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“Locating the *Sensus Fidelium*: A Rahnerian Perspective”

INTRODUCTION

The first section the paper examines the meaning of the term *sensus fidei*. (The term will be referred to in this paper also in English as the sense of the faithful or sense of the faithful.) Utilizing the 2014 International Theological Commission’s (ITC) document *Sensus Fidei In the Life of the Church*, this section defines key terms and identifies constitutive dimensions and points of tension within *sensus fidei*.

The second section of the paper argues that Rahner’s conviction that every person is the recipient of God’s self-communication and that every believer, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, has charisms to be used for the good of the church and world are solid theological foundations for affirming the *sensus fidei*. In addition, other key aspects of Rahner’s theology such as his recognition of the charismatic element within the Church, his understanding of the nature and relationship between *ius divinum* and *ius humanum*, his acknowledgment of the challenges facing the church in any pluralistic age and living in the *diaspora*, and his appreciation of the contributions that the social sciences can make to theology provide a theological basis for, and a possible strategy to identify key elements of *sensus fidei* and to incorporate these contributions into the Church’s self-understanding and practices. The third section examines the thought of Pierre Bourdieu for resources to understand the social dynamics at the heart of *sensus fidei*. Specifically, it will explore his concept of habitus as an entry point to explore the fluid interplay between the individual and society and various factors, especially power, that

influence that interplay. The addition of the notion of “spiritual capital” to Bourdieu’s framework is examined as a way to strengthen his approach in analyzing the *sensus fidei*. Finally it is argued that Bourdieu’s approach coupled with Rahner’s theological framework identifies neglected or often ignored dimensions of *sensus fidei* and offers an innovative approach to understand and nurture *sensus fidei* in the Church.

SENSUS FIDEI: MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

Sensus fidei emerges in *Lumen gentium*, amidst the Council’s renewed attention to the workings of the Holy Spirit in every member of the community of baptized. Richard Gaillardetz observes that “one of the principal contributions of the council was its recovery of the pneumatological conditioning of the church and its appropriation of the biblical understanding of charism.” (Church with open doors,105). The precise phrase “*supernaturalis sensus fidei totius populi*” (the supernatural sense of faith of the entire People of God) appears in Chapter 2 of *Lumen gentium*. *Lumen gentium* 12 states that *sensus fidei* is the characteristic that “is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole people, when, ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful’ they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals.”¹

The phrase *sensus fidei* is rich in meaning. This richness is certainly a strength but it also can be a source of ambiguity and confusion. The sense of the faithful can be used to refer to an individual believer’s appropriation of the faith and/or it can refer to a collective discernment of a community, a community that can be seen more particularly (e.g., wherever two or three are gathered) or more broadly (e.g., the universal church). The 2014 ITC document distinguishes between these two different levels. “On the one hand, the *sensus fidei* refers to the personal capacity of the believer, with in the communion of the church, to discern the truth of faith. On

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the other hand, the *sensus fidei* refers to a communal and ecclesial reality: the instinct of faith of the church herself, by which she recognizes her Lord and proclaims his word.(SF, 3)” The former is referred to in the document as *sensus fidei fidelis* and the latter as *sensus fidei fidelium* though the document notes that *sensus fidei fidelis* can refer to both dimensions while *sensus fidei fidelium* only refers to the communal aspect. The convergence of the two aspects is signified by the term *consensus fidelium*.

The document’s blurring at times of the meaning of the terms *sensus fidei fidelis* and *sensus fidei fidelium* is but one example. The distinction and, at times, the conflation of meanings of *sensus fidelium* as an individual and/or collective reality is also present, to some extent, in *Lumen gentium* and is not uncommon in theological work. For example, Roger Haight notes in the entry “*Sensus fidelium*” in the Theological Dictionary that the phrase *consensus fidelium* and *sensus fidei* are “phrases for the same idea.” This common equivocation highlights a deep truth and a significant challenge. The deep truth is that there can never be a clear separation between an individual’s faith and one’s communal context. One learns the faith from, and in community. One’s faith is saturated with communal experience. At the same time, the equivocation can lead to ignoring fundamental ecclesial issues regarding the interrelationship between the faithful and the hierarchy. It can also gloss over unproductive and unhealthy dynamics between individual and communal realities. Certainly, sociology is helpful in highlighting and offering guidance in helping to distinguish and understand these dynamics.

Sensus fidei is constituted by and consists of several key elements: its divine origin and gratuity (i.e., it is a supernatural gift; its intrinsic relationality, entailing, at least a degree of, mutuality among “parties” within an ecclesial context; its “instinctual quality;” and its consequential nature (i.e., makes a contribution to an individual or community’s awareness and/or practice).

Sensus fidei, individually or collectively, does not emerge without the grace of God. This form of faith, like faith itself, finds its origin in God's gratuitous grace. *Lumen gentium* clearly states that *sensus fidei* finds its source in the spirit that "dwells in the Church in the hearts of the faithful as in the temple." The ITC document, states that *sensus fidei* is "sustained by the supernatural prudence that the Spirit confers."² Contemporary theologians also acknowledge that *sensus fidei* is a supernatural gift. Of course, as will be noted later, the question of the extent of this supernatural gift (i.e., how restricted or expansive it is viewed) has significant implications for ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and Church-world relationship.

Sensus fidei is intrinsically relational. As noted above, one does not develop a sense of the faith alone. This fact has theological and sacramental implications for a grounding of, meaning of *sensus fidei*. The communal dimension is ritually celebrated in the rite of baptism. One is baptized into a community of faith and it is this community that "immerses" one in the practice of the faith. At least initially, at least the formation of an individual is heavily weighted on the side of the community "forming" the individual. Instruction and formation is coming from the side of the community. At its extreme, the individual is seen as a passive recipient ("tabula rasa") of the wisdom of the community. (FOOTNOTE The absolute passivity of the individual is challenged by the social sciences, educational theory, theories of reception, and common sense. Individuals and communities are never completely passive. Their reception is constituted not only by what is presented but by the pre-existing linguistic, cultural, social and psychological "structures." The dynamics of this relationship (i.e., give and take) is analyzed by the social sciences.)

Passivity ascribed to believers (i.e., laity) was implicit in the traditional distinction between the teaching (*ecclesia docens*) and learning Church (*ecclesia discens*). In such a view, ordinary believers (i.e., laity) were passive recipients of the knowledge

² "Sensu Fidei in the Life of the Church," n.d., http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

dispersed by the hierarchy who was defined as the teachers of the faith. Gaillardetz observes that “at least since the French Revolution, consideration of the ecclesial dynamics of listening and learning have been eclipsed by evermore expansive considerations of the dynamics of the ecclesial teaching. These dynamics presupposed what Lonergan referred to as a “classical cognitivist” framework in which God communicates the divine message through doctrines that are taught by the magisterium and passively received by the Christian faithful. In this account, a commitment to the epistemic objectivity Church doctrines overrode any concern for subjective appropriation. The classical cognitivist perspective emphasized the sharp division between the teaching church (*ecclesia docens*), identified with the magisterium, and the learning church (*ecclesia discens*), identified with the lay faithful. This framework paid much more attention to the distinctive assistance of the Holy Spirit given to the bishops than it did to the work of the Spirit in the life of the whole people of God.” (93-4)

As Gaillardetz and many other contemporary theologians note, *sensus fidei* sharply challenges this sharp division. It is built on the recognition that an individual or community of believers are not passive agents but, graced by God, have distinctive gifts to contribute to the Church. *Sensus fidelium* is a recognition that there is a two way street (i.e, mutuality) between the believer and the community of faith. ITS states, “the whole church, laity and hierarchy alike, bears responsibility for an mediates in history the revelation which is contained in the holy Scriptures and in the apostolic Tradition. The Second Vatican Council stated that the latter form ‘single sacred deposit of the word of God’ which is entrusted to the church, that is, ‘the entire holy people, united to its pastors.’ The council clearly taught that the faithful are not merely passive recipients of what the hierarchy teaches and theologians explain; rather, they are living and active subjects within the church. In this context, it underscored the vital role played by all believers in the articulation and development of the faith:’ the Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit.’” (67)

The relationality at the heart of *sensus fidei* is the basis for a distinctive type of knowing that emerges. The ITC document states “ The *sensus fidei fidelis* arises, first and foremost, from the connaturality that the virtue of faith establishes between the believing subject and the authentic object of faith, namely the truth of God revealed in Christ Jesus. Generally speaking, connaturality refers to a situation in which an entity A has a relationship with another entity B so intimate that A shares in the natural dispositions of B if they were its own. Connaturality permits a particular and profound form of knowledge...It is a knowledge by empathy, or a knowledge of the heart.”³

This leads to a recognition that the “truths” derived from *sensus fidei* are distinctive. “Unlike theology, which can be described as *scientia fidei*, the *sensus fidei fidelis* is not a reflective knowledge of the mysteries of faith which deploys concepts and uses rational procedures to reach its conclusions. As its name (*sensus*) indicates, it is akin rather to a natural, immediate and spontaneous reaction, and comparable to a vital instinct or sort of ‘flair’ by which the believer clings spontaneously what conforms to the truth of faith and shuns what is contrary to it.”⁴

This view of the ITC raises important issues regarding *sensus fidei* and the understanding and formation of doctrine. Gaillardetz recognizes the issue. “what, for example, is a proper relationship between the wisdom of God’s people (*sensus fidelium*) in church? The insight and wisdom of ordinary believers often eludes propositional form, embedded as it is in the concrete narratives and daily practices of Christian discipleship. There is a temptation to consider this nonpropositional form as inchoate doctrine, as if Christian wisdom cannot achieve its maturity until it is it has been received for the bishops given normative expression as doctrine. But is this always the case? (95) Gaillardetz responds negatively to this question noting that doctrine should not be seen as the only and ultimate formulation of Christian

³ Ibid., no. 50.

⁴ Ibid., no. 54.

beliefs. The distinctive (i.e., non-cognitive) nature of *sensus fidei*, raises the question of the “status” of it in relationship and weight to doctrinal formulations.

The ITC document lists numerous “dispositions” that are necessary for “authentic participation in the *sensus fidei*.” (See paragraphs 88-105). These include participation in the life of the Church, listening to the word of God, openness to reason, adherence to the magisterium, holiness (humility, freedom and joy), and seeking the edification of the Church. The recognition of the necessity of, and nurturing of dispositions that are essential to fruitfully receive God’s grace is has been an essential element is Christian spirituality and practice. Yet, as Gaillardetz notes, the ITC document’s identification appears particularly restrictive regarding who might be authentic participators is the *sensus fidei*.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Here too, like the question of who are recipients of supernatural grace noted above, the definition of the parameters (i.e., prerequisites) has significant implications on the meaning of *sensus fidei*.

Interestingly, the ITC document does not offer a detailed description of the “dispositions” that need to be present in the magisterium for it to receive and articulate the *sensus fidei*. Yet the document does argue that the teaching office of the Church needs to listen to the experience of the faithful. It states that when the individual puts “faith into practice in the concrete reality of the existential situations in which he or she is placed by family, professional and cultural relationships enriches personal experience of the believer [that] it enables him or her to see more precisely the value and limits of the given doctrine and to propose ways of refining its formulation. That is why those who teach in the name of the church should give full attention to the experience of believers, especially laypeople, who strive to put the Church’s teaching into practice in areas of their own specific experience and competence. (SF 59; 67)” Of course, as noted above, the document circumscribes who are authentic representations of the *sensus fidei*.

Sensus Fidei has made a real difference in the formation and lived reality of the Christian faith. The ITC, along with other commentators, note that the phrase, *sensus fidei*, first appears formally in the documents of Vatican Two. Though only recently an explicit theological category, the reality is present from the beginning of the Church. The ITC chronicles its presence from the New Testament to contemporary times. ((FOOTNOTE) It is interesting to note that the ITC observes that in the medieval Church, following the principal of Roman law that what affects everyone, should be discussed and approved, there was a practice of consulting the faithful in all three domains of the life of the church: faith, sacraments, and governance. (See 122). This assertion is worth further historical analysis.)

Of particular interest is Neumann's work, On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine (1859) in which he argued that it was the laity that kept alive the faith in the fourth century in the face of the Arian heresy. The ITC lists other examples of the contribution *sensus fidei* has made to the Church including its role in the promulgation of Marian doctrines, affirmation of religious liberty, and articulation of social and economic ethical positions.

As outlined above, *sensus fidei* encompasses several key elements: it is a supernatural gift, intrinsically relational entailing mutuality in an ecclesial context characterized by an "instinctual quality" that has consequences for the individual and Church. The interrelationship of these elements is succinctly summarized by several theologians and the ITC document itself. Roger Haight writes, that *sensus fidei* "points to an aspect of the knowability of the faith; Faith possesses what is called a 'connatural,' or instinctive, spontaneous and intuitive knowledge of its object (God). This is called a supernatural sense because it comes from the inner presence and working of God as spirit in the person of faith. This makes the community of faith a pneumatological community, anointed and animated by God as Spirit (1 John 2:27)." Haight continues to observe that "The sense of the faithful is thus the intuitive grasp on the truth of God that is possessed by the church as a whole, as a consensus. It is both adherence to the public teachings of the church and an active charism of discernment, A power of practical and possessive

knowledge belonging to the body of the faithful by virtue of their concrete living of the faith in response to God as Spirit.”

Similarly, Richard Gaillardetz states that “each believer, by virtue of baptism has a supernatural instinct or sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) that allows you [one] to recognize God’s Word and to respond to it. The individual exercise of this instinct is not, of course, infallible. Nevertheless, the council saw this spiritual instinct is vital to the building up of the faith of the church.” (G108-9)

The International Theological Commission (ITC) in its 2014 document *SENSUS FIDEI in the Life of the Church* (SF) observes that *sensus fidei* affirms that “the faithful have an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, which enables them to recognize and endorse authentic Christian doctrine and practice and to reject what is false. That supernatural instinct, intrinsically link to the gift of faith received in the communion of the Church, ... and it enables Christians to fulfill their prophetic calling. (SF, 2)” The ITC document highlights the fact that believers have an “instinct for the truth.” It is noteworthy that while the document recognizes that baptism is the basis for this “instinct for the truth” it quickly adds that one is “in the communion of the Church” as an added necessary prerequisite.

This last observation is significant because it highlights the importance of noting how various elements of *sensus fidei* are described (i.e., what is included or not) and which is given priority or “privilege.” The descriptions and “rankings” of various components powerfully shape the meaning and significance of *sensus fidei* in both theological understanding and Church practice as will become evident in the examination of Rahner’s theology.

SENSUS FIDEI IN A RAHNERIAN THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

As is evident in the description above, several important theological elements coalesce around the notion of *sensus fidei*. The term is multi-faceted. and depending

on the description of each aspect and how each is accentuated, a different understanding of *sensus fidei* develops. As indicated earlier, *sensus fidei* presupposes a relationship between the individual and the larger community. This relationship is rarely explicated in theology. This lack of examination at the heart of *sensus fidei* often leads to the unwarranted acceptance of problematic epistemological and theological assumptions. These unexamined assumptions can lead to the exaggeration of the individualistic (leading to relativism) or a hierarchical/absolutist view (leading to absolutism) view of the meaning of *sensus fidei*.

Part of the genius of Rahner's approach is avoiding dualistic dichotomies as it attempts to create a theological synthesis that avoids the binary opposition that often emerges between God and humanity, grace and nature, incarnation and creation, providence and freedom, spirit and matter, charisma and institutionalization. (FOOTNOTE: Of course, there is vigorous debate about how successful Rahner is in achieving this goal.) This synthesis provides a fertile ground for understanding *sensus fidei* in a theologically grounded, socially nuanced manner. It provides a platform for articulating the sense of the faithful in conversation with the social sciences.

An exploration and explication of *sensus fidei* within a Rahnerian perspective require situating the term in context of key elements of his thought. (FOOTNOTE: Rahner employs *sensus fidei* in several of his writings. His use of the term is sporadic and never developed by him in any detailed fashion. His usage is illustrative of the various aspects of *sensus fidei* identified in the first part of this paper.) *Sensus fidei* is an ecclesial reality and, consequently, it is both appropriate and necessary to situate it in Rahner's ecclesiology and larger theological context.

Rahner's project is grounded in a basic theological claim. This fundamental claim is that God is a central and constitutive dimension of all creation. The corollaries that flow from this assertion are significant and crucial. Often stated dichotomies

between grace and nature, supernatural and natural, human and divine, Church and the world are challenged and can no longer be seen as polar opposites but must be seen on a continuum. If Rahner's fundamental claim is taken seriously, one cannot restrict the experience of God only to the explicitly religious realm. God offers God's very Self to all humanity. This recognition has significant impact for the parameters (i.e., restrictions) one draws for *sensus fidei*.

Rahner's position requires defining, who represents, and where *sensus fidei* is "located," in expansive terms. That is, given that God's grace is at work in all of humanity, *sensus fidei* needs to include a wider community than simply those who are "in communion with the Church." This insight not only opens the door but demands understanding *sensus fidei* more broadly and universally. It lays the theological groundwork for affirming the "instinct of faith" as present beyond Catholic and Christian contexts. Finally, a recognition of the universal presence of God's raises a provocative question regarding the relationship between *sensus fidei* and doctrine. Is the content of *sensus fidei* a "difference of kind" or a "difference of degree" from the content of doctrine given that both find their origin in God's self-communication?

Rahner's explicit use of the term *sensus fidei* is always situated within his ecclesiology which, as noted above, is based in his affirmation of the universal nature of God's self-communication. Faith is the human response to God's grace and the Church must be seen in light of this fundamental reality. Richard Lennan, in *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, highlights the intrinsic interrelationship among God's grace, faith, and the Church. He writes, faith is the "single movement of the human person in God—grace—to God—eternal life. Faith, therefore, designated the human response to God's self-communication. Consequently, the various 'objects of faith', the Church's expressed dogmas, had meaning only when related to the primordial response to God. (186) (FOOTNOTE: While the universality of God's self-communication is at the heart of Rahner's theology, it does not lead him away from affirming the critical importance of the Church as a visible embodiment of this grace

for the world. Lennan observes that Rahner devotes over half of his writings to ecclesiology (Lennan, 10)).

Rahner's concepts for, and ecclesial images reflect the vision of Church that emerges from Vatican II documents. His frequent use of the images of the Church such as the "Pilgrim People" and "People of God" highlights his view of the Church as a community of believers centered in Christ serving the needs of the world. He writes, "we ourselves are the church, we poor, primitive, cowardly people, and together we represent the church. . . the church of God is the assembly of Jesus Christ and the concrete church with its inadequacies, with its historical dangers, its historical refusals, and with its false historical developments. For the victory of God's grace on us men who together are the church is won right here in the form of a servant and under the cross of its Lord, and under the ongoing shadow of the powers of darkness." (Foundations 390) This communal focus is at the heart of Rahner's understanding of the Church's identity.

Rahner further develops his notion of the Church around the notion of sacrament. Seeing the Church as the "basic sacrament," the seven sacraments are constitutive and expressive of this one fundamental sacrament. In this ecclesial framework, there is a foundational importance and priority to the sacrament of baptism because it is the necessary "door" (i.e., initiation) into this community of faith. Without Baptism, the Church does not exist and none of the other sacraments are possible. Rahner writes, "in baptism God gives a person grace for his own individual salvation by making him a member of the *church*. Membership in the church and belonging to the church is the first and most immediate effect of the sacrament of initiation which every Christian receives, and which for every Christian is the foundation of his Christian existence in any and every aspect which this life possesses, and this includes hierarchical, sacramental and supreme powers. For no other sacrament can be validly received by the unbaptized, nor can they possess any juridical power in the church" (Foundations 415). Baptism, for Rahner, is the essential sacrament that is a common basis for all members of the Church.

Reflecting the Council's renewed attention to the pneumatological dimensions of the Church, Rahner affirms that the Spirit is bestowed on all baptized. In fact, he refers to the Church as a "Spirit-endowed society" (35-Spirit in the Church). As a spirit filled community, the Church cannot, utilizing Max Weber's terminology, be falsely bifurcated into the charismatic and bureaucratic (e.g., hierarchal office structure) elements. The Spirit breathes through, indwells in both dimensions. Rahner writes that it is clear that "office and spiritual gifts in the church cannot be conceived as totally distinct elements which happened to be united more or less by chance" (Spirit in the Church, 40). One is not to see the charismatic and the official offices of the Church as two opposing forces caught up in a zero sum game. Rather they are differing expressions of the same Spirit, called to work together to give a fuller witness to the power of the Gospel. Specifically, all believers participate in the threefold offices of Jesus as priest, prophet, and king. Rahner, like the Council, "locates" the *sensus fidei* in the prophetic office. This office carries with it certain responsibilities and charisms (i.e., gifts) that are needed to build up the Church. These gifts need to be treasured and recognized no matter what role the individual plays into the institution.

"The church which has this charismatic element, subordinates are quite definitely not simply people who have to carry out orders from above. They have other commands as well to carryout, those of the Lord himself who also guides his Church directly and does not always in the first place convey his commands and promptings to ordinary Christians through the ecclesiastical authorities, but has entirely reserved for himself the right to do this directly in a variety of ways that have little to do with keeping to the standard procedure and the' usual channel's. (Spirit in the Church, 61)"

Office holders in the Church cannot be seen as not participating in the charismatic element of the Church, non-office holders cannot be seen as devoid of making important contributions to the Church. Such a view would neglect the Spirit filled nature of the whole Church.

Though Rahner does not explicitly use the phrase *sensus fidei* often in his work, a significant portion of his writings can be seen as extended commentaries on both its individual and communal dimensions. As a Jesuit formed by the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, Rahner addresses the discernment of spirits often and in a variety of formats. (FOOTNOTE: See Philip Endean's Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality)

Though Rahner's reflections do not give extended attention to the interplay between the individual and the communal sense of faith, they contain keen observations that are highly suggestive. These observations, when cobbled together, provide a helpful framework to examine the various elements that constitute *sensus fidei*.

For instance, Rahner is aware of, and sees as theologically significant the fact that an individual's faith is shaped and constituted by the community. He writes, "no one develops and unfolds from out of purely formal and antecedent structure of his essence. Rather he receives concreteness of his life from a community of persons, from intercommunication, from an objective spirit, from the history, from the people in from a family, and he develops it only within this community, and this includes what is most personal and most proper to himself. This is also true for salvation and for the Christian religion, and for the Christianity of an individual. (Foundations, 389)."

The influential and powerful impact of the community on the individual's faith does not diminish the necessity for her to prepare and ready oneself to receive, and cooperate with God's grace. The effectiveness of the Spirit's prompting requires that the believer is open to, and has the proper attitude. Rahner writes in his essay, Spirit (TI VII, 190-1), "only he or she who is a member of the Church *and* independent, humble *and* daring, obedient *and* conscious of his or her own personal responsibility, a pray-er *and* a doer, adhering to the church in its past *and* in its future—only such a one as this makes room for the Spirit of God at Pentecost...for this Spirit to do its work in him or her." This is reminiscent of the ITC's document

on *sensus fidei*. description of the “dispositions” that are to be present in a believer’s life in order to discern the promptings of the Spirit.

Rahner’s recognition of the elements that are to be present in a Christian’s life of discernment is matched with his affirmation of the need for the office holders in the Church (especially the magisterium) to acknowledge and affirm the Spirit’s working in and through all members of the Church. This affirmation is clearly at the heart of his critique of dividing the Church into the “teaching Church” (*ecclesia docens*) and the “learning Church” (*ecclesia discerns*). In this view lay persons are seen as merely passive recipients of magisterial teachings and proclamations. Such a view ignores the charisms of the faithful and undercuts the view of the Church as a “Spirit filled society.”

Rahner’s rejection of a sharp distinction between the teaching and learning Church is not to be seen as a denial of the rightful place of the teaching office. Yet the Church must recognize that its authority is not grounded in any particular structure or belief. Rather, Rahner is adamant that the ultimate authority for the Church is Christ. He writes, the Church’s “authority is not from the people, but from the grace of Christ. It derives ultimately not from a vote from below but from investiture from above; the laws governing it section are given in its permanent and unchangeable constitution, which was established for it by its Lord.(Lennan, 103)” Consequently, Rahner recognizes that there are some elements in the church that are God given (i.e., *ius divinum*) and those elements are unchanging. He also acknowledges that there are many beliefs, practices, and structures that find their origin in human decisions (i.e., *ius humanum*). The latter bear the marks of contingency, finitude, and sin.

Rahner’s affirmation of both *ius divinum* and *ius humanum* does not lead to a diminishment of the laity’s role. Rather it creates a space in which the discernment of what is essential and what is not can take place. This discernment does not fall on the shoulders of the teaching office alone. Rather, given Rahner’s contention that

the spirit is working through every member of the church, this discernment is necessarily a genuinely communal event. This, coupled with the acknowledgement of the equality and mutuality that characterize the relationships within the Trinity (i.e., a unity in difference), the Church must be a place where all are respected and consulted. Lennan observes that, “in addition to defending the indispensable leadership role of the hierarchy, Rahner also stressed that the laity were not only gifted by the Spirit, but gifted for the same purpose as the Pope and the bishops: to enable them to contribute towards making the church a living sign of Christ in the world. (107)” The Church, as a spirit filled society, is called to work together as a community in dialogue to recognize the working of the Spirit from wherever it arises.

Rahner’s rejection of a sharp distinction between the teaching and learning Church is also not to be seen as a denial of certain essential structures in the Church. He affirms the hierarchical organization of the Church. What he does not affirm is a structure that is dictatorial or tyrannical. In his essay, “The Charismatic Element in the Church,” Rahner notes that the Church is not a democracy if by that one means all things are open to a majority rule. He writes that the Church is “‘undemocratic’ because it’s office and authority, being founded directly by God himself, have for mankind final jurisdiction in their own domain. There is no absolute right to resistance or need for it in that domain, because God himself guarantees that the authority will not abuse its formal rights in a materially decisive way. (63)” Yet Rahner goes on to state that this statement cannot be read as giving the hierarchy carte blanche power. He states, “But there is not on that account in the church any absolute monopoly of real power at any one point, that is in this case, in this hierarchy ... the church is a hierarchical system, but only because its summit is God, and likewise a system in which power and authority are distributed, that is, a sort of democracy though of its own special kind. From what has been said it is clear that even the church something can originate from among the people. (63)”

Rahner's frequent criticism of the hierarchal Church must be seen in historical context. He maintained that the Church operating often as a totalitarian government had become accepted as normative within the Church during the Pian period.

(FOOTNOTE: Rahner defines the Pian time as "the period of restoration in society and the church after the French Revolution of 1789 up to the Second Vatican Council" (TI XX 116)). Rahner argued that the Church hierarchy during this period both held on to, and gave a divine legitimation to an institutional structure and culture that was a product of its place of honor in medieval society.

The Church today finds itself in a new historical, sociological, and cultural situation. Rahner identifies the Church in this new situation as a World and Diaspora Church. The former term highlights the reality that the Church for two millennia has been primarily a Eurocentric church dominated by western structures and patterns of thinking. For Rahner, the emergence of the World Church marks the third new epoch in the history of the Church. The latter term, Diaspora, refers to the reality that the Church will "no longer exist(ing) within the homogeneous ambience of the Christian Europe, even the numerical relationship between Christians (who are actually such) and non-Christians (who never were Christians or who have again become non-Christians) may remain very different in the different individual cultural and sociological areas of the one world civilization. (TI XX 128)" This new period of history is marked by a realization that much of what the Church thought was essential and unchanging is now seen as reflective of European mores and practices. That is they are historically contingent, finite, and contextual realities

In this new historical and cultural context, new questions, challenges, and opportunities emerge for ecclesiology in general, and for *sensus fidei* in particular. Fundamentally it raises questions about what are the essential and secondary elements of the Church's structure, beliefs, and practices. For Rahner, the Church must expect and embrace the fact that it will change and be embodied differently in diverse historical and cultural contexts. In light of Rahner's understanding of the

Church, it comes a no surprise that he sees the faith of believers (i.e. *sensus fidei*) as playing a pivotal role in discerning and embodying the Gospel. He writes,

“what is important in the concrete is the necessity (particularly today and always involved in the very nature of the church) for the collaboration of churchpeople in the life of the church and the decisions of authority. In light of the Church’s nature churchpeople are not merely recipients of what is done by the institutional church but are themselves the church and today (later we must speak of this at greater length) the real efficacy of the church’s ministries (proclamation, administration of the sacraments, government, etc.) depends largely on the free collaboration of churchgoers themselves. This however is not to be expected, unless the people are obviously involved to the greatest possible extent in the decision-making of the institutional Church. Nor is this necessary participation be expected in practice if it is to be merely informal; it needs to juridical and visible structures which themselves are not in every case necessarily dependent on the goodwill of the officeholders strictly so-called.(TI XX 123)”

He goes on to state that “in principle even though the *jure divino* episcopal Constitution of the church does not mean that the collaboration of churchgoers can and must always and in every case be merely informative and advisory, merely on the consultative character. If in the early church the people in the ordinary clergy have the right to an East central part in the deliberations leading to the appointment of a new bishop, this was certainly not an infringement of the perennially valid episcopal constitution any more than the proprietary (*Eigenkirche*) of the early Middle Ages (where ecclesiastical appointments were under the control of the secular ruler), even though such juridical conditions cannot be copied without more ado for present or future times. Certainly there are matters to be decided even today and in the future in which the collaboration of the people, not only in a consultative to but also in the deliberative form, would be possible and appropriate. (Ibid., 124)” Rahner’s advocacy of the involvement of laypersons and a consultation of what can appropriately be called *sensus fidei*, is grounded on both theological and

practical matters. Theologically, given the Spirit filled nature of the Church, all need to be consulted. Practically, encouraging involvement of laypersons will foster their going participation and involvement in the Church. (FOOTNOTE: Rahner cites other instances where the involvement of the laity (read *sensus fidei*) have made a significant contribution to the life of the Church. Rahner writes “there have repeatedly been times in the Church’s history, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, for example, when many a gift of God’s Spirit to his Church was better preserved by this simple and prayerful people and by many of the ‘princes of the church’. (Charismatic, 64) Additionally, Rahner views the lives of saints, both formally and informally recognized, and the monastic movements as additional examples.)

Rahner’s theological perspective provides a strong theological basis for the validity and *sensus fidei* and its significance in developing a Church alive to, and in the Spirit. While Vatican II provides a theological foundation for *sensus fidei*, Rahner’s theology provides a “conceptual space” for considering a wide range of questions and options regarding the Church’s self-understanding and constitution. Always recognizing *ius divinum*, Rahner pleads that the Church be open to, and courageous in recognizing the full spectrum of creative options it has before itself. Rahner is not saccharine in his estimation of the tensions and conflicts that will surface in a Church that engages all of its members in the discernment process. He writes, “If by her [Church’s] very nature there is necessarily a multiplicity of impulses in the Church, then a legitimate opposition of forces is not only, in fact, unavoidable, but is to be expected and must be accepted by all as something that should exist. It is not just to be regarded as a necessary evil. Only impulses that in the human sphere flow from a single source cannot be felt to be ‘dialectical’, opposed. But when in the Church’s case various influences flow from God into the Church, some through the ministry, others directly to members of the Church who hold no office, it is clear that the God but God alone can fully perceive the meaning, direction and divinely-willed yeah purpose of things... Ultimately only one thing can give unity in the Church on the human level: the love which allows another to be different even when it does not

understand him. This makes it more understandable that charity is not only present in the Church as though in the container, but belongs to the actual constitutive elements of the Church, in contradistinction to all other societies. (Charismatic, 65)”

While Rahner notes with approval the development of regional bishop conferences and parish councils, he observes, with some frustration, that there are few structures currently in place in the Church to elicit and develop expressions of the sense of the faithful. (See TI XX, 119). The lack of “mediating structures” that foster genuine dialogue among individuals, communities and the larger community of faith reflects the Church’s deficient theological understanding and lack of genuine appreciation of the *sensus fidei*. While Rahner certainly provides solid theological validation of the significance of *sensus fidei*, he does not present a developed articulation of the concept or propose specific structures that could utilize its resources. Yet, it is the argument of this paper, that he does provide a framework and a focus that is beneficial in the exploration of the reality and significance of *sensus fidei* for the Church.

As stated earlier, Rahner, recognizes God’s grace at work in all corners of existence. This recognition is the basis for his argument that theology must be in active dialogue with all areas of human knowledge, including the sciences. This dialogue is clearly apparent in practical theology in which sociology is one of the essential conversation partners. Rahner writes that practical theology is an “essentially ecclesial discipline” that needs to be in contact with sociology, political science, contemporary history. (TI IX 105). Sociology, in particular, offers critical insight into the relationship between the individual and society. This relationship is at the heart of *sensus fidei* and understanding the dynamics of it is absolutely essential to develop a theologically sound and socially nuanced view of *sensus fidei* and to implement structures for nurturing and incorporating it into the faith life of the Church. Practical theology is a vehicle for this exploration and Rahner provides a theological and pastoral rationale for utilizing it.

Rahner notes that his description of the nature, goals, and methods of practical theology is a bit suggestive due to its relatively new development in Catholic circles. Yet his description provides a compelling rationale for including the social sciences in theological reflection. As such, it provides an important bridge to incorporate the critical insights of sociology into theology. Rahner writes,

“Practical theology is that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church’s self-actualization here and now—both that which *is* that which *ought to be*... The Church is a historical quantity. Without endangering its abiding essence it is true to say that the Church not simply *is*, but must be continually ‘happening’ anew... because of its Spirit’s eschatological triumphant grace the church cannot be untrue to the particular ‘occurrent’ form of its self-realization to such an extent that it simply ceases being the Church of Christ; that does not alter the fact the Church has the task of making a commitment to realize this particular historical form in responsibility and freedom, and can therefore also fall far short of it. Consequently the Church must reflect consciously upon the question of how the Church’s self-actualization is to take place arising out of and in response to this particular given situation in each instance. Practical theology is a scientific organization of this reflection.” TI IX, 102-3 (FOOTNOTE: Rahner recognizes that practical theology, in addition to relating theology and sociology, raises important questions regarding the relationship of theory and practice. He writes, “but it being this kind of theory and practical theology is not simply an ‘essential’ science but a quite unique one, Testing of the spirits with a view to the act of committal; it implies a prophetic element—which one may be permitted to call ‘political’—since it must be aware of the impulse of the Church’s Spirit, which is not simply identical with the perpetually valid truth in the Church, but translates the latter into the concrete challenge valid at the particular hour. Practical theology can and must be this, because *theoria* the realized in actuality is also an internal factor of the churches practice and only remains genuine *theoria* under this presupposition. In a word, it is ‘theory’ and the science. But it is the *theoria* which indwells the practice itself as an internal factor and which is thus not simply identical with the objectifying you ‘essential’ sciences,

which simply ascertain from a 'neutral' position what is the case, or what must always be, or what will surely occur independently of decisions." (TI IX 104))

It is in the purview of practical theology to study and to recommend practices that would identify, cultivate, and identify the *sensus fidei*. The "target audience" for this study can be on various levels including national, regional, or locally and can be focused on different demographics (e.g., generational, race, ethnicity, etc.).

Surprisingly, given a common criticism of Rahner's thought as being overly abstract, speculative, and ahistorical is his own attention on the reality of faith as it is experienced and lived out in the parish. In contrast to typical ecclesial nomenclature which refers to the local Church as the diocese, Rahner often refers to the local Church as the local parish community, of course, always seen as united to the local Ordinary. It is here that Church becomes real. Rahner summarizes Paul's with approval regarding the importance of the parish community. He writes, "the Church of Christ, the community of those believe in him, the body of Christ and people of God become manifest in the local community precisely because the individual local communities are not simply realities existing for themselves which then combined into a larger organization afterwards for some ideological reasons or other. Rather, all of this becomes manifest because the single reality which is the church actualizes itself and becomes manifest as church precisely in these individual communities. Therefore if they are truly churches in the full sense, they are united to begin with. One and the same people of God filled with the Spirit of God becomes manifest in every local community. (Foundations, 348-9)"

In the following statement, Rahner goes further to emphasize the parish community, newly defined, will be the life blood and the genuine embodiment of the Church in a World Church where it exists as a diaspora Church.

"The church will be an individual sociological group in a pluralist society and then only if the rest of society is tolerantly pluralistic in the liberal sense-something also which cannot be predicted with certainty. Consequently the real effectiveness of such a church and of its authorities will depend-- and in fact much more decisively

than in the past--on the ascent of faith freely given by individuals in the commitment of its members 'from below.' What has hitherto been regarded more or less as an 'established' Church will become a community-Church; parishes (as administrative districts set up by ecclesiastical authority and evenly spread over a certain territory) will have to become living communities from below, not from the outset directly bordering territorially on one another, sharing much more clearly than formally in the determination of their ecclesial life- style, in the selection of their 'officials', and deciding the mode of life of the latter(allowing always for the permanent necessity of a common ecclesial structures and the unity --maintained--of the individual congregations with one another), maintaining unity of faith with the diversity of emphasis on the various aspects of their Christian ecclesial life, etc. (TI XX 128-9; Cf. TI X 368)" (FOOTNOTE: Rahner explicitly notes that practical theology needs to focus on the non-legalistic aspects of the Church. He writes, "Only a small portion of the life of the Church is accessible to legal ordering. Practical theology ought to defend the remaining sphere of the Church's life which is not subject to legal manipulation. (TI IX 112)") Rahner does not view this focus on the parish community as a generating a new form of congregationalism. Rather, as noted above, he maintains the local community must remain in close connection with, and under the jurisdiction of the bishop.

Rahner recognizes that under this new arrangement there will be greater plurality in structure and beliefs. This plurality is to be welcomed as long as "the basic substance of Christianity may not be fundamentally denied in this concrete church, that substance which we are selves have experienced general religious existence as an experience of grace. (Foundations 354)" Rahner's strong theological affirmation of the local community as an actualization of the Church encourages practitioners of practical theology to study it as an essential locus of *sensus fidei*. Within this context, the similarities and differences among various local Churches can be used both to identify the core beliefs and to "prioritize them" in order of importance. Such an identification and prioritization of practices is illustrative of the notion of the hierarchy of truths noted in the Decree on Ecumenism. (FOOTNOTE: Rahner defines

the notion of Hierarchy of Truths as a recognition that “A particular statement does not always have the same objective and excess existentiell weight which another statement hands. (Foundations 377)”

Rahner recommends that one additional task of practical theology that could be important is for it to engage in self-critical analysis of the enterprise of theology itself. He notes that “it might very well be one of practical theology’s tasks to investigate the strategy and politics which lie unexamined and implicit behind the study of systematic theology; it would have to initiate an examination of the hidden tendencies and governing images of systematic theology as it is actually practiced, from the point of view of the sociology of the church, including statistical investigations; for the actual practice of theology is one factor in the Church’s self-realization and thus also subject-matter for practical theology. (TI IX 110)” As will be noted soon, this recommendation resonates with a key goal of Bourdieu’s “reflexive sociology.”

PIERRE BOURDIEU AND THE SENSUS FIDEI

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) is the author of dozens of articles, over forty books, many of which are translated into over ten languages. His work extends over a wide range of topics. Otto Maduro offers the following assessment of Bourdieu, he “is considered in many quarters as one of the most influential thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century. A sociologist, indeed, but no less an ethnologist, an anthropologist, a linguist, and the philosopher, with a postmodern bent for flouting cross-pollinating disciplinary traditions, Bourdieu was an heir, among others, of the work of Marx, Engels, Weber, Durkheim—and not least of their work on *religion*, precisely. Surprisingly, however, his name is often all but unknown for many (most?) US specialists in the social- scientific study of religions. (Maduro, Preface in Rey, vii). There are many reasons for his lack of notoriety including the complexity of his thought, his idiosyncratic use of terms and concepts, his constant revisions of thought, and his unwillingness to “honor” disciplinary boundaries.

At first blush, Pierre Bourdieu seems an unlikely candidate for several reasons to serve as a resource to understand and identify the possible resources contained in the reality designated as *sensus fidei*. One, his work in the sociology of religion is quite limited. Terry Rey in his book, Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy, notes that Bourdieu “wrote ‘only’ ten essays to do you centrally (or more or less centrally) with religion, and the subject appears but infrequently elsewhere in his massive body of work. (Rey 59) (FOOTNOTE: CF “The subject of religion receives only scant attention in Bourdieu’s most important books and is so focal concern in any of his publications. (11)” Rey also notes that Bourdieu’s attitude reflects the pejorative view toward religion held by many French intellectuals since the Enlightenment)). Two, Bourdieu viewed religion in a very negative light. Following Marx and Weber, he saw religion as primarily legitimating the status quo of wealth and power and therefore supporting social distinctions and structures of domination. Simply put, Bourdieu the function of religion was to establish, legitimize, and reproduce social inequality. Rey comments that this attitude leads those interested in identifying the benefits of religion to look elsewhere: “whatever good that religion has contributed to humanity is seemingly of no interest to Bourdieu ... and, so, religious people, theologians and scholars of religion concerned with the positive side of religion, which consist of course significant part in the demonstrable capacity to inspire compassion, charity, and peace of mind, will probably find Bourdieu’s positions on religion to be ultimately limited, disappointing and frustrating.(Ibid 6). Three, Bourdieu not only thought religion was harmful but irrelevant as a social reality in contemporary society. He, like so many sociologists, embraced the secularization theory that religion, especially in the West, was in a state of inevitable decline. This fact explains why Bourdieu, though utilizing many concepts developed by past sociologists to study religion, turned his analytical focus away from religion. Four, Bourdieu’s overriding interest is to understand how the structure of class-based power and privilege is reproduced in human society. His approach focuses primarily on issues of power and domination rather than meaning and mutuality. (FOOTNOTE: Bourdieu’s contention of the

relational grounding of power also sets him apart from Weber who was highly influential on his view of religion.) In this regard, it seems at odds with any attempt to understand religious concepts such *sensus fidei* in appreciative or positive terms. Five, though Bourdieu is being used by an increasing number of sociologists in the United States, he is not a highly influential voice in sociology of religion in the United States. For instance, in Jerome P. Baggett's book *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live Their Faith* (2009) there is only one reference to Bourdieu.

Despite these concerns, it is the contention of this paper that Bourdieu can serve as an important resource for understanding the central dynamic at the heart of the reality of *sensus fidei*. Bourdieu was particularly attentive to the interrelationship between the individual and society. He is adamant to view this relationship in binary terms. He opens his book *The Logic of Practice* (1990), considered to be his most significant work, with the following observation: "Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism. The very fact that this division constantly reappears in virtually the same form would suffice to indicate that modes of knowledge which it distinguishes are equally indispensable to a science of the social world that cannot be reduced either to social phenomenology or a social physics. (Logic, 1) Bourdieu is trying to avoid what he sees as the extreme of structuralism of Levi-Strauss on one hand and the subjectivist approach of Sartre's existentialism on the other.

David Schwarz in *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (1997) observes that Bourdieu's focus on intersection of the individual and society leads him to explore interrelated questions: "Four fundamental conceptual issues in particular emerge: the problem relations between individual dispositions and external structures, the problem of agency in structural analysis, the problem of relating cognitive structures to social systems, and more generally the problem of relations between the material and symbolic aspects of social life. (49)" Bourdieu utilizes a wide range of thinkers including Durkheim, Weber, and Marx in order to

address these complex and difficult questions. At the heart of Bourdieu's work is an examination of the nexus of "social and epistemological processes of mediation...[that involve] the individual perceiver and the social structures and mechanisms that produce everything in and about society that he or she perceives, and that strongly determine the ways in which he or she perceives them. (Rey 37)." Bourdieu's analysis provides insight into the inner dynamics of *sensus fidei*.

Bourdieu's analysis of the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and institution revolve around four central concepts: practice, fields, capital, and habitus. Rey gives a helpful summary of these key notions.

"The first is *practice*, or what people do in society. Invariably, practice takes place in any number of the interrelated and sometimes overlapping *fields* that together constitute society. So much of what people do furthermore, amongst yourself interested pursuits in forms of *capital*, whether material or symbolic, relative to the respective *fields* in which their *practice* unfolds. And the ways in which people perceive of and pursue *capital* are chiefly generated by their *habitus*, which is that part of their personhood that filters their perceptions, modes their tastes, and casts their inclinations and dispositions. (Ibid 39)"

Rey goes on to add symbolic violence as a fifth critical concept, because it has "awesome influence on how people perceive of the social world, is the main mechanism, for Bourdieu, by which distinctions between individuals and groups and forms of domination predicated thereupon are reproduced in society. (39)"

These various notions identify realities that are in dynamic relationship with one another. A change in one exerts influence on the other and vice versa. The interlocking connection among these realities allows one to enter into his theory at various points. Given the paper's examination of *sensus fidei*, Bourdieu's concept of habitus is a particularly valuable entry point. (FOOTNOTE: Rey along with many other sociologists and anthropologists see habitus as "the single most important

concept in Bourdieuan theory for the study religion chiefly because of its transient power for explaining the nature of human belief and practice, which are obviously so fundamental to religion at large. (92)”) Habitus, as described by Bourdieu, is “a socialization process in which an individual internalizes ‘objective structures’ in his or her habitus-- a process in which one’s taste and inclinations are developed and anchored into his or her personality--a ‘*practical sense*’ of the social world is obtained. (Logic 56)” (FOOTNOTE: Rey defines habitus as “the fundamental dimension of the individual as a social being that is at one and the same time the ‘matrix of perception’ and the seat and generator dispositions. (Rey 154)”) Rey notes that “Habitus is thus both an individual’s epistemological ground and her behavioral motor. (48)”) It is embodied history, internalized as second nature.

Habitus is the appropriation of what is “given” by the social environment. Bourdieu names the social environment “fields.” He defines a field as “a network, or configuration, objective relations between positions these positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, either present and potential situation situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, As well as by their objective relations to other positions (domination, homology, etc). (An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology (1992),97)”) There are a variety of fields including economic, educational, political, and religious with respective habitus emerging in each.

Inherent to the dynamics of a field is power relations. As noted earlier, Bourdieu focuses on issues of power and domination. He views fields as a space in which power relations and power differentials are at work. Expanding Marx’s notion of capital beyond merely material holdings, he defines capital in a variety of ways: “As *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be

institutionalized form educational qualifications; and *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and maybe institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility." (Quoted in Rey, 52; Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in Handbook 243)"

Underlying Bourdieu's view of capital and capital acquisition is his understanding that human beings act in self-interest. In this view, one strives to accumulate capital in particular fields (e.g., academic, religious, political, etc.). Rey notes that it is helpful to conceive of fields with such images as force fields, battlefields and games. Social fields therefore are networks of relations between individuals and institutions competitively engage dynamics of capital production, pursuit, consumption, and/or accumulation. (45)" It is critical to note that fields do not stand alone as silos and that capital gained in one field can be transferred to another field (e.g., political capital can be converted to economic capital). Bourdieu calls this transfer "transubstantiation. (Quoted in Rey , "The Form of Capital," 242)"

The interrelationship of among Bourdieu's central concepts of practice, fields, capital, and habitus is succinctly stated by Nick Crossley in The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire (2001) "that practice is the result of various habitual schemes and dispositions (habitus), combined with resources (capital), being activated by certain structured social conditions (field) which they, in turn, belong to variously reproduce and modify. (Quoted in Rey, 5; Crossley 2001, 96)"

These central components are evident in Bourdieu's understanding of the relationship between the individual believer and the community of faith as beliefs and practices are negotiated within the religious field. Rey notes that, for Bourdieu, the religious field can be simplistically characterized by "competition for religious power that always it's specificity... to the fact that what is at stake is a monopoly of the legitimate exercise of the power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and worldview of laypeople, by imposing on and inculcating in them a particular religious habitus.' (Rey 80)" Though this summary highlights Bourdieu's

emphasis on power and the role of domination in the religious field, it is an oversimplification of it. It misses several important nuances of his thought that are important to note and develop if Bourdieu's approach is to be utilized in analyzing *sensus fidei*.

Bourdieu's more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the believer and the believing community is evident in his understanding of the role of the prophet. Bourdieu, in contrast with Weber who grounds the power of the prophet in some inherent gift of character, argues charisma is socially grounded: "the prophet embodies sensory contact, or gives discursive expression to, representations, feelings, aspirations that existed before his arrival... in this sense he brings about, and both his discourse and his person, the meeting of the signifier of the pre-existing signify... it is, therefore only by conceiving the prophet and his relationship with the laity... that one may resolve the problem of the initial accumulation of religious capital. (Quoted in Rey, 96; "Legitimation," 1987, 130)" Rey observes that in this analysis we see "reflected several essential structural elements of the religious field as Bourdieu understands it: the operation of an economic logic, particularly that of supply and demand; the social grounding of religious interests; the positions of, and relations between, various agents and institutions and their specialists; the central competition between orthodoxy (the Church) and heterodoxy (the heresiarchy) over religious capital as 'a resource of power'. (REY 96)"

Bourdieu's analysis of prophecy not only is illustrative of key components of his thought but also offers resources that are useful in understanding *sensus fidei*. In his analysis, the religious agent, in this case the prophet derives her power, in part, from those with whom she is communicating. Bourdieu contends that 'prophecy can play such a role only because it has as its one generative and unifying principle for habitus objectively attuned to that of its addressees' (Quoted in Rey 75; Bourdieu "Legitimation," (1987) 131)" Only if such a social context exists can the prophetic voice be expressed and heard. This "derived power" is based on how well the

prophet can express the “representations, feelings, aspirations that existed before his arrival.” This view resonates strongly with the way *sensus fidei* is conceived within a Rahnerian perspective.

Bourdieu calls attention to the social relationships that form the matrix for ideas, not their content. He writes, “any analysis of the *logic* of the interaction that may develop between agents in direct confrontation with one another must be subordinated to the construction of the structure of the objective relations between positions these agents occupy in the *religious field*, a structure that determines both the form their interactions may assume and the representations they have they may have for these interactions. The interactionist view, strictly speaking, seeks the explanatory principle practices and representations in the logic of the symbolic interactions. (Quoted in Rey 74; Bourdieu “Legitimation,” (1987) 121)” The majority of work on *sensus fidei* focuses attention on the beliefs and practices of particular individuals, not on the social positions (i.e., power) of various constituents.

Bourdieu’s work on power dynamics and domination within the religious field raises critical questions for *sensus fidei* and the current lack of mediating structures for expressing and incorporating it into the larger communal context. He argues that most, if not all, of religious language obfuscates the true power reality. This “misrecognition” masks the true reality of power dynamics. For instance, the name “pilgrimage” masks that the travel is really tourism where certain parties gain economic benefit (i.e., capital) and priests are “called” to a higher office not promoted. This ‘double game’ uses euphemisms to cover up dominative structures (See Rey 67-8).

In opposition to Austin’s, and by extension Habermas, contention that language has power of its own, Bourdieu argues that language only has impact because of the social (read power) relationships. For Bourdieu, the “power over words is nothing other than the delegated power of the spokesperson and his speech” thus “the language of priests, teachers, and, more generally, all institutions... all stem from the

position occupied in a competitive field by these persons entrusted with delegated authority.” (Quoted in Rey, 96; “Authorized Language, 1991, 109)”

Bourdieu, in one of his rare forays into analysis of the religious field, analyzes the separation of lay and clergy. Not surprisingly, his analysis focuses on power: “the constitution of the religious field goes hand in hand with the objective dispossession of those who are excluded from it and who thereby find themselves constituted as a *laity* (or the *profane*, in the double meaning of the word) dispossessed of *religious capital* (as accumulated symbolic labor) and recognizing the legitimacy of that dispossession of your fact that they misrecognize it as such. (Quoted in Rey, 76; “Genesis and Structure,” 1991, 9)” Struggle in the religious field is between the church (*Eglise*) and its priests versus the prophet (or ‘heresiarch’).

Bourdieu’s insights on power dynamics raise critical and essential questions for an analysis of *sensus fidei*. If one takes his analysis seriously, one must attend to the social relationships that serve as a matrix and as the engine for religious practices. Does the division between clergy and laity already tip the discourse and the power in such a way as to prohibit genuine listening and communal discernment? Does the current debate about the use of the term “lay ecclesial minister” and “chaplain” reflect a struggle over who has the power? The authority? Given the bifurcation between laity and clergy and its distorting impact, who really can speak for the *sensus fidei*? How does Bourdieu’s analysis shed light on the relationship between racist structures, colonialism and the possibility of articulating genuine Christian practices.

Although Bourdieu’s focus on power is very illuminating, it is also limited. Numerous analysts see his translation of religious capital into power too reductionistic. For instance, Bradford Verter in his article “Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu” (*Sociological Theory* (2003), Theory, 21:2: 150-74) introduces an additional category of capital called “spiritual capital”. Rey observes that in Verter’s work spiritual capital is “is something like

religious capital only de-institutionalized, freer, more freely accessible, and sometimes the production of members of the laity themselves. (97)”Rey provocatively observes that believers do not buy religious capital they buy into it. The addition of spiritual capital adds an important element to Bourdieu’s work is particularly useful in analyzing *sensus fidei*.

The addition and distinctive nature of “spiritual capital” (i.e., freely accessible, generated not controlled) raises important questions. Bourdieu, building on Weber’s work, maintains that there is an inherent tension between priests (bureaucratic) and prophets (charismatic). He argues that the conflict is inevitable because he sees the two competing as “suppliers” of symbolic goods (i.e., meaning, grace) to consumers. This is a zero sum game. Is this the same type of logic that is at the basis of the idea that if there are more lay ecclesial ministers there will be fewer priests. This logic is clearly at odds with the notion of Jesus that the harvest is abundant but the laborers are few. The former is based on scarcity and zero sum thinking, the latter on the notion that God’s grace is overly abundant. Are there not resources within Rahner’s theology to give a theological foundation for, and an expansion of the notion of spiritual capital that can benefit both sociologists and ecclesial office holders in their understanding and *sensus fidei*?

Recent scholars have utilized Bourdieu’s thought, or parts of it, in their analysis of particular religious practices. These analyses not only substantiate the usefulness of Bourdieu’s approach in studying religion and but often offer additional modifications that can be utilized in exploring *sensus fidei*. For instance, of particular interest is the work of Catherine Bell on ritual. Rey observes that Bell is “quite taken by the corporal implications of Bourdieu’s theory of practice. One’s habitus is necessarily an embodied habitus (and one’s body a ‘socially informed body’) and the structures of the social world, including of course the structures of ritual. (Rey 112)” Bell’s analysis, informed by Bourdieu’s work on habitus, raises questions of how, when, and where is *sensus fidei* embodied? These questions turn attention to rituals

and the question of the “content” of *sensus fidei*. Is it necessarily, or even more importantly less significant if it is not, conceptual?

Bourdieu’s sociology is not without its critics. There are two significant criticisms that have direct bearing on the viability and usefulness of Bourdieu’s approach for understanding *sensus fidei*: one dealing with his overall approach and the other in his understanding of the unique dynamics in religion. One, critics argue that Bourdieu ultimately does not break out of the very determinism that he criticized so vehemently in structuralism. That is, in certain readings of Bourdieu, the individual agent seems ultimately to be a “product” of the surrounding and infiltrating social relations. In this reading, fields form; habitus absorbs. Genuine agency (i.e., freedom) is illusory. Certainly, as many scholars note, there are ample statements in Bourdieu’s voluminous works that could be used to substantiate this charge. Yet in Rey’s assessment the charge of structuralist determinism is overstated for it does not take into account certain counterbalancing statements and some of Bourdieu’s own ethnographic research. Nick Crossley echoes Rey’s view that the possibility of freedom exhibited in resistance and innovation present in Bourdieu’s thought. He writes: “I would concede that Bourdieu has more to say about reproduction than about transformation but this is only a matter of emphasis. Bourdieu does and always made reference to struggle and conflict in his work. He argues, for example, that the various unconscious expectations, assumptions and belief, the *doxa*, which holds the status quo in place are all outcomes of the historical process, and have often been preceded by struggle... legitimation and stability are not inevitable therefore, but are rather the contingent and observable effect of a dying down of struggle and perhaps, in some cases, a forgetting of it from historical memory. (Quoted in Rey, 122-3; Crossley 2001, 112)” Rey also points out Bourdieu’s early ethnographic work pointed out how indigenous persons creatively appropriated Islam faith in their own culture against the onslaught of colonialism and modernity. This work shows that Bourdieu affirmed the reality of creative engaged appropriation on the part of agents. (FOOTNOTE: See interview Bourdieu interview and “modicum of freedom” comment.) Finally in this response to

Bourdieu's determinism, Rey notes that Bourdieu sees sociology as having a transformative impact. He writes: the irony—or perhaps the paradox—in this regard is that Bourdieu conceived in sociology as a means to empower the subjugated to resist social oppression. (Rey, 123?)”

In addition, modifications to Bourdieu's approach made by Verter's addition of spiritual capital, noted earlier, helps to overcome a common criticism of Bourdieu's model of the religious field. The criticism is that it over-emphasizes institutions at the expense of individual agency (FOOTNOTE: See Hervieu-Leger 2000). Verter's suggestion that production of spiritual capital occurs in the religious field itself by its members opens up new vistas of analysis. Michelle Dillon in “Pierre Bourdieu, Religion, and Cultural Production” notes that creation of spiritual capital ‘occurs in multiple interpretive sites, and as such, the meanings and live practices of religion may be relatively independent of all official church discourses or of the meanings in beauty to them by distant observers. (Quoted in Rey, 135; Dillon 2001, 412)” This new perspective clearly softens the rather potential mechanistic supply-and-demand logic of rational choice theory that Bourdieu's approach be susceptible to and grants an agency to laypersons. The implications for understanding the *sensus fidei* in this modified Bourdieuan framework are immense.

Critics also maintain that Bourdieu's negative view of the role and function of religion often leads him to overgeneralize or ignore nuances that are present in the religious field. For instance, Jacques Berlinerblau in his article “Ideology, Pierre Bourdieu's doxa, and the Hebrew Bible” observes that “without justifying the association, Bourdieu consistently equates the prophet with the heretic (in the Hebrew Bible, however, we hear of prophets who seem to defend the orthodoxy/monarchy against antagonistic profits such as Jeremiah, e.g., Jer 28, 26-20) His prophet/heretic is everywhere at odds with the church (i.e., ‘trustee and guardian of an orthodoxy’) and its priestly hierarchy. (Quoted in Rey,123; Bourdieu 2001, 348, n. 104)” This critique is well founded and does indicate that Bourdieu's approach needs to critically appropriated as it is used in analysis of religion.

Bourdieu would more than welcome both the criticisms and the alterations in his approach that are needed in response to them for this is the very dynamic at the heart of his notion of reflexive sociology. He writes, "I believe that if the sociology I propose to first in any significant way from the other sociologies of the past and of the present, it is above all that it *continually turns back onto itself scientific weapons it produces*. (Quoted in Schwarz, 11; Wacquant, "Workshop" 1989, 55)" Reflexivity requires systematic, rigorous criticism both of the practitioner and of the practice. David Schwarz observes that "Bourdieu describes the critical examination of the relations between the researcher and the object of research as 'the most significant product of my whole undertaking., It also justifies his research in the substantive arenas of education and intellectuals. For Bourdieu, these substantive and meta-theoretical questions are inseparably linked, and much of his work simultaneously reflects on both. This approach enriches and increases the complexity of his thought as he investigates both the role of culture in social class reproduction and the epistemological conditions that make it possible to study culture reflexively and objectively. His claim that a properly constructed reflexive sociology holds promise for emancipating individuals and groups from the constraints of social determination and domination represents a unique contribution to critical social theory and research. (Schwartz 11-12). Bourdieu's understanding of the nature and goals of reflexive sociology align in significant ways with Rahner's view of practical theology.

CONCLUSION