First, the central ideas of Christianity are given meaning only by the stories from which they arise. Doctrine, therefore, is derived from Scripture and Tradition and carries with it a part of the story. Second, narrative theology is much more personal, especially by the way it involves the community. This is very important, especially in light of the way that Christianity is experienced as a community and the way that community is the source of the story. And finally, as a tool, narrative theology has the ability to reveal and transform the central ideas of Christianity and the shape they give to our lives.

Even though narrative theology is finding its place within theological and biblical studies, it is still fairly new, and has had to address certain criticisms. In the next section I

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will address these challenges insofar as they are relevant to this study. When addressing these critiques I will argue that they do not present an insurmountable obstacle to the idea I am proposing.

Critiques of Narrative Theology

Take a look at a cross-section of narrative theology, or research its origins, and two things will become evident: first, that narrative theology started as a uniquely American pursuit, and second, that there are a number of different schools of narrative theology. One common critique of narrative theology is the multitude of ways of classifying its various adherents. If we follow Gary Comstock’s division of narrative theology into a ‘purist’ school, (those who maintain that Christian sacred narratives are to be taken as is and that the Christian faith is best apprehended by “grasping the grammatical rules and concepts of its texts and practices”), and an ‘impurist’ school (typified by an understanding of narrative as neither pure nor

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25 Loughlin, x.
26 Tilley, 18.
28 Comstock, 688.
autonomous), then it would seem that we would always be in opposition to one group.\textsuperscript{30} Further, Comstock claims, "the relations between them are anything but cordial."\textsuperscript{31} What such critiques would have us believe is that to be involved in theological research in a narrative form requires allegiance to one or another set of ideals, and that when we choose one "camp" we are automatically opposed to the concepts of the "other side."

However, we are not required, as Comstock would seemingly have us believe, to choose between the two. In fact, even Comstock must admit that there are more than two approaches to narrative theology. Yet, even though Comstock gives passing reference to a "Berkeley school," he clearly does not consider it a serious option. Among the members of this group we find James McClendon, Robert McAfee Brown, and Terrence W. Tilley.\textsuperscript{32} A major characteristic of this group is its catholic approach that does not find a need to explicitly divide up narrative theology, but is more concerned with central issues of the truth and meaning of sacred stories. This broader and more inclusive approach is more in line with what I am attempting to do here,

\textsuperscript{30} Comstock, 688.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 687.

\textsuperscript{32} For more on these authors, consult the following works: Robert McAfee Brown, "My Story and 'The Story'," \textit{Theology Today}, (July 1975); James McClendon, \textit{Biography as Theology}; Terrence Tilley, \textit{Story Theology}. 
whereas my study would inevitably alienate what Comstock calls a purist approach.

I am more concerned with how narrative theology deals with stories and how the community is involved, as opposed to a study of the religious claims buried within stories. I will demonstrate an appreciation for an approach that affirms the importance of a community story, and further, demonstrate that the story of the Church has been told and retold many times throughout history. At times this telling is done in a collective way such as in Lumen gentium. Many have read Lumen gentium with a ready eye for the tensions inherent in the document and what at times seems to be a contradiction in the presentation of ideas. Narrative theology can provide a way of relieving certain tensions within the document that have been the center of debate since its completion: tensions due to stories-in-tension. In chapter three of this work we shall see how this approach is helpful in examining the foundation of the Church, especially as presented in sections eighteen and nineteen of Lumen gentium. Understanding this tension as part of the nature of story provides a deeper and more personal

33 I would like to make note that a narrative examination to Lumen gentium has the potential to lead to many approaches and raise some interesting questions, such as: Is it possible to read Lumen gentium as providing in a powerful way the story of Roman Catholics? Can narrative theology help to unleash the part of the document that tells those of us who are Roman Catholics who we are? I suggest that we need to be able to retrieve our ability to tell the story of who we are. Can we, perhaps, retrieve a story that is uniquely a part of the Roman Catholic Christian community? If, as I am contending, Lumen gentium can be understood in a narrative sense, then issues of
understanding of the root story. We can see Lumen gentium both as experiencing and as being a part of the story of the Roman Catholic Church in our age. It is Jesus who opens up the story of the Church, and so the two stories are really one story.³⁴

A second critique that needs to be considered is whether narrative can or should be regarded as a primary mode of human self-awareness and self-expression.³⁵ This critique steps outside of concerns over Christianity or Scripture and focuses on the meaning of narrative. Is it true to say that the self is narratively constructed, or, as Crites would state it, that “the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative”?³⁶ This is a question of whether or not meaning is in the language itself, and of the possibility of an overarching narrative to life. Some have claimed that in this postmodern era there is nothing left but “a countless number of language games that do not have any reference beyond themselves” and that “no one is able to fit his or her life into a single paradigmatic model.”³⁷ It would seem that such debates are better left to linguists and philosophers.

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³⁴ Loughlin, 82.
³⁵ Grimes, 2.
³⁶ Crites, 291.
³⁷ Horne, 973.
However, since I am concerned here with a community story, I am dealing with a specific group at a specific place in time. The Judeo-Christian tradition regards history in a linear fashion, which implies that there is some end toward which we are tending, such as in Teilhard de Chardin’s concept of Christ as the Omega Point. The self is part of a community on a journey. Therefore, by the assembly of a collective biography which draws on the Bible and on preceding biographical community statements, the community (i.e. the Church), by a document such as Lumen gentium, supplies internal justification not based on logical proofs for the existence of God or verifiable historical facts, but based on the way that the tradition in and of itself provides to the individual, through the community, a liberating and self-authenticating response to the actions of God.

It must be understood, however, that to draw upon narrative theology does not necessitate following all of these potential uses, nor does it preclude devising other methods within this approach. Some of the methods may even be in conflict, or seem to present predisposed divisions among narrative theologians and proponents of the narrative method.

**Community and Story**

Since the Church is a community of persons, I now turn to an examination of community in narrative theology. If story can propose a framework for meaning, a way of understanding the
world in which we live, then it also becomes a compass by which we direct our lives. "Yet because it is a story we are invited to participate, to play with it, to move within the story and if necessary to modify it." 38 A common characteristic among narrative theologians is recognition that, by way of their stories, people strive for, and attempt to lay out, meaning and self-identity. This is true for both individuals and communities.

For the sake of contrast, we can draw upon Avery Dulles to define "non-narrative" theology as a disciplined reflection on faith for the purpose of distinguishing, methodologically, between truth and illusion, grounded on logic rather than impulse. 39 This agrees with the long-held definition of theology by Anselm of faith seeking understanding. What becomes important is how a concept can be shown to "make sense." Narrative theology also does these things especially in the way it reveals how a living faith tradition requires a narrative. In addition, narrative theology reaches beyond the logical into the personal. Hence, narrative theology is set apart due to its appreciation of the primacy of the story and its impact on the reader. What narrative theology offers is a manner of

38 Hoffman, 184.
comprehending, by its limits and possibilities, human language and understanding.

One way this occurs is that the function of narrative can be used to understand the shaping of a community in the secular sense and more specifically in the formation and identification of a community of believers. In the life of a faith community the task is to develop recognition within theological discourse of the role of narrative. Our collective narrative helps to uphold the ethos of a community. In a community, narratives also function to give shape to our moral character, which affects the way we interpret the world. It becomes the basis of the religious and moral identity of the Christian community.40

Story telling is such an all-encompassing aspect of our lives that it is very easy to forget that it is our stories, ultimately, that provide for us the continuity and meaning of our life experience. This concept is held over and against the Enlightenment ideal that discounted personal experience. This continuity of story provides the shape of how we view the world around us. Oftentimes our stories are so much a part of who we are that we fail to recognize the way that they shape our experiences. When stories are told, and we recognize our place

in a larger picture, we achieve the ability to claim our place in that story.

Stories are our heritage and the inheritance that we pass on. They place for safekeeping collective wisdom about the world, both internal and external, among our closest social contacts and the world. It is stories, how they are told and what they tell, that are the arbitrator for our encounters with reality.

In analyzing the structure of a written work we seek to understand how recurring elements, themes, and patterns yield a set of universals that determine the makeup of a story. The ultimate goal of such analysis is to move from a categorizing of elements to an understanding of how these elements are arranged in actual narratives, both fictional and non-fictional.

What is the function of the Christian story? Is the primary location of the story only in Scripture, or can the story of the Christian community be retold? For my purposes here I will argue that Lumen gentium is precisely a recounting of a narrative of salvation history in such a way that it tells the story within the Church of what it means to be the Church.

Through the assembly of a collective biography which draws on the Bible and on preceding biographical community statements, the community (i.e. the Church), by a document such as Lumen gentium, supplies internal justification not based on logical
proofs for the existence of God or the resurrection of Jesus, but based on the way that the tradition in and of itself provides to the community, and the individual, a liberating and self-authenticating response to the actions of God.

Part 2: Working with Narrative

This section of the chapter begins with a brief discussion of the relationship of narrative and doctrine to prepare for the examination of *Lumen gentium*. Secondly, I will be presenting various methods of working with narrative. At the completion of each section I will point out what aspects of these approaches may prove helpful in a narrative examination of *Lumen gentium*.

A: Gabriel Fackre and the Community Story

In a broad sense, the relationship between narrative and doctrine can be described as a presentation of faith within the setting of a story. In a more narrow sense, it is "the decisive image of understanding and interpreting faith"; how we get from here to there. 41 The first concerns the story in its own right, whereas the second is more focused on doctrinal statements as a part of scripture. Gabriel Fackre uses a three part grouping of narrative theology that I find very useful for this study. As a way of classifying the formal function of narrative theology, he discerns three different typologies: canonical story, life

story, and community story. The third, which is "shaped by communal lore and the sedimentations of tradition," is where this examination is centered.  

By considering the role of story in a faith community, narrative theology raises the following question: "What form do communal stories take once the primary religious documents have been written?" We can attempt to answer this by looking at three aspects of the relationship between narrative and doctrine: 1) The role of the community story; 2) How narrative plays a crucial role in the development of tradition and doctrine; 3) The way in which the system provides a structure that is based on the story.

First, David Tracy in The Analogical Imagination sees the three forms presented by Fackre as corresponding in part to the academic, social, and ecclesial arenas, which in turn correspond to fundamental theology, praxis theology, and systematic theology.  

Whereas the canonical story focuses on "a body of received literature," and the life story seeks a recovery of the personal story in both social and personal ways, the community story becomes Hans Frei's "overarching tale." Here it is the community that is telling the story. The telling of this story involves recognition of ways of talking about the faith.

42 Fackre, 343.
experience as a community that provides the substratum for individual experience (stories of the person) that cannot be evidenced apart from the community. These points of common experience, or consensus points, are called tradition, which have a significant role in narrative theology in that these are the points at which the story itself has its greatest visibility. The origin of the story is the kerygma, which Fackre defines as "the presence of the Vision of God [which] fires the people of God to say what it sees." He goes on to say "the narration of the Tale of the deeds of God . . . [is] a tool the Spirit uses to build the Church." It is the story, therefore, that makes the community, while at the same time the community is making the story. Scripture itself is the early tradition upon which the traditions of the Church have been founded. These "community consensus" points allow us to see the world of the bible over/against the framework of canon, from Genesis and Exodus through Israel and the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ, all of its movements funnel toward the formation of the Church and expressions of the "over arching tale."

Second, narrative plays a crucial role in the development of both tradition and doctrine. Since narrative provides the

trajectory of the community story, narrative must also be the locus of doctrine itself. For Christianity, Fackre proposes that the singularity of the Christ event (incarnation, passion, resurrection), is a requirement for the communal model, and that the experiences of the community looking through Christ gives rise to faith statements (doctrine?).

This flow is in the texts [Scripture], but its narrative ordering comes from the tradition. Incipient in the accounts of early preaching in Acts, in the Pauline saga, in the Johannine prologue, it became the “pattern of teaching” found in the early rules of faith that established personal identity at the baptismal rite and corporate identity in the controversies with other sacred scenarios.46

Thus the doctrinal fertility of narrative theology reveals itself in a community story model, which is apparent in Lumen gentium by its primary use of Scripture and Tradition to offer images of the Church. The problem is how to work with the images-in-tension with which this expression of the Tradition presents us. If the images-in-tension can be shown to arise from the use of Scripture and Tradition, then a way of resolving those tensions may present itself.

A conventional approach to solving the problem might be an either-or approach, or even to eliminate an image such as the Body of Christ as being old and insufficient for an age when the

people of the Church more and more recognize the sinful character of the community. Yet, our traditions lead us to these images; the communal trajectory itself demanded them. The story that will encompass them is our life’s story as a people, whether its subject matter is in the form of a story from Scripture or a Tradition that arises out of it. The doctrinal form and didactic use should not obscure the narrative skeleton at the heart.

One of the fundamental problems encountered when assigning narrative a central place in opening the story of the Church in Lumen gentium is the same problem often encountered in a narrative approach to Scripture, and is a significant issue to address in this kind of study: when choosing to sanction a preference for story relative to explanation and argumentation, what happens when elements from different stories are discovered to be in conflict? One of the discrepancies that can be found in Lumen gentium, which I will examine later in this work, centers on the origin of the Church. Issues of discrepancy can, of course, prove to be a difficult dilemma to resolve since any appeal to a narrative will, by its very nature, require interpretation. To begin to apply concepts of narrative theology in the manner I am suggesting, it is important to establish a theological point of commonality. This can be found in the use of religious language.
B: David Ford and the Narrative Form

_Lumen gentium_ is a particular writing that is part of the Roman Catholic community. It is, therefore, a writing steeped in religious language. Since in _Lumen gentium_ we are dealing with various interactions between stories in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church in expressing such stories, we need to be clear on how language is used within an explicitly religious context. Thus, by establishing the purpose of religious language we may then examine its application in personal as well as community narratives. The language of the group (i.e. religious language) becomes the language in which the group tells its story, and within the framework of personal narratives, religious language becomes a tool for the community to present its own story.

Religious language takes the form of symbols, myths, confessions, parables, narratives, and combinations of all of these forms. The language of Christianity has developed its own meanings and finds its first expression in Scripture. Since Christianity and its meaning are best described using terms from within, doctrine is developed directly from Scripture. The theologian then joins in a public dialogue about Christianity and develops a method of examining the Christian story.

The development of doctrine points out the need for historical criticism. Since a narratively rendered proposition
such as, “In Jesus Christ, God became human,” is derived from a close grammatical reading of the Gospels, the religious language of Scripture has the potential to give rise to narrative-based retellings of the story. This is not always obvious in every case under consideration, but rationality and comprehension will always have its narrative character. 47

It could be argued that a faith narrative of a community, coupled with the actual performance of the convictions implicit in the story, is the best, perhaps the only, justification possible. In anything that is read there is an unavoidable narrative character, insofar as the reading of a given text is an action of the reader, in time, that becomes a part of the reader’s personal narrative. 48

In “System, Story, Performance: A Proposal about the Role of Narrative in Christian Systematic Theology,” David Ford offers a basis from which we can draw elements of a method for examining a document like Lumen gentium within a narrative framework. 49 He proposes that narrative is crucial to systematic theology “because of the centrality in Christianity of testimony

47 Hoffman, 180.
to Jesus Christ on realistic narrative form." The story of Christianity begins with the life of Jesus told in a community; and every aspect of Christianity is in some way tied to this story. Since this story belongs to a community, it is the community that picks up the story and gives it life and momentum. There must exist a "middle distance realism" that operates between an individualistic agenda and an amorphous overview. A systematic narrative can serve this function by telling the story and providing some structure at the same time. Ford argues that Christian systematic theology need not be some kind of rigidly rational enterprise that other narrative theologians seek to avoid or overcome.

According to Ford, system, story, and performance are three basic concepts through which human and Christian identity can be conceived. We begin with the idea that in Christian systematic theology "story" has a key role inseparable from the form and content of the Christian stories, especially the Gospels. These are realistic narratives with a "middle distance" perspective on reality, and this is the primary perspective for Christian community, worship, revelation, history, ethics, and eschatology. Both "system" and "performance," as they relate to praxis, are in continual and critical interaction with

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50 Hauerwas, 12.
51 Ford, 191.
"story." The dynamics of "performance" are praise, prayer and the community life, or the living out of the story in the life of the Church. Reality enters into the narrative structure of the story when the story is read and lived in the midst of the community, by the use of religious language. Through the telling of the story of the community living out the story of the Gospel, praxis and story become one, and the praxis operates relative to the foundational story.

The middle distance is that focus which best does justice to the ordinary social world of people in interaction. It portrays them acting, talking, suffering, thinking, and involved in institutions, societies, and networks of relationships over time; in general this perspective renders the details of how things are done.52

Experience and the decision of living are recounted, and the whole work hands over to the reader, whether individual or corporate, the possibility of a transformation of knowledge into experience and action. Lumen gentium uses religious language to convey this knowledge. By participating in its thinking, language, and behavior, the community learns to become community more and more. Individuals and communities think through the activity of knowing God and each other. It is the crucial narrative of the Church, systematically rendered, of what it means to be Church as seen from a middle-distance perspective,

52 Ibid., 195.
that is, from the standpoint of the praxis, which is enriched by
the story of the Church in direct relation to the Gospel story,
the Old Testament, and the whole history of Christian tradition,
lived in the unfolding of history.

By comparing the individual to the community we see that a
person may be described in both systematic and theoretical terms
using the natural or human sciences or some form of linguistic
analysis such as epistemology, ontology, or theology. Yet,
however systematic an approach may be, the story of the person
will always have primacy, while at the same time being
recognized as intrinsically connected to the community. What
this offers this study is recognition of the importance of Lumen
gentium as expressing a community ontology containing a
community story; a combination of “how we are” with “who we
are.” As such, the Christocentric presentation of the
foundation of the Church in Lumen gentium eighteen/nineteen can
be read not simply as a conservative doctrinal approach, but as
a story. It is this ontological approach that will be important
for better understanding the story of the foundation of the
Church as it arises from the two places that the Roman Catholic
Church sees as its life source, Scripture and Tradition, so as

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Ibid., 193.
to "[set] forth a radically different vision of the Church, more biblical, more historical, more vital and dynamic."\textsuperscript{54}

The community authorized and authenticated its own story, and continues to do so today.\textsuperscript{55} We can see, therefore, that the stories of scripture, and in this case especially the Church, are "inevitably linked with something more descriptive, the need for which is likely to increase as the message has to be recorded, explained, and justified for a wider audience, including the next generation of Christians."\textsuperscript{56} Therefore, the primary perspective on reality must be one that best helps to identify and recognize its intended subject, the Church. The most urgent and practical matter will be to arrive at the right assessment that allows for the validity of even the narrowest statements. This opens us up for moving beyond an inflexibility that ignores the broader historical context.

C: Norman Perrin and Religious Myth - Establishing Genre

I have found that, with one addition, the myth categories used by Norman Perrin in his examination of the synoptic resurrection narratives are well suited to this study. Although Perrin is not strictly considered a narrative theologian, his method of biblical scholarship fits in very well with my goals.

\textsuperscript{55} Ford, 199.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 198.
I remind the reader that in narrative and theological understanding, a myth is not intended to refer to something as not true. The actual intent is to bring out the deepest realities of the human experience. In its fullness a myth is intended to build up a world to be dwelt in, of a tradition to be lived in.

Almost every culture has developed some form of cosmology to articulate its understanding of its origins and existence. If we view the story of the Church as relating its origin and existence, then it is important that we properly break down the story into its contingent parts so we can see how they relate and the relationship of apparent contradictions. Perrin uses the categories of primordial myth, which provides order and orientation, and foundation myth, which provides structure of identity to a social group while at the same time allowing for conflict within the story. In a primordial myth a community delves into its most basic origin, asking where did it originate and what gives it life at its heart. It is the primordial myth that provides the "stuff" from which the rest of the story and the community is built. Within in the foundation myth can be found all the visions that the community builds on. It not only

59 Perrin, 13.
devises stories of how the community sees itself, but also ensures that voice is given to the source of the community's dreams. To these two categories I propose an important third type of myth, which I call *eschatological myth*. Just as a cosmological myth provides an understanding of the *meaning* of existence, an eschatological myth is needed to give reason to the consummation of a thing and provides a trajectory along which it travels. It is the point on the horizon that the community looks to as it moves forward in time.

With these types of myth as a place to start I would propose, as regards the story of the Church, the first chapter of *Lumen gentium* operates as a primordial myth, chapter two is a foundation myth, and chapter seven, by the manner in which it brings all the parts of the story together, is an eschatological myth. How these fit together will play an important role in helping to understand the tensions to be examined in chapter three.

**Conclusion**

Stories serve to gather together, in a meaningful form, elements of our temporal existence. For a faith community, these stories are what keep individuals in relationship with the rest of the community. Through the establishment of myth, we can gain a meaningful expression of ourselves and feel that we belong to the common activities of a people. Narrative theology
offers much promise in helping people to understand their own personal stories by recognition of links to community. Such a concept and understanding of story can help community stories come to life if we are challenged to consider how such stories interact with and alter our own, and how meaning also comes with a person’s interaction with his or her own environment. Narrative, therefore, may become the framework through which we can accept who we are and allow us to embrace our possibilities and self-identity.

As a pastoral council, Vatican II was striving to give the Church self-identity in the modern age. The documents of Vatican II are a representation of what the participants in the Council did agree to say for the benefit of the whole Church. They have become a part of Roman Catholic tradition and they are properly invoked as a now fixed expression of the Council’s intentions and authoritative decisions. Dogmatic formulations, and the narratives that give rise to them, cannot be considered apart from each other, and possess authority when the community establishes the reading as a part of its world. In this chapter I have given a background of narrative theology and explored certain elements to derive a basis from which narrative theology

60 Shea, 42.
62 Joseph Komonchak, "Vatican II as an ‘Event,’" Theology Digest, 46 (Winter 1999), 341.
may prove helpful for studying *Lumen gentium*. Concepts from the selected theorists presented will be applied in the third chapter. I have shown that narrative theology is not a single, precise concept, and that its broad range of use lends itself to my purpose here. Since it is not my intention to argue for or against any one approach, I will try to remain sensitive to the approaches of the various schools of narrative theology throughout. I have presented a way of linking narrative theology with doctrine through the idea of a community story model. In addition, I have claimed that the working genre of myth can be used to put points in tension within *Lumen gentium* into a new perspective.

In the next chapter I will consider certain historical elements of the development of *Lumen gentium* for the purpose of exploring the origin of tensions within the parts of the document that will be examined in a narrative understanding.
Chapter Two

An Historical Overview of Lumen gentium

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a selective consideration of historical aspects of Lumen gentium relevant for a narrative study. Since this study is concerned with the narrative elements of Lumen gentium, this chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of either the council or the document in its place within the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

A review of certain historical aspects of Lumen gentium and how it was formulated is necessary for a narrative examination. It is evident, as Joseph Komonchak has pointed out, that attempting to understand the meaning of the final texts requires that they be placed within their redactional history.\(^\text{63}\) I will discuss, first, the origin of the Council, stressing its intention not to formulate new doctrine, but to put existing doctrine into a new context. Second, I will give an overview of the broad drafting of Lumen gentium in order to show a move from a theological commentary on aspects of the Church to a document penetrated by the spirit of the Gospel that would speak of the Church as community. Special attention will be given to Lumen gentium chapters 1, 2, and 7, where the points in tension in

\(^\text{63}\) Komonchak, *Vatican II as “event”*, 342.
this study lie. Finally, I will discuss the importance of traditional and progressive elements within the drafting body that gave rise to the presence of tensions in *Lumen gentium*.

**The Purpose of the Council**

This Council was to be unlike any other in the history of the Church since it was not John XXIII’s intent to meet some threat of schism or to condemn errors, as had been the case with previous councils. He described the purpose of the Council in two very brief statements. The goals of the Council would be first, “the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people,” and second, “a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated Churches to participate with us in this feast of grace and brotherhood, for which so many souls long in all parts of the world.”

However, simply stated, this could not prove to be an easy task, since the Church of the time was much more accustomed to receiving directives than charting the course. John XXIII’s open-minded management shook the ecclesial establishment of the Church to its foundations.

The idea of a new ecumenical council was indeed a shock to many. However, Vatican Council II would prove to be the central historical event of the Catholic Church in modern times, and its pivotal task would be the development of a dogmatic constitution.

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on the Church. John XXIII set the tone for the Council in his opening address when he focused on what the Church could give the world while transmitting doctrine as "pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion":

Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to the work which our era demands of us, pursuing thus the path which the Church has followed for twenty centuries. The salient point of this Council is not, therefore, a discussion of one article or another of the fundamental doctrine of the Church which has been repeatedly taught by the Fathers and by ancient and modern theologians, and which is presumed to be well known and familiar to all. For this a council was not necessary. But from the renewed, serene, and tranquil adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness...the Christian, Catholic, and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine.66 (emphasis added)

Prodded by the vision of John XXIII, the Church would see more clearly its mission to the entire world and restore the relevance of the Gospel. As the bishops and theologians began preparations for the Council, they had a sense that they were breathing a new air, and would be free to face the supreme problem of unity.67 This time there were not disciplinary matters or doctrinal errors to address. It would not be

possible to see this simply as a continuation of the Vatican council of 1869-70, or even other past councils. Pope John, in shifting the focus of this council from doctrinal definitions, condemnations, and ideological purposes, enforced the idea that this Council would have as its focus an emphasis on commitment to a renewal of the Church’s spirit and its call to be witness to its evangelical presence in history.\textsuperscript{68} This shift is important for this study; it indicates that the Council was not formulating new doctrine, but was creatively making use of the doctrine of the Church as it is found in Scripture and Tradition.

Pope John XXIII indicated as the general theme of the Council the aggiornamento of the life of the entire Church. This renewal, which the Pope looked for, could only begin with an enriching of the common faith, along with an application of the pastoral work of the Church to the needs of the present day.\textsuperscript{69} The Church would be the central theme of the entire Council.

What were the hopes and expectations for such a Council, and the work that went into formulating \textit{Lumen gentium}? With definite intent and purposeful action John XXIII announced on

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 37.
January 25, 1959, that the Church would hold its first council in over 100 years. From the beginning the entire concept of an Ecumenical Council was a totally unexpected and disconcerting action. However, in the Pope’s view, the Church was on the edge of a highly important historical juncture, necessitating this as a time “to define clearly and distinguish between what is sacred principle and external Gospel and what belongs rather to the changing times.”

In a statement shortly after the announcement of the Council, Pope John considered it necessary to emphasize that the concept of the Church that he was putting forth was of a Church “on a journey of life.” For the Pope this meant, “the task of the one who leads it is not to preserve it as though it were a museum.” The time had come for a new vision.

When Pope John unexpectedly took the initiative of summoning a Council, he put the whole Church on a path toward renewal. His emphasis on a “step forward toward doctrinal penetration” would not be just an examination and restatement of what the Church is. By the time that Lumen gentium was finished, the Catholic Church would have a document that told of the origins, foundation, and ultimate end of the Church. A narrative understanding of this inherent trajectory in the

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71 Acta et documenta Concilio oecumenico Vaticano II apparando; Series prima (antepreparatoria) (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960-61), I, 10; quoted in Komonchak, 39.
document must keep in mind these original intentions. Such a narrative understanding begins a process of accepting *Lumen gentium* on its own terms, including any inherent tensions present in the document, and allows us to see interconnections that may not have been fully appreciated before.\(^72\)

**The Drafting of *Lumen gentium***

I turn now briefly to the evolution of the drafts of *Lumen gentium*, after which I will point out something of the nature of the tension between the traditional and progressive elements in the document. This will prepare reader for the concept presented in the third chapter of this work, where I will bring the previously presented concepts of narrative theology to bear on the first, second, and seventh chapters of *Lumen gentium*.

From the time that Pope John announced the Council, it was easily recognized that one of the major concerns would be an articulation of the nature and mission of the Church. Since the suspending of Vatican Council I, two very important segments had been left incomplete: the defining of the office of the bishop and the articulation of the nature of the Church. It was easily recognized that one of the main concerns of the Second Vatican Council would be to complete the work already started on the nature and mission of the Church. This task was assigned to the Theological Commission (TC), whose task it was to prepare a

\(^{72}\) Komonchak, *Vatican II as "event"*, 347.
working document of Vatican council I’s incomplete De Ecclesia for presentation to the Council Fathers, who would in turn discuss the document and make recommendations for revision. The Fathers of the Council stressed the idea that what was needed was a balance between new perspectives and the most ancient and old ones.\textsuperscript{73} Building on Vatican I’s constitution De Ecclesia, their particular focus and area of expansion was to be the Church as mystical body, the episcopate, and the laity.\textsuperscript{74} This document, which puts forth a much less open view of the Church, was the basis for the first draft of the TC, which contained the following themes:

1. The nature of the Church militant
2. The members of the Church and the necessity of the Church for salvation
3. The episcopate as the highest grade of the sacrament of orders; the priesthood
4. Residential bishops
5. The states of evangelical perfection
6. The laity
7. The teaching office (magisterium) of the Church
8. Authority and obedience in the Church
9. Relationships between Church and State and religious tolerance
10. The necessity of proclaiming the gospel to all peoples and in the whole world
11. Ecumenism
12. An appendix entitled, “The Virgin Mary: Mother of God and Mother of Men”\textsuperscript{75}

As is evidenced by the highly topical format of the first draft, the redactors of the document were not focused on writing

\textsuperscript{73} Philips, 108.
\textsuperscript{74} Komonchak, History, 285.
\textsuperscript{75} Philips, 106.
a complete treatise on the Church, but more intent on “saying something on every point that seemed ripe for comment.”

Work on the document within the TC was exceedingly slow. By February 1961 only a provisional draft of the first chapter, on the nature of the Church, was even considered sufficient for discussion. By June, several more chapters were discussed, and by July four additional chapters were considered ready for the plenary session of the Council Prepatory Commission (CPC). The role of the CPC leading up to the actual Council was to ensure that the various texts prepared by the subcommissions were suitable for submission to the Pope. Of the duties assigned to the CPC, this critical review of the texts was the one it was able to carry out most completely. Once the texts were approved, it was the judgment of the Pope to determine whether they would be presented to the Council.

The chapters on the Church were reviewed only in the rush of things in the last meetings of the CPC. These delays forced a rapid run-through of the very material that was considered to be at the heart of the conciliar program. The CPC sent so much material back to the TC be revised, that it was only ready to be distributed to the bishops in November 1962, after the first session of the Council had begun.

76 Ibid., 107.
77 Komonchak, History, 300.
78 Ibid., 287.
The discussion of these texts by the CPC began in November 1961 and concluded in June 1962, after seven sessions. The document *De Ecclesia* was discussed during May and June. Upon each review, the CPC would return the document with comments and recommended revisions. These comments often received aggressive responses from the TC, who claimed authority with regard to doctrinal matters on the Church. We see here the beginning of tensions on how this document should give voice to the essence of the Church. Even though the TC was comprised of both conservatives and progressives, as a body they resented any outside commentary on their work.79

*De Ecclesia* reached the council floor at the end of the first session, as part of the 29th general congregation. Cardinal Ottaviani, a leading member of the TC, rose to say that he preferred and even strongly requested a delay on discussion due to the limited time remaining in the first session. He felt that this matter was too important to attempt to squeeze in before the council went into recess. Despite the time crunch, the council Fathers elected to move forward.

According to the council press bulletin the proposal entitled *De Ecclesia* would address “the nature of the Church and its members, the episcopate, religious and laity, authority in the Church, the magisterium and the missionary task of the

79 Ibid, 311.
Church, and finally ecumenism.” The first working chapter on the nature of the Church began by discussing the plan of the Father for salvation, not on an individual basis, but within community. Following this was the Son’s carrying out of the Father’s plan, “with emphasis upon Christ’s providing leaders for the Church.” In addition there were some brief biblical images of the Church with a strong focus on the mystical body. The major concentration throughout was on the visibility and establishment of roles. The chapter ended with two paragraphs which assert the identity between the visible society and the mystical body. Early on, the emphasis of the chapter was on the visible and societal character of the Church, which was placed in a primary position relative to any evocations of the spiritual and supernatural nature of the Church.

Once the first draft reached the Council, most of the Council Fathers agreed that the work did not do justice to the original intention. Initial responses gave praise to the overall substance and structure while calling for some extensive changes overall. The hope was expressed at the outset that the document might move toward “a more pastoral and missionary tone, leaving aside certain aspects which are too juridical.” Others

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80 Daybook, 101.
81 Ibid., 288.
82 Ibid, 289.
83 Daybook, 101.
noted a need for clarification on the concept of Mystical Body of Christ since the "intention of the project must be to expose Catholic doctrine while respecting that which is mystery." One of the earliest criticisms was by Cardinal Montini, who pointed out the lack of intrinsic connection between the various parts of the text. In the first draft, there was a distinct lack of structure or any organic development. Several other bishops agreed that the document needed to have a plan to bring out the main lines of the Constitution. What they were looking for was a fluidity in the way the final form would read, not, as was pointed out by Emile Cardinal de Smedt, a document filled with "clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism." One counter argument to juridical issues in the document proposed, "as long as one lives in the world one cannot do without institutions and juridical norms." Among other points brought up as in need of further discussion were: nature and limitation of the power of the bishops, and the role of the Church faithful as the people of God. Proposed for elimination from the project were questions that would be treated in other documents such as ecumenism, the lay apostolate, and states of

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84 Daybook, 103.
86 Daybook, 108.
perfection. The Fathers found fault mainly with the general spirit and approach of the text.

The design was already moving away from a form that had too much of a classroom feel in danger of making the meaning incomprehensible to many people. A new and balanced understanding was needed on the visible nature of the Church. The story of the Church as part of the document is at this point beginning to take shape. One speaker expressed his wish that "there be emphasized the characteristic of the Church of being born of the blood of Christ and of being the continuation of the mystery of the passion of the cross." At the same time it was brought out that the hierarchical character of the Church founded by Christ must not be underestimated in the face of the project's underlying treatment on the nature of the Church as Mystical body. Tensions on how to speak of the foundation of the Church were beginning to show.

A new draft was called for in which a unity of style was preferred. Since the original document read like it was "written by separate authors," it was suggested that the document be revised "by a few persons and with a single, uniform style." It was briefly suggested that the work be split into

87 Daybook, 103.
88 Philips, 107.
89 Daybook, 105.
90 Daybook, 105.
91 Daybook, 108.
two documents, one containing dogmatic teaching, and the other making practical applications. This idea was eventually rejected, due in no small part to Pope John’s comment in the opening speech of the Council that called for a constitution on the Church that would not be scholastic in nature.92 Again it can be seen that this work would be something not quite like any document from a previous council. The first draft would be greatly revised.

The long break between the first and second sessions of the council was punctuated by the creation of a new central committee by the Pope. At the beginning of the break this special Coordinating Commission (CC) was set up to oversee the revisions of the various schemas that were the result of the first session. On November 21 Pope John ordered a special commission made up of members of the TC and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. The primary purpose of this mixed commission was to revise the proposal on revelation.93 Unlike other council commissions, the pope appointed all the members of the secretariat personally.94 It was from the members of this combined group that a subcommission was formed to work on the schema on the Church. This commission, which would work on a “second preparation” for the Council, would be less encumbered

92 Ibid, 108.
93 Daybook, 117.
94 Daybook, 118.
by the conservative influences that controlled the preparatory commissions in 1961 and 1962. One of the stated purposes for this action was a reaffirmation of John XXIII’s original intent that the council be pastoral, rather than doctrinal or juridical in nature. This would have profound effects on the project _De Ecclesia_ which had taken its place as the center work of the council.

Early on, the CC appointed a special subcommission of seven members to work on the schema of the Church and produce the second draft. Dubbed “the Seven,” this subcommission was comprised of five reformers and two conservatives. This balance was actually the reverse of the ratio in the full commission, and may be seen as the source for the perspectives held in tension that appeared in the final draft.

The text presented to the Fathers as the first item to be considered in the second session was a complete revision of original schema _De Ecclesia_ submitted by the TC, which had been dubbed, “a wholly inadequate expression of the Council’s mind on this all-important crucial theme.” A great deal of work had been done on the document during the break. Therefore, it may

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95 Komonchak, _History_, 365.
96 Daybook, 114.
97 The full history of the time between the first session is too complex to give full consideration in this work. I refer the reader to the second volume of Komonchak’s _History of Vatican II_, pp. 357-514, for a comprehensive treatment of the work of the Coordinating Commission and “the Seven.”
98 Komonchak, 396.
99 Rynne, _The Second Session_, 38.
be more accurate to speak of the new draft as compilation of several drafts that were considered. This combination of drafts became a source of criticism since it "betrayed its patchwork origin and was lacking in uniformity."\textsuperscript{100} However, this draft was a clear departure from the original \textit{De Ecclesia}. The impact of the progressive-minded majority of the new commission, which successfully avoided the imposition of a more conservative document, resulted in a particularly progressive text.\textsuperscript{101} The new draft contained only four chapters divided into two sections:

Section one:
1. The mystery of the Church
2. The hierarchical constitution of the Church and the episcopate in particular

Section two:
1. The people of God and the laity in particular
2. The call to holiness in the Church\textsuperscript{102}

Numerous changes occurred between the first and second drafts. Sections 9, 10, and 11 would become their own documents (Religious Liberty, Missionary Activity, and Ecumenism). Collapsing sections 3, 4, 7, and 8 into one piece eliminated much of the institutional character of the first draft. Also, the second draft introduced the term "People of God," which would become one of the central themes of the final draft. Once it reached the Council, early discussions on this chapter moved

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{102} Philips, 110.
quickly towards dividing it so that the discussion of the People of God would be put at the beginning, immediately after the description of the mystery of the Church. This was highly significant in that it reflects a shift away from the hierarchical nature of the Church to a focus on the members themselves. In other words, this document was moving towards expressing what it means to be “the Church” from the level of the people. The People of God in the final version of *Lumen gentium* would have its own chapter, immediately after an opening chapter on the mystery of the Church, which would lose the earlier juridical overcast.

In opening the second session Pope Paul stated that the goal would be to “examine the intimate nature of the Church, and that the resultant document should be designed so as to highlight the Church’s mission and its “real fundamental nature.” In setting the tone for the discussions in the second session, Paul went on to point out that “the Church is mystery; she is a reality imbued with the divine presence and, for that reason, she is ever susceptible of new and deeper investigation.”

On October 1st, during the 38th general congregation the draft *On the Nature of the Church* was accepted for detailed

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103 Ibid., 119.
104 *Daybook*, 141.
105 *Daybook*, 142.
discussion on its various parts. Although the schema was considered generally acceptable, this version also received several recommendations for improvement.

As a representation of the continued struggle over a dichotomy between the mystical body of Christ and the people of God, some bishops insisted that this schema "insists too much on the equality of the members of the Church without sufficiently stressing the exercise of authority."\textsuperscript{106} In effort to alleviate this problem, recommendations were made to divide the third chapter into two chapters, one on the laity, and another on the people of God.\textsuperscript{107} In support of the concept of the people of God, Jose Cardinal Bueno y Monreal of Seville stated that, "the concept of the people of God represents the external manifestation of the mystical body which really constitutes the internal spiritual reality of the Church."\textsuperscript{108} Also, Albert Cardinal Meyer of Chicago commented that an understanding of the Church as the people of God, as well as the already accepted mystical body of Christ, is important since "we must work with a sense of sin and personal weakness; there should be a paragraph proclaiming that the Church is a home for the weak and

\textsuperscript{106} Daybook, 151.  
\textsuperscript{107} Daybook, 152.  
\textsuperscript{108} Daybook, 188.
struggling before we describe the Church as being without stain or wrinkle."\textsuperscript{109}

As with the first draft, continued stress was placed on the need for the schema to show greater continuity in its composition and style. Recommendations were also made that the Church can be viewed as a community and as a visible society, and that the two considerations do not always coincide.\textsuperscript{110} Awareness of this issue is critical to working with the tension between sections five and eighteen/nineteen. There was clearly awareness during the discussions on the documents that some concepts may appear in opposition, but do not give reason to setting one over another. Bishop Luigi Carli of Segni, Italy, in responding to comments on the role of Peter as part of the twelve apostles and that the Church is in some way founded on the twelve apostles, emphasized that "the scriptural texts which refer to the apostolic college as the true foundation of the Church are not to be understood as referring to its historical foundation."\textsuperscript{111}

Bishop Arthur Elchinger of Strasbourg, France recommended an introductory section on the word of God and favored "bringing the essentially dynamic aspect of tradition into bolder relief,

\textsuperscript{109} Daybook, 201.  
\textsuperscript{110} Daybook, 157.  
\textsuperscript{111} Daybook, 158.
showing it as a living and life giving reality in the Church."\textsuperscript{112} This shifts the emphasis to an expression of what part did the apostolic college play (sections 18 and 19 of \textit{Lumen gentium}), as opposed to an expression of historical incident. Similarly, Auxiliary Bishop Jan Mazur of Lublin, Poland said, "the perpetual missionary function of the Church would be emphasized if the text indicated that the apostles not only founded the Church but spread it."\textsuperscript{113}

In the final version of \textit{Lumen gentium}, the TC brought the text into line with the desires and recommendations of the Fathers of the council. It has often been noted over the years that \textit{Lumen gentium} is a compromise document. However, it is this very idea of perspectives held in tension that made \textit{Lumen gentium} what it is. By its nature a council does not set out to establish the view of the majority against the minority, but strives to bring about a practical unanimity.\textsuperscript{114} We can now consider how the finalized version reflects this ideal.

In the first two chapters of the final version, the Church is described as both a sacramental sign and the pilgrim people of God, a position which is by no means maintained consistently throughout the rest of the Council documents.\textsuperscript{115} There is a

\textsuperscript{112} Daybook, 153.
\textsuperscript{113} Daybook, 184-5.
\textsuperscript{114} Philips, 127.
certain eschatological air about *Lumen gentium* and these visions of the Church, which are juxtaposed without any clear indication of their systematic priorities or interrelationships. The result is that the Constitution can arguably be read as open to both traditional and progressive interpretations.

This open, noninterrelational construction however, while sometimes frustrating, especially in the face of seeking to come to grips with the meaning of the Church, can alternatively be interpreted as a fortunate occurrence since it reflects as an internal principle John XXIII’s desire that the Council be pastoral in nature. As has already been stated, it was not the intent of this Council to make doctrinal decisions. What this Council did with the document on the Church was leave room for theological variety and development. The Council, in essence, produced a living part of Catholic Tradition. This concept is deftly summed up by Schillebeeckx:

The council documents can be examined with an eye for the leading thought which consciously or unconsciously guided the entire council theme. This can produce varying results and a certain subjective interpretation cannot be ruled out. [T]he concrete contents of all the documents can be allowed so to affect one that on the ground of these contents one suddenly finds a single basic thought which is illuminated from different angles in the various documents.116

116 Ibid., 2. Quote is drawn from *Balance Sheet of the Council*. 

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It is interesting to consider whether or not the drafters or the Council Fathers might have known this as the document moved though its various stages of development. Either way, the final documents are a product of the experience of the council. In the end, what is seen is that Lumen gentium and other Council documents are multi-dimensional in a way that transcends any flat, one-sided traditional or progressive interpretation.

In chapters 1, 2, and 7 of Lumen gentium, the origin and purpose of the Church as well as its eschatological relationship to Christ are described not in metaphysical terms suggesting a two-story universe, but within the context of the history of salvation. In other words, the document, more directly than the earlier draft, reflects the use of Scripture and Tradition as raw materials rather than as pre-digested formulas. This approach allows for a degree of plurality and ambiguity not sustainable in a more propositional approach to doctrine.

In the next chapter I will show how a narrative understanding makes a non propositional approach to the Church in Lumen gentium much more clear, and that the traditional and progressive tensions in fact function as a healthy dimension of the document.

117 Komonchak, Vatican II as “event”, 338.
Traditional and progressive influences

It is important to get a sense of the unprecedented conciliar conditions under which the writers of Lumen gentium produced their drafts and arrived at the final form. As already demonstrated in the treatment on development of the drafts, we have seen that it was not unusual for interplay to be expressed with seemingly opposed concepts.

After the initial confusion and shock of the Pope’s declaration began to wear off, the Pope set out to confirm repeatedly his decision and to expand and more clearly define his view of the Council. Throughout this period, the Roman curia, although accepting the prospect of a Council, entertained the hope that they would be the ones to take control. This more traditionalist group was the first to become evident even during the preparatory stages.

The TC accepted the schema compendiosum De Ecclesia, which consisted of thirteen themes, to serve as an “outline” or “first draft.” It was out of this skeletal material that Lumen gentium would emerge. Producing the first draft would not prove to be an easy task, and was often marked by internal arguments and a number of personality clashes. These tensions within the subcommission were made even more evident from the fact that the

118 Ibid, 54.
TC was one of the last of the subcommittees to complete its work.¹¹⁹ "Methodologically, the subcommission De Ecclesia worked in roughly the same way as the other subcommissions in the TC. Many particular studies were commissioned from the members and consulters, but work on redacting the chapters often was initiated before they had all been received."¹²⁰

One of the central themes of the TC's schema De Ecclesia was the nature of the Church. Such emphasis was placed on the need to redact the document in a traditionally conciliar style that certain theologians were purposely kept from being members of the subcommittee.¹²¹ Once the drafts were completed and set before the Council Fathers, it became the task of the TC to make the document a reality. It is in the comments of the Council Fathers on the drafts that the greatest presence of tensions can be seen.

For example, attention to the horizontal reality of the Church came from the Secretariat for Christian Unity (SCU). The SCU maintained the idea that "the Church is the group of believers, united by the bonds of faith and charity in the Holy Spirit, constituting a sacramentally structured community and supported by social bonds and authority."¹²² The positive

¹¹⁹ Komonchak, History, 286.
¹²⁰ Ibid, 286.
¹²¹ Ibid, 288. This section of Komonchak's History of Vatican II details the various political maneuverings and clashes of personality that occurred in the early stages of the Theological Commission's work.
¹²² Ibid., 290.
outcome of this was the beginning of discussions on the Church as the People of God, the continuation and consummation of Israel’s history, whose life and activity is exercised by the power of the Holy Spirit and which in its earthly reality is on a pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{123}

In these three issues, the purpose for the Council, the drafting of \textit{Lumen gentium}, and traditional and progressive influences, it can be recognized that, from the earliest work, the presence of points of view in tension was not only accepted but was even encouraged by purposeful action. Seen in this light, the replacement of the original body of the Theological Commission with a new and diverse commission sets the stage for a narrative examination to uncover how \textit{Lumen gentium} gives voice to the multi-dimensional story of the Church. Those who had held control in the preparation of the document had lost control to those who had not even been allowed a voice at the start. The traditionalists effectively lost their hold over dictating the actions of the council. At the same time, bishops and theologians “who were at best marginal and at worst under active suspicion by Roman authorities”\textsuperscript{124} became major players in the final documents.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[123] Ibid., 290.
\item[124] Komonchak, \textit{Vatican II as “event”}, 348.
\end{footnotes}
The result of traditional and progressive influences in the formulation of *Lumen gentium* established "what has been called an internal incoherence" in the document.\textsuperscript{125} For years, these questions have been seen and accepted as a result of conflict between new beginnings emphasized by the conciliar majority and the preconciliar theology of the minority, and that "the juxtaposition of [the] two theses [is] nothing but a compromise."\textsuperscript{126} We cannot, however, ignore that the final texts of Vatican II are the result of an interesting and dynamic process.\textsuperscript{127} By shifting to a mindset that calls for a linking of the positions, as opposed to one of opposition, points in tension take on a complementarity. Selective interpretation of the document has not worked and will not work. A balance needs to be achieved so that, where conflict is perceived, ideas in tension can be read in the light of each other.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented a selective examination of elements of the development of *Lumen gentium* that are important for a narrative approach. The origins of the Council, its focus on a dogmatic constitution on the Church, and the influence of traditional and progressive elements in the drafting of *Lumen gentium*

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\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 38.

\textsuperscript{127} Komonchak, *Vatican II as "event"*, 347.
gentium were the primary points under consideration. The pastoral intent of the council, as opposed to a council to formulate doctrine or condemn errors, indicates that the resulting documents may be open to non-traditional examinations, such as the narrative understanding I am proposing.

In the following chapter I will show how a narrative examination of Lumen gentium can be used to highlight the story of the Church that is within the larger document. I will apply the concepts, presented in chapter one, to Lumen gentium, with a focus on chapters one, two, and seven. These are the chapters that present the core story within the document, and will provide the working material for an inquiry into the story of the Church as narrative and "myth."
Chapter 3

Applying a methodology derived from narrative theology to Lumen gentium

What we read has the ability to become a part of who we are, says Brian Horne, by being a part of "a sequence of events that constitute our history and promote our self-understanding."\(^{128}\) Moreover, continues Horne, "it is not absurd to say that the apprehension of texts is unavoidably narrative," and that "the reading of certain texts becomes part of the reader's own narrative."\(^{129}\) How then are we to apply narrative understanding to a document whose intended purpose, at first glance, might seem to be explanatory?

In chapter one I explored the foundations of narrative theology. What I have determined to be certain relevant commonalities in narrative theology were pointed out in an effort to approach, draw, or bring out a methodology that can be used for this study. With Fackre's three-part typology of canonical story, life story, and community story we explored how the story of the community is derived from the tradition, and how the stories of the community cannot be evidenced apart from the community. What I intend to do in this section is to show how these aspects of narrative theology may also serve in exploring

\(^{128}\) Horne, 962-3.

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 962-3.
the narrative character of *Lumen gentium*. To do so I will present to the reader an application of the aforementioned aspects of narrative theology. The goal will be to achieve, through recognition of the narrative character of *Lumen gentium*, an appreciation of the many-layered understanding of the category of the mystery of the Church in the multiple images present in the document. This narrative approach will allow points of tension in the document to be placed in a new perspective.

To accomplish this I shall first make use of the categories of myth adapted from Perrin. The categories derived from Perin will be applied as follows: 1) primordial (Chapter 1—The Mystery of the Church); 2) foundation (Chapter 2—The People of God); 3) eschatological (Chapter 7—The Pilgrim Church). In addition, attention will be given to transitional elements in Chapter 3—The Church is Hierarchical. Following the presentation of the story of the Church as myth, I will examine the tension between the images “People of God” and “Body of Christ.” The focus at this point will be on *Lumen gentium’s* use of metaphor and myth. The last major section will deal with the foundation of the Church. As a precursor to addressing the two stories on the foundation of the Church in sections five and eighteen/nineteen, I will discuss what a community authorized story is and how this concept is useful in examining these sections. The chapter will
conclude with a consideration of the benefits of employing a narrative approach for understanding *Lumen gentium*.

I am presupposing, first, an interaction between Scripture and Tradition and the way they support each other, and, secondly that the community is the source of both. I will argue that this interaction inherently allows for an ambiguity and plurality that are a benefit, not a hindrance. Narrative theology makes this evident in that one of its central concepts is that the story is the thing, that its telling shapes the community, and that a story need not be an historical-scientific account. I am claiming that certain parts of *Lumen gentium* can be read as a story, and that any expression of doctrine in this document needs to be understood within this narrative framework. Like a good narrative, the text recalls the community’s past (Chapters one and two) and anticipates its future (Chapter seven).

**Establishing the genre of myth in *Lumen gentium***

The first and necessary task is to explain which parts of *Lumen gentium* comprise the story and to attempt to establish which genre or genres are operating. We begin with chapter one, section one. The wording of the first section gives the sense that it is the Church that is actually telling the story. The faith community, which is the Church, takes on the role of the narrator:
Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament. . .she here proposes, for the benefit of the faithful and of the whole world, to set forth, as clearly as possible, and in the tradition laid down by earlier councils, her own nature and universal mission.\textsuperscript{139} (emphasis added)

From this point on, a careful reading of the document with a narrative mindset quickly reveals that the three main parts of the story are to be found in Chapters one, two, and seven, along with transitional elements in Chapter three. I propose that the story of the Church in \textit{Lumen gentium} can be studied fruitfully a type of myth.

In the first chapter I presented Perrin’s method of categorizing myth, to which I have added the \textit{eschatological} myth. We shall see how the three forms of myth, \textit{primordial}, \textit{foundation}, and \textit{eschatological}, can be applied to the story of the Church found in \textit{Lumen gentium}. By applying these categories I will be identifying a type of narrative genre operative in the document. Chapter one will be examined as a primordial myth, chapter two as a foundation myth, and chapter seven as an \textit{eschatological} myth.

\textbf{Chapter One of \textit{Lumen gentium}: Primordial myth}

A primordial myth, even as the name implies, is the fundamental or primary myth that provides the earliest stage of development for that to which it refers by providing order and

\textsuperscript{139} LG, 1.
orientation for a group of people. A primordial myth speaks of
the creation of the universe and is intended to include all
human beings. Lumen gentium chapter one, The Mystery of the
Church, expresses the origin, nature, and composition of the
Church. Section one serves as a kind of prologue by providing
for the reader the purpose of this work, and even does so in a
way that makes the Church the actual teller of the story. A
primordial myth sets the stage for the reader of what is to
come. It provides the substance that under girds the goal.
What chapter one does is sets the stage for achieving the goal
of the Church, namely, "full unity in Christ" as a type of bond
that is something other than worldly "social, technical, and
cultural bonds."¹³¹

In sections two, three, and four the story of the Church
begins in earnest. Section two, the origin of the Church, is
told through the Father and is thereby linked to very beginnings
of the universe, where the Church was "[a]lready present in
figure at the beginning of the world."¹³² We are brought into,
once again, the story of the fall and told how, because of this,
God "determined to call together in a holy Church those who
should believe in Christ."¹³³ This section also presents, in
good story fashion, a foreshadowing of the end of the story by

¹³¹ LG, 1.
¹³² LG, 2.
¹³³ LG, 2.
saying that the Church will be "brought to glorious completion at the end of time," and that "all the elect will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church." \(^{134}\)

Next, in section three the reader is introduced to the role of the Son in the story of the Church. As Christ is the central figure of Christianity, so also it follows that Christ be presented as the central figure of the Church. The Son, in being presented as "sent by the Father," provides solid transition in the story. The reader is lead into the story of how Christ "by the will of the Father. . .inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth." \(^{135}\) By way of primordial description, the Church is prefigured as "the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery," and the origin of the Church is figured in the symbolism of the blood and water that flows from the side of Christ. \(^{136}\)

In section four a new character in the story is brought on stage when "the work the Father gave the Son to do was accomplished." \(^{137}\) It is through the Holy Spirit that the Church will continue to be sanctified. To describe the role of the Spirit, no fewer than thirteen scripture references are made, three from the Gospel of John, eight from the letters of Paul,

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\(^{134}\) LG, 2.

\(^{135}\) LG, 3.

\(^{136}\) LG, 3.

\(^{137}\) LG, 4.
and one from Revelation. This section closes and wraps up the kernel of the story of the origin of the Church by drawing on Saint Cyprian’s description of the Church as “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” This last part points out how the document weaves together Scripture and Tradition to tell the story.

These three sections provide a fluid narrative flow from the Church present at creation, to its presence in mystery as the kingdom of Christ, and climaxing in its continual sanctification through the Holy Spirit. What follows is the “how” of the Church in section five, what the Church “is” in six, the rich imagery of the Mystical Body of Christ in seven, and the complex reality of the human and divine elements of the Church in section eight. The central purpose of the entire first chapter is to establish the origin of the Church, how it “grows to maturity” and “longs for the completed kingdom.”

Section six makes strong use of imagery for the Church in leading up to the primary image of chapter one of the Church as mystical Body of Christ. Drawing on scripture, the Church is presented as “sheepfold,” “sole and necessary gateway,” “a flock, of which God foretold that he would himself be the shepherd,” “a cultivated field,” and “the tillage of God.”

138 LG, 4.
139 LG, 5.
this last image Christ is described in very symbolic fashion as the ancient olive tree, which is the true vine.\textsuperscript{140} The Church is the "building of God" made out of the living stones of its members.\textsuperscript{141} With many other images this sections builds up to the story of the Church today as "in a foreign land away from the Lord," a Church in exile "concerned about those things which are above. ...until she appears in glory with her spouse."\textsuperscript{142}

Sections seven and eight draw on one of the most powerful images of the Church found in both Scripture and tradition, that of the Church as the Mystical body of Christ. The reader is carried once again through certain very central elements of what it means to be a member of the Church. By the death and resurrection of Christ we are redeemed and "made into a new creation" through which "Christ mystically constitutes as his body" those who believe in him. From here we are retold the story of how water unites us as we are "all baptized into one body," and how "sharing in the body of the eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another."\textsuperscript{143} We are therefore united in flesh with the body of Christ and fully enter into the story of the Church. In the remaining part of section seven the reader is presented with the role of the

\textsuperscript{140}LG, 6.
\textsuperscript{141}It is interesting to note that this passage prefigures the second chapter on the Church as the People of God.
\textsuperscript{142}LG, 6.
\textsuperscript{143}LG, 7.
Spirit who guides the Church in unity and unites us under the full power and authority of Christ who is the "head of the body."\textsuperscript{144}

Section eight will provide the final transition of the story into the foundation myth by defining the human and divine nature of the Church as a "complex reality."\textsuperscript{145} By a series of three parallel statements of its human and divine nature, the Church becomes a figure of Christ. The Church is 1) a "society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ," 2) a "visible society and [a] spiritual community," 3) "the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches."\textsuperscript{146}

\textbf{Chapter Two of Lumen gentium: Foundation myth}

The last section of chapter one prepares the reader very well to move into the second chapter on the Church as The People of God. In this section we shall explore the relationship of chapter two to the foundation myth of the Church. This is done primarily by the way that chapter two examines the structure of Church’s identity and its cohesion as a societal group with a particular way of life.

A foundation myth can be seen as establishing an institution and making provision for its future maintenance.

\textsuperscript{144} LG, 7.
\textsuperscript{145} LG, 8.
\textsuperscript{146} LG, 8.
Chapter two tells the story of the People of God from the time when God "chose the Israelite race to be his own people" to the Apostolic commission which "[t]he Church received. . .from the apostles. . .and [which] she must fulfill to the very ends of the earth." 

Section nine presents an evolution toward the Catholic Church by retelling the story of the formation of the people of God first though "every race," then more specifically the Israelite people whom God "instructed" and made holy, who were a "preparation and figure of the new and perfect covenant." Through this new covenant a "race made up of Jews and Gentiles" is established to become "the new people of God." This people of the new covenant of whom the Church is formed are a messianic people. The link of the story of the Church is further established where Israel, wandering in the desert, is "already called the Church of God." 

Section ten describes the membership of the people of God as "the baptized [who] by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood." The remainder of section ten provides a kind of a job description of a member of the People of God that provides 

147 LG, 9.
148 LG, 17.
149 LG, 9.
150 LG, 9.
for the maintenance of the Church. This is the foundation on which individual membership is built, and provides the common link for the community in form and function.

Sections eleven through sixteen present how the Church is maintained. Section eleven is a sub story of the sacramental life and the exercise of virtue of individual members. A literary flow of this life moves the reader from being “incorporated into the Church by Baptism,” to being “more perfectly bound to the Church” though confirmation, until the partaking “in the eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life.” By these three great sacraments of initiation the People of God are empowered to the building up of the Church in the other social and vocational sacraments. The reader enters more fully into the story by the telling of the vocational sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony. Marriage is seen as perpetuating the People of God and the establishment of “the domestic Church” in which the parents are the “first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.” As heralds, parents are to pass on to their children the story of the Church in the context of family life. Continuing the description of the function of those who are to see to the maintenance of the Church, section twelve tells of the share of

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151 LG, 11.
152 LG, 11.
the People of God in the prophetic office of Christ to tell the story again.

In section thirteen the Church gathers into one people "all the nations of the earth." In other words, no one is left out of the story since everyone is "called to this catholic unity which prefigures and promotes universal peace."\(^{153}\) To narrow the story down to a specific group of those called, section fourteen turns its attention specifically to the Catholic faithful. By "[b]asing itself on scripture and tradition,"\(^{154}\) the council calls to mind the role of the Church in salvation for those who know that the Catholic Church was founded by God through Christ. This further defines the parameters of community.

Section fifteen brings into the story those who are baptized but do not profess the Catholic faith. However, there is a unity that is maintained since "the Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian" and even so many who "possess the episcopate, celebrate the holy Eucharist and cultivate devotion to the Virgin Mother of God."\(^{155}\) Again, like a good story, this last piece foreshadows what will come in the last chapter of *Lumen gentium* on the role of Mary in the life of the Church.

\(^{153}\) LG, 13.
\(^{154}\) LG, 14.
\(^{155}\) LG, 15.
Finally section sixteen brings in non-Christians and extends this all the way back before the time of Christ up to the present age. This is the “good news” of the story of the Church, that divine providence will not “deny the assistance necessary for salvation” to anyone unfortunate enough to not hear the word of God. Again, as stated above, section seventeen caps chapter three in the apostolic mission and brings to a close the story of what it is to be the people of God.

This prepares the reader to move into chapter three and encounter “a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body.”\textsuperscript{156} Even though the document moves back into “body” language, the reader is reminded that “all who belong to the People of God” may move towards the goal of salvation.\textsuperscript{157} Although chapter three employs a much more descriptive format, which will be maintained until chapter 7, there do exist story elements near the beginning which, I would suggest, provide a transition from a more pure story to a more structure-based section suited to detailing the duties within the Church of the ordained, the laity, and the vowed religious. This transitional element can be seen in section eighteen where the lead-in to the role of the bishop is set up against the background of the role of Peter whom Christ set up “at the head of the other

\textsuperscript{156} LG, 18.
\textsuperscript{157} LG, 18.
This use of Peter continues in section nineteen and adds to it, with support of scripture, the establishment of “college or permanent assembly” which was “fully confirmed in this mission on the day of Pentecost.” Later in the chapter I will demonstrate how the tension present between sections five and eighteen/nineteen, which both speak of the foundation of the Church, are a necessary part of the story.

With these transitions established, I move now to the “conclusion” of the story treating with foreshadowing of the end time that was seen in chapter one, section one.

Chapter Seven of Lumen gentium: Eschatological myth

Chapter seven, entitled The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Her Union with the Heavenly Church, presents Catholic eschatology in an ecclesial context. It serves, as an epilogue, in the same way that chapter one is a prologue. Its function as an eschatological myth is to take everything that has been presented in the primordial and foundational parts of the story and move it towards a specific end by providing a trajectory towards a future point at which time the Church will “receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things.”

158 LG, 18.
159 LG, 19.
160 LG, 48.
This concluding chapter of the story begins with a recap of the foundation of the Church, this time presented against the raising of Christ from the dead and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This ecclesiological shift will provide the basis for the faithful who "at the hour when Christ will appear," will share in the "glorious resurrection of the dead."\textsuperscript{161} Composed of only four sections, it is comparatively short, but is packed with images in rapid succession to carry the reader to its triumphal conclusion.

Like the conclusion of a good story, all previous images are brought back into play. The Pilgrim Church, which "carries the mark of this world which will pass," re-presented in section 48, and the Mystical Body of Christ in section 50, provides an encapsulation for the central concept of the coming of the Lord in glory in section 49. This apparently chiastic arrangement (Pilgrim Church > second coming < Mystical Body) helps to relieve the tension of these seemingly opposing images by pointing them both toward the second coming at which time the full unity of the Church will be revealed, and "death will be no more and all things will be subject to him."\textsuperscript{162} This linking of Pilgrim Church and Mystical Body (the community of believers) at this point also strengthens the link between the primordial and

\textsuperscript{161} LG, 51.  
\textsuperscript{162} LG, 49.
foundation myths by the manner in which they become fully integrated ideas.

All members share in this eschatological goal. Even as we await the coming of the Lord in glory, our story is not separated from those who “sleep in the peace of Christ.” It is the eschatological myth that keeps us bound in a union that “is in no way interrupted,” but which “allows for an exchange of spiritual goods.”

The climax of the story then follows in section 51, which, in a way, steps out of the story to reveal the story teller once again as was seen in chapter one. Action, or response to the story becomes the focus. The reader is sent on mission by the Church to “remove or correct any abuses, excesses or defects which may have crept in here or there, and so restore all things that Christ and God be more fully praised.” True to its eschatological nature, the closing paragraph is capped with three major images from the book of revelation of the Lamb as the lamp of the heavenly city, the one who was slain, and being due glory and honor forever. Thus the story of the Church ends with its final consummation in the end time.

163 LG, 49.
164 LG, 51.
People of God and Body of Christ: Images in tension

I now turn to the first of two issues of conflict under consideration. On the one hand we have the image of "People of God" which operates primarily as a community based model for the Church. This communal image offers an approach that puts first the equality of all members and the bond that exists between them. On the other hand we have the long established image of the Church as the "Body of Christ." This image is used in such a way as to place strong emphasis on the hierarchical structure of the Church. In this image, order takes the upper hand. Therefore, it may be said that the tension exists in the manner by which the structure of the Church is perceived. How is it that the Church can exist as a community of equals and, at the same time, exhibit a hierarchical structure?

It is on the relationship between the two images that we begin to build a narrative understanding of their interaction with each other. The logical starting place in this case is an aesthetic recognition of the practical power of metaphor in a story. Though a narrative understanding, we achieve a clearer appreciation of religious images and symbols. And metaphor is one of the primary tools used in narrative. By considering the role of metaphor, narrative theology offers a balance, thus allowing for an appreciation of a many-layered understanding of the category of the mystery of the Church.
These metaphors speak to the individual. When the Church is presented in metaphorical form as both "Body of Christ" and "People of God," it provides a dynamic life connection that is much more likely to lead to an internal religious connection than any dry argument based on logic. The reader is able to become involved and caught up into a sacred world and becomes part of the story of the Church.

This basis in metaphorical language also provides for a consideration of these two images within the myth genre as presented above. I have already placed the entire chapter on the people of God within the foundation myth. The importance of this image as part of the story is the manner by which it relates the history of the people. The chapter first identifies the people of God as including "anyone who fears God and does what is right." The people are gathered into a community, beginning with the Israelite race, with whom God "established a covenant." At the coming of Christ, and the institution of a "new covenant... in his blood," God has called together a new people who will experience "trials and tribulations," but will be "strengthened by God's grace," in order to "remain the worthy bride of Christ."
Throughout the telling of the story of the people of God in chapter 2, the role of Christ is central. Through Christ the new covenant will be ratified. The People of God will truly become a messianic people, with Christ at their head.\textsuperscript{169} The image of the Body of Christ serves as a primordial myth supporting the People of God in the foundation myth. It is its cosmological origin, and provides for the genesis, process, and structure of the image of the People of God. The genesis is provided when the document states that, even before the coming of Christ everything happened “as a preparation and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ.”\textsuperscript{170} God made the people into a holy priesthood, who “everywhere on earth bear witness to Christ.” Therefore, the process by which the people live out the covenant is revealed in the fact that all “share in the one priesthood of Christ.”\textsuperscript{171} Finally, the primordial/cosmological function of the body of Christ image establishes structure for the People of God image. Since, “the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation through the sacraments,” and Christ is at the center of the sacramental life of this priestly community, it is easier it see how the image of the People of God is held in a healthy tension with the image of the Body of

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} LG, 10.
Christ. They actually are not separate, but are woven into each other. The primordial myth not only gives rise to the foundation myth, but also remains an integral, cosmo logical element.

In this manner it can be seen how the two images actually work together. Through these images we are not to be "individuals without any bond or link," since God has made us "into a people who might acknowledge him in holiness."\(^{172}\) The community is drawn ever deeper into the story. God "gradually instructed this people" until the time of the "perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ."\(^{173}\) This is translated into practice in section fourteen. Once again the pilgrim nature of the Church is emphasized and its necessity for salvation. This is done through Christ who is the "one mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church."\(^{174}\) The Church becomes the Body of Christ encountered in mystery, and the people of God lived in the daily life. The way these two images work together lessens the tension between them, even if that tension does not entirely disappear.

**Narrative and the community**

There is a practical result to be considered in the relationship between the two images just examined. Making more

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\(^{172}\) LG, 9.
\(^{173}\) LG, 9.
\(^{174}\) LG, 14.
room for Tradition in narrative opens up a broader appreciation of expressions of personal and communal identity. In other words, a narrative approach allows a community to assume an active role in the telling of the story by presenting a community that is struggling to appropriate its stories and traditions. The bond between present and past generations is maintained. This concept of what I would call a "Catholic narrative" would argue that where the traditions of a community fall into disuse, there is danger of the supporting narrative dying along with them. The Catholic concept of Tradition, by functioning in a mutually complementary way with Scripture, continues the ongoing process of appropriation, and by this method promotes a vital community.

The Foundation of the Church: A community authorized story in tension

We will now consider a second, and perhaps much more difficult tension within Lumen gentium: the foundation of the Church in section five as compared to sections eighteen and nineteen. In order to do this I will begin by comparing the contrasting formulations within the sections so as to make clear the points in tension, after which I will show how narrative theology can help put these tensions into perspective.

How and when did the Church get its start, and what function does Jesus have in its foundation? This is the theme
being examined first in section five, and later in sections eighteen and nineteen. These sections present what could be perceived as conflicting accounts of the origin of the Church. Section five states that "the Lord Jesus inaugurated the Church by preaching the Good News." Thus, the beginning of the Church is placed in the ministry of Jesus. Accordingly, in this section he prepares the way for the Church by announcing the kingdom of God. This is accomplished by a building of scriptural images: 1) It is the kingdom that has "shown out before men in the world." Jesus is planting a seed in the hearts of those who see him. 2) This seed is "the word of the Lord... sown in a field." 3) It is a seed which "by its own power... sprouts and grows until the harvest." 4) "Those who hear it in faith" receive the kingdom. After his resurrection, Jesus "poured out on his disciples the Spirit promised by the Father." This pneumatological event is the beginning of the Church. Lumen gentium tells us that it is from this point ("henceforward") that the Church came into action by, "receive[ing] the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom."

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175 Section two, also concerns the origin of the Church. However, since it is focused on the primordial foundation of the Church in the action of the Father, I do not consider it a story in tension since the two stories under consideration have Jesus as the central figure. Section two is set as logically and temporally prior to Jesus by stating that the Father, "determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ." Here the origin of the Church is taken back to the beginning of the world.
Christ, by his actions, and informed by the Spirit, reveals the kingdom. As we can see, section five is highly dependent on the connection between the Church and the kingdom of God. The word “Church” is only used three times, whereas the word “kingdom” is used ten times. This sets up the last paragraph of section five where, after his resurrection, Jesus “pour[s] out on his disciples the Spirit promised by the Father” so as to “endow the Church with the gift of her founder.” It is made clear that the Church is not the kingdom of God since the Church “receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing the kingdom of God.” Therefore, section five presents the origin of the Church first in its relationship to the kingdom of God, and then as a post-resurrection empowering of the disciples with the Spirit for a specific mission.

This image is held in tension against section eighteen that tends toward a Christomonism in which Jesus operates out of his own will to set up a structure. This gives a formulaic establishment of the Church in contrast to the Spirit-based, more fluid aspect of section five. The origin of the Church in sections eighteen and nineteen is directly tied to the institution of offices or ministries. Eighteen states that Christ, starting with the apostles and making provision that “their successors, the bishops namely, should be the shepherds in his Church” set up the actual offices of the Church. This is
shown as being done very specifically by the will of Christ for the purpose of shepherding the People of God and to "increase its numbers without cease." Section nineteen amplifies eighteen by the calling of the twelve, which Jesus "constituted in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter," and confirmed at Pentecost. Therefore, in these two sections together, the origin of the Church is presented as a very willful action of Jesus and distinctly tied to the establishment of the bishops and the Petrine office and the commission to preach the kingdom of God.

Clearly there is tension in these accounts. On the one hand section five presents a spirit-centered story in which the disciples are empowered by the Spirit to spread the good news of the kingdom of God "among all peoples." In contrast to this, eighteen/nineteen places the focus on Christ's purposeful establishment of the apostles and the role of Peter in the life of the Church. Does the Church find its origin in the preaching of the good news and the descent of the Spirit after the resurrection? Or is it in Christ's establishment of the duty of the bishops to serve as shepherds of the Church? We can now examine what assistance a narrative understanding of these two elements can provide in the way of working with the tension.

The purpose of a narrative is to present events and participants that move through time in such a way as to have a
beginning and an end, "patterned by the narrator’s principle of selection."\textsuperscript{176} It is the task of the narrator, or storyteller, to chart a course for the reader from conflict through resolution. In the case of \textit{Lumen gentium}, the story is that of the Church, and is a story assembled from Scripture and Tradition, viewed through the eyes of a community. We cannot intelligently read the document merely as an historical or scientific accounting of the origin of the Church. This is what Pope Paul VI was pointing towards when, during his comments at the opening of the second session of the Council, he said the "the Church is a mystery; she is a reality imbued with the divine presence and, for that reason, she is ever susceptible of new and deeper investigation."\textsuperscript{177} What \textit{Lumen gentium} does, in the best tradition of the Church, is express in narrative form the mysterious reality of the Church’s origin, form, and goal.

Keeping in mind how narratives express underlying realities, we can say that the "authors" are more accurately the "redactors" of a story previously expressed in various forms. These redactors recast the story for the modern world. Such a scenario fits well with the idea that the Council was not attempting to write new doctrines, but to present them in a pastoral way. In fact, the need to retain this understanding

\textsuperscript{176} Fackre, 341.
\textsuperscript{177} Council Daybook, 142.
was voiced on the Council floor by Bishop Luigi Carli of Segni, Italy. In responding to comments on the role of Peter as part of the twelve Apostles and that the Church is on some way founded on them, he emphasized that “the Scriptural texts which refer to the apostolic college as the true foundation of the Church are not to be understood as referring to its historical foundation.” Carli’s point shifts the underlying question to an understanding of the apostolic college as being a central part of the meaning of the foundation of the Church. We now turn to an examination of how these parts come together.

The doctrinal fertility of narrative theology reveals itself in a community story model, which is apparent in Lumen gentium by its primary use of scripture to offer images of the Church such as “sheepfold,” “cultivated field, the tillage of God,” “the building of God,” and “that Jerusalem which is above” and “our mother.” Within a community story Fackre refers to consensus points in the story as being the traditions of the community and that these are given a “significant role in narrative theology.” He also points out how the canonical stories provide “crucial subplots in the drama, and life stories are its continuing episodes.” Therefore, the community story becomes the “overarching tale.”

178 Council Daybook, 158.
179 LG, 6.
180 Fackre, 350.
The problem is how to work with images-in-tension that this expression of the Tradition presents us with. The question that Fackre's approach seems to address is how can what appears to be a systematic theology explore and maintain the truth of what is primarily expressed in a very different genre? A systematic theology operates through concentration on key loci, such as God, creation, Jesus Christ, salvation, Holy Spirit, Church, and eschatology. However, when these are not viewed as separate doctrinal statements, we can see that the most basic relationship between these loci is not systematic. Their most basic relationship is in their ordering in an "overarching story."\textsuperscript{181} The same understanding can be applied to Lumen gentium, which covers all of this and creates a story, drawing on all parts of the overarching story. It weaves together parts of the total story, not to create a new story, but to amplify a certain part. For Lumen gentium, it is the Story of the Church.

This community story concept allows us to move beyond the tensions concerning the founding of the Church. It provides a link between, on the one hand, a pneumatological approach, and, on the other hand, a tendency toward Christomonism. Fackre's concept of community story and locus allows for a way to bring out the overarching narrative that embraces these two approaches. If the interaction of the two stories of the

\textsuperscript{181} Ford, 206.
founding of the Church can be seen a necessary and inescapable element, then we may perceive richness where we once saw conflict. Thus I offer the following alternative to reading sections five and eighteen/nineteen in opposition.

I will begin with sections eighteen and nineteen, drawing out the primary elements that will allow me to work backwards to section five. I see two reasons for this approach. First is the establishment of eighteen/nineteen as a derivative of the story in section five, so that it can be set in its own context. Second, since eighteen/nineteen may be seen as the more difficult of the two pieces, as evidenced by Carli's statement above, it is necessary to understand its construction before attempting to establish the link with section five. What this will allow is movement from conflicting accounts on the origin of the Church, to a story built in pieces with linking concepts.

The establishment of the bishops as successors to the apostles may be seen as one piece of the story. Read apart from the rest of the document, it seems very much like a statement on the foundation of the Church that can stand on its own. However, as we shall see, it contains key elements the make it dependent on something larger. In eighteen/nineteen we find that the Tradition of the Church gives voice to the establishment of the office of bishop as a valued part of the community story. However, this piece of the story must have
proper links to the entirety of the story. Hence, section eighteen arranges this by first telling why this was done: "in order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease"; secondly, how this was done: "Christ the Lord (locus) set up in his Church a variety of offices"; and, finally, the goal or purpose: "which aim at the good of the whole body" (emphasis added). The action displayed here has immediate ties to something larger. Therefore, what we have in this pericope is the element within Catholic tradition (the office of bishop) that is specifically stated as being for the betterment of the People of God. There came to be, through the will of Christ, a mission that, by "preaching the Gospel everywhere," the apostles would "gather together the universal Church." As a result, sections eighteen and nineteen need not be seen as a completely separate story from the pneumatological founding of the Church. It is a central element in the larger story that, as we shall see in section five, has Christ as its locus and the benefit of the People of God as its purpose. This understanding allows a shift in which the community becomes a primary element.

Turning now to section five, we may establish the plot link in locus, purpose, and primary element. We read that the Church was "founded" by the Lord Jesus (locus) through the "preaching the Good News," and through "those who hear it with faith and
are numbered among the little flock of Christ.” The word, or Good News, by which Jesus is said to have inaugurated his Church, is likened to a “seed which is sown in a field.” The passage gives for evidence the purpose of this by saying that Christ inaugurated his Church in this fashion so for its own good, and “by its own power the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest.” The establishment of this “little flock,” by the preaching of the gospel, is the genesis of the People of God that section eighteen speaks of as being shepherded so that they may increase. Since those who shepherd are also part of the People of God, we see how eighteen/nineteen is linked to five, first through the locus of Christ, and second by the goal of the common good of the People of God as purpose.

Finally, we see how, throughout section five, strong emphasis is placed on the image of the kingdom of God. Those who hear the word of Christ and have it growing in them now constitute the Church as “the beginning of that kingdom.” Although the Church and the kingdom are not one and the same, the Church is the seed of the kingdom. The Church, as the beginning of the kingdom, “slowly grows toward maturity” and “longs for the completed kingdom.” It is the duty of this community, called into being by Christ as the beginning of the kingdom of God, and empowered by the Spirit that he poured out,
to proclaim and establish the kingdom (the community of the Church) among all the peoples on earth.

Having established Christ as the locus, and the building up/growth of what Christ has founded as the purpose, we are therefore brought to the community as the primary element. The locus, purpose and primary element lay the groundwork for what we will discover in eighteen/nineteen. Here again we find that the community is the central element in the larger story.

By establishing a link in plot between the two accounts of the origin of the Church, the reader is able to approach the larger scale of the drama of the Church, and move from a narrow focus to a broader vision. As a result, the greater saga, with its basis in the narrative of Scripture, comes to high visibility, and establishes a connection between Scripture and Tradition.\textsuperscript{182} Such a non-selective reading begins to sanction the two stories to speak to each other. And so, we are thus given the alternative to move from seeing these as two stories, to understanding them as interdependent parts within the overarching story of the Church as a community. The christological origin of the office of bishop is thus strongly affirmed. It receives this affirmation, however, within a deeper context that does not allow for story to be read as a

literal expression of history, and which affirms just as strongly the pneumatological foundation of the Church as a dynamic, apostolic community.

Conclusion

For both of the issues of conflict considered here, and the use of the genre of myth, a narrative context allows Lumen gentium to take on a power that exerts itself on the imagination. Questions are raised about the relationship between faith and imagination in the life of the believer. However, it is not necessary to relegate the document strictly to the realm of theological commentary, especially when a narrative approach allows for a deeper understanding of our experience of being Church. The presentation of both a progressive and conservative account of the origin of the Church or images of the Church has the potential to lead to conflicting ecclesiology if one is given prominence over the other. However, if one is read in the light of the other, and the focus is moved from the problem with the conflict to its benefit, then tensions may be reduced or even seen as a necessary component of the story.

In this chapter I have presented an approach for examining Lumen gentium with a methodology derived from narrative theology, and have shown how it can be used in direct application to certain points in tension within the document.
These considerations are not exhaustive; many other issues could be considered. What this thesis offers is a way of establishing a basis for viewing Lumen gentium less as a compilation of predigested formulas and more as a working expression of Scripture and Tradition that allows for plurality and ambiguity,\(^{183}\) rather than being hindered by them. Lumen gentium provides critical and systematic thinking about the Church and doctrine, while at the same time provoking questions about the nature of the Church. A horizon of identity is established that has the power to restore the centrality of Scripture and Tradition and expand the consciousness of the reader. A world is formed between these points in tension that goes beyond the limits of two independent images.

Understanding the narrative dimension of Lumen gentium allows an exploration of its views on certain concepts such as the foundation of the Church or the metaphors used in describing its people. And, as I have endeavored to show, it can help reduce potential conflicts that may arise among differing symbolic representations. Since a narrative approach to a religious text is not focused on a redaction criticism, but rather on literary criticism, it wants to know what makes a story central to a community, how a community authorizes its own

story, and what it is that allows it to speak so dynamically to so many differing generations and audiences. *Lumen gentium* presents a multitude of images of the Church that can work to form a single unity and truth. Images abound, and even if they are in tension, that tension can provide direction. The Church is not presented in the form of a dry, limpid argument. It is unfolded as a story with a practical power that involves the reader and catches us up into its own sacred world.

Narrative theology has much to offer even beyond the manner by which it makes the story in Scripture personal again. People of faith will always strive for meaning and self-identity in their "stories." In this thesis I have tried to show how *Lumen gentium* is more than a compromise between progressive and traditional ways of looking at the Church. The manner by which it draws from both Scripture and Tradition has produced a retelling of the story of the Church. This story’s multidimensionality enables it to elude overly narrow systematic interpretations that privilege tensions and contradictions over an overarching narrative.
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