

**The Cross Now Rooted Breaks In Bloom:**  
*A study of Bruno Barnhart's 'Wisdom Knowing' and Wholeness in Christian Life.*

by

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## Abstract

This thesis is a study of the work of the Camaldolese Benedictine monk, Fr Bruno Barnhart (1931-2015). He envisions the Christian life from the perspective of wisdom and centred in participatory knowing. Barnhart develops a vision for wisdom today inspired by the Second Vatican Council and framed around four key 'turns': an umbrella turn, 'the sapiential awakening' representing the fundamental turn towards a wisdom approach; and three further turns to respond to today's diverse context - 'the eastern, western and global turns.'

The thesis will show how the four turns can be interpreted as four principles of 'wisdom knowing' - a core principle (radical participation) and three dynamic principles (nonduality, creative freedom, and communion). It will argue that wisdom knowing contributes to two issues identified by scholars of the discipline of Christian spirituality. Firstly, the need to foster wholeness in Christian life through engagement with multiple perspectives. Secondly, in light of the diversity of these perspectives, to develop processes of interpretation to discern Christian specificity. The discipline proposes the category of lived experience to address these issues.

The relationship between lived experience and wisdom knowing provides the basis for further investigation into its potential for cultivating wholeness in Christian life.

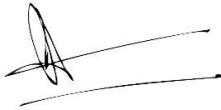
The investigation will centre on the three dynamic principles of wisdom knowing and their significance as orientation points for three key areas of Christian lived experience: nonduality for self-transcendence; creative freedom for life-integration; and communion for the movement towards fullness of life in God.

The findings of the investigation show how wisdom knowing merits consideration as a way to cultivate wholeness through its engagement with lived experience and also three areas of Christian history: nonduality highlights the unity at the source particularly alive in the early church; creative freedom provides a means to navigate the growth of rationality in the period of the Enlightenment in terms of the incarnational process; and communion offers a process to engage with postmodern conditions whilst maintaining a unitive horizon. The potential of wisdom knowing is further revealed by developing a framework to demonstrate its practical application through theological, personal and textual engagement. The thesis concludes by making recommendations for its wider application in the life of the church.

### **Declaration of originality**

I hereby certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and affirm that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'A' followed by a long horizontal stroke and a shorter horizontal stroke below it.

Date: 26 May 2020

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## Introduction

Look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting (John 4:35).<sup>1</sup>

Wisdom holds profound riches, and we can become whole as we learn to live its ways. This thesis contends that approaching the Christian life as wisdom offers a rich harvest today. It was born out of a meeting with the Camaldolese Benedictine Monk Fr. Bruno Barnhart in Big Sur California, January 2002. At the time I was living with his monastic community as I discerned the future direction of my life. When I heard Fr Bruno preach for the first time it was like being struck by lightning: as current prior Fr Cyprian Consiglio describes, his “thought, became fire.”<sup>2</sup> Bruno’s flow of language encompassed an extraordinary comprehensiveness from East to West, from theology and spirituality to poetry, history, psychology and science. Most striking of all, was the centre point of his vision - the ‘event of Christ,’ its essential newness and impact in the historical process. I met with Bruno and had a wide-ranging conversation that made a very deep impression on me. I began studying his work and in 2012 engaged in a series of interviews with him to explore his final work *The Future of Wisdom: Towards a rebirth of Sapiential Christianity*.<sup>3</sup> In 2014 I embarked on this project. Fr Bruno died on 28 November 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture references are taken from the NRSV translation: Bible Browser Oremus, "NRSV Bible," *Oremus*, accessed February 2015, <https://bible.oremus.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Where thought becomes fire” was the title the current prior Fr Cyprian Consiglio gave to his homily at Bruno’s requiem mass. It is published as the afterword in: Bruno Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom: Toward a Rebirth of Sapiential Christianity* (New York: Monkfish Book Publishing Company, 2018), 201-206. Consiglio writes: “his thoughts, like no one I’ve ever known, became flames that leapt out of his head.”

<sup>3</sup> Bruno Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom: Toward a Rebirth of Sapiential Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

It was the notion of wisdom that had provided the inspiration for Barnhart.<sup>4</sup> He felt it represented the natural habitat of the Christian mystery containing much potential. However, it was also this wisdom sensibility that had been largely lost in recent centuries:

Despite the widening of our world and our consciousness that technological progress has brought, we may awaken...to realize that we have been living within an invisible container: in a world subtly diminished and often without depth...the perennial term for this depth of life and consciousness that has so largely disappeared from our Western civilisation, and from our Western Christianity, is wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

And yet, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Barnhart lived the monastic life from his hermitage, he also saw wisdom's re-emergence.<sup>6</sup> This was particularly evident in the Californian context in which he lived. From the 1960s new perspectives abounded on every side in spirituality, psychology, politics, music, social developments and new dialogical approaches. An intense interest in Eastern spirituality arose as people travelled to "the East to ashrams...looking for...a sapiential awakening."<sup>7</sup> Wisdom was "alive and growing, vigorously present in multiple forms...[and] waiting to be named."<sup>8</sup> There was also a growing recognition of the great need for ways to discern the nature of these developments and also to bring them to bear on the enormity of global issues.

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<sup>4</sup> He interchanged the words 'wisdom' and 'sapiential.' For simplicity, the word wisdom will be used in this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Bruno Barnhart, *Second Simplicity: the inner shape of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 3. Barnhart will argue that a wisdom sensibility was central for the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium and began to wane from the 12<sup>th</sup> century as other theological methods arose.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note how throughout history those who have lived outside the mainstream in semi-reclusive situations are also able to be deeply sensitive of what is really happening and offer significant ways to respond. E.g. the desert fathers and mothers of the fourth century.

<sup>7</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1," in *NCR Podcasts*, ed. Tom Fox (Kansas City: National Catholic Reporter, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 1.

The Second Vatican Council stated:

Humanity's intellectual nature finds at last its perfection, as it needs to, in wisdom, which gently draws the human mind to look for and to love what is true and good...our age, more than any of the past, needs such wisdom if all humanity's discoveries are to be ennobled through human effort. Indeed the future of the world is in danger unless wiser people are forthcoming.<sup>9</sup>

The psychologist Robert Sternberg embarked on a comprehensive study of wisdom and observed: "wisdom is about as elusive as psychological constructs get"<sup>10</sup> and yet "without it...there may be no world."<sup>11</sup> The theologian David Ford noted the reappearance of wisdom after its long hiatus:

Wisdom has on the whole not had an easy time in recent centuries in the West. It has often been associated with old people, with pre-modern, tradition and conservative caution in a culture of youth, modernisation, innovation and risky exploration. Yet it may be making a comeback... wisdom is now regularly mentioned in discussions of poverty, the environment, economics, governance, management, leadership, political priorities and policies, education at all levels, family life, the health of our culture, the desire for physical, emotional and mental health, and the resurgence of religion and 'the spiritual.'<sup>12</sup>

The word itself maintains its beauty and dignity even in a deconstructive postmodern context. Its mysterious and practical nature continues to fascinate, penetrating all areas of life and providing meaning in diverse settings.

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<sup>9</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. (7 December 1965), n. 15, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Robert J. Sternberg, "Preface," in *Wisdom: its Nature, Origins, and Development*, ed. Robert. J Sterberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ix.

<sup>11</sup> Robert. J Sterberg, *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2003), xviii.

<sup>12</sup> David Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1. One example of the renewed attention on wisdom is *The Centre for Practical Wisdom* set up by The University of Chicago. The Center for Practical Wisdom, "The Scientific Understanding of Wisdom," *The University of Chicago*, accessed March 30 2016, <https://wisdomcenter.uchicago.edu/>.

In this diverse and complex context Barnhart became convinced that Christian wisdom not only meant “something quite specific” but was also “something actual, emerging, and full of promise.”<sup>13</sup> He believed the Second Vatican Council provided the basis for a “sapiential renaissance” and the time was “ripe for a sapiential awakening” so he set out to formulate a vision for its ‘rebirth’ today:<sup>14</sup>

At this critical threshold, the container of Western and of Christian consciousness is opening to a fresh encounter with reality on every side...wisdom signifies an epistemological quantum leap from our culturally contracted mind, an awakening to this larger, multidimensional reality. Christian wisdom...is the rediscovery of the Christ-Event in the context of this larger, dynamic and interrelated world of reality.<sup>15</sup>

He sought to map the “length, breadth, height and depth” of Christian wisdom from its origins, with its development throughout history and “to imagine what new forms of Christian consciousness, thought, and life may come forth and flourish” through its re-emergence.<sup>16</sup> His vision also reached towards a “universal context in which a Christianity of the future [would] realize itself, no longer in isolation but in a participative relationship with all reality.”<sup>17</sup> A wisdom approach, he claimed, could traverse this broad landscape and also offer a unifying Christian vision:

A sapiential consciousness and theological perspective are the key to the inner meaning of the Christian mystery...in its beginnings and its unfolding but, further, that it is a sapiential approach – reconceived with a new breadth and vitality in the larger context of our world of today - that offers the best hope for a unifying theological and spiritual vision in our own time.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 16, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Wisdom Christianity: Introduction," *The Bede Griffiths Trust*, accessed January 21 2015, <http://www.bede.griffiths.com/wisdom-christianity/>.

<sup>16</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

## 1.1 Significance and possibilities of Barnhart's work

Scholars acknowledge the significance of Barnhart's work. Ewert Cousin describes it as "a stunning survey of the wisdom tradition, which encompasses ancient and modern, Eastern and Western and looks to the future with global paths...it will become a classic source on the wisdom tradition."<sup>19</sup> Beatrice Bruteau declares "a new day coming in Christian spiritual theology"<sup>20</sup> and Cynthia Bourgeault suggests "his intimate grasp of the incarnational dynamism allowed him to embrace all those things which classic sapiential monism rejects: modernity, Teilhard, technology, secularity" and to weave "together a robust sense of incarnational Christianity with a piercingly brilliant grasp of nonduality."<sup>21</sup>

The Johannine scholar Peter Ellis describes Barnhart's insights into John's gospel: "impressive...your description of the mandala leaves me more open to accept the possibility that you have hit upon something new in the Johannine mind."<sup>22</sup> Richard Tarnas adds: "one can hardly imagine a deeper penetration into the mystery and fullness of John's gospel. The light of the Logos really shines through this book."<sup>23</sup> In her own Johannine study Sandra Schneiders takes inspiration from Barnhart's sapiential approach in her "attempt to engage the spirituality of the biblical text through rigorously critical study undertaken in the context of living faith."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ewert Cousins, "Review: The Future of Wisdom," *Bloomsbury Publishing*, accessed 1 February 2014, <http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/the-future-of-wisdom-9780826427670/>

<sup>20</sup> Beatrice Bruteau, "Review: The Future of Wisdom," *Bloomsbury Publishing*, accessed 1 February 2014, <http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/the-future-of-wisdom-9780826427670/>

<sup>21</sup> See the forward to: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, xiv.

<sup>22</sup> See review on cover: Bruno Barnhart, *The Good Wine: Reading John from the Centre* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> See review on cover: Barnhart, *The Good Wine*.

<sup>24</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2003), 1.

Closer to home, in an address entitled *The Benedictine Mission to Postmodern Culture*, his fellow Benedictine Ezekiel Lotz describes Barnhart's work as:

A superb assessment of postmodern culture, theology and monasticism... a working model for the future cultivation of the Benedictine tradition of engagement with other cultures and a subsequent appropriation and spreading abroad of what is best in those cultural systems.<sup>25</sup>

Scholars also refer to his work in their own studies.<sup>26</sup> A symposium was held to expand on Barnhart's vision a year after his passing. Entitled, *Towards the Rebirth of Wisdom: A Christian Conversation*, it included papers by Richard Tarnas and Roger Haight.<sup>27</sup> Finally, *Library Journal* describes it as "more controversial than it might first appear, given Barnhart's good Catholic background," with its assertion of "this moment of history as the 'new dawn' of the wisdom tradition within Christianity...whether he is correct, and what role his learned and passionate advocacy will have, only time will tell."<sup>28</sup> These assessments suggest the breadth, depth and originality of Barnhart's work and highlight its legitimacy for further research, but despite this, it has not attracted a comprehensive scholarly study.

This project will engage in such a study. The chief aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how Barnhart's approach contributes to the living of a Christian life

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<sup>25</sup> Ezekiel Lotz, "Quicquid agunt homines: The Benedictine Mission to Post-Modern Culture," *The American Benedictine Academy*, accessed 30 April 2015, <http://www.osb.org/aba/2010/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> See for example: Cyprian Consiglio, *Spirit, Soul, Body: Toward an Integral Christian Spirituality* (Collegeville: Order of Saint Benedict, 2015), 43. Brendan Cook, *Pursuing Eudaimonia: Re-Appropriating the Greek Philosophical Foundations of the Christian Apophatic Tradition* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 39-40. James Charlton, *Non-dualism in Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Traherne: A Theopoetic Reflection* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 157. Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 1-2. Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 173-180.

<sup>27</sup> These are available on you tube: See for example: Roger Haight, "Towards the Rebirth of Wisdom 6," Youtube, accessed November 30 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3v575lmPIQ>.

<sup>28</sup> Journal Library, "Review: The Future of Wisdom," *Library Journal*, accessed 1 February 2014, <http://bookverdict.com/details.xqy?uri=Product-52468614296567.xml>.

today. More particularly, it will seek to show how it responds to two significant issues that are identified by scholars today. Firstly, that wholistic perspectives are vital in spiritual and theological discourse. Secondly, in light of this expanded context, the question of how to maintain a distinctively Christian understanding and living of that wholeness also emerges.

## 1.2 Issues addressed by the thesis

### a) Wholistic perspectives

Sandra Schneiders locates the first problem of wholeness in the context of the history of Christian Spirituality which leads to an “ambiguous relationship to three historical periods of western intellectual life:”

By temperament and sensibility scholars in the field of spirituality have a good deal in common with the medieval, even the monastic, approach to learning in which thinking about God was integral to, indeed directed toward, relating to God, and personal transformation was not merely a by-product of study but its objective. However, we have all been educated in the critical rationality of the Enlightenment which not only distinguishes between thinking about and relating to the object of one's study, but regards them as mutually contaminating. And, finally, although the intellectual commitments of modernity are still largely in control in the academy, we are all nervously aware of the postmodernism that is nibbling at the edges of every discipline. To our medieval holism the academy tends to say ‘You're old fashioned.’ Our own modern training whispers accusingly, ‘You're not sufficiently critical.’ And our postmodern contemporaries look at what we are studying and say, ‘If it exists you can't study it, and if you could, it would be irrelevant.’<sup>29</sup>

These three historical periods illuminate the wide-ranging landscape for wholistic perspectives, they must incorporate: an integral engagement – typified by the unitive

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<sup>29</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 18-19.

sensibilities of the first monastic/medieval period in which spirituality and transformation were integral to the theological process; a critical engagement as developed in the period of the Enlightenment in which critical rationality separated experience from theological discourse to achieve more clarity; and a deconstructive/plural engagement exemplified in the postmodern period prevalent today. The three periods also suggest a criteria to evaluate the depth of possible wholistic responses that cannot, as Schneiders argues “be simply a rejection of the Enlightenment and a return to pre-critical quasi-monastic procedures of inquiry,” but must “function” within a “modern critical” context integrating a “holistic approach to research with full accountability to the standards of criticism...personal commitment to what one is studying with appropriate methodological perspective, and practical involvement with theoretical integrity.”<sup>30</sup> An approach that is both critical and experiential is called for. Thomas Merton makes the pertinent point: “The two belong together, there is no theology without mysticism (for it would have no relation to the real life of God in us) and there is no mysticism without theology (because it would be at the mercy of individual and subjective fantasy).”<sup>31</sup>

According to theologian Kevin Vanhoozer, we need to go “beyond conveying propositions” alone and offer ways to “concretize the Gospel in individual and communal shapes of living.”<sup>32</sup> Ford uses “wisdom” as the “key word for the goal of theology “which unites understanding with practice and is concerned to engage with

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<sup>30</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 19.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Merton, *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition*, ed. O'Connell Patrick F. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 2008), 65.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity: a report on knowledge (of God)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology, Cambridge Companions to Religion*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24.

the whole of life.”<sup>33</sup> For Ellen Charry, theology needs to reclaim “the pastoral function of doctrine.”<sup>34</sup> Philip Sheldrake argues for a movement from “formal structures [and] rationalistic styles of doctrine,” towards approaches that “unlock...spiritual treasures and...focus on promoting spiritual wisdom.”<sup>35</sup> William Johnston calls for a “mysticism for a new era”<sup>36</sup> and Ilia Delio for “a new understanding of Christ in evolution as the mystery of the whole.”<sup>37</sup> In all of these comments the underlying theme is the desire for wholeness.

To engage in these wholistic perspectives requires both expanding our way of knowing from a sole reliance on critical thinking to encompassing more experiential approaches, and also engaging in the multiple perspectives so prevalent today. Schneiders outlines the breadth that is required: “the phenomena of Christian faith experience...[is investigated]...within the widest and richest available frame of reference,” including the “aesthetic, linguistic, psychological...cosmological... ecological concerns...gender issues...the spiritualities of other religious traditions or the spiritualities of contemporary seekers and even non-religious movements.”<sup>38</sup> Peter Tyler adds: “The Christian Spirituality of the new Millennium will not only be psychologically aware but embodied...it takes all aspects of the self seriously, including the erotic.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> David F. Ford, *The Future of Christian Theology*, Blackwell Manifestos (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds: the Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>35</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 205.

<sup>36</sup> William Johnston, *Arise, My Love: Mysticism for a New Era* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011), 113.

<sup>38</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur G. Holder (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 27, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Tyler, "Epilogue: Whither Christian Spirituality?," in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Peter Tyler and Richard Wood (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 391.

## b) Christian specificity

Michael Downey identifies how this new and expanded context leads to a second problem, that of maintaining Christian specificity:

If the pre-conciliar period was marked by a restrictive and elitist view of spirituality, the post-conciliar period has been characterized by a surge, indeed an explosion, of interest in spirituality of all sorts on the part of a wide array of people. And this swell of interest in spirituality has been accompanied by widespread uncertainty about the precise meaning of the term 'Christian Spirituality.'<sup>40</sup>

The pressing issue becomes "how to identify the ultimate criteria for critical judgment of Christian spiritualities as authentically human and Christian," in other words, while "it must be multidisciplinary" it must "also remain in intimate contact with Christian theology and the other Christian areas of study."<sup>41</sup>

### 1.3 Aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how Barnhart's wisdom approach responds to these two issues and provides avenues to cultivate wholeness in Christian life. He approaches wisdom from the perspective of 'knowing.' It is a way of participatory knowing, a knowing with the whole person. For the purposes of this thesis, it will be termed 'wisdom knowing' and it will be argued that it offers orientation points for growth towards wholeness. Barnhart also shows how wisdom knowing is fundamental to Christian life. Jesus *is* the wisdom of God – the incarnation of

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 41.

<sup>41</sup> Walter Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 935-936. Schneiders adds: it "reminds everyone in the field, whatever their preferred approach, that Christianity is a specific faith tradition that has content and dynamics it does not share with other traditions, even those with analogous concerns." Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 25.

wisdom enabling a “participatory [and therefore a wholeness] revolution” for humanity manifest throughout history and in the human heart.<sup>42</sup> Wisdom knowing in this context has a particular (incarnational) shape and dynamic, and it will be argued that this insight offers reference points for determining distinctive dimensions of Christian wholeness.

Barnhart also stresses a definitively future-orientated perspective: “hidden within this legacy of theological wisdom are secrets of the world's future.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore, it does not eschew the critical rationality emerging with the Enlightenment (despite its fragmentary impact on the wisdom knowing that went before it); rather, it seeks to not only integrate it, but also to reveal its theological meaning. At the same time however, and despite its dominance, Barnhart is clear that reason alone is “not adequate to the challenge of this participation.”<sup>44</sup> It too needs to be situated within a larger context including the ‘classical’ wisdom approaches, the developments throughout history and the global perspectives of our time. Barnhart’s approach therefore is conceived as ‘new wisdom’ for its explicit engagement in history – it is “only a new sapiential consciousness – a consciously *incarnational* wisdom” he asserts that “can enable us to respond to the opportunity” presented today.<sup>45</sup>

Wisdom knowing is centred in this ‘new sapiential consciousness’ – it includes “one long step back toward the fullness of Christianity” at the beginning and a step forward through history, to be “realized today” as a “wisdom epistemology, a wisdom

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<sup>42</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body: Jesus' Participatory Revolution," in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 265.

<sup>43</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>45</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

theology with its own language."<sup>46</sup> Barnhart proposes four 'turns' to illuminate this new wisdom language that attempt to articulate the contours of a comprehensive Christian life today: an umbrella turn – 'the sapiential awakening' representing the fundamental turn towards wisdom knowing; and three further turns to respond to Christian history and today's context - 'the eastern, western and global turns.' He believes that this kind of wide-ranging "theological framework or matrix" is required to respond adequately to the "complex historical situation...in one vision, centered in the historically unfolding Christ-event."<sup>47</sup> It is these four turns that this thesis seeks to explore and develop. The central aim of the thesis is to show how the four turns engage in significant ways with the three periods of Christian history outlined by Schneiders, and also provide principles to cultivate wisdom knowing, and therefore practical means for growth towards wholeness in Christian life.

#### 1.4 Scope of the thesis

The breadth of Barnhart's work could be approached from many different perspectives including biblical studies and theology relating to wisdom, both of which have had a resurgence in recent times.<sup>48</sup> For the purposes of this thesis it will be examined in relation to the discipline of Christian Spirituality. The discipline provides

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<sup>46</sup> Barnhart, "Wisdom Christianity: Introduction."

<sup>47</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Johnson writes: "Contemporary biblical exegesis has lifted the tradition of personified Wisdom from oblivion and demonstrated convincingly that it plays a vital role in early Christian reflection on the creative, revelatory and saving significance of Jesus of Nazareth." Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Jesus, The Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Christology," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 64, no. 4 (1985): 291. See also a recent study of Jesus as feminine wisdom: Sally Douglas, *Early Church Understandings of Jesus as the Female Divine: The Scandal of the Scandal of Particularity*, Library of New Testament Studies (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016). & also Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: the Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994). In terms of theology, see the range of articles in: Stephen C Barton, ed. *Where shall Wisdom be Found? Wisdom in the Bible, the church and the Contemporary World* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999). Also, Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*. (this includes a chapter on Sapiential Theology). Ford, *Christian Wisdom*. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She who is: the mystery of God in feminist theological discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

an ideal partner in three significant ways: like Barnhart's work, it emerged in the context of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it approaches history in a similar way, and most importantly it focuses on 'lived experience,' a notion that is parallel to Barnhart's wisdom knowing. The significance of these three areas will be developed further below.

Firstly, the discipline developed in response to the great changes in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including the explosion of interest in 'spirituality' in general.<sup>49</sup>

Sandra Schneiders' two important articles in the 1980s articulate the parameters for the discipline.<sup>50</sup> It was seeded in the Second Vatican Council and the range of 'spirituality' groups emerging in its wake.<sup>51</sup> In response academia began offering formation and renewal programs, spiritual direction training and then in the 1980s underwent "the difficult birth...of a new scholarly discipline called spirituality."<sup>52</sup> A defining moment was the inauguration of the Society for the Study of Christian

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<sup>49</sup> Much has been written about this. See for example: David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* (Sydney HarperCollinsPublishers, 2003). Many books and articles concerned with Christian Spirituality include a description of this context: See for example: Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 5-29.; David Brian Perrin, *Studying Christian spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 16-56.; Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 1-22.; Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 15-33.; Celia Kourie, "The "Turn" to Spirituality," *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 8, (2006): 19-37.

<sup>50</sup> See: Sandra M. Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners," *Horizons* 13, no. 2 (1986): 253-274.; Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," *Theological Studies* 50, no. 4 (1989): 676-697.

<sup>51</sup> Especially 'the universal call to holiness': "all Christians in whatever state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. (21 November 1964), n. 40, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996). Schneider's identifies four such groups: Those who approached spirituality: 1. primarily as "prayer." 2. "Not just on prayer but with an intensified faith life which embraced the whole of one's daily experience." 3. "The whole of personal experience" & 4. Including "commitment for social and political life." See: Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 254.

<sup>52</sup> Cecilia Kourie writes of the contemporary scene of Spirituality in academia: "In addition to new degree programmes in spirituality at university level, new academic societies have arisen and specialised conferences on spirituality have been held. Furthermore, new journals are now published to meet the growing interest in the academic study of spirituality. Scholarly editions of ancient classics abound and there is a plethora of new publications in the growing field of spirituality." See: Celia Kourie, "Spirituality and the University," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30, no. 1 (2009): 150. A number of edited books on the discipline have also been published including: Richard Woods and Peter Tyler, *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).; & Arthur G. Holder, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (Maldon: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

Spirituality in 1992.<sup>53</sup> Its associated journal, *Spiritus* provided a forum for scholarly discourse on the constituents of the discipline.<sup>54</sup> The key concern of the discipline is articulated by Michael Downey: to approach Christian Spirituality not as “just one dimension of the Christian life” but as “the Christian life”<sup>55</sup> and therefore as Richard Woods asserts, involving “the total life of the whole person.”<sup>56</sup> This wholistic vision is shared by Barnhart’s expansive approach to Christian wisdom.

Secondly, the way in which scholars approach the history of Christian Spirituality corresponds to Barnhart’s perspective structured around three broad periods: a first period of integration between spirituality and theology in which wisdom knowing was prevalent; a second period emerging from the 12<sup>th</sup> century of increasing fragmentation between spirituality and theology in which there was an ‘eclipse’ of wisdom knowing as the emphasis changed towards critical approaches; and a third period arising in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which new perspectives appeared and led to the emergence of the discipline of Christian Spirituality itself.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See: The Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, "Home Page," *The Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality*, accessed November 21 2016, <https://sscs.press.jhu.edu/>.

<sup>54</sup>The journal began under the title of “Christian Spirituality Bulletin” in 1993. Other journals also emerged such as *Studies in Spirituality* (1995) & *The Way: Review of Contemporary Spirituality* (2003)

<sup>55</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 71.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's presence through the ages*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 275.

<sup>57</sup> This three staged historical pattern is present in the work of many scholars of Christian Spirituality. See for example: Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 60-62.; Bernard McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit: *Spirituality as an Academic Discipline*," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 26-29.; Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 26-31.; Walter Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 43-59. Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1998), chapter 2.; Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 684-687.; Dianna. L. Villegas, *The Christian Path in a Pluralistic World and the Study of Spirituality* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012), 43-62.

Thirdly, and most significantly, the category of 'lived experience' is developed as the specific focus of Christian Spirituality in order to realize its specificity as a discipline. Lived experience is understood as the personal appropriation of the Christian life and it enables the discipline to examine the Christian life from a wholistic perspective. Significant work has also gone into effective ways of interpreting lived experience in a multi-disciplinary contemporary context while discerning its Christian character including methods of study and hermeneutical processes. As will become evident lived experience also provides a fruitful category to consider the significance of Barnhart's wisdom knowing and a means to scrutinize his work. It is even more salient because, as we will see, Barnhart does not engage with this area of scholarship. This allows the two areas to be brought together in fruitful dialogue.

### **1.5 Method of the thesis**

This thesis will develop Barnhart's four turns as principles of wisdom knowing in order to explore their potential as providing a framework for engaging in the Christian life in wholistic ways. It will then undertake an analysis of their strength in critical dialogue with the category of lived experience as it is understood and examined in the discipline of Christian Spirituality. It is important to note from the outset that the aim of this thesis is not an attempt to determine a definitive list of the attributes of 'Christian wholeness' itself, but rather to explore the possibility of the four turns as providing points of orientation for fruitful engagement with the plural context today through the lens of lived experience as it is understood in Christian spirituality. Based on this investigation, the potential of wisdom knowing to cultivate wholeness can be ascertained. The investigation will be approached in the following way:

The first two chapters will provide a foundation for Barnhart's approach to wisdom knowing in general and then within Christian tradition. Chapter 1 will outline Barnhart's main influences and key works to show how 'wisdom' became his central category for approaching the Christian mystery. It will then provide an in-depth account of his approach to wisdom as participatory knowing. This 'knowing by participation' will be identified as the 'core' principle of Barnhart's wisdom knowing. Three further 'dynamic' principles of wisdom knowing will then be identified as describing the contours of participatory knowing – a unitive principle, a creative principle, and a principle of communion. Finally, the chapter will explore Barnhart's insights into wisdom as a literary form characterised by poetic discourse and its capacity to insinuate the participatory experience it is describing and its consequent importance in cultivating wisdom knowing.

Chapter 2 will develop Barnhart's theology of wisdom centred on Jesus as the incarnation of divine wisdom. Through the paschal mystery a 'participatory revolution' is realised which shapes wisdom knowing in terms of the cross. The meaning and shape of the cross therefore provides the specific configuration for the particularity of 'Christian wisdom knowing.' The chapter will also highlight the wisdom literature in the New Testament and early church that flows as a result. The way Barnhart treats the history of Christian wisdom will then be considered. He delineates three key periods: its centrality during the first millennium; its waning (especially from the 12<sup>th</sup> century) as more analytical approaches to theology began to predominate; and the time of renewal, especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At this point in the thesis, engagement with the discipline of Christian Spirituality will commence. It will be shown how scholars of the discipline also

identify this three-period historical shape for spirituality in the Western church. The identification of the third period of renewal of wisdom and spirituality sets the scene for the critical analysis of Barnhart's four turns for the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 3 will outline how the Second Vatican Council provided the theological inspiration for Barnhart's proposal of a renewed Christian wisdom in our time. It returned to the theological sources of the first period of wisdom and integrated the historical developments since that time to re-conceive of a comprehensive (and wholistic) vision for Christianity today. Barnhart responds to the theological method, content and literary form of the council in developing his four turns: 'the sapiential awakening' - the fundamental turn to wisdom and wisdom knowing; and three further turns - the Eastern, Western and Global turns, to fill out its shape in a contemporary context. It will be proposed that the four turns provide four corresponding principles of wisdom knowing – *radical participation* (as the core principle); and *nonduality, creative freedom and communion* (as the dynamic principles describing the contours of radical participation in relation to today's context). A working definition of Christian wisdom knowing bringing the four principles together will be developed as follows:

*Christian wisdom knowing is radical participation in the process of unitive incarnation in history, activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion.*

It will be argued that this approach offers significant principles for consideration and that its incorporation of theological sources, historical developments and contemporary context fruitfully engages the historical landscape required for wholistic perspectives today as identified by Sandra Schneiders.

The chapter will then show how the category of lived experience as developed in the discipline of Christian Spirituality provides the means to critically engage with wisdom knowing. Firstly, the personal nature of lived experience will be shown to provide an orientation point for radical participation (the core principle of wisdom knowing), establishing a corresponding methodological starting point. Secondly, the contours of wisdom knowing as described by the dynamic principles of nonduality, creative freedom and communion offer a particular interpretation of the specificity of 'Christian lived experience' by proposing three points of orientation for its three key dimensions – self-transcendence, life-integration and the movement towards fullness of life in God. Nonduality will be proposed as a point of orientation for self-transcendence; creative freedom as a point of orientation for life-integration; and communion as a point of orientation for the movement towards fullness of life in God. These three areas provide the basis for further investigation.

Chapter 4 will engage in a critical analysis of the three dynamic principles of wisdom knowing in relation to Christian lived experience. A 'theological approach' will be employed to investigate the significance of the principle of nonduality; a 'historical approach' to investigate the principle of creative freedom (as it emerged in Western history); and an 'anthropological approach' to investigate the significance of the principle of communion in a postmodern context. The investigation will determine the extent to which the principles of wisdom knowing can be brought together in a framework for practical and wholistic engagement.

Chapter 5 will explore the way in which wisdom knowing can be applied in practical ways. A framework centred on the cross will be developed bringing together points of

orientation for its application in different contexts. Three areas of engagement (theological, personal, and textual) will be developed for each of the four points relating to wisdom knowing. The framework will be brought into dialogue with the three stages of the hermeneutical process which is understood as the most effective means to investigate lived experience in Christian Spirituality. Wisdom knowing will be shown to provide tools to enhance the process of interpreting and living the Christian life in wholistic ways. The thesis will conclude by summarizing the findings and suggesting the further possibilities for Barnhart's work in the life of the church.

### **1.6 The cross now rooted breaks in bloom**

The phrase, 'the cross now rooted breaks in bloom' will be used as a motif for the thesis and referred to throughout. It is taken from an Easter hymn in the Camaldolese Psalter.<sup>58</sup> Fr Cyprian Consiglio, the Prior, drew on this verse in his homily for Barnhart's requiem mass to illustrate how the cross was the centre and shaping influence for his life and work.<sup>59</sup> The chorus reads:

The Lenten spring is past and gone!  
The earth is vibrant with new life:  
the Cross, now rooted, breaks in bloom  
as all is gathered into Christ.

For Barnhart, the cross is *the* 'wisdom event' releasing a 'participatory revolution' in which "God poured divine reality into human kind through the person of Jesus Christ."<sup>60</sup> The cross opens the field for intimate participation, for wholeness, and as a

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas & Consiglio Cyprian Matus, ed. *Lauds and Vespers* (Big Sur: Camaldolese Hermits of America, 1994), No. 88.

<sup>59</sup> See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 205.

<sup>60</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, on book cover

matrix of possibility for growth. Its harvest shapes our being, knowing, and acting from its unity rooted in the heart to its breaking open in bloom towards the communion of all. Barnhart's genius was to hold this revolution at the forefront of his work and attempt to move with its power and demands, and this thesis hopes to expand his vision.

# Chapter 1: Barnhart's wisdom knowing

## Introduction

This chapter will outline Barnhart's approach to wisdom as founded in participatory knowing. Part 1 will outline Barnhart's life history and the shaping influences that led to wisdom becoming his central category for the Christian mystery. It will then summarize his main works and the traditions he draws on for his approach to the renewal of Christian wisdom in our time. Part 2 will examine his treatment of wisdom itself as defined by participatory knowing. This way of knowing – 'wisdom knowing' will be the central notion for consideration throughout the thesis shaped around four principles: a core principle - knowing by participation; and three dynamic principles - a unitive principle, a creative principle and a principle of communion. Part 3 will show how Barnhart identifies the particular (poetic) literary form of wisdom and its capacity to insinuate the wisdom knowing it is describing. The literary form will also be significant as a means of cultivating wisdom knowing as the thesis progresses.

## Part 1: Barnhart's life and works

### 1.1 Life history

Fr. Bruno was born Arthur Paul Barnhart in New York in 1931, the only child of Arthur and Julia Barnhart, and died at New Camaldoli Hermitage, Big Sur on November 28 2015. He attended Catholic primary and secondary school, received a master's degree in chemistry and worked for a number of years as a biochemical laboratory technician. He later stated that he studied chemistry because he believed

that it held “the secret of things...the key to the understanding of reality.”<sup>61</sup> While at university he also took a class in modern poetry which had a significant impact, awakening in him another way to approach reality such that poetic discourse would become central to his theological understanding. The interplay between scientific and poetic paradigms would remain in his pursuit of wisdom.

After leaving college he began having a “religious conversion.”<sup>62</sup> His natural inclination was towards mystical writings and he read Aldous Huxley’s 1944 *The Perennial Philosophy* with its survey of the world’s spiritual traditions.<sup>63</sup> It came to a head in 1958 when at the age of 27, while working in a laboratory, an accident led to him losing the sight in one eye resulting in an intense spiritual and “life changing” experience.<sup>64</sup> He describes how in the terrifying period of waiting in a hospital room to have his eye extracted, he suddenly had an experience of:

...light...an experience of being taken up and let down...where you are sort of lifted into God and you come back down full of love...when that happened to me everything was just full of glory, love or peace – the words don’t quite work...but it is the kind of experience that when it happens to you, you can never forget it and you can never deny it...it was an experience of God...it was the only time it ever happened which is significant for me and has had a lot to do with my later thinking.<sup>65</sup>

This profound “almost completely inexpressible” experience of “fullness...of the true self...of union” with God shaped his thinking about Christian wisdom.<sup>66</sup> Its ‘one time unitive quality’ in which everything is implicit would become a key principle: that

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<sup>61</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>62</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>63</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944).

<sup>64</sup> Bruno Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity* (2014), ed. Christopher Morris, Big Sur.

<sup>65</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>66</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

union with God is effectively bestowed at the beginning of Christian life in Baptism.<sup>67</sup> It also confirmed his religious vocation and in April of 1959 he entered New Camaldoli Benedictine Hermitage in Big Sur California, taking the name Bruno “after the famous saint and founder of the Carthusian order of monks.”<sup>68</sup> He professed solemn vows in 1964.

During his monastic life Barnhart was formed in the Benedictine tradition including the practices of interior prayer, *lectio divina*, and the regularity of the Divine Office and liturgy. He was exposed to the canon of monastic literature as well as its balanced approach to the spiritual life encapsulated in the words ‘*Ora et labora*,’ to pray and to work. Its central tenet may be found in the first words of the Rule of Saint Benedict, to “listen...with the ear of the heart” and to speak from there to the needs of the day.<sup>69</sup> The practice of *lectio divina*, reading the scripture in a prayerful way, is fundamental to learning this way of the heart, and it shaped Barnhart’s life and work profoundly.<sup>70</sup> The Benedictine tradition has maintained the capacity to be in touch with its roots, reaching back to the early centuries of the Church, and to bring the implications to bear on contemporary issues.<sup>71</sup> In this process *lectio divina* takes on a more universal context and becomes a way of discerning and responding to the

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<sup>67</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>68</sup> See “Biography of Bruno Barnhart” by Cyprian Consiglio in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 207.

<sup>69</sup> Monastery of Christ in the Desert, "Prologue Verse 1-7," *Monastery of Christ in the Desert*, accessed April 2020, <https://christdesert.org/prayer/rule-of-st-benedict/prologue-verse-1-7/>.

<sup>70</sup> This is especially evident in his first work - a commentary on John’s Gospel: Barnhart, *The Good Wine*.

<sup>71</sup> This is further emphasized in his own Camaldolese charism founded on the balance of the threefold good – *community, solitude and martyrdom*: See Joseph Wong, "The Threefold Good: Romualdian Charism and Monastic Tradition," in *The Privilege of Love: Camaldolese Benedictine Spirituality* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 81 - 97. Many books continue to be published today on the significance of the Benedictine tradition and living life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

developments and challenges in the world. It will become evident how this is operating throughout Barnhart's work.<sup>72</sup>

Barnhart speaks of two key periods of his monastic life. During his early years his focus was resolutely on the interior life which suited his introverted and shy personality.<sup>73</sup> A second period emerged however in which his outlook changed significantly. It had its beginnings during study in Rome to earn an STL degree (Licentiate in Sacred Theology) from 1962-66. One of his professors, Cypriano Vagagginni, opened up the world of 'wisdom theology' and this identified for him the theological approach he would pursue for the rest of his life.<sup>74</sup> It both drew on the patristic and medieval monastic sources, and was also expressed in a particular style of (poetic) language which resonated with his earlier experience with poetry. Further, it emphasised the centrality of personal experience in the spiritual life. This was in contrast to the more abstract clarity prevalent in theological education during the time of Barnhart's studies.

Two further events were definitive and made real the change towards personal experience. Firstly, in 1969 he was elected prior, a position he would hold for the next 18 years. While greatly challenging for him personally, it required him to engage in a new level of human interaction and served to bring him "out of himself...be much more expressive...and become a teacher and retreat leader."<sup>75</sup> Secondly, in 1972 he was invited to a charismatic meeting in Rome and experienced "baptism in the

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<sup>72</sup> The significance of the practice of lectio divina will be further developed in chapter 5.

<sup>73</sup> Barnhart speaks of a difficult childhood with an emotionally distant father and anxious mother.

<sup>74</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*. Vagagginni names it "gnosis-sapientia." The significance of this will be developed further in chapter 2.

<sup>75</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

spirit.”<sup>76</sup> This was a “wonderful experience” and while it was “another world from mine...[it] immediately...caught on for me,” and he returned to the hermitage “glowing with that.”<sup>77</sup> He reflected on the interior changes happening throughout this time as a movement from being “frozen...locked within himself” in his earlier life to undergoing a process of “thawing out” emotionally.<sup>78</sup>

The charismatic experience was significant in a number of ways. It strengthened his prayer life: “you learn to pray with enthusiasm...with an energy from inside...it’s burning inside you.”<sup>79</sup> He integrated this into his monastic formation and “lectio divina...[took] on a new depth and [became] more experiential than it had been.”<sup>80</sup> It also brought a new “energy for preaching:”

...you understand the scriptures...in that energy...in the light that comes with it...it’s a matter of understanding, of penetration...also of the word having power for you...if the word has power for you as a preacher it’s going to have power when it comes out...so it helped my preaching a great deal.<sup>81</sup>

Barnhart discovered a capacity to preach in a way that his fellow monks and those who visited the hermitage responded to very deeply. This penetration into the scriptures would influence his writing, as will be explored below. Most significantly this experience had a profound personal impact, having a different dynamic to the earlier interior and unitive experience he had in the hospital: “the earlier experience was much bigger, was much deeper...[while] this was an experience of another dimension...exactly what was frozen became opened up in an exterior direction...it

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<sup>76</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>77</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>78</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>79</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>80</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>81</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

was indispensable for me...to make me alive again.”<sup>82</sup> Barnhart discovered a new creativity within himself for interaction, preaching, teaching and writing. In light of his explicit engagement with these two dimensions of interiority and expressiveness, it seems that he was able to achieve a level of balance in his spiritual life central to the Benedictine tradition. This balance is evident in the way he is remembered – at once for his “scintillating intellect...grand eloquence and intellectual acumen” and also “as a gentle confessor and a wise spiritual guide, with a wry sense of humour.”<sup>83</sup>

As will become apparent, these two spiritual experiences, the earlier ‘unitive’ and the later ‘creative’, would take shape in Barnhart’s thinking as forming the two key principles of Christian wisdom and the dynamics of wisdom knowing (later to become the ‘eastern’ and western’ turns). Their significance was further strengthened in the Californian context in which he lived. From the 1960s California became a melting pot of every imaginable spiritual and psychological approach and the use of the word ‘wisdom’ was common in this context. Just a few miles from Barnhart’s hermitage in Big Sur is the *Esalen Institute* founded in 1962, and emblematic of the cultural movements of the time. Esalen was the incubator for a vast array of philosophical, psychological and spiritual approaches.<sup>84</sup> The motivating force behind much of the exploration was the integration of many ‘wisdoms’ from both Eastern and Western

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<sup>82</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>83</sup> See the afterward by Cyprian Consiglio in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 208.

<sup>84</sup> It hosted many notable teachers of the time including Abraham Maslow, Alan Watts, Paul Tillich, Carl Rogers and Joseph Campbell. The website states: “Esalen is a major catalyst in the transformation of humankind, working with individuals and institutions to integrate body, mind, heart, spirit, and community in a nurturing relationship with the environment...we are organized to give you the tools to unleash latent capacities and re-energize your sense of purpose — for yourself and the world. We look beyond dogma to explore deeper spiritual possibilities, forge new understandings of self and society, and pioneer new paths for change, tracing the arc from change to change agent.” See: Esalen, “Our Mission and Values,” *Esalen*, accessed January 19 2017, <http://www.esalen.org/page/our-mission-values>.

perspectives with a strong holistic focus.<sup>85</sup> The creative principle was developed through Barnhart's friendship with Richard Tarnas who lived at Esalen between 1974 and 1984 as the director of programs. Tarnas wrote the *The Passion of the Western Mind* for which Barnhart was a close reader.<sup>86</sup> Their shared interest related to the shape and significance of Western history in the new paradigms being explored, and especially its outward penetration and humanizing impact of life in the world.

The unitive principle was chiefly developed through Barnhart's engagement with the work of fellow Benedictine monk Fr Bede Griffiths. Griffiths moved from England to India in 1955 to live a contemplative life within an Indian context and was part of establishing 'Saccidananda Ashram Shantivanam' a Christian monastery in the style of a Hindu Ashram.<sup>87</sup> In 1980, Barnhart's Camaldolese community included Griffiths' Ashram as part of its congregation and the hermitage at Big Sur became its motherhouse. Along with other Benedictines Griffiths was a pioneer in the inter-religious dialogue that grew in light of the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*, *Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions*.<sup>88</sup> Griffiths visited

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<sup>85</sup> One significant development was that of Transpersonal Psychology, an approach that drew on both Eastern and Western perspectives "to create a new psychology that would honour the entire spectrum of human experience, including various non-ordinary states of consciousness." See: Stanislav Grof, "A Brief History of Transpersonal Psychology," *Stanislav Grof*, accessed 18 January 2017, <http://www.stangrof.com/index.php/articles>.

<sup>86</sup> See: Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western mind: Understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view* (London: Pimlico, 1991; reprint, 2010). The book interprets the meaning and movements of western history from ancient Greece until today. Tarnas speaks of Barnhart as one of the closest readers of the book and significantly influenced its final product. He writes of Barnhart as "a man of such depth and clarity, wide horizons and vision...that the loss of the physical eye opened up a vision in Bruno and allowed him to carry an essence of the Christian mystery as vividly as anyone I encountered." See: Richard Tarnas, "Towards a Rebirth of Wisdom: Our Postmodern Age as an Incarnational Kairos Moment," *Christopher Morris*, accessed July 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&ar=1&video\\_id=y9eFnRzd1gs](https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&ar=1&video_id=y9eFnRzd1gs).

<sup>87</sup> For more details on the history of the Ashram see the website: Ashram Shantivanam Saccidananda, "Home Page," *Saccidananda Ashram Shantivanam*, accessed July 2 2016, <https://www.shantivanamashram.com/>.

<sup>88</sup> The document states: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions...the church, therefore urges its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions." See: Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions. (28 October 1965), no. 2, in

Barnhart's Hermitage on a number of occasions and Barnhart studied his work closely through his role as editor of the Golden String Publication of the Bede Griffiths Trust, and then in the writing of *The one Light: The Principle Writings of Bede Griffiths*.<sup>89</sup> While Barnhart admired Griffiths pioneering work, and engaged in inter-religious dialogue himself,<sup>90</sup> he was also cautious of what he perceived as a movement towards harmonising different traditions in order to achieve a 'marriage of East and West' that was at risk of compromising the full meaning of the Christian mystery.<sup>91</sup>

As Barnhart grappled with these different perspectives it was the notion of 'wisdom' that crystalized as the key to a comprehensive response. It captured in one concept four crucial aspects: his personal lived experience, the diversity and concerns of the prevailing context, his awareness of the significance of literary form, and most fundamentally his Christocentricity. Wisdom enabled him, on the one hand, to engage in serious dialogue with other perspectives, and on the other, to grapple with his sense that "the wisdom of Christianity...does not find itself quite at home among the other sapiential traditions of the world."<sup>92</sup> He was intensely aware of the intrinsic uniqueness of the Christian mystery and he puzzled over how to represent this amongst a diversity of other profound wisdom perspectives. A central question

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*Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996). Other Benedictines engaging in dialogue with Eastern religions include: Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, John Main, Henri Le Saux (known as Abhishiktananda).

<sup>89</sup> Bruno Barnhart, ed. *The One Light: Bede Griffiths' Principle Writings* (Springfield: Templegate Publishers, 2001).

<sup>90</sup> See for example: Bruno Barnhart, and Joseph Wong, ed. *Purity of Heart and Contemplation: A Monastic Dialogue between Christian and Asian Traditions* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

<sup>91</sup> As will become evident Barnhart would grapple with, and ultimately challenge Griffiths desire to find the one unitive principle alone that is common to all traditions. Griffiths writes for example: "One of the greatest needs of humanity today is to transcend the cultural limitations of the great religions and find a wisdom, a philosophy, which can reconcile their differences and reveal the unity which underlies all their diversities." Bede Griffiths, *Universal Wisdom: A Journey through the Sacred Wisdom of the World* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 8. While Barnhart will engage deeply with other perspectives, he also maintains the distinctive 'newness' of the Christ-event.

<sup>92</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 186.

emerged in his thinking: *What is the significance of the Christ-event? What did Jesus bring that was not there before he came?*<sup>93</sup> In other words, what distinguishes Christian wisdom and what contribution might a specifically Christian wisdom make?

This was more than an intellectual question, it emerged from the core of Barnhart's personal experience. The way he spoke of the significance of Jesus in his life is worthy of comment at some length to reveal the deeper motivation for his work:

This Jesus whom we encounter is a light at the center of the world, a fire at the world's edge. He moves beneath the images of himself as an ultimate center of energy. I am always losing him and finding him again, migrating from one image, one station, to another on the journey. He awakens that which lies at the core of my being; the series of Jesus' healings in the gospels are the story of the gradual raising to life and consciousness, to freedom and fullness of this nascent person that I am...in him I possess the secret knowledge of this unity and of this dynamism, which is history. I cannot capture in words the gravitational pull of this solar Christ, moving in the depths of my being.<sup>94</sup>

This 'solar Christ' or "noonday" light was the energy underlying his work, at once unitive and dynamic.<sup>95</sup> The sun metaphor illuminates its stand-alone, generative and all-encompassing nature. He uses the theory of the 'big bang' as a point of comparison. The very first moment of the universe can be conceived as a "state of maximal unity, simplicity and concentration of energy" in which everything is contained within itself, and then explodes to expand and create the universe.<sup>96</sup> This dynamic of an initial fullness to complete fullness can be compared to the Christ event as also being:

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<sup>93</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future," in *Bede Griffiths and the Future of Christian Wisdom* (Reading: Medio Media, 2003).

<sup>94</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 49-50.

<sup>95</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>96</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

A point of maximal simplicity...when everything is one...everything is at its original photon of energy that comes from God...the wisdom understanding here finds its centre...which is full of an energy that wants to go out and create...transform...make a new world...make a new history...simplicity, unity, and maximal temperature...that temperature of the early church...the white hot incandescence of the beginning of Christianity that we find in the New Testament.<sup>97</sup>

Barnhart was obsessed with maintaining contact with the “the fire of newness that burns unceasingly within Christian life” and its transforming energy:<sup>98</sup>

Jesus brings an essential newness – let the mystery stand as a burning mystery of newness...a kind of sun...a solar mystery...a flame that is contagious and that wants to set fire to everything and transform it...it is a revolution from law to freedom – from an exterior structure to an interior principle of life...it is the gift of divine creativity into the human person...an expansive transforming energy that’s within the human person that moves outward into the world.<sup>99</sup>

There is an overwhelming realisation of Jesus being ‘all’ in Barnhart’s imagination:

“Jesus was the wisdom of God...Jesus didn’t have a book...a doctrine or a theory – he was *it*...he was incarnate wisdom.”<sup>100</sup> The idea of “itness” is defined today as generating “a feeling of unnameable joy that accompanies a transcendent, quintessential experience.”<sup>101</sup> He highlights such an experience in the ‘recognition scenes’ in the Gospel:

One person after another experiences a mysterious power in Jesus that, from that moment, changes the course of his or her life...examples come quickly to mind: the two disciples in John’s first chapter, “Rabbi, where do you dwell?” “Come and see.” Then quickly, in the same Johannine

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<sup>97</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>98</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 274.

<sup>99</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>100</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future." Echoed in (Phil 3:7-8): “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

<sup>101</sup> Dictionary Urban, "Itness," *LLC Comapny*, accessed August 2019, <https://www.urbandictionary.com>.

narrative, Peter and Nathanael experience the awakening of meeting Jesus...time after time, we feel the breakthrough of light, the wave-front of wonder.<sup>102</sup>

It is also the 'never before quality' often revealed in the Gospels:

In chapter 9 of John's Gospel, Jesus restores his sight to a man born blind. Once healed, the man becomes a stalwart witness to the one who has given him his sight. When the Pharisees question the authenticity of Jesus' works, he replies, "...Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing" (John 9:32-33).<sup>103</sup>

He was also acutely aware however that its intensity was easily lost over time.

Referring to the parable of the treasure in the field he comments - "the treasure, discovered, is quickly buried once again in the ground."<sup>104</sup>

It's almost like it is something that is too hot to hold in...[our] hands and so we have to put on some kind of gloves in order to handle it...so we put on these mental gloves...that somehow separate us from the mystery itself in its simplicity and in its absolute comprehensiveness...the mystery gets reduced...by rationalisation, by turning it into conceptual understanding... by compartmentalising it...by the analytical approach.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 48.

<sup>103</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "The Stones that Never Cooled," *The Bede Griffiths Trust*, accessed January 2015, <http://www.bede.griffiths.com/wisdom-christianity/>.

<sup>104</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," in *The Privilege of Love: Camaldolese Benedictine Spirituality*, ed. Peter-Damian Belisle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 74.

<sup>105</sup> Bruno Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom* (2012), ed. Christopher Morris, Big Sur. This comment echoes that of Evelyn Underhill: "Christians, of course, acknowledge that Will and that Kingdom as the greatest of all realities every time they say the Lord's Prayer; that is, if they really grasp its tremendous implications, and really mean what they say. But so many Christians are like deaf people at a concert. They study the programme carefully, believe every statement made in it, speak respectfully of the quality of the music, but only really hear a phrase now and again. So, they have no notion at all of the mighty symphony which fills the universe, to which our lives are destined to make their tiny contribution, and which is the self-expression of the Eternal God." See: Evelyn Underhill, "The Spiritual Life," *Kg.vvk*, accessed 18 January 2017, <http://kg.vvk.nl/english/organizations/lcc.gb/lcis/scriptures/liberal/underhill/lectures/talk1.html>.

Most significantly, its sheer newness and intensity “cannot be analysed.”<sup>106</sup> And yet over time, it seems, this is what happened. As the “objective and purely rational knowing of science” became “the epistemological standard” the mystery was “contained” and “split” and in the process “severely mutilated.”<sup>107</sup> To this rationalization of the mystery of Christ Barnhart is most critical. He is acutely aware of the “resistance to incarnation” through “theological...spiritual [and] institutional superstructure.”<sup>108</sup>

Once we cleave the mystery of incarnation in this way, perhaps we are doomed to be faithful to our initial error and to follow the logic of the failure consistently in all of our theology and spirituality: with the ladders, the multi-story buildings, the structures of mediation, the return to the dominance of law...the attempt to rationalize the mystery into an efficient form always seems to lead to these surrogates for incarnation. Reliable and static structures imperceptibly supplant the uncontrollable, living incarnation process.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, when Barnhart began writing, his aspiration was firmly in place – to illuminate the dynamism and fullness of the ‘incarnation process’ and attempt to maintain contact with its newness, immediacy and unity in its beginning and integrate its outward movement of creativity, plurality and transformation in history. In short, its intrinsic fullness and wholeness. Wisdom was the notion that provided the impetus for him to do this.

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<sup>106</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>107</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6, 33-34.

<sup>108</sup> See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 164-169.

<sup>109</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 169.

## 1.2 Writings

Barnhart published his first article relating to wisdom in 1985 after living these experiences for more than 25 years of monastic life.<sup>110</sup> His central concern was already established by this time – ‘Christian wisdom and its renewal.’ Entitled, *Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today*, he began with the question “but where shall wisdom be found?” (Job 28:12) and set out the context for the pursuit that would occupy the rest of his life:

The disappearance of a sapiential tradition of theology from Western Christianity is a historical fact usually taken for granted. Striking and significant enough in itself, this fact invites attention especially today, when there are some signs of a ‘rediscovery of wisdom.’<sup>111</sup>

He sought to understand what had happened to the wisdom tradition and how it might be renewed in a time in which wisdom itself was being rediscovered from a multitude of perspectives. This was particularly important for monks, he argued, because they had traditionally been “the custodians of spiritual wisdom.”<sup>112</sup>

### a) Three periods of Christian wisdom

In the same article he outlined a structure for his engagement consisting of three broad historical periods. A first period, prevalent during the first 12 centuries, and centred in “monastic theology rooted in the sapiential theology of the Church

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<sup>110</sup> He did publish an article in 1979 based on retreat conferences he gave at the Abbey of Gethsemani: see “The Monastic Journey,” *Cistercian Studies*, 14 no 4, (1979).

<sup>111</sup> Bruno Barnhart, “Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today,” *Monastic Studies* 16, (1985): 111.

<sup>112</sup> Barnhart, “Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today,” 111. Barnhart wrote a further article on this theme in 2002. See: Barnhart, “Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition.”

Fathers."<sup>113</sup> He highlighted the rich vein of wisdom theology centred in the person of Jesus as the incarnation of divine wisdom. He also identified the style of theological discourse prevalent which revealed both the content of the faith and illuminated its lived experience. It is presented as "a knowledge of God which is actual experience ...as a personal, subjective, interior, committed knowledge."<sup>114</sup> The unitive principle was especially evident.

A second period, between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in which a change in theological orientation took hold in Western Christianity. Here Barnhart inquired "into the historical changes which brought about [wisdom's] decline" in the Western Church.<sup>115</sup> He identified the change from 'wisdom to scholasticism' as well as the increasing emphasis on the empirical method in science. It especially challenged the unitive presupposition of the wisdom perspective as it moved in an analytical direction, towards clarity and differentiation. In this challenging period Barnhart identified another dimension of Christian wisdom emerging, a "second principle," a new freedom or "creative movement into the world" which was intrinsic to the new emphasis on reason (the creative principle).<sup>116</sup> He believed this process was initiated as a direct consequence of the incarnation and was being revealed uniquely in Western history during this time.

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<sup>113</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today," 111.

<sup>114</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today," 113.

<sup>115</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today," 111.

<sup>116</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Christian Self-understanding in the Light of the East: New Birth and Unitive Consciousness," in *Purity of Heart and Contemplation: a Monastic Dialogue between Christian and Asian Traditions*, ed. Bruno Barnhart and Joseph Wong (New York: Continuum, 2001), 306-307.

A third and final period emerging in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which Barnhart reflected “upon the possibilities for a rebirth of sapiential theology in our own time.”<sup>117</sup> This required integrating the two principles that had emerged, “the inward movement into depth...into unity, and the outward [creative] movement which comprehends all created reality...those are the two wings of Christianity that need to be opened up.”<sup>118</sup> He shapes his response around the question of epistemology (how we know) and offers ‘participatory knowing’ for its capacity to move towards wholeness both for the human person and their experience, and also as a theological category to maintain a comprehensive Christian vision inclusive of these two principles. For the purposes of this thesis this will be termed ‘wisdom knowing.’ It will be argued that its integrating movement from unitive source to its growth, including the critical rationality that emerged in Western history, offers orientation points for growth towards wholeness today.

### **b) Barnhart’s three key works**

Barnhart’s three main works focus on the same theme, a new sapiential approach centred in wisdom knowing.<sup>119</sup> Barnhart’s epic work *The Good Wine: Reading John from the Centre* (1993) reflects on John’s Gospel against a backdrop of a “postmodern age” which is “the end-result of our centuries-long ‘anti-pilgrimage,’ our movement away from the centre.”<sup>120</sup> It attempts to move beyond the typical biblical commentary of the time which he believed remained “within the limits of a narrow implicit epistemology” and tended to exclude “the breadth and depth of a sapiential

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<sup>117</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today," 111.

<sup>118</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>119</sup> These three works are: Barnhart, *The Good Wine*. Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*; Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>120</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 8.

interpretation.”<sup>121</sup> In response he proposes a wisdom reading centred on the principal that there is one ultimate and unitive reality and that the intent of John’s Gospel is to communicate this reality. He is also aware however that “history cannot be reversed” so the approach could not simply return “to an earlier, less rational, less critical, less individuated age.”<sup>122</sup> It required engaging the insights of historical-critical scholarship but also attempted “to take one more step forward into a new unitive wisdom.”<sup>123</sup>

Barnhart proposes a ‘post-critical’ principle of interpretation where one attempts to “move with the life itself of the text which goes beyond any grasp of the materiality of a text or any particular conceptual interpretation.”<sup>124</sup> This is an imaginative process, consistent with the dynamic in John’s Gospel, “written with the energy and creative freedom of a theological imagination.”<sup>125</sup> He terms it a “dynamic participation” with the text highlighting ‘wisdom knowing’ as the core of his approach - “rather motion than procedure, spirit than letter,” a movement “beyond the literal text of the gospel in two directions: one might call them upstream and downstream, inward and outward, the apophatic and the creative dimensions.”<sup>126</sup>

John’s gospel presents us from the beginning with a Jesus who is the living and divine *Word* of God, containing within itself the power which created the universe and which is now creating it anew. When we read the gospel, this transformative power of the Word is effective immediately in our minds, opening them to a *new way of knowing*. It must be insisted again and again that only through a transformation of our way of thinking

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<sup>121</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 433.

<sup>122</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 11.

<sup>125</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 11.

– a change which is itself beyond our understanding – will we enter deeply into John's meaning.<sup>127</sup>

The other central force operating in the work is the figure of the cross. It is the paschal mystery that releases the specificity of wisdom knowing – ‘the wisdom of the cross.’ The cross is “the figure of the reconciliation of all being, divine and created, in a fullness issuing from the crucified body of Jesus.”<sup>128</sup> Barnhart shapes John's gospel according to a formal pattern, (or chiasm) and he proposes a mandalic structure with a centre point, (John 6: 16-21), and with the rest of the narrative radiating out through seven concentric circles, corresponding symbolically to the seven days of creation and forming a cruciform.<sup>129</sup>

Barnhart also uses the cross-mandalic structure in his second book, *Second Simplicity: The Inner Shape of Christianity* (1999). Once again he responds to the prevailing context, “a world subtly diminished and often without depth” and aims to provide a more comprehensive and wholistic vision.<sup>130</sup> He imagines “the world of wisdom” in four dimensions on the two axes of the cross “understood in the light of a unitive view of history.”<sup>131</sup> The four dimensions each represent an aspect of wisdom knowing:

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<sup>127</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 431.

<sup>128</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 18.

<sup>129</sup> For this Barnhart draws on the work of Peter Ellis. See Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1982). The mandala shape brings together a circle (integration) and the cross forming four dimensions. Barnhart writes: “Like a compass of wholeness, the mandala helps us to comprehend the phases and movements both of our own spiritual life and of that of our tradition and culture. At the pivotal moment in history, this figure took on new significant and power as an expression of the Christ-event in its totality.” For more on how Barnhart understands mandalas in general and in Christianity in particular, see: Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 221-235.

<sup>130</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 3.

<sup>131</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 4, 5.

One represents the divine [or unitive] Absolute... Two corresponds to the divine Word, which, spoken in the world, has generated the tradition of Judaism, Christianity and Islam... Three is the dimension of dynamism, of energy, of movement, relationship, communion, personal experience, human freedom and creative... Four returns us to earth: to the body, its death and resurrection in God.<sup>132</sup>

In this work, Barnhart engages in dialogue with other perspectives. At point one (the silence) he grapples with the unitive principle with reference to the Eastern religious traditions and the notion of nonduality.<sup>133</sup> At point two (the word) and point three (the music) he considers the creative principle in terms of the significance of the Christ-event and focuses especially on its impact in Western history revealed in the new growth and affirmation of the human person (through reason and in terms of the psyche as conceived by GC Jung). At point four (the dance) he explores the integration of these different dimensions in our time by reflecting on the meaning of the incarnation in matter, turning again to Jung and especially to the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It is at this point that the mandala moves towards wholeness.

His final book, *The Future of Wisdom: Toward a Rebirth of Sapiential Christianity* (2007) brings his vision together in a dynamic way. Instead of proposing a structure set in four dimensions, he develops four 'movements' that, while following historical growth, also interact together to form a whole. These four movements emerged for Barnhart in 2002 and represent the culmination of his vision. He comments in an interview in 2009: "it all clicked together and I saw that these four stages were

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<sup>132</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 5-6. Corresponding to the four points are the 'four senses' of scripture: One – the anagogical sense; two – the allegorical sense; three – the moral-tropological sense; and four – the literal-historical sense. See: Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 6.

<sup>133</sup> Barnhart wrote a further paper in relation to the meaning of nonduality in a Christian context for an inter-religious conference held at New Camaldoli in 2000. See: Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East."

exactly what was needed...it was a providential gift and it still makes sense to me."<sup>134</sup> Barnhart summarises the four movements as follows:

- 1) The sapiential awakening itself: the recovery of the basic perspective of Christian wisdom, followed by three major developments in the sapiential tradition that are called for today;
- 2) An Eastern turn: a recentering of spirituality and theology in baptismal identity, conceived in terms of nonduality;
- 3) A Western turn: an integration of the dynamic and creative element of Christianity, which is expressed in the liberation and realization of the human person in Western history; and finally,
- 4) A Global turn: active participation in the movement toward one world: a united humanity aware of its communion with earth and cosmos.<sup>135</sup>

The four turns encapsulate the wide-ranging landscape Barnhart had been grappling with. The 'sapiential awakening' represents the renewal of wisdom itself as a way to approach the Christian mystery; the 'eastern turn' represents the unitive principle; the 'western turn,' the creative principle; and the 'global turn' maintains a unitive and wholistic horizon. The aim of this thesis is to show how the four turns provide principles by which to cultivate wisdom knowing and therefore practical means for growth towards wholeness.

### **1.3 Barnhart's style and influences**

Barnhart is a difficult writer to classify. He is not an entirely 'scholarly' or 'spiritual' writer. He develops complex arguments drawing upon a vast range of influences including theology, history, psychology, poetry, science, cosmology and other religious traditions. He also includes personal and spiritual reflections drawing freely on scripture along the lines of spiritual writing. He defines his approach as 'sapiential'

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<sup>134</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 2."

<sup>135</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

or 'wisdom' and this would seem the best way to classify him. A wisdom approach takes participation in the mystery as its point of departure and wholeness as the context – that the mystery of Christ is ultimately “a metanarrative of universal comprehension” and that this reality must be kept active in the theological process.<sup>136</sup> Barnhart liked to paraphrase Teilhard de Chardin: “science analyses, Christianity synthesises.”<sup>137</sup> Above all his writing has a synthetic thrust, aiming to move beyond critical analysis towards engagement with the whole, and centred in participation.

Foundational is his Benedictine heritage and the practice of *lectio divina*. His writing is infused with scriptural references echoing the patristic and medieval writers who moved freely between biblical and theological discourse. As will become evident he is especially influenced by the Johannine and Pauline Christological (wisdom) texts. At the same time, he responds to new developments in the contemporary context in his quest for a 'new wisdom' approach which leads him “into strange, new regions which we may not immediately recognise as belonging to Christ.”<sup>138</sup> This will become evident as we move through the thesis.

In order to identify his main influences the four turns from his book *The Future of Wisdom* will be used. These provide a shape for his work and allow the opportunity to reflect on his theological, historical and contemporary influences. (For significant

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<sup>136</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 151.

<sup>137</sup> The full quote from Teilhard reads: “The analyses of science and history are very often accurate; but they detract nothing from the almighty power of God nor from the spirituality of the soul, nor from the supernatural character of Christianity, nor from man's [sic] superiority to the animals. Providence, the soul, divine life, are synthetic realities.” Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Science and Christ,” *Pontifica Universita*, accessed August 2019, <http://inters.org/Teilhard-Science-Christ>.

<sup>138</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 52.

influences the number of citations will be noted – this represents the number of citations from his three key works as outlined above).

### **a) The sapiential awakening of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

According to Barnhart, the dividing line for the renewal of Christian wisdom in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Second Vatican Council, 1962 –1965 (the significance of Vatican II will be developed in more detail in chapter 3). He explicitly refers to the Council more than 60 times. It brought together the theological ferment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and provided the necessary constituents with which to respond to his search for a new wisdom approach. It represented an “epochal turning point” in which the Roman Catholic Church committed “itself to the recovery of the sapiential core of Christian faith” and paved the way for a “sapiential renaissance” which continues today.<sup>139</sup> Its expansive range of documents and method of combining the retrieval of the sources (‘ressourcement’), and engagement with history and contemporary context (‘aggornamento’), provided the basis for Barnhart’s approach. The council also returned to a ‘wisdom style’ moving out of the legal genre that had gone before it and toward a more pastoral approach.

The theological method of going back to the sources and reading them in the context of the present (and future) to stay in touch with the entirety of the mystery is very evident in Barnhart’s work - “to read Irenaeus together with Teilhard.”<sup>140</sup> Through his own Benedictine formation he had the sources of the tradition at his fingertips. From the patristic and medieval period he refers to a wide range, including: Irenaeus,

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<sup>139</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 14,15,23.

<sup>140</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18-19.

Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Evagrius, Pseudo-Dionysius, Benedict, Maximus the Confessor, Isaac of Stella, Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa and Dante. Irenaeus stands out as the most significant influence referred to more than 40 times. Barnhart finds in Irenaeus the structure for a comprehensive vision of the Christian mystery central to his wisdom approach. This will be developed further in chapter 2.

He also relies on three 20<sup>th</sup> century figures who made the sources of patristic and medieval theology available once again, Henri de Lubac (more than 20 references), Jean Leclercq (more than 20 references), and Cipriano Vagaggini (more than 10 references). Along with these were the 20<sup>th</sup> century Cistercian Thomas Merton (more than 40 references), and Benedictine Bede Griffiths (more than 30 references), who were part of the movement to recover the contemplative dimension of the Christianity, a central aspect of a wisdom approach. He also engaged with the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian Orthodox theologians (Vladimir Soloviev, Paul Evdokimov, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Vladimir Lossky) who recovered the category of wisdom.<sup>141</sup>

He singles out Thomas Merton and Karl Rahner as 'new' wisdom theologians as both embraced the unitive and creative principles into one vision. While Merton in his early monastic life was focused heavily on the contemplative (unitive) dimension, as he matured he moved in a creative and more historical direction through his engagements with literature and social justice issues. Barnhart finds in Karl Rahner the quintessential 'new' wisdom theologian and he is "quoted more extensively" in

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<sup>141</sup> This is particularly evident in: Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 106-109.

*The Future of Wisdom* “than any other author” (more than 40 times).<sup>142</sup> Rahner was so convincing “because of his grasp of the whole thing, the whole Christian tradition.”<sup>143</sup> He holds both the unitive principle in “his sapiential ground, his idea of transcendence...an immediacy with the divine” and the creative principle in “his sense of the meaning of Vatican II and the forward movement of the church and this birth of a global Christianity.”<sup>144</sup>

### **b) The eastern turn**

In the ‘Eastern turn’ Barnhart studies the unitive principle through the lens of the nonduality, a term common in the Eastern religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. He relies on the scholar David Loy and also the work of three Benedictines, Bede Griffiths, Henri Le Saux (commonly known as Abishiktananda) and Thomas Merton for his engagement.<sup>145</sup> Barnhart makes his case for nonduality in Christian life in connection with baptismal initiation and finds this implicitly in the work of Meister Eckhart, referring to him more than 30 times.

### **c) The western turn**

In the ‘Western turn’ Barnhart grapples with the creative principle and the meaning of history. He particularly examines the ‘birth of the individual person’ in Western history from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and its theological significance referencing figures such as Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas and the scientific discoveries of

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<sup>142</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 41.

<sup>143</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>144</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>145</sup> See the book: David Loy, *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (New York: Yale University Press, 1988).

Copernicus and Kepler. He engages with several historians such as Colin Morris, Christopher Dawson and Marie-Dominique Chenu for the significance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century renaissance. He also studies the work of Richard Tarnas and Owen Barfield, who understand this period of history as a necessary growth for humanity towards deeper freedom and maturity. In particular they demonstrate the movement from a passive to an active participation which can integrate the new growth of rationality revealed in the scientific method into a more comprehensive approach in our time.<sup>146</sup> Karl Rahner is also a significant influence for his insights into the growth of the church in the West, the meaning of secular developments, and also the significance of our time marked by the Second Vatican Council as representing the breaking out of eurocentricity to the beginning of the 'world church.'

#### **d) The global turn**

The influence of Rahner continues with Barnhart's conception of the Global turn in which he imagines the possibility of the growth towards 'one' humanity. He also draws on the unitive Christology of Emile Mersch. He situates the tensions of the postmodern context with reference to the work of Paul Lakeland.<sup>147</sup> He then outlines his vision with particular reference to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and his future-orientated vision (more than 30 references). Two other influences are worthy of note. Firstly, the psychologist Carl Jung whose insights into the notion of wholeness

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<sup>146</sup> Barfield outlines a three-stage scheme that Barnhart often refers to. A first and passive participation in the divine, a second (non-participation) represented by the growth of rationality in which participation is virtually extinguished through rational analysis, and a third (active) participation in which there is a deeper integration. This is also paralleled by a number of other approaches, the basic triplicate 'pre-critical, critical, post-critical' as described by Max Webber: 'enchantment – disenchantment – re-enchantment;' and also Paul Ricoeur's 'first naiveté - critical distance - second naiveté'.

<sup>147</sup> See: Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*, Guides to Theological Inquiry. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

(including the meaning of the mandala) is influential as discussed above. Secondly, his engagement with modern poetry including the poets Wallace Stevens, T.S. Eliot, Walter Whitman, and Dylan Thomas. They confirmed his thinking around the significance of literary style in the earlier wisdom tradition and its ongoing significance and new growth in our time.<sup>148</sup> The table below summarises his most significant influences for each of the four turns:

**Table 1: Barnhart's significant influences**

<b>Turn</b>	<b>Significant Influences</b>
The Sapiential Awakening – <i>the renewal of a wisdom approach</i>	Johannine and Pauline writings Irenaeus of Lyons Benedict of Nursia Henri de Lubac Jean Leclercq Cipriano Vagaggini The Second Vatican Council Thomas Merton Bede Griffiths Karl Rahner
The Eastern Turn – <i>the unitive principle</i>	Meister Eckhart Henri Le Saux Thomas Merton Bede Griffiths David Loy
The Western Turn – <i>the creative principle</i>	Francis of Assisi Bonaventure Thomas Aquinas Marie-Dominique Chenu Owen Barfield Karl Rahner Richard Tarnas

<sup>148</sup> His depth of engagement with poetry is evident in the series of articles he wrote as editor of the Golden String Publication of the Bede Griffiths Trust. See: Bruno Barnhart, "Poetry and Wisdom," *The Bede Griffiths Trust*, accessed January 21 2015, <http://www.bede-griffiths.com/wisdom-christianity/>. Barnhart also gave retreats during the 1990s that looked explicitly at the significance of poetry and the rebirth of wisdom. In 1993 he presented four talks on "Spirituality in a secular world: poetry and wisdom"; and in 1999 four talk on "The awakening Self: The New Testament and the poets." Barnhart identifies a 'sapiential continuum' from an explicitly Christian mode in the early centuries, to a secular mode in the romantic period. The significance for Barnhart is in the style of literature that is intrinsic to wisdom discourse.

The Global Turn – <i>the wholistic movement of communion</i>	Wallace Stevens Emile Mersch Carl Jung Teilhard de Chardin The Second Vatican Council Karl Rahner
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This summary demonstrates his depth, breadth and balance as a writer. Three aspects are worthy of note. Firstly, he is interdisciplinary with influences from theology, spirituality, history, psychology, literature, science and other religious traditions. Secondly, his influences span the history of Christianity from early sources and the medieval tradition, and also writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a future-orientated perspective such as Teilhard de Chardin. Finally, he moves freely between what can be classified as ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ interpretations of Christian tradition. This is evidenced by drawing from key representatives of the two ‘movements’ emerging out of the Second Vatican Council: the more ‘liberal’ movement represented by the *Concilium Journal* created in 1965 and featuring Karl Rahner (amongst others), and the more ‘conservative’ movement represented by the *Communio Journal* featuring Henri De Lubac. This capacity for balance is also evident in his treatment of the contemplative tradition. He has a foundation in the patristic and medieval contemplative tradition and also engages with contemplative writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Thomas Merton, who began to expand upon the tradition through their dialogue with other religious traditions. It highlights the nuance in Barnhart’s use of the word ‘new’ in ‘new wisdom.’ The new is also old – it reaches back to the newness that was there in the beginning, and yet also recognizes that a simple return to the beginning is not enough. The newness is also present and active in the movement and growth of history and it is essential to grapple with the meaning of history for a Christian wisdom today.

It is pertinent at this point to mention a significant criticism identified by the scholar Bruce Lescher in his review of *The Future of Wisdom*.<sup>149</sup> He recognizes the “challenging” aspect of the work and its “dazzling amount of material,” however he also points out that Barnhart’s “strength (the breadth of his reading) is also a weakness. He covers a very wide swathe of historical and modern theology. His quoting of authors is idiosyncratic and at times truncated; he attempts to summarize major figures in three or four pages.”<sup>150</sup> A key question emerges: how coherent are Barnhart’s arguments in the development of his four turns? Lescher then makes a further and important point:

The main authors upon whom he bases his argument (Merton, Rahner, and Teilhard de Chardin, for example) predate the turn to postmodernity. Barnhart does not deal with authors who wrestle with the cultural conditions of the twenty-first century. His project reflects modernity, an attempt to understand the direction of history.<sup>151</sup>

While Barnhart himself does engage with the postmodern context his sources are predominantly from 20<sup>th</sup> century (‘modern’) writers. Barnhart also treats the Christian mystery from the perspective of meta-narrative, an overarching and inclusive story for all of humanity. However, as it is often argued, the fundamental tenet of postmodernity is the breakdown of the metanarrative and a movement towards increasing plurality. In effect, therefore, the metanarrative no-longer functions. A second question emerges in this context: to what extent are Barnhart’s four turns meaningful in the conditions of postmodernity? These questions will be confronted as the thesis proceeds through critical dialogue with the discipline of Christian Spirituality. This discipline explicitly engages with postmodern conditions and

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<sup>149</sup> See: Bruce H. Lescher, "Review of Bruno Barnhart's 'The Future of Wisdom: Toward a Rebirth of Sapiential Christianity'," *Horizons* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2009).

<sup>150</sup> Lescher, "Review of Bruno Barnhart 'The Future of Wisdom'."

<sup>151</sup> Lescher, "Review of Bruno Barnhart 'The Future of Wisdom'."

therefore provides an ideal point of reference for Barnhart's work. Barnhart will argue however, that in our postmodern context, wisdom is a notion that is not only meaningful but also of great significance. One of its most potent qualities is its capacity to bring together disparity and hold seeming opposites creatively (such as unity and difference) in a movement of communion. It is to his understanding of wisdom that we now turn.

## Part 2: Barnhart's approach to wisdom

### 2.1 Wisdom in context

At the heart of Barnhart's work is his understanding of wisdom itself. He recognises that his approach is one amongst very many different views. It is said that wisdom is as old as humankind itself, it "transcends time, knowledge, and even cultures"<sup>152</sup> and all people have wanted "to pass their *wisdom* on to following generations by means of myths, stories, songs, and...cave paintings that date back 30,000 years."<sup>153</sup> Over time, understandings of wisdom have changed and in recent decades there has been an increasing interest leading to new perspectives, especially in the fields of psychology and education.<sup>154</sup> It is recognised that wisdom cannot be defined in one

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<sup>152</sup> James Birren, and Cheryl Svensson, "Wisdom in History," in *A Handbook of Wisdom: Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg and Jennifer Jordan (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University, 2005), 3.

<sup>153</sup> Birren, "Wisdom in History," 3. For the Australian Aboriginal people, the Dreaming stories are estimated to have been passed on from between 50,000 and 65,000 years. See: Helen McKay, "Dreamtime Stories," *Temple Books Australia*, accessed April 2019, <http://www.australianstorytelling.org.au/storytelling-articles/a-d/australian-aboriginal-storytelling-helen-mckay>.

<sup>154</sup> See two edited books by researcher Robert Sternberg: Robert J. Sternberg, ed. *Wisdom: its Nature, Origins, and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). & Robert J. Sternberg and Jennifer Jordan, eds., *A Handbook of Wisdom: Psychological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005). Also see the development of the Berlin Wisdom Paradigm: Paul Baltes, "Wisdom: A Metaheuristic (Pragmatic) to Orchestrate Mind and Virtue Toward Excellence," *Max Planck Institute for Human Development*, accessed December 6 2016, <https://www.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/volltexte/institut/dok/full/Baltes/wisdomam/index.htm>.

clear and definitive way, that given its great complexity involving the interrelationship of “vast and diverse topics as knowledge, emotion, self-regulation, motivation, social practice and ethics” it has “resisted any attempt to define it in an uncontroversial way.”<sup>155</sup> On the other hand however, it may be suggested that wisdom, like spirituality, is about humanity’s quest for transformation and wholeness, and offers a record of how to live life for the betterment of all.

Barnhart’s perspective can be distinguished more clearly by differentiating between the practical and the transcendent approaches to wisdom.<sup>156</sup> Richard Trowbridge suggests that practical wisdom “is concerned with successful functioning in the social world,” that is, living life well.<sup>157</sup> It is commonly said: “to know is not to be wise...but to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.”<sup>158</sup> The Oxford Dictionary defines it as “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement.”<sup>159</sup> Many recent approaches have been concerned with identifying the attributes that are required to achieve practical wisdom. In 1990 Robert Sternberg published the first edited book devoted to the topic of wisdom from a psychological perspective. At its conclusion Birren and Fisher attempted a summary statement of the different approaches that had been identified:

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<sup>155</sup> Franz Riffert, "On Defining 'Wisdom:' Baltes, Ardelt, Ryan, and Whitehead," *ResearchGate*, accessed 6 December 2016, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257572766\\_On\\_Defining\\_Wisdom\\_Baltes\\_Ardelt\\_Ryan\\_and\\_Whitehead](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257572766_On_Defining_Wisdom_Baltes_Ardelt_Ryan_and_Whitehead).

<sup>156</sup> Richard Trowbridge, "Introduction to Psychology and Wisdom," *The Wisdom Page*, accessed 6 December 2016, <http://www.wisdompage.com/2013%20Articles/Introduction%20to%20Psychology%20&%20Wisdom%20Trowbridge.pdf>. He makes this distinction citing Aristotle as the source. Aristotle used the terms ‘phronesis’ (practical) and ‘sophia’ (transcendent) in book 6 of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle, "Book VI," in *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926). [https://www-loebclassics-com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/view/aristotle-nicomachean\\_ethics/1926/pb\\_LCL073.325.xml](https://www-loebclassics-com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/view/aristotle-nicomachean_ethics/1926/pb_LCL073.325.xml).

<sup>157</sup> Trowbridge, "Introduction to Psychology and Wisdom."

<sup>158</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "Wisdom," *Thinkexist.com*, accessed 1 August 2014, [http://thinkexist.com/quotation/wisdom\\_is\\_the\\_right\\_use\\_of\\_knowledge-to\\_know\\_is/13014.html](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/wisdom_is_the_right_use_of_knowledge-to_know_is/13014.html)

<sup>159</sup> Dictionary Lexico, "Wisdom," *Lexico*, accessed 31 July 2014, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/wisdom>.

Wisdom is the integration of the affective, conative, and cognitive aspects of human abilities in response to life's tasks and problems. Wisdom is a balance between the opposing valences of intense emotion and detachment, action and inaction, and knowledge and doubts. It tends to increase with experience and therefore age but is not exclusively found in old age.<sup>160</sup>

As well as the attributes required, the theme of wholeness underlies this definition through the integration and balancing of these attributes to come to wisdom. This may also be described as 'discernment,' wisdom is "marked by our ability to discern the inner qualities and relationships of a situation...considerate of multiple perspectives and forms of intelligence."<sup>161</sup> Christine Bates emphasises this process of coming to wisdom as more than an individual pursuit and involving groups and communities:

It is no longer meaningful...to see wisdom as a singular phenomenon...or as a body of knowledge...now the notion of wisdom must incorporate a process of arriving at a truth, which fits the needs and context of individuals, a community, a nation, or a people.<sup>162</sup>

In his 'balance theory' Sternberg confirms the ultimate destiny as the enhancement of the common good.<sup>163</sup>

Approaching wisdom with a reference point in transcendence, includes the practical dimension, however it also significantly widens the context to embrace its ultimate

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<sup>160</sup> Birren, "Wisdom in History," 17.

<sup>161</sup> Alan Briskin et al., *The Power of Collective Wisdom and the Trap of Collective Folly* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009).

<sup>162</sup> Birren, "Wisdom in History," 18.

<sup>163</sup> He writes that wisdom is "The use of one's intelligence, creativity, common sense, and knowledge and as mediated by positive ethical values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extrapersonal interests, over the (a) short and (b) long terms to achieve a balance among (a) adaptation to existing environments, (b) shaping of existing environments, and (c) selection of new environments." See: Robert. J Sterberg, "Balance Theory of Wisdom," *Cornell University*, accessed 6 December 2016, <http://www.robertjsternberg.com/wisdom/>.

and transcendent source. It entails the “recognition of reality that goes beyond conventional, or social consensus of material reality,” to realise that “the human is placed in an ordered universe that has a goal, and the purpose of human existence is to become aware of this design and conform oneself to it.”<sup>164</sup> Religious and spiritual traditions have been the guardians of transcendent wisdom. In India, the Upanishads of the 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE “sought to explain the unintelligibility of this world that is not accessible to the intellect” and found its source in God.<sup>165</sup> In the Jewish tradition “wisdom became a divine enlightenment and revelation of truth from God.”<sup>166</sup> To become wise requires a disposition of faith towards an ultimate and transcendent ‘Other’: “Wisdom therefore, does not start with us or even with nature but with the Creator-Redeemer himself [sic]...genuine wisdom will be found only when we recover God’s designs for his world.”<sup>167</sup> It then brings this transcendent context to bear in the way wisdom becomes lived in daily life.

## 2.2 Barnhart’s transcendent wisdom

Barnhart’s approach is located within a transcendent frame of reference. The source of wisdom is:

A God who speaks and acts...pervaded with a sense of the ineffable, of a numinous reality that exceeds and overwhelms the human capacity to understand and to articulate...this is a God who comes into the world, who is continually exerting a transformative influence on human persons and communities...[and] is known...in personal relationship.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Trowbridge, "Introduction to Psychology and Wisdom."

<sup>165</sup> Birren, "Wisdom in History," 8.

<sup>166</sup> Birren, "Wisdom in History," 6.

<sup>167</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: a Theological Introduction* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011), 16. In the Hebrew wisdom literature we hear the “Lord founded the earth with wisdom” (Prov 3:19); “wisdom begins with fear of the Lord;” (Prov 9:10); and “the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov 2:6).

<sup>168</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 13, 47.

This God 'who speaks' is absolutely transcendent and also personal in intimate communication with humanity. From this perspective the profundity of meaning in the notion of wisdom is revealed as both the penetration of God into the world and the means of entering into relationship with God. At first it is "a communication from an 'Other,' with a divine Word that comes to humanity as from outside."<sup>169</sup> Over time the intimacy and intensity of divine communication increases through personification "as 'Sophia' of the Old Testament wisdom literature, and then embodied in Jesus Christ in the New Testament writings."<sup>170</sup>

This movement of God into the world alerts us to the intimacy of wisdom's presence in creation. Roland E Murphy suggests God "built it into wisdom...[and] wisdom is the mysterious order of the world which beckons to human beings."<sup>171</sup> It "is woven into the warp and woof of the very fabric of creation," and its presence is the means of entering into a personal relationship with God.<sup>172</sup> Wisdom therefore navigates this mysterious interplay between God's creation and God's relationship with creation and especially humanity: "God creates by wisdom and love" and "because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered"; God is revealed through God's "goodness and wisdom" and God wants "to make his [sic] creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness;" and finally "divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 45.

<sup>170</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 237.

<sup>171</sup> Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 927.

<sup>172</sup> Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, 16.

<sup>173</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, English translation. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1997), n. 299, 51, 321.

Within the context of divine mystery, Barnhart is hesitant to define wisdom, by its very nature “it flees definition by exceeding definition, by flying rings and ellipses, ovals and spheroids around the definition.”<sup>174</sup> Wisdom and mystery are intimately related: it “knows reality as mystery, and mystery involves ways of knowing that transcend everyday consciousness and ordinary thought.”<sup>175</sup> For Barnhart, wisdom is first and foremost a knowing in ‘faith,’ “a knowing in darkness, an affirmative cognition of mystery...and the knowing is consequently obscure as it is certain.”<sup>176</sup> Wisdom is therefore known in paradox, ‘a knowing in unknowing’ and maintaining this element of mystery is an essential orientation point: “to keep that remainder of mystery” and to realise that “our words are just little containers...that catch a little from the waterfall...[and] don’t contain the whole of it...the mystery is a totality, it is always more.”<sup>177</sup>

Barnhart approaches wisdom therefore not by attempting to define its qualities, but from the point of view of how we ‘know’ (or better how we are ‘known by’) wisdom in the context of mystery and by its intimate and expanding presence:

Wisdom begins in wonder. Something profound awakens when a child opens a book and finds its pages full of light, the words radiant even though their meanings remain indistinct. A light awakens within the young mind. The enchantment returns again and again at each new discovery, as a new world of knowledge is disclosed to the eager spirit. Always, much more is promised than is realized; the light continues to burn at the center of the mind, its thirst never satiated. Spiritual wisdom remains, at its core, a simple luminous fullness, and is always a beginning.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 98.

<sup>175</sup> Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East," 294.

<sup>176</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6.

<sup>177</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Phase 2: Objectification," in *Word and History: The Unitive Gospel Today* (Big Sur: New Camaldoli Hermitage, 1997).

<sup>178</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 21. Merton writes similarly in terms of the meaning of contemplation: “Contemplation is the highest expression of our intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being. It is a vivid

Wonder opens the person to a 'radiance' that penetrates all reality. Wisdom's beguiling nature reveals itself 'as if' from outside the person, yet at the same time illuminates their deepest core in a movement towards fullness. 'A light awakens' within a person as wisdom in its 'simple luminous fullness' attracts them both beyond, and at the same time, within themselves towards this intimate presence. An example may be drawn from a moment of deep appreciation in nature in which the overwhelming beauty and sheer wonder arouses a sense of connection with transcendent reality and also with one's deepest self. It is this awakening to a deeper and fuller knowing of oneself and of reality that is the core of Barnhart's treatment of wisdom. For the purposes of this thesis, it will be termed 'wisdom knowing.'

### **2.3 Wisdom knowing**

Barnhart's 'wisdom knowing' will be approached as four principles, a core principle and three dynamic principles. These principles will be considered as a basic framework from which to approach wholeness in Christian life. The core principle represents its defining feature – *knowing by participation*. The three dynamic principles include the *unitive principle*, the *creative principle* and the *principle of communion*. They describe the contours of knowing by participation, a movement from unitive source to creative expression, and generative of communion. It is crucial to emphasise that these four principles are not separate but form an organic whole – the 'one vital movement' of wisdom knowing. The motif of the tree growing from its roots through to its final bloom captures its organic nature. However, identifying the four principles provides a framework to work with throughout the thesis.

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realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant source." See: Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Publishing Cooperation, 1961), 1.

### a) Core principle: knowing by participation

Firstly, wisdom knowing is a “mode of consciousness” characterised by participation with and in that which is known.<sup>179</sup> This is knowing “from the inside” where “you and what you are looking at penetrate one another.”<sup>180</sup> It can be contrasted to purely objective knowing, to know something by “standing outside and looking at it,” by separating the subject from the object (reflected in the process of analysis).<sup>181</sup>

Participatory knowing is a movement into greater resonance and intimacy, a “fusion of being...a conjunction of life”<sup>182</sup> and is therefore “personal, experiential, and tending toward union with that which is known.”<sup>183</sup>

Thomas Merton describes “a kind of knowledge by identification, an intersubjective knowledge, a communion in cosmic awareness and in nature...a wisdom based on love.”<sup>184</sup> Cynthia Borgeaut adds: it is about “knowing *deeper*, with more of yourself involved.”<sup>185</sup> Richard Rohr talks about the knowing of the mystics as seeing “things in their wholeness, connection, and union, not only their particularity. Mystics get a whole gestalt in one picture, beyond the sequential and separated way of seeing that most of us encounter in everyday life.”<sup>186</sup> Michael Casey uses the term ‘meta-experience’ for this kind of knowing.<sup>187</sup> Barnhart compares it with taste: “taste says it

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<sup>179</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6.

<sup>180</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>181</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>182</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "Participative Knowledge in Religion and in Poetry," in *Spirituality in a Secular World: Poetry and Wisdom* (Big Sur: New Camaldoli Hermitage, 1993).

<sup>183</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Christopher Pramuk, *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 103.

<sup>185</sup> Cynthia Bourgeault, "The Wisdom Way of Knowing," *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, accessed September 2019, <http://wisdomwayofknowing.org/resource-directory/very-short-course-in-wisdom/>

<sup>186</sup> Richard Rohr, "Experiential Knowing," *The Centre for Action and Contemplation*, accessed September 2019, <https://cac.org/experiential-knowing-2019-07-15/>.

<sup>187</sup> Casey writes: “Meta-experience is the experience that goes beyond the boundaries of ordinary interaction with reality. I can listen to a piece of music, hear the notes, distinguish the different

best...what you taste you are taking into yourself, you are absorbing, it is becoming you...[wisdom] gives you a taste and at the same time it is tasting you, it is somehow assimilating you.”<sup>188</sup> Its visceral nature can be compared to our experience with music where we ‘absorb’ and ‘merge’ with it – as TS Eliot illustrates: “you are the music while the music lasts.”<sup>189</sup> Music will be an important metaphor for Barnhart in giving voice to this way of wisdom knowing. He notes a text from Johann Sebastian Bach where he speaks of “the finest kind of music” where “the left hand...plays what is written and “the right hand improvises, playing assonances and dissonances upon what is written.”<sup>190</sup> Wisdom knowing too brings together the word itself and its creative movement:

One aspect of the difference between ordinary knowledge and the wisdom of which we are speaking - and particularly the new wisdom - is analogous to the distinction between that which is written - the letters on the page, the musical score - and the music itself, that which comes to be in the moment.<sup>191</sup>

The vital step in wisdom knowing is “the emergence of an awareness that reality is open rather than framed.”<sup>192</sup> This was common before the ‘age of reason’ when “people didn’t look at things with hard outlines and precision, the way we tend to

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instruments and follow the melodic progression. This is the stuff of ordinary experience. When the music transports me to another place, where I sense a contact with spiritual reality, or feel myself powerfully moved at a deep level, or I “find myself” in the music - something more than mere listening and hearing is happening. I am being brought into contact with transcendent beauty. This is meta-experience.” This quotation was part of a handout he presented as part of a workshop in 2006. For further detail see: Michael Casey, *Full Human, Fully Divine: An Interactive Christology* (Mulgrave: John Garratt Publishing, 2004), 201-219.

<sup>188</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*. The Latin word sapientia is derived from “sapere meaning ‘to savour’, ‘to taste.’” See: Basil M Pennington, “Wisdom,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 1043.

<sup>189</sup> TS Eliot, “The Dry Salvages,” *Art of Europe*, accessed 12 July 2018, <http://www.artofeurope.com/eliot/eli4.htm>. A parallel can be drawn to the Jesuit Maurice Blondel’s idea of “possessive knowledge.”

<sup>190</sup> Bruno Barnhart, “Bede Griffiths and the Future of Wisdom,” *The Bede Griffiths Trust*, accessed 21 January 2015, <http://www.bede.griffiths.com/wisdom-christianity/>. The original quotation is from Daniel Boorstin, *The Creators*, New York, Random House, 1992, 438-9.

<sup>191</sup> Barnhart, “Bede Griffiths and the Future of Wisdom.”

<sup>192</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 15.

nowadays...they looked at things as if they were all one...as if there was a common life animating everything.”<sup>193</sup> Gradually however we have lost this “comprehensive understanding and participatory understanding” through the rapid growth of and even “absolutizing of critical rationality.”<sup>194</sup> Barnhart will often refer to this earlier way of knowing and then confront this historical development as he attempts to maintain an active participatory knowing that includes critical rationality without being dominated by it. The essential aspect of participatory knowing is its engagement of the whole person.

### **b) Dynamic principles: unitive, creative and communion**

The three dynamic principles describe the contours of knowing by participation. It involves a vital movement *from unitive source to creative expression and is generative of communion*. The ‘unitive’ principle is the interior (and transcendent) dimension of wisdom knowing: at its depth it “is a knowing by union, by identity...the knower, the knowing, and the known are one.”<sup>195</sup> It is to know “things first of all in their unity...rather than in their distinctness” overcoming the division between subject and object.<sup>196</sup> This may be thought of as the unitive ground from which all knowing and doing emerges, from a mysterious and ultimately transcendent oneness “deep, deep in the centre of the human person...where the two are somehow one.”<sup>197</sup> Merton speaks of it as “contemplation...a higher light,” not the “active intelligence” through which the person “gives names and forms concepts...but the dark light in

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<sup>193</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>194</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 147.

<sup>195</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6.

<sup>196</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 63.

<sup>197</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

which no names are given.”<sup>198</sup> At this depth, humans are in touch with God “not through the medium of things, but in His [sic] own simplicity. The union of the simple light of God with the simple light of man’s [sic] spirit...the two simplicities are one.”<sup>199</sup> This unitive reality is fundamental to wisdom and the source of participatory knowing.<sup>200</sup>

The ‘creative’ principle springs from the unitive source towards engagement in life. Wisdom knowing therefore signifies “not only depth” in union, but also “fullness and vitality” which expands the person outwardly towards creative action.<sup>201</sup> Barnhart relates this to the connection between knowing and loving that was prevalent in medieval monasticism:<sup>202</sup>

If it is a knowing in love, it’s also a knowing in affirmation...the whole of our being reaches forward towards that which we know, so the knowing is never just knowing, as it would be in science, but it’s a knowing which is both participatory and also in movement.<sup>203</sup>

This sense of ‘movement forward’ (and outward) in the knowing is key – it is far from a passive participation, rather it activates the whole person in their potentialities to create and engage generatively in the world. It is a dynamic knowing engaging the whole of life – “it has a circular relation with one’s active or exterior life, such that the knowing animates the living and at the same time is a fruit of the living.”<sup>204</sup> It is therefore a living reality, a growth process towards the “creative actualization of the

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<sup>198</sup> Quoted in: Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 19-20.

<sup>199</sup> Quoted in: Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 19-20.

<sup>200</sup> The apophatic tradition of mysticism reflects this insight – in which words are not able to express this depth of mystery and unity at the source. ‘God is One’ etc.

<sup>201</sup> Barnhart, "Wisdom Christianity: Introduction."

<sup>202</sup> This connection to medieval times will be developed further in chapter 2.

<sup>203</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>204</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 65.

person” - the fullness of the person.<sup>205</sup> Once again Merton provides insights into this “highest level of cognition:”

It goes beyond *scientia*, which is systematic knowledge, beyond *intellectus*, which is intuitive understanding...it embraces the entire scope of man's [sic] life and all its meaning...wisdom is not only speculative, but also practical: that is to say, it is 'lived.' And unless one 'lives' it, one cannot 'have' it.<sup>206</sup>

The idea of 'lived' reality captures its dynamic nature. It is a verb more than a noun. As Barnhart suggests it is not so much to know something 'by participation' but “to participate” it intrinsically – a 'knowing in action.'<sup>207</sup> Therefore, it “is the opposite of specialization,” but rather, “moves towards an opening of the full spectrum of consciousness” so that all 'ways of knowing' including embodied, intuitive, imaginative and critical can be involved.<sup>208</sup> This highlights the dynamism of wisdom knowing in which “the whole person is opened”<sup>209</sup> in one vital movement from the “inward movement...into unity” to the “outward movement which ultimately comprehends all created reality.”<sup>210</sup> The inward movement is “the beginning of a dynamic process” therefore which expresses itself “in action...[and] fulfils itself in embodiment.”<sup>211</sup>

The principle of communion reflects the intrinsic fertility of wisdom knowing - “we participate in giving birth to what we know in this way” and this becomes a source of

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<sup>205</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 72.

<sup>206</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. Patrick Hart (New York: New Directions, 1981), 98-99.

<sup>207</sup> Barnhart, "Participative Knowledge in Religion and in Poetry."

<sup>208</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 7. As we will see this movement will include the time of the Enlightenment and the new capacity and application of reason will become an essential part of the journey towards a more active and creative 'participation' in the divine. (This will be developed in depth in chapters 3 and 4).

<sup>209</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6.

<sup>210</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>211</sup> Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East," 305.

life in the world.<sup>212</sup> We might speak of the ‘chemistry’ of wisdom knowing. Thus, as the person learns to participate in wisdom, they also bring forth its life into the world in a generative way. This is ultimately the embodiment of wisdom – an affirming, renewing movement, generating a new unity or wholeness in the world. This process of ‘bringing together’ will be termed the ‘generation of communion.’

This approach to wisdom knowing forms the foundation of this thesis and can be summarised in this way:

*Wisdom knowing is knowing by participation. It activates the whole person in movement from unitive source to creative expression and is generative of communion.*

### **Part 3: Wisdom and literary form**

#### **3.1 Wisdom literature**

Wisdom inspires a style of “alluring” literature – it is “the music that charms us into life...the scent and taste of the centre...awakening the heart.”<sup>213</sup> Of central importance is its effect of initiating the (wisdom) experience it describes, making it “habitable...weaving a fabric of understanding, of intuitive communication...[and] ploughing the waiting fields...in our psyche.”<sup>214</sup> Through its rhythm and resonances it breaks through the surface to illuminate “something deep and alive going on:”

It puts an experience inside the...narrative...so the whole of you gets moved by it...it creates a certain mental field...it is speech which is not only to communicate factual reality but to touch the person at the same

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<sup>212</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>213</sup> Barnhart, "Wisdom Christianity: Introduction."

<sup>214</sup> Barnhart, "Wisdom Christianity: Introduction."

time and to initiate something, to light a fire, to expand...deepen...  
penetrate and...create a life of its own within the person...reaching the  
whole person.<sup>215</sup>

This is obvious in the “deep and poignant sapiential poetry” of the ‘wisdom books’ in  
the Jewish scriptures:<sup>216</sup>

For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;  
because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.  
For she is a breath of the power of God,  
and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;  
therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.  
For she is a reflection of eternal light,  
a spotless mirror of the working of God,  
and an image of his goodness.  
Although she is but one, she can do all things,  
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;  
in every generation she passes into holy souls  
and makes them friends of God, and prophets (Wisdom 7:24-28).

These highly participatory words (‘pervades, penetrates, breath of God’) illuminate  
both the unitive (‘she is but one’) and creative movements (‘she can do all things’).  
They not only describe the attributes of wisdom but also reveal it in a striking way.

It is the conjunction between the form of the words and their content that provides  
the alluring quality of wisdom literature. JL Crenshaw notes its “thematic coherence”  
combining the ‘content’ – addressing “common problems” and comprising “self-  
evident intuitions about mastering life for human betterment, groping after life’s  
secrets,” and a particular ‘form’ by “cloth[ing] their intuitions, confirmed by  
experience, in recognizable dress (proverb, sentence, debate, instruction).”<sup>217</sup> As  
Bartholomew and O’Dowd suggest, it “finds its home above all else in the poetical

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<sup>215</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>216</sup> Barnhart, "Poetry and Wisdom."

<sup>217</sup> James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 10-11.

books – among metaphors, wordplay and more imaginative literature...[and which] creates symbolic images of wisdom that arouse in the reader a desire for wisdom.”<sup>218</sup>

### 3.2 Poetic discourse

Barnhart’s study of poetry was central in identifying the significance of literary form in initiating wisdom knowing. Modern poetry confirmed what was more common in the early church – the power of words to awaken experience. It allowed him to consider how a renewal of Christian wisdom could confront (and to some extent integrate) the critical rationality that had become so prevalent, to reveal the significance of the earlier wisdom language, and at the same time expand it with new possibilities from developments in the contemporary context.

Thomas Merton’s insights were particularly significant for Barnhart here.<sup>219</sup> Merton realized how a wisdom approach both sought “to apprehend man’s [sic] value and destiny in their global and even ultimate significance” and also resorted “to poetic myth and to religious or archetypal symbol.”<sup>220</sup> Further, he applied the word ‘wisdom’ beyond the “classical wisdom tradition” to the field of literature, recognizing that “creative writing and imaginative criticism provide a privileged area for wisdom in the modern world,” and “at times one feels they do so even more than current philosophy and theology.”<sup>221</sup> It was therefore possible to feel the pulse of wisdom

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<sup>218</sup> Bartholomew and O’Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, 23.

<sup>219</sup> See specially: Merton, *The Literary Essays*.

<sup>220</sup> Merton, *The Literary Essays*, 99-100.

<sup>221</sup> Merton, *The Literary Essays*, 99. Mark Burrows makes a similar observation: “While we find almost no resonance between the classical theology articulated by the ancient fathers and early medieval doctors and theologies of modernity, this earlier world finds its heirs among the poets of our age. Modern poetics holds aloft, in a non-metaphysical form, the mystical banner of the ancient world largely ignored in the republic of theology, and mysticism understood as the depths of longing in human experience – particularly in its attentiveness to the inarticulate and absent – seems to have

that had been central in the early church in the work of modern poets. This opened up significant potential to engage with poetry to cultivate the wisdom approach in a contemporary context.

Barnhart finds the core and dynamic principles of wisdom knowing evident in the poetic process. Firstly, poetry reveals in words the participatory environment of wisdom knowing. Secondly, the poetic act operates in dynamic movement between the unitive and creative dimensions, and it captures the transformative process by insinuating the movement of communion, especially through the use of metaphor.

#### **a) Poetry as knowing by participation**

Poetry is resonant speech...speech that goes beyond its definition... instead of clarity or defining itself, instead of outlining itself and characterising itself sharply...the words expand and merge into each other and they become something else.<sup>222</sup>

It insinuates the 'dynamism' of reality:

What makes someone give their whole life to writing poems? I think it is because words are able, if you treat them right, to catch the bird in flight - without stopping it, killing it. Rather flying with it for a second. What bird? The golden crested Yes, the Affirmation, the Breath of Life.<sup>223</sup>

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been largely banished with the artists from this discourse. But in exile the poets have borrowed this mystical impulse, at least in their search for traces of transcendence at the edges of perception and through the deep surfaces of language." See: Mark S. Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate: *Mysticism, Poetics, and the Unlanguageable*," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 346.

<sup>222</sup> Barnhart, "Participative Knowledge in Religion and in Poetry."

<sup>223</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "The Golden Crested Yes," *New Camaldoli Hermitage Newsletter* Winter 2017, 5.

The act of catching reality 'in flight' is the genius of poetry. Jeanette Winterson declares it is "not a version of the facts, but an entirely different way of seeing."<sup>224</sup>

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's  
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;  
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same.<sup>225</sup>

Gerard Manly Hopkins illuminates the identity of these different things with dazzling simplicity. As if by magic we are in touch with their very life. Poetry of this nature is a kind of "music that binds together in its one movement image, thought, feeling and sound;" it is "thought going beyond thought to a participation in the realities that are known."<sup>226</sup> Barnhart was especially impressed with Wallace Stevens who moved "between a strange and often abstract emptiness...and a sensuous fullness."<sup>227</sup> The last verse of *Botanist-on-alp-no-1* reads:

The pillars are prostrate, the arches are haggard,  
The hotel is boarded and bare.  
Yet the panorama of despair  
Cannot be the speciality  
Of this ecstatic air.<sup>228</sup>

Here, the very air itself is the source of fullness. And from *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, Stevens captures the immediacy and fertility of the present moment:

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<sup>224</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 349.

<sup>225</sup> Gerard Manly Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," *Poetry Foundation*, accessed July 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44389/as-kingfishers-catch-fire>.

<sup>226</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 133.

<sup>227</sup> Barnhart, "Poetry and Wisdom."

<sup>228</sup> Wallace Stevens, "Botanist-on-alp-no-1," *Lyrics.lol*, accessed September 2019, <http://lyrics.lol/artist/1004-wallace-stevens/lyrics/306235-botanist-on-alp-no-1>.

Throw away the lights, the definitions,  
And say of what you see in the dark

That it is this or that it is that,  
But do not use the rotted names.

How should you walk in that space and know  
Nothing of the madness of space,

Nothing of its jocular procreations?  
Throw the lights away. Nothing must stand  
Between you and the shapes you take.  
When the crust of shape has been destroyed.<sup>229</sup>

## b) Poetry as dynamic knowing

The poetic act is also an icon of the wisdom knowing, a dynamic movement between the interior and the exterior, “between the concrete particularity of an experienced world and the concrete particularity of words, as a communicable fullness, a momentary epiphany.”<sup>230</sup> In this process poets:

Move towards a certain centre in [themselves] where feeling and knowing are very close to the same thing...a kind of point of convergence...a unitive point which precedes the differentiation...[and where they are] continually operating in contact with something inside [themselves] even as [they] exteriorise it in words...an interior research going on at the same time as the verbal exteriorisation.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Excerpt from verse 32: Wallace Stevens, "The Man with the Blue Guitar," *Poem Hunter*, accessed January 2020, <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-man-with-the-blue-guitar/>.

<sup>230</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 133.

<sup>231</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*. Barnhart cites Jacques Maritain who writes: “Poetic experience brings the poet back to the hidden place, at the single root of the powers of the soul, where the entire subjectivity is, as it were, gathered in a state of expectation and virtual creativity. Into this place he [sic] enters, not by any effort of voluntary concentration, but by a recollection, fleeting as it may be, of all the senses, and a kind of unifying repose which is like a natural grace, a primordial gift, but to which he [sic] has to consent, and which he [sic] can cultivate, first of all by removing obstacles and silencing concepts....In such a spiritual contact of the soul with itself, all the sources are touched together, and the first obligation of the poet is to respect the integrity of this original experience. Any systematic denial of any of the faculties involved would be a sort of self-mutilation. Poetry cannot be reduced to a mere gushing forth of images separated from intelligence, any more than to a discursus of logical reason...” Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), 238-239.

They are in touch with the unitive source, “the invisible current of unitive intelligence that flows under the ground and joins everything with everything else.”<sup>232</sup> From Kabir: “Behold the One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray;” and from Rumi: “Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment; Cleverness is mere opinion, bewilderment is intuition.”<sup>233</sup>

Mark Burrows writes eloquently of this in his article *Raiding the Inarticulate: Mysticism, Poetics and the Unlanguageable*: “poetics points through language toward the *inarticulate*, towards transcendence not *beyond* but *within* speech.”<sup>234</sup> It speaks of “unlanguageable longing...affirms the eloquence of margins” and recognises “unboundedness...[that] not only language but also reality itself resists us.”<sup>235</sup> He also refers to Rumi:

Happy are those who know:  
Behind all words, the unsayable stands;  
And from that source alone, the infinite  
Crosses over to gladness, and to us –

Free of our bridges,  
Built with the stone of distinctions;  
So that always, within each delight,  
We gaze at what is purely single and joined.<sup>236</sup>

And yet poets also wrestle with this mystery and speak not only of the “still point of the turning world” but also of creative movement, “the unceasing explosion of expansive being, of proliferating life from the centre.”<sup>237</sup> The task of poetry is to ‘see’ into the movement of new life emanating from the unitive source. Burrows quotes the

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<sup>232</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 131-132.

<sup>233</sup> Cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 4-5.

<sup>234</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 342.

<sup>235</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 344, 348, 349 & 350.

<sup>236</sup> Cited in: Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 350.

<sup>237</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 21.

poet John Berger: “what is the meaning to be found in the visible...[a] form of energy, continually transforming itself, and *us*, in the process.”<sup>238</sup> Thomas Merton describes it as “a kind of recovery of paradise,” that the “new sound, the music, the structure” of poetry is “grounded in a renewal of vision and hearing so that he [sic] who reads and understands recognizes that here is a new start, a new creation.”<sup>239</sup>

To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.<sup>240</sup>

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil Crushed.<sup>241</sup>

Poetry is also in touch with transformative potential. It reveals “a transformation and a communion, an exchange of being as external reality is permeated with the light that shines from within us. Poetry is alchemy, transfiguration.”<sup>242</sup> This is most potently reflected through the “magic of metaphor.”<sup>243</sup> In the act of rubbing “one thing against another, one word against another, like flint and steel” the poet discovers both the “point of commonality” and also releases the “flash of light, the illumination...a moving force.”<sup>244</sup> In this it “knows a fire of freedom in the mind. It manifests a power, a fiery way of knowing things.”<sup>245</sup> Here the poet cooperates with the birthing process, through the “combining of familiar but separated things” they

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<sup>238</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 352.

<sup>239</sup> Thomas Merton, *Louis Zukofsky: The paradise Ear*, Cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 40.

<sup>240</sup> Excerpt from: William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence," *The Poetry Foundation*, accessed December 2019, [https://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/blake/to\\_see\\_world.html](https://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/blake/to_see_world.html).

<sup>241</sup> Excerpt from: Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *The Poetry Foundaton*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur>.

<sup>242</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 133.

<sup>243</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 131.

<sup>244</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 131.

<sup>245</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 134.

create “something new.”<sup>246</sup> It is a process of “awakening not only to what is but also to what is *becoming*, to the flow of the world that grasps us in its energies.”<sup>247</sup> It expresses the “yearning for communion with the other...the desire to indwell with others a common world.”<sup>248</sup> To touch that mysterious, unitive force that penetrates all reality and is in movement towards an “incircumscribable wholeness” - towards communion.<sup>249</sup>

I said to the almond tree  
 “Speak to me of God.”  
 The almond tree blossomed.<sup>250</sup>

Ultimately the poem is pointing beyond itself towards something larger – the vocation of the human person, “at a place of quickness within, a vital point, we know the world as our own, know ourselves as the children of God...we gradually begin to move in the widening space. We learn the spiralling degrees of freedom.”<sup>251</sup>

The poem refreshes life so that we share,  
 For a moment, the first idea...It satisfies  
 Belief in an immaculate beginning.<sup>252</sup>

## Conclusion

Barnhart’s desire is to illuminate and cultivate this vital point, the human person fully alive. Approaching wisdom as a way of knowing is his strategy for doing this. He

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<sup>246</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 342.

<sup>247</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 352.

<sup>248</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 354.

<sup>249</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 132.

<sup>250</sup> Nikos Kazantzakis, "The Fratricides," *Your Dictionary*, accessed 13 January 2020, <https://quotes.yourdictionary.com/author/nikos-kazantzakis/169079>.

<sup>251</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 134.

<sup>252</sup> Excerpt from: Wallace Stevens, "Notes on a Supreme Fiction," *Genius*, accessed March 2020, <https://genius.com/Wallace-stevens-notes-toward-a-supreme-fiction-annotated>.

aims to get underneath the particular attributes of wisdom to its chemistry – its intensity of life in the world and the human person. This ‘life in movement’ can ‘only’ be known by ‘participating it’ and it is easily lost in the movement to stand outside and look in. He is very aware therefore of the danger of critical rationality overwhelming a participatory approach. This participatory approach opens wide doors for Barnhart; it propels him into vast areas from theology and history to poetry and science.

Barnhart explores this wisdom knowing deeply and identifies a shape and dynamic of four principles: participatory knowing as the core, and three dynamic principles to describe its movement from the unitive source, outward and creatively towards communion. Barnhart’s insight into the significance of literary form and the correlation between wisdom knowing and its mode of expression provides another source of engagement. These two aspects, wisdom knowing itself and the way it is expressed and carried forward in its literary expression will provide the basis for further analysis throughout the thesis. It will be argued that together they provide a means with which to live a more wholistic Christian life. Before beginning this analysis however, the way in which Barnhart approaches the particularity of Christian wisdom will be considered. He will argue that in the Incarnation a ‘new wisdom’ is revealed bringing a distinctive shape and dynamism to wisdom knowing, the way that it becomes expressed, and is lived in the world.

## **Chapter 2: Christian wisdom knowing**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will outline Barnhart's approach to Christian wisdom knowing. Part 1 will establish his theological foundations within 'wisdom theology,' prominent in scripture and the early church, and centred on Jesus as the incarnation of divine wisdom. It will then show how this 'event of wisdom' is fulfilled through the cross and shapes the particularity of Christian wisdom knowing as a 'participatory revolution' building on the approach as developed in chapter 1 with its core and dynamic principles.

Part 2 will trace the historical developments of wisdom theology, from its prominence during the first millennium characterized by its participatory literary style, to its increasing 'eclipse' from the 12<sup>th</sup> century as more analytical theology began to predominate. Reference will also be made to the history of Christian spirituality which follows a similar trajectory and shows a close parallel to Barnhart's perspective. This historical framework will set the scene to turn to Barnhart's vision for the rebirth of Christian wisdom, the subject of the remainder of the thesis.

### **Part 1: Wisdom theology**

#### **1.1 Wisdom incarnated**

Barnhart's theological approach is founded on the wisdom perspective of the early church centred in "the event of Christ" as "the coming of the divine Wisdom to

humanity as a human person.”<sup>253</sup> The incarnation of wisdom and its meaning is the core of Barnhart’s work.<sup>254</sup> He firstly shows how wisdom is prominent in the Pauline and Johannine writings and used to reveal the power and singularity of this ‘event’ and its cosmic significance. From a Johannine perspective Jesus is identified with the divine Logos or Word (a term equivalent to divine wisdom):<sup>255</sup>

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being...and the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:1-3, 14).

Jesus is the “Word of God through which the universe is created” and through his incarnation (‘becoming flesh’), “the unitive mediator of divinization: in him the human person becomes one with God.”<sup>256</sup>

From a Pauline perspective Jesus is the “power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24).<sup>257</sup> The “cosmic scope” of the vision is described in the first letter to the Colossians:<sup>258</sup>

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all

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<sup>253</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 22.

<sup>254</sup> In *The Future of Wisdom* alone the word ‘Incarnation’ is used more than 190 times.

<sup>255</sup> As Elizabeth Johnson suggests, “John’s whole Gospel is simply suffused with wisdom themes.” Johnson, *She Who Is*, 97. Gerard O’Collins writes that John’s prologue uses Logos “as an equivalent for the ‘Sophia,’ found in Jewish Wisdom literature.” Gerald O’Collins, “Word, Spirit, and Wisdom in the Universe: a Biblical and Theological Reflection,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 75.

<sup>256</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 54.

<sup>257</sup> See also: Jesus “became for us the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:30) and is the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col 2: 3)

<sup>258</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 55. Thomas Rausch writes: “For Paul, the Wisdom of God is Jesus himself (1 Cor 2:7). It is difficult to overlook the cosmic significance that Christ plays in Paul (and in early hymns like Philippians 2:6-11) from the beginning to the end of creation.” Thomas P Rausch, *Systematic Theology: A Roman Catholic Approach* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 89.

things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:15-17).

According to Barnhart these descriptions “transcend metaphor” and attempt to give “some verbal articulation...to the absolute reality that has become manifest in him...as the one key to penetrating the mysteries of the cosmos and of the biblical history of salvation.”<sup>259</sup> It is a theological vision of the “Wisdom-Christ” that aims to express the extraordinary fullness in Jesus at once human and also *the* Wisdom of God - “the person in whom God and the universe have become one and in whom the universe is re-created in God.”<sup>260</sup>

Barnhart then shows how wisdom theology was continued “by many Christian teachers and writers of the first centuries.”<sup>261</sup> He notes the works of Louis Bouyer who emphasised the common use of the term ‘gnosis’ (knowing Christ as divine mystery) in the early church<sup>262</sup> and highlights how incarnated wisdom was the basis for the theological vision of Augustine of Hippo.<sup>263</sup> He refers to Jaroslav Pelikán who identifies the significance of the term Logos becoming “enshrined in the Nicene

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<sup>259</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 51.

<sup>260</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 54.

<sup>261</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 22.

<sup>262</sup> See especially chapters 9 & 10 (211 – 255) of Louis Bouyer, *A History of Christian spirituality* (London: Burns & Oates, 1965). Bouyer writes of Clement of Alexandria: “As Clement says...‘Gnosis is the knowledge of the Name and the understanding of the Gospel,’ a definition which might have come from all the first generations of Christians and from the Christian groups that were most purely biblical and Jewish in their formation.” Bouyer, *A History of Christian spirituality*, 211.

<sup>263</sup> Barnhart references the work of Peter Brown who points out: “The Christ of popular imagination was not a suffering Saviour. There were no crucifixes in the fourth century.” For Augustine therefore, “the essence of Christianity consisted in just this. Christ, as the ‘Wisdom of God’, had established a monopoly in Wisdom: the clear Christian revelation had trumped and replaced the conflicting opinions of the pagan philosophers... Augustine therefore, turned, quite naturally, to the Bible, to find his ‘Wisdom.’” Brown also writes of Augustine’s key distinction “between wisdom (*sapientia*) and (*scientia*). Whereas wisdom has as its object the eternal and unchangeable reality, knowledge is the rational insight into visible, perceptible, changeable, and temporal things. Augustine does not equate knowledge with an empirical rationality, as our modern view does. Instead, Augustine views wisdom and human happiness as the goal of knowledge – a knowledge stemming from three sources: experience, authority, and signs.” See: Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1967), 41-42 & 8.

Creed,” and enabling the early Church writers to give cosmic significance to the event of Christ.<sup>264</sup> As Pelikán writes:

By applying this [Logos] title to Jesus, the Christian philosophers of the fourth and fifth centuries who were trying to give account of who he was and what he had done were enabled to interpret him as the divine clue to the structure of reality (metaphysics) and, within metaphysics, to the riddle of being (ontology) - in a word, as the Cosmic Christ.<sup>265</sup>

More recent scholarship also highlights the significance of wisdom in the early church.<sup>266</sup> Wisdom was a central consideration in the Jewish and surrounding Hellenistic culture,<sup>267</sup> and therefore provided “a powerful way to understand and respond to the Messiah... [and] a natural resource for interpreting the Jesus event.”<sup>268</sup> The personification of divine wisdom was foundational in the earliest development of Christology attributing divinity to Jesus from the very beginning.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>264</sup>Jaroslav Pelikán, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 58. See for example the phrase: “Through him all things were made.”

<sup>265</sup> Pelikán, *Jesus through the Centuries*, 58.

<sup>266</sup> More recent studies of wisdom influences in Christology include:

Johnson, *She Who Is*.

Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*.

James Dunn, “Jesus: Teacher of Wisdom or Wisdom Incarnate?,” in *Where shall Wisdom be found? Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the Contemporary World*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).

Stephen C Barton, “Gospel Wisdom,” in *Where shall Wisdom be Found? Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the Contemporary World* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

Aidan Boyle, *Towards a Contemporary Wisdom Christology: Some Catholic Christologies in German, English and French 1965-1995*, Tesi Gregoriana. Serie teologia; 98 (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2003).

David Ford, “Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God,” in *Reading Texts Seeking Wisdom*, ed. David F. Ford & Graham Stanton (London: SCM Press, 2003).

Douglas, *Early Church Understandings of Jesus as the Female Divine*.

<sup>267</sup> “The idea of wisdom was the common denominator in any attempt to come to grips with the question of truth, in philosophical as well as Christian circles.” See Carol Harrison, “Augustine, Wisdom and Classical Culture,” in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the Contemporary World*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 125.

<sup>268</sup> Bartholomew and O’Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, 237-238. Bartholomew and O’Dowd go on: “It is into this world of merging Jewish and Greek ideas that the New Testament was written.” See Bartholomew and O’Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, 232.

<sup>269</sup> In her study of Jesus as the female divine, Douglas suggests: “Wisdom Christology and Wisdom soteriology, in which Jesus is imaged as the female divine, were pivotal across many communities in the early Jesus movement. This ‘high’ Christology did not emerge through a gradual process of accretion. The extant evidence reveals that Jesus is imaged, celebrated and worshipped as the divine

Elizabeth Johnson shows how the depth and richness of the notion of wisdom empowered the first Christians “to attribute cosmic significance to the crucified Jesus, relating him to the creation and governance of the world.”<sup>270</sup> It allowed them to develop “insight into Jesus’ ontological relationship with God, for none of the other Jewish scriptural symbols used – Son of Man, Messiah, Son of God – connotes divinity in its original gestalt,” and therefore to understand him as “not simply a human being inspired by God but ...related in a special way to God.”<sup>271</sup>

## 1.2 Wisdom of the cross

The incarnation of wisdom is realized in enormous paradox: Jesus “became for us the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:30) yet it is accomplished through “the wisdom of the cross.”<sup>272</sup> This is an entirely ‘new’ wisdom – “foolishness” (1 Cor 1:18) to the prevailing wisdom as its centre is “Christ crucified...for God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor: 1:23, 25). The reality of the cross is the fulfilment of Christian wisdom:

It is here that the paradox of a Christian wisdom is most acutely manifested; wisdom...must be centered in this ‘cross of Christ,’ the axial

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from a very early period *and* that in these proclamations Jesus is imaged, celebrated and worshipped as the *female* divine.” Douglas, *Early Church Understandings of Jesus as the Female Divine*, 8.

<sup>270</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 98. Boyle also writes of the early patristic period: “The Apologists used the concepts of Logos and Wisdom in order to make connections between faith and philosophy. All the powers of creation recognized in the Father of the universe by philosophy and all his intervention in the world are transferred to Christ, and this is justified by appeal to the Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22 as well as the Johannine Logos.” He goes on to suggest that the “presentation of Jesus as the Wisdom of God is also found in medieval theology” in writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen. See Boyle, *Towards a Contemporary Wisdom Christology*, 209-210.

<sup>271</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 98-99. This is further confirmed in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 474. “By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.”

<sup>272</sup> Barnhart, “Wisdom Christianity: Introduction.”

event of history, the revolutionary act of God in which humanity – and ultimately the world itself – become a ‘new creation.’ Wisdom itself must somehow go through the inversion, the death and rebirth which is the cross. Here is the very pivot of paradox, and Paul exults in the power of God which is condensed in this point. It is the vanishing point in which all wisdom is swallowed up and the daystar from which not only light but infinite power radiates.<sup>273</sup>

The light and power radiating from the cross are Barnhart’s chief concern. Together, they are the point of metamorphosis from which a new life emerges and the lens through which he imagines the incarnational process in history and the particularity of Christian wisdom knowing.

Here the central motif for this thesis can be evoked. Through the cross, God’s life is rooted deeply into the heart of the earth and the paschal mystery releases the power of God in a new way with new potentialities (a new bloom). Barnhart aims to illuminate the profundity of this bloom by insisting on the phrase ‘event of Christ’ to emphasise its absolutely unique ‘happening’ in Christ at a particular moment in history, a revolutionary event of “sheer newness,”<sup>274</sup> establishing a new centre around which everything now revolves and is therefore “the beginning of a new creation.”<sup>275</sup> Jesus therefore “does not appear simply as the capstone which consummates a long process, as the final word of the sentence, but brings a change in form as decisive as the blossom upon a stem.”<sup>276</sup> Reality is altered ‘at root’ as “the energy of that singular, central, initial event in history... changes everything and puts

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<sup>273</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "The Mystery of Christ and the Cross," *The Bede Griffiths Trust*, accessed January 21 2015, <http://www.bede.griffiths.com/wisdom-christianity/>.

<sup>274</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 25.

<sup>275</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 47.

<sup>276</sup> Barnhart, "Bede Griffiths and the Future of Wisdom."

everything in movement towards its end in a new way, with a new energy, and with a new light."<sup>277</sup>

The influence of Irenaeus of Lyons is significant here with his pronounced incarnational theology.<sup>278</sup> Barnhart often paraphrased Irenaeus' question, "what did Jesus bring that was new?" and the response: "*himself*, and in bringing himself, he brought all newness."<sup>279</sup> The impact according to Irenaeus was to "renew and quicken" and to fill humanity "with that joy which was proclaimed beforehand" and therefore to attain "that liberty which He bestows."<sup>280</sup> The newness bestows an unprecedented freedom and creative potential:

It is not only something that is brand new (something that is itself new), but something that contains the essence...the fire...the spark and the light of newness...the very life of newness so that it's a contagious newness... everything it touches somehow becomes renewed...Jesus is newness itself coming into the world.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

<sup>278</sup> As Clement writes: "...Irenaeus developed a vigorous theology emphasizing the reality of the incarnation (and therefore of the flesh), the unity of the two Testaments, and the positive nature of history. The Word and the Holy Spirit are the 'two hands of the Father.' With them he [sic] creates, directs, attracts and fulfils humanity. History appears thus as an immense process of incarnation." Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and Commentary* (London New City, 1993), 344.

<sup>279</sup> The original text of Irenaeus reads: "Know that He brought all [possible] novelty, by bringing Himself who had been announced. For this very thing was proclaimed beforehand, that a novelty should come to renew and quicken mankind [sic]. See Book IV, Chapter 34, no. 1: Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," *New Advent*, accessed December 2019, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103434.htm>.

<sup>280</sup> Irenaeus, "Against Heresies." Book IV, Chapter 34, no. 1.

<sup>281</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*. Pope Francis also quotes this line of Irenaeus in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "'By his coming, Christ brought with him all newness'. With this newness he is always able to renew our lives and our communities, and even if the Christian message has known periods of darkness and ecclesial weakness, it will never grow old. Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity...every form of authentic evangelization is always 'new.'" Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation. (2013), n. 11.

The fundamental transformation can be summed up in *the* one “movement from the tyranny of law...to the freedom of the Spirit.”<sup>282</sup> Richard Hays also argues that in First Corinthians the wisdom revealed in Christ is not simply a continuity with the prevailing wisdom but of a different order. Any wisdom that boasts “rhetorical eloquence” or even “common sense” has been “exploded...by an eschatological revelation” shockingly revealed in a radical reversal of the cross.<sup>283</sup> The “nonsense” of the cross is the new centre so that now the “meaning of wisdom is controlled by Christ crucified:”<sup>284</sup>

Paul has taken the central event at the heart of the Christian story – the death of Jesus – and used it as the lens through which all human experience must be projected and thereby seen afresh. The cross becomes the starting point for an epistemological revolution, a *conversion of the imagination*. For anyone who grasps the paradoxical logic of this text, the world can never look the same again.<sup>285</sup>

Barnhart elaborates this ‘epistemological revolution’ in terms of the particularity of wisdom knowing with its core and dynamic principles.<sup>286</sup>

### 1.3 Christian wisdom knowing

#### a) Core principle: The cross as participatory event

Barnhart describes the event of the cross as a “participatory event” and

“revolution.”<sup>287</sup> It releases a new potency of participatory potential reconciling all

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<sup>282</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 47-48. See for example: Rom 6.14: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” Gal 5.1: “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” 2 Cor 3.17: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

<sup>283</sup> Richard B. Hays, “Wisdom according to Paul,” in *Where Shall Wisdom be Found*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 115.

<sup>284</sup> Hays, “Wisdom,” 115, 123.

<sup>285</sup> Hays, “Wisdom,” 113.

<sup>286</sup> The basic structure of wisdom knowing was developed in chapter 1 part 2.3.

previous limitations to realise “total participation... by the unity or reunion of all humanity in a single ‘person.’”<sup>288</sup> At the point of most acute confinement in which life (and participation in God) is (seemingly) extinguished, an entirely new and comprehensive life of participation is born. Irenaeus is instrumental in Barnhart’s thinking here. His Christology is centred on “the figure of the cross” as “inscribed in the cosmos and in the history of salvation... understood as the fusion of God and creation, of Trinity and humanity.”<sup>289</sup> The three persons of the Trinity are fused with the ‘fourth’ (creation) to bring about a (final) wholeness. Irenaeus writes:

So by obedience, whereby He obeyed unto death, hanging on the tree, He undid the old disobedience wrought in the tree. And because He is Himself the Word of God Almighty, who in His invisible form pervades us universally in the whole world, and encompasses both its length and breadth and height and depth – for by God’s Word everything is disposed and administered – the Son of God was also crucified in these, imprinted in the form of a cross on the universe; He had, necessarily, in becoming visible, to bring to light the universality of His cross, in order to show openly through His visible form that activity of His: that it is He who makes bright the height, that is, what is in heaven, and holds the deep, which in the bowels of the earth, and stretched forth and extends the length from East to West, navigating also the Northern parts and the breadth of the South, and calling in all the dispersed from all sides to the knowledge of the Father.<sup>290</sup>

Irenaeus asserts the ‘imprint of the cross’ into the heart of reality, echoing the quaternary figure corresponding “to the inner structure of the New Testament.”<sup>291</sup> It is revealed in the Pauline writings such as (Col: 1: 19-20): “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself

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<sup>287</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 283, 265.

<sup>288</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 268.

<sup>289</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 30. Barnhart develops this at length in Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 25-29.

<sup>290</sup> Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. Joseph P Smith S.J., in *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Johannes Quasten S.T.D. & Joseph C. Plumpe (London: The Newman Press, 1952), xxxiv, 69-70.

<sup>291</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 207.

all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”<sup>292</sup> Its ‘mandalic’ shape and reach into all reality is intimated in Eph 3:18 as comprehending “the breadth and length and height and depth.” Barnhart compares it to “the central equations of modern physics, which bring together radically disparate aspects of cosmic reality (mass, energy, light, space, and time) in a single quantitative fabric of relationship.”<sup>293</sup> Through “his death and resurrection” therefore, Jesus “brings everything together...so that he is both the centre and the circumference...of all creation drawn together.”<sup>294</sup>

In this context, the cross is the source of wholeness in Christian life and the foundation for wisdom knowing, shaping its particular life and movement: “the event/mystery” of the cross “is prior to the participation and defines the experience and the knowledge.”<sup>295</sup> At its source, wisdom knowing is “personal participation in the (essentially participatory) Christ-mystery.”<sup>296</sup> It is to “enter into “a field of unitive energy...participated through a unitive knowledge (an intimate personal relationship with Christ).”<sup>297</sup> This will be defined as *radical participation* and represents the core principle of wisdom knowing, reflecting the ‘participatory revolution’ that has been released through the event of Christ. It will be this participatory perspective that Barnhart expands upon in the first of his four turns, ‘the sapiential awakening’ explored in chapter 3.

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<sup>292</sup> See also: “With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (1 Eph 1: 8-10).

<sup>293</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 186.

<sup>294</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>295</sup> Barnhart, “One Spirit, One Body,” 266. It recalls Paul’s proclamation: “to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).

<sup>296</sup> Barnhart, “One Spirit, One Body,” 275.

<sup>297</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 51-52. Pauline texts describing the depth of this participation include: The person will “be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Rom 12:2), to such depth as to “have the mind of Christ” (1:Cor 2:16); “and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:19).

## b) Dynamic principles: The cross as shaping wisdom knowing

Barnhart then interprets the shape of the cross with its two axes as representing the dynamism of wisdom knowing, 'from unitive source to creative expression and generative of communion:'

The centre of the vision is Jesus Christ on the cross. In this central cruciform Christ the four dimensions converge: heaven and earth, Jew and Gentile: that is, God and the world, the people first chosen and the whole of humanity. It is in the physical body of Christ on the cross that all of reality is brought to unity, for in this body, this center, dwells the fullness of God from which all things have come, in which they subsist, to which they return.<sup>298</sup>

The vertical axis represents the unitive dimension (uniting 'heaven and earth') in which humanity enjoys "a new participation in the divine Absolute (God)."<sup>299</sup> John's prologue describes its new intensity in terms of becoming "Children of God"; receiving "grace upon grace"; and knowing the "Father's heart" (John 1: 12, 16, 18). It is expressed in the "ever-recurring 'in Christ,' 'in him' of Paul's letters."<sup>300</sup> The word 'in' illuminates its profoundly participative nature – it is "incorporation into him" so that now "we have the mind of Christ" (1:Cor 2:16).<sup>301</sup> It then became enshrined in the formula of the early church as exemplified by Irenaeus: "if God did not become a human person in Christ, then we could not become God."<sup>302</sup> Barnhart reflects on the

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<sup>298</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 172.

<sup>299</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 265, 274.

<sup>300</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 50.

<sup>301</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 270.

<sup>302</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 276. As Irenaeus writes: "This is the reason why the Word of God was made flesh, and the Son of God became Son of Man: so that we might enter into communion with the Word of God, and by receiving adoption might become Sons of God. Indeed, we should not be able to share in immortality without a close union with the Immortal. How could we have united ourselves with immortality if immortality had not become what we are, in such a way that we should be absorbed by it, and thus we should be adopted as Sons of God?" See: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 19, 1, ANF vol.1, 448, cited in Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 54. As Barnhart writes further: "the response of the church's theologians to heterodox formulations of the relation between divinity and humanity in Christ rests upon a double participation: we participate in God because we

profundity of this divine unity in terms of the principle of nonduality in the second of his four turns, the 'eastern turn' explored further in chapters 3 and 4.

The horizontal axis represents the outward creative dimension (the movement from 'the people first chosen to the whole of humanity'), in terms of a new and universal "participatory relationship between human persons."<sup>303</sup> John uses the image of the vine: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit" (John 15:5). Through participation in Christ the fruit will be a new "*koinonia* which is constitutive of community or church."<sup>304</sup> From a Pauline perspective, the new community extends beyond all cultural boundaries "to bring all things together in Christ:"<sup>305</sup>

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it (Eph 2:12-16).<sup>306</sup>

Through the cross, all that was divided becomes unified; all hostility is reconciled in peace so that a new humanity is generated in a movement that ultimately extends to all created reality. It will involve an ongoing process "of recapitulation" throughout

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participate in Christ; in Christ, God and humanity have become one." Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 276. The Eastern orthodox church called this process "divinization" (theosis) in the context of 2 Pet 1:4: "He has given us something very great and wonderful . . . you are able to share the divine nature!"

<sup>303</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 265.

<sup>304</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 275.

<sup>305</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 271.

<sup>306</sup> See also 1 Cor 12:12-13: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." This is also suggested in The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in which the notion of 'neighbour' is extended to all people.

history through “a new *birth*, which the individual Christian, the church, and the universe undergo together by participation in the divine Energy, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>307</sup>

While the creative dimension is not immediately apparent, Barnhart will argue in his third ‘western turn’ that a particular outburst of this divine energy came to birth in Western history as a new creative freedom within the human person and that the exercise of this is intrinsic to the process (to be explored further in chapters 3 and 4).

It is evident that in articulating this “double opening of participation” (vertical and horizontal) Barnhart is operating against a backdrop of limitation to divine participation in the prevailing context. Vertically, he suggests there was a “dualistic relationship with God...in the exclusion of a sense of divine immanence” and horizontally “in the exclusion of all peoples other than the family of Israel.”<sup>308</sup> This position requires caution as not to suggest an anti-Jewish sentiment. Barnhart is careful to point out the continuity of the Jewish and Christian scriptures and how “an astonishing new intimacy with God is promised in the future” by the Jewish prophets.<sup>309</sup> However, he argues that these limitations to full divine participation are the context for the New Testament writings and he is writing from within this context. We will also see how Barnhart is highly critical of Christianity too for erecting these same two barriers in the course of history. What this analysis allows him to do is bring into sharp relief the comprehensive impact and newness of the event of Christ in participatory terms: that “through his death and resurrection” Jesus “opened this circumscribed participation both inwardly and outwardly: that is, by initiating a

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<sup>307</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 271. Here Barnhart refers to Rom 8:21: “The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

<sup>308</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 273.

<sup>309</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 269. See for example: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.” (Ezek 36: 26-27)

participation in God that is both immediate (or nondual) and universal."<sup>310</sup> He is, therefore, the catalyst "from which every other form of new participation derives."<sup>311</sup>

A parallel to Barnhart's approach is Elizabeth Johnson's use of the phrase "whole Christ" to magnify the significance of the movement from the historical life of Jesus to the one who, through his death and resurrection, is "anointed in the Spirit."<sup>312</sup> He is now "a pneumatological reality; a creation of the Spirit who is not limited by whether one is Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female...the body of the risen Christ becomes one body of the community; all are one in Christ Jesus (1 Cor 12; Gal 3:28)."<sup>313</sup> And as Stephen Barton asks: "what kind of wisdom does John commend to his audience once the universal question about the true locus of wisdom is identified as Jesus?"<sup>314</sup> With reference to the statement "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) he answers in terms of a "transformation of wisdom" from anything that has gone before, more than a "divine agent" in that it "becomes fully human" and it is "through Jesus' death that the fruit of eternal life will reach not only Jews and Samaritans, but Greeks as well."<sup>315</sup>

In summary, the cross figure gives shape to the fullness of participation in its "two fundamental modes, corresponding to the basic polarity of individual and community"<sup>316</sup> and that are "implicit in Jesus' great double commandment of total love of God and equal love of neighbor (Mark 12:29-31)."<sup>317</sup> It is in Christ that they

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<sup>310</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 274. (I

<sup>311</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 282.

<sup>312</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 161, 162.

<sup>313</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, 162.

<sup>314</sup> Barton, "Gospel Wisdom " 106.

<sup>315</sup> Barton, "Gospel Wisdom " 106-107.

<sup>316</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 275.

<sup>317</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 68.

have “become inseparably fused” and “the one unitive event, after his resurrection, becomes a dynamism within the church and the world.”<sup>318</sup> It is this one movement that blooms throughout history to become a new communion for humanity and creation. The movement of communion will be treated in greater detail in chapters 3 and 4 as represented in Barnhart’s ‘global turn.’

### **c) Wisdom knowing as sacramental**

Finally, the consummation of wisdom knowing is realised in the sacramental journey of Christian life:

[The journey] from the gift of self *received* in baptismal initiation to the gift of self *given* in a eucharistic life and death. As one participates in the revolution of Jesus, its form comes to determine the shape of one’s own life. This is the form of the cross.<sup>319</sup>

These words express the contours of Barnhart’s approach to wisdom knowing.

‘Knowing by participation’ is configured around the shape of the cross and the radical participatory life it releases. The ‘movement from unitive source to creative expression’ is understood as the receiving of the unitive self in baptism to a eucharistic giving of that self through creative action in the world, and is fulfilled in the generation of greater communion. Wisdom knowing therefore is founded in baptismal identity and expressed through learning to live the ‘Eucharistic life.’<sup>320</sup> St.

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<sup>318</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 68.

<sup>319</sup> Barnhart, “One Spirit, One Body,” 274.

<sup>320</sup> See this connection of the two sacraments to the cross in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1225. “In his Passover Christ opened to all men [sic] the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a ‘Baptism’ with which he had to be baptized. The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life. From then on, it is possible ‘to be born of water and the Spirit’ in order to enter the Kingdom of God.”

John Chrysostom wrote of the mystery of these two sacraments flowing from the side of Christ:

“There flowed from his side water and blood.” Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, “the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit,” and from the Holy Eucharist.<sup>321</sup>

And as Augustine of Hippo urged in relation to the eucharist: “Be what you see; receive what you are.”<sup>322</sup> Barnhart echoes Augustine’s words to describe the heights of wisdom knowing: “when you consume the eucharist, the eucharist is consuming you...it gives you a taste and at the same time it is as if it’s tasting you...Christ is absorbing you as you are absorbing Christ.”<sup>323</sup> This kind of radical participation is the “source and summit” of wisdom knowing.<sup>324</sup> It provides the foundation for wholeness in Christian life.

## **Part 2: The history of wisdom knowing**

According to Barnhart this highly participatory approach was central in the theological approach of the early church revealed in both content and literary form. The (poetic) form represents the other key aspect of his approach to Christian wisdom, and it was the marked change from the 12<sup>th</sup> century that led to Barnhart

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<sup>321</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, cited in Robert Repenning, *Tenebrae: Solemn Liturgy of the Hours for the Easter Triduum* (U.S.A: Robert Repenning, 2011), 33.

<sup>322</sup> See Easter Sermon 272: Augustine, "Augustine on the nature of the Sacrament of the Eucharist," *Early Church Texts*, accessed 27 February 2020, [https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/augustine\\_sermon\\_272\\_eucharist.htm](https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/augustine_sermon_272_eucharist.htm).

<sup>323</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>324</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11.

delineating the three historical periods of wisdom introduced in chapter 1.<sup>325</sup> The first period extended until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a time in which wisdom theology “remained the dominant mode of theological understanding in both Eastern and Western Christian traditions.”<sup>326</sup> A second period, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, saw an ongoing ‘eclipse’ of wisdom theology as it was replaced by more objective approaches, and a third period of renewal that became pronounced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked by the Second Vatican Council. In what follows, the first two periods will be focused upon. This will set the scene to develop in detail Barnhart’s proposal for the renewal of Christian wisdom in chapter 3, which aims to integrate these historical developments.

In examining these first two periods the intention is to highlight the significance of the change in theological approach from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It will become evident that Barnhart’s central critique is in terms of it compromising the fundamental wholeness and participatory character of the Christian mystery most obviously revealed in the significant change in theological style. In later chapters however, it will also become clear that Barnhart displays a nuanced position. He will propose that while the change led to significant fragmentation, it also represented an intrinsic part of a larger process of growth and freedom for humanity, one that is ultimately connected to the process of incarnation itself. This second period of history will therefore become part of a more comprehensive approach to wisdom knowing in our time. Barnhart’s use of the word ‘eclipse’ is very deliberate, therefore. During the eclipse it appears as though the wisdom approach has all but disappeared, however in reality it is present and active (yet often in the dark) and undergoing a transformation to be

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<sup>325</sup> See chapter 1 section 1.2 (a)

<sup>326</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 1.

revealed later. The way Barnhart handles this will become evident in his proposal for a renewed Christian wisdom.

The strength of Barnhart's position will be further demonstrated by showing its close parallel to the way scholars articulate the historical developments of Christian spirituality. They too delineate three broad periods and argue that genuinely wholistic perspectives need to engage with and integrate the distinguishing aspects of each period.<sup>327</sup>

## **2.1 The first period of wisdom: 1<sup>st</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century**

### **a) Centrality of wisdom knowing**

During the first period a wisdom 'culture' permeated the theological endeavour. It involved much more than simply using the word 'wisdom' as a theological category, but combined a particular "consciousness, way of thinking, and literary language" to fashion a 'wisdom atmosphere'.<sup>328</sup> Barnhart shows how the literature is preeminent in the New Testament and theological discourse throughout the first millennium continued in the same spirit. Maintaining contact with this literature is crucial to Barnhart. As we have seen, he insists that ultimately, the "mystery cannot be understood 'objectively'; the theological object disappears immediately into participation into the subject."<sup>329</sup> The literary style is like the 'raw data' of this highly personal and participatory experience; it is in touch with the heat and dynamism of the event itself.

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<sup>327</sup> See Introduction part 1.4.

<sup>328</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

<sup>329</sup> Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East," 302.

As developed in chapter 1, “sapiential discourse is intrinsically musical or poetic,” using symbol, multiple layers, and symmetry to arouse depth experience.<sup>330</sup> The Catholic liturgy with its “strange, poetic, repetitive”<sup>331</sup> language is typical. It is also an attractive literature – “the music of words draws us into an inner music of meaning, of the reality itself.”<sup>332</sup> In what follows a few brief examples from the New Testament and the patristic and medieval period will be offered. The aim is to provide a taste of the literature rather than an exegetical analysis of the texts (a more methodological approach to texts will be developed in chapter 5 using a hermeneutical methodology).

## **b) New Testament**

Something radically new has appeared, has happened, is present, and the writings of the New Testament are permeated with its light and its creative energy.<sup>333</sup>

The New Testament has “furnished the symbolic vocabulary, the language and the nutritive ground” for the reality of the event of Christ and its incarnational movement.<sup>334</sup> Its “wave-front” of energy announcing the new “divine birth in this world” permeates the texts.<sup>335</sup> The prologue of John’s Gospel captures it in one phrase: “and the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). It is represented symbolically in any number of instances in John’s gospel. Barnhart illustrates its splendour in “The Wedding Scene of Cana” (John 2:1-12). This is “the first of his signs” (John 2:11) and therefore has “a special value and meaning,” offering a “doorway into the whole

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<sup>330</sup> Barnhart, "Poetry and Wisdom."

<sup>331</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

<sup>332</sup> Barnhart, "Poetry and Wisdom."

<sup>333</sup> Barnhart, "Poetry and Wisdom."

<sup>334</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 64.

<sup>335</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 283, 285.

of John's Gospel."<sup>336</sup> "The water that had become wine" (John 2: 9) converges with the wedding...a "unifying thing" and signifies "the ultimate wedding of God and creation...the final wedding."<sup>337</sup> Early in the episode Jesus appears to resist the request for action as "my hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). However he is persuaded by his mother and the episode then anticipates Jesus' 'hour': "it directly translates his hour into another language...the hour of his death and particularly his resurrection when the water of human life will be changed into the wine of divine-human life."<sup>338</sup> This use of symbol to reveal a greater meaning is classic wisdom language.

The intimacy of the new divine life overflows in the first letter of John:

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us...we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete (1 John 1:1-2, 4).

The immediacy of hearing, seeing, and even touching reveals the incarnational dynamic of Christian life fulfilled in joy. Paul's writing emanates a similar alacrity: "the marvellous sweep of his thought is that new freedom of having found a centre which absolutely liberates you...the centre with which you become identified so you are free in every direction:"<sup>339</sup>

I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of

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<sup>336</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>337</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>338</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>339</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2: 2-3).

In texts like this "everything is said...because its centre is expressed...and in that centre...everything else is virtually present and...can be drawn out."<sup>340</sup> The significance can then be elaborated in flowing language as the reception of "the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:18-19).

The parables also bring out the singular power and attraction of the event through the use of metaphor: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt 13:44). This person has discovered something completely compelling demanding an unconditional response. The parable of the mustard seed illustrates its dynamism in movement from the infinitesimal containing all potential and its expansion into fullness of life: "it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches" (Matt 13: 31-32).

A parallel to this interior-exterior dynamic is revealed in the two accounts of Pentecost. John's is an intensely intimate account in which Jesus "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). This is the reception of "an interior reality which brings about an interior transformation...an implosion"

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<sup>340</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: Towards a New Sapiential Christianity*.

representing “the penetration of the barrier between the human person and God.”<sup>341</sup>

The Lukan account in Acts moves in the opposite direction “like an outward explosion.”<sup>342</sup> As the disciples emerge from the upper room “filled with the Holy Spirit” and begin “to speak in other languages” (Acts 2:3) they were suspected of being “filled with the new wine” (Act 2:13). These evocative words illustrate the fundamental change that has taken place in the disciples - a “parallel to drunkenness,” representing “a largeness beyond the level of normal human capacities.”<sup>343</sup> It reveals the action of the “real new wine...the Holy Spirit, which is the very spirit of God, the very being of God” and which frees them to expand and “speak the gospel to the ends of the earth.”<sup>344</sup>

This expansive energy pervades the whole atmosphere of Luke’s Gospel. From the hymns of praise announcing the arrival of Jesus (‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour (Luke 1:46-47)); his public ministry of freedom for the poor (‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18)); to the “jubilant energy” in the recognition of Jesus on the road to Emmaus (‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road’ (Luke 24:32)): “the words are music: an exultant canticle of the manifestation of the Spirit, the outpouring of grace.”<sup>345</sup>

The wisdom literature is the natural expression of this one vital movement of outpouring grace. As we become attuned, more and more texts are illuminated. In the way John the Baptist identifies Jesus: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit

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<sup>341</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>342</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>343</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>344</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>345</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 97, 96.

and fire” (Matt 3:11). In the unconditional response of the disciples when they recognize Jesus: “immediately they left their nets and followed him”; “they left the boat and their father” (Matt 4:20, 22). In the reaction to Jesus’ teaching: “the crowds were astounded” (Matt 7:28); “they were utterly amazed at him” (Mark 12.17). In the healing episodes: “for power came out from him and healed all of them” (Luke 6:19). In the new life then transmitted to the disciples: “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk” (Acts 3:6). The language is saturated with wonder and moves as an outburst of energy – the essence of wisdom knowing.

### **c) Patristic and medieval period**

The patristic and medieval monastic period grew out of this “biblical culture” and theology was “expressed largely in commentaries on the biblical writings of both testaments.”<sup>346</sup> Its language was also “filled with the imagery and words of the Scripture” to express “spiritual experience” with a “consciousness and understanding...centered...in the *mystery of Christ* which is its interpretive light or eye.”<sup>347</sup> For example, the sixth century Rule of St Benedict that brought together much of the monastic wisdom that had gone before is filled with scripture, including 132 references to the Old Testament and 189 to the New Testament.<sup>348</sup> Its first line captures the essence of the wisdom approach: “listen...with the ear of the heart.”<sup>349</sup> The word ‘listen’ has enormous depth in a Benedictine context, it means to ruminate upon and to submit to, and therefore be shaped by the Word. ‘Heart’ in this context

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<sup>346</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 65, 64.

<sup>347</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 65, 64.

<sup>348</sup> Cited in: Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 65.

<sup>349</sup> Monastery of Christ in the Desert, "Prologue Verse 1-7."

means the whole person. There was not the same dichotomy between head and heart at that time.<sup>350</sup> To listen with the ‘ear of the heart’ was to taste the word with the whole of oneself and be transformed by it.

Boniface Ramsey identifies the literary style of the time as creating the common “atmosphere” or “patristic spirit” and involved:

A passionate rather than an abstract approach to truth...an extensive use of rhetoric...a love of imagery and, in particular, of the scriptural image...a popular appeal, and the use of popular language...a synthetic thrust, resulting in the treatment of the Christian mystery as an ensemble rather than as composed of discrete parts...a sense of the mystery of reality, and especially the mystery of God, which resisted probing and intrusion.<sup>351</sup>

As well as confirming the style, Ramsey brings out another key feature of patristic theology – its ‘synthetic trust’ to maintain the mystery of the whole and to resist the temptation to break things into parts.

Intimately connected to the style of literature was the exegetical method as emphasised by Henri De Lubac’s work, a significant influence on Barnhart.<sup>352</sup> De Lubac shows how scripture was read in the context of a fundamental movement from the literal to the spiritual sense. The literal level was considered the ‘letter,’ the words themselves and what the author intended in context. The spiritual level was to perceive the mystery of Christ in the scripture and may occur in the Old or New Testaments. A classic example is Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*, where the

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<sup>350</sup> Kallistos Ware make this point in his lectures on the Jesus prayer at the John Main Seminar: Kallistos Ware, "The Kingdom of the Heart," in *The John Main Seminar* (Ontario: Medio Media, 2002).

<sup>351</sup> Boniface Ramsey, "Fathers of the Church," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1987), 390.

<sup>352</sup> See Henri de Lubac, *The Sources of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), especially chapter 1.

events of Exodus are interpreted symbolically and in light of the Christian mystery.<sup>353</sup>

The approach also highlights the significance of *lectio divina*, the practice of intentionally placing oneself in this spiritual context when reading scripture. This will be explored in detail in chapter 5. In summary, the theological approach was characterised by a close interplay between this way of engaging with scripture and the wisdom literature that was produced.

For Barnhart it was Cypriano Vagaggini who was instrumental in bringing this all together. Firstly, he provided a name for patristic theology, identifying it as a distinctive theological approach, “sapiential...deeper wisdom.”<sup>354</sup> This allowed it to be brought into “distinct visibility” and thereby to recognise both its importance and particular characteristics.<sup>355</sup> Secondly, Vagaggini identified its ultimate aim in terms of being centred in a (participatory) way of knowing:

The concern is not at all with a mere conceptual knowledge of God...but with religious knowledge, implying a general attitude of one’s whole being and above all of the will and the affections...an all-embracing spirit of knowledge and of effective love.<sup>356</sup>

This movement beyond ‘conceptual knowledge’ to a way of knowing that involved the ‘whole being’ embracing knowledge and love is what Barnhart translates as

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<sup>353</sup> For example, he interprets the crossing of the Red Sea in baptismal terms, with the Egyptian army symbolizing “the various passions of the soul by which [humans] are enslaved.” Thus, “those who pass through the mystical water in baptism must put to death in the water the whole phalanx of evil – such as covetousness, unbridled desire, rapacious thinking, the passion of conceit and arrogance, wild impulse, wrath, anger, malice, envy and all such things.” Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe, and Everett Ferguson, in *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. Richard J. Payne (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 122-125, 83-84.

<sup>354</sup> Cypriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: a general treatise on the Theology of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1976), 619-620. Vagaggini uses the term ‘gnosis-sapientia’.

<sup>355</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 28.

<sup>356</sup> Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 619-620.

participatory knowing. Several recent scholars have emphasised the significance of this approach in early Christian tradition.<sup>357</sup> Ellen Charry describes how:

The patristic age emphasized sapience as the foundation of human excellence. Sapience includes correct information about God but emphasizes attachment to that knowledge. Sapience is engaged knowledge that emotionally connects the knower to the known.<sup>358</sup>

She goes on to suggest that this deeper and connected knowing was assumed in the patristic period: “Classical thought believed truth, beauty, and goodness are affective...they change the seeker by bringing her into their orbit and under their influence.”<sup>359</sup> This requires that the theologian “unearths the divine pedagogy in order to engage the reader or listener in considering that life with the triune God facilitates dignity and excellence.”<sup>360</sup> The doctrine therefore served a formative function, “to assist people to come to God” and was therefore intrinsically unitive.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> See for example David Ford who writes of Augustine’s theological approach: “The underlying conception of wisdom at play here thus once again combines the elements of *scripture, creation, ethics, love and worship.*” Ford, *Christian Wisdom*, 266.

Daniel Treier writing of patristic theology: “Behind these varied uses, however lay two basic points in common: first, theology must relate to the divine; second, theology was an aspect of *paideia* or *humanitas*, the Greco-Roman emphasis upon forming people for public life.” Daniel J. Treier, *Virtue and the voice of God: toward theology as wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 5.

Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 3-32.

<sup>358</sup> Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 4.

<sup>359</sup> Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 235-236. She also makes a very helpful distinction between ‘first and second order doctrines.’ First-order assertions “identify the setting for a religious life and teach about God...in relation to human life...teach members to form a coherent pattern of life...have character-forming intentions...helping people flourish through knowing and loving God.” They therefore function in the overall formation of the person. Second order doctrines are “rules and principles that distinguish what is authentic to a community from what is not, how to maintain consistency among its teachings, how to relate its authentic self-understanding to competing or alien claims ...and how to organize rules for deriving and arguing for its teachings.” They therefore function to maintain “community identity and coherence.” See Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 5-6. She argues that as the conditions for knowledge came under pressure with the scientific method – the second order doctrines also began to predominate.

<sup>360</sup> Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 18.

<sup>361</sup> Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 5.

Some examples from the patristic and medieval period illustrate the style.

Athanasius of Alexandria from the 4<sup>th</sup> century uses music to describe the Wisdom of God:

Like a musician who has attuned his lyre, and by the artistic blending of low and high and medium tones produces a single melody, so the Wisdom of God, holding the universe like a lyre, adapting things heavenly to things earthly, harmonizes them all, and, leading them by His will, makes one world and one world order in beauty and harmony.<sup>362</sup>

The use of metaphor to evoke the lived experience of the Christian life is exemplified in a fourth 4<sup>th</sup> century passage from John Cassian:

The soul may quite sensibly be compared to the finest down and the lightest feather which, if spared the onset and penetration of dampness from without, have a nature so mobile that the slightest breeze they rise up of themselves to the highest points of the sky. But if they are weighed down by any splash, any dampening of moisture, not only will there be no natural impulse to fly up into the air but the pressure of the absorbed liquid will drag them downward to earth.<sup>363</sup>

Irenaeus of Lyons of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century echoes the Johannine prologue to amplify the fullness in Christ:

There is...one God, the Father and one Christ Jesus our Lord, who comes through every economy and *recapitulates in Himself all things*. Now, man [sic] too, God's handiwork, is contained in this 'all.' So He also recapitulated in Himself humanity; the invisible becoming visible; the incomprehensible, comprehensible; the impassible, passible; the Word, man.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 42, cited in Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Homebush St Pauls, 1995), 54.

<sup>363</sup> John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Colm Luibheid, in *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. John Farina (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), 9.4,103.

<sup>364</sup> Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger OFM Cap, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. John J Dillon (New York: The Newman Press, 2012), 3.16.6.

Pope Leo the Great of the 5<sup>th</sup> century speaks similarly in highly unitive language in his commentary on the Transfiguration:

For when the Father said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in Whom, etc.,’ was it not clearly meant, “This is My Son,” Whose it is to be eternally from Me and with Me? Because the Begetter is not anterior to the Begotten, nor the Begotten posterior to the Begetter. “This is My Son,” Who is separated from Me, neither by Godhead, nor by power, nor by eternity. “This is My Son,” not adopted, but true-born, not created from another source, but begotten of Me: nor yet made like Me from another nature, but born equal to Me of My nature. “This is My Son,” “through Whom all things were made, and without Whom was nothing made” because all things that I do He does in like manner: and whatever I perform, He performs with Me inseparably and without difference: for the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, and Our Unity is never divided: and though I am One Who begot, and He the Other Whom I begot, yet is it wrong for you to think anything of Him which is not possible of Me.<sup>365</sup>

The language of fullness pervades these early writers in which Christ “is the unitive and intelligible center in which God, humanity, and the universe come together.”<sup>366</sup>

The approach also extended into the medieval monastic period. Here, Barnhart reads Jean leclercq who “describes the monastic theology of the late Middle Ages in contrast to the theology of the town and urban schools...of the same period.”<sup>367</sup>

Leclercq shows how the monks “conform[ed] to the classical and patristic tradition” in a mode of “expression and process of thought” that used “images and comparisons borrowed from the Bible and possessing both a richness and an obscurity in keeping with the mystery being expressed.”<sup>368</sup> Leclercq contrasts this approach with the emphasis on “logic...[and] clarity” of the scholastic approach emerging in the 12<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> See Sermon 51: Leo, "On the Transfiguration," *New Advent*, accessed 26 February 2020, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360351.htm>.

<sup>366</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 54.

<sup>367</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 27.

<sup>368</sup> Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 199-200.

century, which readily made “use of abstract terms...[and] new words.”<sup>369</sup> Monastic theology on the other hand emphasised “the kind of learning which is love.”<sup>370</sup>

Barnhart concludes that the function of theology in this monastic context was “union or participation in the mystery” with the whole of one’s being, in other words, wisdom knowing.<sup>371</sup>

For example, in his commentary of the nature of love, Bernard of Clairvaux offers a profound commentary on the soaking and transformation in God:

To love in this way is to become like God. As a drop of water seems to disappear completely in a quantity of wine, taking the wine's flavour and colour; as red hot iron becomes indistinguishable from the glow of fire and its own original form disappears; as air suffused with the light of the sun seems transformed into the brightness of the light, as if it were itself light rather than merely lit up; so, in those who are holy, it is necessary for human affection to dissolve in some ineffable way, and be poured into the will of God. How will God be all in all (1 Cor 15:26) if anything of [the person] remain...? The substance remains, but in another form, with another glory, another power.<sup>372</sup>

Bernard, writing in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, also speaks of the qualities of monastic (wisdom) theology in contrast to the change in theological method towards a more analytical (scholastic) approach that was emerging in his time:

There we hear Wisdom teaching, here we welcome it within us. There we are instructed, here touched: instruction makes learned men [sic], contact makes wise men [sic]....many of those who are taught what they must do by Wisdom are not equally inspired to do it. It is one thing to know many enriching truths, another to possess them. Likewise, knowledge of God is

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<sup>369</sup> Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 200.

<sup>370</sup> Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 207-208.

<sup>371</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 28.

<sup>372</sup> Bernard, *On Loving God*, trans. G.R. Evans, in *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. John Farina (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), X.28, 196.

one thing and fear of God, another; what confers wisdom is not knowledge but fear that touches the heart.<sup>373</sup>

Bernard is making clear the significance of two different ways of knowing – objective knowing founded on ‘instruction and knowledge’ and a deeper participatory knowing which is ‘within us’ through *touch, contact, possession, and fear* and which leads to a deeper wisdom. For Bernard, this is the foundation of the theological process:

It is not disputation, it is sanctity, which comprehends if the incomprehensible can, after a certain fashion, be understood at all. And what is this fashion? If you are a Saint, you have already understood, you know; if you are not, become one and you will learn through your own experience.<sup>374</sup>

In using the word ‘experience’ Bernard identifies the fundamental emphasis of wisdom theology facilitated through the literary style that was prevalent until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. As intimated by Bernard, this theological approach was also in the process of significant change.

#### **d) Integration of theology and spirituality**

Scholars of Christian spirituality also show how there was an integration of theology with spirituality maintained until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Walter Principe traces the word ‘*spiritual*’ and shows how from its very beginning it referred to the engagement of the whole person. It first appeared in the Pauline letters where “the ‘spirit’ within the human person is all that is ordered, led or influenced” by the Holy Spirit of God.<sup>375</sup> Paul contrasted this ‘spiritual’ life (under the influence of the Spirit), with life under

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<sup>373</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sup. Cant.*, 23.14, cited in: Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 214.

<sup>374</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration* 5.30, cited in Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 269.

<sup>375</sup> Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," 44.

the influence of the 'flesh' (*sarx*) understood as everything in a person that is opposed to the Spirit's influence. The 'flesh' did not equate to the physical body (*soma*) and "could be the person's mind or will or heart as much as or even more than the physical flesh or the body if the mind, will or heart resist the influence of the Spirit."<sup>376</sup>

This is an essential point as it establishes the centrality of the whole person as intrinsic to the meaning and living of Christian life: "The opposition, for Paul, is not between the incorporeal and the corporeal or between the immaterial and the material, but between two ways of life."<sup>377</sup> To live the Christian life was to live the Christian *spiritual* life. As Downey suggests, "absolutely every dimension of life is to be integrated and transformed by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit" and therefore there can be no authentic separation between one's spiritual life and one's life in the world.<sup>378</sup>

Schneiders confirms how theological discourse flowed from this integrated approach. It was characterised by "exegetically based interpretation of scripture for the purpose of understanding the faith and living the Christian life."<sup>379</sup> Its experiential connection to living life was intrinsic so there could be no separation between biblical study, theology and spirituality. Philip Sheldrake's work on the history of theology and spirituality provides a fine summary of this period of Christian history:

From the patristic period until the development of the 'new theology' of scholasticism around the twelfth century theology was a single

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<sup>376</sup> Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," 45.

<sup>377</sup> Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 931.

<sup>378</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 45.

<sup>379</sup> Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 260.

enterprise...the unity of theology implied that intellectual reflection, prayer and living were, ideally speaking, a seamless whole. Patristic theology involved the constant reading of Scripture which was then shaped in the liturgy and in critical dialogue with Greek philosophical culture....to be a theologian meant that a person has contemplated the mystery of the incarnation and possessed an experience of faith on which to reflect... Patristic theology is not an abstract discipline separated from pastoral theory and practice....thus, theology was a process, on different levels, of interpreting Scripture with the aim of deepening Christian life in all its aspects. This approach encompassed a synthesis of exegesis, speculative reasoning and mystical contemplation...the very heart of patristic theology was mystical...‘mysticism’ was fundamentally the life of every baptized Christian who came to know God revealed in Jesus Christ through belonging to the ‘fellowship of the mystery,’ that is, the Church.<sup>380</sup>

Sheldrake confirms the centrality of wisdom theology for the first twelve centuries in accord with Barnhart’s perspective. It had its source in an experiential engagement with the ‘mystery of the incarnation’ through contemplation and prayer and engaged the whole person, including love and desire. It also expressed itself in unified language, formed in a scriptural and liturgical context with the intention of deepening Christian life and faith experience.

## **2.2 The second period of wisdom: 12<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> century**

### **a) Eclipse of wisdom knowing**

Barnhart identifies the eclipse of wisdom knowing as emerging in the 12<sup>th</sup> century amidst significant historical changes and their resounding impact on the Western church. The growth of cities in Europe gave rise to a shift in orientation in Christian life. Alongside the monastic communities, new mendicant religious orders arose to serve the needs of people in the changing context of city life.<sup>381</sup> Universities also

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<sup>380</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 36-37.

<sup>381</sup> Notably the Franciscans and Dominicans.

developed and a new “more purely rational theology” of scholasticism emerged and “displaced sapiential theology as the dominant mode of Christian thought.”<sup>382</sup>

Scholasticism represented a new form of thought and method with significant differences to earlier theological approaches. Rather than being centred in scriptural and symbolic language, it tended towards clarity of language using “abstract, conceptual thought, proceeding through analysis and definition, following the methodology of the *quaestio*.”<sup>383</sup> This involved posing theological questions before engaging in a process of arguing through opposing positions to develop the most cogent response and gave “birth to the great *summas*, rational constructions which rose to stand alongside the Scriptures.”<sup>384</sup> The most significant impact was from a participatory to an objective language. The process of dividing concepts into parts to distinguish one thing from another encouraged the non-participation between the knower and that which was known.

The method can be identified in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, in which a theological position was arrived at through argument of opposing positions to arrive at a point of greater clarity and resolution. For example Part I, Question 2 Article 2 asks: “Whether it can be demonstrated that God exists?”<sup>385</sup> It then engages in a number of objections and concludes with the statement: “Therefore, since a cause cannot be demonstrated by an effect not proportionate to it, it seems that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated.”<sup>386</sup> At this point it provides the contrary argument in affirmation of the question: “On the contrary, The Apostle says: ‘The

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<sup>382</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 13.

<sup>383</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 107-108.

<sup>384</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 107-108.

<sup>385</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae," *New Advent*, accessed January 13 2020, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1002.htm>.

<sup>386</sup> Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae."

invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rm. 1:20). But this would not be unless the existence of God could be demonstrated through the things that are made; for the first thing we must know of anything is whether it exists."<sup>387</sup> Finally it concludes with the final solution to the question:

I answer that: Demonstration can be made in two ways: One is through the cause, and is called "a priori," and this is to argue from what is prior absolutely. The other is through the effect, and is called a demonstration "a posteriori"; this is to argue from what is prior relatively only to us...hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us.<sup>388</sup>

In this one example the change in language from the patristic period becomes apparent. In the place of the free flowing and symbolic language, is an emphasis on clarity of argument. Barnhart identifies three key differences from the first period of wisdom. Firstly, a structural change from wholeness to fragmentation: "the organic integrity and vital power of the biblical word gave way to rational philosophical structures and rational methods." Secondly, a change from experience to objectivity: "the old wisdom yielded to an objectivity in which participation was nearly eliminated for the sake of clarity." Thirdly, a change from poetic to rational language: "the symbolic and metaphoric flow of the old theology was supplanted by the quasi-mechanical efficiency of rational abstraction and analysis."<sup>389</sup>

While there was resistance to these changes, the new approach "soon prevailed in the new social and cultural milieu of city and university,"<sup>390</sup> and as Principe suggests,

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<sup>387</sup> Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae."

<sup>388</sup> Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae."

<sup>389</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 108.

<sup>390</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 108.

“in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, academic theology triumphed over monastic theology.”<sup>391</sup> The essential change from Barnhart’s point of view is evident in the style of language, from participatory through immersion ‘inside’ the mystery, to analytical with the aim of providing objective truth outside personal experience. Identifying this change in literary style is the essential point to grasp from Barnhart’s perspective as it was this, and its increasing dominance in the following centuries, that compromised the centrality of wisdom knowing.

The eclipse of wisdom therefore was not in terms of the notion of ‘wisdom’ itself no longer being used or considered central to the theological endeavour. There were also examples of wisdom theology (as Barnhart understands it) still evident in the mystical writings of the time although they were increasingly marginalised.<sup>392</sup> The key change was to the style of language and the corresponding method that no longer held personal experience as central to the theological enterprise. As Alistair McGrath asserts: “Scholasticism thus does not refer to a specific system of beliefs, but to a particular way of organizing theology – a highly developed method of presenting material, making fine distinctions, and attempting to achieve a comprehensive view of theology.”<sup>393</sup>

The emphasis on organisation and analysis continued to grow over the proceeding centuries and according to Barnhart “sapiential theology was nearly forgotten in the increasingly rationalistic and scientific cultural climate of the modern West.”<sup>394</sup> Two further factors were particularly influential: the Reformation and the period of ‘the

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<sup>391</sup> Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 943.

<sup>392</sup> For example, *The Cloud of Unknowing, Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross.*

<sup>393</sup> Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 33-34.

<sup>394</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 13. A increasing formulaic Neo-Scholastic movement developed from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Enlightenment'. The Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century created an atmosphere of theological tension and ultimately division of Christian communities. In this context it became increasingly important to determine the difference between these communities requiring a further clarity of language to provide clear doctrinal statements. As "religious identity...[became] defined in external 'denominational' terms" the consequence was to lose "the simplicity and freedom, the openness and deep assurance of the original experience."<sup>395</sup> The division of the Christian community came at the expense of the earlier participatory approaches.<sup>396</sup>

In the period of 'the Enlightenment' from the 17<sup>th</sup> century scientific discourse began to predominate privileging the empirical method. With its emphasis on material reality, the assumed metaphysical (and participatory) basis of existence was severely questioned. In this highly objective atmosphere, knowing became focused on what the individual could observe, and therefore prove, and the strength of collective consciousness facilitated by religious affiliation was weakened. Ellen Charry writes how "theology came to be thought of as the intellectual justification of the faith...apart from the practice of the Christian life" and as a consequence "the wisdom of God...ceased to function in the church as the foundation of the good life."<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 276.

<sup>396</sup> As Gabriel Flynn writes: "Following the Council of Trent (1545-63), a juridical model of faith with a strong emphasis on orthodoxy and certitude was imposed universally throughout the Catholic Church. In most seminaries and universities, theology and philosophy were taught without reference to the primary sources and gave an impression of rigidity and narrowness through excessive dependence on scholastic philosophy." Gabriel Flynn, "Introduction: The Twentieth-Century Renaissance in Catholic Theology," in *Ressourcement: A movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn & Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

<sup>397</sup> Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 5. She adds: "the secularizations, elevation, and constriction of reason in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries undercut the sapiential, aretegenic, and participatory dimensions of doctrinal interpretation." As a result, "sapiential truth is unintelligible to the modern secularized construal of truth. Modern epistemology not only fragmented truth itself, privileging correct information over beauty and goodness, it relocated truth in facts and ideas. The

In the context of “cultural and social fragmentation” there was a strong tendency to present the Christian faith as “an array of separate, obligatory articles of belief”<sup>398</sup> and “the sense of participation diminished to unprecedented levels in the theology of both the Catholic and the Protestant communities.”<sup>399</sup> The judicial style of language is evident in the First Vatican Council, 1869 – 1870. The first canon, *On God the Creator of all Things* states:

1. If any one shall deny One true God, Creator and Lord of things visible and invisible; let him [sic] be anathema.
2. If any one not be ashamed to affirm that, except matter, nothing exists; let him [sic] be anathema.
3. If any one shall say that the substance and essence of God and that of all things are one and the same; let him [sic] be anathema.<sup>400</sup>

At the same time, the scholastic method of theology as represented by Thomas Aquinas was given Papal approval as the preeminent method of Catholic theology in the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in 1879, *Aeterni Patris: On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy*.<sup>401</sup> This further solidified the emphasis on an overly rational approach to theology. According to Barnhart, under the weight of these historical developments the social and religious fragmentation seemed unstoppable and by the

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search for truth in the modern scientific sense is a cognitive enterprise that seeks correct information useful to the improvement of human comfort and efficiency rather than an intellectual activity employed for spiritual growth. Knowing the truth no longer brings the knower to God but to use information to subdue nature. Knowing became limited to being informed about things, not as these are things of God but as they stand (or totter) on their own feet. The classical notion that truth leads us to God simply ceased to be intelligible and came to be viewed with suspicion.” Charr, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 236-237.

<sup>398</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 278.

<sup>399</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 277.

<sup>400</sup> Vatican Council I, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*. (24 April 1870), Canon 1, in *The Vatican Council Vol. II*, ed. Cuthbert Butler (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1930).

<sup>401</sup> He wrote in paragraph 22: “The ecumenical councils, also, where blossoms the flower of all earthly wisdom, have always been careful to hold Thomas Aquinas in singular honor.”; and in paragraph 31: “We exhort you, venerable brethren, in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences....Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others.” Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, Encyclical. (1879), n. 22.

20<sup>th</sup> century Christianity had journeyed far from “the original event” and it was very difficult to “discern the unity and the fullness of the mystery.”<sup>402</sup> In summary, it was not rationality per se, it was the dominance of the movement towards objectification that “had carried theology very far from the sapiential perspective.”<sup>403</sup> The consequence was the tendency to once again erect the two barriers to participation that were discussed earlier. Firstly, God’s life seemed far above ordinary human life, and secondly, there was a strong sense of those considered ‘insiders’ as defined by their assent to particular doctrines and those considered ‘outsiders.’ This situation led Barnhart to conceive of a ‘new’ wisdom approach that aimed to integrate these changes without losing the participatory revolution that he believed was the heart of the Christian mystery (the subject of chapter 3).

## **b) Fragmentation of theology and spirituality**

The relationship between theology and spirituality exhibits a similar trajectory from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Schneiders argues that as “philosophy began to rival Scripture in supplying the categories for systematic theology” spirituality became fragmented in

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<sup>402</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 22.

<sup>403</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 22. Brian E. Daley concurs with this analysis of the three great impacts on theological discourse during this historical period - *scholasticism, the reformation and the European Enlightenment*. He writes, “in the late twelfth century...[theology developed] as a science capable of comprehensive study [and] became known as ‘scholasticism’...in the controversies that followed the Reformation, Catholic and Protestant scholasticism took on a more polemical edge, coloring their development of theology’s rational conclusions by their needs to defend respective ecclesial positions...by the nineteenth century, the European Enlightenments had largely displaced Protestant scholasticism with more subjective, historically contextualized modes of theological reasoning...the principal Catholic response...was the revival of scholasticism, bringing a new stress on the rational plausibility of Catholic teaching as a deductive system, and on the necessity of the Catholic Church as the guardian and herald of truth. For many neo-scholastic theologians, the deductive process led, like a science, from the principles revealed in scripture and in the cherished unwritten traditions to the dogmas which the church eventually proclaimed with certainty to the faithful. To do theology was to participate in the church’s officially sanctioned system of reasoned discourse about God.” See Brian E. Daley, “Knowing God in History and in the Church: *Dei Verbum* and ‘Nouvelle Theologie’,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 334-335.

two significant ways.<sup>404</sup> Firstly, its meaning changed from the wholistic understanding of the previous centuries to “designate the intellectual creature in contrast to non-rational creation...spiritual is here contrasted to material.”<sup>405</sup> This was further reinforced by associating spirituality with ecclesiastical as opposed to civil jurisdiction separating it from “temporality... secular property or power.”<sup>406</sup> These changes initiated a process of moving spirituality towards the margins, understood more as a particular sphere of life and not inclusive of all areas of daily life, an understanding as Principe suggests “rather far from the original [and wholistic] Pauline background!”<sup>407</sup>

Secondly, spirituality was no longer intrinsic to the practice of theology. This was demonstrated, according to Schneiders, by placing “Christian experience in Part 2 of the *Summa Theologica*” and therefore changing spirituality from “being a dimension of all theology...to appear as a subordinate branch of theology.”<sup>408</sup> Principe concurs: “the later demarcation of moral theology from dogmatic theology, the excessive multiplication of subtle questions, and the emphasis on a morals of obligation and casuistry robbed theology of its spiritual dynamism.”<sup>409</sup> The belief developed, according to Sheldrake, that “the discipline of the mind could be separated from the discipline of an ordered lifestyle, asceticism, or what we call ‘spirituality.’”<sup>410</sup> The

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<sup>404</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 685-686.

<sup>405</sup> Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 258.

<sup>406</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 681.

<sup>407</sup> Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," 46. Downey concurs: "While the view of Christian life in the Spirit in early Christian centuries was inclusive of all dimensions of life, and the integration of each and every dimension of life through the presence and power of the Spirit was part and parcel of the Christian way of life, such an integrated and integrating view did not last. Spiritual concerns became more and more narrow over the course of Christian centuries." See: Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 41.

<sup>408</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 685-686.

<sup>409</sup> Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 934.

<sup>410</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 87.

fragmentation therefore went “deeper than method or content” but “between the affective side of faith (or participation) and conceptual knowledge.”<sup>411</sup>

The separation continued in the proceeding centuries as theology became orientated towards doctrinal clarity and “spirituality became an object of suspicion...to be questioned continuously throughout an analytical journey towards what could be proved.”<sup>412</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century spirituality was used to designate the interior life (or the ‘life of perfection’), and ‘spiritual theology’ was the systemisation of this. Spiritual theology, *the study of the interior life*, was separate from systematic theology, *the orderly and coherent development of the doctrines of the Christian faith*, and those that wrote on the spiritual life were “not part of what was taught in the schools under the heading of ‘theology’.”<sup>413</sup> Therefore, in this period the growing emphasis on critical rationality led to the separation of experience from the theological process.

The focus on the interior life also led to a further distinction, between the life of the ordinary Christian practicing the virtues and the deeper spiritual life only available to

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<sup>411</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 43.

<sup>412</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 45.

<sup>413</sup> Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 261. At the same time according to Thomas Keating the legitimacy of the contemplative dimension of Christian life was under serious threat from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Central to this was the way the *Spiritual Exercise of Saint Ignatius* were applied from the late 16<sup>th</sup> until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century – they became limited to “discursive meditation” to the neglect of its intrinsic contemplative dimension. Keating writes: “To comprehend the impact of this development on the recent history of Roman Catholic spirituality, we should keep in mind the pervasive influence that the Jesuits exercised as the outstanding representatives of Counter-Reformation. Many religious congregations founded in the centuries following this period adopted the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. They received at the same time the spirituality taught and practiced by the Society.” That is, a predominantly discursive approach to prayer. Another contributing factor was the controversy regarding ‘Quietism’ which led to further suspicion towards contemplation. “Contemplation” became “identified with extraordinary phenomena, and was regarded as both miraculous and dangerous, to be admired at a safe distance by the average lay person, priest or religious.” See: Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: the Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 21-26.

the few 'specially graced' Christians.<sup>414</sup> Perrin writes how the great loss through these developments was "its holistic reference to living one's entire life under the influence of God's Spirit, as Paul had taught in the New Testament."<sup>415</sup> This understanding extended into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so that by the time of the Second Vatican Council the meaning of spirituality "as the practice of the interior life by those orientated to the life of perfection, was firmly established."<sup>416</sup> In summary, the period from 12<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a series of fragmentations between the articulation of the Christian life and the living of it.

From Barnhart's perspective a core dimension of Christian life had been profoundly compromised. By stepping 'outside' the mystery to clarify and defend it, its incarnation immediacy with its intrinsic wholeness and synthetic trajectory had been put at risk. "What had been lost in the process? The words that come to mind are diverse: mystery, participation, unity, actuality, freedom, variety, dynamism, development, openness, universality – and bodiliness, sacramentality, incarnation."<sup>417</sup> In attempting to compartmentalise and make it intelligible, we almost without realising, operate as if reality is static, and thereby reduce the mystery and its fundamentally participatory and dynamic nature. Here, Barnhart is at his most critical of the dangers of the analytical method:

Our inveterate tendency is to grasp the experience, the mystery, in such a way as to reduce and denature it. The event of Christ begins very soon to become objectified in conceptual and institutional structures which then

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<sup>414</sup> This was reflected in the division between "'ascetical theology' which studied the life of perfection up to the beginning of passive mystical experience; and 'mystical theology' which studied that life from the beginning of passive mystical experience to its culmination in the most perfect union possible this side of the Beatific Vision." See: Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality," 261-262.

<sup>415</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 28.

<sup>416</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 681.

<sup>417</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 33-34.

take the place of the uncontainable mystery itself...within Christianity lurks a perennial temptation to reject the stone which is the mystery and event of God incarnate (Luke 20:17).<sup>418</sup>

## Conclusion

Barnhart's passion is maintaining contact with this event of incarnation and the revolutionary new life it releases. He shows how from the birth of the church, wisdom provided a notion of such depth of meaning as to illuminate the profundity of the new divine-human intimacy that had been experienced. A wisdom theology arose centred on the cross as catalyst for a new life of radical participation, with the tension of the two axes representing the inauguration of new unity in two directions: inwardly, as new unitive participation in God; and outwardly as new participation expanding to encompass all humanity. The shape of the cross and these two 'participations' provide the structure for Barnhart's Christian wisdom knowing in movement from an interior and divine baptismal identity, to an outward and ongoing Eucharistic life in the world towards communion.

The persuasiveness of Barnhart's argument is made manifest in identifying the passionate literature that flowed from it. Its poetic sensibility is the inevitable response to the magnitude and personal impact of the event as the key to the creation and redemption of the universe as exemplified in scripture and the early church. For Barnhart, Christianity is "originally - and essentially - a mystery of participation" and it is the literature that carries its wholeness and provides the nutritive grounds for the church to flourish.<sup>419</sup> He concludes therefore that the

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<sup>418</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 33-34.

<sup>419</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 265.

language is not optional, confined to a particular historical period, but intrinsic to the identity of church.

Barnhart then shows that from the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a marked movement in another direction. A new focus on clarity and objectivity led to the marginalisation of wisdom knowing as it became increasingly separated from theological method and daily Christian life. This had come to a head by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with all the pressures of changing historical circumstances. However, despite these developments, Barnhart is also adamant that the answer is not in simply returning to a simpler and more holistic time. Something else was going on during this time of the eclipse of wisdom, and this 'something' is the key to the renewal of wisdom in our time.

Therefore, Barnhart holds a somewhat ambiguous position of criticizing some of the consequences of the change to theological style from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while also maintaining its necessity and intrinsic incarnational growth. Resolving the conundrum, grappling with this history, and attempting to move toward wholeness is the task Barnhart assumes in working towards the renewal of Christian wisdom in our time. The challenge is being able to read this history and not simply return to the past, on the one hand, or, on the other, be overwhelmed by the clarity of critical rationality as an end in itself. There was another way that lay ahead in bringing together these two periods of history to reach towards a more wholistic approach.

It was in the context of the immense changes and tumult of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that new theological perspectives emerged including the space for the renewal of wisdom

theology. The task before Barnhart was firmly set. He must bring together the wisdom knowing that was prevalent in the first millennium and integrate the insights of the critical approaches that had emerged in the course of history. It was Barnhart's conviction that a renewed wisdom approach could provide the resources with which to engage in this process and to envision a hopeful future in the diversity and complexity of our time. It was also his conviction that the approach could be centred in experience, and therefore held promise to enrich wisdom knowing and be a guide towards wholeness today.

## Chapter 3: Barnhart's vision for Christian wisdom

### Introduction

This chapter will consider Barnhart's vision for the 'rebirth' of Christian wisdom in our time. Part one will show how the tumult of the 20<sup>th</sup> century opened a space for new theological approaches including wisdom perspectives. This included returning to the wisdom sources and also engaging with historical developments since that time. The keen engagement with history will be considered the distinguishing feature of a renewed approach in comparison to the first period of wisdom. Barnhart's framework of four movements will then be introduced as a response to the new context.

Part two will demonstrate how Barnhart's approach is inspired by the content, literary form and theological dynamics of the Second Vatican Council. The Council's focus on the mystery of Christ, return to the biblical and patristic sources, and unprecedented engagement with history provide the resources to conceive of the rebirth of Christian wisdom reflected in Barnhart's four turns. The four turns will then be interpreted as four principles of wisdom knowing reconceived today: the core principle of *radical participation*; and three dynamic principles of *nonduality*, *creative freedom* and *communion*.

Part three will show how the discipline of Christian Spirituality provides the means with which to critically engage with these four principles to evaluate their contribution as points of orientation for an experiential and wholistic engagement in Christian life.

## Part 1: The renewal of Christian wisdom in our time

Barnhart's proposal for the renewal of Christian wisdom represents the third and integrating period of Barnhart's historical framework, the first two of which were developed in chapter 2.<sup>420</sup> He uses various terms for this renewal: "a new sapiential theology,"<sup>421</sup> "a rebirth of sapiential Christianity"<sup>422</sup> and "a new Christian wisdom."<sup>423</sup> Central to it will be an engagement with the span of Christian history. It aims to incorporate the core of the first period of wisdom, its continued growth in light of the Incarnation (including the period of 'eclipse'), and also respond to the issues of our time. Therefore, Barnhart's approach will be both 'old and new.'

### 1.1. The 20<sup>th</sup> century as catalyst

In the midst of the catastrophic events of twentieth-century Europe, a major theological revolution was coming to birth...as two world wars and revolutionary cultural changes exposed to radical questioning the foundations of Western civilization, the conventions of Western theology were also challenged and the sources of Christian tradition began to reappear in their luminous unity. A space was opening in which the mystery of Christ could be encountered once again and the essential unity of humanity could be freshly conceived.<sup>424</sup>

Barnhart interprets the turmoil of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as breaching Western domination - "the *breaking of the European container*."<sup>425</sup> He identifies both the "violent convulsions" of the world wars "that shattered" the previous confidence; and also the emerging ferment and possibility: "the decades before and after...the First World War were marked by the startling breakthroughs that we know as the new art and

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<sup>420</sup> See chapter 2, part 2.

<sup>421</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom and the World of Today," 129.

<sup>422</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>423</sup> Barnhart, "Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition," 72.

<sup>424</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 280.

<sup>425</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 152.

poetry of modernism and the new science of relativity and quantum physics” and these movements held the promise of constructive change.<sup>426</sup> In theology “Christian thinkers found themselves faced with what seemed like a new world, requiring fresh perspectives and new methodologies.”<sup>427</sup>

He argues that “in these fresh stirrings, the human spirit [was] breaking out of some invisible mental container into an unbounded field of possibility that [was], once again, hospitable to sapiential consciousness.”<sup>428</sup> This ‘mental container’ had been formed by the overly rationalized approach that had marked the previous few centuries.<sup>429</sup> In the new context, a wisdom sensibility once again became possible as “the unity and fullness of the mystery of Christ began to come once again to the surface of theological consciousness.”<sup>430</sup> A space opened up in which “the ancient depths once again become accessible” and at the same time there was “the expansive freedom of new perspectives.”<sup>431</sup>

Barnhart refers to many of the contributing factors to this new movement, including those before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as romanticism and idealist philosophy.<sup>432</sup> He also notes philosophers Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida who attempted “to

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<sup>426</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 152, 146. In chapter 1 part 3, the significance of poetry as expressing the way of wisdom was considered. Barnhart understands a new breaking through of wisdom language in modernist poetry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He especially notes the poets Wallace Stevens and Dylan Thomas.

<sup>427</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

<sup>428</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 146.

<sup>429</sup> As outlined in chapter 2, part 2.2.

<sup>430</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 23.

<sup>431</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 17.

<sup>432</sup> He writes: “We do, in fact, find a re-emerging sapiential consciousness expressed in the writings of the Romantic poets and philosophers who shared their inclinations.” (He names the German Idealist philosophers Johann Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, and Georg Hegel, and the English Romantic poets William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Percy Shelley, and John Keats). See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 133. He writes further: “the romantic poets and philosophers sometimes catalyzed a sapiential awakening which only later would find its theological home.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 23.

dig beneath and get beyond the whole Western philosophical perspective” towards a fuller account of human knowing.<sup>433</sup> Movements of renewal in “the fields of patristic and liturgical studies converged upon the re-emerging mystery.”<sup>434</sup> The influence of three figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Henri de Lubac,<sup>435</sup> Jean LeClerq<sup>436</sup> and Cypriano Vagaggini,<sup>437</sup> have already been noted for their recovery of wisdom theology and Barnhart also explores their work towards its renewal.<sup>438</sup> He refers to the Russian “Sophiologists” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who “envisioned Sophia as introducing a new age in human history.”<sup>439</sup> He treats the work of Thomas Merton<sup>440</sup> and Karl Rahner<sup>441</sup> in

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<sup>433</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149. Ellen Charry also comments on the great significance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer: “By admitting the subjectivity of the interpreter into the interpretive process, Gadamer opened a space for the reclamation of sapiential knowledge, as theology understood itself in the pre-modern period...the modern notion of truth and knowledge, which excludes the knower from the knowledge is unrealistic and too narrow to be genuinely useful.” Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 17.

<sup>434</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 23.

<sup>435</sup> Barnhart writes of de Lubac: He “made the most extensive study of the Christian sapiential tradition, from its roots in Origen and the Greek fathers through the Middle Ages to the dawn of scholasticism... [and also] considered the possibility of a *new* spiritual exegesis and the essential elements that it must embody.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 24, 27.

<sup>436</sup> He writes of Jean Leclercq: “In addition to his extensive work in making the medieval sapiential writers accessible through editing, translation, and interpretation, focused explicitly on this wisdom tradition and brought it into clear visibility in contrast to other and later way of theology [i.e. scholasticism]. Leclercq succeeded in making the fragrance and flavour of monastic wisdom present for people of today.” See: Barnhart, “Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition,” 72.

<sup>437</sup> Barnhart writes of Cypriano Vagaggini: He “brought into relief the sapiential tradition of patristic and medieval times in contrast to the later theologies, characterizing it in his monumental work on the liturgy. Later, he would see a broad return to the sapiential way emerging in the work of a number of twentieth-century Christian theologians.” See: Barnhart, “Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition,” 72.

<sup>438</sup> See chapter 2, part 2.1.

<sup>439</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 106.

<sup>440</sup> Barnhart suggests Merton represents this new sapiential approach especially in his later years. He firstly spoke in the language of the first wisdom drawing on Scripture and Tradition in the classical sapiential style. He also spoke out of the ‘highly developed individuality of a modern Western person’ and therefore to the issues of the day: “In his development we can feel the liberating expansive energy of the epochal event of Vatican II...as in few other figures, we can observe in Merton both directions of this expansive movement: inward, Eastward to the absolute pole of nondual experience, and outward, Westward to the unconfined dynamism of the modern and postmodern person and world - from the light of the ancient East to the fire of the modern West...Merton opens to us a sapiential space beyond the apparent boundaries of Christian faith in both these directions.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 41.

<sup>441</sup> Barnhart speaks of Rahner as quintessentially a ‘sapiential theologian’ by doing three essential things. Firstly, he recovers the centrality of ‘participation’ by using the vocabulary of ‘God as holy mystery’ and asserting humanities sharing in this through the infinite transcendence of the human spirit. He therefore asserts the essential unity of the human person and of reality. To this Rahner offers a second principle – historicity which embraces the person’s place in the world: “Rahner’s transcendence and historicity correspond to the two great dimensions – vertical and horizontal...and Rahner has opened a new way of theological reflection in these terms – embracing...the whole of the

greater detail and argues that they were both pivotal in “opening Christian wisdom” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>442</sup> He notes how those who were engaging in dialogue with the Asian traditions also “worked specifically at the recovery of a Christian *contemplative* wisdom.”<sup>443</sup> Finally, as noted in chapter 1, Barnhart was also in touch with the vast array of perspectives exploring wisdom themes that were present especially in the Californian context in which he lived.<sup>444</sup> It was in this space of interaction with diverse perspectives that Barnhart formulated his approach.

## 1.2. Wisdom and history

To propose a study of Christian wisdom may sound like the announcement of an archaeological expedition to the ruins of a long-abandoned city. The challenge that faces us is that of demonstrating that our quest opens a way into the future. I will propose that the sapiential approach comes to life today as a historical wisdom, and as such offers a privileged way of understanding the theological continuity of Christianity through its historical journey of twenty centuries and of orienting us toward its further unfolding. Hidden within this legacy of theological wisdom are secrets of the world's future.<sup>445</sup>

The central feature of Barnhart’s approach is its keen engagement with history and this distinguishes it most strongly from the first period of wisdom: “Christian sapiential understanding is able to be reborn again and again, and in our time it comes forth into the new scope and freedom with which history has favoured us.”<sup>446</sup> He is definitive therefore in *not* “projecting a new golden age of Christian wisdom, a

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reality that we know.” See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 47. Thirdly he extends this historical sense to an understanding of the global era by interpreting the Second Vatican Council as the epoch of ‘the world church’ – the deepening and manifestation of communion. This is the movement towards communion which will be expanded on later in the thesis.

<sup>442</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 34.

<sup>443</sup> Barnhart, “Monastic Wisdom: The Western Tradition,” 72. He names Thomas Merton, Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux), John Main, Bede Griffiths, Thomas Keating and Sara Grant.

<sup>444</sup> See chapter 1, part1.1.

<sup>445</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 7.

<sup>446</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 186.

contemplative return to Paradise,” a tendency today.<sup>447</sup> The “gift” of our time is the “opportunity to see the whole living picture and to orient ourselves consciously within it.”<sup>448</sup> His project therefore attempts “to trace the inner structure of the Christ-mystery’s historical unfolding.”<sup>449</sup> Therefore, in the event of Christ we are:

Endowed...with a unitive divine light in which everything - the world, history, and our own being can become newly transparent, that is, intelligible. The apparent eclipse of Christian wisdom by history is an optical illusion, since history itself is an unfolding of the event of Christ and eventually opens itself to sapiential understanding.<sup>450</sup>

This ‘historical wisdom’ requires two phases: firstly, the incorporation of the theological approach of the first period in “which a sapiential tradition came to birth, flourished” and was central until the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>451</sup> Secondly, an engagement with the historical movements since that time (particularly evident in Western Christianity), with the aim of penetrating “through the visible surface of culture and thought to the basic theological process at the core of this history.”<sup>452</sup> While the second phase is a far more complex process, in the work of discerning “the relationship between the mystery of Christ and our human history, we are already attempting a new sapiential theology.”<sup>453</sup>

This dynamic of return and re-contextualisation represents the *method* for the renewal of Christian wisdom. It requires critical engagement with the first period of wisdom, articulating both its strengths and also its limitations, particularly its

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<sup>447</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 188. This tendency will be developed further in chapter 4.

<sup>448</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 185.

<sup>449</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 188.

<sup>450</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 186.

<sup>451</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 134.

<sup>452</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 134.

<sup>453</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 134.

underdeveloped sense of history and the capacity of the human person, and its ongoing growth.<sup>454</sup> As Ramsey writes, the patristic period showed “intolerance to opposing points of view...a reverence for antiquity, tradition and the established order...and a corresponding suspicion of novelty.”<sup>455</sup> Similarly, it requires identifying both the detrimental impact of the period of eclipse on the wisdom approach, while also discerning an essential growth occurring during this time. To understand that, while the changes from the 12<sup>th</sup> century appear to be a “nearly unmitigated disaster” for the wisdom tradition, there was also an “inevitability and...positive side of this historical change.”<sup>456</sup>

According to Barnhart, amidst the tumult of Western history there was, at a deeper level, one far-reaching movement, the “comprehensive awakening of the human person.”<sup>457</sup> In this awakening “‘wisdom’ enters a new phase of life in this world: a phase shaped by the gospel impulse of incarnation...in which the potentialities of the

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<sup>454</sup> Its strengths were outlined in the chapter 2. Barnhart suggests some of its main limitations as follows: Naïve and uncritical Biblical commentary; a tendency towards spiritualizing and lack of respect for the realities of human earthly existence or the freedom of the human person (and a pessimism with regard to humanity); social structures and hierarchies of class and gender were taken for granted; a sense of contemporary history was often lacking; and a lack of compassion for others especially unbelievers. See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 9-13. He writes that while there was a great sense of unity in the earlier period “patristic theology did not give sufficient value or freedom to the individual human person, often considering the individual as object among other objects in the world rather than as transcendent subject.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 9. Further, in the monastic context “personal freedom was totally renounced in view of spiritual transformation. Implicit here is a negative vision of the world and the person. This juridical containment of monastic life becomes a microcosm of the same dominant monachal, authoritarian, and institutional structure in the Roman Catholic Church.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 12. Also, “alien philosophical structures that seemed to make the mystery more understandable to the people of that time and culture inevitably obscured the simplicity and unity of the mystery, its essentially participatory character. During the patristic centuries (first through sixth centuries, approximately) and the through the early Middle Ages to the twelfth century, these were primarily the structure of Platonism and Neoplatonism.” Barnhart, “One Spirit, One Body,” 276. This led to the spiritual life becoming “conceived as an ascent away from the body and the ordinary things of human existence. Spiritual theology became an architecture of ladders and of ascending gradations of virtues and spiritual states. Monastic interpretations of the series of ‘senses of Scripture’ and Guigo II’s ‘ladder of contemplatives’ exemplify this consistent tendency in the medieval West. This mental context corresponded to the cosmological paradigm of the ancient world, with its great chain of being.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 167.

<sup>455</sup> Ramsey, “Fathers of the Church,” 390.

<sup>456</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 108.

<sup>457</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 103.

human person will unfold with a new fullness.”<sup>458</sup> This is of profound significance, it represents the realisation of a freer and more creative participation in God, a deeper sharing in the incarnational process with the ultimate vocation of the uniting of humanity. Western history therefore “represents the invitation - indeed the imperative - to Christian wisdom to awaken and expand into the larger dimensions - and personal vitality - of this new world.”<sup>459</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> century “provides a tentative punctuation: we can try to read the history of the West backward from this terminus” and perceive these historical changes “as a necessary phase of evolution – a transformation of consciousness in the direction of personal autonomy” and from there to conceive of a renewed wisdom approach to reflect this incarnational path.<sup>460</sup> This period of Western history therefore holds an essential intermediate place between the first wisdom and a more comprehensive and (new) wisdom in our time. The journey of Christian wisdom from the first through to the third period “can be seen - ideally at least - as reflecting a progressive embodiment of the divine Word in the human person and in humanity more generally, which reflects the incarnational Christ-event.”<sup>461</sup> This ‘new wisdom’ while in continuity with the first wisdom will also draw on new resources in light of these historical developments.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 108.

<sup>459</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 96.

<sup>460</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 97, 14.

<sup>461</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 50.

<sup>462</sup> Barnhart suggests: “The new sapiential theology, then, will differ from the patristic and medieval wisdom theology in three principal ways: first, by its anthropocentric, subjective approach; second, by its historical-critical sense, and, third, by the philosophical resources that it utilizes. These resources will have an ‘eclectic anthropocentric’ character, in contrast the Platonic-Neoplatonic philosophy that had informed the old Christian Wisdom.” See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 29.

### 1.3. Barnhart's four turns

Barnhart proposes four turns as “the structure” for this “theological journey” tracing the ‘process of incarnation’ in history.<sup>463</sup> The first turn, ‘the sapiential awakening’ is the umbrella movement and represents the “recovery of the basic perspective of Christian wisdom, centered in the mystery of Christ.”<sup>464</sup> The three further ‘turns’ represent “three major developments in the sapiential tradition that are called for today.”<sup>465</sup>

An Eastern turn: a recentering of spirituality and theology in baptismal identity, conceived in terms of nonduality; A Western turn: an integration of the dynamic and creative element of Christianity, which is expressed in the liberation and realization of the human person in Western history; and finally A Global turn: active participation in the movement toward one world: a united humanity aware of its communion with earth and cosmos.<sup>466</sup>

The four turns represent an enormous undertaking, aiming to engage with the sweep of Christian history, and amplify the one unifying thread – the incarnational trajectory in light of the event of Christ and “its intrinsic fullness.”<sup>467</sup> Barnhart aims to draw together the Christian wisdom tradition from its origins, with its development throughout history, and also proposes new perspectives through dialogue with the interrelated world of today, including “a profound interaction with the Asian traditions, a continuing modern Western personalism, and the historical moment of post-modernity and globalisation.”<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 193.

<sup>464</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18.

<sup>465</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

<sup>466</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

<sup>467</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2-3.

<sup>468</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

He recognises the provisional nature of his proposal – its “ambitious claims” make “no claim to finality” but rather offers “an outline of one possible model.”<sup>469</sup> He is realistic that at this “level of generalization” and in attempting “to discern the inner shape and meaning of history, it is possible to make some impressive errors.”<sup>470</sup> He asserts however that this kind of bold vision is essential today. “Sapiential consciousness had been nearly forgotten” and a “‘strong’ Christian sapiential vision cannot realize itself...without breaking through thick, centuries-old walls. The force of a full swing, even if not aimed with exactness, is sometimes needed.”<sup>471</sup> This “freedom to hypothesize, and possibly to be wrong...to exercise boldly and even playfully the imagination of faith” is “our sapiential birthright,” inherent to the wisdom approach itself.<sup>472</sup> It is, for Barnhart, the only fitting response to “the bold act of divine self-communication which is unfolding in the history of the world since the coming of Christ.”<sup>473</sup>

These four turns provide the basis for the remainder of the thesis. They will be developed to represent the core and dynamic principles of wisdom knowing and investigated for their capacity to offer practical means for growth towards wholeness.

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<sup>469</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 20, 189.

<sup>470</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 188-189.

<sup>471</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 189. He writes further: “A contemporary physicist writes of the cosmological vision proposed by a fellow scientist, ‘Even if many of the details later turn out to be wrong, the picture is a big step toward understanding. Progress in science is often built on wrong theories that are later corrected. It is better to be wrong than to be vague.’ In our present situation, it is often better to be wrong than to be timid. We move forward by successive approximations. What is proposed here...is an invitation to resume the long interrupted game with a renewed keenness and on a larger field than before.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 189.

<sup>472</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 189, 151.

<sup>473</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 135.

## Part 2: Vatican II as foundation for Barnhart's approach

The “starting point and the basis” for Barnhart was the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 65) to which he gives enormous weight.<sup>474</sup> In this pivotal time the church found itself stretched “between the fullness of its primitive origins - seen with a new clarity - and a new and larger world requiring a new theological language, at once unitive and dynamic.”<sup>475</sup> In responding it provided the catalyst in which the “biblical, liturgical, and patristic scholarship” of the previous decades “converged to bear common fruit.”<sup>476</sup>

The Council represented much more than “adaptation” to the changing context, but an “epochal turning point...a new self-discovery, a rebirth,” where the church found itself “anew, more largely and deeply in that which [it] had rejected.”<sup>477</sup> With Karl Rahner, Barnhart interprets it as making the monumental shift from a fundamentally ‘European church’ to a ‘world church.’ To achieve this required opening itself in unprecedented ways to a “positive theological appreciation...toward person, world and history.”<sup>478</sup> Therefore, its expansive range of documents provided the basis for a renewed Christian vision, at once retrieving the wisdom sources, and at the same time, engaging with history in an unprecedented way to open up future orientated perspectives.

St. Pope John Paul II expressed a similar sentiment towards this “important and normative text of the Magisterium within the Church’s tradition” stating: “I feel more

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<sup>474</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 15.

<sup>475</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 2.

<sup>476</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 230.

<sup>477</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 16-18.

<sup>478</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 16.

than ever it duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning."<sup>479</sup> For Barnhart the Council provided the compass for "the recovery of the sapiential core of Christian faith," and paving the way for a "sapiential renaissance" in two important ways.<sup>480</sup> Firstly it recovered the wisdom theology and literary style of the early tradition; and secondly it was an icon of wisdom knowing now conceived in contemporary context, both of which provided the basis for Barnhart's four turns.

### 2.1. Recovery of wisdom theology

Barnhart's foundational turn, 'the sapiential Awakening,' is a return the wisdom theology characteristic of the early church. The Council followed a similar trajectory by returning to these sources and once again "confidently embracing the mystery of Christ."<sup>481</sup> As Gerard O'Collins notes: "The sixteen documents use 'mystery' in the singular 114 times and 'mysteries' in the plural only fourteen times...Vatican II preferred to retrieve the biblical language of the 'mystery' of the triune God, revealed in the history of salvation and inviting human beings into a new relationship of love."<sup>482</sup> For example *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* confirms the *one* central event through which *everything* is achieved: "human redemption" is

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<sup>479</sup> John Paul II, *Nove Millennio Ineunte*, Apostolic Letter. (2000), n. 57.

<sup>480</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 15,23.

<sup>481</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 23.

<sup>482</sup> Gerald O'Collins, "Ressourcement and Vatican II," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 283.

“completed principally in the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension.”<sup>483</sup>

This ‘event’ holds all meaning: “in the mystery of the Word made flesh...the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear.”<sup>484</sup> Its impact is radical reconciliation: “by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each individual...in him God reconciled us to himself [sic] and to one another.”<sup>485</sup> Its all-encompassing nature reaches “not only for Christians but also for all people of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly.”<sup>486</sup> All are called “since Christ dies for everyone, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny which is divine...the holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.”<sup>487</sup>

The language of the documents also moved from “the habitual defensive posture with its authoritarian, judicial style to allow the mystery to express itself in the language and imagery of the New Testament and the early church.”<sup>488</sup> A wisdom sensibility is evoked through the use of metaphor: “For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth ‘the wondrous

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<sup>483</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. (4 December 1963), n. 5, in *Vatican II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996).

<sup>484</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

<sup>485</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

<sup>486</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

<sup>487</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

<sup>488</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 23. O’Collins describes chapter 1 of *Lumen Gentium* as using “richly biblical and patristic language” and “emphasised the sacramental reality of the church, from which ‘shines’ the ‘light’ of Christ and which is ‘the sign and instrument of intimate communion with God and of unity among the whole human race.’” O’Collins, “Ressourcement and Vatican II,” 386. John O’Malley adds: the “adoption of a style of discourse more closely resembling...the Fathers” ranks very highly “maybe even first” of the “special characteristics of Vatican II” compared to previous Councils. See: John W. O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 43.

sacrament of the whole Church.”<sup>489</sup> In paragraph six of *Lumen Gentium* for example, a range of images are used to describe the church: “sheepfold, flock, farm and field [in which] the ancient olive tree grows whose holy root were the patriarchs and in which the reconciliation of Jesus and Gentiles has been achieved;” also “God’s *building*, the house of God, holy *temple* and holy city.”<sup>490</sup> This passage alone also contains 32 scripture references.

With these two significant changes one of “attitude” towards an all-embracing Christology and one of “style” towards a change in literary genre, Barnhart argues the church returned to “its native language...that of Christian wisdom.”<sup>491</sup> He highlights the significance of John O’Malley’s *What happened at Vatican II* as shaping his thinking in this regard.<sup>492</sup> O’Malley shows the change in language at the Council was to a new genre, from “canon” to “a more pastoral language” – a “panegyric” genre.<sup>493</sup> He compares its language of intimacy and unity to previous Councils which tended towards a judicial style “usually a relatively short, prescriptive ordinance that often carried with it punishment” for noncompliance.<sup>494</sup> These were words of a “superior speaking to an inferior...power-words” orientated towards exterior behaviour.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 5.

<sup>490</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 6.

<sup>491</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 23. Michael Downey concurs: the focus of the Council was on the “centrality of the Word [and]...the importance of liturgy, especially the eucharist in Christian life” – all intrinsic to a wisdom approach according to Barnhart. See: Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 81-83.

<sup>492</sup> While this influence doesn’t show itself in his writing as O’Malley’s book was published in 2008 (after *The Future of Wisdom*), Barnhart spoke to me of its significant influence in conversations with me in 2012 and 2015. It was O’Malley’s insight into the change in literary style that captured Barnhart’s attention. See particularly chapter 1 in: O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 15-52.

<sup>493</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 44, 46-47.

<sup>494</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 44. An example of the language of the First Vatican Council was given in chapter 2, part 2.2

<sup>495</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 45. The orientation toward exterior behavior was further accentuated as “the dialectical and analytical aspects...of Scholasticism began to play an even greater role in council pronouncements... [which had] an adversarial edge...[and a further] appeal to

The Second Vatican Council on the other hand, used a “literary rather than a philosophical or legal genre,” in a style that taught “not so much by way of magisterial pronouncement as by suggestion, insinuation, and example.”<sup>496</sup> It “largely eschewed Scholastic language” moving from the “the dialectic of winning an argument to the dialogue of finding common ground.”<sup>497</sup> Its approach was not “coercion” but rather “persuasion” in order “to excite admiration and appropriation.”<sup>498</sup> It “looks to reconciliation...raises appreciation...[that] those that it addresses...all share the same ideals and need to work together to achieve them.”<sup>499</sup> In short, “persuaders do not command from on high...[but] from inside out...to establish an identity between themselves and their audience.”<sup>500</sup> In this open engagement, its movement was from minute fastidiousness towards “big issues...[in] an invitation to rise above all pettiness and to strive for an expansive vision and a generous spirit.”<sup>501</sup>

This ‘spirit’ is revealed most notably by the actual vocabulary used. In contrast to past Councils, words of “alienation, exclusion, enmity, words of threat and intimidation, words of surveillance and punishment” are absent.<sup>502</sup> In their place are: “people of God...brothers and sisters...the priesthood of all believers...collegiality... cooperation, partnership and collaboration...the words of dialogue and conversation abound.”<sup>503</sup> O’Malley argues that there is great significance in this choice of language as it reveals “the very identity of the church...it *teaches* by means of

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the mind, not to the heart. Its language is abstract, impersonal and ahistorical.” See: O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 46.

<sup>496</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 47.

<sup>497</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 46.

<sup>498</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 47.

<sup>499</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 48.

<sup>500</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 48.

<sup>501</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 48.

<sup>502</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 48.

<sup>503</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 49-50.

style.”<sup>504</sup> Style is the “ultimate expression of meaning...a hermeneutical key par excellence.”<sup>505</sup> O’Malley concludes strongly: “It well exemplifies the illegitimacy of separating style from content.”<sup>506</sup> From Barnhart’s perspective, it represented a return to its wisdom ‘identity,’ to its essentially participatory nature springing from the mystery and fullness of Christ and that naturally flows into its use of language.

## 2.2 Recovery of wisdom knowing

At the source of this theological and literary approach was a participatory (or wisdom) sensibility. This was shaped by a dynamic operating at the Council providing the foundation for Barnhart’s four turns, and for their interpretation as principles of wisdom knowing in this thesis. Firstly, the Council focused on personal participation in the Christian life most conspicuously through the ‘universal call to holiness.’ This corresponds to Barnhart’s ‘sapiential awakening’ and establishes the core principle of wisdom knowing – *radical participation*. Secondly, the Council operated in a dynamic of three movements reflecting the three dynamic principles of wisdom knowing – a ‘return to the sources’ – represented in ‘the eastern turn’ and the principle of *nonduality*; an ‘updating in history’ – represented in ‘the western turn’ and the principle of *creative freedom*; and, a movement towards ‘ongoing development’ – represented in ‘the global turn’ and the principle of *communion*. These connections will be developed further below.

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<sup>504</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 49.

<sup>505</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 49.

<sup>506</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 49.

### a) Core principle: Vatican II and the sapiential awakening

The 'sapiential awakening' "begins with an epistemological step," the recovery of 'knowing by participation' the core principle of wisdom knowing.<sup>507</sup> In light of "many centuries of institutionalized and rationalized Christianity" this called for a paradigm shift – "a deep and comprehensive change of attitude," indeed "a theological *metanoia*."<sup>508</sup> It required more than a simple return to the consciousness of pre-modern participation however, and neither is the growth in "scientific reason... adequate to the challenge."<sup>509</sup> Barnhart asserts that it is "only a new sapiential consciousness – a consciously incarnational wisdom" incorporating these developments in history and placing human wholeness at the centre, that can respond to the challenge of the new context.<sup>510</sup>

This highly participatory approach was fundamental to the Council. The word 'participation' itself is prevalent in the documents (it appears 41 times in 10 documents).<sup>511</sup> It stressed "the people of God...the common priesthood of the faithful"<sup>512</sup> and that "all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious, and active part in liturgical celebrations."<sup>513</sup> Most significantly, it emphasized the 'universal call to holiness' – that "all Christians in whatever state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity."<sup>514</sup> This is a

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<sup>507</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18.

<sup>508</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18, 15.

<sup>509</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>510</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>511</sup> St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council," *St Josef*, accessed December 2019, [https://www.stjosef.at/cgi-bin/council\\_search.pl](https://www.stjosef.at/cgi-bin/council_search.pl).

<sup>512</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 9 & 10.

<sup>513</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 14.

<sup>514</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 40.

significant change from the approach to spirituality prior to the Council that categorized different levels of spirituality depending on one's state of life.<sup>515</sup>

O'Malley's work is once again instructive here. He shows how the Council made holiness "what the church is all about" in a way that had never been developed "so repeatedly and at length."<sup>516</sup> Holiness meant "more than external conformity" but rather interiority, and therefore "relates more directly to the higher impulses of the human spirit...most impressive among interiority words is 'conscience'"<sup>517</sup> It was concerned therefore with "the inward journey," discovering the life of God deep within the person.<sup>518</sup> The Council speaks of people discovering "in their hearts a law inscribed by God...their conscience is people's most secret core, and their sanctuary. There they are alone with God whose voice echoes in their depths.... [they] discover a law [which]...tells them inwardly at the right moment: to do this, shun that."<sup>519</sup> Here is intimate connection between God and the individual person.<sup>520</sup>

The participatory approach was not only interior, however, the Council also spoke in a new way to the entire world. This extended to "massive proportions" in "its remarkable international breadth, and the scope and variety of the issues it addressed [making it] almost as an entirely different entity" from what had gone

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<sup>515</sup> For a discussion of this see chapter 2 part 2.2.

<sup>516</sup> O'Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 51.

<sup>517</sup> O'Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 50-51.

<sup>518</sup> O'Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 50.

<sup>519</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 16. The word 'conscience' appears 45 times in the documents. See: St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council."

<sup>520</sup> In relation to the church's understanding of revelation, Thomas P. Rausch shows how it emphasized the need for ongoing interpretation. *Dei Verbum* places "revelation not primarily in a text but in the interpretation of the tradition...in other words revelation is personal rather than propositional." Rausch, *Systematic Theology*, 119. This again reveals an emphasis towards ongoing personal engagement.

before.<sup>521</sup> It firstly recognised the profoundly new context emerging in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the challenges it presented:

Ours is a new age of history with profound and rapid changes spreading gradually to all corners of the earth...we are entitled then to speak of a real social and cultural transformation whose repercussions are felt at the religious level also....the world is keenly aware of its unity and of mutual interdependence in essential solidarity, but at the same time it is split into bitterly opposing camps.<sup>522</sup>

It then sets its new course of response in *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”<sup>523</sup> Solidarity with all humanity was a constant theme of the Council. The church “cherish[es] a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.”<sup>524</sup> ‘Cherish’ is a ‘wisdom’ word – tender and intimate. It called for concrete expression through the practice of ‘dialogue’ (mentioned 41 times across 11 documents):<sup>525</sup> the church “can find no more eloquent expression of this people’s solidarity, respect and love for the whole human family, of which it forms part, than to enter into dialogue with it about all these various problems, throwing the light of the Gospel on them.”<sup>526</sup> It spoke to “all men and women” opening up in a positive and unprecedented way “toward the world, toward modernity and its values, toward the various Christian churches, and toward the other religions of the world.”<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> O'Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 33.

<sup>522</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 4.

<sup>523</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.1.

<sup>524</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1.

<sup>525</sup> St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council."

<sup>526</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 3. The word ‘dialogue’ is used 10 times in this document alone. See: St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council."

<sup>527</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 15.

Therefore, the Council highlights both the vertical and horizontal aspects of participation of the early wisdom tradition (as developed in chapter 2), but now in contemporary context: “we return” to the sources “but with a modern personalist perspective.”<sup>528</sup> The vertical dimension (the person’s intimate participation in God) through its insistence on the ‘universal call to holiness’, and the horizontal dimension through its unprecedented reaching out to the world in good will and dialogue – “supplying humanity with the saving resources which the church has received from its founder under the promptings of the holy Spirit.”<sup>529</sup> This participatory approach confirms the epistemological movement of Barnhart’s ‘sapiential awakening’ and provides the foundation for ‘radical participation’ as the core principle of Barnhart’s wisdom knowing.

### **b) Dynamic principles: Vatican II & the ‘eastern, western and global turns’**

The vertical and horizontal ‘participations’ also suggest the dynamic of wisdom knowing from unitive source to creative expression.<sup>530</sup> This is further reinforced through reflection on the three key theological movements of the Council. O’Malley describes them: “*ressourcement* (French for return to the sources)... *aggiornamento* (Italian for updating or modernizing), [and] *development* (an unfolding in context sometimes the equivalent of progress or evolution).”<sup>531</sup> They underscore the “keener sense of history” operating at the Council.<sup>532</sup> It will be shown below, that these three movements provide the impetus for Barnhart’s further three turns: *ressourcement* for

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<sup>528</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 30.

<sup>529</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 3.

<sup>530</sup> See chapter 1, part 2.3

<sup>531</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 37. O’Malley adds: The three “overlap in their meanings, but in general they look, respectively, to the present (*aggiornamento*), the future (*development*), and the past (*ressourcement*).”

<sup>532</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 37.

the ‘eastern turn;’ *aggiornamento* for the ‘western turn;’ and *development* for the ‘global turn;’ and the context for the corresponding dynamic principles of wisdom knowing: *nonduality, creative freedom and communion*.

**i) Ressourcement and the eastern turn – *the principle of nonduality***

*Ressourcement* functions to rediscover the sources of Christian life and maintain its life-giving influence in the present.<sup>533</sup> *The Decree on the up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life* states the “ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ as is put before us in the Gospel, this must be taken by all institutes as the supreme rule.”<sup>534</sup> It means more than simply retrieving the sources to *confirm* the present, but rather to *conform* it “to a more authentic...[and] more profound tradition.”<sup>535</sup> From Barnhart’s perspective it entails rediscovering the tradition in its “integrity...before it got divided and analysed” (especially in the time of the eclipse of wisdom) and then applying this integrity to interpret (and challenge) present thinking.<sup>536</sup> This means returning to the fullness intrinsic to the Christ-event. As an example he highlights the renewal of the liturgy as a return to liturgy “as a source of knowledge” drawing “right from the beginning where the whole thing is together” and this “becomes a litmus test” in the present to judge how close we are “to the fullness of the mystery of Christ.”<sup>537</sup> The endeavour therefore is to hold the unitive fullness of the mystery as *the* interpretative principle.

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<sup>533</sup> “The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of Christian life in general and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.” Vatican Council II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, Decree on the up-to-date renewal of Religious Life. (28 October 1965), n. 2, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996).

<sup>534</sup> Vatican Council II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 2(a).

<sup>535</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 40.

<sup>536</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>537</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

The eastern turn works in this context by returning to “the theological vision of the undivided church – before the separation of East and West” and ultimately to the source - “the original unity of the mystery of Christ.”<sup>538</sup> Barnhart argues that the “internal East of Christianity” corresponds to this source and “the great theological recovery of Vatican II” enables its revival.<sup>539</sup> It allowed an essential “return” to the time before the fragmentation that rational analysis had wrought - absolutely vital today as “Christianity had moved far from the all-comprehending unitive mystery of Christ.”<sup>540</sup> He uses the word ‘East’ here as having “more than a geographical and historical meaning” but also as connoting “mystery, wisdom, origins... beginning... ultimate source...new creation” and as suggesting “a deeper kind of knowing, a vision of all things in one single light, a unitive life and experience, a luminous innocence.”<sup>541</sup> It is to recover a “unitive interpretation” of the Word and open “our theological vision to the depths of the mystery’s Pauline and Johannine expressions.”<sup>542</sup> In other words, to return to the unitive sensibility of the first period of wisdom.

Barnhart then takes it a further step by arguing that a deeper insight into the profound nature of this unity has been made possible today through dialogue with the Eastern religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism.<sup>543</sup> This dialogue itself was greatly encouraged by the Council itself.<sup>544</sup> He suggests that the these traditions “offer a luminous mirror in which Christianity rediscovers

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<sup>538</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 30.

<sup>539</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 55. The word ‘unity’ appears 158 times in 16 documents. See: St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council."

<sup>540</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 70.

<sup>541</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 56.

<sup>542</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 55.

<sup>543</sup> In chapter 1 the influence of Bede Griffiths and Barnhart’s Californian context was also noted.

<sup>544</sup> See: Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*.

itself, its origins, its fullness – and its distinctiveness – with new clarity.”<sup>545</sup> In particular, Barnhart grappled with the notion of ‘nonduality,’ the sense of all pervading unity that is found at the heart of those traditions, and its relationship to Christian life. It led to Barnhart’s assertion that the source of Christian life, baptismal initiation, can be interpreted in more radically unitive terms as “a baptismal identity...[in] the key of unitive or nondual reality, experience, and knowledge.”<sup>546</sup> In this new context, the principle of ‘nonduality’ becomes the first of the dynamic principles of wisdom knowing.

**ii) Aggiornamento and the Western turn - *the principle of creative freedom***

*Aggiornamento* was set in Pope John XXIII’s opening statement to the Council. After affirming the need to “never depart from the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers” he declared that the church must also “look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.”<sup>547</sup> This demanded a much greater engagement with the movements of history to discern the progress of the Tradition.<sup>548</sup> *Aggiornamento* is most evident in *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*:

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<sup>545</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 55.

<sup>546</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18.

<sup>547</sup> John XXIII, *Pope John's Opening Speech to the Council*. (1962). It is further confirmed in the first sentence of *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: “to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change.” Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 1.

<sup>548</sup> O'Malley quotes Marie-Dominique Chenu who described the new attention to history emerging in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “Since Christianity draws its reality from history and not from some metaphysics, the theological must have as his [sic] primary concern...to know this history and to train himself [sic] in it.” See: O'Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 36.

In every age, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, it should be able to answer the ever-recurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and the life to come, and how one is related to the other.<sup>549</sup>

To genuinely respond to the times required the Church “to discern the true signs of God’s presence and purpose,” especially “those values which are most highly prized today and relate them to their divine source.”<sup>550</sup> It is called to recognize that these values are “very good, in so far as they stem from the God-given character of the human person,” as “nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.”<sup>551</sup> The Church therefore is called to discern where the genuine movement of Christ’s life is at work in human history, including outside the visible boundaries of the church, where it “is being enriched, by the evolution of social life” in order to understand the gift of Christ “more deeply, express it better, and adapt it more successfully to our times.”<sup>552</sup>

Central to these developments is human freedom itself, “the people of our time prize freedom very highly and strive eagerly for it.”<sup>553</sup> This is confirmed as “right” as “genuine freedom is an exceptional sign of the image of God in humanity.”<sup>554</sup> The fullness of humanity is realised in freedom by the grace of God: “their dignity therefore requires them to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn

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<sup>549</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4.

<sup>550</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 11.

<sup>551</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 11, n. 1.

<sup>552</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 44.

<sup>553</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17.

<sup>554</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17. The word ‘freedom’ appears 123 times in 14 documents. See: St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council."

in a personal way from within, and not by their own blind impulses or by external constraint.”<sup>555</sup>

Barnhart believed that with the principle of *aggiornamento* the Church moved from “a defensive and superior withdrawal from the world, a rejection of modern individualism, and a categorical opposition to the movement of history in the modern West” and turned “toward the world, toward the human person, and toward human activity and the historical progress that flows from it.”<sup>556</sup> He applied the principle in a particular way to Western history by highlighting the new birth of human freedom and creativity at its core (including the growth of critical rationality) emerging with the 12<sup>th</sup> century renaissance. Its impact was to initiate a new process of humanization of life in the world. Barnhart’s key claim is that this flowed directly from the Incarnation and it therefore has a distinctive theological character. Hence, the essential task to conceive of a genuinely ‘new’ wisdom approach was to understand and integrate this new growth of human freedom by affirming “the basic continuity between the Christ-event and historical progression, between Christ and the autonomous individual person, between Christ and the secularity and critical rationality that mark the modern world.”<sup>557</sup> In this context, a second dynamic principle of wisdom knowing emerges – ‘creative freedom.’

There is an intimate bond between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* and by extension the eastern and western turns.<sup>558</sup> Through the recovery of the fullness of the original tradition a fruitful engagement with historical context is enabled. Far from

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<sup>555</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17.

<sup>556</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18.

<sup>557</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 18-19.

<sup>558</sup> This will be brought out in more detail in chapter 4.

being at two ends of the spectrum, there is a simultaneous “bringing together the back and the forward...the first language of Christianity and the contemporary world...the integral statement of the mystery of Christ...with historical movement... but married in a way in which nothing is lost.”<sup>559</sup> Through this ‘marriage’ a further discovery is made: “the two are two aspects of the one thing.”<sup>560</sup> This is to discover the mystery in its wholeness as both unity (conceived in terms of receiving a nondual identity), as applied in the eastern turn, and dynamism (through growing freedom and creativity) as applied in the Western turn. It expresses the fundamental ‘movement’ of wisdom knowing from “the nondual self and its uncontained consciousness...to the emergent conscious, free, and creative person in the world- as well as to the dynamism of history.”<sup>561</sup>

### iii) Development and the Global turn - *the principle of communion*

It is through engaging with this movement from source to context that the future-orientated perspective is enabled – the principle of ‘development’. As O’Malley suggests, the documents of Vatican II are “not an end point but a starting point” and initiate a process of “development...a cumulative process in which the tradition became ever richer – or, from another angle, ever heavier, with ever more to hear and to explain;” they take “the present as its starting point and look to the future for even greater fulfilment...or greater efflorescence.”<sup>562</sup> The Council stated: “The tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the church, with the help of

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<sup>559</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*. Christopher Ruddy states: “ressourcement...drives aggiornamento.” See: Christopher Ruddy, “Ressourcement and the Enduring Legacy of Post-Tridentine Theology,” in *Ressourcement: A movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187.

<sup>560</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>561</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 97.

<sup>562</sup> O’Malley, *What happened at Vatican II*, 39-40.

the Holy Spirit. There is growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on."<sup>563</sup> According to Barnhart, the Council revealed this sense of progress by confirming the coming together of the world towards 'one history' in light of Christ:<sup>564</sup>

The Church believes that Christ, who died and was raised for the sake of all, can show people the way and strengthen them through the Spirit so that they become worthy of their destiny...the church likewise believes that the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history is to be found in its Lord and Master.<sup>565</sup>

The way towards this destiny is the work of communion. This is firstly the identity of the Church – it "is a sacrament – a sign and instrument...of communion with God and of unity of the entire human race."<sup>566</sup> It is also its vocation: "The encouragement of unity is in harmony with the deepest nature of the church's mission."<sup>567</sup>

The significant 'development' in approach was the way it expressed this mission in universal terms extending to both secular and religious worlds.<sup>568</sup> In the secular sphere it acknowledged "the good to be found in the social dynamism of today, especially in progress towards unity, healthy socialization, and civil and economic cooperation."<sup>569</sup> It also called for Catholics to "stimulate generous cooperation with the international community," and to contribute "to organizations set up or on the way

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<sup>563</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*. (18 November 1965), n. 8, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996).

<sup>564</sup> Here Barnhart is influenced by Karl Rahner's interpretation of Vatican II as the beginning of the 'world church.' This will be developed further in chapter 4.

<sup>565</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 10.

<sup>566</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1. The word 'communion' appears 94 times in 10 documents. See: St Josef, "Fulltext Search: II Vatican Council."

<sup>567</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42.

<sup>568</sup> See: Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42.: "by its nature and mission the church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system."

<sup>569</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42.

to being set up to foster cooperation between nations.”<sup>570</sup> It also offered a sensitive treatment of atheism recognising how it was the methods of presentation of the faith that had “more than a little to do with” its rise.<sup>571</sup> It therefore “urged by its love for everyone...an earnest and more thorough scrutiny” of the causes of atheism and to respond with “the witness of a living and mature faith.”<sup>572</sup> In the area of formation for lay ministry it called for engagement with the human sciences “not only in theology but also in anthropology, psychology, sociology, methodology, for the benefit of all fields of the apostolate.”<sup>573</sup> Finally, in the religious sphere the Church reached out to the other religious traditions and proclaimed for the first time “what is true and holy in these religions” and it “urge[d]...discussion and collaboration” with them.<sup>574</sup>

These aspirations are a far cry from the defensive posture adopted prior to the Council. The overall sense was a new maturity and openness, a realisation of the utmost importance of discerning sensitively how the faith was to be presented in the modern context. Dialogue was essential, with the intrinsic consequence of the ongoing development of the Church’s own understanding of itself and its purpose, and especially its universal vocation as catalyst for the communion of all humanity. Therefore, it could turn “toward the other” and make the “transition from monologue to dialogue: dialogue within the church, with the other churches, with the other religions, and with the modern world.”<sup>575</sup> Dialogue and affirmation of this kind represents the concrete changes required for the shift towards a truly ‘world church’

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<sup>570</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 89 & 90.

<sup>571</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 19. This self-criticism is a sign of the maturing church at this time.

<sup>572</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 21.

<sup>573</sup> Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People. (18 November 1965), n. 32, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing Company Inc., 1996).

<sup>574</sup> Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, n. 2.

<sup>575</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149.

mentioned earlier. It rested upon the one great affirmation revealed in the mystery of Christ which corresponds to the deepest needs and meaning of humanity:

For the church knows full well that its message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart, since it champions the dignity of humanity's calling...its message, far from diminishing humanity helps people to develop themselves by bestowing light, life and freedom.<sup>576</sup>

It is in this context that Barnhart frames the global turn. He firstly engages with aspects of contemporary context before assuming a specific meaning and potential for it. His key assertion is that while it is a time of radical deconstruction and ongoing conflict, there is also evidence of a larger underlying movement, towards the unification of humanity. It is on this "global threshold" and in the potential for "a new unity of humanity" as suggested by the Council that a "new sapiential Christianity will emerge."<sup>577</sup> Theologically, this new unitive potential corresponds to "the process of divine incarnation in history" that "in our time, has been dramatically accelerated."<sup>578</sup>

It requires an orientation towards the whole – the whole person and the whole of humanity in the context of a global environment. This necessitates the interplay of two principles – the intrinsic freedom of the individual (as expressed in a plurality of worldviews characteristic of our time and requiring dialogue), and also the fundamental vocation of the human person as fulfilled in an ever deepening unity (communion) with others.<sup>579</sup> Orientation towards the whole also highlights the

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<sup>576</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 21.

<sup>577</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 159.

<sup>578</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 159.

<sup>579</sup> Barnhart writes: "As the dominance of the West begins to be vigorously challenged by the other peoples of the world and our Eurocentric view of reality begins to give way, we enter a new era in which the unification of humanity becomes the central issue. The secular and material elements of this unification are essential to its progress, and these, as well as the descending movement of Western culture which has brought them forth, derive principally from the event of Christ." Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 181.

vocation of the human person to actively participate “in the movement toward one world: a united humanity aware of its communion with earth and cosmos.”<sup>580</sup>

Therefore, the global turn aims to realise the fullness of the person as being intrinsically connected to the generation of human (and global) unity. This reflects Barnhart’s understanding of the eucharist – it is “to comprehend from within our sapiential perspective the ripening of earth and its humanity...and discover a new depth and breadth of meaning in incarnation and in eucharist.”<sup>581</sup> Its eucharistic meaning will also shape communion in terms of justice.<sup>582</sup> This movement towards ‘communion’ is the ultimate destiny of human life and represents the trajectory and culminating principle of wisdom knowing.

### 2.3 Barnhart’s wisdom knowing

In summary, in conceiving of these four turns, Barnhart identifies four elements that were “not so evident to the sapiential theologians of the early centuries.”<sup>583</sup> Firstly, the sapiential awakening aims to represent a “deep, organic, and participatory theological understanding of the mystery of Christ,” but now approaching the “body of Christ in its global totality and moving toward full realization beneath the events of our time.”<sup>584</sup> Secondly, the eastern turn represents “its nondual nature and...the illumination of the whole body by its unitive interior sun.”<sup>585</sup> Thirdly, in the western turn “we become aware of the dynamic actuality of the growth and integration of this great organism that pervades the entire course of history” evident in a unique way in

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<sup>580</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 19.

<sup>581</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 19.

<sup>582</sup> This will be developed in more detail in chapter 4.

<sup>583</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

<sup>584</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 157, 183.

<sup>585</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

Western history through the emergence of new creative freedom and leading to the increasing humanization of life in the world.<sup>586</sup> Finally, in the global turn Christian wisdom is realised in the context of our time and “we come to realize our own vocation as active and creative participants in this global process” through the generation of communion.<sup>587</sup>

It is now possible to make a statement regarding the key dimensions of Barnhart’s approach conceived in terms of wisdom knowing.<sup>588</sup> To bring the different aspects together, it is helpful to highlight one text from Vatican II that Barnhart refers to as encapsulating his vision:

The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as a perfect man he could save all women and men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of humanity, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead. Animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history which corresponds to the plan of his love: “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10).<sup>589</sup>

Firstly, the text is placed in the midst of the paschal mystery - *it is he whom the Father raised from the dead*, and centred in a “unitive Christology” - *the Word made flesh in which everything is summed up*.<sup>590</sup> It confirms the absolute centrality of this event as revealing the *goal of human history... the fulfilment of all aspirations*. The Incarnation therefore “becomes the center of history, the decisive meeting point of

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<sup>586</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

<sup>587</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

<sup>588</sup> The basic approach to wisdom knowing was defined in chapter 1, part 2.3: *Wisdom knowing is knowing by participation. It activates the whole person in movement from unitive source to creative expression and generative of communion*.

<sup>589</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 45.

<sup>590</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 179.

God and creation, at which is initiated a new human history, impregnated with the unitive divine Reality” bringing everything together in a new way.<sup>591</sup> This establishes the theological context for the core principle of wisdom knowing – ‘radical participation’ in light of the participatory event of Christ.

Secondly, the text reveals the dynamic impact of this event in terms of a process throughout history – (*animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history*) which will ultimately be the *unity (or communion) of all things*. This ongoing reconciling movement Barnhart describes as a process of “*unitive incarnation*” and sums it up in this way:

Something has happened: the divine unity embraces created reality in an event of incarnation and then in a continuing historical process of incarnation....from the moment of incarnation in Christ, the divine nonduality dwells within the world in a new way – embodied and particularized – then to manifest itself in all the dimensions of human existence.<sup>592</sup>

It is this ongoing process of unification through the incarnational process that gives a particular shape to the radical participation of wisdom knowing. Its focus on process highlights the dynamic principles of wisdom knowing. The phrase ‘unitive incarnation’ brings together its two essential aspects - “a principle of unitive divine immediacy or identity” and “a principle of radical historical Christocentricity.”<sup>593</sup>

Wisdom knowing is orientated towards their intersection “as vertical and horizontal axes within the human person” building on the two new ‘participations’ fundamental

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<sup>591</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 20.

<sup>592</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 179.

<sup>593</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 20.

to wisdom theology as developed in chapter 2.<sup>594</sup> These were developed above as the principles of nonduality and creative freedom. Their mysterious interplay as one generative movement represents the contours for the engagement of the whole person. For the purposes of this thesis it will be described as *activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom*. Finally, as humanity learns its vocation to actively participate in this movement the potential for an ever-deeper unity is realized even amidst the increasing diversity today. For the purposes of this thesis this will be expressed in terms of *the generation of communion*.

In this context, a particularly Christian wisdom knowing can be described as follows:

*Christian wisdom knowing is radical participation in the process of unitive incarnation in history, activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion.*

It is argued that this interpretation of Barnhart's work offers significant principles for consideration. Its theological meaning is further strengthened with the imprint of the cross as the intersection of two axes – the interior dimension towards God in nonduality (represented by the vertical axis), and the exterior dimension towards others through creative freedom and communion (represented by the horizontal axis). It is also responsive to the incarnational process in history and grounded in the sacramental journey from baptismal initiation (nonduality) to eucharistic fulfilment (communion).<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 20. See: Chapter 2, part 1.3.

<sup>595</sup> In chapter 5 it will be suggested that this sacramental approach can be further developed by connecting 'creative freedom' to the sacrament of confirmation. Barnhart does not make this connection.

Further, it offers a response to the historical landscape suggested by Sandra Schneiders as necessary to engage in wholistic perspectives today.<sup>596</sup> Its participatory context exemplified in the principle of nonduality responds to the monastic/medieval integration with its emphasis on the unity of theology and spirituality; its insight into creative freedom emerging in Western history provides a basis to engage with the growth of critical rationality at the Enlightenment; and, its assertion of the principle of communion, which holds individual freedom as intrinsically connected to the growth of deeper human unity in a global context, responds to postmodern conditions.

What is the strength of Barnhart's approach? The Second Vatican Council is more than 50 years old, and as it was noted in chapter 1, his work derives predominantly from pre-21<sup>st</sup> century sources. To test its significance, it will now be brought into critical dialogue with the discipline of Christian Spirituality. It offers methodology that engages with the conditions of postmodernity and through critical engagement with this methodology the significance of wisdom knowing can be examined further. The final part of this chapter will set the parameters for the investigation that will be the subject of the remainder of this thesis.

### **Part 3: Investigating wisdom knowing**

#### **3.1 Christian Spirituality**

An investigation of wisdom knowing can be framed in critical dialogue with the discipline of Christian Spirituality and its focus on lived experience. The parallel

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<sup>596</sup> See introduction 1.2.

between the two areas has already been introduced.<sup>597</sup> The compatibility is even closer when considering how both developed in response to the Second Vatican Council and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century context. Downey writes how the Council “provided the key orienting principles for a Christian spirituality at once revolutionary and firmly rooted in the richest tradition of the Christian faith.”<sup>598</sup> The Council therefore provided the basis for its focus on wholeness in Christian life. Scholars highlight the significance of the ‘universal call to holiness,’ the return to the sources, reading the signs of the times, and the emphasis on dialogue.<sup>599</sup> Most significant was the change in orientation towards universal participation: “The wrongheaded understanding of the spiritual life as the life of perfection to which few (i.e., priests, nuns, monks, vowed religious) can earnestly aspire, was dealt a decisive blow...at Vatican Council II.”<sup>600</sup> The consequence was “sustained attention to a more *holistic understanding of spirituality*.”

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<sup>597</sup> See the Introduction, part 1.4 and chapter 2, part 2.

<sup>598</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 86.

<sup>599</sup> On the ‘Universal Call to Holiness’: Schneiders writes: “By the time of the Second Vatican Council, which reaffirmed the universality of the call to one and same holiness (*Lumen gentium* 5), classical modern ‘spiritual theology’ was giving way to what many modern believers found much more interesting, namely, ‘spirituality.’” Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 24. Downey writes: “The affirmation that all the baptized are called to the fullness of life in Christ has had significant consequences in the life of the church. People of all walks of life are now concerned with spirituality.” Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 76.

On ‘return to the sources’: Downey writes: “...contemporary spirituality is biblical spirituality...[and] needs to be informed by liturgy.” Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 79, 81.

On ‘reading the signs of the times’ Sheldrake writes: “The phrase ‘signs of the times,’ coined by Pope John XXIII and repeated in the Council documents, effectively recognized that history was not incidental to, but the context for, God’s work. Faith is not opposed to history, and no separation is possible between religious history and world history.” Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 12.

On ‘dialogue with the modern world’: Downey writes: “The assumption of *Gaudium et Spes* is that church and world each has something to give and receive from the other...a conciliar view of church and world in critical dialogue entails the recognition that God’s providential plan for the world involves absolutely every dimension of existence...this demands a view of the spiritual life at once personal and relational, inclusive of every human concern and commitment, with particular attention to those who are last and least in church and world. Even and especially those who are often judged to be nonpersons, as well as all forms of nonhuman life, are unavoidably the concern of an authentic Christian spirituality attentive to all creation, human life, and indeed the whole world as the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.” Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 84-86.

<sup>600</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 41.

Rather than beginning with doctrinal formulations or theoretical explanations of Christian life, contemporary approaches to spirituality tend to begin by stressing the singular importance of the concrete experience of searching for God, and of finding appropriate ways to live out one's response to the divine initiative.<sup>601</sup>

This wholistic intention and focus on 'concrete experience' led to the growing realization of the complexity of the human person and the meaning of the spiritual life. The emphasis became the significance of each person's relationship with God in their own particular context: "the human being as a whole: spirit, mind, and body; individual and social; culturally conditioned and ecologically intertwined with all of creation; economically and politically responsible."<sup>602</sup> Therefore, the spiritual life was not confined to interiority alone, "exclusively with prayer and the practice of virtue" but also "the relation of the whole of oneself to reality as a whole."<sup>603</sup> The notion of 'lived experience' was identified as the category to engage methodologically within this wholistic landscape. This notion and the methods developed to investigate it provide an ideal means to examine the significance of Barnhart's wisdom knowing as a means to cultivate wholeness in Christian life.

### 3.2 Lived experience

To arrive at an understanding of lived experience, scholars begin by defining the specificities of Christian spirituality itself. It is firstly placed in the context of spirituality

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<sup>601</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 91.

<sup>602</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17. In the Introduction to this thesis, Schneiders was cited, describing how in this context: "The phenomena of Christian faith experience...[is investigated]...within the widest and richest available frame of reference," including the "aesthetic, linguistic, psychological...cosmological...ecological concerns...gender issues...the spiritualities of other religious traditions or the spiritualities of contemporary seekers and even non-religious movements." See: Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 27, 26.

<sup>603</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17. Here, she refers to Peter Van Ness. "Introduction: Spirituality and the secular quest," in *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, ed. P.H. Van Ness (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 5.

in general. Despite the immense diversity of possible understandings, some essential dimensions of spirituality are identified. It is understood as a living, dynamic and experiential process. According to Kees Waaijman its one core concern is 'transformation' – this is “the intentionality of the entire spiritual way.”<sup>604</sup> Downey then identifies “two essential components to spirituality” to safeguard its authenticity, a 'transcendent' component and an 'integrative component.'<sup>605</sup> The transcendent involves an “awareness that there are levels of reality not immediately apparent,” in other words – sacred or divine reality that sustains material reality but is entirely 'other' to it.<sup>606</sup> Further, that the human person is defined by its fundamental self-transcending nature – “as spirit in the world.”<sup>607</sup> The 'integrative' component, revealed in “a quest for personal integration,” is the action of bringing the divine life into material reality and therefore transforming it through active relationship and cooperation with the divine.<sup>608</sup> Schneiders' definition brings them together:

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<sup>604</sup> Kees Waaijman, "Transformation: A Key Word in Spirituality," *Studies in Spirituality* 8, (1998): 5. Downey adds: “The reason why one is studying Christian spirituality...to understand the experience of the Christian spiritual life, and in understanding this experience in the manner of appropriation, one is thereby transformed.” Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 131. Schneiders writes how the study of Christian spirituality “seeks to understand how” the Christian life “actually transforms its subject toward fullness of life in Christ.” Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 6. Perrin suggests: “one of the primary aims of Christian spirituality is to reveal and understand God's transformative presence in the world today.” Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 42.

<sup>605</sup> The two dimensions of transcendence and integration are present in the definitions suggested by a range of scholars. For example, Shel Drake: “a quest for the sacred” (transcendent) and “a quest for meaning” involving a “holistic” and fully integrated approach to life” (integrative). Shel Drake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 3. Perrin: “the capacity for self-transcendence” (transcendent) and “being meaningfully involved in, and personally committed to, the world beyond an individual's personal boundaries,” allowing “them to integrate their lives” (integrative). Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 20. Principe: “The way in which a person understands and lives within his or her historical context [integrative] that aspect of his or her religion, philosophy or ethic that is viewed as the loftiest, the noblest, the most calculated to lead to the fullness of the ideal or perfection being sought” (transcendent). Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," 48.

<sup>606</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 14. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 42, 52, 296, 300. “God transcends all creatures...dwells in unapproachable light...creates out of nothing...transcends creation...is infinitely greater than all his [sic] works....the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists.”

<sup>607</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 42.

<sup>608</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 14. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 319 & 323. “God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness, and beauty – this is the glory for which God created them...to human beings God grants the ability to cooperate freely with his [sic] plans.”

Spirituality is the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence... defined as the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life integration [integrative dimension] through self-transcendence [transcendent dimension] toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.<sup>609</sup>

The definition of Christian spirituality is then identified as a distinctive vision of this general approach:

Christian spirituality as Christian specifies the horizon of ultimate value as the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit making her or him a child of God. This new life, which Paul calls "life in the Spirit" (cf. Rom. 7: 6; 8: 2, 6, 10–11; Gal. 6: 8) is celebrated sacramentally within the believing community of the church and lived in the world as mission in and to the coming reign of God. This life of faith and discipleship constitutes the existential phenomenon that Christian spirituality as a discipline studies.<sup>610</sup>

In the Christian spiritual life, the transformative process happens within a transcendent dimension understood in terms of a Trinitarian God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and the integrative dimension is realised not only individually, but communally, as the 'Body of Christ' reaching the entire world in mission and towards a future orientated horizon of the 'reign of God'. The process is enabled through the

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<sup>609</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 16.

<sup>610</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17. Other definitions include Sheldrake: "Christian spirituality is fundamentally concerned with following the way of Jesus Christ...it refers to the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect particular understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation." Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 7. Perrin: "Christian spirituality is the experience of transformation in the Divine-human relationship as modelled by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit." Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 32. Woods: "Christian spirituality is the progressive realization of an ineffable but undeniably divine Presence in the depths of all experience, communal and particular – a sense of God as the compassionate origin, unfailing guide, and infinite destiny of the whole human family....awareness of and faith in the abiding presence of God, the Spirit of being, life, and relationship that grounds and supports all human experience... growing consciousness of the special reality of God's presence as companion and friend in Jesus and his first disciples." Woods, *Christian Spirituality*, xvii, xix.

gift of the Holy Spirit, newly released through the event of Christ: "The 'Spirit of God, spirit of Christ' or 'Holy Spirit' lies at the heart of all Christian spirituality."<sup>611</sup>

The final sentence of Schneiders' definition identifies the distinctive focus of Christian spirituality: the 'existential phenomenon of the life of faith and discipleship,' or in short, "the lived experience of Christian faith, the subjective appropriation of faith and living of discipleship in their individual and corporate actualization(s)."<sup>612</sup>

How do scholars use the term 'lived experience'? Two preliminary points are necessary before coming to this. Firstly, it is understood that experience itself is extremely difficult to define, it is always "definition subjective and, as such, incommunicable. My pain cannot be felt by you even though, because you have experienced pain, you can empathize, by entering analogically into my experience, and thus understand it."<sup>613</sup> Therefore, to approach lived experience is always to approach an "experience of...something."<sup>614</sup> It is this something or 'object' as expressed through a "text: verbal, literary, artistic, behavioural and so on," that is approached with the aim of gaining a deepening understanding of the dynamics of

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<sup>611</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 35.

<sup>612</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 16. Other scholars identify the focus: Cooper: "How people actually live the mystery of Christ." Austin Cooper, "Christian Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 80, no. 3 (2011): 151. Holder: "Christian spirituality is the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship." Arthur G. Holder, "Introduction," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur G. Holder (Maldon: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 5. Cunningham & Egan: "Christian spirituality is the lived encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit." Lawrence Cunningham and Keith J. Egan, *Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 7. Sheldrake: "The ways that individuals and groups seek to enter into a conscious relationship with God..." Philip Sheldrake, "The Study of Spirituality," *The Way* 39, no. 2 (1999): 162. McGinn: "The lived experience of Christian belief in both its general and more specialized forms....the effort to appropriate Christ's saving work in our lives." McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit," 33. Waaijman: "The point of departure for the study of spirituality is lived spirituality; every study of spirituality is dialectically interrelated with lived spirituality." Kees Waaijman, "The Study of Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods," *With Wisdom Seeking God: The Academic Study of Spirituality (Studies in Spirituality Supplements)* 15, (2008): 57.

<sup>613</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17.

<sup>614</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17-18.

that experience.<sup>615</sup> The process of using ‘texts’ as the basis for illuminating lived experience will be the subject of chapter 5 of this thesis. Secondly, while it is understood that “all theology is an investigation of experientially rooted *faith*,” the category of ‘lived experience’ provides a particular focus for Christian spirituality that distinguishes it from Systematic Theology.<sup>616</sup> It is in this context, that the particularity of lived experience can be considered.

Walter Principe highlights the point of departure for lived experience as the way Christian faith “becomes particular and personal.”<sup>617</sup> It focuses on the “dynamic and concrete character of the relationship of the human person to God in actual life situations” rather than the general principles that derive from experience and may be applied to all circumstances (which is considered the domain of systematic

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<sup>615</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17.

<sup>616</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 17. There are different views on the extent of the distinction/separation between spirituality and systematic theology. Sandra Schneiders who was instrumental in establishing the key distinctions writes: “Spirituality belongs in the theological household not as a dependent or minor but as a mature member of the family, distinct from but closely related to systematic theology as well as to other theological disciplines.” Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders*, ed. Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 209. Her emphasis is that “spirituality studies unique experiences of the living of the Christian faith, which in their very uniqueness, can encourage, challenge, warn, illuminate, confirm, expand, subvert, or otherwise interact with both general theological theory, on the one hand, and other specific experiences of the faith on the other.” Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 18. Walter Principe writes of “a distinction without separation.”

Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 935. The issues are well articulated by Sheldrake who writes: “The serious disagreement among scholars these days is not whether spirituality and theology relate to each other but, methodologically speaking, how they do so.” Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 83.

<sup>617</sup> Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 935. Downey adds: “It is the specific concern of the discipline of spirituality to focus precisely upon the relational and personal (inclusive of the social and political) dimensions of the human person’s relationship to God.” Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 119. This is also how lived experience is defined in the human sciences. ‘The Oxford Reference Dictionary’ defines it as “personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.” Reference Oxford, "Lived Experience," *Oxford Reference*, accessed July 11 2018, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-1552>. Max Manen defines it as “the breathing of meaning. In the flow of life, consciousness breathes meaning in a to and fro movement: a constant heaving between the inner and the outer made concrete, for example, in my reflexive consciousness of hope for a child and the child as the object of hope. There is a determinate reality-appreciation in the flow of living and experiencing life’s breath. Thus, a lived experience has a certain essence, a ‘quality’ that we recognize in retrospect.” Max Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 36.

theology).<sup>618</sup> Lived experience attends to the spiritual life in its “very uniqueness,”<sup>619</sup> the “religious particular...[such as] distinct religious movements...or practices such as Teresa [of Avila’s] own mode of prayer.”<sup>620</sup> It is therefore the way in which the person makes their own personal meaning of the spiritual life.

Bernard McGinn suggests it is “the reaction that faith arouses in Christian consciousness and practice.”<sup>621</sup> Perrin describes it as “experience on the move” - the dynamism of experience in its immediacy – in the way it uniquely inhabits the individual.<sup>622</sup> In terms of Christian spirituality it focuses on the transformative process – how living the Christian life “actually transforms its subject toward fullness of life in Christ, that is, toward self-transcending life-integration with the Christian community of faith.”<sup>623</sup> It aims to uncover the dynamic of “development, of growth in the life of faith, and thus covers the whole of life,” and therefore includes “whatever enters into the actual living of our lives, whether it be religious, mystical, theological, ethical, psychological, political, or physical.”<sup>624</sup>

By bringing together these features of Christian spirituality and lived experience it is possible to offer the following working definition of Christian lived experience:

*Christian lived experience is personal engagement in a process of transformation in Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It involves the interplay of self-transcending and life-integrating movements towards fullness of life in (the Triune) God.*

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<sup>618</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 119.

<sup>619</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 18.

<sup>620</sup> Schneiders, "The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology," 202.

<sup>621</sup> Quoted in: Kourie, "Spirituality and the University." "its specific focus on Christian faith as the experience of the concrete believing subject(s)." (SS 17

<sup>622</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 11.

<sup>623</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 6.

<sup>624</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 119, 91.

It is suggested that this statement brings together some essential points of reference for Christian lived experience and a landscape to consider wholeness. Its focus on 'personal' engagement provides the context for including the whole person. The 'process of transformation' is defined by Christian specificity: situated in terms of the gift of the Holy Spirit, incorporating the two fundamental aspects of Christian life – the transcendent (relationship with God) and integrative (relationship with others in history), and it also highlights a future-orientated horizon - towards fullness of life in God. Further, it provides a rich point of reference to investigate Barnhart's wisdom knowing and its potential contribution to cultivating wholeness in Christian life.

### 3.3 Framing the investigation

An investigation can be formulated by identifying two points of comparison between wisdom knowing and Christian lived experience. Firstly, lived experience as 'personal engagement' provides an orientation point for the core principle of wisdom knowing, 'radical participation.' The personal and dynamic nature of lived experience relates to the intimacy of participatory knowing. Schneiders describes how "studying the human experience of God is not viewing through a telescope a bush burning in a distant desert. It is taking a chance on hearing our name called at close range."<sup>625</sup> The focus on lived experience necessitates therefore the researcher's "personal involvement in its subject matter" leading to a "participative... methodological style" because it "deals with material that often cannot be understood except through analogy with personal experience."<sup>626</sup> Mary Frohlich also places this methodology in a larger historical context as helping to "repair the breach between life and

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<sup>625</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 18.

<sup>626</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 694.

knowledge” that had developed in the previous centuries.<sup>627</sup> Barnhart’s approach provides a corresponding orientation point as it aims to begin Christian reflection from the perspective of personal and radical participation, engaging the whole person from the interior to the exterior.<sup>628</sup> We can conclude therefore that the intrinsically personal dimension of lived experience and the core principle of wisdom knowing, radical participation, share a corresponding methodological starting point, and this provides the basis for further investigation.

This investigation relates to the second point of comparison between the specificity of ‘Christian lived experience’ (*as an interplay of self-transcending and life-integrating movements towards fullness of life in God*), and the dynamic principles of wisdom knowing (*as a movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion*). They can be brought into critical dialogue on the basis that these dynamic principles offer a particular interpretation of Christian lived experience by proposing three points of orientation for it: nonduality proposes a point of orientation for the movement towards self-transcendence as it makes a claim about the nature of the person’s relationship with the transcendent (God); creative freedom proposes a point of orientation for the movement of life-integration as it makes a claim about the person’s capacity to bring (or integrate) God’s life into the world; and, communion proposes a point of orientation for the movement towards fullness of life in God as it makes a claim about the vocation of the person in the trajectory of God’s life in the world and the future.

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<sup>627</sup> Mary Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," in *Minding the Spirit: the study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 76-77.

<sup>628</sup> Barnhart defines Christian Spirituality as “a personal participation in the (essentially participatory) Christ-mystery.” See: Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 275.

The discipline of Christian spirituality also offers rich resources to engage in this investigation as it has developed methods to interpret the relative strength of proposals relating to Christian lived experience. These methods have developed due to the complexity of the category of lived experience itself. As Downey suggests: with “a far more inclusive approach to holiness...[the] widespread uncertainty about the precise meaning of the term ‘Christian spirituality... [and] ‘experience’” presented itself.<sup>629</sup> The danger emerged to simply “let experience free-float,”<sup>630</sup> or as Michael Buckley warns: “the intensity of experience absolves one from discretion, critical reflection, and the doctrinal content of Christian faith, giving experience priority over the unspeakable Mystery.”<sup>631</sup>

At the same time, there still remained a too narrow conception of the meaning of lived spirituality – that it “is primarily concerned with the life of the soul, the interior life, one’s prayer life, one’s spiritual life, as a separate component of the Christian life.”<sup>632</sup> The challenge to hold ‘spirituality’ and ‘experience’ as “unavoidably ambiguous,” while realising that they do “not apply to anything and everything” was brought into sharp relief, and it became essential to develop “an identifiable referent or subject to which the term ‘Christian spirituality’ applies.”<sup>633</sup> In response, a number of approaches to the task of interpreting lived experience were developed with the aim of being both inclusive of a wholistic approach to ‘experience’ and also to discern its Christian character.

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<sup>629</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 40-41.

<sup>630</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 105.

<sup>631</sup> Michael J Buckley, "Discernment of Spirits," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 274.

<sup>632</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 105.

<sup>633</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 41-42.

Three main approaches can be identified: a 'theological approach,' a 'historical approach,' and the most recently developed 'anthropological approach.'<sup>634</sup>

Schneiders suggests that they "are derived from reading, discussions, and observations in the field over the past thirty to forty years...[and offer] a *de facto* heuristic taxonomy."<sup>635</sup> The three approaches offer different methodologies to interpret aspects of lived experience: the theological approach using the principles of theology, the historical approach the critical tools of the historical method, and the anthropological approach through utilizing any number of non-theological disciplines focused on human experience to uncover aspects of the spiritual life that may otherwise be missed.

For the purposes of this thesis they will be treated not only as separate methodologies but as a constituting an interpretative framework (the 'heuristic taxonomy' as Schneiders described above). This approach is also suggested in the literature as Schneiders asserts: "all Christian religious experience" is a combination of the theological as it is "rooted in the theological tradition of Christianity"; the historical as it is located "in a particular socio-cultural and temporal setting"; and the anthropological and therefore "human and thus related to the spiritual enterprise of the human race" especially in regard to the varied perspectives present in today's context.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> These three approaches are found consistently in the literature. See for example: Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 19-29. (At times she interchanges the anthropological with the hermeneutical approach) McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit," 30-35. Downey who adds one further approach - 'The Appropriative Method' - Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 124-131. Perrin also adds 'The Hermeneutical Method' - Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 35-44. The benefit of maintaining three is that they can then be applied effectively to Barnhart's three dynamic principles of wisdom knowing.

<sup>635</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 19.

<sup>636</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 28. Downey adds: "For example, the theological approach must be attentive to human experience precisely within the context of a community of faith in history. Likewise, approaches which focus on history must give due attention to

This is consistent with how Perrin frames the “hermeneutical method” which “involves not only a multidisciplinary approach, but also an interdisciplinary one.”<sup>637</sup> The aim is to search for “God’s transformative presence in the world today...by being open to investigating all phenomena within their own parameters of meaning” and not simply the explicitly ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual.’<sup>638</sup> It also recognises that “human consciousness is singular, and that the human capacity for knowledge is all one” and therefore the process of interpretation includes not only “interpreting the various data” but also “organising them into a coherent whole.”<sup>639</sup> This cultivates “an openness to the Spirit of God active in all dimensions of human life.”<sup>640</sup> Therefore, the hermeneutical method functions as an umbrella methodology to incorporate other approaches by bringing them “into dialogue with each other” and substantially opens the field of investigation.<sup>641</sup> (A more thorough consideration of the hermeneutical approach will be developed in chapter 5).

It is this kind of wholistic approach that will be taken for the investigation to follow. It will use the three approaches as an interpretative framework to examine the extent to which Barnhart’s wisdom knowing tends towards wholeness in terms of its

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the beliefs of a historical community as well as to the theology which reflects on these.” See: Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 123.

<sup>637</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 41. As Schneiders writes: “the interdisciplinary character of the contemporary field of spirituality is not simply a trendy postmodern methodological choice but a response to the nature of religious experience and human knowledge in the contemporary context.” Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 25-26.

<sup>638</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 42.

<sup>639</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 41.

<sup>640</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 41.

<sup>641</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 41. Here Perrin identifies incisively both the connectedness of the hermeneutical approach to the anthropological approach but also its superiority. They are connected because both substantially open the interpretive field for investigating Christian lived experience to methods beyond the theological and historical. However, the hermeneutical approach goes further by not limiting the categories for investigation “to those activities that are already seen as theological or religious or spiritual in nature.” It situates the interpretive process in terms of the possibility of “investigating all phenomena within their own parameters of meaning” and “thus allows the researcher to attend to issues of the world, in all their complexity, without pre-judging them.” For Perrin’s discussion of this see: Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 41-42.

engagement with the three broad periods of Christian history that have been identified: the resources of the theological approach to investigate the extent to which it engages with the first period of monastic/medieval integration; aspects of the historical approach to investigate the extent to which it engages with the development of that tradition (in this case, the theological changes wrought through the growth of critical rationality in the Enlightenment); and an anthropological approach to examine the extent to which it responds to the dynamics of postmodernity especially the emphasis on the diversity and fullness of the person.<sup>642</sup> For the purposes of this investigation the anthropological approach will not employ a particular non-theological methodology but will use its underlying premise as a point of reference. That is, its attention to the intrinsic nature of spirituality and the corresponding breadth of human experience relating to it.<sup>643</sup>

More specifically, the framework will be used as a means to consider the strength of the dynamic principles of wisdom knowing as they relate to the three areas of Christian lived experience, and test their potency as points of orientation to cultivate wholeness in Christian life. This investigation will be conducted in chapter 4 as a critical analysis in the following way:

1. A theological approach to investigate the significance of the principle of nonduality as an orientation point for self-transcendence.
2. A historical approach to investigate the significance of the principle of creative freedom as an orientation point for life-integration.

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<sup>642</sup> The obvious connection to the three movements of Vatican II developed above is worthy of note: the theological approach with 'ressourcement,' the historical approach with 'aggiornamento,' and the anthropological approach with 'development.'

<sup>643</sup> The way the three approaches will be used for the investigation will be developed in detail in chapter 4.

3. An anthropological approach to investigate the significance of the principle of communion as an orientation point for the movement towards fullness of life in God.

## Conclusion

In conceiving of a vision for the rebirth of Christian wisdom today, Barnhart aims to penetrate through the complex and turbulent changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to maintain one constant – the Incarnation and its shaping of human history. While recognizing the enormous challenge of our time, Barnhart interprets its deeper movement in terms of possibility and growth for humanity – a unique opportunity to bring together what has gone before in creative and unifying ways. The impetus for Barnhart’s endeavour was the watershed moment of the Second Vatican Council. It provided the theological method – to reach back to the source – the one event of the impregnation of unitive reality into the heart of humanity - and from that unequivocal affirmation, to engage with history with renewed confidence. It is as though Barnhart perceived the waves of new life emanating from Vatican II and attempted to move with it to conceive of a framework to illuminate some of the underlying principles at play.

The strength of the approach is its wholistic nature conceived as ‘four turns’ and situated in terms of one central process – ‘unitive incarnation’ – the ‘leaven’ at work within the turmoil of history. Barnhart aims to offer a way to maintain the Christian mystery in “its multidimensional dynamic fullness” while being open to the diversity of today’s context.<sup>644</sup> Identifying the principles of wisdom knowing inherent in the four

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<sup>644</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 188.

turns opens the possibility to apply Barnhart's work in practice. The discipline of Christian spirituality emerged in this same context. It also made the turn to the 'person' and wholeness by focusing on the notion of lived experience, and therefore provides an ideal partner to investigate the significance of Barnhart's wisdom knowing as providing orientation points for Christian life. Investigating the strength and applicability of these principles in Christian life and the growth towards wholeness will form the basis of the remainder of this thesis.

## Chapter 4: Wisdom knowing and lived experience

### Introduction

This chapter will examine the principles of nonduality, creative freedom and communion in relation to Christian lived experience to ascertain their strengths as orientation points for cultivating wholeness in Christian life. The investigation will proceed in three parts through a critical dialogue with three approaches to Christian spirituality and the defining points of lived experience:

1. A theological approach to investigate the principle of nonduality as an orientation point for self-transcendence.
2. A historical approach to investigate the principle of creative freedom as an orientation point for life-integration.
3. An anthropological approach to investigate the principle of communion as an orientation point for the movement towards fullness of life in God.

Each part will begin by describing the way Barnhart situates the principle in Christian life, followed by an analysis through engagement with the relevant approach to Christian spirituality, including an examination of key counter points in the literature. A conclusion will consider the significance of the principle for Christian life, including its connection with the corresponding period of Christian history.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Nonduality with the monastic/medieval integration, creative freedom with the period of the Enlightenment; and communion with postmodernity.

## **Part 1: The principle of nonduality**

### **1.1 Theological approach**

A theological approach will be used to investigate nonduality as an orientation point for self-transcendence. The central concern of the theological approach is whether experience “lives within what has been called the ‘Great Tradition,’ by “constantly turn[ing] back to the sources of our common heritage both for admonition and for instruction.”<sup>646</sup> Despite all the possible variations, there is ultimately “only one Christian spirituality, rooted in the Trinity and lived in light of the Incarnation and the coming of the Spirit.”<sup>647</sup> Lived experience therefore must be interpreted within this framework. This flows into the second requirement: to be centred in the basic pattern of Christian life: the double commandment of ‘love of God and neighbour.’ The question is whether Barnhart’s appeal to nonduality preserves the Trinitarian and Incarnational nature of Christian life and may therefore be considered as an orientation point in Christian lived experience.

### **1.2 Barnhart’s approach to nonduality**

#### **a) The notion of nonduality**

The notion of nonduality became prevalent in Christian spiritual and theological consideration in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through dialogue with Eastern

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<sup>646</sup> Lawrence Cunningham, "Extra Arcam Noe: Criteria for Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 176.

<sup>647</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 107.

religious traditions.<sup>648</sup> Barnhart relies on the work of David Loy to provide a basis for his engagement.<sup>649</sup> Nonduality is extremely difficult to put into words, as the very use of words tends toward differentiation in the process of distinguishing between subject and object. Loy explains that nonduality is the “nondifference of subject and object.”<sup>650</sup> He compares it to our ordinary (dualistic) experience:

We experience the world as a collection of discrete objects interacting in space and time. One of these objects is *me*: I experience myself as a subject looking out at an external world and anxious about my relationship with it.<sup>651</sup>

Nonduality, on the other hand, “is experience in which there is no such distinction” and “our experience not only can be but already *is* and always was nondual.”<sup>652</sup> It follows, that, although our ordinary experience may *seem* dualistic, it “is actually nondual... [and] the spiritual path involves eliminating only the delusion of duality.”<sup>653</sup> The essence of nonduality then is its ‘undifferentiated’ nature. It appeals to an absolute principle in terms of the ultimate oneness of reality. It is perennial in nature and therefore according to Sara Grant it “finds itself ‘contextualized’ in every human situation.”<sup>654</sup>

Relying further on Loy, Barnhart argues “that the three great Asian traditions [Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism]...are centered in the same principle of nondual

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<sup>648</sup> Dialogue with Eastern religious traditions increased significantly in light of The Second Vatican Council with its declaration that “The Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions” and encourages Catholics to “preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral” in them. Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

<sup>649</sup> See: Loy, *Nonduality*.

<sup>650</sup> Loy, *Nonduality*, 25.

<sup>651</sup> Loy, *Nonduality*, 36.

<sup>652</sup> Loy, *Nonduality*, 25-27.

<sup>653</sup> Loy, *Nonduality*, 27.

<sup>654</sup> Sara Grant, *Toward an alternative theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 94.

reality, nondual experience, and nondual consciousness.”<sup>655</sup> For the purposes of this thesis the focus will be on the Hindu tradition of ‘Advaita Vedanta.’ ‘Advaita’ translates as ‘not two’ or ‘nondual,’ and ‘Vedanta’ means the end of the *Vedas*.<sup>656</sup> Advaita Vedanta is the school of Hinduism that focuses on the sacred texts that followed the Vedas, that is, the *Upanishads*.<sup>657</sup> Barnhart quotes a classic text to illustrate its central doctrine:

Because when there is duality as it were, then one smells something, one sees something, one hears something, one speaks something, one thinks something, one knows something. [But] when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one smell and through what, what should one see and through what [repeated for hearing, speaking, thinking and knowing]? Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known-through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the Knower?<sup>658</sup>

Here ‘Brahman’ represents ultimate reality and the Self (‘Atman’) – the deepest dimension or ‘real self’ of the human person. When the person discovers the Self they also discover they *are* Brahman, one with the deepest reality and they no longer ‘know’ something as if it is outside them but rather, ‘everything has become the Self.’ Another Christian scholar of Advaita Vedanta, Sara Grant, writes: “Atman-Brahman and ultimate reality is not only one, but one-without-a-second, totally transcendent and untouched by any shadow of alteration.”<sup>659</sup> Barnhart, therefore, approaches nonduality as an absolute or “*radical*” principle of reality – the perennial ‘isness’ or

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<sup>655</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 57. Loy writes: “Buddhism, Vedanta and Taoism are basing their world view on the experience of subject-object nonduality.” See: Loy, *Nonduality*, 3.

<sup>656</sup> The Vedas are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism and are considered to have been composed between 1500 and 1000 BCE.

<sup>657</sup> The Upanishads followed the Vedas and are considered to have been composed between 800 and 500 BCE.

<sup>658</sup> *Bṛihadāranyaka* Upanishad II.iv,14, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 57.

<sup>659</sup> Grant, *Toward an alternative theology*, 39. She refers to the words: “And so everyone else too should realize thus: “He is my own Self”; “I am this Brahman.” (Ait. Up. 2.1).

'being' of reality in which it is "still undifferentiated...one."<sup>660</sup> As 'undifferentiated' it can be contrasted with an "interpersonal" principle - the experience of relationship 'with' something – it is rather the experience of 'identity,' "a knowing by union, by identity...the knower, the knowing, and the known are one."<sup>661</sup> It is therefore the coming together of the deepest aspect of the person, their nondual identity, with their deepest capacity, self-transcendence.<sup>662</sup>

## **b) Nonduality in Christian life**

Barnhart's theological interpretation of nonduality is developed through engagement with the work of two pioneering Benedictine monks who developed a Christian Ashram in the South of India: Fr Henri Le Saux OSB (commonly known as Abhishiktananda) and Fr Bede Griffiths OSB.<sup>663</sup> The ashram was structured to live the Christian monastic life in the context of Hindu spirituality. From the very beginning they identified the central theological issue: the relationship between and compatibility of "*advaita* [nonduality] and the Trinity."<sup>664</sup> Barnhart shows how Griffiths' and Abhishiktananda's approaches were different, yet complimentary, and establish what he believes is a distinctive 'Christian nonduality.'

Griffiths located the "Christian experience of nonduality in a participation of Jesus' communion of love with the Father," a sharing of the love relationship between God

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<sup>660</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64.

<sup>661</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64, 6.

<sup>662</sup> "The dignity of the human person is rooted in his [sic] creation in the image and likeness of God." "The Church...is both the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1700 and 2245.

<sup>663</sup> The Ashram, 'Shantivanam' was first founded in 1948 by the French priest Jules Monchanin and Abhishiktananda. Bede Griffiths joined in 1968 and died in 1993. The ashram continues today under the auspices of the Camaldolese Benedictine Community. For more information see:

<http://www.bede.griffiths.com/origins-the-three-pioneers/>

<sup>664</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 176.

and humanity that has been reconciled in Christ through the Holy Spirit.<sup>665</sup> While this is an ever deepening union, Griffiths maintains the differentiation between God and humanity and therefore distinguishes the Trinity from Advaita. In doing this Griffiths refutes the possibility of Christian nonduality in terms of an undifferentiated experience:

Jesus can say, then, "I and the Father are one." He knows himself as one with the Father, and yet, as we saw in distinction from the Father. He does not say, "I am the Father," but "I and the Father are one." This is unity in distinction. This mutual interpenetration combining unity and distinction developed...in the whole course of Christian mysticism, as one of its fundamental elements. This is what distinguishes the Christian experience of God from that of the Hindu. The Hindu in his [sic] deepest experience of advaita knows God in an identity of being. "I am Brahman." "Thou art that." The Christian experiences God in a communion of being, a relationship of love, in which there is none the less perfect unity of being.<sup>666</sup>

Abhishktananda, on the other hand, offers a more radical interpretation moving beyond relationship to a 'nonduality of identity.' He proposed that in the 'I am' statements, Jesus is identifying himself with the "unutterable divine Name" (the transcendent God) revealing his undifferentiated or "nondual divine identity."<sup>667</sup> Further, just as Jesus's identity is revealed at his baptism, this is also "theologically one with Christian baptism" and the "realization of Christian baptismal identity" is therefore "the experience of Jesus' baptism and of the nondual divine identity."<sup>668</sup> This became Abhishktananda's central Christian experience:

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<sup>665</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 63.

<sup>666</sup> Bede Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 220, cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 63.

<sup>667</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 61.

<sup>668</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 61. The words of Mark 1:11 correspond to this: "You are my son the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Daniel Harrington comments: "It is doubtful that Mark understood Jesus' sonship as one of adoption, beginning at the baptism. Rather, the evangelist probably interpreted the heavenly voice as confirmation of the already existing relationship between God and Jesus." Daniel J. Harrington, "The Gospel According to Mark," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 599.

The whole mystery is Jesus, the “I AM,” ego eimi; my name is “I am”...I feel too much, more and more, the blazing fire of this I AM, in which all notions about Christ’s personality, ontology, history, etc., have disappeared.<sup>669</sup>

Barnhart argues that with this insight Abhishiktananda had located a “decisive point of contact between Hinduism and Christianity, the point at which the central contemplative experience of the Vedanta meets the divine identity of Jesus – which is communicated to us in baptism.”<sup>670</sup>

Barnhart concludes that both Griffiths’ and Abhishiktananda’s approach to Christian nonduality are valid and necessary. Abhishiktananda reveals a “nonduality of the ‘beginning,’ of the root or ground, the Source, the Father.”<sup>671</sup> This is an experience of “divine-human identity...divine nonduality at the core of the person,” and which becomes more transparent in Christian life through dialogue with Advaita. For the purposes of this thesis, this dimension of Christian life will be reserved for the principle of nonduality. Griffiths, on the other hand, reveals nonduality as “the experience of communion in love” through “participation in the divine communion...an experience of the ‘end,’ the final fulfillment in the Holy Spirit... a new *koinonia*.”<sup>672</sup> The term ‘communion’ will be used for this. (This principle will be developed in part 3 of this chapter).

However, Barnhart argues that Abhishiktandanda’s insight into nonduality reveals a deeply significant principle and he seeks to show in more detail its function within Christian life.

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<sup>669</sup> Abhishiktananda, cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 62.

<sup>670</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64.

<sup>671</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64.

<sup>672</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 63-64.

### 1.3 Theological analysis

#### a) Incompatibility of nonduality with Christian experience

Scholars are critical of Abhishiktananda's position. According to Martin Ganeri he "failed to maintain the balance needed" in his encounter with Advaita and instead "allowed his Christian faith in the Trinity to be sublimated by the Advaitic experience of the unity of all in Brahman."<sup>673</sup> Therefore, Christ is "no longer the unique union of God and man [sic], but an exemplar of the relationship that all human beings have with Brahman."<sup>674</sup> He concludes definitively: "Advaita is...clearly incompatible with the articles of Christian faith. Christianity is theistic and Trinitarian, whereas the Brahman in Advaita Vedanta is not the personal Lord of theism, nor is there any real parallel for the Trinitarian distinction with Brahman."<sup>675</sup> Similarly, William Johnston writes of Abhishiktanda's "sad limitations as a theologian" in his surrender to the Advaitan experience and subsequent compromise of Trinitarian life.<sup>676</sup>

This challenges Barnhart's uptake of Abhishiktananda's approach. Is Barnhart in danger of claiming for the human person equality with God? As Bruce Lescher suggests, Barnhart's "claim for nonduality in Christianity needs more development. Even in language approaching nonduality, the contemplative tradition speaks of an intimate love between distinct persons."<sup>677</sup> Johnston concurs: in Christian experience the person "is not dualistically separated from God" neither are they in a nondualistic 'identification', but "closely united with God in a love that is always moving towards

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<sup>673</sup> Martin Ganeri, "Christian Spirituality and Hinduism," in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Richard Woods and Peter Tyler (London Bloomsbury, 2012), 235.

<sup>674</sup> Ganeri, "Christian Spirituality and Hinduism," 235.

<sup>675</sup> Ganeri, "Christian Spirituality and Hinduism," 234.

<sup>676</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 123.

<sup>677</sup> Lescher, "Review of Bruno Barnhart 'The Future of Wisdom'."

oneness.”<sup>678</sup> They therefore maintain the distinction between God and the human person in the context of a Trinitarian approach complementing Griffiths’ position as developed above.

## **b) Nonduality and Christian baptism**

Barnhart contends however that confining Christian experience to the relational pole “rejects a key that will prove extremely fruitful.”<sup>679</sup> He is able to criticize Abhishiktandanda’s tendency “to absolutize this experience of ‘initial nonduality’ at the expense of an integral Christian theological vision,” while maintaining that he had a genuine insight into a “deeper and more revolutionary” principle of Christian lived experience.<sup>680</sup> The more revolutionary position is to locate the reception of a nondual identity with Christian baptism. It will be argued that in developing this theological position Barnhart reveals an important interpretative principle of Christian lived experience.

Barnhart puts the Christian life in the context of the essential oneness of God:

In the biblical tradition, God is One (Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29). In the New Testament, God and creation, God and humanity become one in Jesus Christ. This oneness, then is transmitted to us in our baptism...[through] the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 124.

<sup>679</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64.

<sup>680</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64.

<sup>681</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 64. He also highlight Eph 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

The baptismal experience is an initiation into the fundamental unity of Christian life – “the gateway to life in the Spirit...we are...reborn as sons of God.”<sup>682</sup> The familial language emphasises the depth of the gift, it enables the person to become “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4).<sup>683</sup> Through immersion into the Pascal Mystery, the whole person is reborn and receives a full sharing of Jesus’ own life. Barnhart shows how this is revealed in the structure of Mark’s Gospel<sup>684</sup> and is fundamental to John’s Gospel.<sup>685</sup> In the letter to the Romans it is powerfully illuminated:

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rm 6:4-5)

Barnhart then asserts that there is an aspect of this partaking that corresponds to nonduality. This can be shown by reflecting on Jesus’ own experience: just as he “related to the Father both as the Ground and Source of his being, one with himself”

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<sup>682</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1213.

<sup>683</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 460. Barnhart then highlights aspects of Christian tradition that affirm this full sharing in divine life. In the early centuries “the great ‘heresies’ were rejected by the church because they negated or endangered...human participation in the divine being and life which was the gift of Christ...‘If God did not become a human person in Christ, then we could not become God.’” Barnhart, “One Spirit, One Body,” 276.

<sup>684</sup> Barnhart writes of Mark’s Gospel: “At the beginning of Mark’s Gospel we encounter the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan (1:9-11) and in the scene that originally concluded that Gospel (16: 1-8) we are present at the tomb, within which the women find a young man clothed in white. Beginning and end are chiastically related; this symmetry identifies the empty tomb with Jesus’ baptism. Since, in the early rite of Christian baptism the font was often identified with the tomb of Jesus and the newly baptized person was clad in a white garment, the meaning of Mark’s very deliberate structural symmetry is this: Christian baptism is an immersion, a participation, in the baptism of Jesus (as well as in his death and resurrection), and in this rite of initiation the believer is identified with Jesus himself.” See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 65.

<sup>685</sup> Barnhart writes: “John’s prologue (into which two narrative verses about John the Baptist are cross-woven as interpretive clues) expresses the baptismal reality as a communication of light and life, grace and truth, fullness and the knowledge of God, by joining, in its rhythmic, circular language, the baptismal experience of the disciple with the event of Jesus’ baptism.” See Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 66.

(*in his nondual identity*), and “as the Other to whom he turned to in prayer” (*in interpersonal relationship*), these two aspects are also intrinsic to Christian life.<sup>686</sup>

Jesus’ divine (nondual) identity is revealed when he “identifies himself...with the words I am.”<sup>687</sup> At times this is predicated with a “particular mode in which Jesus mediates divine participation” to his disciples.<sup>688</sup> However there are times when the words are used “absolutely, without predicate”<sup>689</sup> (e.g. John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5; and Mark 14:62). In these cases Jesus “is identifying himself with the unutterable divine Name, Jahweh...[and] divine participation is expressed without mediation.”<sup>690</sup> This corresponds to an undifferentiated nondual identity with transcendence (God).

Biblical scholars confirm the significance of the ‘I am’ statements. Raymond Brown writes of John 8:24 (“unless you believe that I am he”) that Jesus “bears the divine name”<sup>691</sup> and of John 8:58 (“Before Abraham was, I am”), “no clearer implication of divinity is found in the Gospel tradition.”<sup>692</sup> These absolute uses have “the effect of portraying Jesus as divine with (pre)existence as his identity.”<sup>693</sup> Francis Maloney adds that Jesus is speaking both “from within the story time of the events of the feast of Tabernacles, but [also] he transcends this time in an analepsis, a reference back

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<sup>686</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 90.

<sup>687</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 272.

<sup>688</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 272. See for example: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35); “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12) and “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11).

<sup>689</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 272. See for example, “Very truly I tell you before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)

<sup>690</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 272.

<sup>691</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 350.

<sup>692</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 367.

<sup>693</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 139.

to a point before and beyond the time of the story. Before the time of Abraham he was already in existence.”<sup>694</sup>

Barnhart then links the ‘I am’ statements to Christian baptism. He argues that “what is revealed in Jesus – since he is a human being as well as divine - is to be understood as given also to those who believe in him,”<sup>695</sup> and Jesus is therefore “claiming that name [‘I am’] for us as a human being.”<sup>696</sup> In support he appeals to the ‘The Man born blind’ (John 9:1-41) which follows directly from the ‘I am’ statements of John 8. In the passage Jesus sends the man born blind to the pool of Siloam, interpreted symbolically as “sending him to baptism” through which he regains his sight.<sup>697</sup> In response the people are confused and there is controversy about whether this healing is possible. They ask the man himself and he responds repeatedly: “I am the man” (John 9:9). Barnhart suggests that the use of the phrase ‘I am’ reveals his full personhood including “an immediate sharing in the divine identity by this new birth in Christ.”<sup>698</sup> Therefore, this “one representation in the Gospel of John communicates the passing on...of that gift of nonduality to us,” a gift intrinsic to Christian baptism.<sup>699</sup>

Barnhart concludes that baptismal initiation activates “birth into our truest, deepest identity...an awakening to the divine nonduality, to our being in God, our birth and

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<sup>694</sup> Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1998), 284. In chapter 2 it was also shown how the early church articulated Christ as the wisdom of God in highly unitive language. See chapter 2, part 1.3. Its fundamental doctrine as expressed in the Nicene Creed – Jesus is “consubstantial with the Father.”

<sup>695</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 272.

<sup>696</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>697</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>698</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 272.

<sup>699</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

life in the Only-begotten of God.”<sup>700</sup> This takes Christian experience beyond solely a relationship with God, to confirm a reality and experience that is before, or ‘at the birth (or root) of,’ the relational dimension. Therefore, it functions before the differentiation between God and the person, at a nondual level, so that we not only “have a personal relationship with God in and through Christ but a union – even an identity – with Christ and thereby with God.”<sup>701</sup> It is here that Barnhart attempts to translate the Advaitic experience into Christian terms:

We experience our identity with Jesus in our absolute unity, our nondual unity with God...as if we were the one child of God, just as Jesus is...and this prior to a communion of love between the Son and the Father...our being and the being of God are indistinguishable; we experience the very consciousness, the very experience, the very mind, the very soul, the very feeling as it were of God...that’s the baptismal experience – the absolute unitive experience in Christianity.<sup>702</sup>

This represents Barnhart’s boldest claim in terms of the (nondual) meaning of baptism in Christian life and his position requires further consideration. Barnhart is careful not to simply collapse the human person’s relation to God into a divine identity alone as if they ‘become’ God through baptism. Firstly, he firstly places its reception into the context of the Paschal Mystery and the gift that it endows. The gift realises our participation in the ‘one’ birth in God, and which makes us children of God. The depth of the gift goes beyond the reach of relationship alone (which implies a beginning point of separation from God), to realise the fullness of our personhood growing from God, and founded at this birth point in the gift of divine identity. At this root point ‘our being and the being of God are indistinguishable.’ In support Barnhart highlights the “nondual consciousness in Meister Eckhart” who “realized that the

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<sup>700</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 66.

<sup>701</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 71.

<sup>702</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

primordial contemplative experience is the experience of our immersion in the one divine birth.”<sup>703</sup> Eckhart writes of the identity experience in terms of the person’s “highest and dearest leave-taking is if he/she takes leave of God for God,” to never give “God anything” nor “receive anything from God: it is a single oneness and a pure union.”<sup>704</sup> Secondly, as will be developed further below, Barnhart also emphasises that the reception of the gift of divine identity is fulfilled in terms of an ongoing relationship with God in Trinitarian terms.

In the meantime, however, further support for the nondual dimension in Christian life can be garnered by considering the way scholars treat the episode of ‘the man born blind.’ Brown makes the connection with Christian baptism (“there is no doubt that the Church found a baptismal lesson in the healing of the blind man”),<sup>705</sup> however he does not concede the same magnitude to the ‘I am’ statement (“it is an instance of a purely secular use of the phrase.”)<sup>706</sup> This is echoed by Barret: “at this point he is writing simple narrative.”<sup>707</sup> Maloney and Byrne on the other hand, acknowledge the connection to identity: Maloney suggests: “in a way similar to Jesus’ own self-identification (cf 4:26; 6:20; 8:58), the cured man speaks for himself”,<sup>708</sup> and Brenden

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<sup>703</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 66.

<sup>704</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermon 57*, cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 77. See also for example the words of Eckhart: “Why did God become man [sic]? So that I might be born God Himself. God died that I might die to the whole world and all created things. It is in this sense that we should understand the saying of our Lord: ‘All that I have heard from my Father, I have revealed to you’ What does the Son hear from his Father? The Father can only give birth, the Son can only be born. All that the Father has and is, the profundity of the divine being and the divine nature, He [sic] brings forth all at once in His [sic] only-begotten Son. That is what the Son “hears” from the Father, that is what he has revealed, that we may be the same Son. All that the Son has he has from his Father: essence and nature, that we may be the same only-begotten Son...” Meister Eckhart, *Sermon 16*, cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 113.

<sup>705</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 380-81.

<sup>706</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 373.

<sup>707</sup> CK Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text, Second Edition* (London: SPCK, 1978), 359.

<sup>708</sup> Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 292.

Byrne writes: “it is hard to hear this phrase without picking up its echoes of Jesus’ own self-identification. (4:26; 6:20; 8:2, 28,58; 18:5)”<sup>709</sup>

Sandra Schneiders goes further. She firstly assumes the “baptismal lens” of the episode as providing “a hermeneutical entrance into this sphere of Johannine spirituality.”<sup>710</sup> She then suggests that in remaining “nameless” (i.e. ‘the man’), the man born blind becomes a “representative” figure for “everyperson.”<sup>711</sup> This is connected directly to Jesus who is also “referred to by his opponents as ‘this man’ suggesting the identity between the man and Jesus.”<sup>712</sup> The man born blind becomes “everychristian” revealing the heart of Johannine spirituality.<sup>713</sup>

By being plunged into the life-giving waters of the Sent One [he] is enlightened and enlivened by divine Light and Life and is able to respond to the questions by friends or challenges by enemies as Jesus, that is, as an *alter Christus, ego eimi* (I am). The Christian, a child of God, is identified with the Son of God, the Sent One.<sup>714</sup>

In this analysis, the ‘I am’ statement holds enormous significance (“overtones of divinization”) and indicates Barnhart’s claim for nonduality in Christian life has merit.<sup>715</sup>

His position is further strengthened by demonstrating its intrinsic relationship with incarnational and Trinitarian life. He shows this by contrasting the “atemporal or transtemporal nonduality at the core of Eastern wisdoms...[with the] historical

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<sup>709</sup> Brendan Byrne, *Life Abounding: A Reading of John’s Gospel* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2014), 162.

<sup>710</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 150.

<sup>711</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 152-153.

<sup>712</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 153.

<sup>713</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 157.

<sup>714</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 157.

<sup>715</sup> Schneiders, *Written that you may Believe*, 164.

actuality”<sup>716</sup> of Christ, or in other words, the contrast between a perennial “unitive Reality” and a one-time “unitive event.”<sup>717</sup> It is here that the encounter with Hindu Vedanta, while revealing a deep resonance with Christian experience, also illuminates “a decisive difference...at the heart of the Christ-event itself...the event of this new divine-human birth in Christ.”<sup>718</sup> Barnhart argues that in the incarnation:

*Nonduality has become a human being.* And in this human being all things in heaven and on earth are to be gathered together. A single line from John’s prologue has become the central column, the backbone of Christian faith and theology: “the word became flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1: 14). The event of Christ brings nonduality down to earth. The divine wisdom has come to dwell in the bodiliness of humanity.<sup>719</sup>

The ‘newness’ of the event realizes “a transformation in divine nonduality, so that it becomes manifest in the dimensions of form, of movement, and of matter.”<sup>720</sup> It “becomes a dynamism within the church and the world” and “continues in history as “the unfolding and widening nondual event.”<sup>721</sup> By appealing to a ‘nondual event,’ Barnhart offers a resolution to the question of trinity and nonduality. He does this by putting nonduality in the context of wisdom theology as developed in chapter 2: the incarnation (of wisdom) as the fusion of the Trinity and humanity is now conceived in

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<sup>716</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 68-69.

<sup>717</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 283. Rowan William makes this point even more sharply: “By affirming that all ‘meaning’, every assertion about the significance of life and reality, must be judged by reference to a brief succession of contingent event in Palestine, Christianity – almost without realizing it – closed off the path to ‘timeless truth.’” See: Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1979), 1.

<sup>718</sup> Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East," 302.

<sup>719</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 176. With this insight Cynthia Bourgeault suggests he has “integrated the distinctively different Western and Eastern understandings of nonduality,” and “his deep grounding in Christianity’s incarnational epicenter made him unwilling to conflate Christian Wisdom with the basically monistic tradition of Sophia Perennis, or ‘perennial wisdom,’” and therefore offers a way “toward an authentic Christian nonduality.” See forward in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>720</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 69-70.

<sup>721</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 68, 70.

nondual terms and realized in the shape of the cross.<sup>722</sup> The vertical axis corresponds to the purely interior nondual experience; and the horizontal axis corresponds to the communion of love in the Spirit that grows throughout history towards deeper 'communion.' In this context, the persons' nondual identity as undifferentiated experience does not compromise the essential relational (and Trinitarian) nature of Christian life, rather, it represents the root. At this root within the person, at their deepest point of self-transcendence they are identified with God.

Bringing the two axes together, however, ensures that this deepest point is understood in the context of the fundamental relationship with God. Together, this represents the "inner structure of Christian life" and the interaction between them achieves the basic pattern of Christian life, 'love of God' (now understood in terms of being rooted in nondual identity) and 'love of neighbour' (understood in terms of communion).<sup>723</sup> As Cunningham asserts, this fundamental structure fulfils "the essential note of catholicity" from "Christology itself...to reconcile opposites" at the "the conjunction of the bodiliness (humanity) [communion] and the transcendent

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<sup>722</sup> See chapter 2 1.2 a)

<sup>723</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 71. Here Barnhart also cites Evelyn Underhill and her identification of two currents of mysticism: "'intimate-personal' and 'transcendental-metaphysical.'" See Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, 415, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 68. Bernard McGinn also describes "two major paradigms" in the mystical tradition: a union of "loving conformity with the Divine Spirit" (corresponding to communion) and also an experience of "a complete merging, or identification, with God, an identity based on Christ's prayer, '...that they all may be one, as you Father are in me and I am in you, may they be one in us...' (John 17.21)" (corresponding to nonduality). Bernard McGinn, "The Mystical Tradition," in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Peter Tyler and Richard Woods (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2012), 32-33. Richard Rohr also writes of nonduality at the heart of the Christian mystery: "Jesus is the image of full humanity and full divinity put together, which logically is impossible - you are either one or the other. So we have nonduality at the core, at the centre of the whole mystery." Richard Rohr, "Where do Christianity and Nonduality meet," *Science and Nonduality*, accessed January 13 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvg2DgjVgbE>. As the Catechism states: "Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 481.

(divinity) [nonduality] of the human person without dissolving the coincidence into either one of its poles."<sup>724</sup>

Further, by situating nonduality in the context of the cross, Barnhart is operating within, what Downey terms, the ultimate "corrective...the vital center for reflection and discernment" for Christian lived experience. The shape of the cross provides the hermeneutical centre par excellence and "calls for the integration of a wide range of spiritual experiences into the redemptive mystery of Christ's dying and rising to new life," including those "which do not fit into inherited categories for understanding (and) seem to be without precedent in the life of the church."<sup>725</sup> In opening up the possibility of nonduality in Christian experience Barnhart has applied this 'hermeneutic of the cross' and by doing so, sheds a penetrating light on the radical nature of the redemptive mystery – the unconditional gift of God's life 'born' in the human person and realised as a divine nondual identity received in baptism.

#### **1.4 Nonduality and self-transcendence**

In conclusion, Barnhart builds his case for nonduality in Christian life in two ways: he roots it within the baptismal event, and he shows how it functions within Trinitarian life. He holds the tension of an undifferentiated nondual (identity) within the larger (and relational) context in which Christian experience grows throughout history in communion. In baptismal initiation, the human person is at one, born from and identified with God, at their deepest point of self-transcendence. A theological analysis indicates that Barnhart's treatment of nonduality does merit consideration as

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<sup>724</sup> Cunningham, "Extra Arcam Noe," 173. See Mark: 12:30-31

<sup>725</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 108-109.

a point of orientation for the self-transcending movement in Christian lived experience. What are the implications for wholeness in Christian life?

Barnhart argues that it institutes “a revolutionary *pivot of identity* which brings us to the center of a new Christian wisdom” from which significant consequences flow.<sup>726</sup> Firstly, it establishes a unitive rather than an analytical starting point for theological and spiritual reflection - a “simple, unified theological vision...a single theological organism,” therefore replacing “the complex, compartmentalized structure of post-Reformation Catholic theology.”<sup>727</sup> Secondly, the human person is understood from a unitive viewpoint, the person “is a unity and...the ground of human experience is a unitive consciousness.”<sup>728</sup> In light of the baptismal connection, this is “newly present in us from the moment of our initiation” in other words there is a “fullness at the beginning” of Christian life.<sup>729</sup> It is “the plenitude [that] came into the world in Christ and [is] poured into humanity” that is made the primary point of reference, and which corresponds to the depth of the human person.<sup>730</sup>

Thirdly, establishing freedom and fullness from the beginning of Christian life reverses the tendency that had developed over time to present the spiritual life as an ascending ‘ladder’ towards unity with God (and therefore self-transcendence) and

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<sup>726</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 67.

<sup>727</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 72. Barnhart also highlights the insight of Emile Mersch into the essential unity of Christianity. Mersch writes: “The whole of Christianity is unity. And it has to be if the intellect is to point out what, in Christianity, is its essence. Christianity is the taking up of the universe of mankind [sic] into the unity of God through the unity of Christ. The science that explains Christianity, theology, must give expression to this tendency toward unity. It will be more truly itself, it will be more truly a science and the science of Christianity, in proportion as it resolves itself systematically, energetically, and exclusively into unity.” See: Emile Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, 37, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 72-73.

<sup>728</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 90.

<sup>729</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 82.

<sup>730</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 82.

may only happen through an arduous process to which few are called.<sup>731</sup> This approach tended to replace the “dynamism of the Christ-event – both simple and subtle in its immediacy and fullness – with a flat and linear arithmetic formula.”<sup>732</sup> It had also tended to situate the human person in terms of deficiency, even “a subtle, disabling theft of identity, experienced as alienation and evacuation of self” by replacing “the divine agency of grace with a program of human efforts.”<sup>733</sup>

The principle of nonduality revolutionizes Christian life by establishing radical participation in God at its birth point and provides an unconditional affirmation to orientate lived experience. It reveals a wholistic theological principle at the source (in baptism) and that inspired the early writers. Therefore, it emphasizes a unitive principle of interpretation recovered from the early period of Christian history and reconceives it for today.<sup>734</sup> It is from this perspective that the implications can be unfolded “in the lives of individuals, of the church and of humanity as a whole” throughout history:<sup>735</sup>

In this unitive light is the ultimate spiritual identity of the person, and from this light, or this ground, is born every human thought, action, creation, and experience. History itself, therefore, with all its complexity and obscurity, its ascents and its descents, unfolds in the unitive light.<sup>736</sup>

It is to this historical process that we turn in examining the principle of creative freedom.

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<sup>731</sup> This became pronounced from the 12<sup>th</sup> century as was developed in chapter 2, part 2.2.

<sup>732</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 83.

<sup>733</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 83.

<sup>734</sup> The unitive perspective was developed in chapter 2, part 1.

<sup>735</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 69.

<sup>736</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 92.

## Part 2: The principle of creative freedom

### 2.1 Historical approach

A historical approach will be used to investigate the significance of the principle of creative freedom as an orientation point for life-integration in Christian life. It is of historical concern because Barnhart argues that a new growth of creative freedom became manifest at a particular historical time and place, that is, from (approximately) the 12<sup>th</sup> century Western world. Further, this represents a distinctive penetration of the incarnational process leading to profound developments for human life in the world. A central concern of the historical approach is whether in interpreting lived experience throughout history there is sufficient engagement with historical and theological perspectives. Historical methodologies are used to consider the complexity of history so as not to use history to confirm pre-existing assumptions about the shape of the spiritual life. Theological principles are also used to approach history from “within a community of faith responding to a revelation accepted as normative,” to discern God’s action in history.<sup>737</sup> It involves the task of discerning how the tradition grows through and in history - paying “close attention to the past in search of riches which can enhance life in the Spirit in today’s world” while also recognizing “that the past has both gems and rubble, and that these must be sifted through in an effort to profit from...[these] riches.”<sup>738</sup> The question is whether Barnhart’s appeal to creative freedom as emerging in Western history derives from a meaningful engagement with theological and historical perspectives

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<sup>737</sup> Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 934.

<sup>738</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 60.

and might therefore be considered as an orientation point in Christian lived experience.

## 2.2 Barnhart's approach to creative freedom

### a) Creative freedom and Western history

Barnhart firstly defines 'the West' itself as "compounded by Greek, Latin and Germanic elements [and]...gathered into a unity by the Roman empire and then the Latin Church."<sup>739</sup> He identifies two distinguishing features: firstly, "it is the largest human group that has been constellated by the Christian revelation" and second it "has, without close parallel, mediated the unification of humanity, the movement toward one world."<sup>740</sup> He suggests that over the past five hundred years, the Western world experienced profound development that took it a long way "in a certain direction...in front of the other cultures of the world," a time of such significance as to merit the term "Western Axial period."<sup>741</sup> He summarises some key aspects of these developments:

1. A new intellectual autonomy through the liberation of reason so that the individual was free to think for him or herself and to arrive at independent conclusions. The space opened for critical thought and the scientific

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<sup>739</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 98.

<sup>740</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 98. The one exception is the Roman Empire at the beginning of Christianity. Here Barnhart refers to the work of Christopher Dawson, *Religion and World History*.

<sup>741</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 94-95. Karen Armstrong also identifies Western history in these terms: "Today we are amid a second Axial Age and are undergoing a period of transition similar to that of the first Axial Age. Its roots lie in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the modern era, when the people of Western Europe began to evolve a different type of society. Since that time, Western civilization has transformed the world. The economic changes of the last four hundred years have been accompanied by immense social, political, and intellectual revolutions, with the development of an entirely different scientific and rational concept of the nature of truth." See: Karen Armstrong, "A New Axial Age," *Adishakti*, accessed March 2017, [http://www.adishakti.org/\\_/a\\_new\\_axial\\_age\\_by\\_karen\\_armstrong.htm](http://www.adishakti.org/_/a_new_axial_age_by_karen_armstrong.htm).

method prevailed over traditional wisdom. The secular world emerges in this context.

2. A new sense of personal freedom and creativity. The individual was free to move in different directions from the collective rule, tradition and institution and begin to actualise a capacity for innovation.
3. A new progressive dynamism appeared within history. Static structures, especially the ancient structures of social privilege, were questioned.
4. The birth of a keen historical sense, a growing ability to interpret reality in terms of a process of development, exemplified most obviously by the biological theory of evolution.<sup>742</sup>

These factors were all interwoven, “expressions of a single, massive historical process” that is referred to as ‘modernity.’<sup>743</sup> Its manifestations are evident in the “humanism of the Italian Renaissance” with its “expansive human spirit;”<sup>744</sup> in the “powerful movement of human rationality” of the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked by “discovery and conquest” and the “scientific enlightenment” in which there was “an awakening to human potencies within this world, powers that rationally comprehend and then transform the natural environment of humanity;”<sup>745</sup> also in the “creative outburst of the Romantic movement;”<sup>746</sup> and finally in the “series of political revolutions.”<sup>747</sup>

Barnhart identifies the core principle, however, as the emergence of the “conscious, free and creative person in the world,” tracing this to the changing context of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>748</sup> (For the sake of simplicity we will settle on the 12<sup>th</sup> century as marking the general point of change). As feudal society “gave way to a society centred in towns and cities...a new merchant class gained power, and the mobility of people and money increased” a new space for human freedom developed.<sup>749</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> This represents a summary of Barnhart’s six point description of some of the key aspects of Western historical development: See Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 95-96.

<sup>743</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 96.

<sup>744</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 115.

<sup>745</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 116.

<sup>746</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 131.

<sup>747</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 125.

<sup>748</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 97.

<sup>749</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 104.

Barnhart cites the historian Colin Morris who describes the fundamental movement as:

A concern with self-discovery; an interest in the relations between people, and in the role of the individual within society; an assessment of people by their inner intentions rather than by external acts. These concerns were, moreover, conscious and deliberate. 'Know yourself' was one of the most frequently quoted injunctions.<sup>750</sup>

The emphasis was on the individual person, free “from the collective matrix of religion, society, and culture.”<sup>751</sup> An “individual self-consciousness” emerges that claims “a space of freedom” for itself to move in any direction.<sup>752</sup> The term ‘creative freedom’ is used to express this development. In contrast to the undifferentiated nature of ‘nonduality’ it is defined by its capacity for ‘differentiation’ – “the whole person is set free, released into the openness of the world...[it] embraces - or releases - all of the potencies of the person.”<sup>753</sup> It is the facility of the individual to make decisions independently and without compromise to the group (especially the collective power structures set in place by groups). It derives from a sense of a personal identity and generates new possibilities and creativity. Barnhart writes of the “Copernican revolution” as an iconic event in this regard.<sup>754</sup>

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<sup>750</sup> Collin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200*, 158, cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 104.

<sup>751</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 95.

<sup>752</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>753</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 126.

<sup>754</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 116. Barnhart writes: “The new awakening of the human person within the world is realized both symbolically and actually in the Copernican revolution - the astronomical breakthrough pioneered by Copernicus and Kepler, in which humanity begins to awaken to its actual position within the solar system and the universe. For these natural philosophers, the great discovery had not only a cosmological meaning but a metaphysical and theological significance. As “man” awoke from his mythical slumber he not only beheld the physical sun blazing in its sovereignty as the gravitational center and luminous source of his world, but realized the sun of divine intellect suddenly shining forth at his own center, and so found himself the radiant center of the universe around him. This moment in human history calls to mind Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco of the awakening of Adam by what appears to be the transmission of a divine energy through the extended hand of God.”

## b) Creative freedom in Christian life

Barnhart then makes the connection to Christian life: “freedom that fundamental gift of Christ...has flourished uniquely in the West” and the corresponding “transition from Christendom to a secular Western world...is a further unfolding of the event of Christ.”<sup>755</sup> The West therefore has “a unique theological importance,” it represents a necessary transitional stage “between the Christ-event and the achievement of a global Christianity - of the appearance of a global human unity” that becomes at least conceivable in our time.<sup>756</sup> The manifestation of this new level of human freedom is intrinsic to this endeavour. He considers the historical shape of the Western period from a range of different perspectives before focusing on the new emergence of individual freedom in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>757</sup> This development is greatly significant as it represents theologically, the awakening of humanity to a deeper and more “conscious participation in [the] historical process of incarnation.”<sup>758</sup> It was revealed in the “new religious movements” that arose at this time reflecting “a rediscovery of the gospel, of evangelism...of the preaching of the word of God” and the centrality of “religious poverty.”<sup>759</sup> St Francis of Assisi is iconic in this regard.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>755</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 99.

<sup>756</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 98.

<sup>757</sup> See Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 99-103. He draws on a range of schemas to understand this period of history relying particularly on Rahner’s three churches: “(1) the short period of Judeo-Christianity; (2) the period of the church in a particular cultural group, that of Hellenism and European culture and civilization (from the first century until Vatican II); (3) the period in which the church’s living space is from the very outset the whole world. (This period begins with Vatican II) ...[and marks] the inception of the ‘world church.’” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 97-98. The second phase Rahner identifies as the “age of European Christianity” or ‘the Western period’ which “comprehends the patristic, medieval and modern periods.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 98.

<sup>758</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>759</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 105, 104. The Franciscans and Dominicans notably.

<sup>760</sup> Barnhart writes: “Francis himself is the eloquent visible sign of a larger movement, in which the Christian West realizes its own identity and finds its freedom. The human person begins to come forth in this world in the full magnitude of its dimensions, and Francis, in his universality, expresses this actualization in the simplest and most demanding of languages - that of the body, of physical human existence.” See Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 110.

Barnhart turns to MD Chenu's study of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and his insight that the "recovery of the gospel brought about a liberation and animation of human creative energy in the world."<sup>761</sup> This was particularly "evident in a new self-awareness of the human person as rational agent" and a significant manifestation of this was revealed in the movement from wisdom to scholastic theology.<sup>762</sup> Chenu writes:

Henceforth [people] wished, in the light of faith and by using the heritage of revelation, to intellectualize and systematize their beliefs and to explain the word of God in a human way. As the incarnation of divine truth in the human mind, faith was not some extraordinary charisma whose transcendence would keep it above human modes of thought. Faith put to work the various resources of reason, thus introducing them into the mystery of God. By engendering a theology, faith was achieving its logical perfection.<sup>763</sup>

This insight is of profound significance to Barnhart: the new clarity of thought characteristic of scholastic theology (in contrast to the more symbolic and poetic wisdom approach that had gone before it) represented a new growth for humanity – an 'incarnation of divine truth in the human mind' demonstrated in the capacity to generate a more reasoned theological discourse, and thereby explain the word of God in a more 'human way.' It was therefore "an incarnational movement: a descent from the earlier epistemology, in which faith...finds its complement, on the level of human existence, in *reason*."<sup>764</sup> Christian life at this time was therefore entering "a new phase of life in this world: a phase shaped by the gospel impulse of *incarnation*...in which the potentialities of the human person will unfold with a new

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<sup>761</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 105. Chenu writes: "... history shows that it was the Christian's return to the gospel which guaranteed his [sic] presence in the world and that it was this presence in the world which secured the efficacy of the gospel." Marie-Dominique, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspective in the Latin West*, 238, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 105.

<sup>762</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 105.

<sup>763</sup> Marie-Dominique, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 236, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 105-106.

<sup>764</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 105.

fullness.”<sup>765</sup> The key ‘potentiality’ at the source of this movement was a new level of individual freedom realised through the function of reason as expressed in the rational clarity of the new theology.

This emergent freedom, like the spark of divinity shining anew, is the nucleus from which revolutionary changes unfold “in the evolution of the Western sense of the person, of justice, of human rights, and human potential in this world as well as in the still more material flourishing of science and technology in the West.”<sup>766</sup> These benefits also move beyond the explicitly religious or spiritual to create a secular world. It is their humanizing impact that confirms for Barnhart their incarnational source – they reveal “a new orientation toward the world, a descending movement” into ordinary human life and the expansion of that life for each individual.<sup>767</sup> Barnhart therefore draws a bold line of growth from the 12<sup>th</sup> century changes through Western development and into our time as following an incarnational trajectory.

For the purposes of this thesis it is the claim that this new operation of reason (as revealed in the change in theological style), represents a significant initiation point for this incarnational growth, that will be pursued for further analysis. This claim is particularly significant because it appears to contradict a fundamental tenet of Barnhart’s wisdom approach – the centrality of participatory rather than objective language. As we have seen, Barnhart also holds that it was the growth in objective

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<sup>765</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 108.

<sup>766</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 138.

<sup>767</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 118. Barnhart also refers to work of Charles Taylor who writes: “Another major idea we have been developing is that of the free, self-determining subject. This is a freedom defined negatively by the decline or erosion of all those pictures of cosmic order which could claim to define substantively our paradigm purposes as rational beings. But it is also defined positively by the reflexive powers which are central to our modern subject, those which confer the different kinds of inwardness on him or her, the powers of disengaged reason, and the creative imagination.” Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, 395, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 126.

language from the 12<sup>th</sup> century that had the effect of fragmenting the importance of the wisdom theology that went before it. Reconciling this tension highlights Barnhart's insight into the deeper function of creative freedom at the source of this change in theological style, its part in the incarnational process, and therefore in Christian life. Creative freedom therefore becomes an essential principle of his renewed wisdom approach. The significance of Barnhart's proposal is further illuminated by contrasting it to the common interpretation of the emergence of scholastic theology (and the ongoing rationalising of theology that followed it) – that the change in language was reductive rather than enhancing of Christian lived experience.

## **2.3 Historical analysis**

### **a) Ascendency of reason as reductive of Christian lived experience**

It has been noted in chapter 2 how scholars mark the significance of the change in theological method from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>768</sup> Schneiders shows how theology prior to that time would today be termed “biblical spirituality” and scripture was used “for the purpose of understanding and living the faith and/or a biblically elaborated theological exploration of spiritual experience.”<sup>769</sup> In this context, scholastic theology (and its growth into neo-scholasticism), with its emphasis on objective rather than participatory language, is interpreted for its reductive impact on Christian life as it was the source of the division of spirituality and theology. For Sheldrake the division was “a tragedy for both” as “reason began to triumph over imagination and the ability

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<sup>768</sup> See chapter 2 part 2.2

<sup>769</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 685.

to define truth over experience of the sacred.”<sup>770</sup> McGinn reflects on the “sad history of the separation of theology and spirituality,”<sup>771</sup> and Principe suggests “the excessive multiplication of subtle questions, and the emphasis on a morals of obligation and casuistry robbed theology of its spiritual dynamism.”<sup>772</sup> The previously more holistic approach to Christian life had been compromised and fragmented - “there came to be two paths to God: The way of knowledge/ thought/ theory and that of love/prayer/action, the first a journey of the mind and the other a journey of the heart.”<sup>773</sup>

William Johnston develops this position further.<sup>774</sup> His work covers much of the same ground as Barnhart’s and seeks a renewal of mysticism that responds to our diverse and challenging times. He also defines mysticism in wisdom terms: “the wisdom that goes beyond words and letters, beyond reasoning and thinking, beyond imaging and fantasy, beyond and before and after the timeless reality.”<sup>775</sup> When he considers Western history he focuses particularly on the development of the scientific method in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and its impact on mysticism.<sup>776</sup> Johnston argues that the method “and the mentality it engendered made a transcendent God irrelevant.”<sup>777</sup> The focus had changed from the (interior) spiritual to the (exterior) material world – on what could be observed with the senses and therefore objectified. This impacted all aspects of life including theology, as “theologians stopped asking questions and began to elaborate sure and certain propositions. The spiritual search came to a

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<sup>770</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 40.

<sup>771</sup> McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit," 35.

<sup>772</sup> Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 934.

<sup>773</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 685.

<sup>774</sup> See: Johnston, *Arise, My Love*.

<sup>775</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, xvi.

<sup>776</sup> See: Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 12-18.

<sup>777</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 13.

standstill.”<sup>778</sup> The objectivity of the scientific method pushed spiritual (or wisdom) knowing to the margins.

Further, its pervasiveness had created a modern world that “for all its mighty achievements” desperately “needs transformation:”

Apart from the violence, the injustice, the hunger, the despair, the anguish, the systematic suicide, apart from this there is the need to transform and humanize the television, the radio, the press, the Internet and all media that are telling us what to think and how to act.<sup>779</sup>

For Johnston then the developments of Western history (driven by the rise of reason and the scientific method) had a profoundly negative impact on spirituality and a generally dehumanizing effect on humanity. The renewal of mysticism is the antidote so that “union among men and women of all religions will grow and they will dedicate themselves to peace and to the salvation of the world.”<sup>780</sup> In Johnston’s analysis, however, there is little regard for the new human growth that was being birthed at this time and only limited recognition of the corresponding humanizing impact through the application of the scientific method and the increasing sensitivity to the human person and their individual rights. A similar analysis to Johnston’s can be seen in the work of Bede Griffiths and Richard Rohr.<sup>781</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 31.

<sup>779</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 20.

<sup>780</sup> Johnston, *Arise, My Love*, 241.

<sup>781</sup> Bede Griffiths writes: “It was only at the Renaissance that the movement towards the emancipation of man [sic] from the universal Law, from the sacred order of truth and morality really took hold. Then the reflective consciousness turned away from the eternal light of Truth and began to concentrate on man [sic] and nature. The marvels of modern science and technology, the transformation of the world and of human society, which we have witnessed, are the fruits of this reflective consciousness centred on man and nature. But the cost of it has been the alienation of man [sic] from his true Self, from the Ground of being, of truth and morality, and now he is exposed to all the destructive forces which this has released.” Bede Griffiths, *Return to the Center* (Springfield Templegate, 1976), 49-50. Richard Rohr writes: “The apophatic way of knowing was largely lost to Western Christianity during the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, and we have suffered because of it. As the churches

## b) Creative freedom and the process of incarnation

Barnhart on the other hand, while recognising the persuasive ‘shadow’ in Western development<sup>782</sup> and how the “exchange of wisdom for science” appears to be a “nearly unmitigated disaster,” stresses the need “to grasp the inevitability and the positive side of this historical change.”<sup>783</sup> The positive side is the new human freedom being realised and its essential part in humanizing and uniting the world. This larger movement Barnhart identifies as intrinsic to the incarnational process. It is argued that in this interpretation he engages the two aspects of the ‘historical approach’ persuasively to illuminate an important principle of Christian lived experience.

The first aspect is to seek “as accurate and objective a grasp of the historical data as possible.”<sup>784</sup> It is evident that Barnhart, along with the other scholars noted above, recognise the great significance of the historical developments in the West from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The consequent marginalisation and fragmentation of Christian wisdom and spirituality has also been demonstrated. The second aspect however is to “examine the results in light of theological principles...to seek patterns of God’s ways of acting and of human response.”<sup>785</sup> It is here that Barnhart offers a stimulating

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wanted to match the new rationalism of the Enlightenment with what felt like solid knowing, they took on the secular mind instead of what Paul calls “knowing spiritual things in a spiritual way” (1 Corinthians 2:13). We dismissed the unique, interior access point of the mystics, poets, artists, and saints.” Richard Rohr, “Knowing and Not Knowing,” *Center for Action and Contemplation*, accessed 26 February 2020, <https://cac.org/a-hidden-wholeness-2020-01-26/>.

<sup>782</sup> “First, the massive infection of historical Christianity by attachment to worldly power and its abuse, by institutional inertia and complacency, by collective self-exaltation and exclusiveness; and, second, the chronic self-seeking, arrogance, and violence of the Western powers in their relations with other peoples and their resources, with the un-privileged of the West, and with the Earth itself.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 143.

<sup>783</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 108.

<sup>784</sup> Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” 51.

<sup>785</sup> Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” 51-52. Principe adds: “But the theologian, after doing research in history, psychology, sociology, and other related areas, would seek to examine and judge

theological interpretation. Rather than simply interpreting Christian wisdom or spirituality as a particular way of knowing that had been compromised by the rise of reason, he takes the 'incarnational process' as his point of departure. He writes of this discovery in his grappling with the meaning of Western history and Christian wisdom:

In the course of this study it has become apparent that wisdom - Christian theological wisdom - is not itself the primary issue. What is of central importance is the process itself the working out of the Christ-event, which takes place at an incarnational depth beneath the level of our consciousness and thought. Yet, in the course of this history in which wisdom has been eclipsed by human rationality, we are awakening to a conscious participation in this historical process of incarnation.<sup>786</sup>

Taking the 'process of incarnation' as the point of interpretation allows Barnhart to step aside from a common narrative towards the changes initiated by scholastic theology. Rather than simply splitting theology from spirituality, the human capacities being employed to make the change represent an essential growth of human freedom, with the consequence of integrating God's life in the world in a new and fuller way.

Barnhart argues that the new function of reason acts as "a kind of pivot in which the human person begins to detach itself from the...[limitations of the] old wisdom" and to find "its feet discovering the autonomy that's been given to it in Christ."<sup>787</sup> It is in "turning the focus away from the spiritual" that the human person is "liberated from a

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the results in the light of the theological principles – this theology itself being derived from a community or ecclesial experience of faith to a revelation accepted as normative although its conceptualization and verbal expression would be subject to constant scrutiny and development. He or she would tend to seek patterns of God's ways of acting and of human response, to weigh or judge different spiritualities in the light of revelation and ideal of life developed in the understanding of the community and its theology." See: Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," 51-52.

<sup>786</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>787</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future." It is therefore part of the necessary growth beyond the limitations of the first period of wisdom as outlined in chapter 3, part 1.2.

kind of subjection...to the transcendent” and in the process “is enabled to discover God not only as a transcendent object” but also as a “subject and to be liberated into this world as an agent participating in the creative energies of God.”<sup>788</sup> This shift necessitates the leaving aside (for a time) of the wisdom and Biblical language “to make our own penetration of that mystery...to get it into a human language and concepts...until we get closer and closer to the mystery.”<sup>789</sup> ‘Making it our own’ reveals a new level of “participation in the creativity of God which is not just doing what God suggests...but is actually originating something.”<sup>790</sup>

This capacity to originate represents Barnhart’s boldest claim in relation to the significance of Western history at this time: that at the source of the shift in language was an initiation into a deeper realisation of the vocation of the human person, the capacity to bring newness into the world. This vocation is intrinsic to the gift of freedom bestowed by God through the Paschal Mystery. Barnhart identifies this in the Pauline letter to the Galatians describing the shift from being “subjected to something outside” the self - the exterior ‘law’ (“the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came” (Gal 3:24)); to “responding to something inside” the self - the interior life in the ‘Spirit’ (“for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith” (Gal 2:26)).<sup>791</sup> It therefore connects to the revolutionary newness in the Christ-event that releases a new and creative participation in God and with each other as developed in chapter 2.<sup>792</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>789</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>790</sup> Bruno Barnhart, "The Four Senses of Scripture," in *Lectio Divina Series* (Snowmass: Contemplative Outreach Ltd, 1997).

<sup>791</sup> Barnhart, "The Four Senses of Scripture."

<sup>792</sup> See Chapter 2 part 1.2

Barnhart highlights the significance of Rahner's insights into the nature of freedom as stretching in 'two' directions: inwardly, "beyond all individual data into the ineffable, quiet, incomprehensible infinity of the primeval unity of all thinkable reality, in an anticipation of God. Thus we experience precisely in freedom what is meant by God."<sup>793</sup> And outwardly, "freedom is never only the free repetition of what is already there" it is "creative freedom in authentic history, prepared for new things which are both one's own and unexpected and unplanned and only in the hopeful journey into an open future."<sup>794</sup> It is this kind of future-orientated newness that Barnhart perceives as emerging in a unique way in the change of language from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

He uses an aspect of the work of Thomas Aquinas to illustrate his point. That in Aquinas's "idea of *being*" was both a realisation of the "supreme theological conception of the Godhead" and also "a new self-realization of the human person."<sup>795</sup> Aquinas's use of 'being' represented a new language, a "supreme abstraction" in which there was a "metaphysical liberation of God from created metaphors and symbols."<sup>796</sup> At the same time, its realisation releases the human person "from the old servitude to images and simulacra of the Divinity, to participate in the limitless divine life."<sup>797</sup> The change in consciousness represented in this "philosophical" (as opposed to the wisdom/Biblical language of the past) was "the product of creative human reason" in which the waves of incarnational energy began "to shine through

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<sup>793</sup> Karl Rahner, *True Freedom*, 226-227, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 123-124.

<sup>794</sup> Rahner, *True Freedom*, 257-258, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 123-124.

<sup>795</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 111.

<sup>796</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 111.

<sup>797</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 111. Barnhart recognizes the delicate discernment required here. This is not proposed as a final freedom but as a necessary part of the process of coming to full human freedom: He comments: "Biblical symbolism is absolutely wonderful and we can never leave it behind, but we have to step aside from it from time to time in order to make it our own, in order to make our own penetration of that mystery which is expressed symbolically, to get it into a human language and concepts which we can actually handle, as it were, with the hands of our mind...which we can actually manipulate [and] analyse...until we get closer and closer to the mystery." Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

human activity itself...through the secular activity of thought.”<sup>798</sup> The human person was therefore participating in divinity in a more active (and freer) way in the process of constructing these human concepts, and realising a new potential. In this “new autonomy of human reason” Aquinas had located the reality of the free human subject:

The human person emerges into freedom and sovereignty with respect to all other created things – freedom from the container of a static ecclesiology, from the old order, whether physical or cultural, from the collective consciousness of antiquity, from tradition and convention. The most radical freedom, however – and the most precarious point on which one may stand – is freedom from God, which belongs to the human person as an autonomous, spiritual secondary cause. Here begins the fissure that will divide the modern West between a Christian and a post-Christian or secular world. But here as well are rooted faith and love and the emergent creativity of the human person.<sup>799</sup>

This ‘most precarious point’ is also the crux of Barnhart’s argument. The moment in which the human person takes flight into freedom also appears as a moment of rupture: “The stakes in this controversy are very high.”<sup>800</sup> The danger is to become so focused on this new power as to lose touch with other ways of knowing. Or, on the other hand, to be so “shocked by the apparent eclipse of wisdom in the modern West” and “led to dismiss the modern developments as the sinister – or at best ambiguous and largely futile – fruits of an abandonment of sacred Truth.”<sup>801</sup> This leads to the tendency to look back to a more wholistic Christian vision of the past – a

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<sup>798</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 111.

<sup>799</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 111-112.

<sup>800</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 140. Barnhart further suggests that there is a “double diffidence” at play here – firstly – “towards the claims of Christianity and the claims of Western civilization...and it has become difficult to see what should be most obvious: the unique fruitfulness of the Western culture and the relation of this fact to the unique historical event which is the incarnation.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 143.

<sup>801</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 139-140.

privileging of spiritual or mystical life that does not give due consideration to the growth of humanity in God at this moment in history.

Barnhart's insight hinges on the possibility of discerning how reason functions to initiate these deeper incarnational (and therefore life-integrating) movements. The persuasiveness of his position is in identifying the emerging fruits that reflect this.

Firstly, the new language of theology itself represents a movement "toward embodiment, toward incarnation," for it was "bringing faith and gospel into the real world" in a way that went further "than the earlier monastic theology had done."<sup>802</sup>

Secondly, the incarnational movement continues in the revolutionary changes manifested in Western history as "humanity awakens to its unity through the universal rationality, the common language of modern international relations, of scholarship, science and technology, which has come into being through the modern West."<sup>803</sup> Most significantly, it is the increasing humanization that most clearly reflects the incarnational process:

Through science and technology, the creative intelligence and expansive energy of the West, a transformation of the world is taking place, a humanization of the world, which is not cancelled by the more glaring instances of dehumanization. A striking further example of secular incarnation is the late emergence and acceptance of the implications of gospel values regarding universal human rights, civil rights without racial distinction, the universal dignity of the human person, the injustice of slavery, the freedom and equality of women, etc.<sup>804</sup>

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<sup>802</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 106. He adds: "The old Christian wisdom had remained within the cloister of biblical symbolism, reverently backing away from the liberating baptismal illumination, from the I AM at the heart of the gospel. Now the light flashes through by analogy, in a philosophical theology that is the product of creative human reason." Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 111.

<sup>803</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 99.

<sup>804</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 170.

Therefore, Barnhart makes the connection between the creative freedom coming to birth in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (initiated by the new application of reason) and these life-giving developments. Their incarnational source is confirmed by the capacity to generate increasing 'space' for each individual person to live a more human (and therefore) a more incarnated life. Here Barnhart is making explicit the manifestation of the exceptional gift that is fundamental to Christian life as confirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "to human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his [sic] providence...to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors."<sup>805</sup> Consequently, these developments in Western history, to the extent that they transform human life, represent God's life in the world made manifest through the function of creative freedom. Further, the incarnating movement makes the connection to Christian lived experience in terms of the movement of life-integration as it is about bringing the divine life into the world. Identifying this movement therefore becomes a vital aspect for living a wholistic Christian life.

While this specific connection to lived experience is uncommon in the Christian spirituality literature, the method that Barnhart uses finds significant support.<sup>806</sup>

Sheldrake writes of the importance of interpreting history in terms of God's life acting within it: "at its heart Christianity demands an affirmation of 'history' not only as meaningful but also as the context for the process of spiritual transformation."<sup>807</sup> By

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<sup>805</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 307.

<sup>806</sup> Patrick J. Lynch S.J. makes the link in Rahner's work: "he considers increasing rationalization to be an enhancement rather than a diminution of the sacred. It is a means for affirmation the growing presence of the transcendent in the world, for the growth of secularization is fundamentally an acceptance of God's offer of Godself to the world." See: Patrick Lynch, "Secularization Affirms the Sacred: Karl Rahner," *Thought* 61, no. 242 (1986): 388.

<sup>807</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Explorations in Spirituality: History, Theology, and Social Practice* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2010), 19.

examining Western history in terms of incarnational growth, Barnhart is able to perceive in a mutation of Christian wisdom a transformative possibility. He is able to propose that Christian wisdom is not contained in any one way of (participatory) knowing but rather follows an incarnational trajectory and will continue to reveal itself in the developments of history – in this case through the new application of reason:

A new sapiential consciousness will be able to follow this shift, throughout Western culture, from a contemplative-religious pole to an imaginative-creative pole (Western science itself is the rational and empirical extreme of this creativity).<sup>808</sup>

Downey also asserts that this kind of breadth in interpretation of Christian experience is essential today, an “awareness of alterity or *alternative experience* in the Christian spiritual life.”<sup>809</sup> Otherwise he warns that there is a tendency to “mine the same vein” in the history of Christian spirituality and in doing so limit its possible different expressions.<sup>810</sup> As Woods suggests, it is essential that Christian spirituality is not simply presented as if it “has its own rich, inner history possessing a meaning and value independent from events in secular society.”<sup>811</sup> This was a common approach in the past, and is evident when historical changes (such as the change in theological method) are interpreted from the perspective of simply and solely compromising a previously more holistic spirituality. Rather, it is “within that world and for it that Christian spirituality exists in the first place.”<sup>812</sup> According to Cunningham: “there is no Golden Age when a synthetic harmony existed, and there

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<sup>808</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 118.

<sup>809</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 92.

<sup>810</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 68.

<sup>811</sup> Woods, *Christian Spirituality*, xviii.

<sup>812</sup> Woods, *Christian Spirituality*, xviii. Sheldrake adds: “Spirituality is never pure in form. ‘Context’ is not something that may be added to or subtracted from spiritual experiences or traditions but is the very element within which these find expressions. This contradicts an older conception of Christian Spirituality as a stream of enduring truth in which the same theories or images are simply repeated in different guises.” Sheldrake, *Spirituality: a Brief History*, 12.

will be none short of the eschaton. The great tradition is, and should be, polyphonic, The tradition, in short, is complex and it learns."<sup>813</sup> In Barnhart's interpretation, the creative freedom realised in Western history is a vital aspect of this growth and essential to integrate into a wholistic Christian life.

#### **2.4 Creative freedom and life-integration**

Barnhart builds his case for the significance of creative freedom in Christian life by connecting it to the incarnational process. His proposal is to suggest that a peculiar development in Western history signifies a reorientation of the relationship between the human person and the divine. The human person realises its greater freedom and authority through creative participation in the incarnational process bursting forth in many directions. Barnhart identifies a significant initiation point in the new capacity for reason in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (made manifest in the changing theological discourse) and the subsequent humanization of life in the world over the proceeding centuries realised through scientific advancements, individual rights and creative expression. A historical analysis of Barnhart's proposal indicates that the principle of creative freedom does merit consideration as a point of orientation for the life-integrating movement in Christian lived experience. What are the implications for wholeness in Christian life?

Barnhart argues that it reveals an aspect in Christian life manifesting itself in a particular time and place that is viewed with some ambivalence. It bestows upon the human person a power with precarious potential. Barnhart, however, provides a way to discern its impact in terms of the incarnational process – even the fragmentation

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<sup>813</sup> Cunningham, "*Extra Arcam Noe*," 175.

wrought by the new application of reason. Two implications flow from this insight. Firstly, it affirms the creative capacity of the human person, realised through participation in the “divine creativity” that “burns unceasingly within Christian life,” and the corresponding vocation to actively shape history accordingly.<sup>814</sup> This counters the view of the human person only weakly graced by God that would reduce this capacity for freedom, or locate the spiritual life with the moral life alone, or with withdrawal away from the material (tending towards an ahistorical perspective), or limit spirituality to mystical (apophatic) knowing without giving due significance to the rational and creative movement that is intrinsic to the integrative dimension of spirituality. From Barnhart’s perspective, an active and creative participation in the transformative process is intrinsic to the wholeness of the person.

Secondly, it highlights the affirmation of history itself. The growth of humanity in history is established as the place of God’s life in the world. Living in history requires ongoing discernment from this theological perspective. On this basis Barnhart’s approach has the potential to illuminate this period of Western history from the perspective of Christian hope and invites the taking up of the creative energy it offers. As we have seen, the essential discernment point is its descending movement into the transformation of life in this world – it reveals therefore “a wisdom of human freedom...a wisdom of the motion of history...of incarnation, of embodiment” and enables us to approach “Western history in the light of the event of Christ.”<sup>815</sup> It also explicitly engages the second of the historical periods considered essential for wholistic perspectives today, namely, the growth of critical rationality in

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<sup>814</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 247.

<sup>815</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

the Western world that comes to a head at the Enlightenment, providing a theological basis for its discernment and integration into Christian life.

Finally, he also identifies this period as a transitional time and therefore part of a larger process. Creative freedom is understood within the larger context of our time. It becomes an essential element in the ongoing challenge of generating the unity and therefore the wholeness of humanity, of integrating the participatory revolution of Jesus throughout history towards fullness of life in God, the ultimate vocation of Christian life. It is to this larger movement of (global) communion that we now turn.

### **Part 3: The principle of communion**

#### **3.1 Anthropological approach**

An anthropological approach will be used to investigate the principle of communion as an orientation point for the movement towards fullness of life in God. This principle suggests both an ultimate horizon (communion) amidst today's diverse postmodern context, and one that is also intrinsic to its realization of the full flowering of the human person. An anthropological perspective provides a reference point for further investigation because it is contextualized within the dynamics of postmodernity and the fullness of the human person. Its point of departure is "the human person's experience in its own right" on the basis that 'spirituality' itself is constituent of the person and comes before any one particular actualization of it (such as 'Christian' spirituality).<sup>816</sup> In practice, this greatly broadens the landscape so

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<sup>816</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 127. He adds: "The very structures and dynamics of the human person precisely as human make possible the quest for self-transcendence in knowledge, freedom and love...human experience in and of itself is transcendentally directed. As such, authentic human experience is *ipso facto* spiritual experience." Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*,

“the phenomena of Christian faith experience [is considered] ...within the widest and richest available frame of reference.”<sup>817</sup> While it includes the theological and historical dimensions it is also “explicitly concerned with dimensions of spirituality that are accessible only to non-theological disciplines.”<sup>818</sup> In this wide-ranging environment new insights into Christian lived experience may be revealed. There is also a strong caution towards any principle of the spiritual life that would impose a particular experience or narrative at the expense of the individual. The question is whether Barnhart’s appeal to communion and its trajectory towards the convergence of humanity maintains sufficient sensitivity to individual freedom and may therefore be considered as an orientation point in Christian lived experience.

### **3.2 Barnhart’s approach to communion**

#### **a) Communion in a global context**

Barnhart firstly identifies the present context of Western history as the “*postmodern era*,” and broadly defines it as “present wherever the experience of modernity is subjected to critical reflection. Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche, in this sense, can be called postmodernists.”<sup>819</sup> He draws “an emphatic boundary line” at “the time of the First World War when there arose among Europeans a widespread sense that the end of a civilization had arrived.”<sup>820</sup> (As noted in chapter

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127. Schneiders writes: “Spirituality is an anthropological constant, a constitutive dimension of the humanum...human beings are characterized by a capacity for self-transcendence toward ultimate value, whether or not they nurture this capacity or do so in religious or non-religious ways....Christian spirituality is a particular experiential actualization of this human capacity...” See: Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 26.

<sup>817</sup> Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 27.

<sup>818</sup> Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 26.

<sup>819</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 146, 148. For his insights into the postmodern condition he draws on the work of Lakeland, *Postmodernity*.

<sup>820</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 148.

3, he also interprets the world wars as marking the breakthrough of a new era from the dominance of European towards global perspectives).<sup>821</sup>

He recognizes that within a “world of multiple postmodernisms” however, it is impossible to arrive at any definitive approach as by definition it rests upon the particular perspective one is coming from.<sup>822</sup> Rather, he notes two key movements: “toward an absolutizing of critical rationality: everything is subjected to deconstructive criticism;” and “toward the realization of a personal creativity completely freed from rule and convention.”<sup>823</sup> The result is a “new and acute sense of subjectivity and a new dissociation of the individual person from institutional structures of society.”<sup>824</sup> Barnhart also highlights the hazards associated with these movements: a “religious, intellectual, and cultural fragmentation” which can “become an ironic wilderness” characterised “by an extreme individualism,” the “absolutizing of human intellectual freedom” in which “every other totalization, every universal statement, is rejected.”<sup>825</sup> From a Christian perspective, in a radically plural environment, “two great structural principles...are subjected to this radical questioning: the validity of universal assertions and the consistent nature of the human subject.”<sup>826</sup>

Barnhart then makes his central claim, that there is also a deeper movement at play: “the single, massive process of global convergence.”<sup>827</sup> That amongst the great complexity and seeming contradictions is a process of “penetration or removal of

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<sup>821</sup> See chapter 3 part 1.1.

<sup>822</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149.

<sup>823</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 147.

<sup>824</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 148.

<sup>825</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 146.

<sup>826</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 146.

<sup>827</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 180.

separating boundaries and definitive limits” in order to create the space for “a new context of totality” to emerge.<sup>828</sup> This is realised in a number of ways. Firstly, “a deeper convergence appears in the widening acceptance – gradually approaching a universal consensus – of the dignity and basic rights of the human person.”<sup>829</sup> This is revealed in the many different voices emerging in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the “liberation movements – feminine, racial, political, economic, in critiques of ‘the system’ and in theories that propose alternative structures of society.”<sup>830</sup>

Secondly, in the “worldwide technological infrastructure” and for the first time in history, the “growth of international organizations and cooperative efforts” most obvious in the “new ecological consciousness...[and] the sense of a single humanity living on the one planet earth.”<sup>831</sup> As science further advanced, “a new cosmological awareness dawns” and along with it new thinking such as “systems theory.”<sup>832</sup>

Finally (and most importantly) it is evident in the questioning of “the flat literalism that had prevailed in the modern West” and a new awareness of a spectrum of ways of knowing and the importance of wholistic perspectives.<sup>833</sup> In this new climate is the “resurgence of ‘wisdom’ everywhere around us,” through engagement with “the great Asian religious traditions,” the growth of “transpersonal and other advanced psychologies, the various liberation movements and their philosophical reflection,

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<sup>828</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149.

<sup>829</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 286.

<sup>830</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 148.

<sup>831</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 148.

<sup>832</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149-150.

<sup>833</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 147.

contemporary science (including the new physics, biology, cosmology, and ecology)...and sapiential currents of Judaism and Islam.”<sup>834</sup>

Barnhart sums up this new awareness as the possibility of “post-rational holism” in which “the enactive or creative nature of human knowledge” is emphasised so that “our knowing and...our vision of reality” involves “not only observation and rationality but freedom, empathy, hope, and creative imagination.”<sup>835</sup> In all of these different ways the one constant is a movement toward wholeness (individual and collective), “the beginning of global consciousness” and the underlying principle of communion.<sup>836</sup> For the purposes of this thesis communion is understood as a process, characterised by the capacity of the human person to ‘bring together’ what is disparate, to actively participate in “the movement toward one world - toward a united humanity aware of its communion with Earth and cosmos.”<sup>837</sup> It involves a double movement, both inward and outward through simultaneously realising full personhood and also the growth of human solidarity.

## **b) Communion in Christian life**

Barnhart locates the principle of communion with the fulfilment of Christian life, the trajectory of ‘the process of unitive incarnation in history.’ It flows from the incarnation of wisdom revealed “not only in the historical Christ-event itself but also in the history that follows upon this event” in which the unity of Christ is embodied

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<sup>834</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 147.

<sup>835</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 133, 147. Scholars recognize a “participatory turn” emerging today as an evolution from the “linguistic turn.” See for example: Jorge N. & Sherman Ferrer, Jacob H., ed. *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008).

<sup>836</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 148.

<sup>837</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 19.

and particularized throughout history.<sup>838</sup> As we have seen it is also the consummation of the journey from baptism, the initial nondual unity, to eucharist understood in terms of 'koinonia,' as the fulfilment of the individual person in communion with all humanity.<sup>839</sup> It represents therefore both the journey of the individual person, and of their participation in the fulfilment of God's life in history. It is a process of increasing 'personalisation' as the human person realises its intrinsic uniqueness, freedom, and potential while at the same time, personalisation is ultimately fulfilled in the ongoing and active participation in the deepening communion of humanity:

The movement toward globality is accompanied on the personal level by a breakout of inherited cultural containers...toward the fullness of the human person. 'Person' and 'all humanity' are analogous, then, and this analogy is ultimately rooted in a unity and solidarity of humanity both 'in Adam' and 'in Christ' which is such that the whole of humanity is present and active in the individual person.<sup>840</sup>

Barnhart draws on the work of a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians to fill out the vision.<sup>841</sup> In particular, Karl Rahner's interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as a paradigm shift from a Euro-centric to a 'world' church provides the theological context for the convergence of humanity.<sup>842</sup> Rahner argued that for the first time the

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<sup>838</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 178.

<sup>839</sup> This was developed in the context of wisdom theology in chapter 2, part 1 and in the development of wisdom knowing in chapter 3 based on Vatican II.

<sup>840</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 152.

<sup>841</sup> He develops the thinking of Ewert Cousins and his conception of "The Second Axial Time;" Simone Weil's "New Holiness;" Thomas Merton's "Final Integration;" and Bede Griffiths "Universal Wisdom." See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 155-164.

<sup>842</sup> Barnhart writes of Rahner: "He saw the third age of the church as beginning with Vatican II, after (1) the short period of Jewish Christianity and (2) the many centuries during which Christianity and church remained confined within a single cultural container-the Greek-Latin-Germanic or European cultural complex. With Vatican II and the abolition of Latin as the obligatory uniform and universal liturgical language, the church was opened to a diverse enculturation among all the peoples of the earth. At the same time, the awakening world church began to address the world itself with respectful recognition, and - after so many centuries - to affirm the positive value and graced existence of that which lies outside its own visible boundaries: the other Christian churches, the secular efforts and achievements of human beings, and even the other great religious traditions of the world. In his

church truly recognised “the claim of the human person, of the various spheres of human activity, and of the secular world itself to function and to realize themselves according to their intrinsic principles.”<sup>843</sup> Therefore it proclaims “the message of Jesus....more unconditionally and courageously than formerly and therefore in a new way.”<sup>844</sup>

In this shift “the gift of divine *koinonia*” is proclaimed not only “to the church” but as “a wider message...a social, political, and economic imperative that extends to all humanity.”<sup>845</sup> (The documents of Vatican II reflecting these changes were treated in detail in chapter 3, part 2.2). The church moved to “a new level of maturity...to speak in the common language of human existence and human needs, the language of the person” manifested through dialogue within a global context, and in this new space could fulfil its vocation as catalyst for the process of communion.<sup>846</sup>

Barnhart also develops the work of Teilhard de Chardin who considered our time as pivotal describing it in terms of ‘*planetization*.’<sup>847</sup> This is characterized by the ongoing and deepening of the union of humanity through the “emergence of a force of attraction between human beings – comparable to nuclear energy in the physical universe – which is strong enough to overcome their forces of mutual repulsion.”<sup>848</sup>

The new capacity for ‘communion’ is made possible in the light of “the emergence of

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prophetic understanding of this new openness of the church, Rahner has brought to expression a confident and expansive sense of Christian freedom, which is indispensable to a new Christian wisdom.” See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 49-50.

<sup>843</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 157.

<sup>844</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council*, 102, cited in Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 158-159.

<sup>845</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 172.

<sup>846</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 172.

<sup>847</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 152-155.

<sup>848</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 154.

a unifying personal center: the Christ-omega.”<sup>849</sup> It is process characterised by Teilhard’s enigmatic phrase – “true union differentiates” – as humanity unifies there is the simultaneous realisation of deeper individuality rather than suppression of it.<sup>850</sup>

These perspectives enable Barnhart to interpret our (postmodern) time, despite its immense diversity, as coalescing around his fundamental vision of the incarnation of wisdom in Jesus, and its ongoing impact in history towards the communion of humanity. The process of communion therefore represents a space of growth which includes the realisation of the fullness of the human person and the intrinsic vocation of actively participating in the ongoing unity of humanity intrinsic to God’s life in the world.

### **3.3 Anthropological Analysis**

#### **a) Recognition of ‘otherness’ as essential to Christian lived experience**

Scholars describe the deconstructive character of postmodernity. Modernity’s “autonomous self that relied on reason and logic to solve the problems of the world...[is] no longer credible.”<sup>851</sup> Leiven Boeve describes the subsequent landscape in terms of “radical plurality:”

Indeed, the basic premise that the same information can be considered from a variety of completely different perspectives with equal justification

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<sup>849</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 154.

<sup>850</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959), 186.

<sup>851</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 80. As Downey writes: “In postmodern perspective, the world is not understood as a coherent picture, but in terms of a multiplicity of constructs that together constitute a collage. Universal norms and claims no longer persuade. Because of the perpetration of horrible evil through the laws and norms of cultures and societies, postmodernity is suspicious of any claim to objectivity and universality.” See Michael Downey, “Postmodernity,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 749.

is fundamental to postmodernity. Every perspective is understood to have value in itself even if mutual incompatibility as well as occasional conflict are evident. Universal and uniform perspectives no longer hold sway; the master narratives have given up the ghost.<sup>852</sup>

Postmodernity can be characterised by the breakdown of the 'meta-narrative,' the umbrella story that incorporates all others no longer functions, whether it be the "humble certitude of the essentially religious self," or the human being as "the seat of reason and the originator of meaning."<sup>853</sup> In this context Boeve argues for a radically hermeneutical approach in the theological process. He terms this the practice of the 'open narrative' rather than operating within a metanarrative:

An open narrative is generated by an open sensitivity towards otherness, a specific extraordinary and cultivated attitude towards that which interrupts. This basic attitude expresses itself in our capacity to be open to strangeness, otherness, the unexpected.<sup>854</sup>

The basic disposition of "sensitivity towards the other in his/her/its irreducible otherness," is not only a hermeneutical strategy however, it is also a theological one.<sup>855</sup> Theologically it reflects the necessary sensitivity to the fundamental otherness of God who interrupts history, and Jesus, "the revelation of God's open narrative," who interrupts closed narratives on behalf of God (including those that propose universal appeal).<sup>856</sup> Boeve terms the approach "recontextualisation,"<sup>857</sup> a

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<sup>852</sup> Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay of Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003), 54. Perrin adds: Different perspectives are "valued for [their] unique contribution to the construction of meaningful life in different human contexts." See: Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 82.

<sup>853</sup> Lakeland, *Postmodernity*, 18. As Jean-Francois Lyotard famously stated postmodernity is defined by an "incredulity toward metanarratives." See: Jean François Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*, Theory and history of literature; (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

<sup>854</sup> Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 95. The practice of the 'open narrative' is developed in detail in: Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, chapters 5 & 6.

<sup>855</sup> Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 91.

<sup>856</sup> Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 145.

process of hermeneutical sensitivity that enables further growth into the authentic living of the Christian faith through a willingness to learn from the diversity of perspectives, indeed, “profound learning processes and even paradigmatic shifts can take place.”<sup>858</sup> In turn, the Christian narrative can be applied to critique any meta-discourse which tends towards oppressing the other, especially the poor. This process therefore opens “up the way for Christians to envisage for themselves the experience of salvation in Jesus Christ,” (as the paradigm of the open narrative) and to respond to the corresponding call to enter into the practice of the Christian open narrative.<sup>859</sup>

The anthropological approach in Christian spirituality functions in this way. It takes sensitivity towards the other as the point of departure. It is “wary of metanarratives, substantialism, and absolutisms of all kinds even those emerging from heretofore unquestioned theological premises” and therefore interprets lived experience in “an ever widening definition of religious experience, on the one hand, and a sharpened sense of the irreducible ‘otherness’ of experiences that are not one’s own.”<sup>860</sup> Its fundamental reference point is the fullness of the human person in all its dimensions. Through its use of a “hermeneutical methodology” it expands the interpretative field significantly and opens the possibility of discovering new aspects of Christian experience that may be missed by applying theological principles alone.<sup>861</sup> This includes:

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<sup>857</sup> Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 2.

<sup>858</sup> Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 94.

<sup>859</sup> Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 145.

<sup>860</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 27.

<sup>861</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 26. She adds: “There is more to Christian spirituality than theologically articulated faith. The subject of Christian spirituality is a complex human being participating in a plurality of communities and whose multiple dimensions and involvements particularize the appropriation and expression of faith, often in ways that the general

The aesthetic, linguistic, psychological, or cosmological; with the “edges” where the field of spirituality is influenced by important aspects of contemporary experience that are not intrinsic to Christianity itself, such as the meaning of experience, ecological concerns, and gender issues; with the analogies with, challenges to, and affirmations of Christian experience coming from the spiritualities of other religious traditions or the spiritualities of contemporary seekers who repudiate or ignore institutional religion.<sup>862</sup>

In this highly diverse context Barnhart’s assertion of communion as the definitive horizon of human life comes under significant pressure. Is it plausible to propose a principle like communion as operating in the radical plurality of postmodernity? It becomes questionable on hermeneutical as well as theological grounds.

Hermeneutically its “meta-narrative” is in danger of presupposing a “harmony, continuity and consensus” that is not there, or exposing it to the risk of excluding ‘the other’ on the basis that that it does not fit.<sup>863</sup> Theologically, in not being sufficiently sensitive to the other, it is also in danger of not responding to the fundamental otherness of God. The critique of Bruce Leischer was noted in chapter 1: that Barnhart’s project reflects modernity in its “attempt to understand the direction of history” and therefore does not adequately “wrestle with the cultural conditions of the twenty-first century,” especially its profound diversity.<sup>864</sup> This is most evident with the notion of communion in which he presents ‘one story’ or meta-principle in terms of the ongoing movement towards the deeper unity of humanity as giving ultimate meaning to history. Does Barnhart’s approach engage sufficiently with the diversity of today’s context, or respond adequately to the individual person and the

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theory of faith (theology) cannot or has not yet comprehended or articulated. In the first instance, spirituality gives rise to theology rather than the other way around. And theology never fully comprehends the experience it seeks to understand. Lived spirituality will always involve elements and aspects which can only be investigated adequately by the use of other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, art, rhetoric or science.” See: Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 25.

<sup>862</sup> Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 26.

<sup>863</sup> Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 204.

<sup>864</sup> Lescher, “Review of Bruno Barnhart ‘The Future of Wisdom’.”

uniqueness of their experience? Is his approach in danger of limiting rather than expanding the avenues for understanding Christian lived experience today?

### **b) Communion as intrinsic to the fullness of the human person**

Barnhart is unequivocal that Christianity does rest on a “huge affirmation of meaning, an infinite claim of truth...a *metanarrative* of universal comprehension.”<sup>865</sup> It is essential therefore to assert an ultimate horizon especially in a “world of unlimited variety” and propensity for “the blind nihilism of critical rationalism.”<sup>866</sup> He argues however that (the process of) communion itself is intrinsic to the fullness of the human person (including the realisation of their intrinsic otherness), and therefore can be applied in a way that responds to that fullness and avoids the all-consuming function of meta-narratives. It is argued that with this understanding Barnhart can maintain a hermeneutical approach and at the same time make explicit the movement of communion as intrinsic to Christian lived experience. This is significant because in a highly plural environment this principle is at risk of being compromised in Christian spirituality.

Barnhart shows how communion is an active process and not simply a static end point, and that the process can be responsive to the mystery and uniqueness of the human person. This insight derives from the incarnation itself: “The incarnation of divine Wisdom is expressed in the person and life of Jesus, in his infallible sense of the person and its primacy.”<sup>867</sup> It is the human person therefore that is *the* “criterion

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<sup>865</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150-151.

<sup>866</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149-150.

<sup>867</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150. This is revealed in many gospel episodes in which Jesus privileges the person (especially those previously excluded) over group expectations.

of discernment” from which to navigate the dynamics of postmodernity.<sup>868</sup> This demands ongoing dialogue, “to hear and understand, to reflect and to speak in the language of *incarnation*” through “an attentive and sympathetic listening to the voice of the other.”<sup>869</sup> In this, the essential otherness of the person can be approached through a hermeneutical methodology as central to the anthropological approach.<sup>870</sup>

Secondly however, the vision of the human person also demands the principle of communion. The human person is understood as more than their individuality “in isolation” but is affirmed in “divine fullness embodied...in every individual and in the one emergent ‘person’ which is humanity as a whole.”<sup>871</sup> The movement towards the larger personhood (or communion) of the whole of humanity is also inherent to the fullness of the human person. Barnhart therefore seeks to offer “an in-depth understanding of *the person*” as integrating:

The postmodern attainments of radical critical rationality and unconditioned creativity - together with the Enlightenment values of universal human dignity and rights - into a view of the human person grounded beneath human consciousness in the nondual divine mystery.<sup>872</sup>

This statement brings together some of the key insights of the eastern, western and global turns suggesting a framework for wholeness that explicitly engages the three historical periods we have been concerned with: the person is grounded in the

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<sup>868</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150.

<sup>869</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 149-150.

<sup>870</sup> Dialogue has been evident in the ‘eastern turn’ through engagement with Eastern religious traditions; in the ‘western turn,’ through recognition of growth beyond the boundaries of the visible church in the secular world; and in the ‘global turn’ in recognition of the significance of the emergence of the many different voices that had previously been suppressed. He writes that the “the secular and material elements of this unification are essential to its progress.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 181.

<sup>871</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150.

<sup>872</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150.

'nondual divine mystery' emphasizing the fundamental unity of Christian life that was particularly alive during the early monastic/medieval period; affirmed in their individual dignity and capacity (realized through the growth of freedom) as highlighted in the period of the Enlightenment; and, confirmed in their fullness even amidst the "the radical postmodern questioning of the existence of a free subject."<sup>873</sup>

To "the empty space of postmodern doubt and negativity" therefore, Christian wisdom speaks "from its deep root the great, inclusive word of *affirmation*, an affirmation of divine fullness embodied in the human person."<sup>874</sup> This affirmation illuminates both their fundamental freedom *and* connection to all "such that the whole of humanity is present and active in the individual person."<sup>875</sup> It is a vision of "the personal collective, one humanity" which envisages the integrity of the human person in its uniqueness and its vocation to be actively involved in the process of realising a deeper communion.<sup>876</sup> It is here that the fundamental unity of the Christian vision is most radically revealed. Christian life begins in unity (baptism) and ends in unity (eucharist) and the vision of the human person while held in its fundamental otherness is also envisioned as a unity in themselves and ultimately with others. From Barnhart's perspective therefore, the principle of communion must be active in Christian life.

Scholars confirm the importance of maintaining an ultimate horizon in Christian Spirituality today – otherwise it is in danger of losing the "specifically Christian character of the discipline" and submitting to "the post-modern lure of universal

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<sup>873</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150.

<sup>874</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150.

<sup>875</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 152. Here the two aspects of the Global turn emerge as one vision.

<sup>876</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 150.

relativism, nihilistic deconstructionism, rejection of all tradition and authority, and suspicion of personal commitment.”<sup>877</sup> As Principe confirms “hermeneutical theory” should not provide the “ultimate criterion for judgement” but rather “Christian theology” albeit “self-critically” and “broadly conceived.”<sup>878</sup> This is the danger of the radically hermeneutical approach in which the principle of ‘otherness’ appears to have the final say: as Boeve would assert, “recontextualization is thus also an ongoing task that can never reach completion.”<sup>879</sup>

Christianity, however, does demand a principle of fullness at least as its horizon: Schneiders frames it in terms of living “in the world as mission in and to the coming reign of God.”<sup>880</sup> Sheldrake affirms: “through Jesus God not only ‘speaks’ but ‘is God-become-flesh’” and consequently “Christians cannot avoid the fact that his story does offer an overarching explanation of the ‘meaning’ of history.”<sup>881</sup> Downey writes of spirituality as “a way of living in Christ: being conformed to the person of Christ and being united in communion with others, the whole of creation, and with God.”<sup>882</sup> Barnhart explicates this in his understanding of communion which brings together sensitivity to the other while holding a unitive horizon.

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<sup>877</sup> Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 28. She adds: this “reminds everyone in the field, whatever their preferred approach, that Christianity is a specific faith tradition that has content and dynamics it does not share with other traditions, even those with analogous concerns.” See: Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 25. Principe adds: “Christian spirituality must, like theology, be multidisciplinary, incorporating the outlook of anthropology, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines; it must also be ecumenical and in dialogue with non-Christian religions. But it must also remain in intimate contact with Christian theology and the other Christian areas of study.” See: Principe, “Spirituality, Christian,” 935-936.

<sup>878</sup> Principe, “Spirituality, Christian,” 937.

<sup>879</sup> Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 3.

<sup>880</sup> Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” 17.

<sup>881</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 14-15.

<sup>882</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 103.

Maintaining this position requires undertaking a “constructive” as opposed to “deconstructive postmodernism” which avoids both “the glib naïveté with which we have posited foundations and confidently propounded totalizing explanations” and also nihilism through the “infinite deferral of meaning” that “must finally imply the denial of meaning.”<sup>883</sup> It means identifying “the more hopeful and optimistic currents in postmodernity” that are “not inevitably at odds with the gospel of Jesus.”<sup>884</sup> This includes the “emphasis on interruption, disorientation, and discontinuity” just as “Christ...and his cross were discontinuous with all that was judged to be God’s way and work in the world.”<sup>885</sup> It involves “learning to participate in a conversation it does not totally control, without losing or diminishing its specifically Christian identity.”<sup>886</sup> From the perspective of Boeve’s open narrative, openness to ‘otherness’ may include an interruptive or deconstructive moment (especially from those who have been excluded in the past), yet is also orientated towards discovering something “affirmatively un-deconstructible,” that the very uniqueness and fullness of the human person will be realised ultimately in communion with others.<sup>887</sup>

It also situates criticism and dialogue within a context of “the superiority of holistic approaches to the human subject that reject the matter-spirit, nature-culture, subject-object dichotomies in favour of a definition of the human as embodied spirit.”<sup>888</sup> In this context, the human person “is not a composite of various components or faculties, the premier of which is reason narrowly understood, but a whole person

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<sup>883</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 20-21.

<sup>884</sup> Downey, "Postmodernity," 749. As Perrin suggests a postmodern disposition enables meta-narratives to be critiqued “whether upholding views from within society or from the churches” when they “suppress or ignore anything (or anyone) that did not fit into their dogmatic organizing system” and are therefore “barriers to exploring the new, the imaginative, and the creative edges developing the world in so many areas of life.” See: Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 81.

<sup>885</sup> Downey, "Postmodernity," 749.

<sup>886</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 27.

<sup>887</sup> Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity," 17.

<sup>888</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 21.

who desires integration in relation to others in community and tradition” and the movement towards “human flourishing.”<sup>889</sup> This provides a larger context for applying hermeneutical methods.

These perspectives suggest a more nuanced ‘postmodern space’, in which “particularity and wholeness are not irreconcilable but are dialectically inseparable.”<sup>890</sup> Barnhart also identifies these “positive gifts of postmodernity” in terms of “a freeing of creativity from its confinement within conventional forms and rules and a new awareness of the enactive, creative nature of knowledge itself,” in short the movement “toward the liberation and realization of the human person.”<sup>891</sup> In this space Barnhart’s process of communion is illuminating. It provides a principle by which to engage the significant developments of our time and to navigate “between two poles of particularity and universality,” to both respond to the acute sensitivity towards individual experience and also situate that response within a unitive perspective at the heart of the Christian mystery.<sup>892</sup> It also opens up the possibility of operating with a hermeneutical approach that responds to the diversity of the time

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<sup>889</sup> Downey, "Postmodernity," 748-749. Jorge N. Ferrer’s work is also instructive in this connection. He suggests that we are in a time of paradigm shift from ‘the linguistic turn’ to the ‘participatory turn.’ He writes: In the linguistic turn “the object of Religious Studies is no longer the elucidation of the origin, nature, or ontological implications of religious experience, but the analysis, interpretation, or critical deconstruction and reconstruction of the textual, the linguistic, and the symbolic.” The shift to participatory turn “presents a pluralistic vision of spirituality that accepts the formative role of contextual and linguistic factors in religious phenomena, while simultaneously recognizing the importance, and at times even centrality, of non-linguistic variables (e.g., somatic, imaginal, energetic, contemplative and so on) in shaping religious experiences and meanings, and affirming the ontological value and creative impact of spiritual worlds and realities.” This represents a new space and potential in our time. It is an inclusive space which spans spiritual, analytical, imaginal and embodied dimensions. It attempts to hold the great benefits of critical rationality without being dominated by it. It is a “synthesis of a Romantic heart and an Enlightenment mind” which views the human person (and reality) as multidimensional, open to ontological foundations and yet with the creative capacity to shape the world.” See: Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman, "The participatory turn in Spirituality, Mysticism, and Religious Studies," in *The participatory turn: spirituality, mysticism, religious studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 2, 6, 39.

<sup>890</sup> Downey, "Postmodernity," 749.

<sup>891</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 151.

<sup>892</sup> Barnhart, *One Spirit, One Body*, 284.

and the essential gifts that flow from that, and also includes a “unitive hermeneutic principle.”<sup>893</sup> The principle of communion is the fulfilment of this unitive approach.

Communion also makes explicit the second axis of Christian life – love of neighbour. It ensures that Christian wisdom is not presented as a spiritual unity detached from daily existence, or as so engaged in the context as to lose its identity.<sup>894</sup> Rather, it is shaped by the cross in a movement of descent, “nondual divinity descends into what we are and then opens up to its own fullness from within ourselves.”<sup>895</sup> The generation of community therefore “brings wisdom down to earth” consistent with the incarnational movement of Christian life:<sup>896</sup>

With the divine self-communication that takes place in Christ, a divine authority is breathed into the human person by which we are to override the holiest and most ingrained of difference, affirm the common divine core of the human persona and realize one humanity. This is the unfolding of the event of Incarnation in the world.<sup>897</sup>

It is made manifest in solidarity “as the essential divinity of the person and essential oneness of humanity are actualised in the works of justice and love – and in the structures of society...[in] concrete existence in a world of inequality and exploitation.”<sup>898</sup> It is to this central aspect of Christian life that the principle of communion responds and to which Barnhart’s whole vision is orientated.

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<sup>893</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 73.

<sup>894</sup> As Downey writes: “even though contemporary currents and perspectives emphasize more holistic and integrative approaches to the Christian life, the common perception is still that spirituality is primarily concerned with the life of the soul, the interior life, one’s prayer life, one’s spiritual life, as a separate component of the Christian life....spirituality is focused on the interior world of feelings and imagination with little if any explicit attempt at integrating the humdrum, the tedium of too much work, the demands of socio-political responsibility, or economic accountability.” Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 105.

<sup>895</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 178.

<sup>896</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

<sup>897</sup> Barnhart, “One Spirit, One Body,” 284.

<sup>898</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183. This corresponds to ‘the preferential option to the poor.’

### **3.4 Communion and the movement towards fullness of life in God**

Barnhart's proposal of communion engages with the challenge of postmodernity and maintains the unitive horizon of the Christian mystery. His argument is based on framing communion as a process, responsive to the uniqueness and fullness of the human person and situated in terms of growth towards the one 'person' that is the whole of humanity. An anthropological analysis of Barnhart's proposal indicates that the principle of communion does merit consideration as a point of orientation for the movement towards fullness of life in God in a way that is responsive to postmodern conditions. What are the implications for wholeness in Christian life?

Barnhart argues that the principle provides both a process and a future-orientation horizon. The process ensures sensitivity to the individual, and its future-orientated horizon ensures that it is situated within its ultimate vocation, to bring God's unitive life into the world through concrete action, especially towards injustice. It allows for dialogue, interruption and learning in the diversity of a postmodernity and is also founded in an ongoing process of 'unitive incarnation.' It therefore becomes a part of the 'theological shape' for Christian life towards which Barnhart's entire approach is directed – the journey from the baptismal gift of nonduality to the eucharistic self-giving, expressed through active participation in the process of cultivating the unity of humanity. This 'process of communion' becomes synonymous with wholeness in Christian life.

## Conclusion

Through theological, historical, and anthropological analysis, this chapter has demonstrated how Barnhart's treatment of nonduality, creative freedom and communion offer potential as orientation points in Christian life. In each case, Barnhart has grappled with historical developments since the early wisdom tradition to uncover points of orientation for Christian lived experience today: through dialogue with 'Advaita,' the radical unity of nonduality can be suggested as active in the self-transcendent dimension; through engagement with developments in Western history, creative freedom can be identified as operative in the life-integrating movement in terms of incarnational growth; and, through engagement with postmodern conditions, communion can be proposed as a unitive horizon towards fullness of life in God.

This analysis also indicates the potential of wisdom knowing to contribute to wholistic engagement by its responsiveness to the three historical periods identified as necessary for its realization. The principle of nonduality responds to the unitive source underpinning the early period of integration between theology and personal experience and reconceives it in a contemporary way. The principle of creative freedom provides a theological meaning for the growth of critical rationality in the period of Enlightenment by demonstrating its significance in the process of incarnation and corresponding humanization of life in the world. The principle of communion places this process within a larger and more wholistic context emerging today and enables engagement and dialogue with the plurality of postmodernity whilst affirming the unitive and eucharistic trajectory of Christian life.

It now becomes possible to see more clearly the particularity of Christian wisdom knowing in its integrity, as one movement both within the human person and also throughout history as it was defined in chapter 3: *radical participation in the process of unitive incarnation in history activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion:*

After the revolution of Jesus, the *goal* of life – in contrast to classical spiritual traditions – is not to be understood as the unitive experience or unitive state, a supreme and unmediated participation in the Absolute, as if through a progressive purification or unification by which we transcend the phenomenal world. Rather, this divine union is virtually and substantially given in baptismal initiation as a new divine human identity. The journey of life has become a progressive realization of this new identity through an existential embodiment, in the following of Christ. Like the Master, one journeys from the gift of self *received* in baptismal initiation to the gift of self *given* in a eucharistic life and death. As one participates in revolution of Jesus, its form comes to determine the shape of one's own life. This is the form of the cross.<sup>899</sup>

Christian wisdom is lived within a profoundly incarnational trajectory – ‘an existential embodiment.’ It activates the whole person in a journey from receiving the gift of divine nonduality to the ongoing incarnating of that gift of unity into the world. Its revolutionary nature is to assert a fullness of unity (and therefore wholeness) at the beginning of the journey (in baptism) and realize its transformation or incarnation into a deeper and embodied unity/communion (eucharist) even amidst radical plurality.

The process is also an intrinsically historical one. The event of Christ ‘happens’ at a point in time and then reverberates out into all reality “like a coiled spring.”<sup>900</sup> It involves a peculiar transformation throughout Western development in which a new and creative freedom is released in the human person to manifest incarnational

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<sup>899</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 274.

<sup>900</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

growth. The function of reason appears at its forefront, like the tip of an arrow, and while it seems to fracture and move towards non-participation, the new incarnational freedom at its source also enables the humanization process through the application of the scientific method, growing human rights, and creative expression, all of which opens new space for the individual person (despite its very real shadows).

There is a ‘reversal’ occurring in which the emphasis in spirituality moves from withdrawal from materiality to its transformation and incarnation, “we find human transcendence, that is, the movement of the spirit towards God...embodying itself... incarnating itself” in a new and unique way during this period of Western history.<sup>901</sup>

In this incarnational movement, non-duality, or absolute being, retreated from consciousness to become the sunlit *sky* of consciousness under which the world is deciphered by human reason. Absolute being also became the space into which the human person expanded as it awakened to its potentialities...nonduality (or transcendence) has emerged in the West as freedom.<sup>902</sup>

This transformation is the crux of Barnhart’s vision for Christian wisdom - he aims to “come into contact with the substantive root of Christian wisdom in the chemistry of the Christ-event as it unfolds in time” – to express the revolution of participatory knowing in this movement from ‘interior’ unity to ‘exterior’ communion throughout history.<sup>903</sup> The revolution necessarily involves this birth of freedom: “The precious new freedom on which Paul insists with such vehemence in writing to the Christians of Galatia (Gal 4:1-9; 5:1-3) is the existential manifestation of nondual identity.”<sup>904</sup> It also reveals the “Eucharistic destiny” of Christian life, “the inner meaning of the

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<sup>901</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>902</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 136.

<sup>903</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 134.

<sup>904</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 72.

disconcerting history of the modern West, where God is to be found nowhere and everywhere” is also fundamental to “bringing the human person to life from within himself/herself and awakening us to our common humanity.”<sup>905</sup>

This represents Barnhart’s most ambitious claim – that Christian life is rooted in God with such density as to move beyond relationship alone to form a divine and nondual identity. This new birth then swells through the gift of creative freedom made manifest in the humanization of life in the world as discovered in modern Western history and in movements of global unity in our time. The analysis presented in this chapter has suggests however, that the principles that underlie these movements of growth, do merit consideration.

Here the central motif of the thesis can once again be evoked. The event of the cross implants the divine life into the world through the human heart to be incarnated throughout history, and breaks in bloom through the growth of communion (now understood in a global context). The further step is to integrate this ‘chemistry’ into the lived experience of the Christian journey so that “the inner dynamic principle of this history may be discovered to be intrinsic to our sense of self.”<sup>906</sup> This would allow the possibility of opening up to the plurality of our time with resources to discern and actively participate in these movements of convergence. Even as our sense of this kind participation can seem far from lived experience when considering the immense turbulence of today’s environment, Barnhart perceives a birth taking place:

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<sup>905</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 143.

<sup>906</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 151.

Beneath an eclipse of the experience and of the conscious sense of participation there is often proceeding a transition to a new and fuller mode of participation. This, I believe, is the true desert of non-participation through which the Western world has been passing during recent centuries. Beneath the apparent fragmentation there is proceeding an ultimately irreversible movement of the *unification of humanity*. A reversal is taking place, from the prevalent centrifugal dynamic through which we have arrived at our present dominant non-participatory consciousness, to a convergent movement, a global society.<sup>907</sup>

This 'one' movement of convergence (and wholeness), this "global birth" - the *"incarnation of divine Wisdom in the whole of humanity"* - is the consummation of wisdom knowing and the purpose of Barnhart's project.<sup>908</sup> The principles of nonduality, creative freedom and communion offer access points to engage in the process. Chapter 5 will explore practical ways to cultivate wisdom knowing and growth towards wholeness.

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<sup>907</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 286.

<sup>908</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 286. & Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

## Chapter 5: Wisdom knowing and wholeness

### Introduction

This chapter will explore ways in which to cultivate wisdom knowing to foster growth towards wholeness. Part 1 will develop a wisdom framework by focusing on points of orientation for application in different contexts. The framework will be shaped around two areas central to Barnhart's approach – the participatory event of Christ realised through the cross, and the unitive incarnating movement it releases into history that has been developed in the four principles of wisdom knowing. The framework will present four points of orientation to cultivate wisdom knowing and engage with texts as a means to grow in wholeness.

Part 2 will examine the applicability of the framework in relation to the hermeneutical approach proposed for the discipline of Christian spirituality. The approach consists of a three-stage process for interpreting spiritual texts – the descriptive, analytical, and appropriative stages. At each stage it will be suggested how the wisdom framework can be applied in practical ways. Part 3 will summarise the key findings of the thesis and make recommendations for wider applications of Barnhart's work in the life of the church.

### Part 1: A framework to cultivate wisdom knowing

#### 1.1 The cross now rooted breaks in bloom

In the epilogue of *The Future of Wisdom*, Barnhart comments on the future

possibilities for his work: Christian wisdom is “not of merely aesthetic interest” or to be realized “on the plane of speculation” but reveals “organic components of spiritual life.”<sup>909</sup> Ultimately it becomes “a *mystagogy*, inseparable from our personal participation in the sources themselves,” and as we realise our “own vocation as active and creative participants” in the process of wisdom itself.<sup>910</sup> He believes the four turns offer a “*space of opportunity*...inviting the creation of new theologies” and “new modalities” that are coming to life today.<sup>911</sup>

The following framework is a creative response to Barnhart’s work drawing on his writings and the way it has been developed in this thesis. It offers four points of orientation and associated practices to cultivate wisdom knowing. It is important to note that it is not an attempt to create a particular ‘wisdom experience’. As Barnhart emphasises, “the central point for Christians is not experience but rather the new *reality*, the widening continuum of divine self-communication,” that has been made possible in Christ.<sup>912</sup> This reality is ultimately ‘known’ not in particular experiences but in faith, “a knowing in darkness...obscure even as it is certain.”<sup>913</sup> Ultimately, any particular “experience must disappear...‘the seed must fall into the ground’ – so that the new reality can be appropriated by the individual in an active and truly personal (and unitive) way: that is *by faith* (see John 20:29)” and this cannot be manufactured by any framework or system.<sup>914</sup> All practice therefore is placed in the context of grace.<sup>915</sup>

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<sup>909</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 186 - 187.

<sup>910</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 187, 183.

<sup>911</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 188-189.

<sup>912</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 70.

<sup>913</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 6.

<sup>914</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 70.

<sup>915</sup> Barnhart suggests: “I think it’s Grace that does it. I think it’s less what we do than what happens to us, what we encounter. That changes us. That brings about transformation and obviously, what happens to us then has to be lived out in some way. That’s where the doing comes in.” See: Bruno

On the other hand, by its nature Christian wisdom is highly personal and invites a “deep and comprehensive transformation of consciousness” reflected “in the affective movements of one’s heart” and “in one’s way of life.”<sup>916</sup> The core of Barnhart’s work is this participatory consciousness and how it moves “beyond the limits of rationalism” in two ways – interiorly - “to the nondual self and its uncontained consciousness” and exteriorly - “to the emergent conscious, free, and creative person in the world – as well as to the dynamism of history.”<sup>917</sup> This incarnational trajectory asserts wholeness and transformation at the heart of the Christian mystery and therefore intense personal engagement.

Cultivating wisdom knowing is therefore about fostering our openness to this transformative process and its one mysterious movement of growth, convergence and wholeness. In this context, the intention of the framework is to develop two areas: firstly, points of orientation for personal reflection and inspiration to enable people to cultivate wisdom knowing in their own lives; and secondly, key principles for the process of interpreting Christian lived experience (including texts) from a wisdom perspective.<sup>918</sup>

The phrase ‘the cross now rooted breaks in bloom’ will be used to develop the framework. It describes the organic nature of wisdom, inhabiting and growing within us.<sup>919</sup> It illustrates the two core aspects of Barnhart’s approach: its centre point – the

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Barnhart, "Interview with Father Bruno," *Wisdom and Money*, accessed 10 January 2020, <https://wisdomandmoney.org/interview-father-bruno/>.

<sup>916</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 52, 51.

<sup>917</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 97.

<sup>918</sup> The framework is presented from within an entirely Christian context so instead of writing ‘the Christian,’ ‘the person’ will be used.

<sup>919</sup> It recalls the many organic references in the parables of Jesus. For example: ‘The Parable of the Mustard Seed’ and ‘The Parable of the Yeast’ See Matt 13: 31-33

participatory event of the cross; and the participatory revolution that it has released and grows throughout history towards communion. The cross is the source of wisdom knowing, the catalyst for radical participation: its vertical axis representing a new participation in God, and its horizontal a new participation between human persons.<sup>920</sup> This process has been summarised as follows:

*Christian wisdom knowing is radical participation in the process of unitive incarnation in history, activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion.*

The process can also be imagined on the cross itself. The cross has often been conceived as the tree of life<sup>921</sup> – a source of new life for Christians:

Jesus comes into the world as worker and as wood, as gardener (see John 20:15), as carpenter, and as the tree of life. In him we become this tree, this wood. The divine life (Holy Spirit, Grace, Sophia) flows up into us from within, at our inner roots, and then must flow outward into the world, with which we are unitively joined by our fruits, our work.<sup>922</sup>

The cross with its centre point and two axes can be envisaged as shaping wisdom knowing. At the centre point, the point of greatest tension, can be imagined the new and radical participatory reality born into history through the paschal mystery.

On the two axes can be placed the process (and shape) of this new participation – *the process of unitive incarnation* - at once the presence of a new and all-pervading

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<sup>920</sup> This was developed in chapter 2, part 1.3.

<sup>921</sup> See for example Irenaeus: "So by obedience, whereby He obeyed unto death, hanging on the tree, He undid the old disobedience wrought in the tree." Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, xxxiv, 69. and Bonaventure: "Therefore, if we wish to enter again into the enjoyment of Truth as into paradise, we must enter through faith in, hope in and love of Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and men,' [sic] *who is like the tree of life in the middle of paradise.*" Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey to God*, trans. Ewert Cousins, in *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. Richard J. Payne (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 4.2, 88.

<sup>922</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 180.

unity in God, represented by the vertical axis; and the incarnating of that unity into all of reality, represented by the horizontal axis. The three dynamic principles can then be imagined in their fundamental movement from baptism to eucharist. At the foot or root of the cross can be placed nonduality – the radical unity born into the heart of the world and the human heart through the event of Christ; this is incarnated through the ongoing realisation of creative freedom in the person (and throughout history) as the points of the horizontal axis. As this process develops it grows and blooms in eucharistic fruits becoming embodied as individuals and humanity matures into its vocation of actively creating a new communion. This can be envisaged as the head of the cross and spreading like the growth and bloom of a tree. (See appendix 1 for a pictorial representation).

The four key principles of the framework: radical participation, nonduality, creative freedom, and communion can then be expanded as points of orientation for engagement in different contexts. Barnhart's treatment of *lectio divina*<sup>923</sup> and silent meditation<sup>924</sup> will be included in their development below.<sup>925</sup> He reconceives the

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<sup>923</sup> *Lectio divina* was prevalent through to medieval times and has experienced renewed interest in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. It is described as a prayerful reading of scriptural or spiritual texts leading to deepening communion with God. The classical scheme involves four stages or 'movements': 'Lectio' (reading) - approaching a text in a prayerful manner; 'Meditatio' (meditation) - engaging with the text at a deeper level through ruminating on and responding to the way it moves us interiorly; 'Oratio' (prayer) – moving towards spontaneous and personal prayer through encounter with the text; and finally 'contemplatio' (contemplation) - the movement towards union with God beyond words or particular aspirations. Many books on the subject are now available. Two excellent examples are: Michael Casey, *The Art of Sacred Reading* (North Blackburn: HarperCollins 1995).; and Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* (Mahawah: Paulist Press, 1988).

<sup>924</sup> The practice of silent meditation (or contemplative prayer) was also prevalent in the early church and medieval times for example from the fourth century desert tradition and fourteenth century text *The Cloud of Unknowing*. In recent times there has been a renaissance of these practices through the renewal of these earlier traditions. For example, the practice of 'Christian Meditation' through the use of a 'mantra' as developed by the Benedictine monk John Main takes its inspiration from the work of John Cassian. See <https://www.wccm.org/>. The practice of 'Centering Prayer' through the use of a 'prayer word' as developed by the Cistercian monks Thomas Keating, William Menninger and Basil Pennington takes its inspiration from *The Cloud of Unknowing*. See <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/>. These approaches provide practical steps to nurture a contemplative disposition – an open awareness in which the faculties of thinking and imagining are

classical four movements of lectio divina as 'dimensions' in light of his renewal of Christian wisdom in order to respond to the movement of history since medieval times (including the emergence of historical-critical methods) to suggest a more wholistic and contextually orientated approach to scripture and Christian life.<sup>926</sup>

At each point of the framework three areas of engagement will be suggested: a theological engagement; a personal engagement; and a textual engagement.

## 1.2 Principle 1: radical participation

### a) Theological engagement: the wisdom of the cross

The wisdom of the cross (the paschal mystery) is the theological source of radical participation:

The cross figure...is completely open to you...as if Jesus in being crucified had made himself absolutely open and vulnerable to everything...he reached into all of reality...in order to bring it

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allowed to pass to encourage a deeper relationship with God's mysterious, intimate and silent presence within the person.

<sup>925</sup> He writes that these "two practices are particularly helpful for an initiation and growth in this 'surpassing knowing of Jesus Christ,' in addition to the basic faith and self-surrender." See Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 52.

<sup>926</sup> He does this in a series of talks he gave for Contemplative Outreach in 1997. Barnhart expands the practice of lectio divina by reconceiving it as four 'dimensions' of the Christian life in the pattern of his four turns for the renewal of wisdom. As dimensions they can be applied to individual scriptural passages in the classic sense of lectio, but also penetrate the inner structure of the Christian mystery as revealed in scripture as a whole. He shows how the four movements of lectio divina can be connected to the exegetic method of 'the four senses of scripture' providing the larger theological context and thereby "expanding the breadth of lectio without being unfaithful to the tradition." See: Barnhart, "The Four Senses of Scripture." He refers to Henri de Lubac who wrote of "the senses of Scripture reflected to some degree in the history of theology and spirituality." Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 84. Two contemporary Benedictines also make this link between lectio divina and the senses of scripture: See Casey, *Sacred Reading*, 54. and Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 46 - 54. Barnhart therefore agrees with Sandra Schneiders that lectio must be updated in our time to respond to the intervening history. Schneiders writes: "The academy cannot be simply a rejection of the Enlightenment and return to pre-critical quasi-monastic procedures of inquiry...a kind of modern 'lectio divina.'" See: Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 19.

together...that figure stretched upon the cross...stretched into everything to the extremes...to all being.<sup>927</sup>

The extraordinary vulnerability of the cross releases an intimacy that 'fits' the human person.<sup>928</sup> The person is indelibly marked or 'reconfigured' into the shape of the cross – comparable to the "DNA of the human being:"

It's like the skeleton of liberty...the flexible living shape of freedom itself that's inside you...which is the Holy Spirit...it's also that central sign, that simple sign, that simple structure which is cross, which is tree, which is human body, and which is Christ – Christ crucified and risen.<sup>929</sup>

Radical participation is to discover "oneself at the central point of the cross" - to share in Jesus' own life - a living reality as though we are 'breathed' or 'born' into life through it.<sup>930</sup>

Barnhart turns to Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians to illuminate the character of this new life in which he expresses the tension between receiving the "light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" and yet having this "treasure in clay jars" (2 Cor 4:6-7). The light that shines from the person is simultaneously the realisation of one's vulnerability and dependence before God. The passage concludes with the enigmatic words: "For while we live, we are always

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<sup>927</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>928</sup> As described in Matt 11: 29-30: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

<sup>929</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>930</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 51. Barnhart writes further: "The figure and mystery of the cross is completed when the human person - in whom the created world is present - is joined to the three divine persons in the paschal event of Christ and in the sacramental event of baptism. The baptismal seal that marks this completion, this fullness, is at once the threefold divine name, the figure of the cross, and the Holy Spirit. The seal is inscribed upon the body, the fourth, henceforth 'crucified in Christ.'" See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 177.

being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4:11-12).<sup>931</sup>

Barnhart interprets in this way:

Paul conveys the image of a continual welling forth of new life within him which is counterbalanced by a continual dying on the outside. This dying itself, in the pattern of the death of Jesus, somehow involves a communication of the new life to others. "So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4:12). The new life in Christ is a 'fontal' life; the human person discovers himself or herself as a wellspring of life, flowing from unseen depths into the person (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39) and then flowing forth from the person to others in a movement which is incarnation and eucharist. The God who said, "let light shine out of darkness" (2 Cor 4:6), has shone in the heart of this person; now this person continues to bring forth light from the interior darkness and becomes light for others in the midst of the world's darkness. This is the paradigm of Christian life. The movement is from the baptismal receiving of self in the Spirit to a Eucharistic giving of self to others in the same Spirit. The person becomes wellspring and sun in this new incarnational life which moves from the dawn of baptism to the sunset of eucharist.<sup>932</sup>

The Christian life is lived within a mysterious and 'continual welling forth of new life.'

The fontal image is used to evoke this "single vital movement" described in John's

Gospel as "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life," (John 4:14) and which flows

as "rivers of living water" (John 7:38).<sup>933</sup> This new life is 'available' at the core (the

'heart') of the person and is a participation in the incarnational life made possible

through the Paschal mystery. It is lived, however, in a profoundly paradoxical way

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<sup>931</sup> The full passage reads: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4:6-12).

<sup>932</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 86.

<sup>933</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 274. See for example: "Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life'" (John 4:13-14); & "'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-38).

corresponding to the event itself, as a stretching between seeming opposites and bearing at once our vulnerability (woundedness and sin both individually and collectively), and also flowing as a source of transformative life in a movement from interior depths (through baptism), outwardly and creatively into the world as 'light' for others (eucharistic growth).<sup>934</sup> This outpouring is the foundation for wholeness in Christian life and calls us towards a disposition of openness to the whole.

### **b) Personal engagement: openness to the whole**

The power and intimacy of the mystery invites an unconditional openness, transparency and trust – to bear our experience in its fullness and find a home and healing in the transformative power of the cross.<sup>935</sup> We come into wisdom knowing bearing the human condition from our weakness and sin to our transformative potential, and trusting in the healing and creative life of Christ within us. The essential thing is a disposition of willingness “not to get a little stronger but to be re-generated...to be begotten all over again” to discover “in our poverty we are in touch with the dark depth of God from which the light is born into our world.”<sup>936</sup> It is to enter into the mystery of the cross, ‘to lose oneself to find oneself,’ the mystery of life in death, and to submit to its transformative movement.<sup>937</sup> This openness is revealed in the many healing encounters in which people expose themselves to Jesus in faith and they experience “the gradual raising to life and consciousness, to freedom and

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<sup>934</sup> This is also described in terms of: “God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor 1:25); and “For whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12.10).

<sup>935</sup> See Mark 7:34: “Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’”

<sup>936</sup> Bruno Barnhart, “The Child,” in *The Spirituality of John’s Gospel* (Big Sur: New Camaldoli Hermitage, 1992).

<sup>937</sup> The essential thing is to bring one’s experience as it is into the light of cross. This may be in suffering and grief, joy and thanksgiving; and may include personal experience and awareness of larger world issues etc. This also includes entry into the fundamental ascetical practices within Christian tradition.

fullness” as Jesus reaches into their personal experience with profound intimacy to heal and bring about reconciliation and a new participation into fullness of life.<sup>938</sup> This interior willingness for transparency and vulnerability in faith will be termed a movement towards ‘openness to the whole.’

### c) Textual engagement: as wisdom

The text is approached as a ‘wisdom text’ – for its intrinsically participatory nature and capacity to initiate the whole person into the experience that it describes.<sup>939</sup>

Barnhart uses the metaphor of music to illustrate this further. Like music the life of a scriptural text is “in *movement* – is itself, at its deepest level, the *life* that moves within the arrangement of words as music lives within its pattern of notes.”<sup>940</sup> It reveals the whole “like the polyphony of a string quartet” bringing fourth “the biblical word in its vibrant fullness, from the cello’s sonorous depths to the nimble interplay of twin violins.”<sup>941</sup> And like music the text penetrates us “resounding through the whole of the human person.”<sup>942</sup> This calls for “a completely open epistemology” embracing

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<sup>938</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 49. See for example: “He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” (Matt 8.3); “He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.” (Mark 3.5); “Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, rise!’” (Luke 7.14)

<sup>939</sup> This is Barnhart’s approach to the first movement of *lectio divina* (lectio or reading). He puts it into a larger wisdom context as has been developed throughout this thesis. This is particularly significant in light of the strong emphasis on the literal level of scripture in recent centuries that tended to limit the depth of spiritual engagement with the text. First through fundamentalist approaches which propose a one and only and entirely rigid meaning to scripture; and second, through historical-critical approaches which, while offering an essential component of exegetical understanding, tended to diminish the spiritual sense by limiting interpretation to what could be determined through historical-critical analysis. See: Barnhart, “The Four Senses of Scripture.” Barnhart develops this at length in his book on John’s Gospel which was briefly described in chapter 1, Part 1.2. See: Barnhart, *The Good Wine*. The significance of the style of scriptural writing as initiating experience was developed in chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>940</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 13. See John 6:63: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

<sup>941</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 7.

<sup>942</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 7. An analogy is that of two guitars in a room. If the string of one guitar is played the same string on the other guitar begins to vibrate. Here Barnhart compares the

“the Word with the whole of ourselves” becoming “intimate with it” and living with it “as food, drink, companion.”<sup>943</sup>

It requires a certain disposition, as Michael Casey suggests, a “distinctive attitude that is appropriate to lectio divina, that may elude us if we do not try consciously to cultivate it.”<sup>944</sup> He compares it to “reading poetry...we need to slow down, to savour what we read, and to allow the text to trigger memories and associations that reside below the threshold of awareness.”<sup>945</sup> We therefore come before the text trusting in its intimate life within us, “not that of subject and object,” but “that which [we] are... intensely self-reflective and participative.”<sup>946</sup> Casey continues:

We begin reading convinced that a deep affinity already exists between us and what we are about to read. The Word is not only external; it is implanted in our hearts. There is no question here of being brainwashed or overwhelmed by an external body of doctrine – rather of seeds already sown and ready to grow (James 1:21).<sup>947</sup>

It calls on our openness before the text – allowing it to draw us into its orbit of participation as “one energy field...a totality of interrelating elements, each one of which potentially contains the whole...that in Christ, creation is brought into God.”<sup>948</sup>

We aim to bring a “continual awareness of the Christ-Mystery” by trusting in its

‘wisdom approach’ to the sole reliance on historical-critical method which “may succeed in bringing forth something *about* the music, but not the music itself – and between the two lies an immense gap.” Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 7.

<sup>943</sup> Bruno Barnhart, “Getting Inside the New Testament,” *The Bede Griffiths Trust*, accessed January 21 2015, <http://www.bede.griffiths.com/wisdom-christianity/>.

<sup>944</sup> Casey, *Sacred Reading*, 80.

<sup>945</sup> Casey, *Sacred Reading*, 80.

<sup>946</sup> Barnhart, “Getting Inside the New Testament.”

<sup>947</sup> Casey, *Sacred Reading*, 68.

<sup>948</sup> Barnhart, “Getting Inside the New Testament.” & Barnhart, “The Four Senses of Scripture.” See for example the Prologue to John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.” (John 1:1-3) & “I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3.18-19)

presence in our whole being and “to keep focused upon the central axis of meaning and its extension into our own life and experience.”<sup>949</sup> In this encounter the insights of historical-critical approaches and other disciplines may be included as a part of the process.

### 1.3 Principle 2: nonduality

#### a) Theological engagement: baptism

The second point of orientation is divine nonduality initiated through baptism. In the event of Christ divine unity has become incarnated - “*nonduality has become a divine-human person*” and through baptism we are born into this reality from the heart of God into “our truest, deepest identity...to our being in God.”<sup>950</sup> The potency of the words ‘I am’ reveals the enormous significance and interior power of this gift. In this unconditional affirmation we too can say ‘I am’ and stand in our identity as children of God to realise “the fullness” that we are “in Christ and in God.”<sup>951</sup> While this may not necessarily be our ‘personal experience,’ establishing its theological reality as the root of our being is deeply affirming of the person. It confirms the fullness and wholeness present at the beginning of the Christian Journey, a revolution from the tendency to situate it at the end, and only as the goal of the spiritual life. Rather, divine nonduality is the source of our being and active as we learn “to express it, to incarnate it, to make it real in this world” throughout our life.<sup>952</sup>

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<sup>949</sup> Barnhart, "Getting Inside the New Testament."

<sup>950</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 206, 66.

<sup>951</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 82.

<sup>952</sup> Barnhart, "Our Hunger for Wisdom - Part 1."

## **b) Personal engagement: embodied presence**

This incarnational context confirms the physicality of the Christian life.<sup>953</sup> Establishing its fullness from the beginning of the journey encourages a disposition of embodiment in the concrete, as “a simple life of faith in the ordinary circumstances of life.”<sup>954</sup> It affirms a “living nonduality” as the foundation of Christian life already present and active rather than as the final goal for the spiritual life. Rowan Williams speaks of this foundation as affirming “the peaceful worthwhileness of each person. Each person as he or she is at rest is worthwhile – they don’t become worthwhile by all they do when not at rest. It is from that point that God will move in them, create afresh, change.”<sup>955</sup> This orientation towards a mode of simple presence with our whole being will be termed the movement towards embodied presence.

## **c) Textual engagement: as unitive**

The text is approached as intrinsically unitive, as growing out from the oneness of God.<sup>956</sup> It calls for our orientation towards the “deepest level of scripture” and to our own deepest centre.<sup>957</sup> The mystery of silence is the context for this movement as Mark Burrows suggests:

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<sup>953</sup> As Barnhart suggests: “there’s nothing so physical as the spirit and nothing so spiritual as the body,” echoing Colossians 2:9-10: “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him.” Barnhart, “The Four Senses of Scripture.”

<sup>954</sup> Barnhart, “Bede’s Vision of the Future.”

<sup>955</sup> Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honeycakes: The Wisdom of the Desert* (Oxford: Lion Publishing plc, 2003), 113.

<sup>956</sup> Here, Barnhart reconfigures the usual order of stages of lectio divina by emphasizing that the stage of contemplatio is not only the goal and summit of the Christian life as it was classically conceived, but is also the source from the perspective of the reception of divine nonduality in baptism.

<sup>957</sup> Barnhart, “The Four Senses of Scripture.” Centering Prayer and Christian Meditation mentioned earlier provide practical means towards this. As Thomas Keating asserts, the emphasis on analytical approaches in our time is often a barrier to the practice and spirit of lectio divina. This necessitates practices for “cultivating interior silence” to expose “people to the actual experience is essential to get beyond the intellectual bias that exist.” See: Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 30 - 31.

Silence is the primary condition of our beginning and ending...in the beginning, before the word found its first utterance, there was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep. In the end, if we can even conceive of this, what word will we know as the wind sweeps the last surfaces?<sup>958</sup>

The practice of silent meditation is an explicit means to cultivate this mode as a “silent descent into the depths of the person” and thereby toward the mystery of God present in the text and within our being.<sup>959</sup> Barnhart suggests that dialogue with Eastern religious traditions has provided the impetus for a deeper understanding of these practices in the Christian tradition in recent times. Rather than understood “as a quiet gazing...we begin to think of contemplation as an experience of *nonduality* or of pure consciousness.”<sup>960</sup> He refers to Thomas Merton who through engagement with Zen Buddhism wrote of a consciousness that:

Starts not from the thinking and self-aware subject but from Being, ontologically seen to be beyond and prior to the subject - object division...the consciousness of Being...is an immediate experience that goes beyond reflexive consciousness. It is not ‘consciousness of’ but pure consciousness in which the subject as such ‘disappears.’<sup>961</sup>

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<sup>958</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 357. Williams adds: "Silence is letting what there is, be what it is and in that sense is profoundly to do with God. When we experience moments where there is nothing we can say or do that would not intrude on the integrity and beauty of what is before us, that is a silence that takes us into God." Williams, *Silence and Honeycakes*, 111.

<sup>959</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 53. Michael Casey adds: "tactics that facilitate meditation often serve us well in building into our lives a regular segment of sacred reflection." Casey, *Sacred Reading*, 77.

<sup>960</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 53. He quotes Adolphe Tanquerey's definition of contemplation from 1930: "a simple intuitive gaze on God and divine things processing from love and tending thereoto." See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 89. The contemporary nondual understanding is also suggested by William Shannon who writes: "the contemplative sees everything in unity and therefore rejects any dualism that would separate God from creation." William H. Shannon, "Contemplation, Contemplative Prayer," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993).

<sup>961</sup> Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, 23-24, cited in: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 89-90.

Intentional silence enables us to come to the text from this point of beginning.<sup>962</sup> In this way the practices of lectio divina and silent meditation “nourish one another...a gospel scene (sometimes a single line, or even a word)” can provide “the luminous point of focus from which one descends into the quiet depths of meditation. On the other hand, meditation can gradually draw one’s reading of Scripture to a unitive depth.”<sup>963</sup> It is from this purely interior point that the “spectrum of scriptural meanings opens up and that one descends the ladder from interior experience to an illuminated reading of the scriptural text and to concrete action in the world.”<sup>964</sup>

#### **1.4 Principle 3: creative freedom**

##### **a) Theological engagement: confirmation**

The sacrament of confirmation is suggested as the theological orientation for the creative freedom intrinsic to the incarnational process.<sup>965</sup> Confirmation compliments baptism - it “brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace;” especially towards action and agency in the world – “it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us” and “gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread” the gift we have received in baptism.<sup>966</sup> Barnhart’s identification of creative freedom in Western history is also concerned with a new level of human agency and on this basis it can be connected to the grace of confirmation. The individual human person becomes freer to exercise a more personal and active role in humanizing life in this world. This capacity was revealed through the scientific, social and artistic revolutions that

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<sup>962</sup> This is spoken of as the ‘virginal’ point in tradition.

<sup>963</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 52.

<sup>964</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 84.

<sup>965</sup> This is not developed in Barnhart’s work and is not developed at length here. It will therefore require further development in the future.

<sup>966</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1303.

emerged especially from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (as developed in chapter 4). Despite the ambiguity in these developments they reveal an essential aspect of Christian life – a process of incarnational transformation as the gift of the Holy Spirit is made manifest in new ways. This complements the gift of divine nonduality received in baptism as “the beginning of a dynamic process which moves toward expression in action” and “fulfils itself in embodiment.”<sup>967</sup> The contemplative experience therefore is fulfilled in “concrete historical context, by the movement of the divine Spirit in history.”<sup>968</sup>

### **b) Personal engagement: creative potential**

The dynamism of the life of the Spirit within us encourages an orientation towards our creative potential. Barnhart has expressed this as participating in a ripening process in which nonduality turns into “the space in which freedom expands and discovers itself” so that “wisdom is no longer something that you know...but what you are.”<sup>969</sup> The human person matures in its vocation to shape life in the world in new ways:

God has come inside yourself...at the very centre of your freedom...it means some kind of marriage in which God and you are working things out - your participation in the creativity of God is not just doing what God suggests...but is actually originating something.<sup>970</sup>

Barnhart emphasises the sheer newness at the core of this freedom, the human person is ‘God’s newness in the world.’ The person is not only the image of God “in a unitive way...in the light of the divine being...but also in the sense of creator along

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<sup>967</sup> Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East," 205.

<sup>968</sup> Barnhart, "Christian Self-Understanding in the Light of the East," 205.

<sup>969</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>970</sup> Barnhart, "The Four Senses of Scripture."

the line of newness."<sup>971</sup> The person not only experiences union, but has “the power of oneness in this world” and “can make union...can assert the unity and oneness of all things.”<sup>972</sup>

According to Barnhart, this is revealed in John’s resurrection narrative when Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into the disciples and proclaims: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:23). This means “more than the forgiveness of sins” in a narrow sense, it means that “a creative power” is being passed on to humanity, and this “communicable spirit of newness, of creation,” this capacity to raise “oneness out of all the disparity...is meant to be breathed on and on...to become exponential” and ultimately to “bring things into God.”<sup>973</sup> Knowing ourselves as this “free, creative energy” is vital – it is to “know the meaning of our life in this world...it regenerates (within us and around us) the atmosphere in which the future lives. Here the central spark within person and community awakens.”<sup>974</sup> All the human faculties and ways of knowing are at service of this vocation. This orientation towards personal agency will be termed an interior movement towards creative potential.

### **c) Textual engagement: as dynamic**

We come to the text sensitive to its dynamism, as “written with the energy and creative freedom of a theological imagination.”<sup>975</sup> Imagination is understood in the

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<sup>971</sup> Barnhart, "Phase 3: Affirmation."

<sup>972</sup> Barnhart, "Phase 3: Affirmation."

<sup>973</sup> Barnhart, "Phase 3: Affirmation."

<sup>974</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 135.

<sup>975</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 2. Here Barnhart reconceives the stages of meditatio and oratio in lectio divina emphasizing their Christological context and the process of incarnation in history (especially in Western history). Meditatio is connected to the allegorical sense of scripture which focuses on the

broadest sense as “not merely the power of generating images, but...creative freedom.”<sup>976</sup> The text is inspired by the incarnational energy that moves outward through history in freedom to create and humanise life in this world. We are alert to the text initiating that same creative movement within us – the vital movement from the interior to the exterior. The transformative power of the text is profoundly personal – “spoken directly to me, requiring my response. The actuality of the Word wants to become actuality in me, expressing itself in action.”<sup>977</sup>

We are therefore “sensitive to the allure of the text” we “feel for the warm places, the centers of energy and attraction” and “become aware of the radiance, the field of energy and light around” it.<sup>978</sup> In particular we are alert to the “luminous” figure of Jesus and how he “emerges right out of the Gospel and begins to change...obsess ...and haunt” us and ultimately “turn our life around.”<sup>979</sup> We allow the text to “stimulate the whole person” letting our “imagination run free with a text, a scene, a saying, a parable” suggesting “worlds of experience” and possibility.<sup>980</sup> Imagination is the function through which the freedom of the text corresponds to our freedom and expresses itself within us. We aim to ‘move with’ the text - to “move forward toward these truths...with a strong affirmation, a supposition made of the same bold stuff as the gospel.”<sup>981</sup> In discovering our personal connection with the text we discover our

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deeper spiritual and Christological meaning and is therefore sensitive to the impact of the event of Christ and the newness it releases. Oratio is connected to the tropological sense of scripture with its emphasis on the symbolic nature of scripture and the way it arouses individual experience and the capacity of the person to become creative and free in response. He relates this particularly to the creative freedom that was made manifest in human person in Western history as a direct result of the Christ event that has been developed at length in this thesis. For the sake of simplicity these two stages are combined to form a ‘dynamic’ engagement with scripture.

<sup>976</sup> Barnhart, *The Good Wine*, 12.

<sup>977</sup> Barnhart, "Getting Inside the New Testament."

<sup>978</sup> Barnhart, "Getting Inside the New Testament."

<sup>979</sup> Barnhart, "The Four Senses of Scripture."

<sup>980</sup> Barnhart, "Getting Inside the New Testament."

<sup>981</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 137.

unique way of realising God's newness in the world brought to life in creative and transformative actions.

## 1.5 Principle 4: communion

### a) Theological engagement: eucharist

The consummation of wisdom knowing in communion is founded in the eucharistic destiny of Christian life. While the incarnational process plays out in the great complexity and unknown of history, it is possible to affirm the trajectory, towards communion and shaped by the imperative of justice in a global context.<sup>982</sup>

*All humanity (including all cultures and tradition) is to be brought together into this unitive body of Christ. Meanwhile the gospel imperative of justice works in the world. The Eucharistic Christ-energy is a leaven within humanity that, through the struggle for justice and equality, gradually transforms social structures and the very fabric of human relationship in the direction of communion...a world created to become eucharist.*<sup>983</sup>

At the deepest level 'the eucharistic Christ energy' "unites within itself all reality - matter, psyche/consciousness, and divine spirit" and establishes our call, to actively participate in co-creating this 'fabric' in our own circumstances of life.<sup>984</sup>

It is a process "not of ascent but of descent...[it] continually moves in this descending direction of incarnation; the light of life received in faith becomes flesh

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<sup>982</sup> As Barnhart writes: At this point "a special profession of ignorance" is required as we cannot know "what further conflicts, turnings, beginnings, and endings lie in the future." Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 184.

<sup>983</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 197. See: 1 Cor 15:28 "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all." Barnhart also writes of this sacramentally: "The eucharist makes this incarnation of unitive divinity sacramentally present - visible, tangible, even edible-in the midst of the community through the ages." See: Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 177.

<sup>984</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 186.

and blood, given in love.”<sup>985</sup> Numerous examples can be used to illustrate this movement.<sup>986</sup> Barnhart suggests the discourse in John 12 as particularly telling. After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus is clear about what lies ahead. While it is “the hour...to be glorified,” its fulfilment is inseparable from the cross: “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:23-24).

Once again, he turns decisively from this proposed way of ascent to the way of descent, taking up the image of the seed falling into the ground with which he had begun his parables of the kingdom. Once again, the symbolism is eucharistic. This is the movement toward eucharist which the disciples, too, will be called upon to follow.<sup>987</sup>

The impact is to initiate a ‘new paradigm’ in human relationships, illustrated “when Jesus...washed the feet of his disciples and instituted the eucharist, he symbolically destroyed the ‘old paradigm’ of domination and instituted a new order of communion. This means mutual service, *bearing* one another (see Gal 6:20).”<sup>988</sup> In this ‘eucharistic’ paradigm “a physical center emerges that draws together into itself and around itself all the elements that have been left disconnected, unrelated, deprived of their full context and meaning.”<sup>989</sup> This is revealed in Jesus’ own life of preference

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<sup>985</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 87, 89.

<sup>986</sup> For example, Mark’s Gospel is centred on the way of the cross: “Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” (Mark 10:38)

<sup>987</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 88.

<sup>988</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 182. Here, Barnhart draws on Beatrice Bruteau’s book: *The Holy Thursday Revolution*. Stephen Barton makes a similar point: “‘The hour’ of Jesus and the glorification of the son of Man constitute a hidden, paradoxical wisdom, which the parable of the grain of wheat helps to explicate: it is through Jesus’ death that the fruit of eternal life will reach, not only Jesus and Samaritans, but Greeks as well. And, as the symbolic action of the foot washing makes plain soon after (John 13:1-20), it is through Jesus’ taking the role of the servant in both life and death that the basis is laid for a new servant community nourished by a new wisdom.” See Barton, “Gospel Wisdom” 107. The symbolical gesture of ‘breaking’ bread at the eucharist also points to this willingness to ‘break for the other’ in order to bring about a deeper unity.

<sup>989</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 163.

for the poor (and reflected in the Church's teaching on the *preferential option for the poor*).<sup>990</sup>

## **b) Personal engagement: bearing the other**

The vocation of the Christian is to become 'eucharistic life' by bringing a communion of justice into the world.<sup>991</sup> Barnhart uses the notion of 'bearing' to describe something of its lived experience. This rich and multivalent term can mean: "to support, sustain; to carry, bring (forward); to suffer: '*passio*'; to bear fruit, as a tree; to bring forth from within, as a child."<sup>992</sup> Christian life is learning to "bear the world by carrying [the] cross after him" just as "the mature tree bears fruit."<sup>993</sup>

We are confronted with the choice between an acceptance or a refusal of this apprenticeship of bearing. At the heart of Mark's Gospel (8:34-38), Jesus presents this choice as that of taking up one's cross and bearing it after him. In his Letter to the Philippians (3:8-11), Paul exults in the unitive knowledge of Jesus Christ, by which he becomes Christ. By bearing the yoke of Jesus (see Matt 11: 28-30), Paul himself becomes the tree of life, bearing the fruit of eternal life.<sup>994</sup>

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<sup>990</sup> "The principle of the universal destination of goods requires that the poor, the marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern. To this end, the preferential option for the poor should be reaffirmed in all its force. This is an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our *social responsibilities* and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods. Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope of a better future." Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. (2004), n. 182.

<sup>991</sup> Barnhart talks about 'becoming' the eucharist: "When you consume the eucharist, the eucharist is consuming you, it is assimilating you." Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>992</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 179. Just as the weight of fruit on the tree or a flower seems too much for the stem it is on.

<sup>993</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 181-182. See John 15:1-8. Chapter 15 then continues with the new commandment of love: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13).

<sup>994</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 180.

The whole trajectory of wisdom knowing has its terminus and consummation in this generative movement. The other principles provide a scaffolding to embody it in authentic, mature, and transformative way.

This is the uncompromising shape of the cross in Christian life. It is to “accept the teeth [and] the sharp edge of the Gospel”<sup>995</sup> made manifest “in works of justice and love” in solidarity with others to actualize “the essential divinity of the person and the essential oneness of humanity” throughout history.<sup>996</sup> Therefore, communion is not an ‘easy harmony’ in which differences and opposites are reconciled as an end in itself. It calls for deep discernment of the reality of injustice and evil that must be resisted and calls for the growth in self-giving.<sup>997</sup> The process means learning to “bear something that is outside us, on us, or something that is within us but other than ourselves.”<sup>998</sup> Its end point, however, is unitive, “a progressive initiation into unity, this participation in the One.”<sup>999</sup> Ultimately, it calls on a willingness to become ‘gift’ for others – to feed as well as being fed:<sup>1000</sup>

The word gift becomes very important. Jesus brings God into the world in a particular way and the quality of that presence is largely gift. It’s not exchange. Forgiveness is like that. When Jesus forgives somebody’s sins, he says your sins are forgiven. It’s that gratuity of God that delights us and thrills us. The gratuity, generosity, the not asking for something in return, is part of the Christian gift to the person who is able to give.<sup>1001</sup>

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<sup>995</sup> Barnhart, "Interview with Father Bruno."

<sup>996</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 183.

<sup>997</sup> The resistance of evil calls for the willingness to expose injustice and therefore ‘fragment’ any harmony that maintains power structures that privilege individuals/groups at the expense of others. This is eminently clear in the whole thrust of the Gospel powerfully expressed in Mt 10:34.

<sup>998</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 179.

<sup>999</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 179 - 180.

<sup>1000</sup> See John 21:18 – “Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.”

<sup>1001</sup> Barnhart, "Interview with Father Bruno."

This orientation towards willingness and gift will be termed a movement towards bearing the other.

### **c) Textual engagement: as enactive**

We come to the text ready to respond to its demand for concrete action towards a communion of justice in a global context.<sup>1002</sup> We return once again to the “plain and literal sense” of the text “spoken directly to me” and “the personal urgency and pungency, the bite and power of the gospel that calls me to an active response, to conversion, that changes my life.”<sup>1003</sup> We are called to respond to the “prophetic” and “practical side” and “to follow Jesus in the realization of the unitive divine-human reality which is the Kingdom of God.”<sup>1004</sup> It requires the movement towards the other, especially the marginalised – to bear the suffering of others who are unfairly bearing the burden of life. We would ask ourselves: how is the text confronting our unwillingness to be tender and generous; how does it prick our conscience and give us the courage to respond; where do we sense the call to action for justice in the life we are living; what advantages do we enjoy that are to be shared with others in need?

Another aspect would be to develop processes for group listening, dialogue and discernment in response to a text. This builds a sense of communion within a group and offers a shared and deeper response to the requirements of the text. The group could also be led towards the imperatives of justice in today’s context. This ensures

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<sup>1002</sup> Active participation in a global context had not been evident in the classical approach of *lectio divina*. It was implied in the moral sense of scripture and in the anagogical sense of scripture in its eschatological meaning.

<sup>1003</sup> Barnhart, "Getting Inside the New Testament."

<sup>1004</sup> Barnhart, "Getting Inside the New Testament."

that the response moves beyond the individual and is consciously situated within the global needs of our time.

The four areas of the framework can be summarised as follows.

**Table 2: Summary of the wisdom framework**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Theological Orientation</b>	<b>Personal orientation</b>	<b>Textual orientation</b>
Radical participation	Wisdom of the cross (Paschal mystery)	Openness to the whole	Wisdom
Nonduality	Baptism	Embodied presence	Unitive
Creative freedom	Confirmation	Creative potential	Dynamic
Communion	Eucharist	Bearing the other	Enactive

The different aspects provide reference points to cultivate wisdom knowing from the primary disposition of turning towards Christ in openness to the whole, through the affirmation of our own interior being in embodied presence, its unique expression through creative potential, and the primacy of the call towards others. It is important again to emphasize that the framework is not an attempt to capture wisdom knowing as a certain experience that can be produced, but rather to provide orientation points to become open to its one vital movement that will always escape any definition or particular practice. It calls us to trust more deeply and to step towards its fundamental affirmation and learn to surrender to or 'become it' more than know or experience it.

It also stresses the flexibility inherent in the framework – it is not presented as a step-by-step procedure to follow – rather it tries to maintain a sense of an organic

and living process growing from incarnated wisdom, to be discovered in a multitude of ways through an interplay between the person, life and texts. The four points provide a way to guide a person through the different aspects of wisdom present in the text and within themselves and in the process to foster their ongoing growth towards wholeness.

## Part 2: Applying the framework

### 2.1 The hermeneutical approach

The application of the framework will now be considered in relation to the hermeneutical approach suggested by scholars of Christian spirituality as the most effective way to engage in the study of lived experience and therefore be orientated towards wholeness.<sup>1005</sup> In chapter 3, the parallel between wisdom knowing and the notion of 'lived experience' was demonstrated.<sup>1006</sup> Lived experience was characterised by its personal nature and Christian lived experience was summarised as *personal engagement in a process of transformation in Christ through the gift of the Holy spirit involving the interplay of self-transcending and life-integrating movements towards fullness of life in (the Triune) God.*<sup>1007</sup> It was noted how Barnhart's wisdom knowing translated the aspects of this lived experience: personal engagement in terms of *radical participation*; self-transcendence in terms of *nonduality*; life integration in terms of *creative freedom*; and fullness of life in God in terms of generating *communion*. It will be argued that these principles as developed

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<sup>1005</sup> See for example: Sandra M. Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: the study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 56-57.; Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 41-44.; and Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 129-131. (Downey uses the phrase - 'the appropriative method' instead of 'the hermeneutical method.')

<sup>1006</sup> See chapter 3, part 3.3.

<sup>1007</sup> See chapter 3, part 3.2.

in the 'wisdom framework' above provide a useful lens to interpret lived experience in the application of the hermeneutical approach.

This approach involves interpreting a 'text' which puts an aspect of the Christian spiritual life and experience into 'language.' The text may be verbal or artistic such as a biblical or spiritual text, a piece of literature, artistic expression such as a painting, music, photograph, film, or an account of personal experience. It is approached with the aim of discerning the layers of meaning present both in the text, and also within the interpreter themselves.<sup>1008</sup> Cunningham summarises the process as answering two key questions: does it "conform to the gospel as it has been received and does this ring true to what I experience as a free human person 'in Christ'?"<sup>1009</sup> The method involves three stages: a descriptive stage, a critical stage and an appropriative stage in which the experience of the interpreter is brought to bear on the process.

In what follows the process will be used to explore how applying the wisdom framework may contribute to the interpretation of Christian lived experience. Each of the three stages will be described and include the possible application of the wisdom framework. A practical illustration of the process will then be developed using the Johannine episode, *Jesus, and the Woman of Samaria* (John 4: 1-42).

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<sup>1008</sup>As David Perrin suggests: "people need to be able to describe the events in language, critically reflect on them, interpret them and probe for new meaning." Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 49.

<sup>1009</sup> Cunningham, "Extra Arcam Noe," 174.

### a) Descriptive stage

The first stage is to develop as ‘thick’ a description as possible of the text under consideration. The focus is to illuminate the experience inside the text. It may include exploring its historical, theological and literary context and the background and character of the author themselves. Other disciplines may also be used where helpful. The contribution of the wisdom framework at this stage is to highlight the significance of wisdom texts as a particular literary style.<sup>1010</sup> These texts represent the primary or direct texts of lived experience in the tradition as the ‘personal’ dimension is intrinsic to them. They include the ‘classic texts’ that have been identified in tradition – those texts that have, as Mary Frohlich suggests, “the capacity to awaken and engage us at the deepest and most profound levels of our being.”<sup>1011</sup> Frohlich has also come to recognize, however, that in our time and in the diverse context of her students “the particular character of the ‘classic’ exists in many expressions, far beyond the boundaries of the tradition canon” and may include “buildings, devotions, rituals, persons (some famous, some not), popular and classical musical forms, paintings, frescoes, and prayer forms.”<sup>1012</sup>

Barnhart’s wisdom perspective has the potential to expand the horizon for these texts. The emphasis on the newness and incarnational trajectory of Christian life includes developments outside the visible boundaries of the Church. Texts could be chosen that reveal the principles of the wisdom framework from the perspective of nonduality (including the spiritual wisdom of other religious and spiritual traditions), to the freedom and creativity of the western turn including ‘secular’ expressions such as

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<sup>1010</sup> Examples of particular texts have been provided in chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>1011</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 72. These include the mystical texts throughout history that have spiritual weight as profound and personal expositions of the Christian life.

<sup>1012</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 72.

poetry, science, psychology and music, as well as to the many new movements dedicated to communal action in our time.<sup>1013</sup>

Barnhart's reframing of *lectio divina* as four dimensions can also be applied at this stage. He suggests that not every biblical text will necessarily contain all four dimensions within them, and that certain texts can be identified to highlight the characteristics of particular dimensions. For example, 'radical participation' is revealed in the many healing scenes; 'nonduality' by the unitive language of John's Gospel and especially the 'I am' sayings; 'creative freedom' by the parables of growth and the startling reversals in Gospel narratives or the Pauline emphasis on newness of life in Christ; and 'communion' by the calls for justice and the passages relating to community.

## **b) Critical stage**

This stage involves bringing interdisciplinary perspectives to critically engage with the text to deepen the layers of meaning. The three approaches to Christian spirituality (theological, historical and anthropological) as outlined in chapter 4 may be employed to probe the text to discern its strengths and weakness in terms of a comprehensive Christian vision. Other disciplines such as psychological and feminist perspectives may be utilized, and also the more recent developments in spirituality

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<sup>1013</sup> Barnhart suggests that this can be sensed in the "Renaissance, Romanticism [and] Modernism," in the world of music, such as "jazz;" in different Christian expressions such as "the emergence of Pentecostalism through the black churches;" in "contemporary developments in the worlds of poetry, music, painting." Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 102. Further, in the "resurgence of 'wisdom' everywhere around us," including in "transpersonal and other advanced psychologies, the various liberation movements...contemporary science" and the "growth of international organizations and cooperative efforts," aiming to operate from "the sense of a single humanity living on the one planet earth." Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 147-148. Other examples were suggested in chapter 4, Part 2.3.

(including inter-religious dialogue).<sup>1014</sup> The aim is to explore and interrogate the text for its meaning in terms of living the Christian life. Several different criteria could be used to assist the process depending on the text involved. Issues such as, image of God, Trinity and Incarnation, anthropology, and the fundamental balance between relationship with God (self-transcendence) and other (life-integration) could be considered.

At this stage of the process, the wisdom framework provides points of reference to engage critically with a text. Some general points are suggested below from the four wisdom principles. These will not necessarily be relevant to each text under consideration and there is room for further expansion of the list. The idea is to bring a 'wisdom lens' to the interpretation process to both illuminate its wisdom dimensions and to probe it for ways in which it may be limiting the Christian life.

### **i) Radical Participation**

A text may be examined in terms of revealing the Christ-event as a new source of unitive presence and transformative life in the world; the person as intimately participating in the divine life with their whole being, and in their vocation as God's newness and co-creative presence in the world; and criticizing anti-personal or anti-material tendencies.

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<sup>1014</sup> Downey names seven focal points for study "1) within a culture; 2) in relation to a tradition; 3) in light of contemporary events, hopes, sufferings and promises; 4) in remembrance of Jesus Christ; 5) in efforts to combine elements of action and contemplation; 6) with respect to charism and community; 7) as expressed and authenticated in praxis." Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 120.

**ii) Nonduality**

A text may be examined in terms of revealing Jesus as the incarnation of profound unity (nonduality); the person as rooted in God in nondual identity and affirmed in their capacity to say 'I am'; the spiritual journey as shaped from 'fullness and unity at the beginning' and growing towards deeper unity (communion) – from baptism to eucharist; and criticizing overly developmental and/or intellectual tendencies limiting the mystery and gratuity of Christ.

**iii) Creative Freedom**

A text may be examined in terms of revealing the life of God as intrinsic to the growth of history creating newness of life in and for the world; the incarnational and humanizing meaning of history with attention to the significance of 'secular' developments; the significance of human freedom, creativity, and healing potential in the incarnational process; and criticizing the reduction of the spiritual life to doctrinal assent and/or the moral life alone, or as ahistorical that overly limit the significance of human freedom.

**iv) Communion**

A text may be examined in terms of revealing history as the incarnation of divine wisdom in movement towards a communion of justice in a global context; a positive engagement with the constructive movements of postmodernity including dialogue with plurality; the eucharistic meaning of communion as the preferential option for the

poor, working towards justice and supportive of justice movements inside and outside the visible Church; and criticizing insular tendencies.

### c) Appropriative stage

In the third stage the text is viewed from the point of view of the interpreter.

Engagement with the first two stages sets the scene for the interpreter to appropriate their own meaning and understanding of living the Christian spiritual life today - this is termed 'self-implication.'<sup>1015</sup> It is here that the specificity of the discipline of Christian Spirituality (the focus on lived experience), is directly connected to the method employed in its study (by explicitly cultivating the lived experience of the interpreter). It is argued that in the very process of studying lived experience in spirituality, the lived experience of the researcher themselves (that is the person's own spiritual engagement and growth) is implicated and there is the potential for "an expansion or deepening of subjectivity of the self," for "personal transformation" and the invitation to become "a spiritually richer and deeper person."<sup>1016</sup> As Downey suggests transformation is "the reason *why* one is studying Christian spirituality...to

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<sup>1015</sup> As Manen writes: "To establish a strong relation with a certain question, phenomenon, or notion, the researcher cannot afford to adopt an attitude of so-called scientific disinterestedness. To be oriented to an object means that we are animated by the object in a full and human sense. To be strong in our orientation means that we will not settle for superficialities and falsities." Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 33.

<sup>1016</sup> Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 27. Perrin concurs: "Not only is he or she trying to plumb the truth and meaning of Christianity in general, but also, and perhaps more significantly, the individual is often directly or indirectly searching for his or her own identity in it all." Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 7. There is some debate about the dangers of self-implication and the risk this poses to a sufficiently rigorous and objective study of Christian Spirituality. McGinn writes that there is confusion "about the relation between intellectual appropriation and personal commitment that would be impossible to implement in non-religious institutions and possibly untrue even in religiously-affiliated institutions of higher learning." McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit," 35. Perrin adds however that: "Christian spirituality, as a self-implicating discipline, acknowledges the struggles between personal and objective approaches." Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 9. Finally Downey writes: "The transformation and expansion of the person in and through understanding by way of appropriating meaning...understanding and personal transformation occur in tense interaction." Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 130.

understand the experience of the Christian spiritual life, and in understanding this experience in the manner of appropriation, one is thereby transformed.”<sup>1017</sup>

It is this potential for spiritual growth that represents the height of the hermeneutical process and where the engagement with and the growth of wholeness is most explicit. As Perrin observes, at this stage the necessity for “being open” to “experience as experience” is most pointed.<sup>1018</sup> It means allowing “events and experiences...to show themselves” in the process of meaning making “rather than imposing prematurely, or too solidly, the usual ways of seeing and understanding.”<sup>1019</sup> This invites multiple ways of knowing and “involves the active participation of human intuition and imagination.”<sup>1020</sup> He summarises:

Experience as experience is, therefore, self-implicating or self-involving...it involves the thoughtful and imaginative participation of the person in what has been meaningful in life. This process opens the way for being in relationship with oneself, the world, and God in new ways. It leads to wisdom, depth of character, and an appreciation of the relative nature of one’s life in the world before God and others.<sup>1021</sup>

Mary Frohlich’s article, *Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality*, offers a provocative perspective on this stage of the process.<sup>1022</sup> She suggests that ‘lived spirituality’ is a process of constructing “expressions of human meaning,” an “ongoing dynamic activity in which individuals and groups create and recreate meaning, joy, and shared life.”<sup>1023</sup> To engage in this process requires a certain quality of commitment she terms “radical engagement” or “the human spirit fully in

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<sup>1017</sup> Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, 131.

<sup>1018</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 49-50.

<sup>1019</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 50.

<sup>1020</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 50.

<sup>1021</sup> Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, 50.

<sup>1022</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 65-78.

<sup>1023</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 68, 71.

act...being, living, acting according to their fullest intrinsic potential...the fullness of interpersonal, communal, and mystical relationship.”<sup>1024</sup> The key task in studying a text of Christian spirituality therefore is to consider how these “constructed expressions of human meaning...do (or do not) tend toward that kind of radial engagement.”<sup>1025</sup>

Frohlich then argues that to engage authentically in this process requires the same kind of commitment of the interpreter: “when we select, claim understanding of, or evaluate something as ‘having to do with spirituality,’ we do so based on our own living of spirituality – that is, our own spirit’s ‘fully in act.’”<sup>1026</sup> In other words “our ‘lived spirituality’ is both where we stand and what we look at” and therefore we must approach the interpretative process with “the attitude like that of one who takes up a spiritual discipline.”<sup>1027</sup> In summary, we can only engage with the transformative dynamic in the text on the basis of our own attempts to be transformed, that is, to live a spiritual life.

On this basis, Frohlich names “interiority” as the “uniquely defining methodological principle of the discipline of spirituality.”<sup>1028</sup> Interiority is not “private introspection” but the very “mark of personhood...defined as one who receives and gives existence in the act of intimate presence.”<sup>1029</sup> Interiority is the intention to be present with one’s whole being, therefore “intimacy precedes and grounds objectivity...through standing

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<sup>1024</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 71.

<sup>1025</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 71.

<sup>1026</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 73-74.

<sup>1027</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 75.

<sup>1028</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 75.

<sup>1029</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 74.

inside, and coming to know, the lived reality in our own spirits.”<sup>1030</sup> It also intrinsically involves ‘the other’ – it is the “enhancement of the self-presence that is the ground of all presence” and grows towards “full presence with oneself, with others, with the world, with God.”<sup>1031</sup>

Frohlich further suggests that to enhance interiority and self-presence as part of the process of interpreting transformative texts, requires commitment to spiritual practice: to “a structured, committed approach to learning how to live spirituality.”<sup>1032</sup> Frohlich therefore uncovers a significant insight into the study of lived experience – that its personal and transformative nature requires the cultivating of a certain way of being on behalf of the interpreter in order to come more deeply towards understanding it. In other words, the wholeness inherent in expressions of lived experience requires a commitment towards growth in wholeness by the interpreter through the intentional practice of interiority.

The wisdom framework offers resources to cultivate the interior presence as Frohlich is suggesting. The four points of textual engagement provide ways to engage with a text in an experiential way, and the corresponding points of personal engagement can be employed to nurture the interior movements to cultivate wisdom knowing as part of the process. The first point of ‘openness to the whole’ provides the context to

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<sup>1030</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 75. Schneiders adds support to this perspective: "One's own spirituality provides emphatic access to the phenomena spirituality studies." Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 29. "This necessitates the researcher's "personal involvement in its subject matter" leading to a "participative...methodological style." Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 694. To understand lived experience involves therefore "not only intellectual deciphering of a phenomenon but appropriation that is transformative of the subject" Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach," 57. And therefore accessing "the holistic character of the human subject." Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," 25. Principe adds: "it involves participation by the student of spirituality as opposed to an objective self-distancing." Principe, "Spirituality, Christian," 936.

<sup>1031</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 75.

<sup>1032</sup> Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 76.

engage with a spectrum of ways of knowing and come to deeper aspects of the self in the interpretive process. It cautions against biasing any one way of knowing (especially critical thinking) to encompass the bodily, intuitive, imaginative, and synthetic approaches, and involvement in group processes. Opening this landscape orientates the interpretative process towards wholeness and the possibility for transformation.

This becomes further emphasised with the three additional principles. Nonduality illuminates a way of 'unitive' knowing at the other end of the spectrum from critical rationality – rather than separating the knower from that which is known, it highlights the deep resonance between the person and the text. It emphasises the essential place of silence, opening the space to reveal the often unseen vibration between person and text like a guitar string that is plucked and simultaneously vibrates the same string on another guitar. This opens the opportunity for 'intimate' knowing between person and text. Creative freedom stresses the movement and life in the text and alerts the interpreter to that movement within themselves that may be expressed intuitively, imaginatively as well as through reason. Communion emphasises the transformative imperative in the work to bring unity and remedy to injustice.

## **2.2 Example: Jesus and the woman from Samaria (John 4:4-42)**

To explore the application of the framework in practice, the Johannine episode 'Jesus and the woman of Samaria' will be explored – see appendix 2 for the full text. The episode is particularly significant as it can be interpreted as illustrating each of the four wisdom principles as it unfolds. In what follows, a creative response will be

offered from my personal experience. It is not therefore a detailed exegetical study which is beyond the reach of the chapter. It is meant to be illustrative only by offering some examples with the understanding that it could be further expanded. These reflections emerge from my own engagement with the passage in light of the wisdom framework with the aim of illustrating how the framework can be used as an interface between the person and a text. At the first two stages of the hermeneutical process a general comment will be made as to the application of the framework. The personal reflection will be developed at more length at the appropriative stage.

### **a) Descriptive stage**

At this stage, the text is examined to give it depth and bring it alive for the reader from the point of view of Johannine spirituality in general, and its historical context. It would also be approached for its wisdom form and themes. For example, its evocative use of language and narrative structure (with introduction, dramatic development and conclusion) draws the reader into its world and therefore exhibits the participatory quality of wisdom literature. It is also very rich in symbolism: well, noon, water, marriage, mountain, field, harvest and fruit all pointing beyond the literal to deeper meaning and personal resonance. Water itself is a strong wisdom theme (see Sir 24.23-29) and is also suggestive of baptism. The biblical history of meeting at wells followed by marriage (for example Gen 29:10) is also suggestive of the intimate nature and fertility of wisdom. The implication that Jesus now represents the 'new' source of fertility and wisdom is revealing. The corresponding harvest that is reaped without being sown illuminates the gratuity of the gift given and evokes possible eucharistic connections as its impact expands to create a new community for the Samaritan town.

## **b) Critical Stage**

At this stage, along with a range of interpretative lenses such as textual and historical criticism, a wisdom perspective can be applied. Each of the four principles may be used as reference: the meeting between Jesus and the woman illuminating the participatory event of Christ enabling a new inclusion for all (v10) (the principle of radical participation); the I am statement of Jesus (v26) as exemplifying the divinity of Jesus in nondual terms and its gratuity in being revealed to the woman (the principle of nonduality); the new life experienced by the woman through the encounter and her freedom to newly express herself (v29) (the principle of creative freedom); and the new community that comes together around the testimony of the woman and their own encounter with Jesus (v42) (the principle of communion).

## **c) Appropriative stage**

At this stage, each of the four textual and personal engagements from the wisdom framework may be used to cultivate the wisdom knowing of the interpreter and bring it to bear in the encounter with the text with the view towards its transformative potential and growth towards wholeness. My personal engagement with the text will be developed below in relation to each of these four areas.

### **i) Text as wisdom – openness to the whole**

I come before the text as wisdom, aware of it as light and mystery, and taking steps to turn towards it as a whole by cultivating a participatory mode: becoming more present within myself and to the text with the intention to absorb the words, open to

possibilities, letting them strike me as if for the first time. Certain phrases catch my attention:

### **Sitting by the well. It was about noon (v. 6)**

Jesus sits by the well – he is entirely still like the sun itself in the centre of the sky. He accepts its rays so completely and then in a flash of insight he ‘is’ the sun – his presence is completely self-generating. There is a vibration and light emanating from him – he is so intensely present, a fullness of presence I cannot fathom drawing me beyond myself.<sup>1033</sup>

### **A Samaritan woman came to draw water (v.7)**

The woman comes for her daily needs. I am aware of my own needs and existential experience. The sense of ‘being drawn’ takes on profound significance. It brings into sharp relief my own desires, to what am I drawn; am I in touch with my deepest desire? Yet, in the midst of the ambiguity of my life, something completely new breaks in, something not seen since the foundation of the world – in this one meeting between this man and this woman, all previous boundaries are broken, a new life presents itself.

In asking for a drink Jesus immediately affirms the full dignity of this woman and points to her identity as transformative. This ‘old’ well takes on new meaning as source of life and the fulfilment of deepest desire, to participate in this “spring of

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<sup>1033</sup> This suggestion of the ‘all’ being present in Jesus is influenced by Barnhart’s insistence of the one ‘event’ of Christ that his wisdom approach aims to capture.

water gushing up to eternal life” (v. 14). But do I have the courage to drink of this water, allow myself to be drawn into and vulnerable to its transformative intent? Can I allow it to become the very life of my veins? I too, wonder, “are you greater than our ancestor Jacob?” (v.12); and yet, another part of me ‘knows’ the new and unconditional life present here, this is all that is needed, “the well is deep” (v. 11).

### **Go, call your husband, and come back (v 16)**

I am led to be transparent to my own life-history. All that is in darkness is brought into the light, my fragility and infidelity, where I have followed the ‘easy road’<sup>1034</sup> - “what you have said is true!” (v. 18). Yet a stunning reality is revealed, amidst all of this, my whole self (and the disparity of life) is borne by Jesus as it is, and therefore can be borne by me. I am affirmed at depth and can be open to transformation in a new and generative way - a new “worship in spirit and in truth” (v. 23).

#### **ii) Text as unitive - orientation towards embodied presence**

I enter into silence before the text with the intention of being present and open: I might draw on a simple practice of the breath and/or repetition of a word to bring me towards this silence, knowing that the essential thing is to be open and in faith, trusting in the unity and intimacy of the text.

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<sup>1034</sup> See Mt 7:13.

## **I am he (v. 26)**

The words 'I am' resonate at profound depth.<sup>1035</sup> Suddenly everything stops, the curtains are drawn back, divine light breaks through, the words hang there in this dramatic moment of intense stillness. They stand aloft without support revealing the gift of divinity in the world. All is contained in this quantum leap pulsating with potential. These words speak to my own deepest self, inviting the taking up of this gift to discover the great I am.

### **iii) Text as dynamic - orientation towards creative potential**

I open to the dynamism in the text, like music, as it unfolds from one movement to another. The text has life and freedom within it, an unconditional quality moving from the depth of the well, expanding, and spiralling outward into life unimagined. I notice the words that particularly light up, challenge, and illuminate.

## **Then the woman left her water jar (v. 28)**

This is the transformative moment, just as she leaves her jar (her 'old self') I sense the same call within me.<sup>1036</sup> Her cry of freedom moves me deeply, "come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!" (v. 29). She is suddenly able to be herself as though dancing for the first time. This one encounter has released her into the world to be an agent for change, to become good news.<sup>1037</sup> I too feel the pulse of

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<sup>1035</sup> The significance of the I am statement is highlighted by Barnhart's 'eastern turn.'

<sup>1036</sup> The 'leaving' of the water-jar brings to mind the first disciples following Jesus: "immediately they left their nets"; "Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee." (Mark 1:18,20)

<sup>1037</sup> This new senses of agency is highlighted by Barnhart's 'western turn.'

new life within me, as the radiance emanating from her transforms the whole scene – now the community cannot hold themselves back from coming into this new life, “they left the city and were on the way to him” (v. 30). It opens life and potential within me, reveals gifts and freedom I could not know.

#### **iv) Text as enactive – orientation towards bearing the other**

I open to the demands of the text for action and justice with the intention of being alert to its personal call on me. Where does the text challenge me to become the gift that has been freely given, to see where the weight of life is borne by some more than others, and attempt to bring remedy. Certain verses are illuminated in this context:

#### **My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work (v. 34)**

Jesus not only gives the gift; his words embody it. He describes the initiation of a new (eucharistic) paradigm – he is a new food, divine food – a food of unfathomable fertility, “the fields are ripe for harvesting” (v. 35). I am called to enter into this “labour” (v. 38), to become this food, to feed as well as be fed, and bring this new life into being in the concrete details of my own life. I am called into this transformative process from the gift of the baptismal ‘I am’ and its growth into the ‘harvest’ of eucharistic life in the world.

**We have heard for ourselves (v. 42)**

Just as the woman's testimony enabled new life, it has now expanded exponentially, and the Samaritan community is empowered on its own terms. A new communion is realised, the eucharistic life incarnates, made concrete in community.<sup>1038</sup> Each person is given their dignity – the space to expand and become self-generative. The Jesus event through the 'labour' of the cross has released this food and drink into the nature of reality and with this Samaritan community, I "know that this is truly the Saviour of the world" (v. 42).

In summary, the wisdom framework provides avenues for engagement with the hermeneutical process in the following ways: it emphasizes the significance of 'wisdom texts' expressive of lived experience at the descriptive stage; provides a 'wisdom lens' to expand the interpretative process at the critical stage; and offers access points to enhance interiority to foster self-transformation as the ultimate aim of the hermeneutical process. The participatory context encourages the movement towards a space of interior wholeness from which to encounter a text, and the unitive, dynamic, and enactive dimensions encourage the engagement of different aspects of the human person to encourage the growth of that wholeness.

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<sup>1038</sup> This movement of communion is highlighted by Barnhart's 'global turn.'

## **Part 3: Findings and recommendations**

### **3.1 Summary of the thesis**

It is now possible to summarize this thesis by developing some key findings and recommendations. The central question has been the extent to which Barnhart's proposal of four turns for Christian wisdom provides avenues to cultivate wholeness in Christian life? In response, the following approach was taken:

Chapter 1 outlined Barnhart's approach to wisdom as participatory knowing and how it is represented in poetic literature. It defined his approach according to four principles, a core principle of knowing by participation, and three dynamic principles (unitive, creative and communion), described as 'activating the whole person in movement from unitive source to creative expression and generative of communion.'

Chapter 2 explored Barnhart's theological approach, centred on Jesus as the incarnation of divine wisdom, empowering a participatory revolution, and shaping participatory knowing in terms of the cross. It then delineated the history of wisdom theology from its centrality in the early church to its increasing eclipse from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This analysis set the scene for Barnhart's proposal for renewal today.

Chapter 3 described Barnhart's four turns for the renewal of Christian wisdom (the sapiential awakening; and the eastern, western and the global turns), founded on the theological dynamism of the Second Vatican Council. Based on these four turns, four principles of wisdom knowing were developed to reflect the new context: the core principle as radical participation and the three dynamic principles: nonduality,

creative freedom and communion. Christian 'wisdom knowing' was defined as 'radical participation in the process of unitive incarnation in history, activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion.'

It then showed how the discipline of Christian Spirituality also emerged in the changing context of the late 20th century. Scholars of the discipline responded to the new environment set by the Vatican Council and the many developments since and identified the category of lived experience as the way to engage wholistically within it and maintain Christian specificity. Lived experience was defined as 'personal engagement in a process of transformation in Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It involves the interplay of self-transcending and life-integrating movements towards fullness of life in (the Triune) God.' The parallel between lived experience and wisdom knowing was then shown to provide the means to investigate its potential to cultivate wholeness in Christian life.

Chapter 4 engaged in an investigation of wisdom knowing by examining nonduality in relation to self-transcendence, creative freedom in relation to life-integration, and communion in relation to the movement toward fullness of life in God. Finally, in chapter 5, a framework was developed to explore wisdom knowing as a practical means to cultivate wholeness and to demonstrate its applicability in the hermeneutical process.

What conclusions can be drawn as to the strength of wisdom knowing in cultivating wholeness? A response to this question will be made by considering the core and

dynamic principles and suggesting two key findings: the significance of practice and the significance of process.

### **a) Core principle: radical participation**

Firstly, the thesis has identified how Barnhart's participatory approach to wisdom provides a means to engage with lived experience in Christian spirituality.

Participatory knowing is characterized by its intimacy, growing organically within the person, and opening a space to encompass a spectrum of ways of knowing. This 'knowing in movement' with its trajectory from interiority to creative expression encourages the engagement with the personal (and wholistic) orientation of lived experience. This connection is particularly strong when engagement with lived experience is framed in terms of 'interiority' – a process of cultivating presence within the whole person. The open-ended process of participatory knowing is further enhanced by identifying the poetic wisdom literature providing a direct means to encourage wisdom knowing and therefore the movement towards wholeness.

The notion of participatory knowing was also revealed as an effective theological strategy. By drawing on scripture and early church tradition to develop a wisdom theology, Barnhart expands his participatory approach to wisdom.<sup>1039</sup> It centres on Jesus as the incarnation of wisdom, fulfilled through the cross, and situated around two fundamental aspects of Christian theology (Trinity and Incarnation). The event of the cross realises the fusion of Trinity and creation, and becomes the source of wholeness, represented vertically in a new participation in God, and horizontally in a

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<sup>1039</sup> More recent scholarship was also noted as uncovering the significance of wisdom theology in the early church in support of Barnhart's position. See chapter 2, part 1.

new participation with all reality. The participatory revolution it releases through the gift of the Holy Spirit initiates a process of 'unitive incarnation' throughout history and growth towards communion. Unitive incarnation can be understood, therefore, as the particularity of Christian wholeness from Barnhart's perspective. Its radically participatory nature also highlights the trajectory of Christian life from its source in God (baptismal initiation) through the process of unitive incarnation in creative freedom (confirmation) towards communion (eucharist). This provides a theological orientation for wholistic engagement.

By drawing on the vision of the Second Vatican Council and other 20<sup>th</sup> century figures, Barnhart also demonstrates how this participatory approach is responsive to historical growth and the future. He develops an active 'process of participation' requiring the agency (and fullness) of the human person. History takes on theological meaning as the context for transformation and growth towards wholeness. Its trajectory towards communion also opens the Christian life beyond an 'individual' spiritual life alone, to engage within a global context through dialogue and intentionally forming community centred in justice. It calls for the integration of the whole person and the whole of life.

In these three ways, as a way of knowing, as a theological approach, and for its historical responsiveness, it can be concluded that Barnhart's participatory approach provides a basis for wholistic perspectives.

**b) Dynamic principles: nonduality, creative freedom, communion**

Barnhart's three dynamic principles represent the way he understands the shape of the process of unitive incarnation in more specific ways. He asserts nonduality at the source taking it beyond relationship with God alone, to insinuate a point of divine identity operative in Christian experience. He situates the dramatic changes in Western history from the 12<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance, including the growth in critical rationality, as representing a new pulse of human freedom sourced in the incarnational process. And finally, he projects an horizon of communion in the plurality of postmodernity as the trajectory for wholeness.

How credible are these claims and to what extent do they provide a landscape for wholistic engagement? Each of them has been shown to be contentious in different ways. Nonduality can be challenged on theological grounds in terms of compromising the transcendence of God and the separation between creator and creation. Creative freedom on historical grounds, as it is evident that the marked growth of critical rationality that also developed from the 12<sup>th</sup> century did fragment the relationship between theology and spirituality in Western history and wrought a secular world. In this context, it can be understood for its detrimental effect on Christian wholeness. This challenges Barnhart's assertion that Western development is intrinsically connected to the incarnational process. Communion can be challenged on contextual grounds as our time can certainly be characterized in terms of increasing plurality and fragmentation and therefore far from a movement of convergence. This highlights the need for further investigation and development of each of the principles.

However, the analysis conducted with the three dimensions of Christian lived experience, also demonstrates their merit for further consideration. A theological analysis with the dimension of 'self-transcendence' highlighted Barnhart's careful treatment of nonduality within a Christian theological context. He distinguishes his approach from a perennial nonduality by locating a 'nondual event' at a particular point in history made possible through the paschal mystery. This 'births' a divine identity in the human person at their deepest point of self-transcendence. He then shows how this does not compromise the relational and Trinitarian context of Christian life.

A historical analysis with the dimension of 'life-integration' demonstrated how Barnhart situates the growth of critical rationality, including its fragmentary impact, at the forefront of a larger growth of human freedom in Western history. He then asserts its theological significance by identifying the emerging incarnational (humanizing) fruits, generated through the scientific process, new sensitivity to human rights, and expressions of creative freedom, all of which allowed more space for the individual to flourish. This growth also included those elements that manifest outside the visible boundaries of the church. Making the incarnational process the criterion for discernment, opened up the possibility to understand these peculiarly Western developments, despite their destructive potential, as part of the life-integrating movement of God's life in the world and therefore, a necessary part of the growth towards greater wholeness.

Finally, an anthropological analysis, in the context of the movement towards fullness of life in God, showed how Barnhart situated the future-orientated principle of

communion as a process intrinsic to the growth of the fullness of the human person. Communion is not proposed as a static and abstract principle imposed to the detriment of individual freedom. Rather it is an active process requiring ongoing dialogue with the 'other' and growth towards a new and more potent unity that fulfils human uniqueness in relation to the whole. It was shown to engage with the positive aspects of postmodernity, including those deconstructive movements that challenge the abuse of power, and necessarily create the space for justice.

Barnhart's approach to communion aims to navigate the tensive ground between the person and the whole. It holds the wholeness of the human person and the uniqueness of their experience as *the* criterion for discernment, whilst situating it as intrinsically connected to the ongoing growth towards the wholeness of humanity. The process of communion also brings together the principles of wisdom knowing, it is the culmination of participatory knowing through the mysterious interaction of interior nonduality and the exterior movement of creative freedom, opening possibilities for growth towards deeper unity. Therefore, this process of communion is synonymous with wholeness in Barnhart's wisdom approach, and the analysis demonstrates its potential as opening a pathway for fostering wholeness in Christian life.

### **3.2 Findings**

Two key findings as to how wisdom knowing provides this pathway can be ascertained in relation to the criteria set out by Sandra Schneiders in the

introduction:<sup>1040</sup> that in order to offer genuinely wholistic approaches responsive to the personal nature of lived experience requires navigating three historical periods: the early period of integration of theology and spirituality, the critical rationality of the Enlightenment, and engagement with the plurality and deconstructive movement of postmodernity. It requires a “holistic approach to research with full accountability to the standards of criticism...personal commitment to what one is studying with appropriate methodological perspective, and practical involvement with theoretical integrity.”<sup>1041</sup> At the same time, it was noted how wholistic approaches must also be cognisant of Christian specificity. Wisdom knowing engages with this broad landscape in two significant ways: as an avenue for practice and as emphasizing the importance of process.

#### **a) Wisdom knowing and practice**

Wisdom knowing, and its development into a framework, offers practices for engagement by connecting theological and experiential dimensions in mutually strengthening ways. The four principles of the framework provide reference points for an organic process through an interplay of theological, experiential and textual orientations. Its centre is the cross and the sacramental outpouring that becomes the theological source of a process for whole person engagement. The cross is the crucible, an ultimate source and centre of wholeness, holding all reality from the depth of vulnerability in personal experience and humanity’s history, to its possibility and transformative potential. The two axes hold together both ‘vertical’ wholeness with God, and ‘horizontal’ wholeness with all creation. It provides a context for the

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<sup>1040</sup> See Introduction part 1.2.

<sup>1041</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 19.

foundational disposition for growth towards wholeness, openness and transparency to lived experience and the spectrum of ways of knowing.

The dynamic principles then describe the impact of this event as 'a process of unitive incarnation in history' to reflect the interaction of the vertical (unitive) and horizontal (incarnational) dimensions defined as 'activating the whole person in movement from nonduality to creative freedom and generative of communion.' These principles engage with aspects of the historical movements Schneiders outlines. Nonduality stresses the intensity of unity at the source of Christian life and helps to amplify the early period of church history when a unitive perspective was particularly alive. Theology during that time emphasised the Christian mystery as the source of a comprehensive reconciliation in its content and form of expression. Nonduality, and the practice of embodied presence provides a way to maintain contact with this unity in Christian life.

Nonduality is then shown to be the beginning of a dynamic process made concrete in history. The principle of creative freedom provides a category to frame this process and apply it to Western history. The pronounced growth of critical rationality reflected in theological discourse and manifested in the scientific method can be connected to the vocation of bringing newness into the world. This allows the period of the Enlightenment, in which increasing rationality also fragments a previously held unity, to be understood (in part at least), as an intrinsic part of the larger process of unitive incarnation and the full flourishing of the human person. Its incarnational meaning is revealed through its humanizing effects. The growth in critical rationality, then, can be discerned as part of a larger creative capacity coming to life in the human person,

enabling a positive engagement with it. The significance of the systems of logic it produces can be recognized for their vital contribution, and at the same time, to compliment them with practices to intentionally enhance other ways of knowing including the vital place of imagination and creativity in Christian life.

The principle of communion provides a wider context for the process and a way to approach the intense diversity of postmodernity. The hermeneutical processes that are required to engage with the plural and multi-disciplinary environment can be employed within the unitive horizon of Christian life. Communion becomes a process of actively generating deeper unity through bearing 'otherness' in the context of living a eucharistic life. In practice it calls for dialogue and listening, a willingness to be interrupted by and to bear 'the other', and to be open to new possibilities. The willingness to engage with the deconstructive process (characteristic of postmodernity) to realize a more just and deeper unity can be compared to the action of breaking bread to realise a deeper communion in the eucharistic celebration.

The four principles and associated practices, from the disposition of openness and transparency, the interiority of nonduality, to its expression in creative freedom and service through bearing the other, provide opportunities to activate the different aspects of the human person and therefore, avenues for the cultivation of wholeness. They are also centred and shaped within the theological context of the cross and its meaning. The wholistic growth is therefore located firmly within a theological frame of reference, the other requirement for Christian wholeness today.

## **b) Wisdom knowing and process**

Wisdom knowing also underlines the significance of process in cultivating wholeness. It highlights how wholistic engagement is not necessarily in the first place enhanced through interacting with a diversity of perspectives or in identifying the different attributes of wholeness to be attained. Rather, an essential first step is the cultivation of our way of knowing, to move towards a wholistic way of being. In other words, we first need to orientate ourselves towards our own growing process towards wholeness and aim to bring this to the interpretative process. Wisdom knowing offers ways into this process with principles that are theologically grounded and connected to points of orientation for experiential engagement. It proposes ways to cultivate interior wholistic growth and from there to engage in the breadth of lived experience within ourselves, within texts and with the process of interpretation. Hence, it contributes to what Sandra Schneiders believes is a deeper purpose of the discipline of Christian spirituality: to show how “care and commitment not only do not contaminate thought but enhance it. Becoming more is not inimical to knowing more but should be its organic outcome.”<sup>1042</sup>

The emphasis on process in wisdom knowing also provides a source of discernment. Its centre in unity on the one hand affirms the mystical aspect of Christian life. Its engagement with history and humanity’s growth on the other hand would challenge any approach to Christian spirituality that tends toward an ahistorical non-incarnating approach to that unity. The incarnational process stresses the need for a close interaction with history through interpretative processes from multiple perspectives. It

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<sup>1042</sup> Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," 20.

also challenges any insular tendencies in Christian spirituality. The creative freedom that has been endowed through the incarnation needs to be applied to history in terms of identifying its humanising impact which may come from outside the visible church including 'secular' developments.

At the same time its assertion of a unitive horizon would challenge positioning the Christian life as critical engagement alone, or as entirely a journey of the self with God, or alternatively, relying on hermeneutical processes to approach postmodernity as an endless engagement with 'difference.' It affirms that the Christian life must be situated within a growth towards communion and the work of justice. In this context, the interaction of the principles, offer resources in the task of maintaining a balanced and discerned approach to the interpretation of lived experience.

Wisdom knowing also opens a space for the movement towards synthesis. The foundation in an active and participatory process has the potential to incorporate critical and deconstructive dimensions while maintaining a unitive horizon. It also works within a broad landscape and the holding of seeming opposites: from spirit to history, sacred to secular, thinking to feeling, critical to experiential, unity to difference, and personal to universal. The strength of this capacity has become evident in the way the principles of wisdom knowing link to other frameworks of wholeness in the Second Vatican Council and in the discipline of Christian Spirituality.

Opening the space to hold opposites and mystery is the special genius of wisdom. It orientates us towards a deeper and more mysterious unifying movement within

reality. It calls us to 'hold off' from closing the door too quickly one way or another, to a kind of clarity which would also cause unnecessary fragmentation, or towards a harmony that brings a false unity without sufficient critical engagement. As Barnhart suggests, wisdom opens the space to avoid "the extremes of fundamentalism" on the one hand which would seek to close itself around a static approach to meaning, or "rootless relativism" on the other, which would seek an openness towards difference in the pursuit of a harmony that ultimately leads to meaninglessness.<sup>1043</sup> Wisdom's 'light' offers a way to mediate the "ambiguous territory between two poles of particularity and universality," and the possibility to live within the mystery of reality that "no single law or theological formula" can resolve, whether "spiritual, intellectual, existential...as their interaction continues to work itself out at the heart of life and history."<sup>1044</sup>

The breadth and comprehensive intent of Barnhart's work will be challenged with questions such as: how to engage in dialogue with other traditions and disciplines without losing Christian specificity? How to maintain a participatory and experiential approach and maintain sufficient critical engagement? How to confront the reality of injustice and the prevalence of evil within an horizon of communion? How to respond to the 'southern turn' in Christianity and engage with Islam, only briefly treated by Barnhart?<sup>1045</sup> These questions will require ongoing discernment and the need for the fine balancing of different needs. However, Barnhart's approach, with its centre in

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<sup>1043</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 284.

<sup>1044</sup> Barnhart, "One Spirit, One Body," 284.

<sup>1045</sup> Scholars have studied the present 'southern turn' in Christianity. Barnhart comments on the work of Philip Jenkins from his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*: "By the year 2050, he predicts, only one Christian in five will be a non-Hispanic white person, and the centre of gravity of the Christian world will have shifted decisively to the Southern hemisphere" characterized by "poverty, conservatism, supernaturalism, and Pentecostalism." On Islam Barnhart comments on the likelihood that Christianity and Islam "will dominate the global future...and there is the danger of a return to the state of ongoing Christian-Muslim conflict that characterized the Middle Ages." Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 173-174.

the mystery of the cross, its emphasis on process, and the way it comes together in communion does provide points of engagement, and, therefore, a contribution to the quest for wholeness in Christian life today.

### 3.2 Recommendations

To conclude this thesis, three recommendations are suggested for further development:

#### a) The Christian life as a way of wisdom

Firstly, it is recommended that Barnhart's work be expanded to promote the Christian life as a journey in and as wisdom. Barnhart refers to Avery Dulles well-known book, *Models of Church* where Dulles' explores different identities for the church including "institution, mystery of communion, sacrament, herald, servant disciple," and Barnhart then suggests a further identity: "as a communal incarnation of divine wisdom."<sup>1046</sup> This image could be developed to emphasize the participatory environment for Christian life and the poetic wisdom language that expresses it. It could be presented as offering the necessary balance to a world inundated with information and over work, and thereby promote a movement towards re-enchantment.<sup>1047</sup> To bridge the gap identified by Mark Burrows, that "the life of language" must move "beyond construction of reality within the limits of reason alone, and that a disenchanting world emptied of the symbolic and denied the traces

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<sup>1046</sup> Barnhart, *Second Simplicity*, 56. See: Avery Dulles, *Models of Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

<sup>1047</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 188.

of transcendence is finally a difficult if not unbearable dwelling place.”<sup>1048</sup> A wisdom approach opens doors to a richer and deeper reality and a space to engage with the issues facing humanity with pathways towards the transformation of consciousness. In this context the church could more fully fulfil “the deepest nature of [its] mission...the encouragement of unity” rather than division, as catalyst for communion, as source of a reconciled life in the plurality and complexity present today.<sup>1049</sup>

### **b) Developing a wisdom pedagogy**

Secondly, it is recommended the wisdom framework be developed as pedagogy in different contexts.<sup>1050</sup> This could include in the study of Christian spirituality through further development of the framework in the hermeneutical process. Particular attention could be given to the appropriative stage and how the framework can cultivate the interior dispositions to engage in lived experience in wholistic ways. Each of the four principles might be expanded with a glossary of words and attributes to open deeper access to them.<sup>1051</sup> Practices could also be further developed to cultivate each principle: through expanding the possibilities for *lectio divina* and its interaction with silent meditation; exploring ways to engage with silence, creativity and dialogue in the pedagogical process; and expanding the range

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<sup>1048</sup> Burrows, "Raiding the Inarticulate," 342.

<sup>1049</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42.

<sup>1050</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of a 'divine pedagogy' learnt over time: "The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously 'by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other' and shed light on each another. It involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself [sic] to man [sic] gradually. He [sic] prepares him [sic] to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 53.

<sup>1051</sup> For example: 'Radical participation' - immersion, inclusion, healing, self-compassion, forgiveness, encounter, tenderness, resonance; 'Nonduality' - unity, oneness, connectedness, being, intensity; 'Creative freedom' – potential, emergence, agency, capacity, activation, intuition, imagination, insight, newness; 'Communion' – completeness, community, wholeness, convergence, compassion.

of texts to enhance engagement with the framework – especially identifying texts (Biblical and otherwise) to illuminate each of the principles in specific ways.

Engagement with the framework in pastoral and retreat settings might also be developed. This could include exploring it as a source of formation in education, parishes, pastoral and spiritual direction settings; developing retreat opportunities with the theme of ‘living the spiritual life as wisdom;’ exploring the possibilities of developing the framework as a reference for spirituality ‘styles’ and discernment in the spiritual life along the lines of Connie Ware’s work.<sup>1052</sup> It could also be explored in connection to the hermeneutical process suggested in Religious Education today. This approach situates Religious Education as a process of meaning making by bringing the Christian tradition into dialogue with the plural context of today by opening and deepening ones “hermeneutical space.”<sup>1053</sup> The wisdom framework could be applied as part of this process especially its contribution to the appropriate stage and its transformative intention.

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<sup>1052</sup> Ware develops four spirituality preferences or styles with the aim of growing towards wholeness. She identifies four key styles and the dangers if any one of them dominates a person’s spiritual life: Head Spirituality (danger – rationalism); Heart Spirituality (danger - emotionalism); Mystical Spirituality (danger – reclusively); and Social Action Spirituality (danger - moralism). Ware suggests that the four types connect together to make a whole and emphasises the movement towards wholeness as the deeper purpose of engaging with the different styles. See Connie Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995). There is a parallel to the wisdom framework with nonduality (representing the ‘mystical spirituality’) creative freedom (the ‘head and heart spirituality’) and communion (‘social action spirituality’) that could be explored further in terms of moving towards balance in the living of the spiritual life.

<sup>1053</sup> As Didier Pollefeyt writes: “One of the tasks of religious education is to allow children and young people to discover this hermeneutical space within themselves and others...and open it up even more...to discover the highs and lows of life, beauty and comfort, pain and suffering, mystery and the incomprehensible, the forgiving nature and the hard edges of reality, but also: our frail, vulnerable and excluded fellow human beings, the fragility of nature.” Didier Pollefeyt, “The Lustre of Life: Hermeneutic–Communicative Concept of Religious Education,” *Catholic Education Melbourne*, accessed March 11 2020, [https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/formationandleadership/identity/Documents/CI%20Readings/ISS\\_Pollefeyt\\_articles\\_book.pdf](https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/formationandleadership/identity/Documents/CI%20Readings/ISS_Pollefeyt_articles_book.pdf).

### c) Developing wisdom communities

Finally, the potential for Christian wisdom could be further developed by forming groups of interested people including academics from different areas and other practitioners from multiple disciplines including education, psychology, leadership, and other religious and spiritual perspectives.<sup>1054</sup> The density of the notion of wisdom invites the possibilities for rich dialogue and growth. The aim would be to give wisdom a voice in different contexts and explore further its possibilities for application. This could include exploring connections with other participatory approaches such as in leadership and education.<sup>1055</sup>

### Conclusion

By taking the Second Vatican Council as his inspiration Barnhart leads us into vast lands from the sources to the expanding horizons of today. His insight is to maintain a sense of the whole throughout and offer a process for engagement. At the centre is the cross, the tree of life, stretching outwards into all reality empowering a transformation towards wholeness. Barnhart would often declare, the cross is “the

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<sup>1054</sup> The notion of wisdom is being used in many different contexts as was noted in the introduction and in chapter 1.

<sup>1055</sup> In the leadership area see for example ‘Theory U’ as developed by Otto Scharmer and Peter Senge. It presents a process to intentionally engage the mind, heart and will through “co-initiating, co-sensing, co-presencing, co-creating, co-evolving” to approach problems and to enable growth in different settings. See: Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges: The Social Technology of Presencing* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Books, 2009). In the educational area see for example the work of Jorge Ferrer and his ‘Four Seasons of Integral Education’ - a participatory process envisaged as rotating around four movements – planting in Autumn, rooting in Winter, blooming in Spring, and Harvesting in summer. It suggests “that head and heart, intellect and emotion (along with body, instincts, and intuition) can be equal partners in the inquiry process and elaboration of more integral understandings.” Jorge N. Ferrer, Marina T. Romero, and Ramon V. Albareda, “The Four Seasons of Integral Education,” in *Participation and the Mystery: Transpersonal Essays in Psychology, Education, and Religion*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 141.

great 'yes' to reality when all else would say 'no'" or as the poet Wallace Stevens announced:<sup>1056</sup>

After the final no there comes a yes  
And on that yes the future world depends.  
No was the night. Yes is this present sun.<sup>1057</sup>

Barnhart offers a response to this unconditional 'yes' and the call to live its gift, to participate in its nature of opening all that is closed in a widening force of attraction:

The Lenten spring is past and gone!  
The earth is vibrant with new life:  
the Cross, now rooted, breaks in bloom  
as all is gathered into Christ.<sup>1058</sup>

The mystery of the cross opens a space for "the essential integrity...of the whole...a whole which is unbounded" and like a new bloom "expresses itself in freedom and spontaneity."<sup>1059</sup> Its vibrant new life is a "burning mystery of newness...a revolution from law to freedom" that cannot be extinguished in all the ambiguities of life.<sup>1060</sup> It opens us too from inside out, to realize "the fullness and wholeness" is also "our own being."<sup>1061</sup>

"Christ brings a new heart to humanity...a new sense of compassion...a new way of embracing others...so we are one in a new way."<sup>1062</sup> To become transparent to this kind of life is to learn to 'live the cross,' and become a transformative presence in the

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<sup>1056</sup> Barnhart, *Interview: The Future of Wisdom*.

<sup>1057</sup> Wallace Stevens, "The Well Dressed Man With A Beard," *Lyrics.lol*, accessed February 10 2020, <http://lyrics.lol/artist/1004-wallace-stevens/lyrics/416060-the-well-dressed-man-with-a-beard>.

<sup>1058</sup> Matus, ed. *Lauds and Vespers*.

<sup>1059</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 159.

<sup>1060</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>1061</sup> Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 159.

<sup>1062</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

world, “a centre out of which things re-constitute themselves.”<sup>1063</sup> Christian wisdom is to participate in this “gift of divine creativity” born “within the human person” and expanding “outwardly into the world.”<sup>1064</sup>

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<sup>1063</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

<sup>1064</sup> Barnhart, "Bede's Vision of the Future."

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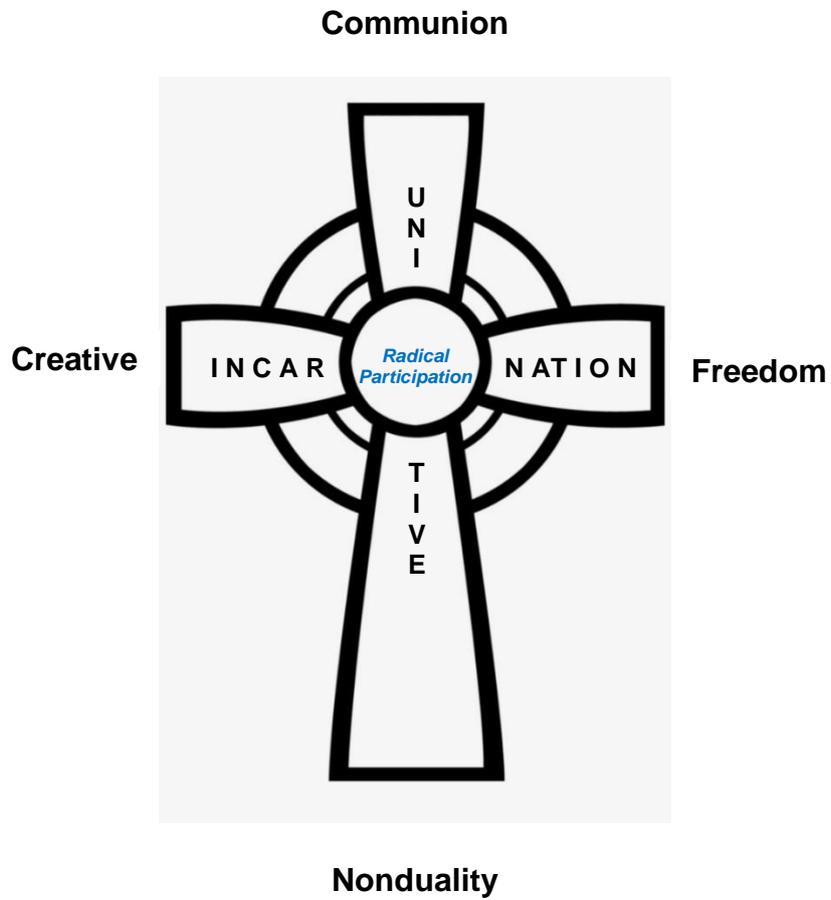
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**Appendix 1:**

**The cross now rooted breaks in bloom**



## Appendix 2:

### Jesus and the woman of Samaria (John 4: 1-42)

4 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John' — <sup>2</sup> although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized — <sup>3</sup> he left Judea and started back to Galilee. <sup>4</sup> But he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup> A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

16 Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' <sup>17</sup>The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' <sup>19</sup>The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' <sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' <sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' <sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' <sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' <sup>33</sup>So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not

say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup>The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.'

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.'