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Karl Rahner's Notion of "Anonymous Christians" and Its Role in the Development of Christian Theology of Interfaith Dialogue in 20th Century

(A Historical, Critical and Analytical Study)

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(Reg. 84-FU/PhD/F07)

In Partial Fulfillment for the Award of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in
Comparative Religion

Department of Comparative Religion
Faculty of Islamic Studies (Usuluddin)
International Islamic University Islamabad-Pakistan
1435 A.H. - 2015 C.E.



Accession No 714-14995 ②

PhD
230.2092
HAK

- 1.00
7.00
11.00
- Christian Theology
 - Rahner, Karl, 1904 - 1924
 - Interfaith dialogue.
 - Theses

Christian Biography

Religious Studies - Christian

and

and


and

and

COMMITTEE OF EXAMINERS

Accepted by the Department of Comparative Religion, Faculty of Islamic Studies,
International Islamic University, Islamabad, as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Religion


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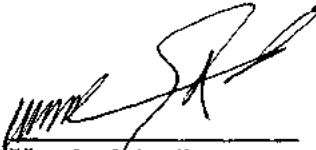
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ
إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ.

(آل عمران: 64)

Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will).

beginning of my academic career. The affectionate support of my brothers and sisters will always remain memorable.

Muhammad Shahid Habib

DEDICATION

THIS HUMBLE WORK IS DEDICATED:

TO

MY PARENTS

AND

TEACHERS

ملخص البحث

كارل رانر (1904-1984) ألماني يسوعي يعتبر من أشهر علماء اللاهوت الكاثوليك والأكثر تأثيراً في القرن العشرين. إن مؤلفاته التي تقترب من 4000 منشوراً أهلته لأن يصبح رائد المجلس الثاني للفتايات. بدأ التفكير في اللاهوت و دوره في الحياة الشخصية للإنسان خلال فترة تكوينه اليسوعية.

إن من أوليات اهتمامات رانر في اللاهوت علاقة الإنسان بربه بالنسبة له أن تكون إنساناً يعني أن تكون على علاقة مع الله الذي يلج الذات الإنسانية من خلال الاتصال الذاتي. إن منتقديه لم يكتفوا بالإعجاب بمنجزاته في علم اللاهوت فحسب بل قبلوه كأعظم لاهوتي معاصر.

بحث في أفضل عناصر اللاهوت متفادياً الغموض إذ اهتم بموضوع الإنسان والرب والمسيح. إن فهمه للنجاح قاده إلى أن يتكر مصطلح (المسيحيون المجهولون) الذي يعني أن كل من اتبع المسيح بأي طريقة كانت بغض النظر عن معتقداته الدينية سيحرز على النجاح. إن هذا قاد الكشلكة الرومانية إلى نشاط حوار الأديان إلى أبعد حد لإيجاد فرصة للدعاية لدينها المسيحي. خضع كارل رانر لمؤثرات عديدة منها أستاذه مارتن هايدجر الذي أشرف على دراسته خلال فترة دامت سنتين. علّمه فيها كيف يفكر و كيف يسير غور النص. ثانياً إن ممارسة الطريقة الروحية المعروفة باسم إجناسيوس للويولا قادت رانر إلى التصوف حيث الاتصال الفوري والمجرد بالرب. إن إجناسيوس علّمته الاتصال بالرب حتى في حياته العملية اليومية.

و ثالثاً تأثير جوزيف مارشل العميق على أفكار رانر في تفسيره لأفكار توماس أكوينس ، لقد صنع منه عالماً حيويّاً صاحب بصيرة نافذة تمتد إلى آفاق غير محدودة جعلت تفسيره لأفكار توماس أكوينس تتناسب إلى أقصى حد مع الفلسفة الحديثة.

إن فكره يبدو غير محدود فيما يتعلق بالاتصال المباشر بالرب. أن تكون لك علاقة بالرب في نظره يعني أن تكون قادراً على الاتصال به و قادراً على معرفته. إن كتبه المشهورة -

أسس الديانة المسيحية- الروح في الحياة و مستمع الكلمة ، تعزز العلاقة بين الفلسفة و اللاهوت.

إن الكنيسة تعتقد بنجاة أتباع الديانات الأخرى بمشيئة الله. لقد بين مشاهير اللاهوتيين بطريقة مفصلة كيف تتم نجاة غير المسيحيين بيد الله. إن هذا التطور في اعتبار الكنيسة مرّ بثلاث مراحل وتسمى (الرافضية) و (التقريبية) و (التعددية) أدّى إلى احترام الكنيسة لكل الأديان.

إن تطوير هذا الفكر حول الديانات الأخرى لدى الكنيسة كان نتيجة جهود عدة مشاهير لاهوتيين الذين استمروا في نشر نظرتهم للديانات بتطلعات جديدة رغم الانتقادات الشديدة إلى أن رضخت الكنيسة لهذه الجهود و أعلنت عن تبني هذه الإصلاحات في نظرتها اللاهوتية. إن من بين هؤلاء المشاهير هو كارل راتر الذي ابتكر مصطلح (المسيحيون المجهولون) لغير المسيحيين. إنه يعتقد بأن (الغيبية) هي من أهم مميزات الإنسان التي تجعله على علاقة مع الله.

هناك لاهوتي آخر من بين المشاهير يُدعى جون هيك صاحب نظرية التعددية ضم غير المسيحيين إلى النجاة الأبدية. أما هانس كاتنج و هو أحد المدافعين عن التقريبية فأكد بأن النجاة لغير المسيحيين واردة إذا كانت من خلال المسيح وحده الذي لم تقتصر نجاته على المسيحيين فقط. إن بولس نيتر و هو لاهوتي كاثوليكي روماني يرى أن هناك ثلاث طرق مختلفة:

- (1) أن كل الديانات نسبية.

- (2) و أنها كلها من حيث الأساس واحدة.

- (3) و أنها كلها تمتلك مصدرا نفسيا مشتركا. فالمسيح بالنسبة له هو غاية النجاة.

قام أحد أكبر اللاهوتيين المبدعين و هو جون كوب بتحديد معنى مصطلح المسيح و يرى أن معناه هو الوسيلة التي لاتستثني أية وسيلة أخرى.

وكان يهدف من وراء هذا إلى إصلاح بناء في الكنيسة. هناك لاهوتي معاصر آخر إدوارد شليبيكس ظل يبحث في الجانب اللاهوتي للثقافة إلى أن وصل إلى تصور يعتبر فيه أن هناك علاقة شراكة جديدة بين الكنيسة و العالم و يرى أن النجاة يصادفها الناس في حياتهم اليومية و التبعية وأن اللاهوت هو نزول الحوار بين الرب و العالم. إن وثائق مجلس الفاتيكان الثاني تبحث أيضا عن القيم المشتركة بين مختلف الديانات لتعزيز علاقة الصحة بينها لكنها تنجيه كلها نحو إله واحد. ولأن بالنسبة للمجلس كل الانبياء يحملون مشروع النجاة الإلهية. إن كارل رانر يُعتبر من أكثر اللاهوتيين احتراما في القرن العشرين. لهذا فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى كشف النقاب عن أهمية فكرة (المسيحيون المجهولون) و كيف استطاعت أن تقوي مشروع اللاهوت الكنسي للحوار في القرن العشرين. إن أهم عنصر جدير بالذكر في نظرية (المسيحيون المجهولون) لكارل رانر هو أولية الرحمة الإلهية و مبادرة النجاة الإلهية. فالرحمة الإلهية تعطي الإنسان نصيبا من الربانية بينما النجاة فهي ليست شيئا ممكنا و لكنها حقيقة يناها كل إنسان من خلال المسيح. إن السبيل الوحيد للنجاة لجميع الناس هو الرحمة الإلهية الكامنة في اختيار الأخلاق الإلهية التي اكتسبها الإنسان من خلال تجرته الغيبية مع الرب. إن فهم رانر المتفرد للرحمة الإلهية يبين أن منح الرب ذاته للإنسان وكذلك الاتصال الذاتي هو بمثابة عملية وجودية تؤثر في ربانية الإنسان و تتضمن أيضا فلسفة الوجودية. فالرحمة تؤثر أساسا في حقيقة الوجود وتجعل الرب هو غاية الخلق. هناك تطور آخر مهم حدث في لاهوتية رانر كان وجودية هايدجر التي تبين أن الرب خلق الإنسان ليشركه المعرفة و المحبة. وأطلق رانر عليها مصطلح (الوجودي الخارق للطبيعة) الموجود في كل إنسان و لكنه الوجودي لعين وجوده. عند رانر الرحمة و الوجودي بينهما ارتباط وثيق من دون الوجودي تفقد الرحمة قيمتها. فالوجودي الخارق للطبيعة باختصار هو الاتصال الذاتي بالرب الحاضر في كل إنسان على شكل عرض سواء قبل أو رفض.

سعى رانر لنشر فكر توماس أكوينس الذي عمل على إيجاد علاقة متناسبة بين العقل الطبيعي والوحي الخارق للطبيعة. إن تأثير النهضة و الإصلاح نقلت المذهب المدرسي إلى

المذهب المدرسي الجديد. مرّ مذهب المدرسين بمراحل مختلفة خلال القرن المنصرم ، أولاها عند تحول القرن. إذ كان التركيز فيها على دراسة نص القديس توماس أكوينس و ثانيها خلال بداية القرن حيث برز الخلاف بين الكنيسة و البرلمان و ثالثها أثناء الفترة التي مرت بين الحربين العالميتين حيث ظهرت ثلاثة أصناف من المذهب التومي و هي: المذهب التومي التقليدي: و يتزعمه جاك مارتن. المذهب التومي التاريخي: و يتزعمه إتيان جلشن. و المذهب التومي الغيبي: و يتزعمه جوزيف مارشل.

أما المرحلة الرابعة فكانت تمتد بين الحرب الثانية إلى فترة تأسيس مجلس الفاتيكان الثاني حيث انتشر فيها المذهب التومي الغيبي لمارشل و سيطر فيها سيطرة تامة ، بعد المجلس الثاني للفاتيكان الذي قاده رانر الذي كان لاهوته يركز كليا على تفسيره المتفرد لمذهب توماس الغيبي للكينونة. إن دراسة مقارنة بين المذهب الغيبي لتوماس أكوينس و المذهب الغيبي لكارل رانر تكشف لنا أن توماس بدأ بالمذهب التثليثي أى أن الوجودي و طبيعة الرب هو واحد و ثلاثة. وهذا يتضمن النموذج التصوري الأرسطي و الأفلاطوني الحديث الذي يفسر الذات الإلهية بأنها: مثل العلة الفاعلة و العلة النهائية و العلة النموذجية للجميع. و من جهة أخرى تكشف لنا الدراسة أن نقطة الانطلاق عند كارل رانر هي تحليل شخصية الإنسان الذي يثير أساس وجودها تساؤلا عن معناها. بالنسبة له الوحي والنجاة و التاريخ و علم الإنسان و علم المسيحية والكنيسة لها أهمية كبيرة في علاقتها بطبيعة الإنسان. وذهب رانر بالقول إلى أن كون الكنيسة هي السر المقدس للنجاة للعالم يجعل منها أيضا خميرة لكل إنسان قد تؤهله لأن يصبح مسيحيا. ويكون بهذا قد أضاف عدسات جديدة للمنظار المسيحي الذي اكتشف أن الحضور الإلهي حيوي في كل إنسان. وكتيجة لهذا سلك المجتمع الكاثوليكي طرقا جديدة لفهم الديانات الأخرى غير المسيحية. فهناك تطابق بين أسلوب رانر اللاهوتي و روح المجلس الثاني للفاتيكان. إنها نظرية (المسيحيون المجهولون) لرانر التي أخرجت المجلس الثاني للفاتيكان من ورطة إيجاد العلاقة مع غير المسيحيين.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Review of Literature

**Salvation in Non-Christian Religions: Approaches of
Christian Theologians in the Post Modern Era**

1. 1. Overview

Karl Rahner, a German Jesuit was the famous and the influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. He won the reputation of being the pioneer of the theology of interfaith dialogue at the Second Vatican Council. During his Jesuit formation days, he started reflecting about theology and its role in the personal life of human being. His prime concern in theology was man's relation with God. To him, God enters humans through self-communication to communicate with them. His critics not only admired his theological achievements but also accepted him as the modern theologian. He searched for the best elements in the Church avoiding obscurities.

However, Rahner's main concern was man, God and Christ. Rahner's understanding of salvation led him to coin the term "Anonymous Christians" which meant that whosoever follows the Christ in any manner irrespective of his theological beliefs will ultimately reach salvation. This led the Roman Catholicism to go deep into the interfaith dialogical activities to further propagate their faith.

There had been many influences on Rahner. Among them was Martin Heidegger whose scholarly supervision for two years introduced him to think and see what was behind the text. Secondly, spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola guided him to mystical which led to intimacy with God. Ignatius taught him to transcend to God even in the things of daily life. Thirdly, Joseph Marechal profoundly influenced his interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. Marechal made him a dynamic interpretation of Thomas Aquinas whose insight extended to the unlimited horizons making Rahner's interpretation of Aquinas relevant to modern philosophy and theology.

His work *The Foundations of Christian Faith*, *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word* carry relation between philosophy and theology. Today The Catholic Church believes in the salvation of the followers of the other faiths as the Divine Will. The prominent theologians have detailed discourses regarding how the non-Christians will be saved by God. This development in Church's consideration passed through

three stages namely exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism developing respect for every religion. This development of thought about other faiths was the result of many prominent Christian theologians. They continued its propagation till the church restated its theology in a reformed manner. Among them was Karl Rahner who coined the term "anonymous Christians" for the non-Christians. He thinks transcendentalism, as the distinctive characteristic of human beings, which keeps them in relation with God.

Another influential theologian was John Hick whose theory of pluralism includes the non-Christians in the eternal salvific scheme. Hans Kung, an advocate of inclusivism affirms that there is salvation outside the church but only through Christ who does not confine his salvific grace to Christians only. Paul Knitter, a Roman Catholic Theologian, has three different approaches: (i) all religions are relative, (ii) all are essentially the same and (iii) all have a common psychological origin. Christ, to him is the final cause of salvation. The most creative theologian John Cobb assigns special meaning to the term "Christ". To him, Christ is the way that excludes no ways. It aimed at the constructive reformation of the Church. Edward Schillebeeckx, another modern theologian, remained in search of theology of culture. He envisaged a new partnership between the Church and the world. He views theology as descending God's dialogue with the world.

The documents of the second Vatican Council also looked for the common values in different religions to promote fellowship among them as all were heading towards the One God. To the Council, all the Prophets carried God's plan of salvation. Karl Rahner had been the highly respected theologian in the twentieth century. Thus, the present study aims at discovering how Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians strengthened the development of Christian theology of dialogue in the twentieth century.

The notable element in the theory of anonymous Christians by Karl Rahner is the primacy of grace and God's salvific initiative. According to him, Grace significantly gives man a share in Godhead while salvation is not a possibility but a

fact given to every human through Christ. The only means to salvation for all is God's grace found in man's moral choices having transcendental experience of God. The unique understanding of grace by Rahner elaborates that God bestows His very self to man and His self-communication as an ontological process actualizes the divinization of man. It also carries in it the philosophy of existentialism. Grace fundamentally affects the existent reality as God becomes destiny of the created reality.

Another significant development in Rahner's theology had been Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy which pinpointed that God created humans to share with them the Divine knowledge and love. Rahner termed it as 'supernatural existential' present in all human beings but as an existential of their concrete existence. To Rahner, grace and existential are closely related. The supernatural existential in brief is the self-communication of God present in every human in the mode of an offer either accepted or rejected.

Rahner had been the key figure to contribute to the Catholic theology. He propagated the thought of Thomas Aquinas to whom there existed the harmonious relationship between natural reason and the supernatural revelation. The influence of Renaissance and Reformation shifted scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism. Scholasticism passed through different stages during the last century. At first, the focus was on the study of Saint Thomas' text. The second stage was the conflict between the Church and the parliament. The third stage was the period between the two wars carrying three kinds of Thomism that is traditional Thomism of Jacques Martin, historical Thomism of Etienne Gilson and the transcendental Thomism of Joseph Marechal. The fourth stage was from the World War II to Vatican II when Marechal's transcendental Thomism enjoyed complete possession of the field. After Vatican II, this theological movement was chiefly led by Karl Rahner whose theology was completely based on his unique interpretation of Thomas's metaphysics of being.

A comparative study of transcendentalism of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Rahner reveals that Thomas starts with theo-centricism which means that existential and nature of God is one and triune; this carries in it Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic patterns explaining God as the efficient cause, as the final cause and as the exemplary

cause for all. On the other hand, Rahner's starting point is the analysis of human persons whose basic existence is the quest for meaning. For him, revelation, salvation, history, anthropology, Christology and Church have a lot of significance in their relation to human nature. He goes on to state that the Church being the sacrament of salvation for the world also serves as heaven for all mankind.

Rahner adds new lenses to the Christian telescope which meant to detect active presence of God in all human beings. As a result of this, the Catholic community took new ways to understand other religions and relate to the non-Christians. There is found congruence between Rahner's theologizing style and the spirit of Vatican II. It was his theory of anonymous Christians which got Vatican II out of the dilemma of how to have relations with the non-Christians.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Apparently, Rahner concept of anonymous Christians has significant role in the promotion of Christian theology of interfaith dialogue in the 20th century. It is need of the day to explore the impact of Karl Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians on the interfaith dialogue. Keeping in view the significance of Karl Rahner and his notion of anonymous Christians, the researcher decided to study Karl Rahner's theology, especially his notion of anonymous Christians and its role in the development of Christian theology of interfaith dialogue in the 20th century. The focus of this study concerns these questions: (i). what is the importance of Karl Rahner's theological works and ideas in the contemporary catholic thought? (ii). what is Karl Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians and how has it been criticized by his contemporary theologians? (iii). what important role has Karl Rahner played in the development of Catholic Christian theology and what is the shape and structure of traditional catholic theology after the scholarly contribution of Karl Rahner's thought? and (iv) what is Karl Rahner's contribution in shaping the decisions of Vatican Council II?

1.3. Significance of this Research

The study is significant for the reseachers of comparative religion. It also provides

guideline in the development of curriculum regarding the content on Karl Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians. It also provides the path for the policy makers. The study guides the experts for contribution of interfaith dialogue. The study streamlines the interfaith dialogue in Christianity with other religions of the world. A look at outcome of the academic research in Pakistani universities revealed that pioneers of inter-religious dialogue and leading figures of Vatican have been paid little attention. So, the significance of the proposed study consisted first of all in being an attempt at filling that gap.

Secondly, as the literature review below reveals that the contemporary scholarship has recently tremendous rise of interest in the thought of Karl Rahner. And many valuable studies appeared on various aspects of his thought. Therefore, the present study undertakes a timely effort in this perspective.

Thirdly, the present study is all the more relevant because of Vatican II has made Rahner's theory of Anonymous Christians a part of its official documents by name of "*Lumen Gentium*". This theory was based on supernatural existential and revelation-God's self-communication to man. A lot has been written about this notion. But no work has examined discusses its impact on theology of dialogue and Vatican II as well as the implications of this notion for the 20th century. So, the study can be viewed as an effort to fill that gap.

1.4. Research Methodology

The study is case study in nature. The academic work of renowned theologian Karl Rahner has been focused in the whole study. The study is historical. The relevant documents regarding the study has been personally collected from the libraries as well as research institutions. Primary documents of academic work of Karl Rahner are available in the hard and soft copies. Initially, all the primary documents were collected and authentic translated books were collected as well to meet the objectives of the study. Although, most of the academic work of Karl Rahner is in German language and has been translated in English and available in hard and soft copies. To find the originality and authenticity of the Karl Rahner documents as well as data following criticisms were done:

1). Internal criticism of the data

2). External criticism of the documents

Originality and authenticity of the data and documents was done through the collecting the references as well as comparing the data with the authentic sources. After internal and external criticism of the documents and data, research was started to conduct to achieve the objectives of the study. A three fold method was employed, in this study: (a) historical: which enables to understand the basic facts through, chronological study of events. Historical method was used to understand the evolution and development of Rahner's ideas as well as the twentieth century Christian theology in general (b) analytic: which enables to reach deeper level of understanding (c) critical: which exposed weak and strong points giving way to new understanding and further suggestions. To carry out this research, historical and analytical method of research has been followed. The research method also included the critical analysis. The step was employed to bring together the books relevant to the problem stated in the beginning. At the second step, the books of Karl Rahner were analyzed and the problem was tackled in the light of this analysis. In order to avoid the superficiality and over simplification, special attention was paid to the dissimilarities and details. Finally, since the subject of anonymous Christians, supernatural existential, grace, revelation-God's self communication to man and dialogue with other religions have most prominently been expounded in his five volumes of Theological Investigations. This study centered upon these but it also included references to his other works.

This case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves. A form of qualitative descriptive research, the case study looks intensely at an individual or small participant pool, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group and only in that specific context.

My Research design is the string of logic that ultimately links the data that has been collected and the conclusions that have been drawn to the initial questions of the study. Typically, research designs dealt with the following four key problems:

- What questions to study
- What data are relevant
- What data to collect
- How to analyze that data

In other words, this research design is basically a blueprint for getting from the beginning to the end of the study. The beginning was an initial set of questions to be answered, and the end formed some set of conclusion about those questions.

1.6. Review of Literature

1.6.1. Salvation in Non-Christian Religions: Approaches of Christian Theologians in the Post Modern Era

Christianity, in development of its thought present today carries the different phases which form the two thousand years of its history. The view about other faiths was formed in a period of substantial ignorance of the wider religious life of mankind.¹ In first place, there was found total rejection for the other religions as there was no salvation outside the Church. This is called exclusivism. The second stage led the Catholic thinkers to better understanding of other faiths rejecting the rejection phase. This phase is termed as inclusivism.

The modern and the post-modern era saw the globalization of the world and the societies became multi-cultural and multi-religious resulting in the fruitful struggle for the promotion of tolerance, harmony and understanding among people of different religions and faiths. This led the theologians to rethink the religious matters for peaceful social setup resulting in the phase of Pluralism. Of the three, exclusivism was propounded and propagated by Karl Barth. It was Karl Rahner who chiefly advocated the concept of inclusivism.² Pluralism was led and supported by John Hick.³ The development of these concepts show the Christians' tendency towards the

¹ The most extreme form of the "Exclusivist Theory" cited by Karl Barth, (1886-1968). See, for more details in his famous book (1961). *Church Dogmatics* (1st ed., Vol. 1). (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark). See also, "Exclusivism" in, A. Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (USA: SCM Press LTD, 1993). pp. 10-37.

² Rahner has discussed on "Anonymous Christians" and "interfaith dialogical" activities with other world religions in following Vols with details: Volume 6 – 1966 • Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society • Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God • Anonymous Christians Volume 10 – 1973 • Church, Churches and Religions Volume 12 – 1974 • Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church Volume 14 – 1976 • Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christians Volume 16 – 1979 • Anonymous and Explicit Faith • The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation

³ See for more details: J. Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982). p. 47. See, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: OneWorld, 1993). p. 136. See, *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths* (USA: SCM Press LTD,

acceptance of non-Christian religions entitled to salvation as the universal will of God. The following paragraphs will illustrate the three phases in detail.

1.6.2. The Three fold Typology and Ways of Salvations

1.6.2.1. Exclusivism in Christian Tradition

John Hick had claimed that Christianity carries the monopoly of salvific truth and life. The exclusivists hold that there is only one true, saving religion i.e., Christianity. The Christian doctrine "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" has played a vital role which meant that there is no salvation outside the Church. Regarding this, the council of Florence had affirmed,

"No one outside the Catholic Church not only pagans but also Jews and Heretics and Schematics can share in eternal fireprepared the devil and his angels"⁴

The same kind of view has been stated by Luther when he said, "Those who are outside Christianity, be they heathens, Turks, Jews, or even false Christians and hypocrites cannot expect, either love or any blessing from God, and accordingly remain in eternal wrath and perdition."⁵

From these quotes, it becomes clear how the Christians hated the non-Christians considering no salvation outside Christianity. There is found zeal for their mission and salvation. Their mission carried the responsibility of conversation of non-Christians to Christianity. About this, Julius Richter states that it is a subject of missiology which is:

1995).p. 69. , See G. D'Costa, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation* (USA: University Press of America, 1986).p. 67.

⁴ Hick, *God Has Many Names*.p. 30.

See also, E. J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975).p. 10.

⁵ Hick, *God Has Many Names*. pp. 30-31.

“That branch of theology which in opposition to the non-Christian religions shows the Christian religion to be the way, the truth, and the life which seeks to dispossess the non-Christian religions and to plant in their stead in the soil of heathen national life the evangelic faith and the Christian life.”⁶

This supported the view that non-Christians are consigned to hell. This dogma was universally accepted by all the Christians, to whom there was neither salvation nor remission of sins outside the Church. It was considered extremely necessary for salvation. The council of Florence (1438-45) affirmed that “no one remaining outside the Catholic Church----can become partakes of eternal life; but they will go to the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before the end of life they are joined to the Church”.⁷

These statements show how strict the Christians had been towards other religions. The main reason behind that had been the total ignorance of them. There was kept a distance from the other religions which continued to add to the hatred for them. In the medieval ages, Islam and Christianity had military contacts in the form of Crusades. In such conditions, there was found no concept of religious dialogue. Both Muslims and Christians distorted each other's conceptions. So this was an age of exclusivism when the Christians thought none entitled to salvation outside the Church. The Christian understanding of God is as holy love and of Christ as the divine love incarnate. On this basis there remained the attitude of total rejection for a long time.

1.6.2.2. Inclusivism & Christian Theologians

This is noted as the phase of early epicycles, which arose out of the understanding and keen study of other faiths by the catholic thinkers. At first, the intellectuals went deep into the Protestantism followed by the positive interaction to

⁶ J. Hick and P.F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1987), p.17.

⁷ Hick, *God Has Many Names*, p.30; See also, Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, See, G. D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenges of Other Religions* (Maryknoll: New York: Orbis Books, 1986).

the non-Christian faiths. Here, it was considered that only Catholics could be saved. Anyone except them to be saved would have been Catholic without knowing it. All the Muslims, Jews, Hindus etc believe themselves what they are but they infact are the members of mystical body of Christ. This is both an acceptance and a rejection of other faiths. The Christian theology views the divine presence in them. However, they are considered as having no salvation apart from Christ. The inclusivist approach is that all the religious truths belong to the Christ. It finds the ways by which there is found Christian reflection in other faiths. Contrary to exclusivism which excluded all other faiths as insufficient for salvation, inclusivism includes other religions as having divine presence but salvation becomes possible only through Christ in an implicit way. The Christians claim of the Christianity's unique finality as the laws of the only full divinity and full salvation. The non-Christians can be saved only because of their union to Christ in a way unknown to them. The relationship of Christianity to other faiths is that of complete to incomplete, explicit to implicit and open to anonymous. It meant that Christ is hidden at the heart of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.⁸

Since the Second Vatican Council, the inclusivist theology of religions is described as "Christ within the religions". The theologians propounding this view were Karl Rahner; Hans Kung, Rawan Williams, David Tracy etc. They stated that the grace of Christ is an essential element for salvation, however implicit in all other faiths. It is only Christianity which explicitly carries full salvation. Since Second Vatican Council, there has been a lot of work done on this subject quite fruitfully. Inclusivism is there in all Christian traditions.

The Christian belief in this Phase, that all the non-Christians invisibly belong to the Church polite their attitude towards their religions. The people of other faiths have implicit instead of explicit faith in Christ. The whole theme had effectively been explained by Pope Pius IX in 1854:

⁸ See, Hick and Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. p. 22.

"It must, of course, be held as a matter of faith that outside the apostolic Roman Church, no one can be saved, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood. On the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who are affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible ignorance are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord."⁹

This view clearly illustrates that eternal salvation is possible only within the Church. However, believers of other faiths can be saved if they belong to the Church atleast in desire and longing as it is not always necessary that this desire be explicit.

1.6.2.3 Religious Pluralism & Christian Theologians

Pluralism according to the Oxford Dictionary means "a condition in which two or more states, groups, principles co-exist".¹⁰ It is a theory recognizing more than one principle. In the theological perspective, pluralism was first debated by John Hick who stated that religious pluralism is the fact that the history of religions shows a plurality of traditions. Pluralism refers to a particular theory of the relation between these traditions. Regarding religions, pluralism is also used for theocentrism.¹¹ With reference to this, for Christians Christ is one Savior among other Savior figures and God alone stands at the centre. Various religions have different ways leading to God. Jesus Christ is seen as not definitive mediator for salvation but seen as normative to some and non-normative to others.¹²

⁹ Hick, *God Has Many Names*.p. 32.

¹⁰ See M. Eliade, "John, Hick "Religious Pluralism"," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987).p. 331.

¹¹ There are many works in this regard such as, R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Logman & Todd, 1968).;Hick, *God Has Many Names*. and see, Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

¹² See, V. Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2003).p. 25.

In pluralistic approach in theology, ingenuity goes to the extent to hold together that outside Christianity there is no salvation and that outside the Church there is salvation. This acknowledges an evident fact that salvation in experiential form lies both inside and outside the Church. To the Catholics, it is asserted that only Christians can be saved. However, the new developed thought stated that all are saved to be called Christians.¹³

Their being Christian is, however implicit and not explicit. For such kind of Christians, Karl Rahner has coined the term Anonymous Christian whom he defines as someone who can and must be regarded in this or that sense as the Anonymous Christian. He is an ignorant man with implicit faith belonging to the invisible Church.

Another Christian theologian, Hans Kung daringly expressed that the Church carries the extra-ordinary salvation but salvation within other world religions is ordinary. To him, "A man is to be saved within the religion that is made available to him in his historical situation".¹⁴

All the world religions carry the way of universal salvation. The difference between the Salvation of the Church and outside is that in the former, it is very especial and extra-ordinary. The people of other faiths accordingly to Hans Kung are pre-Christians directed towards Christ and they will be saved by God through religious traditions.

1.6.3. Karl Rahner and the Theory of Anonymous Christians

Karl Rahner (1904-1984) was a German Catholic theologian of the twentieth century.¹⁵ He developed a sort of modern theology which deeply influenced not only

¹³ Hick, *God Has Many Names*.p. 34.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ William Dych S. J., *Karl Rahner* (London: Continuum, 1992). pp.5-6.; Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: A Brief Introduction* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007). pp.51-54.; Herbert Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Work*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Burns & Oates, 1965).pp.18-21.

the Catholic Church but also other Christian sects.¹⁶ He is considered to be the pioneer of Inter-religious dialogue¹⁷ and emerged a leading figure of Vatican (1962-1968).¹⁸ The thought of Church about non-Christians' salvation is based on many theories. In Vatican II, many theologians contributed a lot to the understanding of salvation for non-Christians. Regarding this, Rahner's thinking appears as dominant to the Vatican II.¹⁹ It's developing of Christian attitude towards other religions carries Karl Rahner as the chief engineer in this regard.²⁰ He is the highly respected and the single influential of contemporary theologians in the Roman Catholic Church.²¹ The documents and later results of Vatican II are unthinkable apart from his contributions.²² There is possibility of salvation of non-Christians through an implicit acceptance of Christ. Rahner clarifies this in his article on "Christianity and non-Christian religions".²³ It carries in it four theses. Firstly, Christianity claims to be the absolute religion intended by God for all but the human persons meet it when they are seriously confronted by it.²⁴ In the second place, he discussed the social aspect of salvation. The humans are on the way to salvation through a concrete religion in which they find themselves. Because of confrontation with the Christian message,

¹⁶ See, "Rahner, Karl (1904-1984)," in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Michael Glazier; Monika K. Hellwig (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994). pp. 714-115.

¹⁷ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).

¹⁸ F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1997).p. 1362.

¹⁹ George Vass, *A Pattern of Doctrines 2: The Atonement and Mankind's Salvation*, vol. 4 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1998). pp. 16-22.

²⁰ Conway; Fraiche Ryan Padraic, *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010). pp. 4-7.

²¹ Gregory Baum, *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999). pp. 158-164.

²² See, Herbert Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1986). pp. 94-102.

²³ See, *The Church: Reading in Theology*, ed. Gustave Weiger (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1998). pp. 113-117.

²⁴ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5. pp. 118-120.

non-Christian religions are validly leading to salvation.²⁵ The third thesis recognizes the followers of other faiths as anonymous Christians because of their implicit relation to Christ.²⁶ The fourth thesis reflects upon the idea of mission.²⁷ The term anonymous Christians²⁸ meant to clarify and broaden the outlook of the Catholic Church on the followers of other faiths²⁹

- i. **Rahner's Transcendentalism:** The term "Transcendental" means to go beyond the human intellect. It asks the question of being which can experience the unlimited horizon open to the mystery of God. Rahner's concept of anonymous Christian has got the very basis of this transcendental experience of Grace and Nature.³⁰
- ii. **Grace and Nature:** The human existence is within the order of grace. The human nature is qualified by God's offer of Himself given to all through Christ for salvation.³¹ God bestows His very self to the human being. He bestows the internal essence of divine being upon human beings.³² He in grace does not merely do something or affect something rather He gives the very reality, the inner, the divine life. In this context, Rahner insists that God's self-communication is an

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 121-130.

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 131-132.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 133-134.

²⁸ See, definition for this term: Joseph A; Mary Collins Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Goldenbridge: Gill and Macmillan LTD, 1987).p. 27.

²⁹ See, *Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations*, vol. 14 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).p. 131. See also ibid. pp. 280 - 294 and ibid., 6.p. 391.

³⁰ The major extended discussions of nature and grace can be found in "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990). pp. 297-317; "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," *ibid.* pp.319-346; "Reflections on the Experience of Grace," *ibid.*, 3. pp.86-90; See "Nature and Grace," in, *ibid.*, 4. pp.165-188.

³¹ *Nature and Grace* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). pp. 1-43.

³² See, George Vandervelde, "The Grammar of Grace: Karl Rahner as a Watershed in Contemporary Theology," *Theological Studies* 49, no. 3 (1988).p. 446.

ontological process effecting the divinization of the human person. For Rahner, concrete human nature is a composite of pure nature and grace. Both can never be separated. Grace can be conceived as a dynamic orientation given in human existence.³³ Man's self-transcending dynamism falls within human experience and is qualified by grace. It is the relation between Grace and Nature that orientates human towards God.³⁴ To him, natural and graced knowledge of God appears to be strange. God's will to endow humans with grace is an interior ontological constituent of concrete human existence even if it is not a constituent of nature. Such a divine decree necessarily entails an ontological change in human existence.³⁵ Rahner's theology of grace carries the use of philosophical concept, of existential originating from a 'conviction of faith'. Rahner explains transcendental relation between God and Man as:

"Man is the being who possesses unlimited transcendence of knowledge and freedom. The inner dynamism of his spirit is directed to absolute being, to absolute hope, to absolute nature, to good in itself, to what is unconditionally right, and thus to God".³⁶

God's mystery is implicit yet there is a strong bond between God and Self. It is the condition of the possibility for the intelligibility for all explicit religious

³³ See also for more details: Rahner, Karl. 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace' in, Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 3.p. 91. See also the following meditation of Rahner on this subject of experience: 'Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment' in *ibid.*, 16. pp. 24-34; Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace' in *ibid.* pp. 35-51, Experience of the Holy Spirit' in, *ibid.*, 18. pp. 189-210.

³⁴ The major extended discussions of nature and grace can be found in "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations*, 1. pp. 297-317; "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," in, *ibid.* pp. 319-346; "Reflections on the Experience of Grace," in, *ibid.*, 13. pp. 86-90; "Nature and Grace," in, *ibid.*, 4. pp. 165-188.

³⁵ See, Rahner, Karl "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," in, *Theological Investigations*, 1.p. 303.

³⁶ See, Rahner, Karl "Anonymous and Explicit Faith," in, *ibid.*, 16.p.55.

assertions. This became the very basis of Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians who are in one or the other way in relation with God. This is Transcendentalism which is the most distinctive characteristic of human beings.

iii. **Supernatural Existential:** Rahner's work, *Foundations of Christianity Faith* (1976), explains the term "supernatural existential"³⁷ as something "present in all human beings, but as an existential of their concrete existence".³⁸ Supernatural existential has been discussed by Rahner also in the article "Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification". Here is stated the relationship between the existential and grace. The essential point highlighted here is that the existential is a partial realization of grace if the latter is defined as the self-communication of God. Regarding this, Rahner has made some important statements:

- a. The existential is a lower degree of grace.
- b. Since the existential is imitatively natural, it is only modally supernatural; whereas grace itself is imitatively supernatural.
- c. The existential is the deficient mode of grace.
- d. The existential is added indeed to natural by grace.³⁹

iv. **Rahner & Catholicism:** Rahner endeavored to search for the best elements of the Catholic theology. He avoided the obscurities and his theological proposals provoked controversy on various fronts. Rahner carries universalism of his theology of grace and revelation.⁴⁰ He was the Catholic dogmatic theologian who endeavoured to display the continuities between the natural and the supernatural orders. He sought to correct standard neo-scholastic theology by giving an account of the conditions for the possibility in human knowledge of a

³⁷For a full account of the 'supernatural existential,' see *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978). pp., 116 - 137.

³⁸ See, Carr Anne, *Theological Method of Karl Rahner* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977).p. 120.

³⁹ Kark; Herbert Vorglimler Rahner, *Theological Dictionary* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).p. 161.

⁴⁰ Leo J. O. Donovan, *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology* (Washington DC: University Press, 1995).p. 9.

recognition and reception of divine revelation.⁴¹ His theological program restored the Christian faith. His writings embody a strong affirmation of the central elements of the Christian tradition. He focused his attention to the emerging Church dialogue with large religious and non-religious movements. Rahner stressed the importance of the interior life for modern men and women drawing many to prayers and meditation.⁴²

Rahner method was favored in the Vatican II considering its anthropological aspect and its endeavor to bring Thomist philosophy into dialogue.⁴³ Modernity entered the Church through Rahner because of his theology of freedom and free speech.

⁴¹ See, Declan; E.Hines Marmion, Mary, *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). pp. 83-89.

⁴² Ibid. p.19.

⁴³ J.C. Livingston and F.S. Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997). pp. 207-212.

1.6.4. Huns Kung and Ways of Salvation

Another loud voice regarding religious pluralism is Hans Kung who was born in Sursee, Switzerland in 1928. He is a prominent theologian, philosopher and a prolific writer. He studied philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University (Rome), the Sorbonne and the Institut Catholique de Paris. In addition, he has been awarded numerous degrees from several universities. He was the President of the Global Ethic Foundation (Sifting Weltethos). From 1960 until his retirement in 1996, he served as the Professor of Ecumenical Theology and Director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research at the University of Tübingen. From 1962 to 1965, he rendered his services as official theological consultant (Peritus) to the Second Vatican Council appointed by Pope John XXIII.⁴⁴

The Christian theology formerly regarded all the other religions as the ways to damnation with the passage of time, when the theological studies advanced the other religions became to be recognized as the true ways of salvation. As a younger theologian, he has considerable influence during the Vatican Council II. He has developed his argument in the context of the dogma "Outside the Church no salvation". Kung's first conception is that there is salvation outside the Church, But only through Christ. Christ does not confine his salvific grace to Christians only. Kung explains that the salvation of non-Christians is not on the basis of Church but it is because of faith in God. Church is to be understood as an open community of those who serve and help. There is God's nearness to all persons of goodwill and God's grace for eternal salvation of mankind.⁴⁵

Kung considers all the religions having truth concerning the true God but they are in error. The gospel states to convert the non-Christians but does not require them

⁴⁴ See about Hans Kung: Schmidt, B. (2012, May 10). Bibliography of Hans Küng's Publications in English 1955-2012. Retrieved September 18, 2014, from <http://www.britannica.com>

⁴⁵ Huns Kung, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Garden City, 1976). pp. 91-92.

to renounce "Whatever there is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is gracious".⁴⁶

Kung does not allow sweeping all the humanity through the backdoor of the Church. This is an event only in the heads of theologians. The Catholics have been challenged by Kung to admit the logical conclusion of this absurdity.

"Salvation outside the Church: Why not honestly admit it, if this is in fact what we assert? If all religions contain truth, why should Christianity in particular be the truth? If there is salvation outside the Church and Christianity, what is the point of the Church and Christianity at all?".⁴⁷

Thus Kung insists that all of the world religions contain truth that can be recognized. However, the differences between these religions go parallel to the truth. The proclamation of God's truth in some way leads the followers of these religions to salvation. Regarding this Kung further explains:

"As against the "extraordinary" way of salvation which is the Church, the world religions can be called-if this is rightly understood-the "ordinary" way of salvation for non-Christian humanity. God is the Lord not only of the special salvation history of the Church, but also of the universal salvation history of all mankind; this universal history is bound up with the especial salvation history in having a common origin, meaning and goal and being subject to the same grace of God."⁴⁸

For Kung, the ordinary salvation is general for all non-Christians whereas the Church guarantees extra-ordinary salvation for the Christians. He removes the question from the issue of their eternal salvation. Both kinds of salvation are bound together in the common meaning of God. Christian faith according to Kung carries this as its integral part that all the humans are saved by the will of God; and that they

⁴⁶ Richard Henry Drummond, *Toward a New Age in Christian Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), p. 98.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

are intended to find their salvation. To God, religions are serial strictures and potential vehicles for the operation of divine grace. Kung further affirms that they have a relative validity and a relative providential right to existence. They are theologically pre-Christians.⁴⁹

Kung finds the salvific role for the religions in the providence of God. The Church along with other responsibilities carries the service to the other world religions. Kung asserts that the Church is to offer brotherly help to the world religions. The Church is the representative of all people before God; it is the sign of invitation of God to all peoples. Because of this, Kung prefers the feminine gender for Church. Its mission is no longer seen to be the total displacement of other religions. Its fair missionary task can be helped by the people of other religions. This is to recognize that authentic Christian missionary activity may go on even under the name of another religious tradition.⁵⁰

This theme has been shown in his both work on being a Christian. Kung always wrote with passion, rich learning and insight. He emphasizes the universal perspectives of the Bible that God is creator and converse of all men, that God operates everywhere that he wills the salvation of all men and that the non-Christians too as observers of law can be justified.

Kung emphasizes that there is salvation outside the visible Church. The other religions may be ways of salvation having authentic theological legitimacy.⁵¹

1.6.5. Paul F.Knitter and his Theory of Salvation

Among Roman Catholic theologians, Paul FKnitter⁵² was the Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 99

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 100

City of New York.⁵³ He was formerly Emeritus Professor of theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.⁵⁴ Since publishing His acclaimed book, *No Other Name?* (1985), made him quite famous as he devotedly advocated the religious pluralism. The survey of religious pluralism carried three distinct approaches?

- (i) All religions are relative.
- (ii) All are essentially the same.
- (iii) All have a common psychological origin.

To Knitter, the Catholic mode of pluralism has three major insights. In the first place, Christians must regard other religions as salvific because of universal will of God. Secondly, Christ is the final cause of salvation. Third insight is that interfaith dialogue is to learn from other religions. This is seen as the "new age" for Christianity.

Paul Knitter has made a significance contribution to this new approach in theology. He has been a professor of theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Many of his articles have been published in several American and German journals.

Knitter has criticized Kung for some of his claims made by the latter that is among the catholic theologians in the spirit of Vatican II. Kung claimed that Christ

⁵² Most of his research and publications have dealt with religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. Since his ground-breaking 1985 book *No Other Name?* He has been exploring how the religious communities of the world can cooperate in promoting human and ecological well-being. This is the topic of: *One Earth Many Religions: Multipath Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (1995) and *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996). He has recently published a critical survey of Christian approaches to other religions: *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (2002). He is also General Editor of Orbis Books' series "Faith Meets Faith."

⁵³ See, Theological Seminary, U. (2010, August 18). Paul Knitter. Retrieved December 16, 2014, from <http://www.utsnyc.edu/paul-knitter>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

and Christianity are universal for all human beings irrespective of their faith. Paul Knitter disposes of the claim which to him is not necessary for religious commitment to Christ. Moreover, this claim is also not possible according to the norms of theological method. Knitter lifts the discussion to the higher level showing his closer affinity Raymond Panikar and a large group of contemporary theologians.

Knitter continues to insist on the proclamation of Christ as "the norm above all other norms the "definite savoir".⁵⁵

To him, the current era of dialogue must suppress both the New Testament witness and Christian tradition. Knitter summarizes his position in term of seeking a common experience among the various religions of the world in the following way:

"Instead of searching for 'one God' or 'one Ultimate' or a common essence' or a 'mystical centre' within all religions, we can recognize a shared locus of religious experience now available to all the religions of the world".⁵⁶

He takes pluralism to its logical conclusion which is in contrast to anonymous Christianity explained by Rahner.⁵⁷

In his book, "Introducing theologies of religions", Paul Knitter invites his readers to view religious pluralism as a promise and a providential blessing instead of considering it as a problem or threat. He was fully aware of the dramatic development in the field of theology of religions. So he treated the topic in the new ways. Paul Knitter assumes that the any Christian statement must carry the doctrines of other religions also as interreligious dialogue has become an integral part of the Church.

⁵⁵ Knitter, *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*.p. 143.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 186.

⁵⁷ *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996).p. 6.

Knitter's vision carries global dialogical community. He has presented four main theological modes for Christian religion on other religions. First is the Replacement Model of the optimistic views as the reality of other religions is known to the Western world.⁵⁸

The second one is the Fulfillment Model which is the most typical of the Vatican II Roman Catholic Theology. This mode carries willingness to see God's grace operating in the non-Christian religions and its insistence on the necessity of interreligious dialogue. The third model is the Mutuality Model which is relatively a new approach. This model leads to a platform for more authentic dialogue. The last one is the Acceptance Model which welcomes religion plurality and makes no assumptions concerning other religions. There is no common ground among religions but there is a large space for dialogue in the sense of a good neighbor policy.⁵⁹

Knitter has criticized the overemphasis on the unbridgeable gap between different cultures. He emphasizes to perceive the plurality of religions not as a problem but as fruitful kayos in the human history. This is the interplay of emphases and insights. The non-Christian religions are to be taken as a network of checks and balances. Knitter encourages his Christian colleagues to participate seriously in the interreligious relationships and cooperation.⁶⁰ This indicates that Knitter involvement in the religiouspluralism is not just academic.

⁵⁸ *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002).p. 93. See also for more details: James Lee Fredericks, *Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), pp. 55-64.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ See, Knitter, Paul F. "Religious Pluralism and Religious Imagination: Can a Pluralistic Theology sustain Christian Faith?" In *"Louvain Studies"*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (2002), pp. 240-264.

1.6.6. John Hick and His Idea of Universalism

An influential religious pluralist who contributed a lot to the understanding of the concept of salvation in the non-Christian religions⁶¹ was John Hick (1922-2012). He proved to be one of the important and great theologians of the twentieth century. As a philosopher in the Anglo-analytic tradition, his works mark the foundation of religious epistemology, philosophical theology, and religious pluralism.⁶² To him, all the world religions worship God who has been given various names. He has advocated a paradigm shift replacing Christianity by God as focal point of salvation.⁶³ The world religions according to Hick are the different human responses to the one divine reality i.e. God. The religions tradition can be evaluation on the basis of its capability of offering a better quality of human existence.⁶⁴ John Hick explains the pluralistic approach towards religion in the following words:

“It must involve a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the thought that it is God who is at the centre and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him”.⁶⁵

This is the advocacy of “Copernican revolution” which involves a new Christianity. It is mythical in nature and needs re-interpretation and this is its uniqueness. Hick takes pluralism to its logical conclusion, a radical redefinition of the Christian faith where its fundamental doctrines are destroyed.⁶⁶ Hick demythologizes

⁶¹ See, J. Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press). p.181.

⁶² See, *John Hick: An Autobiography* (England: One World Oxford, 2002). pp. 11-24.

See also for more details: John Hick, (1922-2012) *On Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

A-Peer Reviewed Academic Resource, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/hick/>, See, Hick, John, 2005. <http://www.johnhick.org.uk/>. Accessed 3/16/05.

⁶³ See, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*. pp. 99-101.

⁶⁴ See, *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths*. pp. 12-14.

⁶⁵ See, *God Has Many Names*. p. 66.

⁶⁶ See, D'Costa, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation*. p. 2.

the Christian faith and removes Christ from the centre of divine revelation. To him, "Any viable Christian theodicy must affirm the ultimate salvation of all God's creatures".⁶⁷

Hick's theology carries in it pluralism, demythologizing and universalism however, all these may not belong together.⁶⁸

When Hick states that theodicy must affirm the ultimate salvation of all God's creatures. It guides to think whether there is no life and death decision to be made. It can be assumed that everything will turn out well for everyone in the end.⁶⁹ Thus universalism is highly appealing for modern man though it is not biblical. Regarding salvation of mankind, Hick's view contrasts to that of the Christ who asked, "Lord, will those who are saved be few"? The reply to this question was strive to enter the narrow door; for many I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.⁷⁰

Hick seems to disregard the teachings of Jesus Christ which raises the question whether such theology can be considered a viable Christian viewpoint. Hick's states that everyone will be saved. This statement also carries an addition of a very significant phrase "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved". The New Testament does carry universalism but Hick's bold claim of Universalism goes for beyond it. In God, there is universality of love, and He loves the whole world. This love leads to salvation of mankind but does not guarantee it for all. Hick's view carries the universality of the Gospel which states, "God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world might be through him."⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ J. Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985).p.91.

⁶⁹ G. D'Costa, "John Hick," in, *the Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theologians in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: lackwell Publishers, 1997). pp. 268-72.

⁷⁰ See, Charles M. Cameron, "John Hick's Religious World," *Evangel*, Vol.15, No.1 (Spring 1997), p. 25.

⁷¹ Ibid. , 25.

However, this universality of the Gospel does not mean Hick's universalism which asserts that any Christian theodicy must affirm the ultimate salvation of all God's creatures. The declarations of Divine love by John, the following strong judgment appeared, "he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not beloved in the only Son of God".⁷²

Hick's emphasis has been on the choice of love of God instead of his judgment. God's love carries universality and leads the whole world to salvation. This love calls for the response of faith in Jesus Christ. Hick goes beyond and states the God's love must lead to the salvation of all creatures. Hick exhorts us to take the love of God for faith in Christ seriously. The scripture speaking of salvation means both the love of God in faith and in Christ whose grace is connected with faith. The gospel emphasizes both grace and faith necessary required for salvation.⁷³

In short, Hick boldly declares that Christianity has numerable resources capable of being developed in the interests of a world ecumenism. A view of Hick's theology makes it clear he shows little respect for the Scripture and prefers the pluralist environment of contemporary society. He has criticized Rahner's notion of anonymous Christianity in the following words. "These rather critical theories are all attempts to square an inadequate theology with the facts of God's words".⁷⁴

Hick's use of Scripture had been very selective picking the things for his purpose and discarding the ones which he found not useful. Similarly his idea of world ecumenism is very different from that associated with the World Council of Churches. The WCC confesses Christ as God Savior and seeks to fulfill their calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Hick's ecumenism world entirely dispense with the call for world evangelism. Hick challenges us to present more clearly and convincingly the biblical attentive to his pluralistic theology.

⁷² Hick; Hassan Askari John, *The Experience of Religious Diversity* (Gower: Aldershot, 1985).p. 11.

⁷³ See, Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths*. pp.12-14. , See also, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*.p. 20.

⁷⁴ *God Has Many Names*.p. 74.

1.6.7 John B.Cobb and Salvation

Among the most creative and influential contemporary American theologians, John Cobb(1925)⁷⁵ stands high whose work "Christ in a Pluralist Age" appeared to be the significant Christological study. Cobb is best known as a process theologian connected to the Chicago School which is a galaxy of the students of Alfred North Whitehead.⁷⁶ They have been striving to develop a tradition in theology according to the religious philosophy of Whitehead. Cobb in him finds the universal presence of revelation and redemptive grace.⁷⁷ Whitehead's philosophy in theology asserts that each actual entity is formed by the integration of past experiences with an aim towards future. Every actuality is offered an initial aim by God who is a transcendent source.⁷⁸ Successful appropriation of the new aim will read to creative transformation in the world. Cobb designates it as Logos having Christ as its incarnation in the world, especially the human beings. This makes Jesus "the paradigm case of incarnation."⁷⁹ His existence is characterized by his identity with the immanent Logos. Jesus alongside it is also the highest embodiment of human being. Cobb explains the saving significance of the paschal mystery of Jesus in terms of a spiritual field of force into which people can enter". This makes Cobb's Logos Christology constitutive as well as normative.

⁷⁵ Cobb advocated a theology that managed to be both christocentric and pluralistic in its approach to other faiths. He proclaimed that christocentrism is rooted in Sophia, or divine wisdom, which is the essence of God who is embodied in Christ. He asserted that it requires a Christian to reject arrogance, exclusivism, and dogmatism as obstacles to the Christological creative transformation. In this understanding, other religions could approach Christ's essence without actually believing in Christ.

⁷⁶ For more detailed bibliography, see "Appendix B: A Bibliography of the Writings of John B. Cobb, Jr." in *Theology and the University: Essays in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991). pp. 243-265.

⁷⁷ See, JeeHo Kim, (1999, July 8). *John B Cobb, Jr. (1925-)*. Retrieved October 10, 2014, from http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/mwt_themes_850_cobb.htm

⁷⁸ See Drummond, *Toward a New Age in Christian Theology*. pp. 150-151.

⁷⁹ Ibid; ibid. p. 50.

In his significant Christological work, Cobb intends to take living in a religiously pluralistic world with utmost seriousness. To him, it has become outdated for Christians to view the other faiths in a negative way. Cobb states, "It is impossible to dismiss the Zen master as a benighted pagan, and 'Buddha' must be recognized as rightly naming the reality which is for vast numbers of people supremely important".⁸⁰

Cobb assigns special meaning to the term "Christ". He has stated some sharp things about narrow-minded approach in the context of contemporary religious pluralism. He also discards the view that all beliefs are equally true. Limitizing Christ means to care what is important for Christians. In the developed Christian theology such limitation and closeness can be called radically unchristian. It leads to a new understanding of the Church as Cobb says, "much that we have meant by Christ in the past, when we did not acknowledge pluralism, becomes destructive in our new situation".⁸¹

By this, Cobb intended to retain the universal significance of Christ instead of leading to new expressions of polytheism. He identifies Christ as the image of creative transformation. To him, Christ is the way that excludes no ways. He can provide unity in religious history of mankind. The existence with openness to the other great religions of mankind can lead to a deepening of Christian existence.

One of Cobb's theological goals has been identified in the phrase "a deepening of Christian existence. His aim is the constructive reformation of the Church. Adopting the way of dialogue with other faiths, there is a lot of learning about them leading the Christians to creative transformation at both individual as well as corporate level. Cobb highlights that this is not a new experience for the Church. In past, Christian theology opened itself to the Greek philosophy without ceasing to be Christians and today there is openness to the traditions of Asia. The encounter of Christian tradition with other religions gave rise to self-criticism which made the creative transformation possible.

⁸⁰ John B. Cobb, *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975). pp. 18-19.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 21.

Cobb has used the term 'Logos' to denote the cosmic principle of order, the ground of meaning and the source of purpose. Logos equates to the mind of God. Christ is the Logos as incarnate and Jesus is the full incarnation of Logos. Logos was distinctively embodied in Jesus. To Cobb, Christ is not bound to any particular religion. He uses the term Christ to name the divine reality as that reality is held to have been present in Jesus.

Cobb makes it clear that the nature of the ultimate divine reality is to be regulated by the nature of the personhood of Jesus.⁸²

1.6.7. Edward Schillebeeckx and Culture of Theology

Edward Schillebeeckx was born 1914 in a Flemish Catholic family. He had been the influential on Roman Catholicism emerging prior to Vatican II and continuing beyond its promulgations. He studied classic Neo-Thomistic Theology which blessed him to enjoy contacts with the French Dominicans. His doctoral dissertation appeared in 1951 on the sacramentology of Thomas Aquinas. The seventies carry the accomplishment of one of his major theological work on Jesus-theology (its third part came in 1989).⁸³

Schillebeeckx was in search of a new Theology of Culture in the late sixties in the context of secularization. Important results of this study were published in the four volumes of his theological soundings. In the modern context of theology, Schillebeeckx elaborated "a theological perspective on the historical form of human existence in its concrete involvement with the world and its religious meaning".⁸⁴ He envisaged a new partnership between Church and the World. To him, Church has to link itself with the questions implicit in the contemporary sensibilities. Salvation is encountered in the daily living and working of human beings in the world in their relation with what is on the earth. He emphasizes on actually putting the teachings in the documents into practice by Christians. In non-Christian religions, Schillebeeckx

⁸² Ibid. pp. 154-155.

⁸³ Erik Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in History* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

views the basic evangelical of the one true Church of Christ. In this regard, it is stated, "Everyone, including even a well-disposed agnostic, has some connection with This Church and is not a complete outsider side".⁸⁵

Schillebeeckx regards it as "a first step in a sincere but prudent dialogue". It was both to receive from and to give to the world and its religions. He further notes that the Council affirms the non-Christian religions as part of God's redemptive plan.⁸⁶

This leads him to state that the Church has officially relinquished her religious monopoly. It does not attempt to definitely state the chances of a non-Christian achieving salvation. This evaluation of the Vatican II lends the support of another chthonic theologian to the cause of religious inclusivism.

Schillebeeckx's theology is premised on the need for hermeneutics. Theology is about discerning God's dialogue with the world which is always interpreted from as it is always within a particular context and history. The interpretation abides by that particular setting and culture. Therefore, Schillebeeckx believes in literal repetition of Scripture and tradition to address the present-day issues. He further advocates to fearlessly reinterpret the faith. It is faithfulness to gospel to re-interpret i.e. "to present the original Dialogue (a living prophecy!) again and again, and above all to put it into action and to let it be heard as the word of God in constantly changing situations in life."⁸⁷ Such is the task of hermeneutics theology and the Church.

The latter understands revelation as primarily a deposit of faith waiting to be communicated to others. The evangelization is taken as the conversion of non-Christians while interreligious dialogue as an instrument for evangelizing mission. Schillebeeckx understands revelation as God acting in history and Church's task to discern it. This word of God is affirming salvation for all. It has to invite all persons to realize salvation and liberation for all which is in accordance with gospel and Jesus.

⁸⁵ See, Edward Schillebeeckx, *Vatican II: The Real Achievement* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1967).p. 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 59.

⁸⁷ "Towards a Catholic Use Hermeneutics", in *God Futur of Man* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1968).p. 5.

Schillebeeckx's theology explains other faiths as their collaborators in the mission towards God, with a contributing role.

Interreligious dialogue has become a necessity for the Church to discover the aspects of God's will for salvation of all mankind.

Schillebeeckx believes the Church as well-poised for their role by fundamental changes in Church understandings of theology. These new understandings were articulated in Vatican Council II document leading the Church to dialogue. Now the Church is to discover its role as sacrament of dialogue and facilitating it for the missionary activities in the religiously pluralistic setup. This is strongly advocated by Edward Schillebeeckx in his theology.⁸⁸

1.6.8. Second Vatican Council Documents and Salvation for non-Christians

Towards the last part of the 20th century, there appeared "The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions". It was Pope John XXIII who wanted the council to explain the Jewish theology. Many bishops disagreed fearing that it would be considered by the Arab governments as a political move favoring recognition of the state of Israel. It then included Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists also. So with this document in 1965 the Church affirmed all the mankind with different religion as one community.⁸⁹ The Church examined the relation with other faiths with greater care. It looked for the common values to promote fellowship among them as all share the common destiny i.e., God. His saving will extends to all mankind. Men look to their religions for an answer to the undiscovered issues like what is man and what is the life for? What happens after death or what is judgment etc. All the religions carry a certain awareness of a hidden power along with the recognition of the Supreme Being. The religions of the advanced civilizations answer

⁸⁸ *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p. 176.

⁸⁹ F.S.C, Edmund Chia (2001). *Dialogue Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia*, (ed.). Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (FABC): Bangkok, Thailand, p.1.

these questions exactly. People seek release from the trials of life by ascetical practices. All the religions attempt in their own ways to outline a code of life covering dogma, rites and morality.⁹⁰

In this context, the stance of the Church is appreciable. It does not reject anything which is true and holy in other religions. This is because many of its teachings reflect the truth that enlightens all mankindway. Christ however is proclaimed as "The way, the truth and the life". He carries in him the fullness of religious life for all men. Therefore, the Church emphasizes to enter into the process of dialogue and collaboration with other faiths. Their spiritual and the moral truths should be acknowledged and encouraged with prudence by the Christians. As the official documents of Vatican Council II (Nostra Aetate) have been explained the nature of relationship and theological bases having dialogue with Muslims.

"They worship God, including prayer, alms-deeds and fasting along with honoring Jesus and his Virgin Mother with great devotion. Despite long crusades, the council forgets the past and makes sincere efforts to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all mankind."⁹¹

The council affirms that the depth of the mystery is the Church having spiritual ties with other faiths. All the prophets carried the God's plan of salvation. However, the salvation of the Church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people. It is mindful that the Church stands on the footingsof apostles. The

⁹⁰ See, Council, V. (1965, April 16). DECREE AD GENTES ON THE MISSION ACTIVITY OF THECHURCH.

Retrieved October 10, 2014, from

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm

⁹¹ F. S. C, Edmund Chia (2001). *Dialogue Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia*(ed.). Federation of Asian Bishop' Conferences, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (FABC), (Bangkok, Thailand), p.2.

See, Arinze, Fracis (1993).*Meeting with other believers: Introduction to the Plenary Assembly, 1992.* Bulletin of the Secretariat for Non-Christians/Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue 82(28/1), p. 22.

Church always held that Christ underwent suffering and death because of the sins of all men so that all might attain salvation. The cross of Christ is proclaimed as sign of God's universal love and grace for all.

The worship of God essentially requires brotherly treatment to all humans. The relations to God his fellowmen are interdependent as the Scripture says, "He, who does not love, does not know God".⁹²

Regarding human dignity and rights, there is left no basis for any kind of discrimination between individuals. The Church therefore discourages and rejects any discrimination on the basis of force or religion.

1.6.9. Summary

The whole discussion in this chapter can be summed up with the statement that the Church believes in the salvation of the followers of the other faiths as it is the Divine Will. The prominent Christians theologians have detailed how the non-Christians will be salvified by God. This development in Church's consideration passed through three stages namely exclusivism which was the total rejection of other faiths as there was no salvation outside the church. The attitude gradually got softer as the theologians started studying the other faiths. This phase was inclusivism which brought the church closer to the non-Christians instead of rejecting them. This further led the theologians to rethink the religious matters in a globalized world. It required peace and harmony in the multicultural and multi-religious society. The only way to this was the promotion of pluralism which developed respect for every religion and led the followers to look for common elements in their faiths. This proved extremely fruitful and got quite strengthened through inter-religious dialogue.

This development of thought about other faiths was the result of the thought many prominent Christian theologians whose understanding of religions with new horizons despite severe and bitter criticism continued its propagation till the church re-stated its theology in a reformed manner. Among them was Karl Rahner who

⁹² Ibid.

couned the term "anonymous Christians" for the non-Christians. Rahner, for this is respected as the influential of the contemporary theologians in the Roman Catholic Church. Regarding salvation of the followers of other faiths, Rahner ensures that they are confronted with the Christians message which lawfully leads them to eternal salvation. In this context, he stated four theses. The first says that there is no religion of equal right to Christianity. The second thesis explains relationship between nature and grace. Man carries unlimited openness for the limitless God. Thirdly, Christianity relates to other faiths as anonymous Christians who in one or other sense are Christians. The fourth thesis views the presence of a hidden reality outside the visible Church. Moreover, Rahner thinks transcendentalism as the distinctive characteristic of human beings, which keeps them in one way or the other in relation with God.

Another influential theologian was John Hick whose theory of pluralism includes the non-Christian in eternal salvation. He has replaced Christianity by God as the local point of salvation. According to Hick, all the world religions are as the human responses to the one reality i.e., God. In pluralistic approach towards religions, Hick redefines the Christian faith destroying its fundamental doctrines and demythologizing it. He states that theodicy must affirm the ultimate salvation of all creatures which meant that everything will turn out well for everyone in the end. In God's there is universality of love and He loves all. This is the key to salvation for all humans. He further declares that Christianity can develop in the interest of world ecumenism. Prefer pluralist environment of the modern society Hick shows little regard for the scripture. He challenges his audience to interpret the Gospel more concisely in a pluralist theology.

Hans Kung was an advocate of inclusivism. Kung explains the Christian dogma "Outside the Church No Salvation". He affirms that there is salvation outside the church but only through Christ who does not confine his salvific grace to Christians only. Kung considers all the religions having truth concepts the true God but they are in error. The difference in these religions goes parallel to the truth. For Kung, all the non- Christians will have ordinary salvation in general whereas the

Church guarantees both kinds of salvation are bound together in the common meaning of God.

Pluralism was also surveyed by Paul Knitter a Roman Catholic Theologian with three different approaches: (i) all religions are relative, (ii) all are essentially the same and (iii) all have a common psychological origin. He insists that Christians must regard other responses as salvific because of universal will of God Christ, to him in the final cause of salvation an inter-faith dialogue must be promoted for having insights into other faiths. To Paul Knitter, Christ is the ultimate savior. He has also bitterly criticized the over emphasis on the unbridgeable gap between different cultures. To him, pluralism is not a problem but a fruitful Kairos in the human history.

There is a creative theologian among the contemporary American was John Cobb who was one of those striving to develop a tradition in theology according to the religious philosophy of Whitehead. Cobb assigns special meaning to the term "Christ". He discards the view that all religions are equally true. He intends to retain the universal significance of Christ. To him, Christ is the way that excludes no ways. It aimed at the constructive reformation of the Church. Inter-faith dialogue was to lead the Christians to creative transformation at individual as well as collective level. Cobb regards Christ as not bound to any particular religion. The follower of other religion will also reach salvation because of Christ.

Edward Schillebeeckx, another modern theologian remained in search of theology of culture. He envisaged a new partnership between the Church and the world. Church has to think it with the question implicit in the contemporary responsibilities. In other faiths, Schillebeeckx views the basic evangelical of the true Church of Christ. To him, salvation is encountered in the daily living and worshipping of humans. He views theology as descending God's dialogue with the world. To discover the aspects of God's willed for salvation of all men, inter-religious dialogue has because a necessity and the Church are well-poised for this role.

The documents of the second Vatican Council also looked for the common values in different religions to promote fellowship among them as all are heading

toward the one God. The Church does not reject anything which is true and holy in other religions. To the Council all the prophets carried the God's plan of salvation. Therefore, the Church discourages any discrimination on the basis of race or religion. God's plan of salvation includes all those who acknowledge Him and the Savior wills all to be saved. The Church honors the element of goodness and truth in all religions, the followers of any religion who seek God and act for His will are entitled to eternal salvation.

This affirmation by the Vatican Council II is the result of the modern Catholic thinkers whose views led to the reformation of the Church's thought about the non-Christians. The chief engineer of this was Karl Rahner who had been the highly respected theologian in the twentieth century. His gradual development of the four theses discussed earlier, led him to prompt that the non-Christians are in some way in accordance with the teachings of Christ which makes them the anonymous Christians. This has been absolutely a gateway to promote the theology of dialogue with the other faiths. Thus, the present study aims at discovering how Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians strengthens the development of Christian theology of dialogue in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWO

Karl Rahner's Life, Thought and His Contribution to the Christian Theology

2.1. Introduction

With the passage of time, the interaction of intellectuals of different faiths led to the study of one another's religion. This resulted in bringing them closer and developing respect for one another. The modern times saw the emergence and strengthening of inter-faith dialogue which helped maintain peace and harmony in multi-religious societies. Theologians from all religions contributed a lot to these activities. The twentieth century produced one theologian whose philosophy and understanding of different Religions led him to become a focal point for contemporary scholars. This was Karl Rahner whose study and explanation of theological beliefs raised him so high that the whole Church was influenced by his theology. He was a German Catholic theologian born in 1904 and lived for eighty years. From a vantage point in theology, he viewed Islam, Judaism and Christianity as closely related religions on the basis of their monotheistic belief in God. In Christianity, however, this belief is shaped through the dogma of the Trinity of God. Rahner has been the influential Jesuit Priest who was involved in a kind of revolution of the Catholic Church. There could have been no idea of liberalization of dogma at the Second Vatican Council without Rahner's contribution. This led to attacks on him by reactionary Catholics. He continued with fruitful efforts and was ultimately acknowledged as a bridge builder in the Roman Catholic Church. Now he is recognized as the theologian of the modern era. What separates Rahner from all other intellectuals of the Church is his radically innovative approach to theology with its philosophical roots. In addition to this, he had a concern with questions of mysticism.

For Rahner, to be human is to be in relationship with God. The center is God who enters into relationship with humans through God's own self-communication. Rahner's mystical project⁹³ explains that to be human is to be inseparable from God. However his endeavour was to make it understandable for the people who are seen to possess, at some level, a true knowledge of God. He stated:

⁹³ For Rahner, the term "Mysticism" can refer to "(a) an experience. The interior meeting and union of a person with the divine infinity that sustains him or her and all other being." And (b) "the attempt to give a systematic exposition of this experience or reflection upon it (hence a scientific discipline). Rahner, *Theological Dictionary*.p. 301.

“It must be made intelligible to people, that they have an implicit but true knowledge of God perhaps not reflected upon and not verbalized; or better expressed, they have a genuine experience of God ultimately rooted in their spiritual existence, whatever you want to call it”.⁹⁴

It is evident that Rahner's emphasis is on the human mystical experience. The human being tends to have a relation with God since a human person is capable for encountering the Holy Mystery. This mystical encounter is possible in all situations of everyday life. Regarding this Rahner comments, “We weave fabric of our eternal lives out of the humdrum days.”⁹⁵ At this stage, the mystical experience is there even in the banal activities of personal habits. Eating, sleeping and even thinking are in a way mystic activity.

On the basis of this philosophy, Rahner affirmed that salvation was possible even outside the Church. To him, all humans are salvifically touched by the grace of Christ. Therefore, he coined the phrase “Anonymous Christians” to elaborate his conviction.

There has been a lot of influence on the thinking of Karl Rahner yet he himself pointed out how important was Martin Heidegger for him.⁹⁶ Rahner remarked,

⁹⁴ Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982*, trans. Harveny D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1986). pp. 267-268.

⁹⁵ See, Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 19 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990). pp. 167-177.

⁹⁶ Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was a German philosopher whose work is perhaps most readily associated with phenomenology and existentialism, although his thinking should be identified as part of such philosophical movements only with extreme care and qualification. His ideas have exerted a seminal influence on the development of contemporary European philosophy. His best known book, *Being and Time*, is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century. In it and later works, Heidegger maintained that our way of questioning defines our nature. (Wheeler, Michael, "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Netherlands Mirror: University of Amsterdam Institute for Logic, Language and Computation/U.S.A. Main Site: Stanford University/Center for the Study of Language and Information

See for more details on Martin Heidegger: Karpowicz, W. (2002, October 6). *Martin Heidegger*.

Retrieved November 18, 2014, from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/heidegge/>

“Although I had many good professors in the classroom, there is only one whom I can revere as my teacher, and he is Martin Heidegger”.⁹⁷ His (Rahner) influence is commented by Leo O’ Donovan as:

“In a remarkable way his thought combined depth and sensitivity, witness to the Christian tradition and awareness of faith’s new situation, a powerful appreciation of human suffering and an unvanquished hope for its redemption, he became at once a theologian among theologians and a pastor among pastors.”⁹⁸

Because of this, he won the position of an expert in Vatican II. Here he contributed to bringing about many reforms. Because of his vision, there is found an increasing fear in the Church regarding a growing tendency towards a pre-conciliar mind.⁹⁹ The following pages will discuss in detail how the theologian developed almost changing the very foundations of the Catholic Church and its approach to theology of dialogue in the modern era.

2.2. Karl Rahner: A Theologian and Philosopher

Karl Rahner had an unremarkable upbringing. His family was Catholic with middle class life standards. He had been an average student at school. After his graduation, he entered the Jesuit community. The years of Jesuit formation and the study of philosophy and theology knitted Rahner’s mind to develop his thought in critical dialogue. The great philosopher worked on “spirit in the world” as his doctoral thesis in philosophy, but it is strange to know that this work was rejected. Rahner did not loose heart and went to Innsbruck. He studied under the famous intellectuals; like Martin Heidegger who motivated him to develop his modern thinking in theology.

¹⁰⁰ In 1937, he started lecturing at the theological faculty of Innsbruck. It was

⁹⁷ See, P.G. Crowley, *Rahner Beyond Rahner: A Great Theologian Encounters the Pacific Rim* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005). p. 91

⁹⁸ Donovan, *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner’s Theology*.p. 9.

⁹⁹ Marmion, *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner*.p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Dych S. J., *Karl Rahner*. pp. 5-6.

tragically closed by the Nazis in 1937. Rahner kept himself busy with pastoral work during the years of World War II. A critic of Rahner, Bernard Haering remarked that Karl Rahner was a thoroughly pastoral minded thinker fully dedicated to the Churches mission of salvation. Rahner rejoined Innsbruck in 1948 at the reopening of the faculty. He also taught at Munich and Munster. Apparently this was not an exceptional academic and religious life. But the contribution he made to develop new approach towards theology was remarkable. He brought new interest to the ignored theological landscape which was considered by many theologians as lifeless. This was an intellectual as well as spiritual reinvigoration.¹⁰¹

Rahner was a modern professor and must have been very impressive at university level. But he gained his popularity as a theologian who like many others was above all pastor. Regarding Thomas Aquinas, Rahner considered the French Jesuit Pierre Rousselot (1878-1915) and the Belgian Jesuit Joseph Marechal (1878-1944) as an influential figure in the interpretation of Thomas. These theologians proposed a "new-theology" in order to retrieve the real Thomas. In their view, the neo-scholastic interpreters had reformed him. He was a scholar of the first rank having a full command of the methods of his discipline and aided by his interest in all fields of theology. His career as a theologian gained him high rate success. He served as a member of the faculty of theology at Innsbruck University nominally from 1937 and effectively from 1948 to 1964. His teaching and writings came to be extremely influential. Besides, he also rendered his services as editor, lecturer, retreat master and preacher. These successful services attracted the attention of the Church leadership towards him. Thus, Rahner was appointed as an official theological consultant in 1962 which in 1969 led to him being appointed to the Papal theological commission. These two appointments resulted in his retirement from teaching in 1971. He was recognized as a theologian of international repute.¹⁰² During the last years of his life, he enjoyed many academic honors. He remained an active servant to the church till his death.

¹⁰¹ Kilby, *Karl Rahner: A Brief Introduction*. pp. 51-54.

¹⁰² Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Work*. pp. 18-21.

Karl Rahner's theological achievements have been influential all over the world. He has been the important theologian of the Catholic Church since the 1960s.¹⁰³ In the ongoing Church culture, he encouraged a move towards modernity. He strongly rejected past conventions of doctrine and liberated the present for a perspective towards an effective future. This rejection is moved to the churches and schools, social activists and mystics, and theology. A follower and critic of Rahner, Johan Baptist Metz wrote:

"Karl Rahner renewed the face of our theology. Nothing is now as it was before him. Even those who criticize him are fueled by his insights, insightful and moving perceptions about the world of life and faith".¹⁰⁴

It is very impressive that he led others how to think about God, Christ, human beings and the Church. For this, Rahner is considered by the theologians of the post-modern era as one of the outstanding and venture some theologians. Many books are being produced on the life, works and theological services of Rahner. The theologians of his age recognized Rahner a theologian who led them towards an understanding of how to be Catholic modernates the same time. He helped Christians see their faith and the Church in a deeper and broader way. He stated,

"Theology has always been devoted to giving access to the realities of faith".¹⁰⁵

Rahner was such a great academician and intellectual that he never sought importance or fame. He had strong interaction with all kinds of people in society and Church. That is why his theology entered into people's lives in a particular way. To him, theology was a historical discovery and cultural insight. Rahner was modest and approachable having no interest in prestige or in power. He described his life as

¹⁰³ See, Henri Niel, "Honouring Karl Rahner," *The Heythrop Journal* 6, no. 3 (1965). pp. 259-264.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas F. O'Meara, *God in the World: A Guide to Karl Rahner's Theology* (USA: Liturgical Press, 2007).p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* p. 2.

without anything distinctive about it, but just in the service of God. A German theologian has recently written:

"Rahner was a figure of destiny for theology in the twentieth century in Germany and beyond. He took up a new the modern world which many wished to ignore. Divine providence gave him various gifts for accomplishing great things. He was the most gifted speculative mind of the past century, and yet he was ambitious to the point of forgetting about himself even as he pursued an inexhaustible production of writings and lectures. He launched a landsidein theology because he was at the right place at the right time".¹⁰⁶

Rahner was an indefatigable searcher for truth, for deeper insight and for better communication with people of the modern age. His habit of doubting led him to further insight and to renounce false certainties and securities. He was one of the greatest ecumenical theologians in many ways. His works are effectively studied by other Christians beyond the Roman Catholic Church. He was almost a Church Father and never disowned his Roman Catholic identity. He has given evidence how one can be fully loyal to the Catholic tradition with a truly all-embracing openness. This was the spiritual attitude of Rahner supported by his vast knowledge of all Christian traditions, and his own transcendental thought pattern. His own ecumenical and inter-cultural concerns developed markedly in the last decades of his life. He has been categorized as a neo-orthodox Catholic and a revisionist neo-scholastic. Not only that, he is also believed to have been an existentialist, a conservative theologian, an excessive critic of Church authority and its teaching, and most commonly of all a transcendental theologian.¹⁰⁷

Much influence on Rahner's approach to theology was exerted by his spiritual and intellectual formation in the society of the Jesuits. He always practiced theology

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ See, Leo J. O'Donovan, "In Memoriam: Karl Rahner, S.T., 1904-1984," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 1 (1985). p. 129-131.

for the Church's life, its spiritual uplift and its pastoral services. By this, he probed into every element of Christian belief and practice whereby he elaborated the nature and method of theology, the doctrine of God and the anthropological aspects of theology. Rahner's theology is firmly based on the holistic reflection on the reality of God and human reality with a multifaceted frame work. From this basis he was driven to intellectual thinking about all kinds of issues. Theorizing is possible within the boundaries of the whole creation between the finite and the infinite. Rahner's reflection led him towards engaging with a philosophy which addressed the question of what it means to be human for God. That is why he posed such questions as:

“What does it mean to be human and to dwell in encounters with Divine mystery? What do we mean in using the word “God”? How are we to think about a world in which God and humans meet one another? Much that is common to people of all faiths and cultures can be discovered through careful reflection on the metaphysics of God, world and human being and knowing-because we are human, and because being human is to open into the mystery of God”.¹⁰⁸

All his services embody a coherent theological program. Rahner sought to articulate a vision of concrete Christian and human existence in the world as embraced by god-the holy mystery.¹⁰⁹

Rahner endeavored to search for the best elements of Catholic theology. He avoided obscurities and his theological proposals provoked controversy on various fronts. Rahner's emphasis is on the universalism of a theology of grace and revelation. He was the prominent Catholic dogmatic theologian who endeavored to display the continuities between the natural and the supernatural orders of being. He sought to correct a standard neo-scholastic theology by giving an account of the

¹⁰⁸ Paul G Crowley, *Rahner Beyond Rahner: A Great Theologian, Encounters the Pacific Rim* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ David F. Ford, *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).pp. 118-119.

conditions for the possibility in human knowledge of a recognition and reception of divine revelation. His theological program restored the Christian faith. His writings embody a strong affirmation of the central elements of the Christian tradition. He focused his attention on the emerging Church dialogue with large religious and non-religious movements. Rahner stressed the importance of the interior life for modern men and women drawing many to prayers and meditation.¹¹⁰

It was the time when a shift in theology occurred between Vatican I and Vatican II that Rahner developed his own method of theology. He was influenced by and had his influence on the advancements in theology that paved the way to the Vatican II mainly through incorporating philosophy in the theological developments. Rahner was a leading figure in all these developments. This led the Council to become progressive in the interest of a modernity (mingled with) which allowed space for liberalism as well as feminist, post-colonial and pluralist theologies.¹

Rahner's method was favored in the Vatican II considering its anthropological aspect and its endeavor to bring Thomist philosophy and theology into dialogue. Modernity entered the Church through Rahner not least because of his theology of freedom and free speech. However, many critics have attacked the theological method of Rahner since, as they claimed, it included a lot of error regarding the post-modern and post-liberal scenario. These criticisms are diverse. One (argues) objects that Rahner has a philosophical and theological anthropological basis. Another suspects it of a false universalism whereas a third questions its insufficient political basis. The question arises whether such criticism does adequate justice to Rahner's theology or whether it represents a caricature, distortion, misunderstanding or partial understanding of his theology. The following sections are designed to elaborate Rahner's method of theology briefly.

2.2.1. Foundationalist Method

The Theology of Karl Rahner has deep roots in philosophy in such a way that rationalism and transcendentalism go side by side like Kantian philosophy. According

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.19.

to Fergus Kerr, Rahner's theological qualities are embedded in a strongly mentalist epistemology.¹¹¹

This mentalist individualist conception of the self seems difficult to reconcile with the tradition of the Church. Another critic of Rahner, Kevin Hart remarks that the understanding of the human self is not influenced by the experience of God. To him, the attention to the transcendence of the self is minimized through emphasis on self-transcendence.¹¹² George Lindbeck regards this transcendental theology as an expressive experience with religious universalism neglecting cultural and linguistic particularities.¹¹³

From another perspective, Rahner's method is criticized for its consequences for the interpretation of Christianity. It represents an interpretation of God's love as a universal salvation, and understands this to be a mark uniqueness of Christianity. Rahner's method, it is argued, neglects the historical singularity of Christ.¹¹⁴

It does not relate Christianity without conceiving other religions as venues of salvation. Bruce Marshall also criticized Rahner's Christology as Christ becomes primarily an example rather than being seen as a historically unique and singular individual. The crux of the matter is that the transcendental theology questions the singularity of the Christian revelation.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ R. Williams, *The Analogy of Beauty* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986). pp.11-34. See also, H. Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).

¹¹² K. Hart, *Absolute Interruption: On Faith*, in J. D. Caputo, M. Dooley, and M. J. Scanlon, *Questioning God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). pp. 186-208.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 66.

¹¹⁴ H. Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1969). pp. 80-82.

¹¹⁵ B. Marshall, *Christology in Conflict: The Identity of a Savior in Rahner and Barth* (New York: Blackwell, 1987). pp. 123-125.

Johann Baptist Metz, a student and life-long friend of Rahner also criticized Rahner's approach to theology. Metz's political theology seeks to correct the privatization of religion. He finds Rahner's method politically insufficient. He questions whether salvation is reduced to a private and individual affair thereby failing to explore the social and political dimensions of salvation. This aspect is not sufficiently taken into account in Rahner's theology.¹¹⁶

2.2.2 Transcendental Theological Basis

Rahner's transcendental basis developed throughout his two major philosophical works: *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word*.¹¹⁷

Transcendentalism as described by Rahner is the dilemma of knowing of the human being that is capable to advance towards the unlimited horizon and to encounter the mystery of God. This approach became the basis for Rahner's theology of "Anonymous Christians" in which having salvation is understood as revealed by Jesus Christ who explained Grace and Nature clearly.¹¹⁸

There is a concrete order of reality. Creation itself is 'grace' in an indirect sense. Grace covers the human existence always and everywhere. God has a universal salvific will as explained by Christ. He offers his self-communication to free human beings. There does not exist any "pure nature" in a pure state. This, to Rahner, had been the flaw of neo-scholasticism and a concept with which he was never satisfied.

¹¹⁶ See, J. B. Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (New Jersey: Paulist, 1998). See also G. Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

¹¹⁷ Marmion, *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner*, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁸ The major extended discussions of nature and grace can be found in "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1. pp. 297-317; "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," *ibid.* pp.319-346; "Reflections on the Experience of Grace," *ibid.*, 3. pp.86-90; "Nature and Grace," *ibid.*, 4. pp. 165-188.

He objected to it as it confused abstraction with what concretely existed.¹¹⁹ Concrete human nature is the union of pure nature and grace. Human existence never separates the two. Grace is a dynamic orientation in the human existence. From here radiates a transcendental experience of human beings since they are qualified by grace and consciousness. However, it is not necessary that grace is adequately expressed.¹²⁰

The human being is oriented towards God because of the foundational relation between Grace and Nature. Rahner addresses this relation between man and God as transcendental. He states,

“Man is the being who possesses unlimited transcendence of knowledge and freedom. The inner dynamism of his spirit is directed to absolute being, to absolute hope, to absolute future, to good in itself, to what is unconditionally right, and thus to God.”¹²¹

God is an implicit mystery but detectable through a transcendental experience which is the condition of the possibility for an intelligibility of all explicit religious assertions. Building on this experience, Rahner coined the term “Anonymous Christians” based upon his understanding of the salvific will of God and his confession of Christ as the absolute self-communication of God to humanity.

2.3 Influences on Karl Rahner

As mentioned earlier, the most powerful impact on Rahner’s development as theologian was that of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). There were of course many other influential personalities whose thoughts added a lot to Christian theology, philosophy and spirituality. Karl Rahner, among them the profound ones of was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), Joseph Marechal (1878 – 1944), St. Ignatius of

¹¹⁹ Eamonn Conway, *The Anonymous Christian- a Relativised Christianity? : An Evaluation of Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Criticisms of Karl Rahner's Theory of the Anonymous Christian* (European University Studies, 1993).pp. 10-16.

¹²⁰ See, Rahner, Karl, “Philosophy and Theology,” Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 6.p.72.

¹²¹ See Rahner, Karl, “Nature and Grace,” *ibid.*, 4.p.183.

Loyola (1491– 1556), Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)¹²² and Pierre Rousselot (1878 – 1915)¹²³ who efficaciously impacted Rahner's thought. It was Ignatius of Loyola whose spiritual exercises developed such a Rahner who found solace in meditations, prayers and in communication with God. These influences led Rahner to propound that Christ was not limited to the Church only. He declared salvation for the whole humanity. The following discussion elaborates the specialty of these theologians that influenced Rahner a lot.

2.3.1. The Martin Heidegger's Influence on Rahner

To Rahner, it was only Martin Heidegger¹²⁴ whom he could revere as his teacher among other professors. Heidegger joined the University of Freiburg as

¹²² Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is the central figure in modern philosophy.

¹²³ Pierre Rousselot (29 December 1878 – 1915), Born at Nantes, France, he entered the Society of Jesus in October 1895. He was ordained priest on 24 August 1908 at Hastings. The same year he had obtained a doctorate for two theses presented to the Sorbonne: *L'intellectualisme de saint Thomas* and *Pour l'histoire du probleme de l'amour au Moyen Age*. In November 1909 he entered the Institut Catholique at Paris; he was given the chair of dogmatic theology in the following year, which he occupied till he was called to military service in 1914, apart from a year (1912–13) spent in England. He was killed in battle at Eparges, on 25 April 1915. See for more details: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Rousselot

¹²⁴ Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was a German philosopher whose work is perhaps most readily associated with phenomenology and existentialism, although his thinking should be identified as part of such philosophical movements only with extreme care and qualification. His ideas have exerted a seminal influence on the development of contemporary European philosophy. His best known book, *Being and Time*, is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century. In it and later works, Heidegger maintained that our way of questioning defines our nature. (Wheeler, Michael, "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Netherlands Mirror: University of Amsterdam Institute for Logic, Language and Computation/U.S.A. Main Site: Stanford University/Center for the Study of Language and Information, See for more details on Martin Heidegger: Karpowicz, W. (2002, October 6). Martin Heidegger. Retrieved November 18, 2014, from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/heidegge/>

chairperson of the department of philosophy.¹²⁵ As a professor, Heidegger was so much influential on the students under his supervision that Rahner admitted thus;

"I learned something about thinking itself from him, about how to think.....how to read texts in a new way, to ask what is behind the text, to see connections.....he taught us the courage to question anew so much of the tradition.....he helped in the straggle to incorporate modern philosophy into today's Christian theology".¹²⁶

The implications of the existential experience by Rahner have a significant influence of Heidegger. To him (Heidegger) existential meant to be "being-in-the-world". Rahner viewed it as transcendent, free and threatened by sin and guilt. Heidegger explains humanity in a way that there is found no subjectivity or objectivity for the human person. Everyone has got own' experience of the world from birth to death. He referred the human person as "being-these" while other living things as "being there's".

He also coined the phrase "Being-toward death". "Being-theres" may suffer from angst when they are compelled to make a choice about their future life. They are required to see their life as a continuous process. It makes them very self-reflective and self-aware expecting the unexpected. On the other hand, the existent possesses sufficient freedom to determine his ethos. Angst and the world experiences cannot make him helpless.

Rahner studied with Heidegger for four semesters (two years) which influenced the former's concept of human existent. To Rahner, the experience of the human and its involvement with the other orient his theology. A close friend of

¹²⁵ See also for more details: Fergus Kerr, "Heidegger among the Theologians," *New Blackfriars* 46, no. 538 (1965). pp. 396-403.

¹²⁶ Karl Rahner and Krauss Meinold, *Karl Rahner: I Remember, an Autobiographical Interview with Meinold Krauss* (New York: Crossroad, 1985).p.45.

Rahner and his student also (Harvey Egan) used to refer to him as "The mystical theologian of everyday life".¹²⁷

Rahner moved forward with the existential enterprise. This led him to find that God's grace was self-communicative and served as the necessary crux of existence for the human person. God was there in everything of daily life. This shows that Karl Rahner subsumed the treatment of the existential by Heidegger into incipient theological anthropology. Rahner's theology considers the human as a transcendent being. He has adapted from Heidegger ontologically as well as epistemologically considering the human being. His scholastic philosophical education lent him a proposition that the ground of thinking is external to thinking becoming unthinkable at some level.¹²⁸

This recognition of the ground of thinking was introduced by Heidegger to Rahner who calls it a "mystery and a secret ingredient". This ground of thinking in a theological manner by humans is a transcendental experience. The analysis of this view of Rahner unfolds that. The human intellect is capable to think about, seek and experience God in all things. To him, human being is a spirit encountering the world. This spirit denotes the human force beyond the world recognizing the metaphysical.

Man is spirit in the world whose good extends beyond the world. It has the capacity for God's self-communication. Being a being of receptive spirituality, it freely stands for revelation. Rahner reflects that human thought can reach the extend where the Divine connection becomes so Heidegger's palpable influence, Rahner discloses autobiographically that God is the most important reality and the human being must forget self for God. God is the absolute and never depends on anything as all do on him. The humans are to worship him and surrender to the Divine will.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Marvey Egan, *Karl Rahner: The Mystical of Everyday Life* (New York: Sheed & Werd, 1964).p. 55.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 62.

¹²⁹ Imhaff and Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-18182*. pp. 267-268.

For Rahner, Heidegger was a kind of philosophical mystagogue. He taught to go for careful examination of texts to glean new perspectives. Heidegger focused on the study of the Being but Rahner also took the question of God as a result of the former's style of thinking and investigating. He learned a novel rubric which leads to deduce synthesis of careful analysis of dogmatic propositions allowing one to truncate doctrinal considerations into cardinal principles. Heideggarian experience for Rahner found its significance in the idea of existential reality of human being. But the theological questions by Rahner were discovered by himself. He directly states,

"Heidegger hardly influenced my specifically theological questions, because Heidegger never wrote anything about them. In my manner of thinking, in the courage to question anew so much in the tradition considered self evident in the struggle to incorporate modern philosophy into today's Christian theology, here I have certainly learned something from Heidegger and will always be thankful to him".¹³⁰

2.3.2 The Ignatius Spiritual Influence on Rahner

Ignatius of Loyola¹³¹ and his spiritual exercises had a profound influence on Rahner theology. Rahner mentioned that this spirituality was more important than all other philosophical and theological experiences. He further admits that his entry in the Jesuit order was not accidental. He deeply experienced its Ignatius spirituality. Rahner

¹³⁰ Rahner and Meinold, *Karl Rahner: I Remember, an Autobiographical Interview with Meinold Krauss*, p. 46.

¹³¹ Ignatius of Loyola (1491– 1556) was a Spanish knight from a local noble family, hermit, priest since 1537, and theologian, who founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and was its first Superior General. Ignatius emerged as a religious leader during the Counter-Reformation. Loyola's devotion to the Catholic Church was characterized by absolute obedience to the Pope. See for more details (1) Loyola, (St.) Ignatius (1992). (2) John Olin. ed. *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*. New York: Fordham University Press. (3) Caraman, Philip (1990) *Ignatius Loyola: A Biography of the Founder of the Jesuits*. San Francisco: Harper & Row. O'Malley, John W. (1993) *The First Jesuits*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

participated in these exercises twice in thirty day and a yearly eight day retreat. These led him into the realm of mysticism where Ignatius set naked immediacy to God during this experience.¹³²

Rahner thought anthropological theology essential for Christianity. So he was deeply influenced by Ignatius who stressed on the subject of self-reflection and self-responsibility. Here Rahner comments,

"My own theological thinking sprung from the practice of the Ignatius exercises and so in fact was fashioned in the light of reflection on the effective operation of the spirit".¹³³

These exercises shifted Rahner's emphasis from knowledge to freedom. To him, human is a free being capable to create way to God. He is free to accept or reject God's Grace (God's self-communication). The spiritual exercises lead the creature to deal directly with the creator and vice versa. Ignatius leads one to the experience of God. He emphasizes that immediacy between God and the human person i.e. creator and creature is of greater significance today than ever before. What is the crux of the Ignatius spirituality; it is awareness of one's humanity along with the encounter with God's grace. There is found a mystagogical function in the experience of God. His self-communication and His love is more intimate than self love. The human person carries an innate need for God. This allows for a transcendent where there is an experience of God within the daily events of life. Rahner's vivid experience to God was the consequence of his Jesuit formation and Ignatius spirituality. God is mystery

¹³² See, Imhof and Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982*.p. 180.

¹³³ See, Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 16.p. 10.

but offer a free and perpetual self-communication to the human person. Thus Rahner became a mystical theologian imbued with Ignatius spirituality.¹³⁴

The Ignatius spirituality leads to the understanding of the self through finding God in all things which is the perfect transcendental experience. Ignatius stated that this was to lead to the theological anthropology and the Christian anthropology was subsumed by the Trinitarian experience. This was the very basis of his piety and his spiritual exercises. For Rahner, the conquest over the humanity's misery is possible if the self rises to God with love and hope. This development in Rahner was the result of Ignatius spirituality. To both Rahner and Ignatius, God is in the world because God transcends the world. The Trinitarian theology of Rahner indisputably carries the impact of Ignatius spirituality and mysticism.

Ignatius's doctrine has been woven throughout the Rahnerian thought. His mystic Trinitarian perception of God provided a sound basis for Rahnerian transcendental theology. Rahner speaks of him as "We may now state that Ignatius was really a mystic. There can be no doubt about that. With this bare statement, we must be satisfied."¹³⁵

It can be concluded that Rahner cannot be separated from the Ignatius mystical experience. Both recognized human experience inclined to mysticism. The crux of the whole influence of Ignatius on Rahner can be summed up as "The Holy Mystery" mystically offers through a mystic interaction the mystery of the triune God to the mystery of the human person. All the things bear the Holy Mystery which the free humans can find through its self-communication.

¹³⁴ See, *ibid.* p. 135.

¹³⁵ See, *ibid.*, 3.p. 280.

2.2.3. Influence of Joseph Marechal

The interpretations of Thomas Aquinas by Rahner have got a profound influence of Joseph Marechal.¹³⁶ These provided Rahner with unique philosophical notion. Marechal tried to correlate Roman Catholic neo-scholasticism with modern philosophy. This was the most attractive aspect for Rahner. For him, the philosophical insight was the result of Marechal's philosophy. Rahner commented, "What is needed is a trusting colloquium between traditional scholastic philosophy and the modern philosophy".¹³⁷ He considered it the need of the time to keep us with the tradition.

Because of Marechal, Rahner could understand Heidegger better than before. His thomistic horizons expanded beyond the traditional scholastic philosophy. J.

¹³⁶ **Joseph Maréchal** (1878-1944) was a Belgian Jesuit priest, philosopher and psychologist at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven who founded a school of thought called Transcendental Thomism, which attempted to merge the theological and philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas with that of Immanuel Kant. Maréchal joined the Jesuits in 1895 and after a doctorate in Biology in Leuven (1905) he specialized first in Experimental Psychology, spending some time in Munich with Wilhelm Wundt (1911). Till the end of his life Maréchal would say that his real interest was rather in Psychology than Philosophy. Prompted by the call of Pope Leo XIII to revitalize Thomist theology, he started studying in depth the works of St Thomas Aquinas in order to understand the inner coherence of his system, along with the works of other scholastic thinkers, modern philosophers and scientists of the day. From this (and in particular from influences from Kant's transcendental idealism) emerged a new and more dynamic Thomism, recapturing the union of 'act and power' of the original thinker. The development of his thought can be grasped in the five cahiers (see bibliography) in which after exposing the weaknesses of traditional Thomism he evaluated Kant's Philosophy (3d cahier) with whose help he proposes a modernized Thomism in the 4th and 5th cahier. The work of Maréchal had a great influence on such contemporary theologians and philosophers as Andre Marc, Gaston Isaye, Joseph de Finance, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, J.B. Lotz, and Richard De Smet. Till his death (11 December 1944) he taught Philosophy and Experimental Psychology at the Jesuit house of Studies in Leuven (St Albert of Leuven's Philosophical and Theological College). He was a great friend of Pierre Scheuer, the Belgian Jesuit who has been described as a metaphysician and a mystic. See for more details: Joseph_Maréchal. (2014, August 15). Retrieved December 11, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Maréchal

¹³⁷ See, Imhof and Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-18182*.p.14.

Marechal advocated the transcendental Thomism with his focus on the "Turn to the subject" which was the real significance of human experience. Marechal and the Rahner's particularity was the mystical experience of God through a nascent philosophical transcendental method. In this context, "the turn to subject" was critical to Rahner. In transcendental philosophy, this term meant concentration on subject as knower. Rahner had the object approach towards knowledge mediating through senses. However, he also did justice with subjectivity approach to knowledge with further development in transcendental philosophy.¹³⁸

This novel approach to Aquinas found him more engaging for Rahner's theological interpretations than the traditional scholastic philosophy. Marechal's influence on Rahner destined him to a dynamic knower whose determination extends beyond the object toward "an unlimited horizon". Rahner regretted this to Aquinas' notion of the "excesses of knowledge". The human keeps on striving realities in a single experience, human as knower is with unlimited horizon through transcendental experience. Rahner takes this activity as to have capacity to know the triune God. Being "spirit in the world and history" one can experience the triune God in all things. Rahner critically illustrates that, when faith and theology speak of God and his revelation, its language has meaning in the context of our experiences and makes sense in that context".¹³⁹

Both Rahner and Marechal identify human experience at different stages. It becomes present to objective reality, there as the knower followed by presence to the unlimited horizons and finally entering the transcendental moment with original experience. For Rahner, the human person is absolutely oriented toward God. To know God is His very nature. Things known to him are also known of God and vice versa.

God alone is "Transcendent the human transcends itself and moves towards knowledge of God. Rahner calls this as "grace". He defines it as, "the presence of

¹³⁸ William Dych S. J., *Karl Rahner* (London: Darton, 2000).p. 42.

¹³⁹ Ibid. p.43.

God in the knowing subject".¹⁴⁰ This refers to the capacity of the human to transcend in the knowledge of God, because God is already in the person. This leads us to understand thomistic transcendentalism as the return to the human person as subject moving toward God to know Him. So Thomism defines human existence with God central to it.

Rahner experience God as the most profound encounter known to the human person. So he re-examines the traditional scholastic approach and posits thus in *Foundation of Christian Faith*, "the original knowledge of God is not the kind of knowledge in which one grasps an object which happens to present itself directly or indirectly from outside. It has rather a character of transcendental experience.....the knowledge of God is always present non-thematically and without name, and not just when we speak of it".¹⁴¹

Rahner further elaborates that God's free gift of grace is revelatory to the human person. Everyone has got freed to transcend mystagogically and freely know and love God. The human knowledge at least non-thematically carries God's self-communication of Grace. It is his choice to accept or reject that.

The transcendental Thomistic approach is that being human implies relationship with God. Though, it is incomprehensible here. The term transcendental refers to the human experience with unlimited horizons.

The Thomism was principally propounded by Joseph Marechal whereas its principal theologian was Karl Rahner like Aquinas Thomas, Rahner considers God as formal object of theology. He related anthropology and theology very strongly. To him, it was the transcendental anthropology which makes one oriented beyond the self and to the Holy Mystery.

This impelled Rahner's interpretation of Aquinas extremely relevant to the tradition and the modern philosophy. In traditional neo-scholastic thought, revelation

¹⁴⁰ Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper, press, 1994). p.146.

¹⁴¹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. p. 21.

is purely extrinsic to the human experience. Rahner explained revelation is experienced non-thematically as the awareness of unlimited being. Within the scope of transcendental reality, the knower is the subject of examination. Rahner tried to discover an epistemology to aid his theological project more appropriately than traditional scholasticism; moreover, Rahner got understanding of the human person as knower who is capable to stretch to the infinite horizons, experiencing beyond and more than that sense perception allows. This was the consequence of Marechal's influence on Rahner as he himself stated that certainly Marechal influenced him. Discovering him expanded his horizons beyond the scholastic philosophy.¹⁴²

Rahner emphasizes the human person's freedom and knowledge as these are transcendent and it was the transcendental theology he thus advocated,

"The principle of a transcendental theology is genuinely theological. Since theology deals with man's salvation.....its subject is the perfect totality of man.....to understand reality is to grasp transcendently. Grace is the necessary condition for hearing the word of God as God's."¹⁴³

It is through Grace that one can transcend oneself toward an unlimited new horizon. Rahner correlated the transcendental Thomism and human history. This history along with passing of time is also the salvific revelation history communicated through God's word and spirit. The human person is as a free knower to acknowledge the Divine offer of Grace. Marechal signified the human person's experience whereas Rahner considered the transcendental moment as the human person's experience of Triune God in all things.

Rahner's studying the idealist; Immanuel Kant made him realize that focusing on the conditions in the human subject was more significant than concentrating on the objects of human knowledge. This encouraged him to study Marechal who modified

¹⁴² Imhof and Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982*.p. 255.

¹⁴³, in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Karl Rahner, Cornelius Ernst, and Kevin Smyth (London: Sheed and Ward, 1970).p. 287.

Kant's transcendentalism avoiding specious concept of subjectivism. His thought induced Rahner to develop a modern way toward relationship of the existential and God's offer of grace. Rahner concurred with traditional views on nature and grace besides unpacking the secular and sacred philosophy as a result of his exposure to Marechal.

To sum up this section, it is significant to restate that Rahner develop into a great theologian after passing through a series of studies and religious practices since his entry in the Society of Jesus. The above detailed personalities proved to be the most influential in developing Rahner's theology. Martin Heidegger proved to be the wisest professor for Rahner. He studied under him for two years but gained so much that his whole theology carries Heidegger's influence as its very basis. His existential meant to be "being-in-the-world" leading Rahner to view it as transcendental and free being who could transcend beyond the intellect approaching God's grace which was self-communicative. At the second place was Ignatius of Loyola whose spiritual exercises had a profound influence on Rahner's theology. To the later, the spirituality had got more importance than other philosophical and theological experiences. Ignatius stressed on self-reflection and self-responsibility. His spiritual exercises developed Rahner's theological thinking leading to finding God in all things. The 'self' must rise to God and have transcendental experience only this could conquer human misery. Along with Ignatius, Marechal's influence was profound on Rahner in his interpretation of Thomism. Marechal correlated traditional neo-scholasticism with the modern philosophy. Because of him, Rahner's Thomistic horizons expanded beyond the traditional philosophy. His particularity was the mystical experience of God. Every human person has got freedom to transcend to God with love and hope. It was his exposure to Marechal that Rahner unpacked the secular and sacred philosophy.

2.4. Rahner's Influential Work

The real Rahner could be discovered only through the study of his work. His early work theologized the study to win approval from the admirers. He continuously studied and worked in theology. According to his pupil, Herbert Vorgrimler, those writings are the key to Karl Rahner, the man and the theologian.¹⁴⁴ During his study, there was the approach of neo-scholasticism which most often presented the theology of Thomas Aquinas in a dry and abstract form. Rahner thought it incredible for the post Enlightenment Catholics. So he reacted against it very strongly. He emerged as a modern Thomas Aquinas. He proved to be a theologian fully dedicated to the salvation of man. He was an indefatigable searcher for truth. In his writings, he exceeded all the great theologians of the past in number of his publications. Starting with dogmatic theology, he built bridges to moral and pastoral theology. His concern for careful distinctions made his writing heavy with sometimes too long sentences. He possessed a vast knowledge of the full Christian tradition and had profound understanding of the historical dynamics of thought-patterns. The following papers carry the detail of his major works which influenced the Church at its very basis and expanded theology to new horizons.

2.4.1. The Foundation of Christian Faith

As the title of the book indicates, it is basically an introduction to the idea of Christianity. The subject matter of the book deals with the one who is Christian and wants to be a Christian dealing with the totality of his own existence. What this foundational work wants to do is to reflect upon the Question: "What is a Christian and why can one live this Christian existence today with intellectual honesty"? This existence looks very different today in individual Christian because of personal levels of maturity. The totality of his existence is the Christian existence and this totality leads to God. This makes one stand before the great saints and then the Christ. At this

¹⁴⁴ Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*. pp. 20-21.

stage, one certainly feels that he has not thought, loved and suffered enough to reach the Mystery of God.¹⁴⁵

In This work, Rahner has illustrated that human being is the subject and person-the very message of Christianity. It implies that human being is a person and a subject on the basis of his personal relationship with God, history of salvation and the notion of responsibility before God and God's judgment. Christianity believes in the verbal revelation as God has called the human beings and has spoken to them. These assertions will become intelligible only if Christianity is understood including person and subject. This is hidden in the philosophy of human nature which is anthropological as well. This can become clear with the discussion of our transcendence, responsibility and freedom, our orientation to incomprehensible mystery and our social nature. These all together compose the personhood (subjectivity) of man.¹⁴⁶

Rahner in this book also discusses the human being as a transcending being. Because of this, human being can experience more clearly. The human spirit carries endless horizons and can place everything in question. It can surpass the limited possibility to be an entity with a limitless horizon. This is an experience of the being as radically infinite resulting. Rahner describes three ways to evade the experience of transcendence. Firstly it is the everydayness. The humans maintain a silent distance from themselves by getting involved in the concrete aspects of the world. If one ever reflects on that what escapes the world, it is found that it makes no sense to be over-concerned about it. The second way of evading the experience of transcendence is "With certain skepticism". Everything is encompassed by an ultimate question. One can resolutely decide to take categorical existence and its tasks upon oneself. The ultimate question is tolerated silently with a sensible dollop of skepticism. Thirdly, it is the way for the one in despair. The categorical realm of existence can be forced

¹⁴⁵ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*.p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*.p.3.

from despair. One can go about the business-reading and doing work but finally one can go in despair rejecting the question meaningless and unanswerable.¹⁴⁷

However, every human is a transcendent being. To him is ever bequeathed the uncontrollable and endlessness of meaning i.e., mystery. This guides us to be open to this mystery. Only by this way, one can experience oneself as person and subject.

2.4.2. Spirit in the World

After finishing his basic training in philosophy and theology, Rahner became a Priest. He worked on the book from 1934 to 1936, besides, having published among articles on spirituality. He also started teaching the history of philosophy which led him to take Ph.D in philosophy. Thus, the work "Spirit in the World" carries a very complex intellectual background. An important aspect of this book is that it is taken as a response to Kant. In his interviews, Rahner had stated that this work clearly carries the presence of Heidegger as he had been the most influential figure for Rahner which seems to be borrowed from Heidegger. Rahner's philosophy is totally transcendental for keeping the 20th century Roman Catholic thought in manageable categories. Besides Heidegger, Joseph Marechal has also been a great influence. It is on record that Rahner took notes on Marechal during his early student days. It does not mean that Rahner was fully influenced by Marechal. He is found away from Marechal's approach in a number of ways. The study of Spirit in the world becomes a study of Thomas and this has always fascinated all the readers.¹⁴⁸

2.4.3. Hearer of the Word

This book by Rahner is basically the collection of Lectures delivered in 1937. It was published in 1941. In some ways the book is a companion to the Spirit in the World. It focuses on rethinking of the whole task of fundamental theology. This demands the using of philosophical anthropology developed in Spirit in the World and broadening it to include freedom, will and love. This book and the idea of the

¹⁴⁷ See, Fischer, M. (2014, July 5). Karl Rahner's Foundations of Christian Faith. Retrieved August 10, 2014, from <http://www.pastoralcouncils.com/oldsite/Rahner000.htm>

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

supernatural existential are equally important. To have clear understanding of Rahner, it needs to be acquired with both, the concept of revelation and the project of Hearer of the Word which are at odds with Rahner's stronger versions of supernatural existential.

Rahner in this book invites us to reflect on ourselves including all the aspects like knowing, willing, loving etc, in order to become aware of our being as radical. This will lead us to explore ourselves as beings of transcendence always and already in relationship with God. These human beings despite this openness to God do not know Him in the way they know everything else which they come across. God is not known as an object among all other objects. His place is as the condition of possibility of all knowing. All the knowledge possessed by the humans is through their senses as it all comes from outside. In the book *Hearer of the Word*, Rahner elaborating Thomas stated that God manifests Himself in such a way. That He is able to be heard in the word of His revelation. For this, we must know Him and He must be hidden. His word can only be heard if we encounter Him in an earthly place at an earthly hour. Man can listen to God because he knows that God is and He is the unknown. This is the central thesis of *Hearer of the Word*: how to understand God Who reveals Himself. The crux of the work is to have an understanding of ourselves as those who hear God even if He does not speak. This means to go beyond the infinite horizon and know God.¹⁴⁹

2.4.4. Theological Investigations

These are the twenty three volumes with the discussion on all aspects of Christian life and those of Church. Most of these writings are in the essay-form, collected and published in 23 volumes covering enumerable theological topics. The most intensely discussed topics are:¹⁵⁰ God, Christ, Mary, and Grace and Man in the Church and the Theology of the Spiritual Life and Theology, Anthropology, Christology, and Concerning Vatican Council II and Ecclesiology, Questions in the

¹⁴⁹ Marmion, *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner*. pp. 83-84.

¹⁵⁰ See, Pekarske, Daniel T. (2002). *Abstracts of Karl Rahner's Theological investigations 1-23*, (USA: Marquette University Press).

Church, the Church in the World and Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology and Jesus, Man, and the Church and God and Revelation and Science and Christian Faith and Humane Society and the Church of Tomorrow.¹⁵¹

2.5. Summary

It would be absolutely just if the above discussion is concluded as "Rahner was the influential Christian theologian in the post-modern era. He lived for eight years and served as theologian for about six decades. It was during his Jesuit formation that he started reflecting about theology and its role in the personal life of human being. During the study years the Ignatius spiritual exercises developed such a Rahner whose prime concern in theology was man's relation with God. To him, being human meant to be in relation with God Who enters humans through self-communication, Though he proved to be revivalist of the Roman Catholic Church yet he received very bitter criticism. It was very hard for him to make the intellectuals realize his understanding of theology. He continued to add to the Church's dignity and eventually won his critics who not only admired Rahner's theological achievements but also accepted him as the modern theologian. 4000 literary works with Rahner's name on the title page undeniably prove him the philosopher.

The critics are fueled by his perceptions about the world of life and faith. He made them see their faith and Church in a deeper way. He reached for the best elements of the Church avoiding obscurities. However, as mentioned earlier, Rahner's

¹⁵¹ Rahner has discussed on "Anonymous Christians" and "interfaith dialogical" activities with other world religions in following vols with details:

Volume 6 – 1966 • Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society

- Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God
- Anonymous Christians

Volume 10 – 1973 • Church, Churches and Religions

Volume 12 – 1974 • Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church

Volume 14 – 1976 • Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christians

Volume 16 – 1979 • Anonymous and Explicit Faith

- The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation

main concern was the man, the God and the Christ. He endeavored to display the continuities between natural and the supernatural elements. Rahner was against scholastic approach of studying theology; he thought theology and the modern philosophy to be banded so the post-modern theology could not avoid it.

Rahner's understanding of salvation led him to coin the term "Anonymous Christians" which meant that whosoever follows The Christ in any manner irrespective of his theological beliefs will ultimately search salvation. This led the Roman Catholicism go deep in the interfaith dialogical activities in order to propagate their faith.

There had been many influences on Rahner whose impact gave the twentieth century such a theologian that his influence could last for many years. Among them was Martin Heidegger whose scholarly supervision for two years introduced Rahner to think about thinking and see what is behind the text. Heidegger's most significant effect on Rahner was the implications of the existential experience by him. He thought Heidegger philosophical mystagogue. At the second place, it was found the Ignatius of Loyola whose spiritual exercises led Rahner to mystical. Ignatius stressed on the subject of self-reflection and self-responsibility. He also taught to transcend to God even in the things of daily life. At the third place, it was Marechal whose profound influence was explicit in Rahner's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas; Rahner had objective as well as subjective approach to knowledge with further development in transcendental philosophy. Marechal made Rahner a dynamic knower whose insight extended to the unlimited horizons. This made Rahner's interpretation of Aquinas extremely relevant to the modern philosophy.

A glimpse of the influential work of Karl Rahner develops a clear portrayal of the revolutionary Christian theologian of the post-modern era. However, there was found a vivid influence of Thomas, Heidegger and Marechal in the writings of Rahner. The Foundations of Christian Faith explains a Christian dealing with the

totality of his own existence. The study of Spirit in the World is the study of Thomas. It is the work of philosophy. The last paragraph of this book summarizes what has to come in Hearer of the Word. This work carries relation between philosophy and theology, and the theological significance of philosophical ideas.

CHAPTER THREE

Rahner's Notion of Anonymous Christians And it's Theological & Philosophical Roots

3.1. Introduction

Karl Rahner like Thomas Aquinas has been the theologian of his time. The latter worked for the Church in the 13th century whereas Rahner did the same for his age i.e., 20th century. He labored so much that his work amount to thousands of titles in many languages. The age of modernism called for a new way of seeing the modern world through the Church's eyes. It was Rahner who prudently led the Church to the new way which made it express that the Spirit who leads the Church also fills the earth. The Church now remained not only the teacher but also became a learner. The new way saw relationship between the natural and the supernatural world of grace which was a new understanding carrying Karl Rahner as its chief architect. His perception of grace is extremely fruitful. To him, it is present in all times and all places blessing with supernatural faith for all religions. Rahner understanding of theology preserves the primacy of grace and God's salvific initiative. This led Rahner to coin the term "Anonymous Christians" which affirmed the salvation in all non-Christian faiths. The term is thus defined in "The New Dictionary of Theology":

"A term made popular by Karl Rahner to deal with the question of the salvation of those who, without fault, never become Christians. On the basis of the universal salvific will of God and his own theory of transcendental revelation, Rahner argued that every person is given an opportunity in the ordinary course of his life to make fundamental choices about his own existence whose self-constituting reality has the same quality, if not content, as the choice about explicit faith in Christ".¹⁵²

According to Rahner, anyone possessing God's justifying grace and seems to accept salvation which Christ mediates to him/her is called to be the anonymous Christians. Grace is signified which forgives and gives man a share in Godhead. The clear theory of anonymous Christians appeared around the late-1950s from the pen of Rahner in the following words:

¹⁵² Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 27.

"There are men who merely think that they are not Christians, but who are in the grace of God. And hence there is an anonymous humanism inspired by grace, which thinks that it is no more than human. We Christians can understand it, better than it does itself.

When we affirm as a doctrine of faith that human morality.....needs the grace of God....we recognize as Christian that such humanism.....even outside professed Christianity is a gift of the grace of God and a tribute to the redemption, even though as yet it knows nothing of this"? ¹⁵³

The theory summed up Rahner's earlier writings and was to permeate his later ones. He emphatically announced that salvation is not a possibility but a fact and it is given to everyone who wills to be thoroughly human provided that this humanity is understood in a Christian way. This particularly led Rahner to elaborate the theory of anonymous Christians more explicitly. In this context, he wrote:

"If it be true the man who is the object of the Church's missionary Endeavour is or can be already prior to it a man who is on the way towards his salvation and finds it in certain circumstances without being reached by the Church's preaching; and if it be true at the same time that the salvation which he achieves is the salvation of Christ, because there is no other, then it must be possible to be not only an anonymous 'theist', but also an anonymous Christian, and this not only [in] a merely intangible inner way, but also with a certain making visible and tangible of the anonymous relationship....¹⁵⁴

By this Rahner meant to integrate the theory into his theology which is in the context of contemporary pluralism. The theory carries two dimensions: first that every one among humans is destined to salvation and the second that this salvation can only be in Christ. This theory is based on the supernatural elements of grace involved in a non-Christian approach to God along with an honest dedication to morality. This is found prominently in Rahner's discussion of the natural verses supernatural ruled by over-dominant salvific will of God. To him, grace gains victory

¹⁵³ Vass, *A Pattern of Doctrines 2: The Atonement and Mankind's Salvation*, 4.p. 47.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 50.

if man freely accepts it. It is not bound even outside the Christian Church. It is only the grace being a means to salvation that God wills for all men. It can be found in man's moral choices having transcendental experience of God's mystery in his time and culture. In Rahner's meditation on the experience of the spirit, he sums up his pastoral conviction by highlighting that in everyday living hope, promise, free choice of death, experiences of love and beauty, praying in silence, total retreatment, consolation, certainty, doubt etc. is the symbolic of the presence of God's grace in humans. He stated:

"This is where we truly find God and his liberating Grace, where we experience what we Christians call the Holy Spirit".¹⁵⁵

This thing of daily life points to existential circumstances responsible for an experience which Rahner calls God's liberating grace-the Holy Spirit within all humans. For him, the experience of grace held the central position. It is the essential and fundamental reality of the Christian message. Rahner's affirmation that God's universal salvific will must have human counterpart makes man's move towards salvation possible. Besides, this efficacious salvific will is only through Christ. Such kind of salvation is offered to everyone in their inner being. On the basis of this, everybody is regarded as the anonymous Christian and this must somehow affect his consciousness. This state is named by Rahner as the experience of Grace, the mysticism of everyday life and the finding of God in everything.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Karl Rahner, *A New Baptism of the Spirit* (New Jersey: Denville, 1975).p. 23. This is English translation of *Auch heute weht der Geist*, Munick (1974), p. 25. See, also, Rahner's celebrate essay on the same topic, published in 1954, see 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations*, 3.p. 91. , See also the following meditation of Rahner on this subject of experience: Karl Rahner, (1979). See, 'Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment', *ibid.*, 16. pp. 24-34. See, Rahner Karl, Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace' in, *ibid.*, pp. 35-51. , Experience of the Holy Spirit' *ibid.*, 18. pp. 189-210.

¹⁵⁶ See, Vass, *A Pattern of Doctrines 2: The Atonement and Mankind's Salvation*, 4.p. 65.

3.2. Rahner's Understanding of Grace

It is Rahner's understanding of grace around which pivots his whole theology. He consistently defines grace as self-communication of God. This is explained as the essence of Christianity. Rahner uses this term in a very specific sense. It elaborates that God bestows his very Self to the human beings. He bestows the internal essence of divine being upon human beings.¹⁵⁷ He in grace does not merely do something or affect something. Rather He gives the very reality- the inner, the divine life. In this context, Rahner insists that God's self-communication is an ontological process effecting the divinization of the human person. From his pen, the statement regarding thus flows:

"Redemption is the communication of divine grace; it occurs in the ontological reality of God's self-communication; it is in any case, the condition and accomplishment of that antic process which consisted from the very beginning in the supernatural bestowal of grace and divinization of humanity".¹⁵⁸

This carries in it the philosophy of existentialism and self-communication of God. Rahner's understanding of grace becomes fully significant when it is understood in contradistinction to and in relation with its correlate i.e. nature. At first, Rahner explores the classic teaching on nature and grace.¹⁵⁹ Then he sets his hand to an innovative reconstruction of this framework which hints at the qualification of Grace and all it entails as supernatural. He vigorously defends nature-grace schema as a non-negotiable for Roman Catholic Theology.

Rahner calls the distinction between nature and the supernatural as "essential and radical".¹⁶⁰ Nature comes into being when God creates other-than-self. Nature is the outcome of a unique mode by which God constitutes something wholly other than

¹⁵⁷ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 49 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).p. 446.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.p. 187.

¹⁵⁹ *Nature and Grace*. pp. 54-60. *Reinterpreting Rahner: A Critical Study of His Major Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). p. 154

¹⁶⁰ *Theological Investigations*, 4.p. 66.

self. This is a mode of efficient causality.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, there is grace which is a mode of formal causality. Grace fundamentally affects the existent reality as God imparts His being as form of created reality becoming its destiny and end.

3.2.1. Grace and Nature

Rahner has discussed the hiddenness of God at length using various philosophical approaches. These reflections proceed from a conviction of faith i.e. from a strictly theological proposition. The philosophical basis in Rahner's theology efficiently provides concepts and language that clearly explain and express the meaning of a conviction of faith. Faith is primary whereas philosophy has secondary place. However, the latter is essential to the former as one must have the courage to think about one's faith to prove its truth and sensibility. Rahner's use of philosophy can be best understood by studying his works in some of the theological contexts.

It was after the Second World War when Rahner resumed his teaching at Innsbruck. There appeared a controversy between the Catholic theology and a French movement. The Rome swiftly rejected the "new theology" whose leading proponent among others was Hendri de Lubac.

The Rome took the issue with his understanding of the supernatural in 1950. The issue was the relationship between grace and nature.¹⁶² De Lubac viewed the human desire for God as truly human i.e. an intrinsic part of human nature. Rome questioned how it could be. If it were a natural desire, was not the God who created human nature bound to satisfy it? If God were so bound, how could divine grace still be free? Rome protested against the "new theology" as it did not do justice to the sovereign freedom of God's grace.

¹⁶¹ See, *Mission and Grace: Essays in Pastoral Theology 1* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). pp. 62-64.

¹⁶² At one point Rahner says that grace and nature is not simply the equivalent of order of redemption and order of creation. Grace and nature are adequately distinguishable realities, whereas the orders of creation and redemption are not. See for more details: *ibid.* pp. 62-63. See also, Werner G. Jeanrond, "Karl Rahner, Theologian," *The Furrow* 35, no. 9 (1984). pp. 577-581.

To resolve the apparent dilemma, Rahner took the responsibility. This was a seemingly abstruse theological dispute. He felt the delicacy of the matter and elucidated it in such a way that it did justice to Rome's concern as well as to the legitimate concern of the 'new theology'. The average understanding of the relationship between grace and nature by the latter is the "Ultimately this amounts to the reproach of 'extrinsicism': grace appears there as a mere superstructure, very fine in itself certainly, which is imposed upon nature by God's decree, and in such a way that the relationship between the two is no more intense than that of a freedom from contradiction (of a 'potential oboedientialis' understood purely negatively); nature does indeed acknowledge the end and means of the supernatural order (glory and grace) as in themselves the highest goods, but it is not clear why it 'should have much time for' these highest goods".¹⁶³

Rahner adds further, "a free being could always reject such a good without thereby having inwardly the experience of losing its end".¹⁶⁴

To Rahner, if supernatural free order of God's grace was an extrinsic addition to human nature, the whole humanity loses its ultimate meaning.¹⁶⁵ The human creation would mean only to work for salvation with no ultimate meaning in itself. Similarly human secular history would also have been a drama for salvation. Rahner's dispute with the 'new theology' was an innocuous theological subtlety. This issue was addressed explicitly by the Vatican II's teachings on the relationship of the Church to the modern secular world and to the non-Christian religions. This was chiefly led and supported by Karl Rahner's work on the relationship of grace and nature. To him, natural and graced knowledge of God appears to be strange. To the one to whom the best is the peaceful co-existence. The Vatican II discussed the question of grace and nature in the context of history instead of knowledge.

¹⁶³ Dych S. J., *Karl Rahner*.p. 33.

¹⁶⁴ Jeanrond, "Karl Rahner, Theologian."p. 33.

¹⁶⁵ Nature: refers to the permanent structure or principle of a being. For Rahner, human nature, by virtue of its transcendent orientation, is open to a possible self-communication of God (grace). The major extended discussions of nature and grace can be found in "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace", Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1. pp. 297-317. See also, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace", *ibid.* pp.319-346

It explained how the salvation history is related to all the human history. It also affirmed the positive relationship between the two histories declaring all as the community of believers:

“United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history”.¹⁶⁶

Here is observed the positive view of the Council about the presence of grace and salvation outside the Church. The absolute freedom of gratuity of God's grace is maintained by the Vatican II. Besides, it sees it a universal possibility for every person because of the universal saving will of God “who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediation between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:4-5)¹⁶⁷, ‘neither is there salvation in any other’ (Acts 4:12).¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the history of grace is seen as intimately linked to all of human history. These average teachings about grace convince Rahner for the ‘new theology’ and he shows that God's will to endow humans with grace is an interior ontological constituent of concrete human existence even if it is not a constituent of nature. Such a divine decree necessarily entails an ontological change in human existence. There is also disagreement by Rahner with the ‘new theology’ at one important point:

“But is this inner reference of man to grace a constituent of his ‘nature’ in such a way that the latter cannot be conceived without it, i.e., as pure nature, and hence such that the concept of nature Pure becomes incapable of complete definition? It is at this point that we are bound to declare our inability to accept the view which has been attributed to the ‘nouvelle theologie’ and has met with so much opposition”.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ p. 35.

¹⁶⁷ (1 Tim 2:4-5).

¹⁶⁸ (Acts 4:12).

¹⁶⁹ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1.p. 303.

By this, Rahner meant to propose that grace be understood as 'supernatural existential' if it is separated from nature. It was Martin Heidegger who used the term existential to pinpoint the features characteristic of a human existent distinguishing man from other kinds of beings. God created humans to share with them the Divine knowledge and love. They are to live a life of grace ensuring grace and nature goes parallel. Creation is intrinsically ordered to the supernatural life of grace as its goal. The human existence is called a 'Supernatural existential' which means that this is part of human nature and a free gift of God. He also bestows human with grace. The personal relationship of knowledge and love with God is the offer and possibility of grace which primarily is existential. To Rahner, this is not a link between nature and the supernatural order of Grace. The human nature was created in a concrete mode and exists as a result of God's intention in creating it. Moreover, the 'pure nature' is just an abstract possibility. So, the supernatural existential affirms that grace is the constituent part of our historical human existence.¹⁷⁰

God's gracious presence in the human existence leads to view it as universal in equally important sense. The term existential denotes an aspect of human existence operative in all human affairs. In this context, grace is universal despite The Fall of Man. The reason is that the power of God's love and grace is stranger than the power of sin which makes grace an ever-present existential of human existence.

Rahner's theology of grace carries the use of philosophical concept of existential originating from a 'conviction of faith'. The following discussion is to penetrate into the philosophy of Rahner's supernatural existential.

3.3. Rahner's Supernatural Existential

There are noted serious discrepancies between Rahner's initial and later formulations of his theology regarding the "supernatural existential".¹⁷¹ The term was

¹⁷⁰ See, Maddox, Randy L. Karl Rahner's Supernatural Existential: A Wesleyan Parallel? In, *Evangelical Journal* 5, (1987), pp. 3-5.

¹⁷¹ Supernatural Existential: In the context of Rahner's theology of grace, this term refers not only to its gratuitous character (supernatural) as a result of God's universal salvific will, but also to a

coined by him in 1950 when he intervened in the *nouvelle theologie* (new theology).¹⁷² In his work, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1976), Rahner explains the term “supernatural existential” as something “present in all human beings, but as an existential of their concrete existence”.¹⁷³ The first part of the definition points out that the existential is a consequence of God’s universal will of salvation. The latter part indicates that it is an element of the existence rather than of the nature of human beings. However, both the parts are not contradictory in any way. The existential must be gratuitous as it has to do with salvation along with pertaining in some way to grace. The existential of human beings is present, affirms Rahner, prior to their freedom, their self-understanding and their experience. Going ahead, Rahner’s expression of the supernatural existential combines two references: an element of human existence and its stressed *priori* character.

The subject of “supernatural existential” was treated in depth by Rahner in 1950 on the issue of the ‘new theology’. He returned to it numerous but not with that rigor and depth. The industrious researchers get shocked as Rahner was found to contradict what he said in his most important statement. At times, he refers to the existential as an “offer” of grace, sometimes as ‘grace’ or “the self-communication of God”.

There were found advantages as well as weaknesses in Rahner’s treatment of the supernatural existential. For example, he himself admits that “it would be necessary

characteristic (existential) of each person’s consciousness whereby they are open, or disposed, to the offer to divine self-communication. And among the numerous articles by Rahner that focus specifically on the supernatural existential, see: “Anonymous and Explicit Faith”, Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 16. pp. 52-59; “Observation on the Problem of Anonymous Christian,” pp. 280-294; “Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church,” pp. 161-178; “Anonymous Christian,” pp. 390-398.

¹⁷² Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (Rutledge: London, 2004).p. 49.

¹⁷³ Anne, *Theological Method of Karl Rahner*.p. 120.

to examine more closely how the supernatural existential is related to grace itself, and in what sense it is distinct from it".¹⁷⁴

Here, Rahner seems to have no clear idea of the nature of the relationship of the existential to grace. This also reveals that he was unable to say what the supernatural existential was. Rahner's theology of the existential frees his Catholic theology of grace from reasonable suspicion of semi-pelagianism. While responding to an anonymous writer 'A', Rahner brought forward his first essay on the supernatural existential. 'A' defended de Lubac against severe criticism he incurred over the theology of grace.¹⁷⁵ The central point of this theology was that all human beings have by nature a spiritual orientation to the one true God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Neo-Scholasticism asserted that the natural and the supernatural orders co-existed in human beings as separate layers. To Rahner, the transcendence of God produced the unintended effect of rendering the Christianity as a whole on the subject of the supernatural existential. Rahner thus stated:

"If God gives creation and above all men a supernatural end and this end is first in intentioned, then the world and men is by that very fact always and everywhere inwardly other in scripture, then he would be if he did not have this end, and hence other as well before he has reached this end partially (the grace which justifies) or wholly (the beatific vision)."¹⁷⁶

Rahner here affirms that all human beings have as their concrete end the true God revealed in Jesus Christ. He goes on to say that human beings with this end are other than they would be if they did not have this end? Rahner abstains from speculation about the 'natural' end that the human person has if the supernatural end were not bestowed. It suffices for him to affirm that such an end exists. He assumes

¹⁷⁴ See, Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1.p. 316.

¹⁷⁵ See, David Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential," *Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (2004).p. 98. See also, Eberhard, K. "Karl Rahner and the Supernatural Existential." In, *Thought* 46, (1971). pp. 537-45. , See also, Ernst, C. "Some Theme in the Theology of Karl Rahner." in, *Irish Theological Quarterly* 32, (1965), pp. 251-57.

¹⁷⁶ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1.pp. 302-3.

the perjuring identity of the human person in both situations. This is essential for the gratuity of the beatific vision. Rahner calls the supernatural existential "an interior ontological constituent of the human person's concrete quiddity terminative". In other words, the existential to Rahner is a definitive determinant of a concrete human nature.

A glimpse of Rahner's first article on the subject of the supernatural existential leads to three points. Firstly, the bestowal of existential occurs at the very beginning of the human creation. Secondly, nature according to Rahner is an actually existing reality though it always exists as taken up into the quiddity. That is why it remains when everything pertaining to the supernatural is subtracted. Thirdly, theology of the existential and gratuity of grace go side by side, i.e. grace would lose its essential quality of gratuity without a theology of the existential. He quotes:

"In this more recent view [of the *nouvelle theologie*], this ordination to the beatific vision on the one hand was considered an inner, inadmissible constituent of human nature, and on the other hand was so conceived that withholding of the goal of this ordination was considered incompatible with the wisdom and goodness of God. And in this sense [the ordination] was declared unconditional [unbending] (provided the creature did not fail to reach its goal through its own fault). In our view, with these presuppositions grace and the beatific vision can no longer be called unowed [gratuitous]."¹⁷⁷

This article also carries two more elements; (i) his scant mention a natural end of human beings; (ii) the tantalizing clue to his later position on the Supernatural Existential in "the permanent dynamism of grace".¹⁷⁸ To Rahner, there are two different aspects under which the One True God might be encountered; the common aspect simply as Creator whereas the higher aspect tends to know Him in His inner being and life. Rahner rejected the idea that a twofold human end gives rise to two entirely separates though (juxtaposed) human orders, one natural and the other

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 304.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 301.

supernatural. Rahner's second claim is surprising as it provides no reason about "The permanent dynamism of grace".

Rahner continued to go on elaborating the supernatural existential. The later works do not carry anything directly contradictory to the thought presented earlier. These are in fact the repetition of the findings of the first article. The work "Nature and Grace" (1960) draws a distinguishing line between the "formal object of the natural spirit" and "the formal object of supernaturally elevated spirit". Rahner here defines the formal object as everything known is grasped as an object.

The natural formal object of the spirit is declared as "the transcendence towards being in general and the natural openness for being as a whole". On the other hand, its supernatural counterpart is "the supernatural transcendence of the spirit, opened and borne by grace". To Rahner, this kind of transcendence is possessed by every human. Here he seems to be concerned with not only the grace but supernatural existential also. Grace is to open and bear the supernatural transcendental as grace, says Rahner is God Himself, the communication in which He gives Himself to the humans as the divinizing factor.¹⁷⁹

Grace also carries the dynamic character as Rahner calls it the "offer" of grace being continuous and permanent. He further states:

"The two formal objects are not opposed to each other like two things that lie side by side so that, they must be either kept separate or confused".¹⁸⁰

Supernatural existential has been discussed by Rahner also in the article "Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification". Here is stated the relationship between the existential and grace. The essential point highlighted here is that the existential is a partial realization of grace if the latter is defined as the self-communication of God. Regarding this, Rahner has made some important statements:

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 177.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 183.

- (i) The existential is a lower degree of grace.
- (ii) Since the existential is imitatively natural, it is only modally supernatural; whereas grace itself is imitatively supernatural.
- (iii) The existential is the deficient mode of grace.
- (iv) The existential is added indeed to natural by grace.¹⁸¹

Elaborating grace at length, Rahner is concerned with the reception of grace and its recipient (the addressee of God's offer). It is not the human person who is addressed rather the human nature elevated by the existential. Rahner's thinking personalistically couples the existential with God in God's self-communication. He envisions the existential as the beginning of the self-communication of God. That is why he has called the addressee a 'nature' in the sense of 'pure nature'. To him, nature is an actual reality.

Rahner has slightly discussed the supernatural existential and grace in his work "History of the World and Salvation History". Here the purpose was to address the topic of possibility of saving faith for non-Christians. The existential is not clearly discussed, but also indicated implicitly. For example, he stated, "it is part of the Catholic statement of faith that God extends the supernatural saving purpose to all human beings in all ages and places in history".

The universal effect of this divine purpose is the existential. The term 'grace' is also used by Rahner in its proper sense. He states: "Everyone is offered salvation which means that every one, in so far as he does not close himself to this offer by his own free and grave guilt, is offered divine grace-and is offered it again and again (even when he is guilty)".¹⁸²

In his explanation sometimes Rahner seems to be confused and becomes ambiguous to separate grace and existential. The former is grasped from the human perspective as "the acceptance of the self-communication of God in grace and glory". The latter is the existential- a situation where is found the obligation of striving

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 161.

¹⁸² See, Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential."p. 107.

towards a supernatural goal of direct union with the absolute God in a direct vision. The supernatural existential can be described as the remote ordination to this goal. Rahner makes several statements on the Supernatural existential in *Sacramentum Mundi*.

He Says that the "Supernatural" goal of man, freely established by God, also has this character of transcendental necessity, because it is always implanted in the being of every man, through the Self-communication of God in grace, on account of the universal saving will of God, in advance of all free decision (Existential, Supernatural), and so it exists in man either in the mode of acceptance (faith, love) or refusal (sin), but it can never become just a command from the outside and, through the indifference of freedom, a matter of no consequence to him, falling outside his movement toward his goal.¹⁸³

Here, the thought has become quite clear. To Rahner, the supernatural existential is implanted in the human creation. The existential assures the permanent offer of grace. So for humans, the existential is there as free acceptance i.e., faith or free rejection through sin. This freedom of choice is practiced only for the transcendental necessity. Its origin is God's universal will for salvation producing the supernatural existential in every human, which is the beginning of God's Self-communication in grace.

A prominent work by Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978) also details the concept of the supernatural existential. Here the previous views on the subject are reprised as well as developed further. To have better understanding, Rahner's view in the last statement can be summarized as under:

- (i) The existential is the Self-communication of God present in every human in the mode of an offer.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Karl Rahner, "Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology," (New York: Herder and Herder, 1975), p. 301.

¹⁸⁴ *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 127.

- (ii) Every person must be understood as the event of the supernatural Self-communication of God, though not necessarily accepts it in freedom.¹⁸⁵
- (iii) The existential exists in the mode of either acceptance or refusal where offer is still to be accepted or rejected.¹⁸⁶
- (iv) The existential bestows with the remainder of the Self-communication of God without reducing it to a purely human reality.¹⁸⁷
- (v) Everyone must carry God's Self-communication which makes its personal acceptance possible. There takes place the personal transformation of the human being by the existential making its acceptance or refusal human and therefore free.¹⁸⁸

The above views by Rahner on the supernatural existential indicate that the only major change in his position was the context and perspective. Dealing the dispute with 'The New Theology', Rahner concentrated on the creation of the human person to illustrate whether the orientation was natural or supernatural. It was agreed that this orientation 'always' existed. Rahner's 'the supernatural existential' was the elevation of the human person through permanent and continuous offer of God's grace. As far as perspective is concerned, Rahner shows preference of the uncreated grace (the Self-communication of God) over all forms of the created grace. This insight lacks in the earlier debate with 'the new theology' because he had to adopt Scholastic perspective of the created grace as the discussion centered on the powers of created human nature.

Here, the theology of the supernatural existential discussed by Rahner in the preceding pages leads to the conclusion that the debate carried significant change of perspective and context.

¹⁸⁵ "Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology." pp. 127-28.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 128.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

The stimulus of the debate was the “new theology (nouvelle theologie) which viewed the human desire for God as truly human i.e., an intrinsic part of human nature. Rahner protested against it as it did not do justice to the sovereign freedom of God’s grace.

To bridge up the gap between the French ‘new theology’ and ‘Rome’, Rahner had to concentrate on the moment of the human creation. Here, he inserted himself into a neo-scholastic debate maintaining the primacy of the created grace. Having settled the dispute, Rahner could not free himself from the obligation to elaborate the issue in Scholastic terms. He reverted to his long-held conviction of the primacy of uncreated grace and the interpersonal nature of the God-human relation. Meanwhile there was noted a significant change in his context of reflection from creation to decision i.e., choice between faith and unbelief.

In short, Rahner’s theology of existential carries in it the whole theology of grace. The existential is an authentic instance of the Self-communication of God, which is the very essence of grace. Through restructuring, it is also the transformation of the human person and experience where is launched a life shared with God entailing an assurance of grace.

3.4. Anonymous Christians: Its Philosophical & Theological Roots

Rahnerian understanding of the non-Christian religions looked in them the aspects of Christianity. He developed a new perception about the other faiths and stated that the non-Christians somehow carry in their theology the very teachings of Christ. This makes them the anonymous Christians though not with any explicit announcement. The very basis of this perception has been Rahner’s view about the creation and the nature of the human person.

3.4.1. Historical Background of Anonymous Christians

A view of the Church history unfolds that it did account for the salvation of non-Christians in the past. Karl Rahner is not the pioneer of this theology. The term anonymous Christians was already in use to describe those who were justified but not

baptized. Justin (165 A-D) in the second century after Christ viewed the non-Christians as, "And those who lived according to Logos are Christians even if they were considered Atheists; like among the Greeks Socrates, Herachit, and others; and among the Barbarians Abraham, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, Elies and so many others".¹⁸⁹ Two centuries later almost the same was stated by Augustine (354-430) as, "What is now called the Christian religion was there in the past and was never unknown from the beginning of humanity up to Christ's coming in flesh. Since then, one began to call Christian the true religion that was already there before".¹⁹⁰ The Archbishop of Malines (1827-1906) is found to be the first one to use the term anonymous Christians. Another theologian regarding this was Auguste Dechamps (1810-1833) from Belgium. There had been severe reactions against modernity in the form of neo-scholasticism. These were not the solution to that problem. This was recognized by the French philosopher Mourice Blondel who set out to show that Christianity in its very essence corresponded to the inner logic of human existence. He clearly demonstrated the internal credibility of faith and human experience. He argued that people wishful for authentic life were 'determined' to 'will' themselves freely. They have option to accept or reject God. They are to look into the Christian revelation. The acceptance of revelation makes them the undetermined supernatural, i.e. thirsts for the absolute present in all humans. This is determined by Christianity. Blondel points out that immanent supernatural are present anonymously in every human being.¹⁹¹

After him, it was Karl Rahner who sticks to the term and throughout his theological career continued to demonstrate his theology. He was indirectly influenced by Mourice Blondel through Henri de Lubac. The latter, acquainted with Blondel's philosophy addressed the problem of salvation outside the Church. He was

¹⁸⁹ Conway, *The Anonymous Christian- a Relativised Christianity? : An Evaluation of Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Criticisms' of Karl Rahner's Theory of the Anonymous Christian.* p. 5.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ See for more details, *Sannaes de philosophie chretienne*, March 1907, pp. 585- 582.' Blondel acknowledged the influence of Cardinal Dechamps in leading him to consider that the supernatural present in our consciousness not graspable in itself, ut est, but rather in its inner activity, ut agit.

influenced by both-the history and the modern philosophy. He explained the grace of Christ as universal. He has also discussed the implications of an implicit Christianity for the Church as a whole.¹⁹²

With the late developments in Catholic Theology, Karl Barth and Paul Tillich were also busy with the same issue. They classified the people as actually Christians (those having explicit faith in Christ) and 'virtual' or 'Potential' Christians (carrying the elements of Christianity in their belief and actions). Tillich introduced the latent Church and Christian humanism outside the Christian Church.

3.4.2. Rahner's Anonymous Christians

As far as Rahner is concerned, he first began to elaborate salvation for non-Christians. There appeared an article from his pen in 1950 dealing with "pagan Christians" and Christian Pagans". He warns and reminds Christians to show others how the way to God which Christians walk is "safer and shorter".

The direct and inerrable consequence of the supernatural existential was anonymous Christians according to Rahner's understanding. He viewed the human being as the one with unlimited openness towards the limitless God. The human spirit is capable of hearing the word of God and understands His Self-communication. Thus, the supernatural existential is present in all humans. However, they are free to accept or reject Divine offer even though they are anabaptized, they do have implicit faith in Christ as all salvation is claimed to come through Christ. So these people will be saved through Christ. So these people will be saved through Christ. They according to Rahner are termed as anonymous Christians. He thus wrote:

"The seed has no right not to seek not to grow into a plant. But the fact that it is not yet developed into a plant is no reason for refusing to give the name which we give to the plant destined to grow from it to the seed as well".¹⁹³

¹⁹² Conway, *The Anonymous Christian- a Relativised Christianity? : An Evaluation of Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Criticisms' of Karl Rahner's Theory of the Anonymous Christian*.p. 14.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

This aspect of Rahner's theology has got the most attention. It is the result of logical theological method known as the heart of his theology. The researcher cannot put this aside.

It was Martin Heidegger who had been the influential figure for Rahner. He is the one who proposed the theory of existential. Rahner, because of that has admitted him as his best and real teacher. To Heidegger, existential designated the characteristic of human existence i.e., "being in the world". Its importance to Rahner was that the existential referred to the human person as free and transcendent being. The transcendentalism is a priori disposition of the human person who asks after the question of being and experiences to be a being of unlimited horizon open to the mystery of God. Another element of the basis of anonymous Christians is that of grace and nature. Grace as discussed by Rahner is the God's Self-communication with men where God bestows His very Self to human beings which Rahner affirms, is an ontological process affecting the divinization of the human person. Regarding nature, Rahner declares it absolutely open to a possible self-communication of God because of its (nature's) transcendent orientation.

In Rahner's theology, grace and nature are followed by the "supernatural existential". The term refers to gratuitous character of grace which is a result of God's universal salvific will. Besides, it also refers to the person's consciousness open to the offer of the divine Self-communication.

Hence gratuitous grace is supernatural whereas existential is the free and transcendent human person. So it was this specific understanding of the very essence of human creation and the creator that led Rahner to view all the human beings entitled to salvation by God's universal will. This also led him to study deeply the other faiths and point out in them the elements of Christianity as to call them 'the anonymous Christians'. According to Rahner himself:

"Our reflection thus far, says, in effect, that there is also an 'anonymous Christianity'. According to the Pathologic understanding of the faith, as is clearly expressed in the Second Vatican Council, there can be no doubt that someone

who has no concrete, historical contact with the explicit preaching of Christianity can nevertheless be a justified person who lives in the grace of Christ.....Since the transcendental self-communication of God as an offer to man's freedom is an existential of every person, and since it is a moment in the Self-communication of God to the world which reaches its goal and its climax in Jesus Christ, we can speak of 'anonymous Christians'.¹⁹⁴

This indicates that if God's justifying grace is possessed, a person according to Rahner is 'anonymous Christian'. He also accepts the salvation mediated to him by Christ. The foremost significant element in anonymous Christianity is the interior grace giving man a share in Godhead.

Another definition by Rahner himself further clarifies the term:

"We prefer the terminology according to which that man is called an 'anonymous Christian' who on the one hand has de facto accepted of his freedom this gracious self-offering on God's part through faith, and love, while on the other he is absolutely not yet a Christian at the social level (through baptism and membership of the Church) or in the sense of having consciously objectified his Christianity to himself in his own mind (by explicit Christian faith resulting from having hearkened to the explicit Christian message) we might therefore put it as follows:

The 'anonymous Christians' in our sense of the term is the pagan after the beginning of the Christian mission, who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ".¹⁹⁵

This issue is approached by Rahner from the grand viewpoint of the systematic theology. This is the theory which received so much attention that no other theory could. This is because the interreligious relations command the interest of a broad audience. Rahner's view on the possibility of the salvation outside the visible Church are quite familiar to a large audience and some of them presume the theory of

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.p. 172.

¹⁹⁵ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 4.p. 283.

anonymous Christians as the central purpose of Rahner's work. This is the term across which everybody comes while taking up the theme of salvation in non-Christian religion.

Since its emergence, the idea has generated a lot of discussion and a large amount of literature which carries both praise and critics. This theory brings together the doctrine of the universal salvific will of God accounting for those who enjoy the relationship with God in one way or the other. The theory has also been criticized as it lacks the required explicit faith in Christ thus undermining the missionary task of the Church, resulting in clouding seriously the meaning of the Church. However, the theory of anonymous Christian carries overriding significance. A large number of disjoint issues have been woven by Rahner into a single theological fabric. He himself asserted that his theory may be accepted or rejected by anyone but the fact remains that the problems dealt with by the theory are indeed our problems and will remain with us. It is the experience of God's grace which exists in the world of religions rather among all the people. This was the supreme concern of Rahner in propounding the theory of anonymous Christianity. To him, salvation comes through the grace of Christ without which the non-Christians will not get to it. Rahner claims the universal salvific will of God open to every human. He interprets the Christian claim to absoluteness from within the limits of human nature and in the light of pluralism of religions as social and historical entities. The humans and the whole world are oriented toward Christ and sustained by him. They are open to God's Self-communication. The offer of grace is there for all because of God's universal salvific will. This essentially requires faith in the Divine revelation for grace as God's Self-communication and its effect. On the basis of this experience of grace and universal salvific will of God, Rahner was spurred to elaborate the theory of anonymous Christian in more explicit terms. Rahner thus stated:

"If it be true that the man who is the object of the Church's missionary Endeavour is or can be already prior to it a man who is on the way towards his salvation and finds it in certain circumstances without being reached by the Church's preaching; and if it be true at the same time that the salvation which he achieves is the salvation of Christ, because there is no other, then it must be

possible to be not only an anonymous 'theist', but also an anonymous Christian, and this not only [in] a merely intangible inner way, but also with a certain making visible and tangible of the anonymous relationship".¹⁹⁶

This simply indicates how Rahner argued his theology integrating it into the whole of his theology. It carries the context of global interaction with the non-Christian religions. The theory in it carries two essential elements i.e., Rahner's anthropology that everyone being human is destined to salvation and Rahner's theology-that this salvation can only be in Christ. The claim is argued by Rahner as "Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men who cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right".¹⁹⁷

For its validity, the theory carries the time factor and the free individual's effort making men capable to achieve salvation through anonymous Christianity which Rahner defines as grace- gift of God's Self-communication and His relationship to all of us. The theory also carries the theological function. It is neither the last ditch nor a clutching to reduce the whole corpus of traditional theology and dogmatic. The theory has got more concern for the Christians than the non-Christians because the formers are in active contact with the contemporary world. The theory of anonymous Christian has also got the central place for the Pastoral Theology.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore the theory has a very significant influence on the Second Vatican Council as Rahner himself pointed out:

"What is meant by the 'anonymous Christian' (the name itself is unimportant) is compatible with the Council's teaching, indeed it is explicitly stated by it".¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 6.p. 390.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 5.p. 115.

¹⁹⁸ Rahner discussed with details on this topic. There are some examples: See, On Missionary Preaching, *ibid.*, 1. p. 220, especially page p. 224 for the anonymous Christian; 'The Basic Imperatives of Personal Theology', Vol. 1, p. 256, especially p. 269 or mystagogy, p. 271, for love of neighbor; 'Introduction to Faith for different Age God-believers', p. 672; and 'The Future of the Church', *ibid.*, 4. p. 744.

¹⁹⁹ See, *Theological Investigations*, 6.p. 398.

Grace the foundational element in the theory of anonymous Christian is the free offer of Self-communication to all humans. This gives man the capacity of responding to the Divine offer and the capability to reach this level is known as the supernatural existential. This is a technical term used by Rahner for the one who is elevated to such heights of spirituality that the Divine communication becomes possible for him. This state once achieved is permanent in nature and transforms human nature orientating it toward The Glorious God. The supernatural existential enables the human spirit to accept or reject grace.²⁰⁰ This capacity is there in every human being. God's revealing of God self is to everyone whether he knows Him or not. One's free response to this is an act of faith. Here the conscience of a man is also very important because the response to the divine Self-communication takes place in a person's choice of accepting it. This implicitly leads him toward God ultimately submitting to Him. The conscience is required to transcend egoism and have affection for others which is in fact love of God. This will lead to the acts of faith and charity, resulting in friendship with God. This grace is received through Christ. Though the individual may not become a member of the Church explicitly yet he is an anonymous Christian having spiritual communion with the Church.

For Rahner, an ordinary honest living may also be visioned as the anonymous Christianity because anyone who is kind and loving and is faithful to the conscience carries in him or her very elements of Christianity. Similarly, the act of dying also carries the decision for the God of eternal life. It can be called the act of faith as the individual positively accepts the sense of his existence in the face of death. This is described by Rahner as the surrender of the whole person to the incomprehensible God.

Regarding salvation, Rahner points out that it is not simply bestowed on anyone who bypasses his individual freedom. He is capable of an interior attitude toward God. This is in accordance with the Christian faith and can lead to salvation when elevated by an interior accepted grace. The readiness for the acceptance of

²⁰⁰ See, Rahner, Karl. "Atheism and Implicit Christianity" in, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 9, p. 159.

God's inarticulate call is elevated by grace leading the individual to a supernatural moral act which is the same as the faith in Gospel revealed by God.²⁰¹

The grace and faith being specifically of Christ carries in it the marks of Christ's salvific activity. The non-Christians carry the implicit desire for the membership in the Church when they accept the grace existentially. The axiom-there is no salvation outside the visible Church-implies a perceptible connection with the Church, however not similar to the perceived membership in it. By implicit desire, Rahner meant that a person has a serious moral outlook and tendency to do everything leading to salvation. This is taken even when the individual does not know that membership of the Church is one of the objective factors necessary for salvation.²⁰²

This is in fact a conditional necessity rather than an absolute one for salvific purpose. Rahner felt obliged to refer to the implicit desire because there is in some way or another a connection with the visible body of the Church for everyone touched by grace. The relation of the anonymous Christian with the Church is referred by Rahner as the proto-sacrament of Christ which means that the Church in its concrete appearance is a real sign of the salvific will of God and of the grace of Christ and all grace comes through the spirit of Christ. It is necessary to realize that Rahner bases his theology on the real unity of the human race.²⁰³

This unity of mankind is determined by the Incarnation of the Word of God. It called the human race to live the life supernaturally. This ability of any person is also a real ontological determination of the nature of each human being. By the Word of God, humanity has already ontologically come to the real satisfaction of the individuals. This is to say that the human race is a real unity from the very beginning including all the humanity.

²⁰¹ See, Rahner, Karl "On Truthfulness" in, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 7, pp. 229-59.

²⁰² See, Rahner, Karl "What is Heresy?" in, *Theological Investigations* Vol. pp. 472-3.

²⁰³ See, Rahner, Karl (1977). *Christian at the Cross Roads*, (London: Burns and Oates), p. 39.

Rahner affirms it as a real fact and not merely an abstraction. He argues that it is based on the natural unity of human race and the real incarnation of the Word of God. The very fact is further explained through the Church which describes the human race as the people of God. They implicitly carry in them the Church. As Rahner goes on to say that acceptance of one's concrete nature by one's free will is the expression of the supernatural salvific will of God. This says Rahner shows a desire in an individual for the Church. It can be understood as a personal and spiritual act comprising necessarily something of the Church. Rahner calls it the "Votum Ecclesiae" which is the personal acceptance of membership in the people of God. This is concluded by Rahner as:

"The proposition about the Church as necessary means for salvation suffers no exception through the possibility of justification by the Votum Ecclesiae, in so far as that necessity of the Church for salvation always does and must mean-by [Church]-at least what we have called [people] of God]-and, indeed, always can mean this. Because [people of God] has an objective reference to the Church in the proper sense (a reference which is not left to the discretion of the individual human being), the proposition of the necessity of belonging to the people of God for salvation does not impair the proposition of the necessity of the Church in the proper sense for salvation".²⁰⁴

To Rahner, the Church is an established juridical organization carrying humanity consecrated by incarnation. Rahner has laid a great emphasis on the invisible belonging to the Church. To him, the justified person belongs invisibly to the visible Church, by grace having visible relation to the Church. He further asserts that Christianity understands itself as a universal religion intended for all mankind. It is the manifestation of God's grace. The Church is regarded as the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of the hidden reality even outside it. It no longer remains the community of those who claim to salvation. The Church, says Rahner, is a heaven for everyone everywhere.

²⁰⁴ Burns. O. P., Robert (2001). *Roman Catholicism after Vatican II*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press), p. 147.

The believers of the non-Christian religions do know God and their faith carries elements of grace which, according to Rahner, is given to everyone as gratuitous gift on account of Christ. This makes the non-Christian religions lawful- their followers destined to salvation. Rahner meant to highlight that lawful religion is a positive means of gaining relationship with God and thus attaining salvation. Such an understanding about the other religions leads the Christians to develop the affectionate feelings for them resulting in true and fruitful dialogue.

The anonymous Christians are characterized by the innate human longing for truth and for the true way of finding God. This shows that one cannot suppress the question of truth which is the correct attitude to transcendent mystery. The human beings always remain capable of submitting to the Divine mystery when it reaches them. Such mode of life can lead the people to eternal salvation, which of course is through Jesus Christ and His Church and in a universal human solidarity.

3.4.3. Rahner's Four Theses

The term anonymous Christians meant to clarify and broaden the outlook of the Catholic Church on the followers of other faiths.²⁰⁵ The following detail will elaborate the four theses for better understanding of the issue.

- (1) There is no religion of equal right to Christianity. This is the very basis to believe for every Christian. It is believed that lawful religion is God's Self-communication to man. All men can have some relationship with God. To

²⁰⁵ Rahner has discussed on "Anonymous Christians" and "interfaith dialogical" activities with other world religions in following vols with details:

Volume 6 – 1966 • Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society

- Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God
- Anonymous Christians

Volume 10 – 1973 • Church, Churches and Religions

Volume 12 – 1974 • Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church

Volume 14 – 1976 • Observations on the Problem of the Anonymous Christians

Volume 16 – 1979 • Anonymous and Explicit Faith

- The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation

Christians, it is only the Church which binds man to God. Rahner affirms that Christianity is the absolute religion in the human history. With Christ, Mosaic religion started losing its validity. Rahner asks the time when it became compulsory for every man and culture to believe in Christianity as the absolute religion. To this, he himself answers that Christianity once understood presents itself as the only still valid religion for man and a necessary means for salvation. This is the core of the first thesis where Rahner speaks of Christian religion as the absolute religion. It offers salvation to all along with playing social role of religion. It enters into the inner factor of people and culture caring both Christians and non-Christians into a situation where they face each other in dialogue. This becomes the basis for the second thesis which discusses the nature and supernatural elements in non-Christian religions.²⁰⁶

(2) Rahner's second thesis stated:

"Until the moment when the gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, non-Christian religion-----does not merely contain elements of a natural knowledge of God, -----it also contains supernatural elements arising out of grace which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ".²⁰⁷

This is to explain the relation between nature and grace and study the supernatural elements in the non-Christian faiths. To Rahner, grace is not only offered outside the Church, it gains victory in man's free acceptance of it. Man carries unlimited openness for the limitless God. This leads him to be a being with spiritual existence. When man accepts himself, he accepts Christ as the absolute perfection and guarantee for his salvation by grace of God. This grace is found in the personal life of the individual and this elevates the individual from the natural life to the spiritual heights. This is capable of contributing to all his religion lawful which Rahner defines as a means for having right relationship to God and for attaining salvation. In short, grace elevates man from the natural life and can be seen through individual's

²⁰⁶ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5. pp. 118-120.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 21

relationship with God. The non-Christian religions bear certain rights for having relationship between man and God which is a positive significance for making them lawful religions. On this basis, Rahner developed the third thesis exploring relationship between Christianity and other religions.²⁰⁸

(3) Christianity relates to non-Christian as an anonymous Christians- someone who must be regarded as Christian in this or that sense. He has the experience of the grace of God. This grace is the height of all spiritual acts. An anonymous Christian is on the way to salvation only through Christ. This leads him into such an individual who understands his being Christian in belief in the depth of his grace and profession of faith which is given a social form in the Church. This paves the way to define the condition of the Church by Rahner.²⁰⁹

(4) The fourth thesis discusses the presence of a hidden reality outside the visible Church. Christianity involves a conscious awareness of faith, an explicit Christian-----and a constitution of the Church as a society. There can be no separation of explicit Christian faith and the visible Church.²¹⁰

By this, Rahner meant that non-Christianity is to be brought to the explicit consciousness of what already belongs to it as the divine gift of grace. He sees the Church as historically tangible vanguard and explicit expression of what Christianity hopes as a hidden reality even outside it. This is the view which led Rahner and others to speak of the unification of the whole human race in the one Church of Christ. Because of having implicit relation with Christ, the followers of non-Christian religions are also entitled to salvation. This brought the theologians closer for inter-faith dialogue to have peaceful society in multi-cultural and multi-religions set up.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Ibid. pp. 121-130.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 131-132.

²¹⁰ See, *ibid.*, 12.p. 163.

²¹¹ Ibid. pp. 133-134.

A view of the four theses gives a clear image of Anonymous Christian. Though this bore a lot of criticism, yet Rahner continued striking on his thesis to illustrate that non-Christians have an implicit belief in Christ leading them to salvation. This has been censured for operating on the basis of an abstract and overly optimistic view of religions. It makes non-Christians embodiments of God's universal will of salvation.

3.4.4. Analysis of the Four Theses

These four theses clarify Rahner's approach to man's knowledge of God, which according to him, is the very basis of the notion of anonymous Christians. To become a Christian surely needs expression of explicit faith by any individual. The initial concept of the anonymous Christian does not carry this in it. The above summary of Rahner's four theses highlights the grounds classifying the followers of non-Christian religions as anonymous Christians. Firstly, Christianity claims to be the absolute religion intended by God for all but the human persons meet it when they are seriously confronted by it. At the second place, he discussed the social aspect of salvation. The humans are religious to attain salvation through a concrete religion in which they find themselves. Because of confrontation with the Christian message, non-Christian religions are lawful leading to salvation. The third thesis recognizes the followers of other faiths as anonymous Christians because of their implicit relation to Christ. Last thesis reflects upon the idea of mission. Rahner is found to regard

"Christianity as not one religion among others, consequently the salvation it offers is the only one available".²¹²

He looks for the explicit manifestations of a hidden and unnamed Christianity working in non-Christians. These are the elements of grace and moral height. This is predominantly occupied by the salvific will of God as "grace gains victory in man's free acceptance of it".²¹³

²¹² See, *ibid.*, 6.p. 391.

²¹³ See, *ibid.*, 5.p. 124.

This is Christ's grace as the only means to salvation. This is based on man's moral choices and his transcendental experience of God's mystery. The religions before and after Christ carry in them the elements of supernatural grace as well as their explicit form in an objective social way. Rahner is convinced that there is nothing as natural good act deciding our way of life i.e., good or evil. He extends his theory also to the atheist of goodwill having no explicit affiliation with religious affairs. There may also be found the transcendental theism co-existing with atheism. It is the moral act respecting the demands of conscience, thus can be called theism in the heart's depth. It also carries unconditional faithfulness, honesty, selfness and other basic human dispositions. So, the non-believers on the basis of these virtues can reach their salvation. These good deeds, according to Rahner are equivalent to an acceptance of God. The absolute faithfulness to conscience indicates the atheist's hidden endowment with supernatural grace which can be recognized as an implicit Christianity.

Beside atheists, non-Christian believers, says Rahner respect the moral conscience manifested in good deeds. Rahner attributes to human conscience the role of representing the immediate voice of God in man. This morality must carry in it the objective truth material along with the subjective conscience which can destine man to salvation. When a man dedicates himself totally to a good cause, he implicitly is the Christian despite denying it explicitly. He may be led to salvation subjectively but, in fact, he is denying truths needed for salvation.²¹⁴

Rahner solves the problem of conscience on a theoretical basis. To him, the basic art of cognition is to know one's being. It is basically self-knowledge and self-fulfillment of man's concrete being. This is the truth in itself; since being and the truth are equivalent. Man's acceptance of the truth of his being means the acceptance of salvation which is God's Self-communication. Rahner states,

²¹⁴ Ibid. p. 473.

"Man is he who realizes himself when he gives himself away into the incomprehensible mystery of God".²¹⁵

This is a grasping reality with recognition of truth, which is the anonymous acceptance or rejection of Christ. A step outside the man's individuality gives another line of thought. The encounter with one's neighbor is so argued by Rahner that it becomes the central argument for the anonymous Christian. He states;

"Where the whole 'transcendental' depth of interhuman love is realized and represented... there such a love is also necessarily a conscious love of God and has God as its reflex motive (even though...in every different degrees of Clarity)".²¹⁶

It shows that love of neighbor to Rahner is the basis of the moral as such. This is the loving communication with the human treasuring all man's moral life. This is essentially the manifestation of man's self and God's saving presence by grace. This now portrays the anonymous Christian having an implicit faith in Christ with the presence of the grace of God. Church mission in this sense subjects the non-Christians in the true sense, as only Christ carries salvation for all. In accepting themselves, men tend towards the Mystery of God thus accepting Christ as the result of God's grace acting in man. The unconditional dedication of man to the other human makes him the anonymous Christian. To Rahner, this approach towards non-Christians could be a threat to Church's missionary activity. Rahner himself turns the tables by asserting that "success of missionary preaching necessarily pre-supposes that which we may call by the name of anonymous Christianity. For explicit faith, an interior disposition is required which gives and forgives man a share in Godhead even before baptism.

The above discussion leads to conclude that transcendentalism is the distinctive characteristic of human beings. It asks the question of being which can experience the unlimited horizon open to the mystery of God. Rahner's concept of anonymous Christian has got the very basis of this transcendental experience of Grace

²¹⁵ Ibid., 6.p. 393.

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 238.

and Nature. The human existence is within the order of grace. The human nature is qualified by God's offer of himself given to all through Christ for salvation. God bestows His very self to the human beings. He bestows the internal essence of divine being upon human beings. For Rahner, concrete human nature is a composite of pure nature and grace. Both can never be separated. It is the relation between Grace and Nature that orientates human towards God. God's mystery is implicit yet there is a strong bond between God and Self. It is the condition of the possibility for the intelligibility for all explicit religious assertions. This became the very basis of Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians who are in one or the other way in relation with God. Rahner explains the term "supernatural existential" as something "present in all human beings, but as an existential of their concrete existence". The existential is the self-communication of God present in every human in the mode of an offer. Every person must be understood as the event of the supernatural self-communication of God, though not necessarily accepts it in freedom. The existential exists in the mode of either acceptance or refusal where offer is still to be accepted or rejected.

It is specifically noted that Rahner cannot be separated from the Ignatian mystical experience. Both recognized human experience inclined to mysticism. The crux of the whole influence of Ignatius on Rahner can be summed up as "The Holy Mystery" mystically offers through a mystic interaction the mystery of the triune God to the mystery of the human person. All the things bear the Holy Mystery which the free humans can find through its self-communication.

It has been the need of the Church to understand non-Christianity for its missionary activities. For this the term anonymous Christians served a lot. It was an eye-opener to the world at large looking for the mystery of Christ present in all. It leads a lot of people to go to the non-Christians in relationship of God's love to them. The Christians have explicit faith in Christ whereas non-Christians have implicit faith in Christ. Rahner says,

"Authentic Christianity is the real love of God and neighbor for their own sake which-----must be directed to God and neighbor in an irreversible and inexhaustible transcendence".²¹⁷

Such love of God is very demanding on man and grows up mysteriously in different shapes and on unfertile soil. This love of God makes us free of everything and become one.

3.4.5. Anonymous Christians and the Church

In the post-modern context, the Church has got a lot of strength with Rahner's theology. The concept of anonymous Christians was vital importance for it. It provided a theological framework for understanding faith in the post-modern context. It became easy for the Church to understand the secular Europe Rahner's work after the Second Vatican Council elaborated the implication of anonymous Christianity facilitating the Church's approach to non-Christians.²¹⁸ This work focused on discussing them as implicit Christians i.e., they were in a state of justification and grace with no explicit belief in Gospel. In another thesis, Rahner interpreted the Church's teachings demonstrating the Christian faith in the pluralistic world. Here Balthasar criticized the theory as robbing Church of its identity. It also signals surrender of the Church to the world relativising the work of the historic Christ in the process of redemption. Rahner emphasizes on the relationship of anonymous Christians and the Church. This objectively interprets his existence on the categorical level. Christ's grace in the anonymous Christian is embodied in the Church. He is always engaged in the pilgrimage of faith. God's self-offer of Grace to the anonymous Christians and his response to it are dependent on Jesus Christ. To Rahner, the salvation history does not necessarily carry in it the saving event of Christ. Rahner's overriding theological concern is to argue God's will of salvation for all.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ *The Christian of the Future* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967). pp. 78-85-97.

²¹⁹ See, Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, *Karl Rahner: Faith in a Wintry Season, (Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of His Life)* (New York: Crossroad, 1991). pp. 12-26.

3.4.6. Anonymous Christian and the Church's Mission

It is an undeniable reality that the supreme concern of the Church in all circumstances remains its missionary task. The anonymous Christian by Karl Rahner and the other theologians could pave the missionary way of the Church with extremely effective result.²²⁰ So the theory accepted and supported by the Church was primarily for its mission. The theory was intended by Rahner for different purposes. Firstly, it carried Christianity's self-understanding. Secondly, it had important consequences for the mission. The missionaries were to accept the God's self-offer of grace to anonymous Christians through Christ whether rejected or accepted by them. The missionaries were to encounter the ones who have already made an act of faith, however implicitly.²²¹ There had arisen a lot of controversy regarding anonymous Christian in the missionary context.²²² However to some missionaries, the theory facilitated their task. They could appeal to the anonymous Christians instead of simply indoctrinating him with teachings of the Church. This suffered arrogant responses as well. Here Rahner's attitude is two-fold. Firstly, he attempted, through this theory to primarily express Christian's self-understanding within the contemporary faith situation. He wants them to understand the disbelief around them and find out God's grace as active in the apparently graceless world. At the secondary stage, the theory meant as a tool for dialogue or evangelization. The misapplication and misinterpretation of the theory somehow owes to Rahner himself.²²³ Rahner claims it to be lawful to develop a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of non-Christians and non-Christian religions. This was meant to illustrate that all salvation comes through Christ and the Church includes all those to whom salvation is offered. Hence,

²²⁰ See for more details: Anonymous Christianity and the missionary task of the Church, Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 12. pp.161-180

²²¹ P. Hacker, *The Christian Attitude Towards Non-Christian Religions: Some Critical and Positive Reflections* (ZMR Publishing 1971).p. 20.

²²² Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 9 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).p. 153.

²²³ Rahner is taking for granted here the reader's familiarity with Hearers of the word.

the theory of anonymous Christians can be understood as successful categorical interpretation of God's salvific will in the world.²²⁴

3.5. Critics on Karl Rahner

Being a human being Rahner could not avoid all fallibility; thus open to criticism. The academic circles have responded differently to Rahner's theology and philosophy. He is not found up-to-date with all the developments. The criticism on Rahner carries different forms which are not as much as on matters of principle.

It is observed that Rahner received favorable criticism, liberal and unfavorable criticism. The favorable and appreciative criticism was from Vatican II expressed by groups of Catholic traditionalist. As his works proved extremely influential, he remains victorious. The insufficiently theologically informed people had been completely dependent on his deeds. Especially, the German Bishops were just told of what Rahner stated, this then was imposed on the Council making his theology dominant at Vatican II. It also explains the way how a theologian slips from the slope of faith handed over to the theologians. This fitted in twilight of German Catholicism. Rahner was faithful to his service and he introduced reform in the Church as he sought to build up his theology. Rahner had to suffer insult and complaint at the Catholic Church giving up the missionary activity the way of renewal and openness. However, Rahner was fully aware of that the circumstances opposing him were false. There had been some critics who found Rahner's theological understanding valid for today. To them, it was lawful when the Church formulated dogmas with political consideration. They felt it superfluous to look for an abiding nucleus with a lot of significance which to many intellectuals was scandalous. Rahner questioned the reason to have faith in the Church when its very grounds for truth were doubted. He asked what justification could be convincing that the Christian formulated their belief in true statements.

²²⁴ A modern conception of salvation which hampers apostolic zeal according to Alan Race, "Christianity and Other Religions: Is Inclusivism Enough?," *Theology* 89, no. 729 (1986), p. 178-186; See, R. Schreier, *The Anonymous Christian and Christology*, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Jan. (1978), pp. 2-11

Rahner remained an idealistic theoretician whose basic model was the relationship of God to humans. He was accused of safeguarding the truth of theological statements by epistemological considerations. Such kind of criticism was by the earlier pupils of Rahner and Metz who could not recognize Rahner's unifying the Divine and the human love. Thus, we find Rahner with all kind of criticism favoring, liberal and strictly opposing.

As far as the theory of the anonymous Christians is concerned, it is a doctrinal position which can be defended within the framework of Rahner's theology. It could have the role of practical orientation of Christians in the pluralistic world. Hebblethwaite assesses this theory as too imprecise because of its vagueness. He says that it is an indicator of a set of theological attitudes giving an example of vision which if adopted proves extremely fruitful. The practicability of Rahner's theory was highly appreciated. The Church took it as a consolation regarding people outside who in some way belonged to the Church, as they are in search of salvation.

Rahner's theory of anonymous Christian was welcomed by those who emphasized on having good terms with the non-Christians. This theory offered ordinary way of salvation for them whereas the Christians were offered extra-ordinary way of salvation. This theory is based on the phenomenon of transcendentalism which discloses the reality of God in every human act within a universally valid historical situation of the supernatural existential. Furthermore, the theory intended to leave the non-Christians in their own religion whilst making them acquainted with Christianity.

Therefore, this theory is regarded as the practical device for both its friends and enemies. Rahner while defending his theory argued more and more, this theory has got practical significance in the theology of religion. The anonymous Christianity mediates between theory and praxis; it is rather the consequent application of Rahner's basic conviction that man's salvation is decided by praxis. There is found in anonymous Christians the practical view of faith i.e., knowing and loving. This theory, says Schwerdtfeger is a way of solving the basic dilemma of Christianity i.e., how can a particular event in history be of universal significance? The theory answers this as man is saved by Jesus Christ and salvation is possible outside the explicit

Christianity. This theory explains the basic framework of Rahner's theological system from beginning to end. It is a doctrinal tenet and a brilliant salvation by Rahner. Therefore, Schwerdtfeger claims the support of other contemporary theologians and rejects those who deny Rahner's brilliant work.

There are found many different reactions to Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians based on Biblical foundations, theological claims and coherence with the texts of Vatican II. In every kind of criticism, there is reflected the missionary activity of the Church. Many think this theory a misnomer in itself. Rahner because of severe criticism on anonymous Christianity altered it to anonymous Christian which on the whole was accepted by many opponents. Regarding this, Hacker strictly criticized the theory as a threat to Church's mission:

"This expression is indeed a misnomer or even a contradiction in terms, [for] if the proclamation of the gospel is nothing but the bringing of men to a reflex realization of what they already are, and then a large part of Christian doctrine is virtually invalidated".²²⁵

However, Rahner duly emphasized the necessity of an explicit Christian belief. Jungel criticized the theory on the one hand as necessary since the light of Christ is somehow accessible to all and on the other explaining Christianity as against any anonymity. To him, in God's offer of salvation, anonymous Christianity is existentially impossible.

3.5.1. Hans Urs Von Balthasar

Hans Urs²²⁶ has been the most powerful and the most famous critic on the theory of anonymous Christians. His work "The Moment of Christian Witness"

²²⁵ Hacker, P. (1971). *The Christian attitude towards non-Christian religions: Some critical and positive reflections*, op.cit, p. 90.

²²⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar was born Lucerne, Switzerland in 1905. He was undoubtedly one of the most important and prolific Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century, writing over one hundred books and a thousand articles. During the Second Vatican Council, the influence of his writings can be seen in the conciliar documents. In 1972 he formed *Communio: International*

carries the most biting attack on the theory, according to which it has been a cause of weakening distinctiveness of Christianity. Rahner has made evacuating the things too easy and has dissolved Christianity it from its very content. Balthasar blames Rahner to have made Church full of anonymous atheists.

Von Balthasar had been a very close friend of Karl Rahner having joint deliberations in Munich working together in direct contact till 1960s. Afterwards, they separated their ways and Von Balthasar sending his books to Rahner asked him to write a theology of the Cross. Rahner regarded Hans Von Balthasar one of the most significant theologians of the twentieth century. He was unique with historical scholarship. On the other hand, for Von Balthasar, Rahner has been the great theological opponent making faith easy adapting to the need of the time. He trivializes the seriousness of God's history with humanity. Von Balthasar also accused Rahner of specifically heretical errors. The latter continued to suffer under the attacks of Von Balthasar.

Von Balthasar sets out his criticism about Rahner with a consistent theme. To him, it is the degree to which Rahner's thought is formed and controlled by philosophical allegiances. The most significant work of Rahner as reviewed by Von Balthasar in 1939 was *Spirit in the World*. He advocated him as the best-known representative of the transcendental approach. This and the criticism on the anonymous Christian implicate that Rahner in some way subscribes to the German idealism.

The non-foundational interpretation of Rahner pulled Von Balthasar to the wrong way. Rahner clearly articulates the relationship between the transcendental and the categorical i.e., the two are always closely connected. It was insensible to Rahner to comprehend Christianity to be one in the implicit depths of experience. This meant

Catholic Review with Daniélou, de Lubac, and Joseph Ratzinger. From 1961-87 he produced his most important work, a trilogy published in fifteen volumes: *The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-Logic*. After years of illness, Balthasar died on June 26, 1988, one day before he was to be made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II.

to reject the offer of grace turning away from God. Von Balthasar does not deny salvation outside the Church. He is rather more emphatic on Christianity's universal salvation. Similarly, grace of Christ, says Von Balthasar is active outside the visible Church. Here Von Balthasar seems to show views on possibility to salvation with Rahner but he did not feel any need to propound such theory as to explain it. If Rahner is understood with all qualifications, to Von Balthasar, Christianity is the distinctive and particular form of life in response to the distinctiveness of Christ's love.

All the severe attacks by Hans Urs Von Balthasar on Rahner, But Rahner publically defended himself in an interview against these attacks. He stated:

"If wanted to counter-attack, I would say that there is a modern tendency (I will not say theory, but tendency). To conceive of a theology of the death of God which seems to me to be basically gnostic? For I am apriority cemented in to have any meaning at all- is in a true and authentic and comforting sense the Deus impassible, The God who is incapable of suffering".²²⁷

Thus, there had been the different understanding and experiences of God which led the intellectuals even to irreconcilable theological positions.

3.5.2. Johann Baptist Metz

Johann Metz²²⁸ has been a very close friend and student of Rahner since, the friendship lasted till the death of Rahner. Both had been in sincere bond of friendship. Rahner found the theological conversation with Metz quite helpful. Rahner's encounter with philosophy and theology of intercommunication is owed to Metz. The

²²⁷ Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*, p. 125.

²²⁸ Johann Baptist Metz (b. August 5, 1928) is a Roman Catholic diocesan priest from Bavaria (Auerbach). He is Ordinary Professor of Fundamental Theology, Emeritus, at Westphalian Wilhelms University in the northern German town of Muenster. He was also Visiting Lecturer in Politics and Religion at the Institute for Philosophy at the University of Vienna. His books include *Poverty of Spirit*, *The Emergent Church*, *Faith in History and Society: toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, and *Hope against Hope: Johann Baptist Metz and Elie Wiesel Speak Out on the Holocaust*.

influence of Metz is evident on Rahner when he explains the relationship between philosophy and theology, the love of God and the love of man. Rahner talks of political love and Christian humanism along with the social function of the Church and the theology of revolution. Metz is found criticizing Rahner and his theology of transcendence. To Rahner, it carried an experience of God that included the attitude of men to one another. Everything in Rahner is let to go over into God who loves humanity with an incomprehensible effect.

This love extends to the universal consummation God. Metz goes on to criticize this theology as it becomes privatized making Christian message lose its importance to the societal dimension.

Metz quotes; "the categories most prominent in this theology are the categories of the intimate, the private, the apolitical sphere".²²⁹

Moreover, the transcendental attempt undermines history fleeing from it since the human person is always already with God.

3.5.3. Hans Kung

Hans Kung²³⁰ has also criticized Rahner's theory of anonymous Christian. He states that any theologian is not allowed to re-interpret reality according to apparently profound speculative constructions.²³¹

To Kung, even the non-Catholic Christian despite belonging to the Church cannot be included in the secret list of the members of the Church. There is no value

²²⁹ See, Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*. pp. 126-127.

²³⁰ Professor Hans Küng, born in Sursee, Switzerland in 1928, is a scholar of theology and philosophy and a prolific writer. He studied philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University (Rome), the Sorbonne and the Institut Catholique de Paris. In addition, Dr. Küng holds numerous awards and honorary degrees from several universities.

See, details: Anderson, M. (Ed.). (2014, April 12). Hans Kung. Retrieved September 18, 2014, from <http://www.britannica.com>

²³¹ Kung, *On Being a Christian*. p. 317.

of explicit or implicit or conscious or unconscious faith in the Church. In the same way, the non-Christians if not desirous of becoming the members of the Church, explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously or who have anything opposite of the Church mission can never be adopted by Christianity. Kung wants Rahner to realize that Church has its own place as well as certain criteria which is to be maintained in every situation. However, he advocated God's universal will of salvation but through Christ. Salvation outside the Church is because of faith in God.²³² He expresses respect and honor for man's free will to him, the sole criterion for entertaining the community of believers should be a profession of faith.

The approach of Hans Kung to Rahner's theology is just when he criticizes the anonymous Christians. Salvation is universal to all humans but the non-Christians cannot be termed as even anonymous Christians in any case. Their faith in God and acts of virtue will lead them to eternal salvation. It is not permissible for any theologian, views Kung, to drag believers of other faiths into his own because of certain similarities or to impose on them his own faith.

3.6. Summry

The notable element in the theory of anonymous Christian by Karl Rahner is the primacy of grace and God's salvific initiative. Grace significantly gives man a share in Godhead while salvation is not a possibility but a fact given to every human through Christ. The only means to salvation for all is God's grace found in man's moral choices having transcendental experience of God. This has been proclaimed as the fundamental and essential reality of the Christian message. Because of this, everybody is regarded as the anonymous Christian somehow affecting the consciousness.

The notion of anonymous Christian is not pioneered by Karl Rahner. It has a complete historical background. Justin (before 165 A.D), Archbishop of Maliges (1827-1906), Auguste Dechamps(1810-1833)and the French philosopher Maurice Blondel are found having worked to show that salvation was there for the non-

²³² Ibid.

Christians also as they were doing what God wills. Karl Barth and Paul Tillich had done the same job. For these theologians, the grace of Christ is universal and the non-Christians had implicit faith in Christ. Rahner indirectly influenced by these thinkers found that the anonymous Christian was the inevitable and direct consequence of the supernatural existential which meant that the humans have unlimited openness to the limitless God which keeps all of them capable of hearing the word of God. Rahner's theological concern had been God's universal saving will and thus possibility of salvation outside the Church.

The unique understanding of grace by Rahner elaborates that God bestows His very self to man and His self-communication is an ontological process effecting the divinization of man. It also carries in it the philosophy of existentialism. Grace fundamentally affects the existent reality as God becomes destiny of the created reality.

A more clear explanation by Rahner came forward when he undertook the task to deal with the "new theology" by French movement. This was severely criticized by Rome. Rahner got the point of de Lubac who viewed the human desire for God as an intrinsic part of human nature. Rome protested against the theory as it did not do justice to the sovereign freedom of God's grace. Rahner elucidated this delicate matter in such a way that it did justice to the concerns of both.

Another significant development in Rahner's theology had been Martin Heidegger's existential which pinpointed that God created humans to share with them the Divine knowledge and love. Rahner termed it as 'supernatural existential' present in all human beings but as an existential of their concrete existence. To Rahner, grace and existential are closely related i.e. without existential grace would lose its gratuity. The Supernatural Existential in brief is the Self-communication of God present in every human. It exists in the mode of an offer either accepted or rejected. It does not reduce the Self-communication of God to purely human reality. It transforms the human person making acceptance or refusal of God's communication free. This is because of transcendental orientation of the human nature. The supernatural existential directly and inevitably resulted in the concept of the anonymous Christian.

A view of the four theses gives a clear image of Anonymous Christian. Though this bore a lot of criticism, yet Rahner continued stressing on his thesis to illustrate that non-Christians have an implicit belief in Christ leading them to salvation. This has been censured for operating on the basis of an abstract and overly optimistic view of religions. It makes non-Christians embodiments of God's universal will of salvation. Rahner's anonymous Christian was initially bitterly criticized by the Church but with the passage of time, the Church found it extremely helpful and fruitful for its missionary task which is its supreme concern. The Church explained it as to encounter with those who have already implicit faith in Christ. There was a way, through this theory of appealing to the non-Christians instead of indoctrinating them. For the Church, the theory also served the process of dialogue and evangelization.

The critics on Rahner's theory of Anonymous Christians had been with favoring, opposing and the liberal approach. The favorable criticism came from the Second Vatican Council and the Catholic traditionalists. Some theologians found Rahner's approach valid and needed for today. Rahner's emphasis on the relationship of God to humans has made him an ideal for many. The practicability of his theory has been highly appreciated. Critics like Hans Urs, Johann Metz and Hans Kung have also put bitter criticism on his theory. They charged it in many ways. However, almost all of them advocated the approach to salvation of all whatever faith the people have. With the passage of time, Rahner managed to prove to them that the theory was not only true but also the need of the day. This has made his position undoubtedly of modern mainstream Catholic theology. The most extra-ordinary developments in Catholic theology are Rahner's salvation optimism. He argued that all religions though contradictory in essential matters are necessarily the means of salvation as willed by God.

Chapter Four

Role of Rahner in the Development of Christian Theology

4.1. Introduction

A thorough study of Karl Rahner's theory of anonymous Christian clarifies how fruitful it had been for the Church and for tendering the attitudes towards the non-Christians. These criticisms have not been seriously looked into but merely glossed over and dismissed, yet Rahner's consistency to prove its legitimacy won him a lot of repute and he now stands among the best theologians of his time. His major contribution had been retrieving to the scholastic school of thought, following Thomas Aquinas and labored hard to elaborate Neo-Scholasticism. The scholastic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas started with Theocentrism where existence and nature of God was one and triune. This is based on Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic patterns which explain God as the efficient, final and exemplary cause for all. For Rahner, the aim of human existence is the quest for meaning. Saint Thomas' text was focused proving the fruitfulness of the scholastic philosophy as the structuring element of the speculative theology.

It was after Renaissance and Reformation that scholasticism made a shift to Neo-Scholasticism, chiefly led by Rahner in the twentieth century. He retrieved to the correct interpretation of the Scripture bringing Thomas again into theology whose chief concern was the harmony between the natural reason and the supernatural revelation. Rahner with his colleagues advocated transcendentalism proving it the very basis for salvation for all. This is the self-communication of God offered to all men in their freedom. Rahner's explanation of the theory of anonymous Christian opened for the Vatican Council II, the gate way to settle the issues of interfaith dialogue and salvation for non-Christians.

4.2. Scholasticism and its Impact on Christian Theologians

The Scholastic theology had been there since medieval ages in diverse traditions. Many prominent theologians contributed a lot to it with great significance. In the modern times, Thomism has been dominant manifesting decisive differences.

These differences have been highlighted by the historical studies of the twentieth Century.²³³

The major cause of shift from Scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism had been the controversies as a result of Renaissance²³⁴ and the Protestant Reformation.²³⁵ However, the development of theological censures also marks the changes in Scholasticism within the last medieval period. The errors in theology and philosophy also led to the new method in theology with emphasis on authority and theological resources.²³⁶

To Thomas, the articles of faith were understanding and presentation of Christian doctrine. He thought of the harmonious relation between natural reason and the supernatural revelation. This harmony was disturbed by the cross in philosophy which could be corrected by the Church.

Thomas Aquinas²³⁷, a theologian of his time responsibly took the issue of salvation for non-Christians. His theology begins with the self-evident truth. The

²³³ Livingston and Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, p. 342.

²³⁴ The Renaissance literally "rebirth," the period in European civilization immediately following the middle Ages and conventionally held to have been characterized by a surge of interest in Classical learning and values. It was a cultural movement that spanned the period roughly from the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the Late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe. Though availability of paper and the invention of metal movable type sped the dissemination of ideas from the later 15th century, the changes of the Renaissance were not uniformly experienced across Europe.

²³⁵ The Protestant Reformation was the schism within Western Christianity initiated by John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other early Protestants. It was sparked by the 1517 posting of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. The efforts of the self-described "reformers", who objected to ("protest") the doctrines, rituals, leadership, and ecclesiastical structure of the Roman Catholic Church, led to the creation of new national Protestant churches.

²³⁷ Thomas Aquinas was born in the Kingdom of Naples at Rocca Secca purportedly between the years 1225 and 1227. He died on the 7th of March in 1274 at Fossa Nuova. Thomas Aquinas was a

solemn belief in God leads him to know God and His relation to man. To Rahner, God is knowable but not with the intellect. It is rather something above intellect. Thomas negates the opinion that no created intellect could see the essence of God. If God created intellect cannot see God, it could never attain beatitude which is the highest function of man. This can only be as a result of high operation of intellect. Thomas goes on to state that in every man, there resides a natural desire to know whatever happens in his surroundings. This arises in him a lot of wonder also.²³⁸ Because of rational faculty, man is capable to know God to some extent. Thomas holds that God is in the knowledge of His creatures. This guided him to explain the possibility of salvation who did not apparently become the members of the Church. He thus states;

“If, however, some were saved without receiving any revelation, they were not saved without faith in the Mediator, for, though they did not believe in him explicitly, they did, nevertheless, have implicit faith through believing in the divine providence since they believed that God would deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to him, according to the revelation of the Spirit to those who knew the truth”.²³⁹

This indicates that Aquinas considered salvation universal and his task included making this understandable. People will be saved by free will of God. His ways of salvation may be known or unknown. Aquinas further holds that God's sovereign Goodness can be and cannot be understood without Trinity of persons. Knowing God, declares Aquinas, cannot neglect Trinity. The human reason can go to a certain extent in knowing God. Aquinas centered at two points i.e., faith in Christ could be explicit or implicit; and all the goodness in men has come from

Dominican Friar, Theologian and Philosopher. He was of the Scholastic tradition, which emphasized dialectical reasoning as a means with knowledge. Scholasticism, as was Thomas Aquinas, was greatly influenced by the Aristotelian resurgence and Neo-Platonism, both of which Scholastics, and Thomas Aquinas in particular, would seek to reconcile with Christian theological doctrine.

²³⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. I (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc, 1947). q. 12, art. 1.

²³⁹ Ibid.. q. 2, art. 7.

God through Jesus Christ. Salvation is there for such people because of their implicit faith in Christ.

Along with Thomism, Augustism²⁴⁰ and Neo-Scholasticism emphasize the tradition, Church and the role of experience. Augustine's emphasis had been on the relation between personal purification and the interpretation of Scripture. This shifted to Thomas' emphasis on academic discipline with rule and authority. The emphasis in Neo-Scholasticism shifted to the Church's teaching as the proximate rule to interpret Scripture and tradition as the remote rule of faith. The following discussion about Scholasticism and the shift to Neo-Scholasticism will make it quite understandable how different theologians in different contexts dealt with the theological concerns. This was to deal with the problems of that time, though the theologians bore a lot of criticism.

4.3. Scholasticism In the Christian Theology

4.3.1. Definition of Scholasticism

"Scholasticism" is a derived term from a Greek word *Schooled* which meant "free time". Among Greeks, the instruction in philosophy was originally followed in one's free time. In Rome, someone devoted to science was called Scholastic (Scholar), a learned person who got education at school.²⁴¹ It was Lambertus M. De Rijk²⁴² who proposed to use the term "Scholasticism" as a collective term for

²⁴⁰ **Augustine of Hippo** (13 November 354 – 28 August 430), is known as Saint Augustine or Saint Austin, was an early Christian theologian whose writings are considered very influential in the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy. He was bishop of Hippo Regius (present-day Annaba, Algeria) located in the Roman province of Africa. Writing during the Patristic Era, he is viewed as one of the most important Church Fathers. Among his most important works are *City of God* and *Confessions*, which continue to be read widely today.

²⁴¹ Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology* (USA: The Catholic University of America, Press, 2010). pp. 2-3.

²⁴² **L. M. de Rijk** (Hilversum, November, 6 1924-Maastricht June, 30 2012) was Professor of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy at the University of Leiden, and Honorary Professor at the University of Maastricht. A complete bibliography of his writings up to 1999 is available: Maria Kardaum and Joke

scholarly research carried out with particular method. As a structuring element in Catholic Theology, there had been no rival to the Scholasticism. It had been highly influential in European as well as American speculative theology.

Often Scholasticism was identified with medieval theology. However, this method remained in practice later on. De Rijk emphasized the didactic and methodological character of Scholasticism. He viewed it as,

“a method which is characterized, both on the level of research and on the level of teaching, by the use of an ever recurring system of concepts, distinctions, definitions, propositional analyses, argumentation techniques and disputation method”.²⁴³

Another theologian Ulrich G. Leinsle²⁴⁴ pointed out that the medieval theological method was a very complex concept depending entirely on the ever-changing concept of Scholarship during the age. This indicates that the term Scholasticism refers to the method irrespective of content. Scholasticism is characterized with methods of disputation and reasoning which contrast to the other ways of theology. To get to the concept more clearly, here is stated a definition of Scholasticism. In the real sense, Scholasticism intends to gain deep insight into the theological matters by applying reason and philosophy to the truths of revelation. The aim of this theological method is (1) to bring supernatural truth closer the human mind which reflects on it, (2) To make possible a systematic, organically structured general presentation of the truth about salvation, and (3) to be able answer reasonably the objection rose against the contents of revelation.²⁴⁵ This approach is restricted only to theology.

Spruyt (eds.) – *The Winged Chariot. Collected essays on Plato and Platonism in honour of L. M de Rijk* – Leiden, Brill, 2000. pp. 15-26.

²⁴³ See, Willem J. Van Asselt, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, trans. Albert Gootjes (USA: Reformed Heritage Books, 2010).pp. 7-8.

²⁴⁴ Ulrich G. Leinsle, He is German author of the book of *An Introduction to Scholastic Theology*

²⁴⁵ See, Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*.p. 5.

4.3.2. Different Stages of Scholasticism in Christian Tradition

A glimpse in the history of scholasticism reveals that it in nature passed through five stages. The first stage is the turn of the century which basically seems to be the preface of the following four stages. The first stage started with the beginning of twentieth century and ended at the outbreak of the First World War. The period between the first and Second World War marks the second stage of scholasticism. After World War II, the third stage started which continued till Second Vatican Council. The last stage is going on at present since the Vatican II. In each period, Church had different reactions to successive crises. The theological intellect during these stages also carried distinctive academic climate duly affecting the church theology. The core of the scholasticism theology and philosophy had been the major thesis in epistemology and metaphysics resulting in the emergence of a new generation of leading theologians. Their contribution along with the severe intervention of the church transformed the scholasticism from closed conventionalism (early 1900s) to the open intellectualism of today.

4.4. Scholasticism in the 20th Century

During this time the Jesuit Gregorian University at Rome became a stronghold of scholasticism. An attempt by Bismarck's to break it was successfully resisted. The higher institute of Philosophy at Louvain was established by Desire Mercier whose intellectual leadership won international reputation for it. The Jesuits and the distinguished scholars staffed the theological faculty all around furnishing a number of scholars to Catholic institutes. They had shown the fruitfulness of scholastic philosophy as the structuring element of a speculative theology. The scholastic theologians through a number of philosophical and theological reviews were received by the audience of clerics and educated laymen whose influence form the public opinion. Pope Leo XIII²⁴⁶ was keen to historical

²⁴⁶See, Pope Leo XIII, (born March 2, 1810, Carpineto Romano, Papal States—died July 20, 1903, Rome), head of the Roman Catholic Church (1878–1903) who brought a new spirit to the papacy, manifested in more conciliatory positions toward civil governments, by care taken that

research into scholasticism's medieval sources. His efforts had been at an encouraging pace for the Scholastic revival. A lot of pioneering work by prominent theologians of the time laid foundations for the revolutionary historical studies in the next generation. There had been renewed dialogue between scholastic and contemporary philosophy which proved the intellectual self-possession of the former. The internal coherence and consistency was regained by it ridding of extraneous accretions. Despite this, scholasticism needed more adequate work to distinguish philosophy of Saint Thomas from his theology. This was practically identical by Leo XIII in his work *Aeterni Patris*. At turn of the century, Thomas' epistemology and metaphysics distinguishingly carried difference from those of his great baroque commentators.

Another problem at that time was the deficient historic thought as it was a lightly woven system. This system must rest on trinity, Incarnation and grace as its central theses. The intrinsic coherence of such theology could be understood only through good comprehension of its specific philosophical presumptions.

A basically logical analysis could enable a theologian to distinguish the works of the past theologians from the peripheral free opinions. The doctors at that time could not distinguish between Thomas' own theology and his baroque commentators. Being unaware of history they gave a misleading account of Saint Thomas' thought in their manuals ignoring radical uniqueness of his metaphysics of existence. This metaphysics played a vital role in Thomas theology of Trinity, the Incarnation and grace. The Scholastics also ignored his metaphysics of God to his personal religious experience. Thomism being impersonal Aristotelian science did not fail to give the impression of being a highly rationalistic system despite misleading presentations. The writing and teaching of Scholastic philosophers and

the church not be opposed to scientific progress and by an awareness of the pastoral and social needs of the times. He was the oldest pope (reigning until the age of 93), and had the third longest pontificate, behind Pius IX (his immediate predecessor) and John Paul II. He is the most recent Pope to date to take the name "Leo" upon being elected as Pope. See for more details: François, R. (2013, June 18). Leo XIII. Retrieved July 16, 2014, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/336286/Leo-III/4150/Pontificate>

theologians displayed a markedly negative attitude towards philosophy of intuition through strongly influencing the Catholic theology. This clarifies that many French Catholics were ill at Scholastic revival. To them, Scholastic theology could not be squared with Christian soul's dynamic life under grace.

In short, their focus had been on the historical study of Saint Thomas' text by the turn of the century. The re-approachment between Scholasticism and modern philosophy could not be achieved earlier in the century as it could not proceed in a tranquil atmosphere.

4.4.1. First Stage

This was the beginning of the twentieth century. Leo XIII who had never excluded the possibility of re-approachment between the Church and the nineteenth century parliamentary governments had been succeeded by Sainly Pastoral but less intellectual Pius X. Here, the secular republic and its parliamentary constitution was rejected and considered fundamentally an anti-Catholic institution. Moreover, the modernists stroked at Leo XIII's program while attacking Scholasticism for theological, educational and social reforms.

To them, Scholastic theology was an impediment to the proper appreciation of the Revelation. The religious mind was required to thematize its inner experience of God as truth is the conformity of revisable objectivities with the evolving soul's vital exigencies. There had been a great influence of modernism on catholic theology. The attacks on Scholasticism had revolutionary repercussions. The traditional apologeticsof the natural Catholic theology were undercut by modernism. The Catholic dogmatic statement was re-evaluated with radically different approach modernists aimed at thematizing the religious quality of the individual soul's practical encounter with God. This meant to satisfy man's religious needs.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ See, Gerald A. Mcool, "Twentieth-Century Scholasticism," *The Journal of Religion* 58(1978). pp. 203-8

4.4.2. Second Stage (Between the Wars)

During this period Scholasticism was fully revived. There had developed openness toward parliamentary democracy as well as the secular culture. Many of the philosophers after the war had broad vision and they contributed to Scholasticism admirably. Their achievements had been the enrichment and development of the commentator's traditional Thomism, the historical recovery of Saint Thomas's own philosophy; and the establishment of Transcendental Thomism. The prominent theologians in this regard had been Jacques Maritain²⁴⁸, Etienne Gilson²⁴⁹ and Joseph Marechal.²⁵⁰ This indicates that there emerged three kinds of Thomism. These were the traditional Thomism of Maritain, the historical Thomism of Gilson and the Transcendental Thomism of Marechal. There was

²⁴⁸ See, Jacques Maritain (18 November 1882 – 28 April 1973) was a French Catholic philosopher. Raised as a Protestant, he became an agnostic before converting to Catholicism in 1906. An author of more than 60 books, he helped to revive St. Thomas Aquinas for modern times and he was the one of the principal exponents of Thomism in the twentieth century and an influential interpreter of the thought of St Thomas Aquinas. He is a prominent drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pope Paul VI presented his "Message to Men of Thought and of Science" at the close of Vatican II to Maritain, his long-time friend and mentor. Maritain's interest and works spanned many aspects of philosophy, including aesthetics, political theory, philosophy of science, metaphysics, the nature of education, liturgy and ecclesiology. See also, Sweet, W. (2008, August 18). Jacques Maritain (1882–1973). Retrieved June 5, 2014, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/maritain/>

²⁴⁹ See, Etienne Gilson (13 June 1884 – 19 September 1978) was a French philosopher and historian of philosophy. A scholar of medieval philosophy, he also philosophized in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas, though he did not consider himself either a neo-Scholastic or neo-Thomist philosopher—in fact, he was consistently critical of both those schools. In 1946 he attained the distinction of being elected an "Immortal" (member) of the Académie française. He was one of the most eminent international scholars of the 20th century. See also, Encyclopedia Britannica: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/233841/Etienne-Gilson>

²⁵⁰ See, Joseph Maréchal (1 July 1878 – 11 December 1944) was a Belgian Jesuit priest, philosopher and psychologist at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven who founded a school of thought called Transcendental Thomism, which attempted to merge the theological and philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas with that of Immanuel Kant.

found among them the disagreement about the judgment in Thomas's epistemology about the abstraction of being and the nature of his philosophical theology. Scholasticism envisioned by Leo XIII was genuine. Here seems that an unbridgeable philosophical pluralism had become an inevitable necessity.

4.4.3. Third Stage (World War II to Vatican II)

The two wars had changed the intellectual climate of Europe to a great extent. The Catholics and Scholastic theologians continued to contradict at the issue of ability of Scholastic theology regarding accurate interpretation of Scripture's meaning. There was carried out a lot of historical research in other fields. With this, there was found significant difference in method between Scholastic theology and the symbolic approach to Scripture. This gave rise to the new theology with Hegel as the most influential figure in postwar period. It was found impossible for the Catholic theologians to leap over the rigid Scholasticism of nameless and return to the Fathers. The new theology was to link the Church's Patristic heritage and Neo-Hegelianism, besides furnishing a more satisfactory explanation of the saving grace of Christ which reaches to atheists and non-Christians. The new theology had suffered Thomists violent reaction. Thomism was in full opposition to the plurality of analogous conceptual frameworks. The authentic Thomists viewed the sound metaphysics of being as having only one conceptual framework with the political settlement in Rome. The new theology appeared to be a dangerous flirtation with modern thought and Marxist politics. This paved the way for Marechal's Transcendental Thomism to enjoy the complete possession of the field.

4.4.4. Fourth Stage (Vatican II to the Present)

Marechal transcendental Thomism, after Vatican II was chiefly led by Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergane.²⁵¹ They dealt all the theological problems by

²⁵¹ See, Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ, CC (17 December 1904 – 26 November 1984) was a Canadian Jesuit priest, philosopher, and theologian regarded by some as one of the most important

applying Marechal's metaphysics of the mind. Rahner developed a powerful systematic theology whereas Lonergan contributed a lot to the theological methodology. To both of them, the human mind's dynamic movement toward infinite being had been the basis for philosophical reflection. Both approach to God on the basis of Thomas' analogy of being. However, they differ in their interpretation of Thomas's matter, form and existence of metaphysics. Lonergan introduced the new theological method which enabled the theologians to thread his way safely by employing it in contemporary scientific theology. Rahner as well as Lonergan had been open to the theological possibilities of diverse philosophical systems. The unique interpretation of Thomas's metaphysics of being formed the basis of Rahner's whole theology. The theological contributions by the two led the Scholastic theology to give up its claim to theological imperialism.

4.5. Neo-Scholasticism and the 20th Century Christian Theologians

Despite diverse schools of thought, Thomism dominated the modern theology. 'Summa' the famous work by Thomas Aquinas became the basic text book of classroom instruction. Neo-Scholasticism does carry certain differences from Thomas' own thought. The influence of Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation caused shifts from medieval Scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism. The research informs that the changes in the development of theological censures were caused by the theological errors in the theological method. To Thomas, there existed a basic harmony between natural reason and the supernatural revelation.

thinkers of the twentieth century. Lonergan's works include *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957) and *Method in Theology* (1972), as well as two studies of Thomas Aquinas, several theological textbooks, and numerous essays, including two posthumously published essays on macro economics. A projected 25-volume *Collected Works* is underway with the University of Toronto Press. See also, Lonergan is considered by many intellectuals to be the finest philosophic thinker of the 20th century." *Time*, April 27, 1970, p. 10. Cf. *Fellows of the Woodstock Theological Center, The Realms of Desire: An Introduction to the Thought of Bernard Lonergan*, (Washington, D.C.: Woodstock Theological Center, 2011), pp. 3-6; in addition to recording their own estimate of Lonergan's importance, the authors cite the opinions of many others.

The errors resulted in disharmonies in philosophy. The Scripture and the Church were there to correct them. However, with the developments in 14th and 15th century, the Scripture, central to Thomism, was losing its authority. There arose conflict among councils, Papacy and universities. This led to necessity of an inarch complex theological method which sought to determine Catholic truths by appealing to Scripture tradition, the councils, the papacy etc. This method was completely different from that of Aquinas. In the sixteenth century, MelchiorCano,²⁵² a Spanish Dominican theologian undertook the research about the evident principles within the diverse sources influencing Baroque Scholasticism which thence developed into Neo-Scholasticism.²⁵³ Cano in his work "De Locis Theologicis" listed the places where theology could look for the sources of its arguments and authority. He followed humanist concept of locus while assembling various Loci for different disciplines and applying them to theology. Unlike Aristotle, Cano referred the term locus to the place where theology finds its authority. He established foundations of Roman Catholicism with reference to theological authorities. To him, there were ten sources of theological authority namely (1) Scripture (2) Oral tradition, (3) The Catholic Church, (4) The general Councils, (5) The Roman Church, (6) The fathers of the Church, (7) The Scholastic Theologians, (8) Human Reason, (9) Philosophers, and (10) History. Cano considered the first seven as theological authorities whereas the last three were extrinsic to Theology.

The writings of Parisian theologian Denis Petau²⁵⁴ stood decisive for the development of Baroque Scholasticism of sixteenth century to Neo-Scholasticism

²⁵² See, Melchor Cano, Melchor also spelled Melchior (born c. 1509, Tarancon, Spain—died Sept. 30, 1560, Toledo), Dominican theologian and bishop who upheld the rights of the Spanish crown against the claims of the papacy. See for more details:<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/92808/Melchor-Cano> See also, New Catholic Dictionary:<http://saints.sqpn.com/ncd01615.htm>

²⁵³ Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 2 ed. (USA: Fortress Press Minneapolis, 2011).p. 22.

²⁵⁴ See, (Denis Petaus), He is one of the most distinguished theologians of the seventeenth century, born at Orleans, (1583; d. at Paris December 11, 1652), from *The Original*

of twentieth century. He was the one whom the Neo-Scholastics of 20th century labeled as the prince of theologians. He had been remarkably successful to understand the nature of theology as well as developing theological use of historical sources. To him, theology became a deductive science as it could employ deductive method, deducing conclusions from the premises of faith by means of premises of reason. He argued that theology is a strict science when it uses deductive method to reach any theological conclusions. This in particular became the Neo-Scholastic conception of theology as a scientific discipline forming its structure and procedure.

The development of theological manual became the major instrument of theological instruction. There followed a set approach. The manuals first clarified the Catholic position on certain topics demonstrating its veracity with arguments drawn from Bible and refuting the errors of Protestantism. Neo-Scholasticism incorporated the scientific ideals into its theological approach. Its theological method carries the three elements which are detailed below.²⁵⁵

4.5.1. Starting Point: Church Teaching

The theses on the theological topics started with the Church teaching. The first manual of theological instruction through this practice was “theologic Wircebergensis in 1771. Church teaching was considered as the immediate rule of faith by Neo-Scholastic theologians. This ascertained for the believers the truths contained in Scriptures and traditions which were considered to be the remote rule of faith?²⁵⁶

Neo-Scholasticism explained the Roman Catholicism in the most precise formula which facilitated a lot in preaching and learning the faith. This approach was different from traditional Scholasticism in two ways; firstly the form of

Catholic Encyclopedia: <http://oce.catholic.com/oce/browse-page-cans.php?id=70f9f78765762552b2da1c3b54d16813>

²⁵⁵ Fiorenza and Galvin, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*. 22-3.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

presentation changed and at the second place there was a change in the role of Scripture.

In Scholasticism, the presentation was in the form of question whereas Neo-Scholastics adopted the form of thesis. The former's teaching began with disputed questions whereas the latter's with theses about Church teaching. A renowned historian, Chenu²⁵⁷ has perfectly elucidated the contrast between the traditional and the modern Scholasticism in the following words;

"For an article is a question not a thesis, the word was to be used in the manuals. The change in terms is in itself denunciations of the heinous reversal to which have been subjected the exalted pedagogical methods set up in the 12th century universities: 'active method' mindful to keep open, even under the dead-weight of school work, the curiosity of both the student and the master".²⁵⁸

As far as the role of Scripture is concerned, the medieval Scholastics gave priority to it whereas the Neo-Scholastics had radically different approach. Thomism maintained that the argument based on the authority of Scripture bore intrinsic probity. The Neo-Scholastic in reaction to Reformation's appeal criticized the misinterpretation of the Scripture. So, to them, the primary rule of faith was the Church teaching. This led to the careful delimitation of obligatory character of the Church in Neo-Scholasticism.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ See, **Marie-Dominique Chenu** O. P. (7 January 1895, – 11 February 1990, Paris) was a progressive Roman Catholic theologian and one of the founders of the reformist journal *Concilium*. Chenu was a forerunner of the *ressourcement* in theology that proceeded to the reforms of Vatican II. Chenu played a large role in the reappropriation of historic theological sources that led to the *nouvelle théologie*. In particular he promoted the return to Thomas Aquinas as a source but rejecting post-Tridentine "modern scholastic" theology. See, Marie-Dominique Chenu OP (7 January 1895, – 11 February 1990, Paris), from *Encyclopedia* <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3407702327/chenu-marie-dominique.html>

²⁵⁸ Marie Dominique Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas*, trans. Albert M. Landry (Chicago: H. Regnery Company, 1964).p. 96.

²⁵⁹ See, for the distinctiveness of the Neo-Scholastic Understanding of Magisterium, See T. Howland Sanks, *Authority in the Church: A study in Changing Paradigms*, (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974).

The revealed truths were called “divine faith” whereas the revelation defined by magisterial were considered “defined divine faith”. The teachings of the Church flowing indirectly from the office were defined as belonging to ecclesiastical faith. The Neo-Scholasticism through the approach of distinct classifications, which thence was a philosophical attitude, set the parameters of theological debates. This was criticized by many theologians leading to a balanced re-assessment today. Such classifications had advantage of identifying areas of dissent. The elements of tradition viewed as central to Roman Catholicism were clear through this classification that these were not central. The theological propositions were classified regarding their centrality to faith, their degree of certitude and their corresponding censure.²⁶⁰

4.5.2. Proof from Scripture and Tradition

At the second place, Neo-Scholastic theologians sought to demonstrate the truth of the thesis in its relation to Scripture and tradition. The demonstration was procedural depending on magisterial teaching. The proposition to be demonstrated determined the selection and reading of the sources. The passages from the Scriptures were reduced to proof texts which were interpreted as demonstration of particular doctrinal thesis. This justified the distinction between the proximate and remote rule of faith. The former served as the key for getting to the meaning and proof value of the latter. This was excellently advocated by a Neo-Scholastic theologian as, “the demonstrative power of the Sacred Scripture, as inspired, as well as that of the documents of the tradition depend upon the Church’s teaching office because those sources have value for us in the order of knowledge only as a result of the help of the teaching office”.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Fiorenza and Galvin, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*. pp. 23-24.

²⁶¹ Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas*.p. 25.

4.5.3. Speculative Exposition

The third step was to deal the teaching of Church, thesis and demonstration of Scripture and tradition through philosophical reflection to reach more profound understanding of its truth. This involved examples and comparisons from natural experience elaborating the thesis which also meant to relate it to other beliefs highlighting their coherence. This step also sought "actualization" of the thesis by applying it to concrete issues. It demonstrated how traditional truths could be correlated with modern questions. The most important element in this step was an attempt to resolve the debates among diverse Scholastic schools which led to greater conceptual clarification. The Neo-Scholastic theologians took the philosophical reflection as a tool rather than as a critique. Their main concern had been the deeper understanding of theological truths.²⁶²

4.6. Neo-Scholastic Product in the Twentieth Century

With the development in theological studies, the contemporary Roman Catholicism carries many distinctive method and approaches. The ideal ones among them are transcendental, hermeneutical, analytical, correlation and liberation. These approaches are theoretically different but are indeed combined in practicality.

(1) Transcendental Theology: It was Immanuel Kant who coined the term 'Transcendental Theology'. By this, he meant to describe a method of discerning theological concepts. Later on, this was divided into two categories, ontology and cosmotheology. These terms also were first used by Kant. His aim was to explain distinctively the two competing types of transcendental theology. Kant points out the incapability of human reason to prove the existence of God. For this, Kant

²⁶² Ibid.

appeals to the moral symbolism. He explains God as a moral trinity i.e. holy lawgivers, good governor and just judge.²⁶³

(2) Hermeneutical Theology: It carries in it different theories of interpretation. From this viewpoint, all approaches to theology are hermeneutical. These may be the interpretation of Scripture, Tradition or experience. In the works of some theologians, it is found that transcendental and hermeneutical approaches are combined together for theological explanations.²⁶⁴

(3) Analytical Theology: In this approach to theology, analytical tools are applied to have clear understanding of religious matters. In the contemporary Roman Catholicism, two approaches of analysis have been extremely influential. First is the significance of a metatheory while the second one is the significant role of models and paradigms in theological reflection.²⁶⁵

(4) Correlation Theology: To many Roman Catholic theologians, in the present age, the theological task can be best expressed by a method of correlation. The Christian vision is to be maintained in the very task of Christian theology. It carries relation of man to God and Christ as well as relation of Christians to the non-Christians. This complex task entails diverse criteria.²⁶⁶

(5) Liberation Theology: This carries in it diverse theological movements. This in a narrow sense focuses on political, ideological and economic causes of social inequality in Latin America. The theologians here highly influenced by Johann B. Metz interpret modern society and political change distinctively. They advocate liberation as the central theological category. In a broader sense, this approach to theology refers to any movement that criticizes any specific oppression. Liberation is viewed as integral to the theological task.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ See, Otto Muck, *The Transcendental Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1968). See also, Rahner, "Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology." p. 287.

²⁶⁴ See, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Theology: Transcendental or Hermeneutical?," *Horizons* 16, no. 02 (1989). p. 329-41.

²⁶⁵ See, Fiorenza and Galvin, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*. pp. 35-6.

²⁶⁶ See, *ibid.* pp. 42-47.

²⁶⁷ See, Naturally, Ruether's work can also be categorized in relation to liberation theology and feminist theology—an indication that there is a considerable overlap or crisscrossing in the

Any theologian following one approach necessarily borrows insights from the other approaches. Here in the Rahnerian context, the approach which contributed to the making of Rahner had been the transcendental theological approach. Its focus is on the human subjectivity and its role within human knowledge and religious belief. The modern Roman Catholicism attends to the challenges of modern philosophy through this approach. These challenges were taken by many schools of thought in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Pope Leo XIII sanctioned Thomism as the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church which dominated the other schools even in the twentieth century. In the middle of twentieth century, the theological advancement opted to integrate modern and Thomistic philosophy. The theologians developed the Roman Catholicism by drawing upon their insights in relating the content and history of faith to human subjectivity. The theology was influenced in specific direction further influencing history and tradition.

There had been a strong reaction by the Neo-Scholasticism against the reconciliation of modern philosophy and Roman Catholic theology. The Catholic institutions were influenced by politics and ecclesiasticism. Thomism though the official philosophy of the Church was Neo-Thomism as a special brand. This was the result of modernity however; it was also against the modern trends of Enlightenment. The chief contribution of Neo-Thomism included separation of nature and grace, expansion of faith to natural theology, development of fundamental theology etc. These characteristic developments are of modernity which Neo-Thomism opposed.

Meanwhile, the Neo-Thomists took up the task of historical studies resulting in relating Thomism with modern philosophy. The Catholic theologians who had been most influential on the Second Vatican Council were the production of Neo-Scholasticism. Their first major works were on Thomas bringing forward theological dimensions of his thought. Their efforts proved Augustinian elements in Thomism and the fact that contest between natural and supernatural, the very

appropriation of different methods. See also Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World* (New York: Crossroad, 1969).

feature of Neo-Scholasticism was not authentically Thomist. The success of this movement had been because of its involvement in past as well as modernity. Both had nothing to reject of each other's. This was the way how Thomism was related to modern philosophy. This movement had tremendous result. Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan and Edward Schillebeeckx²⁶⁸ wrote dissertation on Thomas understanding of theology. Handri Bonilliard and De Lubac²⁶⁹ also carried out study on Thomistic theology which shows relation of grace and nature and the presence of Augustinian element in Thomism. These kinds of efforts were continued by the following theologians also.

4.7. Rahner's Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism²⁷⁰ had been a significant theological approach in Roman Catholicism. The Scholastics referred this to what was applicable to all being. For

²⁶⁸ See, **Edward Schillebeeckx** was born 1914 in a Flemish Catholic family. He had been extremely influential on Roman Catholicism emerging prior to Vatican II and continuing beyond its promulgations. He studied classic Neo-Thomist Theology which blessed him to enjoy contacts with the French Dominicans. His doctoral dissertation appeared in 1951 on the sacramentology of Thomas Aquinas.

²⁶⁹ See, **Henri-Marie Joseph Sonier de Lubac, SJ** (known as **Henri de Lubac**) (February 20, 1896 – September 4, 1991) was a French Jesuit priest who became a Cardinal of the Catholic Church, and is considered to be one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century. His writings and doctrinal research played a key role in the shaping of the Second Vatican Council. In August 1960, Pope John XXIII appointed de Lubac as a consultant to the Preparatory Theological Commission for the upcoming Second Vatican Council. He was then made a peritus (theological expert) to the Council itself, and later, by Pope Paul VI, a member of its Theological Commission (as well as of two secretariats). See also, Kerr Fergus. (2007). *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians: From Neo-scholasticism to Nuptial Mystery*, (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell), pp.70-76.

²⁷⁰ The term refers to a metahistorical, a priori disposition of the human person, who asks after the question of being, and who thereby experiences him or herself as a being with an unlimited horizon, open to the mystery of God. Rahner's concept of anonymous Christian has got the very basis of this transcendental experience of Grace and Nature.²⁷⁰ The major extended discussions of nature and

example, goodness applies to every existent so it is transcendental. Kant, a modern philosopher took transcendentalism as a priori conditions of possible experience. This meant possibility of knowledge through human cognition. The modern Roman Catholicism has given the term transcendentalism a theological thrust combining the above two meanings. To it, the systematic theology is transcendental when it investigates the "a priori conditions in the believer for the knowledge of important truths of faith".²⁷¹

It also refers to the Scholastic approach i.e., the infinite horizon of human knowledge. This points out to the unlimited dynamism of the human intellect reaching for the meaning of the totality of reality.

Joseph Marechal, a Belgian Scholastic was the one to relate metaphysics of Thomas to the modern philosophy. This influenced the Roman Catholics to a great extent. Among them the most prominent had been Karl Rahner with transcendental approach in theology. Besides Marechal, Rahner was deeply influenced by Martin Heidegger. Rahner's theological services include works on all the topics in Christianity. He proved not only to be successful writer but also an influential editor of the Church documents publishing major encyclopedias and dictionaries of theology. The establishment of the international journal *Concilium* was also under Rahner's influence.

Rahnerian approach to theology carries the analysis of human experience of knowledge and freedom as an experience of "an absolute and limitless transcendental" expressing human nature as radically open to limitless God, with His self-communication and saving presence to the world.²⁷² Rahner's theological method is continued in the following five points:

(1) Human persons transcend through acts of knowledge and freedom. These acts carry unlimited openness. At the first place, we come to experience limitlessness of our knowing and our openness to the transcending infinite. This is experienced

grace can be found in "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1, pp. 297-317

²⁷¹ "Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology." p. 287.

²⁷² *Theological Investigations*, vol. 11 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990). p. 94. See also for more details: Marmion, *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner*. pp. 65-82.

when we search for the meaning of our existence. It also leads us to confrontation with incomprehensible mystery.

(2) After this, there is a hope for the fulfillment of the highest possibility of human existence. We are radically finite with unlimited questions, but we are hopeful for absolute fullness of meaning. We develop trust in the absolute mystery of our being that is absolutely trustworthy.²⁷³

(3) The third step unites the historical existence and the subjective human existence. God's self-communication and the human hope for it are historically mediated. This is because of God's presence in the human history.²⁷⁴

(4) The human persons search history for God's self-communication as final and irreversible. This search looks for an absolute fulfillment in itself of the meaning of history.

(5) The last point of Rahner's theological method is to develop the notion of the "absolute savior". He expresses God's irreversible presence to the world in a free subject. God's presence is freely offered and accepted in a free human subject. Such an individual has exemplary significance for the world; he is accepted by God when he accepts human finitude.

This is how Rahner's style of theologizing is transcendental. There is found no other theologian of such stature. However, in doing so, Rahner was forced to take language to its limits in order to explain theology as he had perceived. It was the Kantian influence making Rahner a key figure in this school of thought. It was Joseph Marechal who integrated the thought of Kant with that of Thomas. To Marechal, even human judgment of truth implicitly affirmed the existence of God. The ultimate ground of the world is in God. This conflicted with the Kantian statement which asserted that to prove existence of God was impossible. It was Marechal's inspiration that Rahner wrote his doctoral thesis in philosophy titled "Spirit in the World". This work gave a synthesis of Thomism and Kantian

²⁷³ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Experience of Transcendence or the Transcendence of Experience: Negotiating the Difference in Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology* (Louvain: University Press, 2005). pp. 183-218.

²⁷⁴ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. p. 210.

philosophy. Another prominent influence on Rahner was his teacher Martin Heidegger. This led Rahner to great heights in his theological career.

Rahner's style of theologizing is philosophical couched in the language of metaphysics which needs to be translated for comprehension. The philosophical approach is firmly entrenched in Catholic Tradition whereas the Protestants put criticism on it. It is this philosophical reflection on Christian faith which made Rahner a mark of power on the Catholic Tradition. His transcendental deduction method is justification of his theological development. This begins with the question "What are the a priori conditions for the possibility of---?" and answers are sought in the transcendental structures of the subject. To Rahner, it is the questioning which makes knowing possible and any question can never be questioned. The deduction method is to correlate the Christian message with transcendental structures of human subjectivity. In Rahner's words, it thus runs:

"If moreover, the horizon of human existence which grounds and encompasses all human knowledge is a mystery, and it is, then man has a positive affinity, given at least with grace, to those Christian mysteries which constitute the basic content of faith".²⁷⁵

Rahner here seems swinging between the objective horizon of human existence and the subjectivity of human knowledge. The process of transcendental deduction is explained by Rahner as:

"The structure of the subject itself is an a priori, that is, it forms an antecedent law governing what and how something can become manifest to the knowing subject.....This in no way implies that the realities which present themselves cannot manifest themselves as they really are. A keyhole forms and a priori law governing what key fits in, but it thereby discloses something about the key itself".²⁷⁶

The most important to Rahner is the Christian message which is the human person. Transcendental deduction is the correlation between the anticipated and the actual message of Christ and through this Rahner justifies Christianity. He takes human

²⁷⁵ Neil Ormerod, *Introducing Contemporary Theologies: The and the Who of Theology Today* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997). p. 97.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

person as person and subject, as a transcendental being. The transcendental structure involves knowing and freedom. This constitutes humans as responsible subjects. Rahner argues that freedom is "always mediated by the concrete reality of time and space of man's materiality and his history. To Rahner, there is distinctively transcendental freedom and the categorical freedom. This can be understood as the freedom of a prisoner who enjoys transcendental one but his categorical freedom is impaired. Rahner clarifies that these both form single unity of human freedom. This indicates that Rahner's thought is categorized as transcendental and the historical. Rahner goes on to state that the human freedom is in search of salvation which he thinks as the "final and definitive validity of a person's true self-understanding and true self-realization in freedom before God".²⁷⁷ The human history is evident of working out of freedom and salvation. This approach of Rahner does carry rationale as it deduces the mysteries of faith through reason. This is not accurate as the concrete knowledge of human subject is already conditioned by the knowledge of Christian message. The human experience further verifies this knowledge making it independent of its source. Rahner argues that the knowledge of Christian message conditions the knowledge of human subject. Besides, the reality of the latter, the existence of the human subject has radical orientation to God, which also called supernatural existential by Rahner, points out the human person capable of hearing the word of God. This is a share in God's grace or divine self-communication which only supernatural existential can comprehend. Rahner makes it clear that the mysteries of Trinity, incarnation and grace are not the three mysteries but are the aspects of one mystery of divine self-communication.

It is significantly noted that the concept of divine self-communication has been the central thesis of Rahner's theology. This involves communication of God's being, through His Word and Spirit transforming the human person so as to receive and rejoice in the Word. To Rahner, God is revealed as Trinitarian. Thus, Trinity is part of the structure of revelation. This Rahnerian approach to Trinity has

²⁷⁷ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. p. 39.

resemblance with that of Karl Barth²⁷⁸ and the supernatural existential with Moore's psychological analysis of human person. This analysis looks for the relationship between grace and nature about which Rahner thus states:

".....the spiritual creature is constituted to begin with as the possible addressee of such a divine self-communication.....In the only order which is real; the emptiness of the transcendental creature exists because the fullness of God creates the emptiness in order to communicate himself to it".²⁷⁹

This elucidates that the pure state of nature exists as a possibility of which the humans have no experience as they are born with emptiness to be filled only by God.

This develops Rahner's Christology which sees the world as dynamic evolving process. The humankind also evolves from the material universe. This complexity of nature is explained by Rahner through his notion of "active self-transcendence". It enables the being to transcend to a higher state. In this way, the evolution does not remove God from creation but places Him at the heart of creation. He reaches down to the humans. However all this is through Jesus who guides the self-transcendence of the human spirit to the ultimate fulfillment breaking it through into the divine. It is through Incarnation that creation reaches its perfection when self-communication of God takes place. This leads us to analyze Rahner's transcendental method where the objective process of evolution through active self-transcendence finds its subjective counterpart in the conscious self-transcendence of the subject in knowing and loving. This metaphysical approach to theology though incomprehensible to many had been explicitly detailed in Rahner's doctoral work "Spirit in the World". His metaphysics has got roots in Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics but he does carry uniqueness.

²⁷⁸ See, Karl Barth (May 10, 1886 – December 10, 1968) was a Swiss Reformed theologian. Barth is often regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian of the twentieth century. Barth's theology found its most sustained and compelling expression through his thirteen-volume magnum opus, the Church Dogmatics. Widely regarded as one of the most important theological works of the century.

²⁷⁹ S.J.A Ann Shwe, "The Mystery of the Incarnation According to Contemporary Theology," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 40, no. 4 (2003).p. 123.

Johann Baptist Metz criticized the transcendental method of Rahner as running the risk of reducing history to historicity i.e. history is considered by Rahner simply as a category of human existence. However, Rahner ever remains a source of great learning.

4.7.1. Thomas Aquinas' Transcendental

Thomas Aquinas was born on 28th January, 1225 and could live till 7th March, 1274. He was an Italian Dominican Priest. He has a lot of influence in Scholastic tradition. He is such a philosopher and theologian that the Catholic Church holds him as a Saint, model teacher and the highest expression of both natural reason and speculative theology. Much of modern philosophy is based on his ideas especially in the areas of natural law and metaphysics. The best known of Thomas in these fields are the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. The modern theology includes the study of his works especially for those seeking ordination as priests and for the students of Sacred disciplines as Catholic philosophy, theology, history etc. For his influential theological services, Thomas is considered as the Church's greatest theologian and philosopher.²⁸⁰

Aquinas transcendental is found to follow two trajectories: the being of reason and the real being. The former is associated with logic whereas the latter is of metaphysics. To Aquinas, the act of the intellect meeting the act of being has got a lot of importance. He describes this as a kind of transcendental openness. He has adopted Aristotle's principle of demonstration. His conception got developed through an innovative conception of actuality altering from Aristotle's metaphysics which itself became transcendental.

The medieval philosophy is marked with the doctrine of the transcendental that involves the amending of Aristotle's categories. To Aristotle, anything said about a thing falls into at least one or more of his ten categories. The concern of medieval theologians was the predicates more universal than the categories. They

²⁸⁰ See, Fergus Kerr, *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University, Press, 2009). pp. 1-12.

called it 'transcendence' which is a kind of surpassing. These are special modes of being that Aristotle called categories. The transcendental is not limited to one determinate category. 'Being' and its 'condition' go through all categories. Their doctrine concerns the universal features of reality. The Aristotelian categories did not carry unique universality. The transcendental carry in them a unique universality i.e. their novel integration of the abstract and the concrete becoming distinguished from other concepts and becoming common to all things. The most prominent works of Aquinas and the crucial texts for understanding truth as a transcendental are *De Veritate* and *Summa Theologia*. To Aquinas, "Everything is knowable insofar as it has being". For better understanding to Aquinas Transcendental, here would be explained the comments of three prominent theologians whose interpretation not only gives Thomistic views but also relates them to the modern philosophy. They are Jan Aertsen²⁸¹, Olivia Blanchette²⁸² and Martin Heidegger.²⁸³

Aertsen explains truth both as logically as well as metaphysically transcendental. The being of reason is associated with logic whereas the real being with metaphysics and both are coextensive. The logical Transcendental aspect of

²⁸¹ Jan Adrianus Aertsen (Amsterdam, 1938), formerly professor of Medieval Philosophy and Modern Catholic Philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam (since 1984), was the director of the Thomas Institute in Cologne (Germany) until 2003; his areas of interest are the history of transcendental, the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart. See for more details: <http://www.ontology.co/biblio/jan-aertsen.htm>

²⁸² Oliva Blanchette, He Born May 6, 1929, in Berlin, (Ph. D. Université Laval (Québec) 1966 Philosophy and he was Professor of Philosophy at Boston College) His areas of Interest and Teaching is Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of History, Ethics, Social Ethics, Health Care Ethics, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Blondel. See, http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas_sites/philosophy/pdf/BlanchetteCV2009.pdf

²⁸³ Martin Heidegger (September 26, 1889 – May 26, 1976) was a German philosopher known for his existential and phenomenological explorations of the "question of Being". Heidegger is known for offering a phenomenological critique of Kant. His best known book, *Being and Time*, is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century. See also, <http://www.egs.edu/library/martin-heidegger/>

truth is applicable to every categorical being whereas the metaphysical transcendental deals with the things themselves i.e being qua being. Each understanding of truth as transcendental carries different implications. This is what Aquinas states in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q.16, 9.3:

“As good has the ratio of the desirable, so the ‘true’ has an order to knowledge. Now everything is knowable insofar as it has being (*esse*). For this reason it is said in the third book of *De Anima* (431b 21) that ‘the soul is in a sense all things,’ through the sense and the intellect. And therefore, as good is convertible with being, so is the true. But as good adds to being the notion of desirable, so the true adds a relation to the intellect.”²⁸⁴

Aertsen interprets that the real identity of the true and ‘being’ is mediated by the notion of act. To him, things are knowable not because of their potency but because of their acts. These acts are a reason to call them beings. “Actuality is the ground of both the knowability and the entity of things”. Aertsen means to say that the act of knowing resides in things and not in the intellect. The act of intellect can be understood when it is complimented with the knowledge of the way things are in act. At this time, Aertsen calls truth a relational transcendental which is conceived according to the correlation of being and the intellect. It would be significant to quote Aertsen for his clear understanding of Thomas Aquinas transcendental:

“Thomas understands Aristotle’s statement as a reference to the special position of human beings in the world. Man is all things *quodammodo*, namely, not by his being, but by his knowing; it is that in which the perfection of an intellectual substance consists. Knowing being is distinguished from non-knowing beings is by nature able to assimilate also the forms of other things. Their nature has ‘a great amplitude and extension.’ An intellectual substance has ‘more affinity’ to the whole of things than does any other substance. Through its intellect it is able to comprehend the entire being (*totius entis comprehensiva*). The human mind, one could say, is marked by a transcendental openness.”²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ See, Peter A. Kwasniewski, *Wisdom’s Apperentice: Thomistic Essays in Honor of Lawrence Dewan* (USA: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007). pp. 3-12.

Thus Aertsen analyzes Aquinas as understanding Aristotle's viewpoint about humans having special position in the world. There are two kinds of beings: knowing beings and non-knowing beings. The former can assimilate the forms of other beings whereas the latter have only their own form. The knowing beings are also marked with "greater extension of nature and more affinity of intellect." Among these knowing beings, it is the human mind only which is marked with the transcendental openness. This is, to Aertsen the climax of Aquinas Transcendental. Olivia Blanchette while commenting on Aquinas in his major work "Philosophy of Being: A Reconstructive Essay" proposes a twofold trajectory namely the act of the intellect and the actuality of being. She explains that reflection on the act of judgment itself raises one to metaphysics. Blanchette calls it as "a reflection that seeks understanding in its very transcendence of understanding." Here he makes a distinction between the act of judgment and the term used therein. This is in fact, minds' transcendental orientation in every act of judgment, where the mind grasps the truth in every act of judgment. This act implicitly proclaims the already knowing of the truth which entails some truth with being. The truth is in relation and reference to being. This indicates that the transcendental orientation of mind is towards both the truth and the being. Blanchette for more clarity directly quotes Aquinas who states, "That which intelligence first conceives as what is known best and in which it resolves all conceptions, is being."²⁸⁶

In the language of transcendental, it can be stated that every act of judgment is an evidence of supra-categorical. With such an understanding of Aquinas transcendental, Blanchette explains the actuality of being where he innovatively argues that act is the transcendental property of being. To him, the act of being is more than an accidental property of substance. He distinguishes the act as transcendental from the action particular to each substance. Blanchette argues that the combination of essence and the act of being results in action. The act of being does not flow from the essence as it is the finite. Rather, both the act of being and the essence are simply in composition. The metaphysics of the act of

²⁸⁶ Blanchette Olivia, *Philosophy of Being: A Reconstructive Essay in Metaphysics* (Washington D.C: CUA Press, 2003), p. 27.

being transcends any attempt to define it essentially. Blanchette concludes Aquinas with latter's remarks on act as one of those first simple concepts that cannot be defined and definitions are always finite.²⁸⁷

Martin Heidegger interprets the transcendental in Aquinas as a transcendental corresponding to his argument for the priority of Dasein²⁸⁸ based on Dasein's unique relation toward Being. Heidegger views Aquinas's consideration of truth as transcendental and Dasein disposition of being as:

"Being as the basic theme of philosophy is no genus of some entities and yet it concerns each entity. Its 'universality' is sought on a higher plane. Being and the structure of being lie beyond each entity as such. Being is the transcendence simply. The transcendence of the being of Dasein in an exceptional [transcendence] insofar as the possibility and necessity of the most radical individuation resides in it. Every disclosure of Being as transcendence is transcendental knowledge. Phenomenological truth (disclosedness of being) is *veritas transcendentalis*."²⁸⁹

Heidegger here seems to highlight that the ontological is to the categorical as the notice is to the supra-categorical. The medieval transcendental surpassed the categories by virtue of their universality. Aquinas move is based on Aristotle's dictum, "Man's soul is, in a certain way entities." Heidegger remarks:

"Thomas is engaged in the task of deriving the 'transcendentia'-those characters of Being which lie beyond every possible way in which an entity may be classified as coming under some generic kind of subject-matter (every *modus specialis entis*), and which belong necessarily to anything, whatever it may be.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 343.

²⁸⁸ Dasein (German pronunciation: ['da:zain]) is a German word which literally means being there or presence (German: da - there; sein - being) often translated in English with the word "existence". It is a fundamental concept in the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger particularly in his magnum opus *Being and Time*. Heidegger uses the expression Dasein to refer to the experience of being that is peculiar to human beings. Thus it is a form of being that is aware of and must confront such issues as personhood, mortality and the dilemma or paradox of living in relationship with other humans while being ultimately alone with oneself.

²⁸⁹ Daniel Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Transcendentalism," *Research in Philosophy* 35 (2005). p. 34

Thomas has to demonstrate that the verum is such a transcendent. He does this by invoking an entity which, in accordance with its very manner of Being, is properly suited to 'come together with' entities of any sort whatever...Here the priority of 'Dasien' over all other entities emerges, although it has not been ontologically clarified. This priority has obviously nothing in common with a vicious subjectivizing of the totality of entities."²⁹⁰

Thomas's concern had been the characters of being lying beyond every possible way, demonstrating that an entity can come together with entities of any sort. This is the amalgam of Dasein and Aristotle. Heidegger retrieves to the medieval tradition in highly selective manner which enables him to put in conversation with a modern conception of transcendence.

To conclude, it would be significant to note that Thomas's transcendental followed the being of reason and the real being. His concept of transcendental is the alteration of Aristotle's metaphysics whose view was that anything said about a thing did fall into one or more of his ten categories. Aquinas's uniqueness in his transcendental is his universality as it concerns the universal features of reality. Aertsen explains that actuality is the ground of both knowability and the entity of things, i.e. the act of knowing resides in things and not in the intellect. Because of transcendental openness human mind can grasp all realities. Balanchette, another critic of Aquinas describes transcendental as the act of intellect and the actuality of being through which mind grasps the truth in every act of judgment. To Heidegger, Aquinas move is based on Aristotelian approach about human mind and soul. Thomas was concerned with those characters of being which lie beyond every possible way.

4.8. Comparison between Rahner's and Aquinas' Transcendental

As stated earlier, the most prominent work of Aquinas was *Summa Theologica* and that of Rahner was *Foundations of Christian Faith*. Both are considered as the basic course for the students of theology. However, the former is

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

a Summa of theology whereas the latter carries in it the fundamental theology. Their comparison shows their distinct theological presuppositions.

As far as Thomas is concerned, his starting point is theocentricism. He addresses the issue of existence and nature of God as one and triune. After that he discusses human nature and its virtues followed by the explanation of Christology. There are found Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic pattern in Aquinas explaining God as the exemplary cause of all. This Neo-Platonic pattern emphasizes the origin of all things from God.

Rahner's beginning point is the analysis of human persons whose basic existence is the quest for meaning. The "Foundations of Christian Faith" investigates the quest for meaning and experience of absolute mystery coupled with the experience of sin and grace, Christology and Church in relation to their significance for human nature. Rahner also locates anthropology in this work which to him is the constant reference point of theological reflection. The human quest for meaning looks to history for response. In this way, Rahner's theology relates anthropocentricism with Aquinas's theocentricism.

4.9. Transcendental as Basis for Salvation

It was this transcendental approach of Rahner and his predecessors which became the basis for the Christian concept of 'salvation for all'. The divinized transcendentalist carries a history. This is the capability to have God's self-communication which takes place and does not exist. Therefore, man is the event of free self-communication of God in absolute closeness. Christianity in its very essence does proclaim God's salvific will for all men as men are the free subject. Christianity also carries history of salvation and revelation which is borne by God's freedom and man's freedom forming a unity. It claims to be salvation and revelation for every person being a religion of absolute value irrespective of time and people having a mission to evangelize all men. The historical nature of Christianity is its essential characteristic.

God is recognizable and human relationship to Him is understood as transcendental. He occupies a definite position in time and space regarding salvific

activity. However, God cannot be historical because anything historical is always concrete existing as individual within a larger context. God lies beyond everything conceivable and is primordial abyss of all reality. He is always and everywhere with his absolute reality communicating Himself as the center of everything. The Bible explains that God has already communicated Himself in Christ. He is the innermost center of man's existence everywhere, whether man accepts it or not, reflects upon it or not. This leads to the conception that "the history of salvation and revelation is the process of limiting and mythologizing and reducing to a human level something which was already present in its fullness from the outset".²⁹¹ Rahner further explains that "Man is historical as a transcendental subject having essence of unlimited transcendentalist". To put it the other way, transcendence itself has history and that history itself is always the event of this transcendence. It is hard for modern consciousness to make sense out of transcendentalist in man. If history does not grasp its transcendental depths, it becomes blind. Transcendence is the mediating relationship to the past and to the future. It must be noted that this historical relationship experiences its historicity when this history always takes into account the transcendental conditions. By this, Rahner means to say that history ultimately is the history of man's transcendentalism. He goes on to say that "Transcendence itself has its history, and history is in its ultimate depths the event of this transcendence."²⁹²

Like transcendence, according to Rahner, the supernatural existential also has a history. Man is a being of subjectivity, of transcendence and of freedom for relationship with God. He is also the event of self-communication of God. Being a historical being individually and collectively, man follows the supernatural existential which is the source of his orientation towards God who offers His self-communication for which man is free to accept or not. This indicates to the fact that the existential itself has a history which is at once the single history of both salvation and revelation grounded in God's free self-communication as the basic relationship between the Creator and the creature. This history is the event of

²⁹¹ See, Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 139.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

God's freedom. There exists a concrete dialectic in history between the presence and absence of God. In the former sense, God gives Himself in an absolute self-communication whereas the latter one indicates God as always remaining the holy mystery. This is in fact the history of salvation and revelation.²⁹³

This, according to Rahner, is also the one true history of God Himself as the Eternal One. He has created time and history, where He, the Unchanging and Untouchable manifests Himself. This can be experienced most clearly in the fundamentals of Christianity i.e., Incarnation of Eternal Logos in Jesus Christ.

God's self-communication addresses the men in their freedom. Rahner highlights that every salvific act of God is the salvific act of man. Every revelation takes place because of man's faith to hear it. Thus the divine and human history of salvation exists synthetically. Man's every free act is based on God who blesses the former with grace and the responsibility for his own accountable acts. It is the faith which demonstrates revelation. Man experiences whatever he is given by God who is at once distant and close. This is man's transcendence making the history of both salvation and of revelation.²⁹⁴

It has today become a normal interpretation of Christianity that the history of salvation is co-existent with the whole history of the human race. Everyone who avoids sin, despite he is free to commit, finds his salvation. God's self-communication to the whole of mankind means salvation for all. This self-communication of God is free for the free men who can have it through transcendence. The history of salvation with these characters essentially carries two moments conditioning each other mutually. It is the free self-communication of God and it belongs to history and takes place within it. Man is also free to accept or reject it. The self-communication and the freedom of its acceptance and rejection appear to man even on the level of reflection and are expressed in images and likenesses.²⁹⁵

The history of salvation does not only carry a word of God or merely sacramental signs of His grace but there also belongs the event of self-communication of God

²⁹³ Dahlstron, "Heidegger's Transcendentalism." pp. 141-2.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 143.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

himself which is indeed transcendental. In its very essence and reality, the history of salvation carries transcendental event of God's self-communication to man and the concreteness of man's history where he actualizes this acceptance or rejection in freedom. Rahner compares this with the Holy Spirit as the essence of Church, the grace as the essence of sacraments and the interior act of God on man in faith as the essence of God's word in revelation. By this, he means to convey that without self-transcendence to God there can be no history of salvation coexistent to all the human history. In Rahner's view, transcendence is always accompanied by some degree of reflection as it is an objectively mediated experience free of any explicit religious mediation. Resultantly, the history of salvation encompasses the profane history of mankind and is not limited to the history of true and false religion. It only presupposes that the transcendental experience is actualized and historically mediated.

So, the universal history of salvation is co-existent with the history of the world. The explicit history of revelation is identified by the popular understanding of Christianity in the Old and the New Testament. It distinctively carries Christian history of revelation, and the universal and the supernatural history of revelation with proper value and significance. It is to be noted, asserts Rahner that history of revelation and salvation go side by side with the human history. The faith of every individual is a part of the real history of revelation. Rahner views it wrong to think one's faith not having any historical background. To him, the history of revelation in the human race is coextensive with the whole history of the world's freedom. He further elaborates that the "natural revelation" of God has its history which does carry some distinctive from the universal history of revelation which is coextensive with the history of mankind and of salvation.²⁹⁶

God in his supernatural grace i.e., God's self-communication also becomes the God of supernatural salvation making man approach Him when grace is borne. God's self-communication is presented in man as existential whereas the history of religion exists in the supernatural order of grace which man accepts or rejects as he is a free being. The history of man's spirit and man's freedom is in the proper

²⁹⁶Ibid. pp. 145-6.

sense the history of supernatural revelation based on God's supernatural self-communication accessible to man's transcendental and elevated experience.²⁹⁷

4.10. Rahner's Concept of Salvation for Non-Christians

For every Christian, according to Rahner, the Church is the sacrament of the salvation of the world. It is considered as the plank of salvation in the shipwreck of the world. This is a small band of those who are saved by the miracle of grace. The Catholic Text highlights that the Church does not include in it only those who belong to it but also confirms salvation for those not belonging to it. There is a hidden grace offered to the human soul all over the world. This grace is at work everywhere omitting none and giving to every reality in the world a secret orientation towards God.

Grace at the moment of reception is signified and affected by baptism, penance etc. It also roots a man in the eternal life of God. On this basis, Church does not remain sign of God's mercy for its members only but also for the whole world. This grace triumphs in the whole world and carries an inner dynamic tendency to assume tangible historical form.²⁹⁸

There has also developed a quite new and profounder theology of the true nature of Church mission which being the biggest ideological organization is growing with the world population. A man embodiment of zealous missionary activity gives of his grace to others. If his zeal is serene and patient, he will be successful in preaching mission. In doing so, he imitates God's forbearance signifying salvation. God's will and justice is in fact the revelation of his infinite loving kindness to man. Such a prepared and highly developed Christian will meet non-Christians boldly. If some do not want to be his brothers, he would make them brothers because he could see in them persons unknown to themselves. They would be unaware of what in depths of their life they are. Moreover, a missionary sees in them anonymous Christianity in several ways. The natural virtues like kindness, love, fidelity etc. are an indication of the presence of Christ whose grace is at work

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Rahner, *The Christian of the Future* pp. 81-3.

in all mankind. The virtuous people do carry in them the unutterable sighs of the spirit accepting the silent mystery.²⁹⁹

Rahner goes on the state that the mind's pure transcendence is elevated by grace. It thus affects the dynamism towards the God of eternal life who in reality is the goal and end of man's supernatural salvific will. It is the Church which for him represents the nature as God planned him and to which his supernatural vocation belongs.³⁰⁰ The sacrament of grace tends towards its historical embodiment in the sacraments. Grace is never simply identical with its own efficacious sign. It gives promise that it is powerful everywhere. On this basis, the Church is the promise of salvation for all as it stands under the mercy and not under the judgment of God. It affirms salvation even for those who lived and died before Christ. Furthermore, it also assures to remain until the end and always alone a reality within the world superficially and sociologically as an institution. Therefore the Christian mission is at work for the victory of the Church despite knowing that it can never be victorious all over the World. The Church accomplishes its task through predominance of God's grace. For a Christian, Church is not an affirmation

²⁹⁹ Dahlstron, "Heidegger's Transcendentalism." pp. 85-87.

³⁰⁰ A prominent work by Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978) also details the concept of the supernatural existential. To have better understanding, Rahner's view in the last statement can be summarized as under: The existential is the self-communication of God present in every human in the mode of an offer.

- (i) Every person must be understood as the event of the supernatural self-communication of God, though not necessarily accepts it in freedom.
- (ii) The existential exists in the mode of either acceptance or refusal where offer is still to be accepted or rejected.
- (iii) The existential bestows with the remainder of the self-communication of God without reducing it to a purely human reality.
- (iv) Everyone must carry God's self-communication which makes its personal acceptance possible. There takes place the personal transformation of the human being by the existential making its acceptance or refusal human and therefore free.

standing in contradictions to the affirmations of others. To him, the Church is the historic audibility of God's Self to the world.³⁰¹

Rahner's hermeneutical approach towards non-Christian religions significantly highlights the problem of religious pluralism. He points out that the Church is required to have an attitude of open Catholicism to other religions. For Church, the pluralism of religions has more meaning than pluralism of philosophers. In past, Christians had no or little contact with other cultures. But in the modern age, there has been a constant relation of Christian with other religions with new look. Rahner explains Catholic interpretation of religious pluralism in several theses.

At first, he gives theological interpretation of Christian belief. It is a religion determined absolutely for all men recognizing no equal beside it. So it is the way of salvation. It has different encounter with all men and for all cultures. Rahner affirms Christianity as the true religion for all mankind. Man's existence carries in it socially constituted religion. This means that man is obliged to seek religion in a social expression. Moreover in the new world, Christians and pagans live as one in the situation of dialogue.

In the second thesis, Rahner highlights that the non-Christian religion carries in it real elements of natural knowledge of God however mixed with other elements. Besides, there are also the supernatural moments of grace. On this basis, a non-Christian religion is considered as legitimate religion. Rahner here reminds of universality of God's salvific will and salvation only in Christ. The pre-Christian religions, on this basis had been legitimate with meaning in salvation history. God's self-communication does not remain ineffectual because of personal guilt. There is found no ground for this in gospel. There are many reasons for being optimistic about God's saving will which rules more powerfully than man's shortsighted view. Men can have salvation while living within their respective cultures.³⁰²

The third thesis is the outcome of the second one. Here Rahner highlights that Christianity encounters the pagans not as non-Christians but as the anonymous

³⁰¹ Dahlstron, "Heidegger's Transcendentalism." pp. 88-91.

³⁰² Louis Roberts, *The Achievement of Karl Rahner* (USA: Herder and Herder, 1967). pp. 276-7.

Christians. The fact in that is their experience of grace which means revelation has taken place within them without any formal expression in the word of a missionary. For such people, argues Rahner, hearing the gospel is the reflex conceptual statement of what man has already necessarily performed in the depths of his spiritual being which necessarily involves grace of Christ who is the only source of salvation. So every non-Christian is not just an anonymous theist but an anonymous Christian also.

Rahner's fourth thesis emphatically states that the Church cannot consider itself the exclusive community of guardians of salvation. He argues that in the situation of religious pluralism, when the non-Christians are anonymous Christians, the Church must recognize itself as the historical expression of universal salvation history remains valid for all men.³⁰³

To sum up, it is significant to note that Rahner's theology views Church as the sacrament of salvation for the whole world. Salvation of non-Christians is based on their experience of God's grace offered to every human soul. Rahner's thought becomes quite clear when he states the issue in his several theses. As discussed above, Christian belief is interpreted as the absolute religion for all men. This is followed by the knowledge of non-Christians about God. This makes the non-Christians as anonymous Christians which affirm that salvation is there even outside the Church.

4.11. Rahner's Impact on Vatican II and Salvation for Others

It has been an admitted fact that the documents of Second Vatican Council have greatly been influenced by the theology of Karl Rahner. The Church has to change its perception about the believers of other religions. Rahner found several aspects of Lumen Gentium-Vatican II's constitution on the Church inadequate. So he remained committed to the basic model of the Church. The council endorsed the understanding of the Church according to Rahner's view i.e. the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world (L G 1, 9, 48). This raised the issue for the

³⁰³ Ibid. pp. 277-8, See also for more details, J. Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, *Christianity and Other Religions* (England: One World, 2001). pp. 22-38.

council to reconcile the doctrine that membership of the Church was necessary for salvation when it declared salvation for others also. This question got a way out in Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians. His theory could not become the part of constitution. Rather, the basis of his theory i.e. God's universal salvific will and the salvific value of non-Christian religions was included among the major insights of the council. For Rahner, it revealed that the Spirit had been at work in the Council. He thus stated:

"No one who maintains in principle the radical difference between truth and error, who has recognized a true claim to absoluteness on the part of Christianity and the Church, who grants in principle to certain formulated insights and religious institutions a significance that has a part in deciding humanity's eternal destiny, can regard the caesura which came in with the council as something to be taken for granted. Such a person must recognize it as a fundamentally Christian event, as a victory of Christianity and not of liberalism. Such a person must be prepared to put up with and work on all the theological problems involved in such a change-something that is not at all easy and will remain a task for a long time."³⁰⁴

Here, Rahner seems to be convinced of some parameters which could propose explanation of such issues. Among them was (1) the rejection of the idea that the Christians alone were on the way to salvation and (ii) the Church was the sole source of blessedness.

Rahner before and after the Vatican II continued to emphasize that the baptized were not the sole travelers to salvation. Especially after the Vatican II, Rahner had been very positive towards the prospects of salvation for non-Christians. He affirms that God's saving will ensure that: 'the morning light on the mountains is the beginning of the day in the valleys not the day above condemning the light below'.³⁰⁵

However, to Rahner, Church was considered as the embodiment of grace in history which is offered to all as God's self-communication. The success of the Church's

³⁰⁴ See Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 20 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).pp. 99-102.

³⁰⁵ *The Christian of the Future*.p. 84.

mission, argues Rahner is the result of adapting its strategies to the changing circumstances. He defined the Church as:

“The Church in terms resonant with those he had used before the Council:
‘The Church is the community, legitimately constituted in a social structure, in which through faith, hope and love, God’s eschatological definitive revelation (God’s self-communication) in Christ remains present for the world as reality and truth.’”³⁰⁶

This declares the Church as the sacramental sign of grace offered to the world. Besides, the presence of Church definitely meant the presence of Christ in the world. The Church is considered as the means of salvation as it in its very foundations carries the grace of Christ which does offer salvation to all. This led to elaborate the Church as:

“The apprehensibility of that which already unifies at the interior level, as the historical expression of that which is universal.....the sheer rendering present of the God-planned nature of humanity as subject to God’s designs...as the fundamental sacrament of a grace which, precisely because, it is offer to all, presses forward to express its sacramental historical nature even where the individual sacrament (of baptism) has not yet been conferred”.³⁰⁷

Rahner goes on to state that the Church being the sacrament of salvation for the world also served as a heaven for all mankind. It influenced everyone everywhere as the grace of God, says Rahner is operative everywhere. Those who are not baptized could respond to the call of Christ because of graced offer of salvation. Therefore, the Christians could never be the elite community of salvation. To Rahner, the very insignificance of the Church in the late twentieth century was its nature as a sacrament. He affirmed that the missionary activity was integral to the nature of the Church. However, it was to be taken in a dialogical manner. In a religiously pluralistic society, the missionary activity must consider significantly that baptism did not devote negation of the previous beliefs. It was just calling the people to conscious recognition of God who was already at work in their lives.

³⁰⁶ Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).p. 148.

³⁰⁷ See, Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 10 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).p. 23.

4.12. Second Vatican Council Documents and Salvation for non-Christians

Towards the last part of the 20th century, there appeared “The “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”. It was Pope John ³⁰⁸XXIII who wanted the council to explain the Jews. Many bishops disagreed fearing it to be considered by the Arab governments as a political move favoring recognition of the state of Israel. It then includes Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists also. So with this document in 1965 the Church affirmed all the mankind with different religion as one community.³⁰⁹ The Church examined the relation with other faiths with greater care. It looked for the common values to promote fellowship among them as all share the common destiny i.e., God. His saving will extends to all mankind. Men look to their religions for an answer to the undiscovered issues like what is man and what is the life for? What happens after death or what is judgment etc. All the religions carry a certain awareness of a hidden power along with the recognition of the Supreme Being. The religions of the advanced civilizations answer these questions exactly. People seek release from the trials of life by ascetical practices. All the religions attempt in their own ways to outline a code of life covering dogma, rites and morality.³¹⁰

In this context, the stance of the Church is appreciable. It does not reject anything which is true and holy in other religions. This is because many of its

³⁰⁸ Pope John XXIII (Latin: Ioannes XXIII), born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (Italian pronunciation: (25 November 1881 – 3 June 1963) was the head of the Roman Catholic Church from 28 October 1958 to his death in 1963. He inaugurated a new era in the history of the Roman Catholic church by his openness to change (*aggiornamento*), shown especially in his convoking of the Second Vatican Council. He wrote several socially important encyclicals (most notably *Pacem in Terris*).

³⁰⁹ F.S.C, Edmund Chia (2001). *Dialogue Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia*, (ed.). Federation of Asian Bishop' Conferences, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (FABC), (Bangkok: Thailand), p.1.

³¹⁰ See also, Council, V. (1965, April 16). Decree *Ad Gentes* On The Mission Activity Of The Church. Retrieved October 10, 2014, from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm

teachings reflect the truth that enlightens all mankind way. Christ however is proclaimed as "The way, the truth and the life". He carries in him the fullness of religious life for all men. Therefore, the Church emphasizes to enter into the process of dialogue and collaboration with other faiths. Their spiritual and the moral truths should be acknowledged and encouraged with prudence by the Christians. Their upright life carries worship of God, including prayer, alms-deeds and fasting along with honoring Jesus and his Virgin Mother with great devotion. Despite long crusades, the council forgets the past and pleads with all making sincere efforts to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all mankind.³¹¹

The council affirms that the depth of the mystery is the Church having spiritual ties with other faiths. All the prophets carried the God's plan of salvation. However, the salvation of the Church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people. It is mindful that the Church stands on the descended pillars and apostles. The Church always held that Christ underwent suffering and death became of the sins of all men so that all might attain salvation. The cross of Christ is proclaimed as sign of God's universal love and grace for all.

The worship of God essentially requires brotherly treatment to all humans. The relations to God his fellowmen are interdependent as the Scripture says, "He, who does not love, does not know God".³¹² Regarding human dignity and rights, there is left no basis for any kind of discrimination between individuals. The Church therefore discourages and rejects any discrimination on the basis of force or religion.

³¹¹ F. S. C, Edmund Chia (2001). *Dialogue Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia*, (ed.). Federation of Asian Bishop' Conferences, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (FABC), (Bangkok: Thailand), p. 2. See, Arinze, Francis (1993). *Meeting other believers: Introduction to the Plenary Assembly, 1992*. Bulletin of the Secretariat for Non-Christians/Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue 82(28/1):22. Gioia, Francesco (1997). *Interreligious Dialogue: The official teaching of the Church (1963-1965)*, (ed.). Attitude of the Church toward followers of other religions. 1984. Vatican City: Document of the Secretariat for non-Christians. From <http://www.misceurope.co.uk/dialogue%20and%20mission%20-%20PCID.pdf>

³¹² *Ibid.*

4.13. Summry

The whole discussion in this chapter leads to conclude that Rahner had been the key figure to contribute to the Catholic theology. Rahner propagated the thought of Thomas Aquinas to whom there existed the harmonious relationship between natural reason and the supernatural revelation. Moreover, he considered salvation as universal will of God for all men. This was the chief thought in scholasticism.

Scholasticism passed through different stages during the last century. The first stage is the turn the century. It was the preface to the next stages. The focus was on the study of Saint Thomas' text. The theologians proved the fruitfulness of the scholastic philosophy as the structuring element of the speculative theology. The second stage was the start of the century where appeared conflict between the Church and the parliament. The modernists also attacked the scholasticism for theological and social reforms. The third stage was the period between the two wars. Here had developed three kinds of Thomism i.e. traditional Thomism of Jacques Martin, historical Thomism of Etienne Gilson and the transcendental Thomism of Joseph Marechal. The fourth stage was from WWII to VII when the intellectual climate had changed a lot as a result of war. The issue on the ability of the scholastic theology regarding interpretation of the scripture's meaning continued here. Thomas was in full opposition to the plurality of analogous conceptual frameworks. However, Marechal's transcendental Thomism got its way, because of certain conflicts, to enjoy complete possession of the field. After Vatican II, this was chiefly led by Karl Rahner whose theology was completely based on his unique interpretation of Thomas's metaphysics of being. This led the scholastic theology to give up its claim to theological imperialism.

The influence of Renaissance and Reformation shifted scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism. To Thomas, there was harmony between natural reason and the supernatural revelation. The theological developments changed the view and made the philosophies disharmonious. Here is found that the Scripture was losing its authority in Neo-scholasticism while it was central to Thomism. The method of Neo-

scholastics took the Church teachings as its starting point which ascertained the believers the truths of scripture and tradition. However, they criticized the misinterpretation of the Scripture. At the second place, they demonstrated the truth of their thesis through Scripture and tradition. The last step was the speculative exposition which dealt the teaching of the Church and scripture through philosophical reflection to reach more profound understanding of the truth.

Scholasticism got a shift to Neo-scholastic but it is still found that among different schools of thought, Thomism dominated all others. Many theologians like Josph Marechael, Martin Heidder, Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner chief concern had been the existential and transcendentalism. This was the result of development in theological studies with different approaches like transcendental, hermeneutical, analytical, correlation and liberation.

A comparative study of transcendentalism of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Rahner reveals that Thomas starts with theocentricism. To him, existential and nature of God is one and triune. This carries in it Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic patterns explaining God as the efficient cause, as the final cause and as the exemplary cause for all. On the other hand, Rahner's starting point is the analysis of human persons whose basic existence is the quest for meaning. For him, revelation, salvation, history, Christology and Church have a lot of significance in their relation to human nature. Moreover, anthropology, says Rahner is the constant reference point of theological reflection.

The transcendental, however, became the basis for salvation in Rahner's theology. The divinized transcendentality carries a history which is the capability to have God's Self-communication. Christianity carries a history of salvation and revelation which is borne by God's freedom and man's freedom forming a unity. It also carries mission to evangelize all men. Its essential characteristic is its historical nature. To Rahner, man is historical as a transcendental subject having essence of unlimited transcendentality.

Like transcendental, the supernatural existential also carries a history. This means that man is a being of subjectivity of transcendence and of freedom for relationship with God because God's self-communication addresses the men in their freedom. Every salvific act of God is the salvific act of men. According to Christianity, history of salvation is co-existent with the whole history of human race. It carries word of God as well as the event of Self-communication of God himself which is indeed transcendental. To Rahner, The Holy Spirit is the essence of Church; grace is the essence of sacraments and God's act on man in faith as the essence of God's word in revelation.

It is significant to note that Rahner's theology views Church as the sacrament of salvation for the whole world. Salvation of non-Christians is based on their experience of God's grace offered to every human soul. Rahner's thought becomes quite clear when he states the issue in his several theses. As discussed above, Christian belief is interpreted as the absolute religion for all men. This is followed by the knowledge of non-Christians about God. This makes the non-Christians as anonymous Christians which indicate that salvation is there even outside the Church.

Rahner goes on to state that the Church being the sacrament of salvation for the world also served as a leaven for all mankind. It influenced everyone everywhere as the grace of God, says Rahner is operative everywhere. Those who are not baptized could respond to the call of Christ because of graced offer of salvation. Therefore, the Christians could never be the elite community of salvation. To Rahner, the very insignificance of the Church in the late twentieth century was its nature as a sacrament. He affirmed that the missionary activity was integral to the nature of the Church. However, it was to be taken in a dialogical manner. In a religiously pluralistic society, the missionary activity must consider significantly that baptism did not devote negation of the previous beliefs. It was just calling the people to conscious recognition of God who was already at work in their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE

Rahner's contribution in shaping the decisions of Vatican Council II

5.1. Introduction

Karl Rahner has arguably been the most famous influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. He was a man of versatile personality. With a prodigious literary output, about 4000 publications, he won the repute of being among the pioneers of the Second Vatican Council. Rahner in all his works is found emphasizing only on one thing i.e. the core of the Christian faith leading to the concentration of the plurality into a few key experiences of which God's Self-communication has been the most fundamental.³¹³

Based on this, Rahner's study of the Christian tradition and his spiritual life convinced him that God's world was much vaster than the Christian World. He added new lenses to the Christian telescope which meant to detect active presence of God in all human beings. As a result of this, the Catholic community made a leap forward. It took new ways to understand other religions and relate to the non-Christians. This was crystallized in Rahner's writings. There is found congruence between Rahner's theologizing style and the spirit of Vatican II. It was his theory of anonymous Christians which got Vatican II out of the dilemma of having relations with the non-Christians. Around 1960s, Rahner turned the Christian telescope to the people of other religions. He found that the Council now meant a transition from European and Western Church to a World Church. This aimed at finding a common ground with the followers of other religions. Rahner emphasized on the positive appraisal of the great world religions and the universal saving will of God. This optimistic view about salvation had been the clearest theme to Rahner. He also points out to the transcendental nature of human person which means that 'a person's whole spiritual and intellectual existence is orientated towards a holy mystery which is the basis of their being'.³¹⁴

Rahner's subtle understanding of faith profoundly preoccupied him with three topics particularly in his final writings: (i) the reform of the teaching office of the

³¹³ Karl Rahner: *Theologian for Twenty First Century*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).p. 1.

³¹⁴ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 9.p. 177.

Church; (ii) the future of Catholicism in a world-Church; and (iii) the future of Christianity among world religions and new humanism.³¹⁵ With this, he played an important role in bringing the Vatican Council to a theological and historical turning point. To him, the Christian faith carried two tenets in its very basis: the universal salvific will of God, and that this salvation comes through God in Christ alone. This led Catholicism to take the former as universal and the latter as particular. For Catholics, however a real and full encounter with Jesus can be had only in Church.

5.2. An Historical Background

Christianity has adopted different models to come to a balanced understanding of other religions. However, it continues to give equal weight to its two foundational beliefs: firstly God's love is universal, and secondly it is particular i.e. made real in Christ. For this, there are found two models adopted by the Christians. These are the Replacement Model³¹⁶ and the Fulfillment Model.³¹⁷ The former held sway over most of Christian history whereas the latter embodies the majority opinion of the present-day Christianity. It also describes what most of the Christian theologians view about other religions. They emphasized that the non-Christians are not only to be preached but there should also be dialogue with them because all the religions are of value as God is found in them. It is the Fulfillment model which represents the new theology based on the developing attitudes after new experiences. However, this model also

³¹⁵ John Honner, "Speaking in New Tongues: Karl Rahner's Writings from the Grave," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 11, no. 1 (1998), p. 66.

³¹⁶ Christianity is meant to replace all other religions. This is the first of the Christian attitudes toward other faiths. Christian missionaries throughout the centuries have cast forth into the world with the conviction that it is God's will to make all peoples Christians. In the end-or, as soon as possible-God wants there to be only one, God's religion: Christianity. See, for more details: Evangelical Christian doctrines.

³¹⁷ Christianity means today as the "replacement" to the "fulfillment" of other religions. Theologians offer a theology that will give equal weight to God's love is universal, extending to all peoples, but also that God's love is particular, made real in Jesus the Christ. This model represents something really new in the history of Christianity.

marks a limit i.e. God's special presence in Jesus. This indicates that the theologians here seem to say,

"We can't stretch things any further without losing the uniqueness of Jesus. To venture beyond it may mean losing one's Christian identity."³¹⁸

After this, the Church has been on the forefront of new theological thinking about other religions. In past, the catholic attitudes had been a kind of teeter-totter carrying up and down movement between the universal and particular presence of God. There continued shifts from universal to particular and vice versa dominating the Church thinking. For Catholics, the particular presence of God along with Jesus also included the Church. This meant to have greater belief in God's universal love for all.

In the beginning, the theologians did not have to deal much with other religions. As the communities of Jesus went deeper, there is found a quick change in their attitudes. Christians had been minority and had to explain their relation to different cultures as Jesus followers. The early Fathers emphasized the Word of God and that all the Christians experienced that "the Word of God was "made flesh" in Jesus".³¹⁹ This is the Word of Whom all humankind partakes. The earlier theologians strongly pointed out that because of God's universal presence and call, the spirit of every human (man or woman) is naturally Christian".³²⁰ This strongly affirmed God's saving presence beyond the Church weighing the universal side of the teeter-totter.

This weight changed, in the following centuries to the stress on particular importance of the Church. The bishop of Rome then enjoyed the high spiritual political power. So, the enemies of the state were also considered the enemies of the Church. This unfolds how attitudes towards non-Christians started changing particularly influenced by Augustine-the theologian of his time. He emphasized that men were saved "only by grace" without which there is only damnation. Such saving

³¹⁸ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.p. 63.

³¹⁹ Ibid. p. 65.

³²⁰ Ibid.

grace, preached Augustine, is not found beyond the Church. His chief concern in his teaching had been "double predestination: God from all eternity predestines some to salvation within the Church; the rest-'damned masses'-end in perdition".³²¹ He meant to state that all the people outside the Church will go into the everlasting fire. This thought, prevailing till the sixteenth century, was encapsulated in the famous dictum "Outside the Church no salvation". This at the initial stage aimed at those within the Church. It was a warning for them of they thought of learning it. This was at their eternal risk. During the middle ages, this proclamation was also directed to the non-Christians. This instead of having dialogue led to wars like Crusades. In the thirteenth century, the dictum got an addition and became "Outside the Church, no salvation at all". It was in 1442 that the council of Florence³²² thus states, "No persons, whatever almsgiving they have practiced even if they have shed blood for Christ, can be saved, unless they have remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church".³²³

This falsely indicated that the boundless love of God for all people was bounded by the borders of the Church. When Christopher Columbus landed in America, a lot of efforts were made to preach Christian beliefs there. The missionaries could not imagine anyone could not see overwhelming truth and beauty of Christian faith. Many of the Americans preferred their previous ways of living. This led the Council of Trent (1545-63) to come up with the formula of love of God without denying the necessity of the Church. This formula meant that moral values in all people were an implicit expression of the desire to join the Church thus getting through the doors of heaven.³²⁴

After this, towards the modern age there was a shift from "Outside the Church, no salvation" to "Without Church, no salvation". It meant that those outside the

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² The Seventeenth Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church was convoked as the Council of Basel by Pope Martin V shortly before his death in February 1431 and took place in the context of the Hussite wars in Bohemia and the rise of the Ottoman Empire. At stake was the greater conflict between the conciliar movement and the principle of papal supremacy.

³²³ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. p. 66.

³²⁴ Ibid.

Church may have some relation to it when they follow God's voice in their conscience. The postmodern scenario carries the preaching of this attitude by the Popes. To them, if followers of any religion loved and served the creature, this meant that they belonged to the "soul" of the Church. This indicated their relation and attachment to the Church, thus becoming its potential members. This Christian attitude meant to affirm God's love to everyone. This teeter-totter seemed to get balanced in this era. Painfully, all these efforts for propagating a better attitude to those outside the Church never had positive attitude toward their religions. The theologians avoided to mention that other religions did offer grace, revelation and salvation. Till 1960s it was taken for granted that no religion other than Christianity could be considered by God.

5.3. Rahner's Theological Impact on Vatican II

In its very essence, the relation between Rahner and Vatican II³²⁵ is quite inseparable. Rahner's best part of life has been devoted to work against the backdrop of change in the Church. His services meant to promote the reception of Vatican II. To Rahner, the Church now was turning to be the World Church. The concern of Vatican II also added in it the adoption of a more missionary style in order to get closer to the non-Christian population. The common grounds in different cultures around the globe were found for positive attitude towards others. Furthermore, the great world religions were also appraised with an emphasis on the universal saving will of God. This was the dearest theme to Karl Rahner; as he taught that the true God wills all to be saved.³²⁶

³²⁵ The Second Vatican Council (Latin: Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum or informally known as Vatican II) addressed relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. It was the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church and the second to be held at Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The council, through the Holy See, formally opened under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII on 11 October 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1965.

³²⁶ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.

In a pluralistic set up, Rahner focused on the need for structural change in the Church in order to have better balance in the official teaching authority and legitimate academic freedom. These efforts led him to develop the theory of the relationship between anonymous and explicit Christianity. The real basis for all this, according to Rahner has been the transcendental nature of human person. Rahner points out that it is not the human who makes efforts to reach God; rather, it is the Divinity seeking out human spirit with the offer of grace which is universal. These were the teachings of the early Church, says Rahner and his efforts meant to revive the real Christian traditions in the postmodern world. For this, the council carried a specific method of "Ressourcement and Aggiornamento" which "advocated shipping over what was currently in place to retrieve from the past something more appropriate or more authentic".³²⁷ In his work, Rahner retrieved to certain forgotten truths with a view to inject new life into the sacrament.

He searched for new ways of formulating Christian faith as the traditional dogmatic language of the Church was no longer intelligible to many Christians. Rahner always welcomed the religious pluralism. He emphasized that the Church was to deal with the changes. However, the core of Rahnerian Christian faith, never to be neglected, was the universal will of God for salvation which comes only through Christ. This, according to Rahner is a theological rather than the dogmatic approach.

As far as the attitude of the Council was concerned, its style was less autocratic and more collaborative whereby there was an inclination to reconcile with human cultures; to see goodness instead of sin; and to look for the elements of friendship instead of hatred.³²⁸ In such an atmosphere, Rahner's whole energies were devoted to structural, spiritual and theological renewal of the Church. To him, faith meant a person's proper and free conviction. He thus states:

³²⁷ Malley O and John W., *What Happened at Vatican II* (USA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008). pp. 300-1.

³²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 311.

"Faith implies an existential, practical, and theoretical relationship to the truth of faith itself and may not be reduced to mere obedience to the formal teaching authority of the Church."³²⁹

In this context, Rahner argues for the anthropological aspect of the Christian faith. This is the influence of Enlightenment modernity on Rahner which along with other elements had specific focus on rationality and anthropocentrism. In his affirmations, Rahner continued to explain that Christianity definitely meant the Church despite different forms of tension. He kept on seeking for a *via media* between different dimensions of the Church. The perception of growing restorations mentality within the Church kept Rahner increasingly pessimistic. This resulted in a more authentic interpretation of the Council.

For Rahner, a person with strong conviction possesses spiritual openness to potentially receive the Divine word. On this basis, Philip Endean highlights that reading of Gospel depends upon the state of the self-a change in the self leads to comprehend the text with radically new eyes. Moreover, theocentrism and anthropocentricity cannot be radically separated. Many of critics of Rahner have complained that Rahner had relativised the radical demands of Christianity. However, a true understanding of Rahner can be had through the study of his own writings instead of his critics'. To Rahner, both the limitations of his theology as well as the need for other thinkers's were important to develop his ideas in new directions. Regarding this, he thus stated:

"When I began my theological studies forty years ago, I was far clever than I am today, if I take all the possible branches of knowledge and intellectual problems as my criterion of measurement. For today there is such a vast number of questions and areas of knowledge of a historical, metaphysical, philosophical, linguistic, sociological and religious kind that in the face of this mass of theological material I feel much stupider than I did then".³³⁰

³²⁹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 23 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).23, pp. 85- 84.

³³⁰ See, *ibid.*, 16.16, pp. 6-7.

Here, there is found a similarity in Rahner and Aquinas i.e. both thought on the basis of the whole and in relation to the whole. Regarding the attitude of Vatican II, there had been different opinions. Some thought that it had gone too far, becoming too progressive and surrendered too much for modernity. On the other hand, some theologians including Rahner felt the need of the Council to be worked out. This indicates how the council was comprehended. However, it is significant to note that among all, Rahner's method was welcomed by the Second Vatican Council. The basis for its popularity was Rahner's emphasis on anthropology and an endeavor to bring Thomism into modern philosophy and interfaith dialogue. Rahner advocated the freedom of speech within the Church which meant to let modernity be the part of theological traditions. In the post-modern context today, Rahner's approach has got a lot of criticism. His existential orientation is attached as privatizing of religion that lacks social and political force.³³¹

A view of Rahner's ecclesiology in condition with the renewal inaugurated by Vatican II and its openness to the world highlights that he was not to purchase particularity of Christian identity at the cost of public character of theology. He discouraged the Christians who stayed isolated from their cultural atmospheres. The dividing line between Christians and non-Christians was presented by Rahner in a fluid manner. This indicates that he strived to work out the full implications of his convictions for the universality of grace. In the neo-scholastic environment when grace was seen as scarce, Rahner's theological services had been an effort for a more integrated vision of Christianity with more optimism for the post-Vatican II generation.

5.3.1. Grace and Nature in Rahner's Theology

Rahner's theological case is carefully crafted involving standard Catholic doctrines for a truly revolutionary theology of religions. The centerpiece of Christian faith i.e. God is love, became the focal point of Rahner's theology. This meant that God is to embrace all people and wants to save them. Rahner's emphasis has been to

³³¹ See, Fiorenza Marmion, *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner*. pp. 65-66.

realize the very truth that God does what He wants. God in His love for the creature reveals Himself to every human being. This in fact is the grace given to all by God. The love of God for His people, according to Rahner has got a lot of meaning. The human nature is not just 'natural'. It is much more than that and carries in it the Divine presence and peace-thus becoming the graced nature. To Rahner, this is the 'supernatural existential' i.e. the human existence is more than nature. His emphasis has been to know the very reality of our existence which makes the human nature a piece of Divine nature. The whole theological career of Rahner proves how grace could be felt within our nature. He explained it as the electricity which lights the bulb to show what it really is, similarly God's love fills us enabling to live and act differently. Rahner states that "grace informs us something like the way the Spirit informs the body".³³²

It is through grace that we can know and love in the best ways. Both the acts of knowing and loving have no bounds. These can be satisfying but can never be satisfied. For this, Rahner's conclusion is that 'the humans are the finite beings capable of the infinite'. Being even mortals, they can hear to the word beyond the limits. Therefore, the sinful condition does not harm this grace. If man falls into a deep ditch, there are several means to get out of it. If sin is a part of human nature, the ability to love and care about others is a more powerful part of human nature. Rahner means to say that in the human nature good and evil do not have a fifty-fifty chance i.e. good is stronger. On this basis, human potential to be saved is far more than to be fallen. The very human nature carrying God's presence and His love can experience God and final salvation even outside the Church. This was Rahner's chief concern throughout his theological career.

5.3.2. Salvation in Other Religions

Rahner remained firm in his claim that God's grace is active in all religions. The beliefs and practices of all religions carried in them the offer of God's Self. The basis for this claim by Rahner is the key ingredient of Catholic experience and theology i.e.

³³² See, Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. p. 69.

the human beings are embodied and social beings. This means that our every act comes through our bodies and through other people. Similarly knowledge and beliefs are not the spiritual transfusion rather these are the outcome of some material form. That led Rahner to state that "grace must be embodied and God's presence has to take some kind of material shape".³³³

The religions, says Rahner, are the ways where humans search for deeper meaning. In their every essence, these carry the clues to the Divine Spirit. Rahner is against those Catholics who insist on the necessity of the Church just because they believe that God meets them in physical and social forms. To him, all other religions are necessarily the embodiments of God's grace. So he firmly stated that "religions can be ways of salvation. Through their rituals, all the believers are drawn by God to His self. In Rahner's words, the statement runs as:

"The non-Christian religions can be a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation".³³⁴

With this new theological understanding, Rahner did not mean to approve all religions. He just wanted to open a possibility never open to non-Christians before. Rahner establishes a probability that God is speaking non-Christian languages also. The errors in other faiths do not weaken this probability. If error and corruption was a gauge for how much God can make use of a religion, Christianity might rank lower than many others. Rahner meant to state that a religion with errors does not mean that it carries no good. So he invited Christians to a new way of approaching the non-Christians. Instead of beginning with the Divine message, the missionary should start with non-Christians in some other ways as God has been present in them long before the missionaries arrived. There may be certain elements which other faiths have to teach to missionaries. So, Rahner's theology calls for such a relationship between Christianity and other faiths which includes give and take on both sides.

³³³ See, Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faiths: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. pp. 178-203.

³³⁴ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.p. 318.

5.3.3. Notion of Anonymous Christians

To Rahner, grace present in all humans is in fact, the grace of Christ. By this, he provides further depth and new horizons. God's grace pervading all humans is because of Jesus Christ. This is the concept central to Christianity. Christ is the healing spirit in the universe. To Rahner, Jesus Christ is not an efficient cause of salvation but he is its final cause. God's saving love has always been there as His very nature. The final cause of this love is Jesus because there is in him "What God is up to, what intends to bring about in giving the Divine spirit to all people".³³⁵ The message of Christ is love, peace and justice representing the intent and direction of every breath of God's spirit that blows within humankind. To Rahner, it was Jesus Christ who could satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart which continue waiting for an absolute savior. Jesus in him carries the clearest and final Word of God that God is truly with us. So he is the greatest source to live worthy like him. He is to guide and help all in this world and the Hereafter.

This highlights the importance of Jesus Christ in Rahner's Fulfillment Model and the Replacement Model. They affirmed the necessity of knowing Jesus to really experience God's saving love. However, Rahner further advocates that without knowing Jesus, God's love can be experienced but it will be not clear what its true purpose is. The experience of God's grace and love by non-Christians, added Rahner, is already oriented toward Jesus as he represents the ultimate goal of God's grace. So all graced through their faiths are also orientated towards Christian Church. They are in fact the Christians directed toward Jesus but they do not realize it. To Rahner, they are the anonymous Christians. His concern here is to liberate Christians from having negative views of the ones outside the Church. He addresses them to realize that God is much greater than they are. This was how he strived to develop the positive view of his colleagues about non-Christians.

³³⁵ Ibid. p.73.

5.3.4. Rahner's View of Church

Rahner's understanding of how God saves through Christ has given way to new insights. The Christians by this have got inspired as well as frightened regarding the Church mission which now no longer could be considered the only island for salvation. Rahner puts it thus:

"The Church should consider itself the historically tangible vanguard and the historically and the socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christ hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church".³³⁶

Rahner also calls the Church as sacrament which does not mean to rescue the people and put them on new roads. It aims to enable people see more clearly and move more securely. A key objection to this view of Rahner was that it would burn away the missionary zeal. His response, however, was that the Christians must share good news of living with love and justice seen in Jesus. He maintained that becoming a Christian offered a greater chance for salvation. A true follower of Jesus carries greater responsibility for others rather than a greater advantage for oneself.

This leads to comprehend Rahner's view about others as the persons not knowing their destination as to him, only Jesus Christ is the final cause of salvation. Only here is God's goal of creation. Christ is, says Rahner, the absolute savior. All the non-Christian religions with elements of goodness are to serve and to prepare the way for the people to take last step to get into the Christian community. In this way, Rahner's new ideas have facilitated the catholic theologians to develop a new theology of religions. His revolutionary approach has officially been affirmed as Rahner's Catholicism in the form of Second Vatican Council.

³³⁶ See, T.W. Tilley, *Religious Diversity and the American Experience: A Theological Approach* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007).p. 133.

5.4. Rahner in Dialogue with Others

Rahner towards the last part of his life strived hard on apocatastasis. It is an Orthodox doctrine that all free beings will eventually share grace for salvation. The world created by God carries in it solution to every problem arising anytime anywhere. To Rahner, the world is a composite of various different cultures. However, religion is practiced in real life. Such a situation demands the tolerant approach towards other believers i.e. dialogue with world religions must be the major field of modern theology. The Christians, in specific, must not have negative consideration of other religions.³³⁷ Rahner thus argues;

“Beyond ecumenism there are burning questions; they exist because in the world today we have not only Christians but also Moslems, and the entire secularized, positivist, relativist, skeptical, atheistic world in which the message of Christianity must be preached in a new way”.³³⁸

He continued to emphasize on the need to treat Muslims in a theological way instead of just political or polemic ways. He considered dialogue as a part of broader scheme of engagements. The whole non-Christian world is no longer considered heading to eternal damnation. However, Rahner describes Christianity as “the acceptance in faith...of a unity of all reality that comes not from human beings but is grounded in God’s self-communication”.³³⁹ The openness to other religions advocated by Rahner has been the result of his theology of Trinity which he explained as the monotheism above all monotheisms. It is only God, added Rahner, who can rescue every human from its inherent dynamism to a dead end. He also significantly takes the heart of history which is open and alive in the most serious manner.

³³⁷ See, Imhaf and Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-18182*.p.325.

³³⁸ Ibid. p. 358.

³³⁹ Karl Rahner, *Faith in a Wintry Season Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of His Life* (USA: Herder & Herder, 1986).p. 199.

Rahner laid great stress on the Church to take up the task of ecumenism with other world religions. The theological task with Christian traditions only is all too easy a manner to settle. To Rahner, there is quality of grace and revelation in the striving to become human. This grace is striving at us to recognize and embrace other believers and even the non-believers. There has been a fundamental correlation between God and the whole history of humanity. Rahner sought an increasingly historical as well as temporal conception of God and His people. He further added, "The Church must speak with the men and women of today".³⁴⁰ He disagreed with those who thought that there was no salvation outside the Church. Lennan, a critic of Rahner offers an optimistic analysis of his vision of an open Church in the following words:

"In proposing a model of the future Church, Rahner was interpreting Christian tradition for a new age. This being so, his proposals drew on an aspect of that tradition which is often neglected: its compatibility with development. What Rahner offered was a scheme for developing that tradition in the light of contemporary condition".³⁴¹

Rahner's later writings are essentially marked as "writings from the grave". His conception of grace, creation, Christianity, Trinity, the Church etc did not carry any change. There is found a slight shift to pneumatology as the starting point of his theology of dialogue with the world religions. He carried greater intensity of feeling and of application in his final years. This stage is original in the radicalization of his thought. He remains an involved human being. He pushes the theory from ecumenism with Christian traditions to ecumenism with other religions, science, humanism and even atheism.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 186.

³⁴¹ Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). p. 257.

5.5. Rahner in Interfaith Dialogue

It was at the time of Second Vatican Council when the slogan of "dialogue" and "openness to non-Christian world" got intensity. Among all the theologians, Rahner was in dead earnest about dialogue. The most notable thing in him was, despite his utmost emphasis on dialogue, that Christianity was the real claim on the conscience and corned not even the smallest concession in this regard. However, he insisted on the truth and goodness found outside the Church. He worked out hard to develop a language for the Church to communicate its message in the real sense. His efforts fruitfully influenced Vatican II which carries his theological understandings as most of its content.

5.5. 1. Rahner's Dialogue with Natural Scientists

Rahner's adoption of dialogue was not limited with religions only. He also extended it to the representatives of natural sciences. He aimed at bridging the traditional gap between the scientists and the Church. He made them check the overestimation of their sciences. To Rahner, humans did not just carry evil and value-free aggression; instead, they had sense of responsibility and guilt. In this dialogue, Rahner learnt from the scientists to think in a rationally limited way in evolutionary terms. Now relation of God with the world and humanity, according to Rahner, was an evolutionary process moving "forward in qualitative leaps...from death to consummation". To Rahner, these leaps were the outcome of self-transcendence which preserved the honor of humanity. God enables the finite to bring forth something new. Thus the new in all truth emerges from the old. There is found no competition between God and the natural forces.³⁴²

Despite inability of theology to be explained by the methods of natural sciences, Rahner defended its right to have a place in university. He emphasized on the scientists to realize that their research and everyday life carried philosophical and

³⁴² See, Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*. pp. 111-112.

theological thinking. However, such interpretation was the task of linguistic philosophy highlighting the mindfulness of theological statements.

5.5. 2. Rahner's Dialogue with Marxists

The framework of dialogue adopted by Rahner also offered the opportunity to converse with Marxists on theological basis. He openly called them "my friends". His civic courage and personal esteem bound to the members of the Italian Communist party. He shared with them the Marxist accusations. These activities of Rahner with the people of the world at all levels led him to realize the misuse of religion. The exploiters backed up their systems with appeals to a divinely willed eternal ordinance. Marxism carried the ethical impulses towards a humanizing change of the world. This won great respect in the eyes of Rahner. However, he diplomatically criticized the inhumanities in it and emphatically declared it unacceptable for Christianity as it reduced humanity to a bundle of chemical processes influenced by society. He insisted Christianity to be associated with humanism to make the future of the world worthy of humanity. It was a road to an absolute future which comes itself and is in fact God Himself. The dialogue with Marxists taught Rahner that there was a connection between two futures: the absolute future and the future within the world. The study of the people all over the world led Rahner to support the view of 1974 General Assembly of Jesuits that the Church has to work for integral liberation of people. It will no longer be limited to purely religious sphere. Besides this, Rahner also supported the theology of liberation. However, he was never enthusiastic about progress. When the first man landed on the moon in 1969, Rahner thus remarked:

"I will not belittle this gigantic effort and this triumph of the human domination of the world. I will not say that it should not have happened. But if some already set out to leave this our old earth, the others, the majority, who remain here, should feel even more urgently the responsibility to work with just as much boldness and persistence, with just as many heroic renunciations, to make this old earth freer from war, hunger, misery and crass injustice. Otherwise this day would be an accusation: your intelligence has found the way

to the distant moon, but your heart does not know the way to the misery of your brother who is near".³⁴³

Rahner being among the experts of the Vatican Secretariat for non-believers took an active part in the institutionalized forms of dialogue. He got the responsibility of editing the international journal "Dialogue" (1968-1974). The council attracted many theologians and literary scholars from Christian as well as non-Christian communities. However, the journal and its editor (Karl Rahner) were attacked vigorously because of the minority of communists. Rahner was accused of betraying the truth properly in a doctoral work. This made the Council to show that clergy and laity in the Church had not been embraced by love and openness. This meant that dialogue at the official level went dead before it was completely alive. However, Rahner regarded all this activity of the Council and its journal meaningful. He continued to converse with Marxists till his end in order to develop mutual understanding in the interest of a peaceful future.

There was a change in the climate of the Church after 1969. Its openness to the world lasted for a very short time. The Council and the change of government in 1969 were considered by Catholics as the cruel blows of fate. It began the march into ghetto. This situation in Germany could not check Rahner's ways who untiringly kept pointing to the tasks of the Church and theology in future.

He was against the shaping of the Church under personal religious and political influences of few theologians. He strongly defended the democratization of the Church where dialogue strengthened the legally developed essential order instead of destroying it. His aim had been to fill the Church with maximum people so that, they may not go out of Christianity into purely secular humanism. To him, 'shimming down of congregations and orders was deeply un-Christian'.³⁴⁴

Towards the end of his life, Rahner called this phase of the Church as "the winter time" which could last too long but will ultimately be followed by the spring.

³⁴³ See, *ibid.* pp. 114-115.

³⁴⁴ Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*. pp. 113-116.

His optimistic view not only developed broader understanding of theology but also gave Second Vatican Council new footings.

5.5. 3. Rahner's Ecumenical Dialogue

Karl Rahner's theology, since its beginning, worked towards the ecumenical dialogue. He learnt a lot from the Protestant theology which extended his horizon of theological understanding. As a result, his theology and the dogma of the Church took such a way that difficulties to the Protestant Christians came to an end. Regarding this, Rahner did not consider any dogmatically bonding as the unsurpassable end of a process. It was, to him a formulation open to mystery. Anything important for Catholics must not become a difficulty for non-Catholics. To Rahner, this is the very theological task of the Church to be taken with full responsibility. His ecumenism was the awareness that the Catholic Church must look for the causes of the opposition of other Christians as it in the theology of fallible human being. It was the primacy of divine grace which in Rahner's theology corresponds to the Protestants. It brought about the will, the ability to perform good abandoning a man to take stand as an autonomous contribution before God. Both Rahner and the Protestants carried a commonality i.e. the former's theology of the world and the latter's high estimation of Word of God. To Rahner, the word has got a decisive importance in the sacrament. The material elements, adds Rahner, only serve to clarify the word. In the Scripture, the revelation of God is meant for salvation. On this basis, Rahner argued to the Reformers that scripture alone suffices. God neared them through grace alone.

Rahner could not share some of basic positions of Protestants and honestly opposed them. One of these was the consideration of grace which to the Protestants was given to sinners by God as it was from outside like a Lord of manor. On the other hand, grace according to Rahner is the communication of God Himself transforming the people to their very inner selves. This result is making them avoid sins, thus rescuing human honor before God. Rahner considers the Biblical theme of God's wrath as completely fallen into the background. God offering Himself in love no longer has any trace of anger. This is how the Church theology, to Rahner, was not to depend on the discoveries of Biblical criticism.

Rahner's ecumenical dialogue kept him close to the Protestants; at least to those who had open-mindedness to the Catholic Church. In 1961 and onwards, the relationship became so strong that it was never broken. The profound philosophical correspondence with the prominent Protestant theologians and the members of the World Council bore extremely fruitful results. All of them had realized that the union of the institutions did not mean the resolution of theological controversies. It was in fact an initiative to bind the Churches for developing institutional unity leading to the full unity in faith and theology for all Christians.³⁴⁵

In 1960s, Rahner engaged himself in dialogue with the renowned theologians of Judaism. They searched together for the common things in them. Towards the end of his life, Rahner increasingly focused on Islam. Regarding this, the important theme in Rahner's theology i.e. Trinity pioneered dialogue with Muslims.

5.5. 4. Rahner-Before Vatican II

The positive Catholic theology of religions in the twentieth century has been the outcome of the theologians' strivings to find theologically sound and positive interpretations of the axiom. Some of the theologians were marginalized as having ideas outside the official view. However, towards the second half of the twentieth century, the official Catholic teachings were indirectly influenced by them. Karl Rahner an influential dogmatic theologian dealt with the question of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions before Vatican II. He developed a phrase concerning the position of non-Christians (the trade mark of his views and the focus of Catholic "inclusivism" since the 1960s).³⁴⁶ The Second Vatican Council carries his enormous influence on the final shape of its documents. He is regarded as the official theologian at the council.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ See, Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*. pp. 118-120.

³⁴⁶ See, Maurice Boutin, "Anonymous Christianity: A Paradigm for Interreligious Encounter," *JES* 20 (1983). pp. 602-629.

³⁴⁷ See V. Dych William, *Karl Rahner, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992). pp. 12-13.

Rahner's reflections in his lecture "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" delivered in 1961 before the Council were followed on the same footings even after the Council.³⁴⁸ This essay produced by Rahner before the Council reflects his main teachings concerning the subject. He intended to speak optimistically of God and His saving will. This new approach to other religions in Catholicism emphasized that divine religions are something more than mere expressions of "natural religions", because of grace as their essential element adding something to man's relation with God. Rahner argues that God presents supernatural instances of the grace to man because of Christ.

Christianity's relation to non-Christian religions was well interpreted by Rahner in his four theses. The main objective in developing them stated by him is as follows:

"We simply want to try to describe a few of those basic traits of a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions which may help us to come closer to a solution of the question about the Christian position in regard to the religious pluralism in the world today".³⁴⁹

His first thesis announces Christianity as the only "absolute religion" intended for all men. There is no other religion as of equal right. Only through Christianity, God provides salvation to all people in Christ. The second thesis explains Rahner's understanding of the relation between nature and grace. According to him, grace is operating anonymously in a person's religion. So the non-Christian religions are "lawful" religions given by God to be the means of salvation. These first two theses led Rahner to develop his third thesis in order to determine the position of non-Christians and their religions in relation to Christianity. In this thesis, Rahner claims that non-Christians religions carrying Jesus Christ anonymously within them become lawful ways of salvation. His fourth and final thesis outlines the Church's function in the light of the logical conclusion of the previous theses. The Church should serve non-Christians in the name of Christ. It should be an example for others.

³⁴⁸ See, Rahner Karl, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," *Theological Investigations* 5(1966). p.

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³⁴⁹ See, *ibid.*

All grace, says Rahner is the supernatural grace. He thus got a foundation for a new type of theological approach to non-Christian religions which chiefly centred the universal salvific will of God only in Christ. These positive statements laid the foundation for development of a positive Catholic teaching on non-Christians.

5.5. 5. Rahner-After Vatican II

Earlier, the Council's teachings focused on the positive relationship that the other religions enjoy in God's universal plan of salvation. Its concern was more pastoral than being doctrinal. It did not affirm explicitly that other religions were ways of salvation. Rahner viewed it as the Council's achievement when it started looking beyond the question of salvation of non-Christians as a positive relationship of the Church to other religions. There is no doubt in the fact that this change was the outcome of Rahner's four theses mentioned above and discussed at length in the previous chapters. The whole theology of dialogue took new ways to approach the non-Christian communities. The Council viewed salvation optimistically in the actual self-gift of God for all people. Rahner argued that such optimism was not explicitly professed by the believers. Therefore to him, "the essential problem for the theologian has been left open," and "the theological quality of non-Christian religions remains undefined." He asks whether salvation of non-Christians was outside or within the life of their religions. He could find no vivid answer to the question whether the religions were salvific in themselves or not.³⁵⁰

5.6. The Council of Vatican II and Rahner

At the time of the formation of the Council, Karl Rahner was recognized as the prominent theologian whose theology was taken for granted by the Church. He was also respected by the progressive theologians. He was strongly committed to the renewal of permanent diaconate. He was the only dogmatic theologian having his position defined on the diaconate. He was also well aware of the burning concerns in missionary lawns of the Council. Rahner joined the committee working for the

³⁵⁰ See, Karl Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation," *ibid.* 18(1984).p. 290.

preparations for the Council. He became the private adviser to Cardinal Koinig at the Council in 1961. At his direction, Rahner had already written many articles and a dictionary of religion in 1956. His concern remained the texts from dogmatics and moral theology. Here, he had to cope with the opponents also who urged that the need of time was to give summary and a syllabus of the current theological and philosophical errors. He refused to approve this procedure.³⁵¹

When the Council was solemnly opened on 11 October, 1962, the Pope encouraged the forces of renewal and ruled out the condemnations. Karl Rahner was also among the officially nominated Periti and was not allowed to take part in the session of any of the commissions of the Council. However, his activities included interaction with the bishops outside the Council in Germany, South America, and France where were held theological meetings.

When the text of the Council was prepared, discussions began on the sources of revelation. This was the key theme in Church and theology, this first text was rejected by the opponents whereupon on November 21, 1962 John XXII formed a new commission to work out a new text. Beside the Holy Scripture, another source of revelation was the oral tradition which resulted in the expansion of contents of faith, as new things were easy to be discovered in the oral tradition. With the passage of time, when the new text was ready and discussion on it started on 1st December 1962, Rahner had to give an opinion both in oral and written form. The experts produced a real flood of paper on 5 December, 1962. Rahner took part in a session of the mixed commission. Despite having the director's authority, Rahner was not excluded. Rahner did the same in the following session which won him respect by the opponent theologians. His deep knowledge of the tradition, his sovereign command of Latin and his logical acuteness in argument led him to lead others.³⁵²

The sessions of the Council continued and Rahner was officially nominated peritus and member of an expert group of seven theologians in February 1963. They were to

³⁵¹ See, Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*, p. 95.

³⁵² Ibid. pp. 96-97.

work out the new text on the Church in the modern world. In autumn 1963, Rahner worked with theologians like Gerard Philips-a Belgian dogmatic theologian. He developed good terms with them as their collaboration was important with Council's proceedings. Here the new texts were kept as open as possible avoiding anything leading too quickly to a dogmatic assertion.³⁵³

The second phase of the Council carries major role of Karl Rahner to whom the theme of the diaconate was of much concern. Rahner focused on the collegiality of bishops and their relationship to the Pope. He advised them in preparing the Schema on the Church, the new text on Mary and on the members of Orders. This phase of Council proceeded in rational and peaceful climate which was the result of Rahner's active participations. He delivered numerous lectures at various places and also worked on conciliar texts on the relationship of scripture and tradition. The second phase lasted from 29th September to December 4, 1963.³⁵⁴

On 14 September, 1964 started the third phase of the Council which lasted till 21 November, 1964. There were discussed the texts with which Rahner was chiefly concerned. These were on the revelation and on the Church in the modern world. Rahner significantly involved himself in these and set the basic theological trend of Christianity. The third phase was followed by the fourth one which started on 14th September, 1965 and lasted till 8th December, 1965. On 9th November, Rahner carried out discussion of a new order where his theology of indulgences was represented by Dopfner Konig and others.³⁵⁵

The Second Vatican Council passed sixteen texts which definitely carry the influence of Karl Rahner. However, four among them, K.Keufeld pointed out; do not carry traces of Rahner's theology. These are (i) on the means of communication, (ii) on the eastern Churches; (iii) on Christian education; and (iv) on religious freedom. His thought on other issues especially on revelation and tradition had been a great

³⁵³ Ibid. p. 99.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 98-99.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

inspiration for conciliar theologians. However, there is essentially major role of Rahner's fellow theologians concerned with the renewal of the Church. Rahner, in 1947 had explained the Church as a sacrament (carrying universal salvation). His incredible persistence for the reward of diaconate makes him among the heroes of the Second Vatican Council. However, Rahner remained active to the point of exhaustion. It was in March, 1966 when he saw a 794-page paperback in USA carrying all the texts of the Council. It was edited by Walter Abbott who included in it short introductions and an index. Rahner wrote a general introduction to the Second Vatican Council whereas introductions to sixteen conciliar texts were written by Herbert Vorgrimler.³⁵⁶

5.6.1. The Second Vatican Council and Non-Christian Religions

The most significant document carrying the teachings of the Second Vatican Council was "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" also known as *Nostra Aetate*.³⁵⁷ The primary purpose to make it focal here is to observe the teachings of the Second Vatican Council about non-Christians. The Second Vatican Council proved to be an opening for Catholicism to come closer to non-Christians and their religious traditions. This Council was formally inaugurated on the 11th October, 1962, by Pope John XXIII, in accordance with his announcement on the 25th January, 1959.³⁵⁸ The Catholic Church was becoming outdated and less relevant in the context of modernity. It was not officially interested in establishing a dialogical relationship with non-Christians. At the time of the promulgation of the *Nostra Aetate*, some conservative bishops, opposing it, argued that this document would affect or rather end the Church's missionary activity by regarding all religions as of the same value. The emergence of the *Nostra Aetate* an accidental document was regarded as the most important and controversial document of the Second Vatican

³⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 100-101.

³⁵⁷ See "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions". *Vatican Council II the Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.*, (Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975). pp. 738-742.

³⁵⁸ Thomas Strasky, "The Church and Other Religions," *IBMR* 9(1985).p.154.

Council dealing with non-Christians and their religions. Cardinal Bea expressed the main aim of the *Nostra Aetate* as follows:

“The purpose of the Declaration is not a complete exposition of these religions, nor of their discrepancies among themselves and from the Catholic religion. This council rather intends through this Declaration to show that there is a bond between man and religions which is meant to be the basis of dialogue and of collaboration. Therefore, greater attention is paid to those things which unite us, and are helpful in a mutual approach”.³⁵⁹

The chief purpose of this declaration was to provide a permanent basis for dialogue and collaboration with non-Christian believers. A thorough study of the document in the following pages will clarify its importance for Church’s relationship with the non-Christians.

5.6.2. Declaration of *Nostra Aetate* (Our Age)

The core of the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* was that the church developed respect for non-Christian religions. The emphasis was on the essential unity of the human race as the creation of God. There were many common elements to unite all religions. The declaration opens with the idea of human unity as follows:

“In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions”.³⁶⁰

The Church had to possess a more positive attitude towards non-Christians as a special duty to promote and foster the unity of humanity. This was meant to stress the brotherhood of all people irrespective of their race, colour, religion, and other perspectives of life. All men are created in God’s image. So there is no basis for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people and people

³⁵⁹ Ibid. p.157.

³⁶⁰ *Nostra Aetate* 1: 1.

arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it. Thus the two important essential foundations of the brotherhood of all people are; (i) all people have been created by the same God; and (ii) the dignity of the human being is because of the creation in God's image. It bounded the Christians to treat others with respect and love. The Catholic Church looks for the commonalities in the world religions.

"All men form one community. This is so, because all stem from the one stock which God created to people of the entire earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving design extend to all men against the day when the elect are gathered in the holy city which is illuminated by the glory of God, and in whose splendour all peoples will walk".³⁶¹

All religions are the ways of the human search for truth. So the moral and the religious aspects are means to reach salvation. The Catholic Church appreciates everything true and holy in other religions. In this regard, Ruokanen argues that "religions contain religious truth only insofar as they reflect something of the Christ-centred truth, or have some sort of reference to the truth revealed in Christianity, or at least seek that truth which became plain in Christ".³⁶²

The Church regards the common human morals in the other religions. But these moral goods and religious truths are to be tested by the Christian revelation and truth. To the Council Fathers, the goodness, truth and holiness in other religions was

³⁶¹ *Nostra Aetate* 1: 2; when we look at the book of "Revelation" in the New Testament. We encounter the similar passage dealing with the eschatological vision of the nations (Revelation. 21, 22). According to K. Cracknell, the expressions of this passage deal with the eschatology of nations and peoples and challenge the theologies which speak of the eschatology of a single people, and which suggest that God has but one single pattern of working in his saving action toward humankind. If God wants to save all nations and so He is at work in various ways to do this, Christians have to accept that their partners in the process of dialogue have truth in their holy books and their religious traditions are valid. See, for more details: K. Cracknell, *Towards a New Relationship: Christians and People of Other Faith* (London: Epower Press, 1987). pp. 51-52.

³⁶² See, Miikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions: According to the Second Vatican Council* (Brill: Brill Academic Pub, 1992). pp. 59-60.

associated with evil and devoid of the light of the Gospel. The *Nostra Aetate* aimed to acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found in non-Christian religions. The Christians were to come closer to others with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration while witnessing to their own faith. Here are mentioned three aspects: dialogue, collaboration and to tell them about one's own beliefs and way of life.

5.6.3. Salvation within Non-Christian Religions

With the Second Vatican Council, the Church authorities started using different expressions to lessen its strong condemnation for other religions. It was a step beyond the traditional Catholic axiom that *Extra Ecclesiam Null Salus*. *Nostra Aetate* speaks about non-Christian religions with sympathy and in a tone of goodwill. It divides the non-Christian religions into two groups. Those who know divine necessity of the Catholic Church but explicitly reject it cannot attain salvation. Secondly, those who seek God with sincere heart and act for divine can succeed in attaining salvation.³⁶³ It is clear that salvation for non-Christians carries three conditions. These are (1) not deliberately refusing to accept the Gospel or to enter into the Church; (2) seeking God, the Creator with a sincere heart and open mind; (3) carrying out God's will. Thus, the Catholic Church explicitly acknowledged the possibility of salvation for non-Christians.³⁶⁴ One can follow the Gospel message without being a member of the Church. The Gospel message cannot be deliberately denied of its truth. Salvation comes not from their religions but from a natural knowledge of the One God and natural moral law.³⁶⁵ The Catholic Church acknowledges the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, but does not recognise that their own religions are ways of salvation for them. God's salvific grace according to the church is not restricted to the visible boundaries of the Church. So, the non-Christians seeking God with a sincere heart have a real possibility of attaining salvation. Rahner's views even before the

³⁶³ See, *Nostra Aetate* 1: 2. From http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ See, Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions: According to the Second Vatican Council*. pp. 99-100.

Second Vatican Council are more positive. He called other faiths as "lawful religions" in God's plan of salvation.

The Council regards all humankind as one and the Holy Spirit offers to all people the possibility of salvation as all men are called to the single divine destiny. The non-Christian religions significantly carry in them the universal grace of God offered to all people. With this, the Council explicitly declared that there is salvation outside the Church. However, it still maintained that Christ and the Church are necessary for salvation. The Council neither explicitly indicates that other faiths are ways of salvation nor that they are not ways of salvation. There is disagreement among Catholic theologians about the interpretation of the conciliar statements on this issue. The Council, in fact, did recognize the general salvific presence of God's grace in the entire universe created by God. The Council implicitly implied that non-Christian religions are independent ways of salvation as they carry grace and truth. Meanwhile, it argues that they are made available in them through the mediator ship of Jesus Christ.

In short, we may conclude that the documents of the Second Vatican Council accept the possibility of salvation for non-Christians provided that they follow the orders of their conscience without rejecting deliberately the Gospel message and entering into the Church. The divine grace of salvation is available for all human beings.

5.7. Assessment of the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council

Regarding the non-Christians, the Council had a very positive approach. The Catholic Church acknowledges and does not reject what is true and holy in them. It encourages the followers to respect and love, to know the people around them and to promote dialogue with non-Christians. However, the process of dialogue can get affected with a number of differences especially with Muslims.³⁶⁶ The Council's

³⁶⁶ See, Council, V. (1965, April 16). Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission Activity of the Church. Retrieved October 10, 2014, from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm

statements speak about the necessity of evangelization of non-Christians. The Council acknowledged the truth and grace, and religious and human elements in non-Christian religions but it essentially required that Christ must be proclaimed as "the way, the truth, and the life" and "...in whom God reconciled all things to himself, men find the fullness of their religious life". According to Vatican II, truth found in other faiths is a preparation for the Gospel.³⁶⁷ The Council Fathers considered this truth as a reflection of the Christian truth which illuminating the entire world and by regarding the Catholic Church as the champion of the spiritual, moral social and cultural elements of other religions. Referring to Muslims and not to Islam, the Council puts stress on individual Muslim men and women and not on their faith which to the Council Fathers is not means of salvation. It also leaves out the prophetic mission of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) through whom the Muslims profess to have access to the final revelation. This indicates that there is certainly a tension between the appreciation of other religions and the call for evangelisation. This makes dialogue difficult.

However, it was for the first time that the Catholic Church officially acknowledged the presence of truly religious values in Islam. It also acknowledged the Muslims' esteem and veneration of Abraham, Jesus and Mary. It thus called for mutual understanding in order to promote and preserve peace and harmony for all humankind. This is how the Second Vatican Council made tremendous progress for developing and promoting inter-faith dialogue. The teachings of the Second Vatican Council did succeed in clarifying a broad theological foundation. Thus it proved to be a move from exclusivism to inclusivism concerning church's attitude towards non-Christians. It acknowledged that there are "real holiness and moral goodness" in other faiths but also asserted that salvation of humankind depends on the Christ event in one way or another.

The Second Vatican Council meant entirely a new attitude of the Catholic Church to the non-Christian religions. In its spirit, its conciliar document speaks of the right to religious liberty. This idea was rejected by the majesterium in the last

³⁶⁷ See, *Ibid.* 13: 1; 15: 8; 39: 1; 40: 2.

century. The "Declaration on Religious Liberty"³⁶⁸ The "Declaration of Human Rights" indicated that there had developed indifferentism in the Catholic Church which meant eternal salvation for believers of any faith. However, Pope Gregory XVI rejected the absurd and erroneous principle of liberty of conscience. The Vatican II affirmed the religious liberty as right of every individual and is to be respected by all institutions. The basis of this is that God is redemptively at work in whole of humanity. Even one is free to worship and practise according to one's faith. This attitude in Catholicism had to take a long way as many theologians were unwilling to recognize the religious liberty for all. This freedom is based in fact in very nature of man who seeks truth in a manner of dignity. He is to act according to his inward motivation as the human dignity is the very basis for religious liberty which is not only for Catholics but for all people.³⁶⁹ Regarding this new development in the Church attitude, Schillebeeckx thus remarks,

"This declaration reflects on entirely new attitude, based on the recognition of the dignity of the human person. This recognition that everyone may freely and publically express his philosophy of life, within the changing bounds of the common weal is something new in the Church".³⁷⁰

To the Church, the foundation of right notably is on grounds of the divine mandate laid Christ. The other religions carry human dignity as the foundation of sight of religious freedom. So, this declaration marks the real turning point in the history of the Church regarding its relation to other faiths; now considered as entities for the Church to enter into dialogue. It is also recognized by the Church that eternal salvation is possible for all who seek God with sincere heart and try to do His will. This makes their faith justified.

³⁶⁸ This "Declaration on Religious Liberty" promulgated on December 7, 1965, is one of the three declarations of the Second Vatican Council.

³⁶⁹ See, *Declaration on Religious Liberty in Vatican Council II*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975), p. 803.

³⁷⁰ See, Eduard Schillebeeckx, *The Real Achievement of Vatican II*, trans. H.J.J (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 41-42.

Both principles of the Second Vatican Council, i.e. the necessity of Christian faith and the universal salvific will of God are properly reconciled by Karl Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians. He stated that even non-Christians justified by grace of Christ and their love for God are Christians in a special sense. Thus they will possibly attain salvation. To Rahner, the absolute faith is Christianity. However, all other religions containing supernatural elements are lawful ways to salvation. Consequently, this line of thought led Christianity to take non-Christians as anonymous Christians. Thus Church is also hidden reality among the non-Christians. On this basis, this theory got workable proposition by all theologians who advocated that Christ's grace is present in all religions and reaches the following in practice of their religion. The Church recognizes that the Spirit is at work in all people and so the non-Christian religions have a place in God's salvific plan. Its mission considers non-Christians to be corrected despite they in fact are a preparation for the Gospel. God saves all men who have not got the message of Gospel. This is an epoch making reversal of the Church's attitude towards non-Christians. The Second Vatican Council is the result of contribution of not only the Catholic theologians but also the Orientalists who played a decisive role in renewing the Church's attitude towards non-Christians.

5.7.1 Teaching of *Nostra Aetate* (Our Age)

It says (*Nostra Aetate*)³⁷¹ that the relation of understanding with other religion is very necessary. For this, the Church needs an open mind and re-think its attitude towards other religions. The church included both Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches. In its first section, the text stated that the church examined with greater care its relation with non-Christian religions and laid great stress on the fact that all the human beings are one community. So, for living together in the world there should be developed mutual understanding through some common aspects in spite of the fact that they have different religions.

³⁷¹ The documents of Vatican and their explanations are present with details in this book. Every person can reach easily to the results after studying The Vatican's documents. It also shows us the aims and purposes of dialogue all over the world for the Evangelization Mission and Salvation of the mankind.

In relation to Muslims, “the text calls them as the worshippers of one God submitting them as Abraham submitted himself. They regard Jesus and Virgin Mary and also believe in the Day of Judgment and reward of God. The text goes on to state that Christians and Muslims had been caught in many disputes for many centuries. But at present, the Council stressed to forget the past and make a sincere effort for mutual understanding that will be useful for all. This will be an easy way to promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values”.³⁷²

In the words of Ataullah Siddiqui;

“The statement of Muslim beliefs has thus moved from a position of condemnation to the acknowledgment that Muslim beliefs are a set of beliefs in their own right. However, the document ignores the question of Revelation (Qur’ān), and the Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Although it compares Muslims submission to the submissive act of Abraham, this does not mean it accepts the spiritual lineage of Muhammad (peace be upon him), through Ishmael to Abraham. It is also significant that the document, reconciliatory in tone, nonetheless emphasizes ‘forgetting the past’ in order to acclaim ‘peace, justice and moral values’”.³⁷³

5.7.2 Lumen Gentium (The light of all nations)

These are the Latin words and lexically mean “The light of all nations”. It is the document issued by the Vatican II essentially under the influence of Karl Rahner. It in fact sets forth the Church’s understanding of its own nature i.e. it is “the loving mother of all”. This indicates that the Church now meant for the whole world strengthening the interreligious relations being central to every religion.

Regarding salvation for others, the Council stated in its document *Lumen Gentium*;

“The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place, among whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith of

³⁷² Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in 20th Century* (London: MACMILLAN Press Ltd, 1997).p.2.

³⁷³ Ibid. pp. 35-36.

Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day. Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since He gives to all men life and breath and all things (cf. Acts 17:25-28, and since the Saviour wills all men to be saved (cf. 1 tm 2:4).³⁷⁴

The document emphasized that all the people are related to the people of God in various ways. The Christians are the dearest people for the sake of fathers. However, the non-Christians having good divine in their beliefs and acts are also on the ways of salvation. They are the ones who seek God with sincere hearts and moved by His grace act for the will of God. *Lumen Gentium* also states that those who have not yet arrived at the knowledge of God but have many different virtues, are considered by the Church on the way to salvation. However, those in complete evil living and dying without God would not be saved and would be exposed to ultimate despair. Therefore, the Church is to carry on its mission and preach Gospel to all the people of the world. This is in the plan of God that Christ's message must be taught to all His people. The Church prepares them for baptism. Besides, any good found in acts and hearts of other believers is purified and raised to the glory of God.

5.7. 2. Dignitate Humanace (The Liberty of Religions Communities)

People living in any community must enjoy religious liberty. It is in very nature of man that he essentially needs a community to live in. The Vatican II's document *Dignitate Humanace* addresses the whole world about the religious freedom. The principle of liberty in faith is recognized also by the law. This document, though quite late is a significant event in the history of the Church. Through this, the Church has overcome the ambiguity of dealing the secular order in terms of double standard i.e. religious liberty when Catholics are minority and privilege for Church and intolerance for others when Catholics are a majority:

³⁷⁴ F. S. C., Edmund Chia (2001). *Dialogue Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia*(ed.). Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, (Bangkok: Thailand), p. 4.

“The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and very human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in associations with others”.³⁷⁵

The religious groups must be treated without violating the public order. They have right to immunity to live according to their own belief system. The humans must have complete freedom to work and promote institutions according to their own principles:

“Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered by legislation or administrative action on the part of the civil authority in the selection, training, appointment and transfer of their own ministers, in communicating with religious authorities and communities in other parts of the world, in erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in the acquisition and use of the property they need”.³⁷⁶

5.7.3. Ad Gentes Divinitus (The Universal Sacrament of Salvation)

This document is about the missionary activity of the Church. The people of God are sent to all parts of the world to spread Christian message. The Gentes meant the unbelieving nations. The document also considers the difficulties of Church in its missionary moves. Vatican II opened the ways for the Church to deal directly with the other believers which is of great significance. The very necessity of the Church's missionary activity is highlighted in the following passages from this document:

“So, although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please HIM (Heb 11 :6), the Church, nevertheless, still has the obligation and also the sacred right to

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

evangelise. And so, today as always, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity". (AG 7)³⁷⁷

Moreover, the Church considers it essential to preach the message of Gospel to all the people in the world before Christ's second coming. The Church manifests God's plan who concludes the history of salvation through the mission. It is the mission which keeps Christ present. Evil is eradicated and souls are purified. Christ is to overthrow the rule of devil. The mission aims to purify goodness in every culture for God's glory and human happiness. About missionary activity, it was said in prophesy: "Enlarge the space for your tent and spread out your tent clothes unsparingly"³⁷⁸ The Church preaches Jesus Christ as the chief corner stone of the foundation of the apostles and prophets upon which the spiritual temple is built.

The Church realizes vast areas lacking in the missionary task. Everyone in the world is to be preached the message of Gospel. Among the non-Christians, some have faith in God, while others have no knowledge of God. Some even deny the existence of God. The Church has to implant itself among all these groups and bring them to the way of salvation. For this, the Church is required to establish relationship of respect and love with all those people. The missionaries must be familiar with the religious and cultural tradition of all those. The task needs tedious labour to keep modern man intact with the things of God, and His love and truth. The word of God carries salvation for all through Jesus Christ. All the non-Christians are on the way of God Who satisfies all their inner hopes. They are certainly in search of God who wants a personal relationship with them through Christ. As a result of Church's mission, the new converts take the path of divine grace for the spiritual journey to God. The transformation is not sudden; rather it is progressive in nature. The converts may suffer misunderstanding but they would find no parallel to the joy they experience as generously granted by God.

For such a compact job, the Second Vatican Council has worked out on certain training programmes for the clergymen. These equip them for the task both pastorally

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

and practically. Their minds are opened and refined in order to better mix with the cultures of their people and consider their relationship with Christianity. The document regarding this thus states;

“In the same way, priestly formation must take account of the pastoral needs of the region; the students must learn the history, goal and method of missionary active, as well as the peculiar social, economic and cultural conditions of their own people. They should be formed in the spirit of ecumenism and properly prepared for fraternal dialogue with non-Christians. All this demand that, as far as, studies for the priesthood should be undertaken in close contact with the way of life of their own people. (AG 16).³⁷⁹

The Council had laid a lot of emphasis on the training of the missionaries who were required to have scientific approach to their responsibility. There is a dire need for fraternal collaboration among scientific institutes of missiology. This is what the new horizons in dialogue with non-Christians demand. The history of science of religions and the pastoral techniques must be the part of clergy students' training. Besides, the Council also remained concerned with the Episcopal Conferences for the immigrant missionaries to work and study along with aiding with pastoral attention. This is a source of bringing the people closer to the Church in spite of their living too far. The Christians through such conferences get a chance to preach the message of Gospel to others. The former's acts of kindness and assistance would help them show the real face of Christ.

The Council regarding dialogue with non-Christians also considers the institutes of contemplative life which are of immense significance in the conversion of souls. This is to explain that God opens the minds of non-Christians to hear the message of Gospel which will ultimately lead them to salvation. These institutes are required to establish houses for the missionaries so that they could live within the culture of the non-Christians and work accordingly for union in Christ. The Council further appreciates those strengthening the missionary programme in the following words:

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

“Those lay people who promote the knowledge of peoples and religions by their historical or scientific-religious investigations in universities and scientific institutes, and so help the preachers of the Gospel to prepare for dialogue with non-Christians, are worthy of special praise.”³⁸⁰

5.7.4. Dei Verbum (On divine revelation)

In this document there is discussion about the importance of the Revelation. It lays great stress that the Revelation has got basic significance in their belief system. The Christians also believe in the completion of Revelation. In the document, we also find the history of the previous Prophet (PBUH), who was according to the document, in search of savior. This chain of Prophets (PBUH) ultimately leads to Gospel and then to Jesus who is called “a man among men”. He is the one who speaks the words of God and the Revelation got completed and perfected upon him. His words are confirmed with the Divine guarantees. Here, we find that the focus of the Church is on the Christ and his teachings and that he is the only promised savior of mankind. In the words of Dr. Ataullah Siddiqui:

“Here no room is left for further ‘Revelation’ and therefore the Qur’ānic Revelation and Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) ministry has no relevance in the council’s documents. As, the council further points out, the earlier Prophets (PBUH) were taught ‘to look for the promised saviour’. The Qur’ān also points that out. Jesus asked his followers to look for a Prophet after him (Al-Saff, 61:6) but this also has no significance in the council’s documents. But it shows the difficulties ahead in the theological area of dialogue with Muslims”.³⁸¹

5.7.5. Gaudium et Spes (Joy and Hope)

This in fact is the foundation of the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world. It came from the challenging intervention of the Council session. The Council was urged to find a vision interpreting what, in fact, was the Church of

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁸¹ Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in 20th Century*. pp. 37-38.

Christ. Moreover, it was also to explain the relation of Church to the modern world. There is found positive and affirmative attitude of the Church relating to interreligious relations.

The foremost thing before the Church is that it appreciates everything that is good. It eagerly progresses towards unity, healthy socialization and other co-operations. This is the deepest nature of Church's mission. The Church works for communion with God and unity among all men. The social union is the outcome only of the bonding of hearts and minds and of faith and love. The Church does not restrict itself to any specific culture. It rather has universal outlook. If the Church is at liberty to preach its mission in every society, it can help develop close bond among different communities. It wishes to put aside all the conflict by the people to consolidate human organisations in themselves.

The Council has great respect for truth and goodness in all humans. It introduces Church as a source of assistance and fostering everything good around the globe. It is everywhere in the service of men protecting basic human rights and needs of common good.

The Church explains God as self-revealing to His people and He speaks according to the specific culture. Thus, the ways of salvation and cultural ways are interlinked in various manners. The Church, too being a part of different cultures through history, has used those cultural elements to strengthen its missionary task expressing it perfectly in the liturgy. In other words, Church had been the part of every age and culture instead of being tied to only one nation. It is faithful to its traditions and conscious of its universal mission. In this way, it not only strengthens the cultures around it but also gets enriched by them.

Through Christ's message, cultures are renewed. Man is made capable to fight against his sinful attractions. This goes on to purify souls of men and elevate them to the ways of God. The spiritual qualities of every culture are caused to blossom and fortify in Christ. Besides all these objectives, the Church also stimulates human culture and contributes to man's interior freedom. Church's respect for the believers of other

religions and its fostering everything good and true in religions is highlighted as follows:

“Many people are becoming more eager to ensure that the rights of minority groups in their country be safeguarded, without overlooking the duties of these minorities toward the political community; there is also an increase in tolerance for others who differ in opinion and religion. At the same time wider cooperation is taking place to enable all citizens, and not only had a few privileged individuals, to exercise their rights effectively as persons. (GS 73).³⁸²

With loyalty to the Gospel in the fulfilment of its mission in the world, the Church, whose duty it is to foster and elevate all that is true, all that is good, and all that is beautiful in the human community, consolidates peace among men or the glory of God (cf. Lk 2: 14). (GS 76)³⁸³

In short, Church acknowledges all those who in any ways are in relation to God. Through dialogue, all men will be spurred to believe in Christ solemnly. This dialogue excludes nobody as it leads to truth through love alone. Its focused outcome is the universal brotherhood and peace all over the world.

5.7.6. Dignitatis Humanae (Dignity of the human person)

To Christians, religious freedom and the human right have got much importance. Their teaching primarily guides the people to care for the interests of others. The council Fathers had issued this document because of increasing pressure from the secular forces. Beside human rights, the document advocated religious freedom. It explains freedom in the following way:

“Freedom means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within the limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be

³⁸² Ibid., p. 11.

³⁸³ Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in 20th Century*.

restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters".³⁸⁴

Here, we get the view of the second Vatican council on other religions. They have found some spiritual wealth amongst Muslim beliefs. Both believe in one God as All-powerful but Christians deny any other revelation. However, a secretariat was established to initiate dialogue with non-Christians. The council wants to propagate Christian mission as well as to have dialogue. The Church had been under pressure to abandon its flexible attitude towards non-Christians. The missionaries were disturbed at the too favorable attitude for them. In such a situation, the Church started looking into the matter seriously and it was made clear that the tension between dialogue and mission could not be resolved in favour of mission.

5.8. Vatican II and Reformations in Catholic Church

Before Vatican II, Catholicism was neither a world of tranquil certainties nor a dark place of clerical oppression. However, after the Second Vatican Council the Catholic pastoral practice was fully reformed. It came to birth as a historical event and became a developed programme of reforms in the Church. The Council issued many documents aiming at total renewal of the Church. These are doctrine of the Church in *Lumen Gentium*, the account of Christianity's relationship to others in *Gaudium et Spes*. These indicated the ways to achieve the set programme of the Council. The single most profound and significant achievement of the Council was to overcome the weaknesses of liturgy. Besides this, the Council focussed on the preferential option for the poor as they and those working for them seemed to be invisible entities of society. Here the efforts proved impressively fruitful. The Council's concern was not only the economic and political uplift of the poor; it primarily aimed at their evangelization. Regarding this, John Paul II contributed a lot in Vatican's attempts to curb the errors of liberation theology. The council sought to do important dues to the quality. Among them is also the importance which people attach to the sequence of Chapters in the Council's two dogmatic constitutions-*De Verbum* and *Lumen gentium*:

³⁸⁴ Ibid. p.5

“In the case of Dei Verbum, the Council treats first, in Chapter I, of God’s being and act, God’s utterance, the Verbum Dei, and only then, in chapter 2, does it go on to consider what we are to do about the word that has been spoken to us, and about the responsibility of those who teach us to ‘listen’ to that word, to ‘guard’ and to ‘expound’ it. (The Catechism, deplorably, begins, not with God, but with our ‘search’ for God.)

In the case of Lumen gentium, Chapter 1 insists on the irreducible diversity of biblical and patristic images of the mystery of God’s gathering of humankind, the mystery of the Church. Chapter 2 nevertheless privileges one such image that of God’s ‘people’ on the move through history only in Chapter 3 does the Council consider the structures and offices that this pilgrim people need”.³⁸⁵

Through its documents, the Council successfully incorporated the narrowly juridical teaching of Vatican I on Papal primacy into larger view of episcopacy. However, it had to face frustration as the Church had been controlled religiously by Pope for thirty seven years. This led the bishops to suppose that the Roman Curia would ultimately surrendered power. With the theological advancements, centralization and micromanagement have been on rise. A notable figure Xavier Rynne thus noted, the most striking accomplishment of the Council has unquestionably been the proclamation of Episcopal collegiality, the principle that the bishops form a college and govern the Church together with the Pope who is their head. Moreover, he went on, ‘the new doctrine is bound to influence the exercise of [Papal] authority in practice, particularly if Pope Paul’s plans for the reform of the Roman Curia and the establishment of the Synod of Bishops are fully carried out.’³⁸⁶

The Council is blamed to polarize the Church as the vast portion of human race inevitably carries diversity of attitudes. Church with serious disagreements with disputants was not to damage bonds of charity. These disagreements indeed threaten the truth and charity. To Pope John XXIII, reform program in the form of Vatican II was meant to bring the Church up-to-date. Paul VI called it as complete renewal.

³⁸⁵ See, Vatican Council from <http://Vatican2voice.org/7reception/Lash.htm>

³⁸⁶ See, Ranne Xavier, *The Fourth Session* (London: Faber Faber, 1966).p. 257.

Some scholars named it as refreshing of Catholic thought in true biblical spirit. This novelty was highlighted in media as Council's progressiveness and liberalism. In the biography of Cardinal Ratzinger, It is stated that to put all this into political terms, majority had a liberal impulse, whereas the minority was more conservative. Yves Congar (1966) remarked, "True reform implies an appeal from less perfect to a more perfect tradition, a going back to the sources".³⁸⁷

5.8.1. The Problem with Open Window

The Council has developed the attitudes of Catholics behind Gospel's back as a result of seismic shifts in social and economic structures and attitudes. Bernard Lonergan had opined in the late seventeenth century regarding the uplift of modernism and scientific progress; "When modern science began, when the Enlightenment began, then the theologians began to reassure one another about their certainties".³⁸⁸

It was institutional and intellectual confrontation with hostile cultures which led Catholicism to disagreements with others. However, it stayed for short time. With modernism, it was the renaissance of Catholicism with good formation in 1960s.³⁸⁹

Initially, modernism was condemned severely which delayed all renewal programs. The Church remained alarmed of modernist attacks. It took half century for renewal of the Church in the form of promulgation of conciliar documents. Many of the theologians greeted the change with incomprehension. The documents aimed at the transformation of consciousness. The conciliar message initially seemed not to speak to the concerns of majority of Catholic followers. Some theologians got confused as they had not expected the change the way it had gone. They started striving to keep away from cliché of the changing world. The overall reformation of the Church in the

³⁸⁷ See, *Informations Catholiques Internationales: Ici*, (1971), p. 55.

³⁸⁸ See, Lonergan Bernard, "Theology in Its New Context," (London: Longman & Todd, 1974). pp. 55-67.

³⁸⁹ See, Lash Nicholas, *Modernism, Aggiornamento and the Night Battle* (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1977). pp. 51-79.

form of Second Vatican Council was appropriate and at appropriate time. However, the achievement of renewal took a lot of time.

While discussing the Council, it is important to note that the conciliar documents kept off birth control and priestly celibacy. Many of the bishops urged to consider the matter but Pope Paul VI- one of the truly great popes of modern times emphatically reserved it to himself and issued the Encyclical *Sacerdotalis Coehibatus* in 1967. There was the disturbing frequency with which the questions of sexual behaviour were decided merely on account of authority in the Church. Professor John Marshall (1965) pointed out that the minority theologians realized their incapability to show intrinsic evil of contraception as it was against natural law. Thus, it became the matter of authority to decide it.

5.8.2. Vatican II and Different Stages

The Council emphasizes on the need for collegiality. To it, the universal Church includes all those redeeming God's grace. Thus, the Church is a symbolic enactment of all the believers. This is stated in *Lumen Gentium* more concretely as:

“This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local gatherings of the faithful united with their pastors. All bishops are the vicars of Christ and they are not to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontifical”.³⁹⁰

It meant that each diocese meant not merely the fragment of some multi-dimensional corporation; it rather was the universal Church in its particular existence. The universal Church is a community of limited experience and resources drawing on scholarship and its members are in continual need of educational and correction. On these bases, Karl Rahner explained the fundamental theological significance of the Council as “the beginning of a tentative approach by the Church to the discovery and realisation of itself as world-Church”.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ A. Ivereigh, *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years after Vatican 2: Essays for John Wilkins* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003). pp. 24.

³⁹¹ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 20. pp. 77-89.

To Rahner, the Church passing through different stages had now been culturally prevailing through the whole world. The Second Vatican Council was the assembly of the world-episcopate. Thus, this is now the world Church which has to be generally at home in all the diverse cultures of the world. This would definitely influence liturgical forms of theology as well as the structures of Church order. So, Rahner saw the further Church as a Diaspora-Church, *pusillus grex*. By this, he raises two very important issues regarding the future of the Church. He questions the relationship of amongst Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims etc. These also find themselves to live as world-peoples with deeper mutual understanding and collaboration. Secondly, the world-Church diverse in its structure was required to sustain the bond of common faith and charity. The only way for the world-Church to be at home in every part of the world is the collegiality of the worldwide episcopate. This can only be possible if the control spreads all around instead of being only at the Roman Centre. John Paul II (1995) asked Bishops to engage in dialogue for reform of the papacy. John Quinn here pointed two main problems i.e. centralization and the need for reform of the Roman Curia.³⁹² It would be a long way ahead if there is reward of regional councils as a regular feature of Church life. However, The Roman Curia was never to reform it by losing its control of centrality.

5.8.3. Greater Openness and Dialogue

Every change in religious attitudes comes from the very bottom and not from the top. However, Church's attitude towards other religions after the Second Vatican Council started changing from the very top which further churned up interreligious dialogue at the local level. The calls to dialogue were essentially the outcome of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions. Established in 1964 by Pope Paul VI, its chief concern was to take the task seriously. There were fruitful results of the dialogue. However, as a necessity the name of the Secretariat was changed to "Vatican Commission for Interreligious Dialogue". It was John Paul II who persistently called for greater openness to other faiths. For this, he was also called "The Pope of Dialogue". During all this, he had remained firm in his conviction that

³⁹² See, John R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy* (New York: Herder, 1999).p. 178.

the only one true religion was Christianity offering the authentic relationship with God.³⁹³ He practically had done a lot for promoting interfaith dialogue, had many gatherings and journeys even when he was ailing and feeble. His understanding of the Holy Spirit did not let him rest and thus the Catholic theology of religions continued to grow.³⁹⁴ To John Paul, there was despite many conflicts, an undercurrent of unity among the world religions. This is because of the presence of the one Spirit which makes dialogue necessary as well as promising. It is the same Spirit of Christ at work in all religions.

5.8.4. Three Major Themes Forwarded for other Religions

The Vatican II's documents regarding the approach towards other religions significantly consider three major themes; (i) the religions can be considered ways of salvation; (ii) the Church must be dialogical; (iii) the Church is in the service of God's reign. Thus, as the first milestone, Vatican II declared all the religions as genuine condition of grace i.e. the ways of salvation. The pope here explained that the Holy Spirit is in the very structure of human individuals as well as of societies, cultures and history. This saving Spirit also dwells in the religions affirming them as carriers of saving grace. In its document, "Dialogue and proclamation" (1991), the Vatican II, the non-Christian religions are discussed by chief Catholics as never before. It was explicitly recognized that the people outside the church did carry the active presence of God and His Word along with the universal presence of the Spirit. Thus, their religious traditions corresponded positively to God's Word and receive salvation. This document further explains that the word religions play "a providential role in divine economy of salvation". Theologically, it meant that the religions are to connect man to God. Thus, the other religions were favoured and respected by the Church as carrying truth and goodness for universal salvific will of God. This attitude was more resolutely affirmed in 1996 by the Council in its official Vatican International Theological Commission statement as, "other traditions have a "saving function" and

³⁹³ See, *ibid.* p. 80.

³⁹⁴ Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (MaryKnoll: Orbis Books, 1997).p. 173.

thus can be a means which helps for the salvation of their adherents".³⁹⁵ Thus, they carry the presence of the Spirit.

After affirming non-Christian religions as ways of salvation, the second theme i.e. the Church must be dialogical touches the way Christian goes about trying to be Christians. The Catholic theologians added a new duty to their job description i.e. dialogue with persons of other faiths seeking conversation with those who are different in beliefs. This call was from Vatican II whose recent statements elaborate dialogues move from the periphery to centre. Its focus had been on two words; dialogue and proclamation. For Catholics, both of these activities had become intrinsic elements for effective propagation of the Church mission. Christians are to let people hear God's Word transforming humanity to new look. This requires them not to remain in the Church but to go to the other world to spread the Good News. The easy and supportive way to these is dialogue which is genuinely a new trend. This is the component element of the one mission of the Church. Dialogue and proclamation go side by side and are intimately related. However, these are not interchangeable. Christians are necessarily and essentially required to talk and listen as well as to their believers of other faiths. A closer look at the views of The Pope and The Vatican II clarifies their very understanding of dialogue. It is not a sly means of softening the audience in order to convert them. Rather, it is a means of mutual knowledge and enrichment i.e. Church also learns and gains something. It is not chit-chat and both sides may be shaken up with different questions. This needs a good preparation on the part of Christians making dialogue and proclamation amazingly the means of conversion of all. Toward God, this conversion would make one Christian or non-Christian leave the previous religious traditions and direct toward another. Thus, in dialogue, all can speak boldly and listen courageously with focus on understanding one another.

The conciliar documents of Vatican II emphasized that the Church and the Reign of God are to be distinguished. Moreover, grace is at work even outside the Church. The

³⁹⁵ International Theological Commission, "Christianity and the World Religions" (1997), 84, 87, in origins: *CNS Documentary Series*, August 14, 1997.

Catholic teachings do not stop here. They recognize the religion of God more important and larger than the Church. Paul F. Knitter in his notable work "Introducing Theologies of Religions" thus quotes:

"The Church is effectively and concretely at the service of the kingdom" (RM 20). The Church's mission is "to foster the 'Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ' at whose service she is placed" (DP 35, also 59). So, the Pope tells us, "the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the kingdom of God of which she is seed, sign, and instrument" (RM 18). This would all imply that the first and foremost purpose of the Church is to promote God's Reign, not itself. As the Pope says, the Church is a "sign" of-a pointer toward, a sacrament for-the Reign of God. But the Reign itself is larger. And it is taking form in other places, finding other signs as well".³⁹⁶

These developments in the teachings of the Council projected love of God for all. Its strong affirmation of the value of other religions and need for dialogue proved it to be more clear ever than before. This rather had been proclaimed as the core of Christian identity. Regarding this, the Council essentially carries three gradients. Firstly, Jesus is the only saviour of all humanity. This is the very essence of Karl Rahner's theological perception; secondly, dialogue must have limits. The proclaiming component of the mission holds "permanent priority" over dialogue which makes the missionary activity proper. At the third place, the Reign of God and the Church are distinguished but not separable. The world is to be made the Reign of God by binding it through Christ but the process of dialogue must not run the risk of losing holds of the central meaning and role of the Church.

5.9. Rahner in the Postmodern Context

Postmodernism is a late form of modernity which was characterised by its faith in human reason unbridled scientific progress, the autonomous human subject and the divorce of the secular from the sacred the postmodern spirit is characterized by scepticism and incredulity towards such explanation of reality. The theologians are

³⁹⁶ See, Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.p. 84.

classified into three groups regarding the understanding and intellectual interpretation of the postmodern trends. The first group including Jean Lyotard and Jacques Derrida who explain postmodern as; "We are trapped in our own skin---there is nothing more---there is no fixed meaning to anything whether world, word, text or human subject".³⁹⁷ Derrida's linguistic deconstruction led to the recognition of the elusive nature of ultimate meaning. Meaning to him is never static.

The second category of the postmodern theorists includes theological prospects mediating religious thought to modern culture. There appeared "post liberal theology" from Yale University by George Lindbeck and his colleagues which appeals to universal religious experience. Including Rahner, they explain religions like languages or cultures embedded in forms of life. Moreover, theology in liberal forms had undermined the specific identity of particular religion. This has been the underlying agenda of the post liberal theology. There also started the Radical Orthodoxy Movement which views faith not as alien to reason but its intensification and divine illumination. This position was inspired by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Pope John Paul II compares faith and reason to "two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth".³⁹⁸

The third group of the postmodern understanding is more moderate having many forms of post modernity. It challenges ambiguous traditions of modernity. Post modernity is the opening of a new kind of theological self-consciousness. Thus, the postmodern context is marked on the one hand by mediating theologians (Tracy, Rahner etc.) who do value reason but do not overvalue it. On the other hand are the post-liberals and radical orthodox that see theology's sole foundation in revelation. Rahner essentially carries this caution of post-modernism in the most moderate forms. He recognizes truth only relative to the community in which the person lives. His

³⁹⁷ Lyotard Jean-Francois, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Theory and History of Literature*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, vol. 10 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).p. 37.

³⁹⁸ S. Caldecott, *Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-Enchantment of Education* (Ada: Baker Publishing Group, 2009).p. 141.

theology comes to "Terms with the situated, partial and fragile character of all human knowing and doing".³⁹⁹ To Rahner, foundation of faith is relativitised in the Holy Mystery despite even new interpretations of language. Theology transcends the mere human words calling for an attitude of worship. Any theology devoid of such acknowledgement according to Rahner fails in its true mission.⁴⁰⁰ It needs to uplift itself from merely the conceptual level.

Many of the themes preoccupying postmodernism are anticipated by Rahner's theology. The theologians influenced by Derrida's theory of linguistic demonstration have been advocating new and more tentative way of speaking about God. Rahner was chiefly concerned with elaborating theology as petrifying into a self-enclosed discourse having nothing to do with the challenges and criticism of other disciplines. Nevertheless, Rahner never favoured an aloof posture of Christian identity. For Christians, segregation can never be a viable option.⁴⁰¹ Rahner maintains that there must necessarily be some kind of correlation between theology and the postmodern context. This indicates that Rahner's theology anticipated to certain essential characteristics of postmodernism.⁴⁰² Being a product of purely modern theological environment, Rahner was fully aware of the inescapability and irreducible nature of intellectual pluralism of the age. He also thought it impossible to integrate many different theological scholars.⁴⁰³ For clearer view of his theological approach in the postmodern and purely scientific era, the following quote of Rahner suffices:

"If as a theologian I inquire about an abstract concept of God, but wish to approach God directly, the absolutely nothing of what God has revealed as Creator of the world, as Lord of history, should be uninteresting to me. Naturally, it could be piously claimed that one needs to know nothing beyond this. But if I wish to love

³⁹⁹ Karl Rahner, "Experiences of a Catholic Theologian," *Theological Studies* 61(2000). p. 3-15.

⁴⁰⁰ On this, See, *Theological Investigations*, 4. pp. 60-73

⁴⁰¹ See, Werner Jeanrond, *The Possibilities of Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994). pp. 70-89.

⁴⁰² For a discussion of this aspect of Rahner in the context of a non-foundationist reading, See Karen Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism in the Thought of Karl Rahner " *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55(2002). p. 127-140.

⁴⁰³ See, Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 11. pp. 3-23.

God for God's own sake and not only for the sake of my personal salvation, then in order to find God I cannot restrict my interest to Scripture alone. Rather, everything through which God permits God's very self to be perceived in this creaturely world will be of interest to me....Although I would like to know more about the variety of human experiences as explored in the sciences, the arts, and historical events, I am quite ignorant of much of this. For the theologian all these human experiences speak of God even if the individual theologian knows very little about them".⁴⁰⁴

This makes it clear, as mentioned earlier, that the central tenet of Rahner's theology had been "God is incomprehensible mystery". No rationality can explain it with clarity. This is the greatest achievement of Rahner's lifelong testimony interpreting the mystery of God as integral to the Christian tradition.

5.10. Summary

The formation of Second Vatican Council in general and theology of interfaith dialogue in the twenty first century in particular are undoubtedly the consequence of Rahner's undaunted efforts throughout his theological career. The key experience on which is based his whole theology is God's self-communication to man. This introduced the Catholic Church to the new ways to approach to the non-Christians. It is formerly a dilemma for the Council which got its way out with Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians which led the European and Western Church to become a world Church. He had to strive hard to reform Catholic teachings in order to make future of Christianity secure. He continued to assert that Christian faith carried the universal salvific will of God which comes only through Christ.

In the past, the Church's attitude to other faiths had been a kind of teeter-totter where presence of God universally and particularly was seen moving up and down. The view of God's universal love for all strongly affirmed His saving presence even beyond the Church. Regarding attitudes towards non-Christians, the Church was particularly influenced by Augustine to whom; men were saved only by grace which is not found

⁴⁰⁴ See, P. Conway and F. Ryan, *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-First Century* (P. Lang, 2010).p. 12.

beyond the Church. Later on, this was left as a false notion as it bounded the boundless love of God to the borders of the Church. This was followed by the formula of love of God without denying the necessity of the Church. The moral values of all the nations meant an implicit expression of the desire to join the Church. Those who loved and served creature belonged to the soul of the Church.

Rahner's services are meant to promote the reception of the Vatican II. He also added in it the adoption of a more missionary style in order to get closer to the non-Christians. He focused on the need for structural change in the Church. He always welcomed religious pluralism. He argued for the anthropological aspect of the Christian faith. Like Thomas Aquinas, he thought on the basis of the whole and in relation to the whole. Therefore, among all, his method was welcomed by the Second Vatican Council. He brought Thomism into modern philosophy and interfaith dialogue. He endeavoured for a more integrated vision of Christianity with more optimism for the post Vatican II generation. He called the Church as Sacrament which enables the people to move more securely. His new ideas facilitated the theologians to develop a new theology of religions. His revolutionary approach has officially been affirmed as Rahner's Catholicism in the form of Second Vatican Council.

Towards the last part of his life, he especially emphasized Christians to avoid negative consideration of other religions. For him, dialogue was a part of broader scheme of engagements. He pushed the theory from ecumenism with Christian traditions to ecumenism with other religions, science and humanism. He remained dead-earnest about dialogue. He worked out hard to develop a language for the Church to communicate its message in the real sense. Vatican II was influenced by him to such an extent that most of its content carries Rahner's theological understandings. At the time of its formation, his theology was taken as for granted by the Church. He joined the committee working for the preparations for the Council as an advisor. Throughout the proceedings, he continued to advise, discuss and criticize different texts till the Council passed sixteen documents. His thought especially on revelation and tradition had been a great inspiration for *conciliar* theologians.

Some of the documents issued by the Council are *Nostra Aetate*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dignitas Humana*, *Ad Gentes* and *Gaudium et Spes*. The core of the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* was that the Church developed respect for non-Christian religions. The emphasis was on the essential unity of the human race as the creation of God. There were many common elements to unite all religions. The declaration opened with the idea of human unity. *Lumen Gentium* is the document issued by the Vatican II essentially under the influence of Karl Rahner. It in fact sets forth the Church's understanding of its own nature as "the loving mother of all". This indicates that the Church is meant for the whole world thus strengthening interreligious relations. *Ad Gentes* is about the missionary activity of the Church. The people of God are sent to all parts of the world to spread Christian message. The *Gentes* meant the unbelieving nations. The document also considers the difficulties of Church in its missionary moves. Vatican II opened the ways for the Church to deal directly with the other believers which is of great significance. *Gaudium et Spes* is the foundation of the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world. It came from the challenging intervention of the Council session. The Council was urged to find a vision interpreting what in fact was the Church of Christ. Moreover, it was also to explain the relation of Church to the modern world. There is found positive and affirmative attitude of the Church relating to interreligious relation and Karl Rahner's role is no doubt significant in developing this attitude.

Conclusion

(i) The study concludes that "Rahner had been an influential figure among Christian theologians in the 20th century. He served as theologian for about six decades. He usually reflected about divinity and its role in the personal life of human being. To him, being human meant to be in relation with God Who enters humans through self-communication. He somehow managed to make the intellectuals realize his perception of theology. He continued till his critics recognized Rahner's theological achievements. Peeping into the matter unfolds that there was a vivid influence of Thomas, Heidegger and Marechal in the writings of Rahner. *The Foundations of Christian Faith* discusses the matter of existence. The study of *Spirit in the World* is the study of Thomas. The *Hearer of the Word* carries relation between philosophy and theology, and the theological significance of philosophical ideas. His conception led to a new theology of religions. On this basis, his service had officially been affirmed as Rahner's Catholicism in the form of Second Vatican Council. Therefore, Christian theologians have been acknowledged the importance of Karl Rahner's theological works and ideas in the contemporary catholic thought in twentieth century.

(ii) Rahner's understanding of salvation led him to coin the term anonymous Christians which meant that whosoever follows the Christ in any manner irrespective of his theological beliefs will ultimately reach salvation. The notion of anonymous Christian has a complete historical background. Many theologians viewed that the grace of Christ is universal and the non-Christians had implicit faith in Christ. Rahner indirectly influenced by these thinkers found that the humans have unlimited openness to the limitless God. Rahner's theological concern had been God's universal saving will which meant salvation outside the Church.

The distinctive perception of grace by Rahner elaborates that God's self-communication is an ontological process effecting the divinization of man. The Church found Rahner's anonymous Christian really helpful and fruitful for its missionary task which is its supreme concern. This paved the way to get close to those

who have already implicit faith in Christ. Thus, the theory also served the process of dialogue and evangelization.

The favorable criticism came from the Second Vatican Council and the Catholic traditionalists. Critics advocated the approach to salvation of all. Rahner managed to prove that the theory was not only true but also the need of the day. He argued that all religions though contradictory in essential matters are necessarily the means of salvation as willed by God.

(iii) The influence of Renaissance and Reformation shifted scholasticism to Neo-Scholasticism. Here is found that the Scripture was losing its authority in Neo-scholasticism while it was central to Thomism. Scholasticism got a shift to Neo-scholastic but it is still found that among different schools of thought, Thomism dominated all others. Many theologians like Josph Marechael, Martin Heidder, Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner chief concern had been the existential and transcendentalism. Rahner's starting point is the analysis of human persons whose basic existence is the quest for meaning. For him, revelation, salvation, history, Christology and Church have a lot of significance in their relation to human nature. The transcendental, however, became the basis for salvation in Rahner's theology. The divinized transcendentalism carries a history which is the capability to have God's Self-communication. It also carries mission to evangelize all men.

Like transcendental, the supernatural existential also carries a history. This means that man is a being of subjectivity of transcendence and of freedom for relationship with God because God's self-communication addresses the men in their freedom. Every salvific act of God is the salvific act of men.. To Rahner, The Holy Spirit is the essence of Church; grace is the essence of sacraments and God's act on man in faith as the essence of God's word in revelation. It is significant to note that Rahner's theology views Church as the sacrament of salvation for the whole world. Salvation of non-Christians is based on their experience of God's grace offered to every human soul.

Rahner goes on to state that the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world. He affirmed that the missionary activity was integral to the nature of the Church. However, it was to be taken in a dialogical manner. In a religiously pluralistic society, the missionary activity must consider significantly that baptism did not involve negation of the previous beliefs. It was just calling the people to conscious recognition of God who was already at work in their lives.

(iv) The Second Vatican Council passed sixteen texts which definitely carry the influence of Karl Rahner. Rahner, in 1947 had explained the Church as a sacrament (carrying universal salvation). He stands among the heroes of the Second Vatican Council. To Rahner, the Church passing through different stages had now been culturally prevailing through the whole world. Now the world-Church, diverse in its structure, was required to sustain the bond of common faith and charity. Rahner's services are meant to promote the reception of the Vatican II. He also added in it the adoption of a more missionary style in order to get closer to the non-Christians. He always welcomed religious pluralism.

Rahner joined the committee working for the preparations for the Council as an advisor. Throughout the proceedings, he continued to advise, discuss and criticize different texts till the Council passed sixteen documents. His thought especially on revelation and tradition had been a great inspiration for *conciliar* theologians.

Rahner emphasizes a kind of correlation between theology and the postmodern context. This indicates that Rahner's theology anticipated to certain essential characteristics of postmodernism. Being a product of purely modern theological environment, Rahner was fully aware of the inescapability and irreducible nature of intellectual pluralism of the age. He also thought it impossible to integrate many different theological scholars.

It is concluded that Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians provides the dimension to Christianity to contribute the interfaith dialogue with non-Christian religions. According to Karen Kilby (2007) has discussed the theology and philosophy of Karl Rahner. But this work does not determine Karl Rahner's notion of

anonymous Christians in interfaith dialogue. Similarly, William Dych (2000) focused on Karl Rahner's work on grace and nature as well as transcendental Christology but did not focus on the Karl Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians. Except this, George Vass (1998) has highlighted the anonymous theory of Karl Rahner in his book titled, "A Pattern of Doctrine 2" but the Rahner's notion in interfaith dialogue has not been concluded as well the researcher found the results. Louis Roberts (1967) has highlighted the theological approaches of Karl Rahner in his book titled, "The Achievements of Karl Rahner. Basically, Karl Rahner's academic work titled, "Theological Investigations" and "Foundations of Christian faith" have been originally found to achieve the objectives of the study with internal and external criticism of the documents as well as data. Karl Rahner's anonymous Christians identifies the supernatural existential in brief is the self-communication of God present in every human nature. Except this, the prominent innovation of the study highlights that Rahner's notion determines the existence of the harmonious relationship between natural reason and the supernatural revelation.

According to the present author, the present study is not a final attempt on the subject of theology of dialogue and its different aspects. It is a starting point to penetrate into the detailed study of the topic. For instance, the present study shows that a comparison of Scholasticism and Neo-Scholasticism and their impact on Christian theological perceptions is needed. Such comparison can be conducted through internal and external criticism of the relevant documents to meet the objectives of research. The study will highlight the nature and characteristics of impact of Scholasticism and Neo-Scholasticism on Christian theology. Similarly, the present study can be extended to further studies on salvation for non-Christians in the writings of Christian Theologians in the 20th Century. As we have seen above, there has been a remarkable role of ecumenical movement within Christianity in providing strong footings for dialogue. It would be quite significant to view the ecumenical movement historically and critically so that a true relation between dialogue and the movement could be identified.

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