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Ressourcement: a failed retrieval of the sense of the Tradition

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Ressourcement: a failed retrieval of the sense of the Tradition

John Morris

Accounts of *Ressourcement* usually focus on its material concerns—patristics, ecumenism, ecclesiology, theological anthropology—or its opponents: the “new” theology was one which did away with the “old” theology, i.e. neo-thomism. This thesis contends that this way of seeing things is at best misleading and at worst erroneous. Misleading, as taken by themselves these projects can seem eclectic; erroneous, as many of the accounts of *Ressourcement* endeavour (whether commendatory or accusatory) are materially inaccurate; nowhere more so than in the clashes with that ill-defined bogeyman, neo-thomistic scholasticism. Even that recent scholarship which does attribute to *Ressourcement* a unifying insight (most notably the excellent work of Hans Boersma) chooses to focus largely on its fruit.

Turning this procedure on its head, I argue: (i) that *Ressourcement* correctly diagnosed an *intentional* problem—the disconnection between spirituality and theology, between the virtue and the science of faith—menacing contemporary orthodoxy and driving contemporary heresy, (ii) set about addressing this intentional rupture in the reception of Tradition, (iii) was immediately and widely misunderstood and ultimately (iv) failed, exactly at its supposed moment of triumph, the postconciliar springtime, when the extrincisism which it had long combated became near-universal. This failure is with us today in the fast-disintegrating chaos of Catholic theology and practice. (It is the ultimate root of the astounding depopulation of our Churches, our seminaries—and our universities.)

The solution *Ressourcement* proposed remains viable (its failure due to incompleteness, not radical error) but only if one critical flaw is addressed: the lack of attention to liturgy. Thus with the clairvoyance of hindsight not only do I define the movement by an argument it never explicitly made—after all, what endeavour is aware, until afterwards, of its founding charter?—but I propose a solution—the retrieval and development of the ancient western liturgy—which would have seemed at least startling to most of my authors; yet which I am convinced truly captures the spiritual insight behind *Ressourcement*.

Ressourcement

a failed retrieval

of the sense of the
Tradition

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PhD Thesis in Theology
Durham University
St John's College
2023

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Plusieurs sont portés à croire que j'exagère et que je me « ferme » en vieillissant. Je leur réponds en substance que naguère, en des circonstances tout autres, j'ai refusé de plier le genou devant ces Baals successifs qui avaient nom maurrassisme, hitlérisme, intégrisme; je vois maintenant d'autres Baals, ayant envahi le sanctuaire, réclamer même adorations, et leurs serviteurs user du même genre de procédés qui caractérisa le vieil intégrisme de signe inverse, dès avant 1914. Je n'aime ni l'hypocrisie, ni les intimidations des pressions sociales, ni le terrorisme intellectuel. Je n'accepte pas que l'on ouvre les pires entreprises sous les mots magiques de progrès, de marche en avant, d'ouverture ou de renouveau...

Lubac, *Mémoire*, p. 152.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a great many people. Materially, this thesis would not exist without the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, whose funding enabled me to devote four years to it, free from the worries which so often plague doctoral work. I am indebted to my supervisors, Simon Oliver (who introduced me as an undergraduate both to *Ressourcement* and to St. Thomas) and Lewis Ayres (who, having the misfortune to be dubbed ‘primary’, has naturally borne the brunt of my half-worked-out ideas and grandstanding comments). To Fr. Andrew Louth, whose excellent course on Liturgy could not contain half as much as the Liturgies themselves to which he gently insisted we should come if we wanted to have some small idea of what Liturgy meant in practice. To those Eastern Liturgies I owe any appreciation I have of the Western rites; his was a double gift, giving with equal generosity both what was already ours (but how little known!) and what was not. Let East be East and West be West (and Truth be Truth), but let no small-minded cries of “byzantianism” or “latin-mindedness” besmirch that necessary faithful plurality in Christ’s Church which must undergird the reunion for which we should work and pray.

To Fr. Benjamin Earl O.P., who received me into the Church; and to Cn. Michael Brown, who married us, and who has faithfully celebrated the ancient western liturgy whilst policies and fads have come and gone, bringing a little rest into a mad and cacophonous world and not a little bother upon himself, borne with gentleness and wry humour.

To Dr. Yang Guo, supremely patient, without whose socratic criticism my grasp on philosophy would be even vaguer, and without whose mockery of theological posturing I might—surely not!—have taken myself too seriously. To Dr. Gabriel Kalcheim, in conversation with whom many of these ideas were first argued: I hope they fare a little better here.

To Atanas Tonchev, wisest of friends.

To my family, in particular my parents.

And lastly and most of all to my wife, Emma Natacha Morris. It is a commonplace to say that she had the greater part in this thesis; it is none the less true for that.

To all of these, and to all those space and convention prevent me naming, I readily acknowledge a great debt of gratitude. Much of the best in this thesis is truly theirs; the faults are all mine.

to
Nathalie Milena Anastasia Morris
great finisher of PhDs

Foreword

In any question which has existed in the Church for more than ten minutes, one may find the partisans of a particular answer and those opposed. Frequently distributed along a spectrum, from the extreme to those whose *via media* is just shy of holding nothing at all, they nevertheless are distributed along one plane, and give voice to a diversity of answers within a common paradigm. A newcomer is faced with three possibilities: to adopt either one or the other stance, positioning himself somewhere along the continuum between High and Low or Right and Left or Traditional and Modern or whichever pair of epithets may (imperfectly) summarise the two goods which appear to be in conflict; or to cry *a plague o' both your houses!* and call the whole framing of the issue into question. To do this in one or two issues is considered flippant, but to do it systematically is to be revisionist.

This thesis began as an attempt to occupy a position *within* the usually accepted parameters of the debate on *Ressourcement*—specifically, to distinguish between the movement and its excesses, defending the former whilst apologising for the latter, and holding out as a way through the current *impasse* in Catholic theology ‘a *ressourcement* in *Ressourcement*’. After all, these authors were unpopular in the 30s, unpopular in the 50s and *still* unpopular in the 70s—unpopular, that is, whenever they tried to do anything which did not fit the neat narrative of the proto-liberal saviours of a moribund scholastic Catholicism. It has ended in the firm conviction that this debate itself is part of the problem. The real crisis in Catholic theology (and the fact that one is expected to defend the existence of the crisis only points to its extent) is a crisis in the life of the Church: specifically, a crisis in that reflective life which is her Tradition. *Ressourcement* saw this coming and sought to address it; if we have ended up with a very different *problématique* today it is in part because we have not listened.

Introduction

J'aurais voulu entrer, Seigneur, dans une église;
Mais il n'y a pas de cloches, Seigneur, dans cette ville.

Blaise Cendrars, *Pâques à New York*

Tradition

The subject of this thesis is Tradition, understood as the life of the Church stretched out across time. Tradition is that continuity in virtue of which the history of the Church is *her* history, the history of one (at times rather conflicted) acting subject.¹ But this definition is, for all practical purposes, useless, and so it is immediately translated into another: Tradition is that norm *in virtue of which* the life of the Church is a single life; Tradition is that standard *against which* any proposed action can be measured. In Congar's terminology, we have passed from a "subjective" account of Tradition to one "objective": Tradition as contained in what have traditionally been called the "monuments of Tradition", which means, in practice: in books, in libraries. Thus we repair thither to learn what the Tradition actually *says* about some particular question, and we consult Denzinger for "magisterial tradition", a patristic index for "patristic tradition", a handbook of comparative liturgiology for "liturgical tradition", a florilegium of the great mystics for "spiritual tradition"; we interpret and weigh the results of our research according to our several inclinations, and before long there are several more or less well argued schools of thought purporting to set out "the Catholic position on X." Sometimes the Magisterium intervenes more or less forcefully, and sometimes these interventions are even heeded; sometimes revolutions in thought, or new data, render old positions untenable: in general, for one reason or another, a more or less familiar process tends to whittle down the options until only a few candidates survive for any length of time, and if they survive for long enough and gain traction in the communal life of the Church they become part of the record of the Church's history which furnishes the monuments of her Tradition. Thus whilst in theory the Tradition may be considered subjectively as the life of the Church,

¹As the phrase suggests, this is more or less Blondel's account of Tradition as the life of the Church implicitly containing and mediating whatever is 'cashed out' explicitly. I shall turn to Blondel later, but my motivation here is different: Tradition is also the solution to the problem of continuity *tout court* (and thus to the rule-following problem): it is by virtue of sharing the same Tradition that the Church now is continuous with the Church then. (This claim is true theologically—Holy Tradition *is*, ultimately—the Faith, and keeping the Faith is sufficient to instantise the Church, at any rate if one allows the traditional circularity which makes ecclesiology ultimately *de fide*—and sociologically, but I am interested in it, for the moment, philosophically.)

in practice² we mean by it the objective contents, the *traditum*: to call a position *traditional* is to say that it is in accord with this *traditum*; to call it *untraditional* is to say that it is not.³ This observation applies regardless of whether one adopts a position regarded as “traditional” (which generally means *rejecting* some innovation on the basis of the *traditum*) or “progressive” (which generally means arguing that such-and-such a change in the *traditum* is in fact in harmony with its greater context, taken *en bloc*, or its spirit), although for practical reasons one side tends to stress the incongruence of such-and-such a position with the *traditum*, and the other the need to appreciate the *whole* tradition and its meaning in order to discern what really is handed on *as tradition*, and what is merely historical baggage. If in either case one were to attempt to move from the objective to the subjective, and argue either that *the life of the Church tells against such-and-such a doctrinal compromise* or *the life of the Church (at any rate today) shows the acceptability of such-and-such an innovation*, one would immediately fall back on objective *contents* in order to avoid having a purely vacuous answer.

The claims of this Thesis are:

- (1) That there has been a discernible rupture in the Tradition subjectively considered, that is, that the handing on of the *traditum* has become so muddled that we struggle to discern what is and is not part of it;
- (2) That this rupture is traceable to a neglect largely in place *before* the council in the subjective means of forming those perceptions which make up a discerning of the Tradition, i.e. it is not for want of data, but for want of virtue;
- (3) That told like *this*, the confusing history of twentieth-century Catholicism makes a great deal of sense; and that
- (4) Various movements—of which I focus on perhaps the most interesting, *Ressourcement*—recognised and sought to address this rupture in aesthetic formation, and consequently are quite unintelligible if taken out of this context and treated merely in terms of their objective conclusions.

In other words, I am deliberately rejecting the usual way of discussing the question of Tradition, *because I think that we can no longer reliably discern what the traditum is or what it signifies*: our current confused state is precisely a confusion of this aesthetic faculty of judgement before it is any disagreement over content. In one sense this argument is not new: Balthasar put it very well at the beginning of the Trilogy, where he warned that if we forget beauty ‘syllogisms may still dutifully clatter away like rotary presses’ but ‘the logic of these answers...no longer captivates anyone. The very conclusions are no longer conclusive’.⁴ But I intend to be abnormally pig-headed over it: I really do mean, not that we need a new or restored aesthetic theory, which if we spread it well enough will bleed over into the kind of practices which form the right kinds of dispositions, but that we need the right practices *simpliciter* (and by extension largely do not currently have them). Thus it will not surprise the reader to discover that I have my own aesthetic and liturgical preferences and would more or

²I am oversimplifying here—arguments about the *traditum* naturally involve the subjective history of its formulation. But in (almost) any practical argument the “objective” is ultimately prior.

³The *depositum fidei* is contained within but not identical to the *traditum*: there is much which the Church hands on which is not even remotely *de fide*, but which could not be lost without Tradition suffering (particular music, art, liturgical colours and so on).

⁴Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Seeing the Form*, trans. by Joseph Fessio and John Kenneth Riches, vol. 1, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2009, p. 19.

less like everyone to agree with me.

Nonetheless this is a thesis about *Ressourcement's* engagement with Tradition—an engagement which, ultimately, failed. To show *how* *Ressourcement* failed I have to show what I think *Ressourcement* thought (and I think) Tradition is, and thus I intend to show that *Ressourcement* itself claimed (1) and—*mutatis mutandis*—(2).⁵ (Once I have done this the conclusion *that* *Ressourcement* failed is more or less given, and I devote as little time to it as possible.) Thus I shall tell the story of *Ressourcement* rather than elaborating a theoretical account of Tradition. But it is as well to lay one's cards on the table and begin at as much of a disadvantage as possible, and I should not like the uneasy suspicion that I would like to restore the Old Rite and perhaps even such anachronisms as the Old Breviary to grow gradually in the reader's mind when I can forestall the process by confessing them at the beginning.

But to tell this story I shall sketch an idea: *Ressourcement's* half-articulated account of Tradition. I have adopted this method of telling a history firstly because *Ressourcement* is best picked out by this idea; secondly because the history of the Church in the last century in general and *Ressourcement* in particular is so hopelessly politicised that without a clear speculative account everything risks being lost, but thirdly and most importantly because the idea I am trying to get at is stubbornly existential: it is only understood by coming to see it in action.

Retrieving Tradition

This idea might be expressed as a rejection of the now standard form/content distinction: a rejection of the idea that we can meaningfully separate signifier and signified. In this form the idea is more or less played out, in any case:

There are no formulae of faith which are, as formulae, enduringly valid, capable of transmitting the living faith to men of all ages. Is this relativism? Not at all. It is what is meant by the identity of the faith with itself *in history*. For we do not possess the absolute which acts as an inner norm to our faith in an absolute way; we possess it only within our historical situation. ...

Is there, then, no precise content of faith? Of course there is. But there is no explicitly fixed *representation* of truth—which is not the same thing.⁶

What is perhaps most striking about this is how dated such naive linguistic representationalism now sounds. On Schillebeeckx's model, we have acceptable formulae for getting at truth in *this* point in time; and with historical investigation we can *construct* formulæ which are able, now, to express what was *then* meant by what was said; and so a (theoretically) simple substitution is possible. Every assumption in this claim looks a good deal less philosophically tenable or even intelligible than it did in 1968. But even on its own assumptions the claim is dubious: if we supposedly have such infallible access to "what was meant by P", why not use it *in order to understand P*, rather than to generate some *new* formula, where the slightest slip could lead to us

⁵(3) stands or falls with my argument, whilst the claim in (4) that other accounts of *Ressourcement* are lacking will largely remain inductive for reasons of space.

⁶Edward Schillebeeckx, *God and the Future of Man*, trans. from the Dutch by N. D. Smith, London: Sheed and Ward, 1969, pp. 39–40; see the excellent discussion: Thomas Joseph White, 'The precarity of Wisdom, Modern Dominican Theology, Perceptualism, and the Tasks of Reconstruction', *Ressourcement Thomism, Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life*, ed. by Reinhard Hüter and Matthew Levering, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010, p. 99.

saying more or less than we meant to? Schillebeekx would doubtless respond that this was exactly what he was endeavouring to do: in order to coin our new formula we need to understand the old. But the old is no good without this understanding, and if the faith is to be presentable in the modern world without a lot of hard work we are going to need to find new ways of saying things. Certainly; but need we find new *formulae*?⁷

In Schillebeekx's presentation, the problem of Tradition begins with the objective (a particular formula) moves to the subjective (speakers in such-and-such a context expressing the formula) and then immediately translates this back to the objective (what speakers in such-and-such a context meant by the formula). There is another way to approach this problem, expressed, ironically, in the very phrase from Chenu which was taken to express exactly what we have just seen in Schillebeekx and which precipitated the breakup of le Saulchoir to which we shall turn in a few chapters⁸—'a theology is a spirituality which has found instruments adequate for its expression':

A theologian might call himself an Aristotelian, and justly, if we consider his psychology or his views on the metaphysical primacy of being; but he is only a *theologian* by virtue of a spiritual transformation of aristotelianism itself quite foreign to Aristotle, and under the proviso of a constant openness to the possible riches of other systems and other philosophical positions.

To point out this relativism in the structure of theology is not in the slightest to fall into eclecticism.... The relativity of differing systems corresponds exactly to their differing intelligibilities, and thus to their degree of truth....

In the last analysis theological systems are only expressions of a particular spirituality. This is their interest, and their grandeur. If one must be surprised by the divergence of systems under the unity of dogma, one should first be surprised to see the same Christian faith give rise to such variegated spiritualities. The grandeur and the truth of Bonaventuran or Scotist Augustinianism are entirely **[contained]** in the spiritual experience of St. Francis, which is the soul of this greatness in his children; the grandeur and the truth of Molinism are contained in the spiritual experience which is the *Exercises* of St. Ignatius. One does not enter into a system for the logical coherence of its construction, or the veracity of its conclusions; one finds oneself already within, as if from birth, by

⁷Do we stop at the distinction *est enim aliud depositum Fidei, aliud modus, quo eadem enuntiantur*, or do we 'tamper' and 'censor' this bold idea, introducing the 'cautious qualification' present in the official version: *eodem tamen sensu eademque sententia?* (Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*, ed. by Margaret Hebblethwaite, London: Continuum, 2000, p. 223)

John XXIII, in fact, used the 'censored' version, as confirmed by the recording. (John Finnis, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [18th Jan. 1992], pp. 70–1; John Finnis, 'The language of doctrine', *The Tablet* [14th Dec. 1991], pp. 1544–5; John Finnis, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [4th Jan. 1992], p. 14) That a demonstrably false historical claim circulated (Christopher Hill, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [28th Dec. 1991], p. 1591; Christopher Hill, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [11th Jan. 1992], pp. 40–1; Thomas Walsh, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [18th Jan. 1992], p. 71; Francis Sullivan, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [1st Feb. 1992], pp. 139–140; John Finnis, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [8th Feb. 1992], p. 170, Cf.) and continues to circulate (and that Hebblethwaite contradicted himself: Peter Hebblethwaite, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [25th Jan. 1992], p. 108; John Finnis, 'What Pope John said', *The Tablet* [1st Feb. 1992], p. 140, and failed to revise the claim in the edition of 1994) only shows how strongly the idea of theoretical *replacement* is embedded in postconciliar self-understanding.

⁸Chapter 4 on page 117.

the capital idea which is the object of our spiritual life, with the whole way of looking at the world and the system of meaning which go along with it. *A theology worthy of the name is a spirituality which has found rational instruments corresponding to its religious experience.*⁹

The distinction here turns on whether one inserts the word *contained*: are the theological claims *present inchoately* in the spirituality—that is, as something distinct, but arising in a particular context—or are they simply *in* it, so that the theology is just spiritual experience under another name? The whole passage forces the first sense: theological systems, taken *en gros*, arise within the framework formed by particular spiritualities, which themselves form multiple approaches to the same faith. Getting at the meaning of any particular formula, in this model, implies *learning to see the world* through the particular eyes of a particular spirituality; a process *partially* achievable by imagination, but which will demand sooner or later an unambiguous submission to the spirituality in question (whence Chenu's confidence on St. Thomas, and tendency to avoid other systems). In this model the meaning is not there to be extracted, but is *embodied* in practices which have to be adopted if its theoretical expression is fully to be grasped.¹⁰ In other words, in this model the *traditum* includes the spiritual context in which it is articulated: the signifier and the sign are *essentially* linked. *And thus in order to retrieve the Tradition one has to acquire a kind of theological virtue*: what Congar called the *habitus* of Theology. This claim is what I take to be the central insight of *Ressourcement*, and it is this claim I intend to defend.

Defining the sense of the Tradition

Congar's '*habitus* of Theology' stands to Theology as, more broadly, the sense of the Tradition stands to the Tradition. Throughout this thesis I use a variety of terms for this 'sense', picking out now one, now another aspect of it. The sense is a virtue, an attitude, an orientation; it implies a taste, an aesthetic sense, an ascetic preparation; it is revealed in a traditional life as the pattern behind acting and judging: something intentional and—insofar as the sense is always possessed by some agent—existential.

With such a riot of terminology the reader might be forgiven for wondering if in fact I mean anything by 'sense' at all. Is not the 'sense' simply the intuition to agree with me about what the Tradition actually contains, and senselessness the apparent tone-deafness which always seems to attach to anyone who differs over matters of taste? *De gustibus non est disputandum*: at the end of the day one can show *what* one appreciates, but never *why*. After all, although I have repudiated arguing over the monuments of Tradition themselves, I will of necessity discuss them, whilst (apparently equally of necessity) the notion of their sense and the related notion of our sense of them will remain largely allusive.

The very fact that we have no commonly accepted word for the concept I am getting at here is proof of the argument I am making. The divorce between Spirituality and

⁹Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Une école de théologie, Le Saulchoir*, Paris: Cerf, 1985, pp. 148–9. *C'est qu'en définitive les systèmes théologiques ne sont que l'expression des spiritualités. [...] La grandeur et la vérité de l'augustinisme bonaventurien ou scotiste sont tout entières dans l'expérience spirituelle de saint François qui en fut l'âme en ses fils; la grandeur et la vérité du molinisme, elles sont dans l'expérience spirituelle des Exercices de saint Ignace.* The French is doubly ambiguous: *tout entières dans* suggests the locative 'are to be found in their completeness in', but could just about—with violence to the style and sense of the passage—be read restrictively 'are entirely limited to'; either *l'expérience* or *saint François* could be the referent of *qui*.

¹⁰I am going beyond Chenu here: he *does* at times sound a good deal more like Schillebeeckx than I suggest. But in this he represents the high-water mark of *Ressourcement* reformism. *vide* chapter 4 on page 117.

Theology, between the Virtue and the Science of the faith, is so deeply rooted in our understanding, that only such “novel” adjectives as ‘existential’ or ‘intentional’ can apologise for transgressing it. In so doing they insulate us. One conclusion of this thesis is that the current fractured state of the Church and her theology is partly due to not fasting enough. The claim would not be absurd in the Fathers; it is not hard to find in Congar, who speaks often of the role of prayer *and fasting* in discernment; yet it sounds curiously frivolous or even irrelevant when stated baldly. (There are after all a mere two days of fasting left in the Western church’s year, and the communion fast has been practically abolished, with the clear sentiment that such gestures, possibly excellent in private devotion, have no corporate place in modern existence.) The reason for this—the claim is too large to argue for here and I shall simply have to assert it, but it is the corollary to the argument I make about Spirituality and Theology—is widespread adoption of a defective anthropology (sometimes rather unfairly dubbed ‘enlightenment anthropology’) in which matters of attitude, approach, style, taste, or sense are “subjective”; so much ultimately unhelpful baggage before the “objective” reasoning intellect.¹¹ It is because our anthropology is askew that our philosophy—and theology—reaches for adjectives like *existential* to qualify the direct discussion of what is possessed intellectually. More prosaically, the claims I am gesturing at with all this terminology are based on an anthropological claim: the *sense* of the Tradition means (i) the intellectual faculty, the acquired connatural perception of what the Tradition in fact says and (ii) the corresponding outline of Tradition as picked out by this perception. These are two sides of the same phenomenon, and like any virtue they exist in a virtuous actor: a traditional person is someone who sees the harmony and the outline in the otherwise quite variegated and discordant materials which make up the history of the Church and her decisions, someone to whom it *makes sense*—in the literal sense of someone whose sense (faculty) is in-formed by the sense (structure, content) of the Tradition.

So far this appears a laboured definition of connatural perception: a historian, for instance, is ultimately someone for whom the data of a period have an overriding pattern and are thus manageable; a musician is someone for whom “sounds” are “notes”, whose “ear” apparently hears things (delayed recapitulations of themes,

¹¹Many a grand narrative has been told of this process. For several centuries Catholic apologetics was full of the dangers of “Cartesianism”; “Kantianism” was scarcely treated more lightly, although Congar at least preferred to inveigh against “Wolfianism”. Today the same pattern is discernible with respect to “dry-as-dust scholasticism” or (more cogently for this thesis) the “two-storey model of Nature and Grace”. Each of these arguments can be defended, although one thinks of Eliot’s comment on evolution ‘which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past’.

Nonetheless one should not lose the wood for the trees. Careful genealogy, of the kind it would not be unfair to say was reintroduced by Alasdair MacIntyre, is not only defensible, but is a welcome corrective to the unhistorical approach to philosophy which—whomever one blames—has rendered the thought of the last few centuries so unsympathetic to notions of Tradition or inherited wisdom. (The chief argument of Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed., Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984, deals, I think, with the same phenomenon whose *denouement* was delayed in the Church until after the Council. MacIntyre’s ultimate claim is that a way of thinking—virtue ethics—was lost long before its vocabulary was abandoned, with the effect that ethical arguments *appeared* to have demonstrative form, but were actually simply reproducing the flow of an earlier way of thinking without any of its internal logic; elsewhere he makes clear that the root of this separation between form and content was the loss of the anthropological vision of Man as a reflective habitual actor (or in the title of one of his later books, a dependent rational animal). This same anthropological shift lies behind the postivist extrincisism which gripped both theology and liturgiology in the period we deal with here, and against which *Ressourcement* strove.)

For practical reasons I have avoided as much as possible any kind of genealogy (it is for this reason that practical concerns have been banished to the last chapter). Regardless of whether the reader agrees with me about either the problem we find ourselves in or its probably solution, the phenomenon at the heart of this thesis—the ignored, almost invisible *sense* of the Tradition—deserves to be accounted for.

internal melodies, chord progressions) which less trained listeners arrive at only by analysis. But the instinctive classification which makes historical data manageable can falsify history, whilst progress in one school of music can render another unintelligible or objectionable (this can be seen particularly when temperaments and scales diverge). The existence of a fit between the mind and the data it studies is evidence, not of correctness, but only of time spent. Misfitting and over-fitting are both possible. What, in virtue theory, decides if a particular application of a virtue is in fact correct (and thus virtuous) is the supervening virtue of *prudentia*;¹² and how *prudentia* is *acquired* is a separate question from how the prudence of a particular decision is justified.

The analogy is only partial, because the specific object of study here—Tradition objectively considered, as I called it earlier—is not simply another branch of human endeavour. The Tradition is the life, not just the history, of the Church: specifically it is her life as the Church. (Thus Revelation itself is part of Tradition, because it was given for the church, for whom, says the Shepherd of Hermas, the world was made.) Tradition is handed on, consciously and unconsciously, by the Church. In both of these dimensions—in origin and in transmission—the motive force is the Holy Spirit, whose action we either cooperate with or resist. Thus we have much better reasons to think that there is more or less one ‘sense’ in the Tradition (however giving rise to innumerable themes: the analogy of one symphony, rather than one piece of software, is apposite) and to count on Divine assistance in getting at it, than we do to think there is one true sense of a particular history, or one notion of music. (In fact the notion of a linear sense in history is, as Daniélou never ceased to insist, distinctively Jewish and Christian.) But if so, acquiring the virtue of Tradition will require more (not less) than acquiring intellectual expertise in some field. If Tradition is the work, ultimately, of Grace, preparation will look more like penance and asceticism than purely theoretical works might suggest.

Whence the two groups of terminology I will employ. Intellectual virtues reveal themselves in intentional stances; the intellectual virtue of perceiving the Tradition is present in one who has the right intentional stance toward it. But ‘stance’ is too narrow: the virtuous man *delights* in the performance of virtue, *desires* the good. These are aesthetic terms, and in turn we would expect that one who wished to communicate this delight would turn to a particular style, an attempt to show, to present the attractiveness of the world as seen by the Tradition and not merely to analyse it. Thus, positively, the ‘sense’, the spiritual insight of Tradition. Yet the attitude of Tradition turns out to be *itself* an intentional stance: a stance of receptive humility, but also of discernment. Thus the intentionality of *receiving Tradition* and the intentionality of *Tradition* (slightly clumsily one might say ‘of practising Tradition’: the noun lacks a verb) turn out to be very similar.¹³ In fact the act of receiving is what constitutes Tradition: the act of receiving, of coming to be possessed by, and of in

¹²This discussion is often made in the ethical sphere, but *prudentia* applies as much to the decision to tackle or pass in a game of football. The stakes are so much higher in moral judgement, but every decision is ultimately an exercise of prudence.

Whether this view can be sustained without regress or begging the question is outside of our scope here: I am less interested in arguing from virtue theory to a particular virtue than I am in showing how the relationship between the virtues is a good model for the relationship between the sense of the Tradition and the wider practice of the Faith, its reflective life in Theology and their integration in Spirituality.

¹³‘To keep’ (*custodire*), whilst essential, is not sufficient: merely maintaining libraries and handbooks is not enough. In this sense the language of the *depositum Fidei* can be deceptive: that ‘Faith given once and for all to the Saints’ must not only be kept intact by not tinkering with it, but must be lived, in situations new and old, if the faith is to be kept.

turn handing on and interpreting; or more generally the living out of the Faith which is received, in the context of the Church from whom it is received.¹⁴ Thus “Tradition” ultimately grows until it comes to name the entirety of the Faith, received in the Church and lived out through time. Correspondingly the ‘sense’ of this Tradition *considered as this lived faith* is one of translation, of orientation, of discernment, of life and, ultimately, of attentive silence.

By ‘Tradition’, then, I mean the faith as lived out through time in the Church (I shall return briefly to the objective study of Tradition in chapter 3 on page 110); by the ‘sense’ of the Tradition I mean the intentional, existential effect which living the faith out *in this way* has, and which (like any other formality under which the Faith appears) can be itself the object of spiritual and theological attention. Nonetheless the reality is hard to analyse, and was not usually directly available to *Ressourcement* as a subject for discourse. As I tease the idea out of various aspects of *Ressourcement* thought I employ now one word, now another, as the emphasis of the source material shifts, whilst *Ressourcement* itself frequently spoke of quite different problems (the divide between Spirituality and Theology, the relationship between Nature and Grace, the action of God in History) in which whatever else it was doing it was pursuing this elusive sense.

Failure?

With this distinction between the sense of the Tradition and the Tradition itself I can clarify what I mean by saying that *Ressourcement*, as a movement, failed. *Ressourcement* set out to retrieve this sense, both by pursuing it itself and by making it publicly available. The intention of *Sources chrétiennes*, to take one clear example, was to get the Fathers out in the vernacular, so that people might (i) come to live in their fundamentally sacralised universe, and (ii) seek out and pursue with devotion the corresponding uniquely Christian attitude appropriate to one living in this sacralised cosmos.

In other words the curious intention of publishing Gregory of Nyssa in the middle of the occupation was to bring about a revolution of prayer. Yet *Sources chrétiennes* quickly became (for largely political reasons I touch on later) an excellent scholarly collection, surviving by sales to learned institutions. Neither the goal of coming to see a richer Christian universe nor that of praying with the Fathers is rendered impossible by a better critical apparatus. But in the end it was not the revitalised symbolical universe of *Exégèse Médiévale* or *Catholicisme* (to take one example) which became the dominant interpretative current.

In other words at least some *Ressourcement* authors themselves considered that the kind of “sense” which they had laboured to propagate was *not* growing in the Church, whilst what frequently appeared to the late Lubac as a defective or even inverted sense of the Tradition appeared to dominate. (In this the split between “Communio” and “Concilium” is weaker than it might appear. Both Congar and Lubac felt that the Church was falling apart and wrote popular books designed to prop up the centre: they

¹⁴It is quite inexcusable that the dialogue at the beginning of Baptism was altered so prosaically. ‘What do you desire of the Church?’ ‘Faith.’ To follow this simple claim with a rite which at first glance has more to do with expelling demons from various material objects than instructing in the Faith is to make a powerful statement about the ultimate origin of “our” Faith. Indeed, the traditional liturgy has very little at all to say about the “obvious” notion that belief is the holding of propositions to be true, and a great deal which apparently exists to inculcate intentional stances towards things—God, the Angels and Saints, Sacraments, Sacramentals—almost without troubling to explain what they are. Doubtless instruction is of great value, and our worship is to be *obsequium* rationabile, but the contrast all the same demands explanation.

differ in etiology and tone, but not in fundamental diagnosis.) Thus considered purely historically there is some evidence that *Ressourcement* figures themselves considered some of what they had set out to do less than wholly successful.

This historical failure might be purely incidental. (I am inclined to be a good deal more severe in judgement, but I will return briefly to the state of the Church at the very end of this thesis.) The failure I am interested in is the *internal* failure of *Ressourcement*, visible *before* the post-conciliar crisis, to propagate what is as much a practical attitude, aimed at cultivating an intentional stance, without this simply turning into yet another theological controversy. In other words the need for the *sense* was as invisible to the majority of *Ressourcement's* interlocutors as it was unexamined in *Ressourcement's* approach.

Thus I can qualify the judgement: *Ressourcement* was a failed retrieval of the sense of the Tradition because it was an incomplete retrieval: specifically because it failed to pay attention to Liturgy, which is the paradigmatic context for the interaction between Spirituality and Theology, and the formation of the *sense* of the faith. (This structural incompleteness was, as it happens, compounded with two World Wars, Church politics, and the failure to deal with the last attempt to address the problem of Tradition, Modernism, which had poisoned the discussion. But even had everything gone perfectly, *Ressourcement* would have succeeded by growing into an appreciation of the role of Liturgy in Tradition.) Incompleteness is cause for failure, but the cure is to supply what is lacking. (A car missing a wheel is quite useless for driving: it needs a wheel, not to become a motorcycle or a boat.) Thus whilst I do intend to insist not merely that *Ressourcement* was lacking, but that it was vitally lacking and indeed mostly unsuccessful—and appeal for ultimate evidence to the obscurity of the thing I claim was at the centre of *Ressourcement* endeavour—the purpose both of the insistence and of the inductive argument is to present *Ressourcement*, duly completed, as a cure for at least some of the woes we suffer from today. *Ressourcement's* fundamental diagnosis remains correct: the root of our trouble is a ruinous divorce between Spirituality and Theology. Fashions in both have changed, but the extrincism has only grown.

Overview

I sketch an account of the intellectual position (as distinct from the historical movement) I call *Ressourcement* theology. I begin with the most celebrated (and mythologised) *Ressourcement* controversy: the argument over Nature and Grace; and show that both Lubac's critics and his admirers—then and now—missed what he was really doing. He attacked an *aesthetic* separation between Nature and Grace, such that nothing in my intentional life is taken to have any real bearing on my spiritual life; he set out to retrieve an *apologetic* and *intentional* tradition. Unfortunately he accepted the equation his opponents made between the speculative and the intentional, and the debate promptly veered off course and has remained in a sterile exchange of truisms ever since.

This confusion between two orders was the result of anti-modernism and the corresponding rejection of “immanence.” Thus I turn to Modernism and show (i) that there was in fact such a thing, (ii) that it raised questions of capital importance, albeit in ways which now seem extremely naive; (iii) that the Church, rather than address it, tried to suppress it by force and (iv) that *Ressourcement* tried to provide this answer.

This answer was grounded in a philosophical analysis of the intentional stance required to adopt the faith, which *Ressourcement* took—somewhat haphazardly—from

Blondel and Rousselot. What is frequently a *tone* or an *attitude* in Lubac or Congar is in fact a worked out position in Blondel or Rousselot, and intelligible only in this light. But something else emerges: we are really dealing with a change in philosophical *methodology*, a methodology which *Ressourcement* would adopt and adapt theologically, and which serves to define the movement: a methodology which is concerned with the generation of the right immanent *habitus* in its interlocutor as much as was with the justification of particular claims.

At this point I can define *Ressourcement*: speculatively, a reunification of spirituality and theology; by intellectual heritage, an aesthetic response to Modernism and anti-Modernism (or rather Modernity); and as a matter of concrete history, the Dominicans and Jesuits who took these concerns from Blondel and Rousselot and developed them together at le Saulchoir and Fourvière.

What was *Ressourcement* doing? Ultimately, endeavouring to retrieve the Tradition in an age which did not think it had lost it; but doing so because it took the Tradition to mean more than simply its “monuments.” Thus I consider the endeavours of various *Ressourcement* theologians to reunite spirituality with theology. This was a matter of the greatest practical urgency. Daniélou seems oddly concerned with getting commented editions of the Fathers (with translations) out during the occupation; Lubac was oddly concerned in attacking “the two-storey account of Nature and Grace” in between clandestine publications.

This concern should have flourished in an account of Liturgy. But *Ressourcement*, despite occasional (and contradictory) promises, considered Liturgy a matter for the experts. I thus show how this fundamental lacuna ultimately reduces the movement to a set of unanchored claims (which various figures would try to anchor in something else: we consider the startling case of Lubac’s Teilhardianism), ultimately leading to its failure.

This failure is still with us. *Ressourcement* is considered wholly in terms of its conclusions, ignoring their intentional, context. (This can be seen quite easily by comparing the number of times the word “fasting” occurs in e.g. Congar with any analysis of Congar’s theology.) This in itself is of interest only to the specialist. But the growing rupture in the *sense* of the tradition which *Ressourcement*’s failure leaves unaddressed was for a long time hidden by a mechanical continuity. Only the general upheaval in Catholic liturgical (and even more importantly, spiritual) life after the council has brought this discontinuity to the foreground.

Any retrieval of the Tradition along the lines of *Ressourcement*’s own attempt will begin with its *preconditions* and thus, normatively, with the Liturgy. Thus I conclude with practical politics, including an appeal for something like the ancient western liturgy on *Ressourcement* grounds; or what the liturgical movement might have been (and indeed what, in the long run, it is slowly becoming).

Nonetheless I must disavow one aspect of this overtly political conclusion. To argue for the restoration of the Mass (and, almost more importantly, the Office and the Rituale) on *these* grounds is not merely to add one more argument to a growing arsenal of Traditionalist weaponry ready to be lobbed around rather fruitlessly, generally online. Nor is everything I have said about *Ressourcement* merely prolegomena to defence of my own aesthetic prejudices. Catholic Traditionalism is as in need of retrieving the authentic *living* tradition as any other “grouping” in the Church (albeit it has a material advantage) and the solution to a crisis which was already simmering in the early twentieth century cannot consist in returning to the fifties. Rather, we need an etiology which stretches back beyond the council and is able to tell us where we are:

A moment's reflection suffices. Immense is the manner in which the orchestration of these themes might vary. That in a very short time after the Council ended the alliance of interpreters fell apart (for the post-Conciliar de Lubac the post-Conciliar Chenu is 'absurd') should not surprise, nor should the resurgence of a Traditionalism conscious of insuperable disagreements among its own critics. A new criteriology is needed. There was once a pope who sought to provide it.¹⁵

As Nichols notes acerbically, the pontificate of Benedict XVI was marked by an effort to tell a kind of authoritative history of the 'new' theology and thereby to construct a critical appraisal of the situation we find ourselves in. For better or for worse this project is no longer pursued in Rome, and the work of critical appraisal has, in effect, been handed to the laity.

¹⁵Aidan Nichols, 'An Avant-Garde Theological Generation (review)', *New Blackfriars* 102.1102 (2021), p. 1031.

CHAPTER 1

Exemplum: The Nature-Grace Narratives

Necesse est multos ad legem naturalem revocare antequam de Deo loquamur.... Fere auserim dicere “Primo faciamus juniores bonos Pagnos et postea faciamus Christianos.”

C. S. Lewis¹

The claims made in the introduction are in danger of seeming nebulous. I am claiming that *Ressourcement* is best seen as an attempt to retrieve a particular notion of Tradition (in the face of what it saw as the doubly unacceptable alternatives of Modernism and Neo-Scholasticism); but that this retrieval is an attempt to adopt a particular stance *toward* the Tradition before it is an attempt to say anything *about* the Tradition. This detectable *style* will do a great deal of work in this thesis (the definition I offer of *Ressourcement* is effectively an attempt to work out what it means to adopt this particular style) but only because it ultimately entails a particular set of claims (however much *Ressourcement* resisted systematisation).²

The easiest way to see what I am getting at here is to see this in action, and the clearest case is probably the controversy Lubac stirred up (or rather contributed to) over the relationship between Nature and Grace. In this controversy

- Lubac misunderstood his own position;
- Lubac’s opponents misunderstood both his position and their own; thus
- False narratives were created, and continue to bedevil Catholic theology to this day; whilst
- Lubac’s real insight was urgently needed and has been buried.

Simply to demonstrate these assertions is a good *prima facie* argument for the kind of revisionism I am undertaking in this thesis. But the particular disagreement we are concerned with here is not *simply* verbal. Lubac really does claim that St. Thomas

¹C. S. Lewis and Don Giovanni Calabria, *The Latin Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. and trans. by Martin Moynihan, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998, p. 92

²To speak of *style* is not to reduce everything to an æsthetic judgement. I use “style” as the nearest English corollary to *esprit* in the sense in which Pascal distinguished between the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse*. (Pascal, *Pensées, L’Œuvres de Pascal*, ed. by Jacques Chevalier, Pléiade 34, Paris: Gallimard, 1936, pp. 815–1095, 21)

and St. Augustine mean what *he* says, and not what his opponents say, and although he is almost certainly wrong about this as regards the details—Feingold demonstrates fairly conclusively that Lubac’s alternative branch of Thomism is actually dependent on a variety of eclectic scholastics, some of whom departed explicitly from St. Thomas on exactly this question—he is almost certainly fundamentally right. There really *has* been a loss of a Traditional position on the relationship between Nature and grace. But what has been lost is not a theoretical account of their relationship (as Lubac can seem to claim) but a living tradition of their interaction. Lubac—despite himself—is restoring Tradition.

To show this I present Lubac’s narrative in some depth. Here two things are at work: (i) a set of substantial claims about the consequences of scholastic thinking, motivated by (ii) an *attitude* which Lubac (correctly) holds he shares with the Fathers and St. Thomas, and which seems to him to be lacking in his opponents. Turning to Lubac’s account of the supernatural itself, I show how this *attitude* is actually Lubac’s explicit target, although Lubac appears to conflate it with his substantial and exegetical claims. I then consider the response to Lubac’s thesis, passing over the immediate reception (which was wholly unedifying, and which can be chased up in the archives to little profit, except to show that no notion of attitude enters the debate at all) to consider the recent controversy between Milbank and the “Ressourcement Thomism” of which Feingold is here the best known representative. Milbank’s radicalising of Lubac is no more attentive to this attitude than Feingold’s courteous criticism; this latter is perfectly compatible with Lubac’s overall end, but entirely blind to what separates him from Lubac. We now have sufficient materials to sketch Lubac’s systematic claim. Here I assert rather loudly that this account is not enough. The other thread we have been following throughout, the intentional stance, must come to the fore. To adopt this stance *is* to become attentive to the Tradition; to acquire it by habit *is* to acquire the virtue of thinking traditionally. The rest of the thesis will be devoted to seeing this in action.

The Interminable Nature-Grace Debate

The fundamental issue for Lubac is apologetic:

Que de doctrines humaines, que de faits humains il serait aisé d’évoquer, tout au long de l’histoire humaine, témoignant en l’homme, plus ou moins obscurément, de l’universel désir de Dieu!... Désir de voir Dieu, désir d’union à Dieu, désir d’être Dieu : tous ces termes, ou d’autre analogues, se rencontrent en dehors du christianisme, et indépendamment de lui. Mais que d’équivoques en chacun d’eux!³

If we follow Lubac’s lead,

our apology will always recommend the gifts of God and his friendship to one able to appreciate them. But in the last case, we will not be sure whether the one we address is already animated by the supernatural and ready to understand the gift of God (cf. John 4:10). Perhaps indeed there are no signs of this. And then we may well proceed as does St. Augustine in his First Catechetical Instruction. He starts by asserting the emptiness

³Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel, Études Historiques*, Théologie 8, Paris: Aubier, 1946, p. 273.

of such things as riches, honor, and bodily pleasures, and the foolishness of dedicating one's life to their pursuit. He evokes the inescapability of death. He evokes the judgment of God. He then holds out the prospect of "true rest"...The introductory and fundamental appeal, the initial motivation which is the engine of the entire discourse, is self-interest...

Why does Augustine aim so low? What has happened to the restless heart of the Confessions—that heart made by God for himself, and unquiet until it rest in him? It has retired before a more mature episcopal experience.

Thus:

Lubac wants apology to look like mystagogical catechesis. I would say rather that apology should concentrate on our misery, which is manifested, first, in the order of knowledge, in that what is naturally knowable of God is in fact known only with great pains and then only rarely apart from revelation. Second, in the order of moral action, our natural end and perfection, insofar as that consists in the attainment of moral virtue, is hardly attained, and rarely apart from grace. Nor can we avoid grave moral fault apart from grace. Third, in the order of physical being, our properly personal life of knowing and loving has no intrinsic limitation, and yet we are consigned to a finite exercise of knowing and loving by death. What a doom and a destiny, what a dread and a gloom enveloping life. Fourth, in the order of metaphysical being, the soul is immortal and survives the wreck of death, since it is an incorruptibly simple quasi-substance. But without the body, we cannot see philosophically how it can place its typical operation, and a substance that does not operate seems hardly to exist at all.

For this misery there is only one remedy, grace; and for the conundrums, knots, paradoxes in thought our misery includes or leads to, there is only one solution, the light of the gospel. It is, I think, on the evocation of our misery, and not on the appeal to our innate desire for God, that such apologists as Pascal take their stand.⁴

One could not hope for a more thorough expression of precisely the position which Lubac aimed to avoid. For Lubac explicitly linked his view of the natural desire to the ability to *avoid* an apologetics 'concentrating on our misery'.⁵ And it is precisely this approach to the problem—in which the relationship of nature to grace is instrumentalised in pursuit of *another* relationship, that of the Church to the unbelieving world—which, I shall argue, has so muddied the waters and led to the thoroughly confused discussion of the subject which has become so central to contemporary Catholic theology.

One might object to Mansini that telling the average atheist—let alone Dawkins—that his soul 'is an incorruptibly simple quasi-substance' (!) is unlikely to bear much fruit; as likewise every other observation is *not* immediately obvious to the hypothetical well-informed sceptic. But this is very clearly not his point: Mansini and Lubac differ not merely on the question of which arguments one should employ in going about apologetics. They differ more fundamentally in the question of *whose*

⁴Guy Mansini, 'The Abiding Theological Significance of Henri de Lubac's Surnature!', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 73.4 (2009), pp. 613–6.

⁵See the discussion on page 128.

those arguments are to be. Behind the assumption that St. Augustine's move from the language of desire for God imprinted on our hearts⁶ to the language of rational self-interest represents the fruit of episcopal experience (and not merely a bad day, or an unresponsive audience, or the change in genre between a text written to be read by the educated and sensitive and a homily preached to all and sundry, or even a loss in St. Augustine's thought, or weariness or anything else⁷)—behind this assumption, as behind the assumption that perhaps God has *not* touched some, and thus *non exardunt in pacem Tuam*,⁸ is the assumption that, for Mansini, apologetics is carried out in the language of Christian theology (and scholastic theology at that), and consists in persuading the enquirer to adopt *that* language. Mansini's catalogue of our misery is not, of course, intended for the Atheist's ear. To him we might well need to use the metaphor of the swallow flitting through the banquet hall if we are to evoke the immortality of the soul, or to point to one or two saintly examples as evidence that occasionally, with grace, moral heights can be reached, but the purpose of this language will be to render our own account plausible. But the purpose of this is to show the unbeliever that we have a plausible system, in which he will then seek instruction, not to claim that he is *already* in possession, however inchoately and confusedly, of anything which might, with a little blowing on the embers, burst into the flame of faith. There is nothing 'out there' which can be used without first baptising it, bringing it 'in here' and showing it in its true light. And a baptism is a death before a resurrection.⁹

Thus, if Lubac wishes to minimise as far as possible the difference between the faith and the faithless, to stress the anticipatory nature of human desire, to show that God 'is not far from each one of us', Mansini stands for the opposite: he *maximises* the distinction, stresses how straightforwardly unreliable our fickle instincts are and bids the prospective convert come and learn how to speak as a Christian.

What Lubac claimed about apologetics (and this is a concern which, as we shall see, animated the whole movement) was simply that this translation need not in fact take place so early. We are *not* so very wretched that we cannot find, within our own experience (according to Lubac), the means with which to articulate a longing for God; God *has* made all for Himself, and consequently *all* our hearts are inquiet until they rest in Him, whether or no we pay attention to that inquietude or stifle it beneath the cares of this world, it is for all of us 'natural' to believe, 'natural' in the sense that is it existentially proximate.

Implicit in this is a very different conception of 'nature' in Lubac and Mansini, and the two traditions they represent. Mansini's 'nature' is obscured, cloaked by sin and unreliably accessible, but best sought by teleological reflection within a reliable philosophical framework. Lubac's 'nature' is accessible precisely as mystery, and whilst in so doing we discover that we are radically wounded and can fall along the way into any number of compromises, each idolatrous, in facing it squarely we discover with remarkable clarity that we are *called*, made and loved by God. Were this all, their quarrel would be largely verbal. In shorthand, Mansini's nature is the objective *natura*

⁶*quia fecisti nos ad Te*, which Lubac prints at the end of the introduction to *Surnaturel*

⁷ Cf. Lubac's claim that Augustine's thought on grace had *not* changed '*depuis les sereines réflexions du jeune converti... jusqu'aux rudes polémiques du vieil évêque*' Henri de Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, Paris: Cerf, 2008, p. 107.

⁸ Cf. Aurelius Augustinus, *Augustine Confessions*, ed. by James O'Donnell, vol. 1, Oxford: OUP, 2012, I.27.

⁹ Pascal does indeed 'take his stand upon our misery'. But *Misère de l'homme* (Pascal, *Pensées*, Ch. 2) is at least written in the language of the interlocutor, and claims such as *L'esprit croit naturellement, et la volonté aime naturellement* (103) are not quite so far from Lubac as Mansini implies.

of the scholastics; Lubac's is something existential, something concrete. But Lubac unquestionably *does* claim for his 'nature' a good deal of the prerogatives assigned to *natura* in (neo)scholasticism; and moreover he claims that St. Thomas had more or less the same concept of nature, and *not* that of neoscholasticism. About this, as I have said, I think he is both right and wrong. But perhaps more importantly this claim has tended to lead to the assumption (which is largely how Lubac frames *Surnaturel*) that what is at issue is the proper interpretation of St. Thomas, with the implicit corollary that Lubac in particular and *Ressourcement* in general is operating *either* with a 'ressourced' Thomistic concept of nature against the 'baroque' speculation of *natura pura* or with a completely different concept of its own with which it has *replaced* the traditional conception, depending on which side of the argumentative fence one falls. It is this antithesis which I intend to claim is unhelpful: unhelpful both historically, as the history and legacy of *Ressourcement* has come to be told largely as a set of theological achievements or acts of vandalism which were (so I shall argue) peripheral to *Ressourcement* as an endeavour and a movement, and unhelpful theologically, as they obscure those lacunae which *Ressourcement* correctly diagnosed in (then) contemporary theologising, and which still plague a good deal of modern Catholic theology.

Lubac's Nature and Grace

Between *Surnaturel* and its two-volume replacement, *Le mystère du surnaturel* and *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* little changes beyond a calming of the rhetorical tone, slightly tighter argumentation and the deciding of several ambiguities in the earlier work in a minimalistic fashion. Nevertheless, grand claims have been made (chiefly by Milbank) that Lubac falsifies his argument in so doing. Since I attack Milbank's reading on its own grounds I shall not engage in an exhaustive study of the differences. By all accounts they boil down to the following: the older work leaves open the possibility of a rational spirit created *without* being called, but seems to hint against it. Then in an article (also called *Le mystère du Surnaturel*) Lubac explicitly stated that God *could* create such a being—but that he hadn't, and the possibility wasn't very useful, since it didn't establish gratuity. In the later book this claim is worked in more substantively, but at no point does it do any work.¹⁰ Thus Milbank's contrast comes down to whether one thinks Lubac *could* agree with *Humani Generis*, which Milbank agrees Lubac thought he could. The *other* difference between the two works is more interesting: *Surnaturel*, despite being a collection of articles, is a single narrative, where the two later books divide into narrative and argument. This division, as we shall see, is very unhelpful, for it has legitimised the idea that Lubac is engaging in speculative theology about nature and grace.

The nature of Theology

Lubac is clearly doing something rather different. His style is epigraphic, and it pays to pay attention to his epigraphs. *Catholicisme* begins with a long citation from Giono condensed from several pages; yet most commentators take it purely as a

¹⁰ After acknowledging the encyclical, Lubac concedes to this hypothetical state the role of "saving the gratuity of grace in the anthropomorphic imagination of the masses" and "preserving the mystery of our calling" by pushing the supernatural entirely into the background (which, he implies, is at least better than naturalising it). de Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, p. 327.

indictment of Christian individualism, without remarking the *cosmic* dimensions of Giono's complaint, repeated throughout his *œuvre*, and thereby missing something of Lubac's distinctly premodern cosmic catholicity. *Le mystère du surnaturel* opens with three distinct epigraphs over two pages: a line from Radbertus, 'we seek by faith those things which are unseen'; one of Gilson's many complaints against Scholasticism 'buried under five centuries of silt' and suffering above all from 'self-ignorance' or 'ignorance of the self'—both the scholastic self and scholasticism itself seem to fall under the criticism. Centrally on the next page is a long citation of Pseudo-Dionysius:

Nous en serions venu, par une excessive circonspection, à refuser de rien écouter ni de rien dire concernant la philosophie divine, si nous n'avions enfin compris qu'il ne convient pas de négliger cette sorte de connaissance des mystères qui est à notre portée. Ce qui nous en a persuadé, ce n'est pas seulement la tendance naturelle de l'intelligence, qu'un perpétuel désir tient fixée à ce qu'il lui est permis de contempler des merveilles divines : c'est encore l'excellence des lois instituées par Dieu même, qui, tout en nous interdisant de nous mêler indiscrètement des choses qui nous dépassent, nous prescrivent au contraire, pour celles qui nous furent accordées en don, de les étudier sans relâche et de les transmettre à notre tour aux autres hommes.¹¹

Thus, before we have started the text proper, is everything framed. We walk by faith, not sight; scholasticism is at best rather inclined to forget this, and Pseudo-Dionysius is cited not so much for proof of our 'natural tendency' toward divine things, as for justification of his audacity in wading into the debate. (Dionysius is, in context, only offering one of the many apologies for talking about divine things at all with which the book is suffused, and the divine things in question here are the fruits of mystical prayer.) This is doubly striking: firstly he has all but *created* the debate by treating as problematic what was largely regarded as solved, and secondly the issue is decidedly *not* mysterious—at any rate in the way Pseudo-Dionysius is speaking—in neo-scholastic thought. But this, Lubac thinks, is precisely the problem:

D'une part, si la thèse dualiste ou, pour mieux dire, séparatiste a épuisé sa destinée dans les écoles, peut-être commence-t-elle seulement de livrer ses fruits les plus amers. A mesure que la théologie de métier l'abandonne, elle continue plus que jamais de se répandre sur le terrain de l'action pratique. Voulant protéger le surnaturel de toute contamination, on l'avait, en fait, exilé, hors de l'esprit vivant comme de la vie sociale, et le champ restait libre à l'envahissement du laïcisme. Aujourd'hui, ce laïcisme, poursuivant sa route, entreprend d'envahir la conscience des chrétiens eux-mêmes.

Leaving aside the rather premature declaration of victory for the critics of neo-scholasticism, note that Lubac quite explicitly blames all *that* for the woes of modern *society*. The theology has taken a while to work through, but it has born *social* fruit:

L'entente avec tous est parfois cherchée sur une idée de la nature qui puisse aussi bien convenir au déiste ou à l'athée : tout ce qui vient du Christ, tous ce qui doit conduire à Lui, est si bien relégué dans l'ombre,

¹¹Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names* III.3, cited in de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 11. The citation continues.

qu'il risque d'y disparaître à jamais. Le dernier mot du progrès chrétien et l'entrée dans l'âge adulte sembleraient alors consister dans une totale « sécularisation » qui expulserait Dieu non seulement de la vie sociale, mais de la culture et des rapports mêmes de la vie privée.

Mais d'autre part les doctrines que l'on appelait d'un nom générique, au début de ce siècle, « doctrines d'immanence » ne cessent de se renouveler..

Lubac is here being somewhat ironic: those who spoke most loudly 'under the general name' of 'doctrines of immanence' were the heralds of the anti-Modernist campaign, who condemned them and viewed them as short-lived innovations. Instead they are apparently here to stay, goaded on precisely by that which was supposed to defeat them, present even in the Church:

Sous des formes quelquefois subtiles, elles imprègnent, plus qu'on ne s'en aperçoit peut-être, la mentalité de bien des chrétiens à l'intellectualité, ou à l'intériorité plus exigeants. (Jamais l'homme n'aura finis de vouloir s'enfermer en lui-même!)

By this modern immanentism Lubac seems to have in mind post-war communitarian optimism, 'envisaging at the end of Becoming a "universal reconciliation" which, in itself as in its means, would exclude everything supernatural', although doubly dangerous today since these projects, rather than denying or seeking to conquer transcendence, embrace it and present themselves as the natural fulfilment even of the faith. 'We are not ignorant,' claims Lubac 'that the only way to "refute" is to absorb' and in so doing to profit from the encounter "as so often in the past". But this takes time: 'and some among us risk being seduced, whilst others—who should be protecting them—are still busy fighting the battles of yesteryear and miss the dangers which we now face—and which are pressing.'¹²

Thus, then, before he has even started, Lubac has adopted a particular picture of the role of theology: it forms (slowly but surely) the attitudes people adopt, it matures in things like "secularisation" (Lubac deliberately uses the sociological anglicism over the usual french *laïcité*) and a thirst for "doctrines of immanence", and thus presumably a better theology could mature in things like "christianised society" and "contented sacramentality". Central to most versions of this claim (and implicit in Lubac, although this would be very hard to prove) is that ideas play this role by their *affective* consequences. If the reason, ultimately, that it matters for Lubac that my desire for God is not an elicited velleity but a fact about nature is that the former leads to secularisation and an appetite for non-Christian doctrines of immanence, then the *style* within which theological claims are couched is going to be as important as their content.¹³

Augustine, Jansenism, and "Modern Theology"

Surnaturel became two books: *Le mystère du surnaturel* and *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*. Whatever this might have gained in terms of maintaining a reasonably

¹²Henri de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, Paris: Cerf, 2000, pp. 15–6.

¹³It is important to point out that this position need not entail a lack of concern for the truth of the claims considered. It is perfectly conceivable that one of the things which shows a theological claim to be true is the fruit it bears indirectly.

sized volume, this was a tremendous pity from the viewpoint of the debate. Lubac's argument was henceforth to be treated—by partisans and detractors alike—within the vocabulary he attacked, as a thesis pertaining to the theological anthropology of the middle of the last century. Yet the first part of the older book was devoted to Augustine and his erstwhile interpreters; the second was given up to the interaction of Grace and Freedom; and only the third—325 pages into a 494 page book—directly attacks the issue which came to dominate the debate. Of this material not everything survived, but if one takes *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* first one arrives at a very different understanding of Lubac's purpose.

The book is ostensibly a recovery of St. Augustine, from Jansenists and anti-Jansenists alike. Lubac opens with exactly the same claim about Baius and Jansenus: their condemnation has, in the eyes of many—including careful ecclesiastical historians, who presumably ought to know—brought about the end of Augustinianism, by more or less condemning St. Augustine himself.¹⁴ This in itself is remarkable, since the error of Baius is supposed to have been the inverse of that of Jansenus: Baius reduced the economy of grace to an economy of barter, where our freely-effected good works *oblige* God to hold up his end of the bargain (salvific Grace being reduced to the role of restoring us to this prelapsarian state); Jansenus preached the irresistibility of Grace so strongly that predestination became inexorable fate. How can the condemnation of *both* such apparently opposed errors have finally parted ways with St. Augustine?

In reality, Lubac holds, both errors are the same. Here his argument becomes subtle. It seems at first glance that he is working within the same paradigm as the historians whose perspective needs correcting. Jansenism is built on Baianism methodologically: it begins with the same suppositions about the state of pure nature in which Adam was created, and simply fills in the postlapsarian details differently (and perhaps somewhat better).¹⁵ On this view the basic problem is an error about the supernatural: Jansenus, like Baius, holds that God in some sense owes his grace to prelapsarian Man.¹⁶ Starting from this mistake about the supernatural everything else falls into place: nature and supernature are competitive within the same ordering, grace must *overcome* fallen nature; salvific grace, like a good concupiscence, overwhelms the will.

On this reading, the problem with Jansenism was a failure properly to conceive of the independence of the realms of Nature and the Supernatural, and if one thinks the condemnation of Jansenus has condemned St. Augustine, it is only because we have tended to refute him without observing this, and thus seemed to have the supernatural itself in our sights. This, however, is not Lubac's claim. Jansenus' error was not so much in his conception of the relationship between nature and grace (although he did indeed get that wrong) as in the methodological use to which he put it in the first place:

Mais est-ce bien, au sens chrétien du mot, la grâce? Tantôt instrument aux mains souveraines de l'homme, tantôt force envahissante qui supplée toute activité naturelle et réduit celui qu'elle « libère » en un nouvel esclavage, comment reconnaître en elle cette initiative de l'Amour créateur venant, pour le rendre efficace ou pour lui rendre sa première droiture, au devant de l'effort humain qu'il a lui-même suscité, et opérant à la fois le gage et le modèle suréminent? Tel était cependant, avant tout, aux

¹⁴De Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, Cf. 10ff. and 49ff. ¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 54. ¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 56.

yeux d'Augustin, le mystère de la grâce. ... L'homme et Dieu n'était pas pour lui deux forces en présence, ni deux individus étrangers. Il savait la Transcendance divine ; il avait même éprouvé l'instinctive répulsion du pécheur et de l'être pétri de néant qui double, si l'on peut dire, la distance qui sépare naturellement le fini de l'infini. Mais avec saint Jean, avec tous les humbles chrétiens, il croyait à l'Amour. Il avait même éprouvé la force irrésistible de son appel, capable de combler tous les abîmes. Finalement, entre la nature et la grâce, il ne s'agissait pas pour lui d'opposition, mais d'inclusion ; non de lutte, mais d'union. Il ne s'agissait pas pour l'homme d'anéantissement, mais d'unification intime et de transformation. Un grand principe dominait tout, où s'exprimait son âme : *Deus interior intimo meo*.¹⁷

More striking even than the change of subject matter here is the change in Lubac's tone. Something new has entered the picture: St. Augustine *felt* the repulsion of the sinner before his judge, *felt* the dread of the soul before the one who fashioned it from nothing, *believed* Love, *felt* the irresistible call. "Irresistible", a few pages earlier, referred to tyranny. Lubac does not even comment on the change in meaning of the word: the change in style has done all the work.

Something else enters the picture here, without contradicting what we had said earlier. Lubac *does* think that Jansenism failed because it failed to get the relationship between Nature and Grace correct; but this failure was *intentional* before it was ever *theoretical*. Neither Jansenus nor Baius nor their opponents have any place for a God *interior intimo meo*: at best grace is a "delectation" which wins us, externally, from our sins, or an internal comfort always in danger of sliding into quietism. The error with which Lubac charges Jansenism and anti-Jansenism alike is anthropological: all have failed to conceive of the paradoxical status of the fallen image-bearer of God.¹⁸

Thus Lubac is at once making a speculative claim, which entails other speculative claims (a claim about anthropology, which entails an account of nature and thus God's action in it) and an *intentional* claim: before one even begins one's speculative investigation one has to adopt the right *stance* towards things, in order to get the right *vision* of them. This was already apparent in his treatment of St. Augustine: although he does tell us why Baius and Jansenus are wrong on their own terms, the explanation is that St. Augustine 'speaks from the point of view of eternity'—that is, from the viewpoint of death and the final judgement. (It is notable that Lubac says exactly the same thing about Dostoevsky.¹⁹) This is not the same thing as entertaining a hypothesis. Lubac's Augustine is not entertaining the circular argument: to be saved is to have final perseverance, and only those who have final perseverance are saved, thus election inexorably brings those who are saved to their salvation; therefore *given* the hypothesis that X is saved, X must have been elected. Nor is he interested in resolving the apparent contradiction (still less the more than apparent injustice) by elaborating a theory of cooperation such that God saves the saveable (Baius) or damns the damnable (Jansenus). Rather, Lubac mines those texts in which St. Augustine seems to declare that salvation is *all* grace, and grace is *all* election, and those texts in

¹⁷Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁸Telling in this regard is the immediate dismissal of a tentative reaching beyond the confines of the debate, when Habert dares to cite the Greek fathers: 'Habert avait oublié qu'il est enfant de l'Église latine, et que l'Église latine ne renvoie pas ses enfants aux Pères grecs, mais à saint Augustin...' (!) Gerberon, *Histoire générale du jansénisme*, ibid., p. 85.

¹⁹Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, Paris: Cerf, 1959, p. 412.

which he says that none *in statu viatoris* is fixed on his path, sets them side by side, and asserts that both are, strictly and literally, true, but only *by considering their standpoint*.

The same is true of that *delectatio* by which grace moves us to action. Far from preceding or being consequent on our decision, it is coterminous. Lubac cites Gilson: *la délectation n'est que l'amour, qui n'est lui-même que le poids intérieur de la volonté, laquelle n'est à son tour que le libre arbitre même.*²⁰ So much the worse if this seems paradoxical: it is our concept of liberty which causes the problem. *Gratia liberatrix, gratia liberans, gratia liberationem pollicens.*²¹ We are not free *from* God, but *by* God; grace does not triumph *over* us, but *in* us.

The prose is intoxicating, but what is the claim? Lubac has not solved any of the problems Jansenus or Baius or the *recentes* set out to solve: he has not shown how grace can be the motive cause of our salvation and yet we freely choose, how we can desire God (and thus seek salvation) and yet be wholly different from him, or how our imperfect acts can be meritorious, and that merit be ultimately attributable to grace. He has simply moved them all, and situated them within human nature itself; and he has claimed that this is the classic *locus* for this problem. In other words, the quarrel is about what one takes as a given, and what one views as a conceptual tool.

Thus Lubac tells the story of the gradual acceptance of a methodological tool as a true picture of reality. Thinking of prelapsarian Adam is a useful way of working out what belongs to nature, including for Augustine.²² But Augustine's notion of grace is far more as *pardon* than as *gift*²³ and Augustine's nature is, in our terms, thoroughly engraced.²⁴ *On chercherait en vain, dans la volonté bonne, quelque chose qui soit nôtre sans nous venir de Dieu.*²⁵ This shows up in the very passages Baius would turn to prove the strength of nature: Adam did not *pray* for Augustine, because prayer (like grace properly so called) belonged to the postlapsarian order: he had no *need* to implore the grace which was always on hand.²⁶ Far more important than the texts is this existential standpoint which Lubac finds in Augustine: Augustine writes as *one converted*, and everything he says of original justice or damnation is by way of contrast.²⁷

Lubac is well aware that this way of putting things is not Thomas', and that there has been a shift in vocabulary: the difference, he says, is not merely verbal, but it need not destroy the unity of the faith.²⁸ But *natura pura* is something completely different: a pure abstraction, having its origins in nominalist speculations on the *potentia Dei absoluta* and humanist interest in "natural religion", it is unevicenced in this world. Even the *limbo puerorum* is *not* a case of pure nature.²⁹ Earlier scholastics are quite clear on this, and even Cajetan does not treat it as a *reality*. (Lubac argues with some success that the "natural" end was originally conceived as a hypothetical *terrestrial* end (political in Aristotle's sense, consisting of the goods of this life, but cut short by death).³⁰) But with its introduction something changes: no more is it a question of a twofold consideration of man's end, but rather two possible ends. For Soto, that eccentric reconciler of Duns Scotus and St. Thomas in whom Lubac sees the authentic voice of the Tradition (and Feingold sees eclecticism):

Il ne s'agit pas là de quelque ambiguïté ou de quelque indétermination
essentielle, préalable à un choix divin. Coexistant dans l'homme tel qu'il

²⁰De Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, p. 95. ²¹*Ibid.*, 96-7 (96). ²²*Ibid.*, p. 102. ²³*Ibid.*, p. 103. ²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 104-5. ²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 106. ²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 116. ²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 127-8. ²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 129-32. ²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 142-3. Some would speculate that God must actively intervene to *remove* the desire for the beatific vision if the child in limbo is to be contented (176). ³⁰*Ibid.*, 169ff, *passim*.

est réalisé, dans cet être qui est fait à l'image de Dieu, dans chacun de nous, les deux finalités sont à réaliser l'une et l'autre, l'une par l'autre. La première est déterminée par les règles de la prudence et de l'honnêteté, telle que les ont expliquées les « philosophi naturales ». Elle n'est ni supprimée ni étouffée par la seconde – Soto ne veut rien méconnaître des valeurs naturelles, et l'on peut revendiquer pour lui le titre d'humaniste, – mais elle lui est subordonnée. Seule la seconde mérite le nom de fin vraiment dernière, et seule elle dépasse l'horizon terrestre. En un mot, dans notre langage, pas de transcendance envisagée sans surnaturel.³¹

Very quickly this was to collapse. Following Cajetan, Suarez and innumerable others, theologians take as self-evident the Aristotelian dictum that a desire is *natural* if it can be realised by natural means, without ever calling so unchristian a principle into question.³² The resulting “natural desire” is a ‘velleity’ of no serious importance. Worse, the human soul (or mind: lubac uses *mens* and *anima* interchangeably here) loses the mystery it has as image-bearer, and becomes pure animal *materia* for God to impose upon if he sees fit.³³ So self-evident does this reasoning become, that commentators place Thomas’ own language in the *videtur quod*, the more to distinguish Thomism from Scotism: *videtur Sanctus Thomas sentire cum Scoto*. And yet on this point Thomas and Scotus agree!³⁴

Thus the argument. But so far I am falsifying Lubac’s style: Tolet was unable to restore ‘the ancient *atmosphere* of thought’,³⁵ Bellarmin is augustinian ‘in his *most personal* thought’; ‘only the mystics—since nobody takes their doctrine very seriously—could remember the traditional position’;³⁶ theology has been reduced to a miraculous exception to philosophy: *il n’y a plus de conception chrétienne de l’homme. On a oublié en lui « l’image vivante du Dieu vivant »*.³⁷ Lubac’s real target is existential. To take *natural* in Aristotle’s sense is perfectly valid, but to build a christian anthropology *etsi Deus non daretur* is to cut off the branch one is sitting on; and trying to arrest its fall with notions like a *desiderium elicatum* or *potentia obedientialis* only highlights the absurdity (here Lubac’s irony is unsurpassed). Certainly the soul has an obediential potency, but what is it there for? A potency which supplies its own teleology is at the very least curious. (If the potency’s being *obediential* is what allows the distinction, we have simply moved the problem.) The commentators are *dans l’embarras* and highly embarrassed about it, forced to choose between three unsatisfactory solutions to safeguard their self-imposed assertion that no desire can be *natural* unless its realisation is: either they make the desire consequential, or they minimise it out of existence, or they minimise its object.³⁸ Several times Lubac has objected—curiously we might think—to reducing the supernatural to the miraculous—sometimes, with malice, to a *special case* thereof.³⁹ To reason as the majority do, Lubac claims, is to reject *ab initio* the mystery of human nature, and we end up rationalists *malgré nous*.

This, he charges, is exactly what happens: not by genealogical necessity, but by intellectual culture the mindset of the *order* of pure nature existing really alongside the *order* of grace came to be essential. A truly *Christian* philosophy would have been

³¹Ibid., p. 164. ³²Ibid., pp. 194–200. ³³Ibid., pp. 207–9. ³⁴Ibid., p. 214. ³⁵Ibid., p. 180, my italics.

³⁶Ibid., p. 218, my italics. ³⁷Ibid., p. 257.

³⁸Lubac might have added that the latter two solutions are no solution at all: the sloppy thinking which allows theologians to get away with claiming that whilst X “properly so called” is excluded, “a kind of” X somehow fails to transgress the limits is rightly derided among philosophers. It is a simple category mistake: if X is excluded but something which looks like X is not, it must be because they are categorically distinct in a way which matters for the argument, but this distinction it far too often hand-waved away.

³⁹De Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, 243, 249f, 256f.

able to articulate *both* the consistency of nature *and* its radical incompleteness and openness (at least in fact) to God. But post-Tridentine intellectualism was as unequal to the task as post-Tridentine missionary and spiritual endeavour surpassed it. Naturally, philosophy became sundered from theology, and theology from spirituality.⁴⁰ ‘From Jansenus to our days’ (Ch. IX) nothing has changed. A dwindling Augustinian school has continued to give the answer of Soto to the objection that no natural appetite could not have a natural faculty for fulfilling it. But the natural desire has vanished, in practice, both from a functional role in theology and from our apologetics. Unfortunately the Augustinian position was insufficiently worked out; it became increasingly pessimistic, only encouraging the “School” in its adherence to *pura natura* and a desire unrelated to the supernatural desire elicited by grace. Lubac cites with considerable irony a rather ridiculous poem on the subject:

Il aurait pu borner Adam sa créature
Aux seuls biens dévolus à la pure nature
Et sans lui prodiguer ses plus rare bienfaits,
Limiter sa largesse à des dons moins parfaits.

En cela quel reproche aurait-il pu lui faire,
Sans former une plainte injuste et téméraire ?
Quoiqu’exclus à jamais de l’éternel séjour,
Eût-il pu l’accuser de lui manquer d’amour ?⁴¹

At this point it is all over:

Le cri de guerre qu’avait poussé Ripalda : « Exterminandus est appetitus innatus! » devait donc trouver un écho de plus en plus vaste. Ce *Delenda Carthago* visait plus loin qu’une thèse scolastique. Il allait, sans qu’on y prît garde, à ruiner toute l’ancienne anthropologie. Le « désir de voir Dieu » ou, dans le langage qui a prévalu de nos jours, le « désir du surnaturel », qui avait été si longtemps, tant pour les Scolastiques que pour les Pères, le premier principe explicatif de l’homme et, avec l’homme, de toute la nature, ce pivot de la philosophie chrétienne ne résista pas aux coups qui lui furent portés. Les théologiens qui l’exécutèrent firent leur besogne avec d’autant plus d’acharnement qu’ils étaient comme hypnotisés par le péril que les doctrines baianistes avaient fait courir à la foi, puis par l’incrédulité gagnant de toute part, enfin par la marée de l’immanentisme en ses mille formes. Il pensaient donc en cela mener la guerre sainte...⁴²

Unfortunately this was precisely the opposite of the correct response. In reality they were ‘cédant à demi au naturalisme ambiant et faisant à un monde qui se désintéressait de ses destinées les plus hautes la plus fâcheuse des concessions’.⁴³

Lubac insists that he would have nothing against “the system of pure nature” were it not ‘constructed on the ruins of the most traditional of ideas, the central insight of christian philosophy’: that Man is *not* to be conceived of “over against” himself, or his natural ends, but before his creator in an attitude of complete dependence, desiring a gift he could not demand.⁴⁴ Such language is, as Lubac notes, to be found

⁴⁰De Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, pp. 276–7.

⁴¹*L'accord de la grâce et de la liberté, poème, accompagné de remarques critiques et historiques*, P. Le Vaillant S.J. (1740) *ibid.*, 311. The poem concludes with praise for Louis XV, exterminator of Jansenism.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 312–3. Ripalda is somewhat different in context. ⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 313. ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 329–30.

in works of “spirituality”; it can scarcely be found even in the older scholastics to whom he appeals and it is as absent from the doctrinal work of Garrigou-Lagrange as it is implied in his spirituality. Lubac emphatically opts for spirituality over such a dogmatics.

Lubac’s Narrative: Victorious Spirituality

What, then, would a better dogmatics, integrating this “spiritual” insight, look like?

Lubac presents a narrative designed to show exactly this weakness so that he can elaborate ‘a more excellent way’. He opens with a claim, in a 1928 *Gregorianum* article, that the divergence between modern and ancient theology is at times difficult to account for in terms of progress; the article goes on to present the same stark opposition (on the question of the meaning of ‘beatitude’) between the ‘ancients’ and the ‘moderns’ as Lubac will sketch, before concluding with an indictment of *insufficiens contactus philosophiæ modernæ cum coryphaeis antiquioris Scholæ*.⁴⁵ Of the pained response largely in the language of this indicted modern (scholastic) philosophy, which the *Gregorianum* carried a little later, Lubac says nothing.⁴⁶ And thus Lubac tells his narrative of the ‘ebb and flow of theologies’: a narrative which, frozen for us in 1965, is already beginning to look rather dated, and a narrative which exists to establish only that theological positions *can* change; that development is not always progress. We are told of Gilson,⁴⁷ of Rousselot and his disciples;⁴⁸ of the opposition we get an even briefer thumbnail sketch: they insisted on not being literalist.⁴⁹ Yet both ebb and flow are on Lubac’s side:⁵⁰ authors *already* saw, perceived *very early*; theologians are returning ‘to antiquity’, ‘to simplicity’—aware, always, of the Magisterium.⁵¹

This is not history; it is myth-making. But it is myth-making for a purpose: Lubac is presenting his work both as mainstream, and as theologically conservative, and his target is not the readers of today, who too often take these narratives at face value, but the political intrigues of his day. With these cleared out the way the narrative stops.

There is thus a difference in character between the first vague and generalised chapter and the rest of the book. Henceforth Lubac is entertaining a thesis:

La création n’est pas pour chaque être un fait du passé, une cause ou une condition préalable d’existence qui ne l’affecterait pas tout entier et à chaque instant... Dieu n’est point absent à son œuvre.⁵²

This Augustinian insight is, Lubac thinks, sufficient to establish everything else. But it is not, he acknowledges, what Thomas was specifically concerned with: Thomas had his own battles to fight, against the deniers of the beatific vision.⁵³ The question is whether such a strong identification of *natura* and *creatio continua* can show itself to be both Thomistic and theologically defensible. Already Lubac’s phraseology in *Surnaturel* on this question had earned him the accusation that he simply did not believe in nature at all.⁵⁴ The question, then, is whether it is necessary to conceive of

⁴⁵E. Elter, ‘De naturali hominis beatitudine ad mentem Scholae antiquioris’, *Gregorianum* 9.2 (1928), p. 290.

⁴⁶Victor Cathrein, ‘De naturali hominis beatitudine’, *Gregorianum* 11.3 (1930), pp. 398–409.

⁴⁷De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 28. ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 29–31. ⁴⁹De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, p. 31.

⁵⁰De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 32–4. ⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 34–40. ⁵²*Ibid.*, pp. 41–2. ⁵³*Ibid.*, pp. 47–51.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 56 n. 2. The article in question, Charles Boyer, ‘Nature pure et surnaturel dans le " Surnaturel, du Père de Lubac’, *Gregorianum* 28.2/3 (1947), pp. 379–395 (which actually cites two phrases in support of the claim) is a fair summary of the immediate criticism Lubac’s thesis provoked: ‘it is not at all question of Aristotle, but of reason itself: a nature cannot be, before all grace, ordered to a single end, without that

two ends for man, one belonging to the natural, and the other to the supernatural, order—this being ‘not the ancient concept of *natura pura*, but the system which has grown up around it in modern theology, profoundly modifying its meaning’.⁵⁵ Necessary or not to preserve the gratuity of Grace: but in passing Lubac touches on the objection which is alive and well in contemporary Thomism: does not the exclusion of a natural end remove a natural law? Of this claim Lubac can make neither head nor tail⁵⁶ and he wonders whether ‘order’ is being used ‘socially’.

Lubac begins by trying to show that ‘dual system’ of pure-nature-and-grace is actually *ineffective*: nature and grace are *trop parfaitement séparé[s] pour être vraiment différenciées* and thereby end up ‘in the same category’.⁵⁷ In other words, Lubac charges ‘modern theology’ with building an entirely *natural* system, a system in which Grace is a wholly invisible and effectively irrelevant superstructure. How could one take the *fecisti nos ad Te* to refer to a purely *natural* contemplation of God, distinct from the beatific vision?⁵⁸ Lubac assumes here that Boyer must in fact mean a natural contemplation, just as he has already assumed a natural desire for a natural contemplation would be of no apologetic value.⁵⁹ Thus a great deal of his rhetoric is built on the *assumption* of this hard division: *either* something is supernatural through and through; *or* it is natural: whence, then, these natural analogues of supernatural gifts? ‘One sees no difficulty even in speaking of “natural grace”!’⁶⁰ ‘What remains of the supernatural, except the word?’ ‘The only difference intelligible...consists in the epithet.’⁶¹ Lubac thus considers the natural/supernatural distinction to be a distinction without difference; and since in practice every ‘supernatural’ object is now the ‘higher’ or ‘more perfect’ copy of some natural object, one of startling hubris: whence this insight into the mysterious nature of God?⁶² Lubac is ironic: ‘a few’ theologians ‘apparently aware both of the intellectual difficulty and of the spiritual impropriety’ of these consequences, endeavour to re-introduce something of the mysterious—Lubac cites by way of example Descoqs’ suggestion of ‘a real vision of God, the author of nature, which would not reveal him according to his intimate perfections in the supernatural order, but—all the while remaining in a certain manner proportionate to our nature—would be intuitive; would surpass the realm of abstract concepts and infused species.’⁶³ But such a half-hearted concession is logically inconsistent, besides tending to the construction of ‘a kind of natural morality...which tends to be a morality without religion’;⁶⁴ Lubac prophesies an eventual Pelagianism or eventual Baianism,⁶⁵ whilst noting that he has been accused similarly but has no intention of falling into the same trap.⁶⁶

end entering into its definition. A nature is an essence which rests in the good which is proportionate to it, etc’ (391); ‘to say that the creature has no rights vis-à-vis God could have a religious sense...but if one meant that God could treat the work of his hands however he liked, as if to put a just man in hell, or simply to deprive an innocent human being of the final good proportionate to him, etc’ (391); ‘the intentions and attestations of an author have nothing to do with it: as soon as one assigns to a nature but a single end, not only is this end *natural*, it is *due* to the nature; it is no longer a grace’ (293) In other words, Lubac’s position was not even Augustinian (a school whose existence Boyer acknowledged, although its confidence in this question grew ‘fainter and fainter’ (392)) but simply illogical. That Lubac might perhaps be conceiving of ‘nature’ rather differently from the definition Boyer derived so confidently from ‘reason’ did not seem to occur to him; nor did Lubac respond except with dismissal.

⁵⁵De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 56. ⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 57, 59. ⁵⁷Ibid., p. 61. ⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 62–3.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 60. ⁶⁰63–5 (64) *ibid.* ⁶¹Ibid., p. 66. ⁶²Ibid., pp. 67–70. ⁶³Ibid., p. 71. ⁶⁴Ibid., p. 72.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 73–5. ⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 76–7.

Lubac's target

Already it has become apparent that Lubac is opposed not so much to the hypothetical existence of a state of pure nature as to the construction of a natural/supernatural distinction based on no experiential difference. To this he assigns two motives: explicitly, the need to defend the gratuity of Grace, and implicitly, the tendency to 'systematisation' which he so deplored. The remainder of *Le mystère du surnaturel* is devoted to this explicit problem, but the majority of Lubac's *argument* is in fact an argument against the kind of conceptualisation which prefers the invisibility of redundant duplication for the analogical predicating of a gratuity quite unlike other gratuity.⁶⁷

Lubac's first claim is that it is difficult to see how the *hypothetical* existence of a connatural end could solve anything:

On dit qu'un univers aurait pu exister, dans lequel l'homme, sans pré-judice peut-être d'un autre désir, eût borné ses ambitions raisonnables à quelques béatitude inférieure, simplement humaine. Bien. Nous n'y contredisons pas. Mais une fois qu'on a dit cela, on est bien obligé de concéder... que dans notre univers actuel il n'en va pas tout à fait de la sorte...

On the contrary, 'in me, a real, personal human being, in my concrete nature (*nature concrète*), in this nature which I have in common with all real men (if I judge by what my faith teaches), and no matter what any reflection or reasoning might reveal to me, the "desire to see God" could not be eternally frustrated without an essential suffering'.⁶⁸ Absent the universalising claim and no one could object; derive the universalising claim in the minimal terms in which Feingold derives a universal desire for God *connaturally* and a universal 'specific obediencial potency' and not even Mansini could object. But what does Lubac mean here by 'desire' and 'concrete nature'?

C'est que ce désir n'est pas en moi un « accident » quelconque. Il ne me vient pas de quelque particularité, peut-être modifiable, de mon être individuel ou de quelque contingence historique aux effets plus ou moins transitoires. A plus forte raison ne dépend-il aucunement de mon vouloir délibéré. Il est en moi du fait de mon appartenance à l'humanité actuelle, à cette humanité qui est, comme on dit, « appelée ».

Lubac's language ('transitory effect', 'any particularity') makes it clear here that he is not considering the sacraments (the author of *Catholicisme*, with so realist a view of sacramental incorporation, would scarcely have described baptism as a 'contingent historical event with transitory consequences!'). Moreover, this desire is the sign of a common presence in a 'called humanity': it is ours, then, in virtue of Adam, of *this* creation

Car l'appel de Dieu est constitutif. Ma finalité, dont ce désir est l'expression, est inscrite en mon être même, tel qu'il est posé par Dieu dans l'univers. Et, de par la volonté de Dieu, je n'ai pas aujourd'hui d'autre fin réelle, c'est-à-dire réellement assignée à ma nature et offerte sous quelques espèces que ce soit, à mon adhésion libre, que de « voir Dieu ».⁶⁹

⁶⁷In this Lubac is perhaps rather slow to acknowledge that in theorising (even whilst attacking over-theorising) there is always a theoretical cost.

⁶⁸De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 80. ⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 81.

This is Lubac's thesis, and everything which relates to his apologetic position is derived from this claim. Lubac, despite his use of the word, is interested in the *particularity* of the human condition: a being 'placed in the universe by God' such that it is called to God. Thus he immediately complains that it is in *this concrete nature* ('as one sometimes says: this "historic nature"') that the gratuity of Grace must be shown, not against some other hypothetical nature. That is, Lubac postulates the illegitimacy of an identity between me and the purely natural being I *might* have been:⁷⁰ we do not share the same 'concrete' nature, and thus it is no good observing that I *might have been* without this gift, and thus God did not give it: no, *to me* it has been given and yet God is free in giving it. Perhaps we share the same 'nature', but we do not share the same 'humanity', the same 'human being'; we are not 'the same me'.⁷¹ Lubac is dubious that we really *can* speak of having the 'same nature' as such a man, but in any case 'let us place in this hypothetical world a man as similar to me as one would like; we do not thereby place *me* there'.⁷² This follows from his parallel insistence on the constitutive nature of the desire: it leads to one end;⁷³ loss of it would be damnation only because it is constitutive;⁷⁴ it is not merely a natural desire, but a desire *of my nature*⁷⁵

Thus: the desire is nature-determining (and Lubac, to be consistent, ought to insist that without it *nature would be changed*), but why does that prevent one defending gratuity by appeal to a state of pure nature? Lubac is insistent that it *does*:

C'est donc bien toujours à l'intérieur du monde réel, c'est-à-dire à l'intérieur d'un monde à finalité surnaturelle non pas seulement possible mais existante, que je dois trouver... une explication de la gratuité du surnaturel... Or c'est à quoi ne réussit point l'hypothèse moderne que nous examinons. Nous ne disons pas qu'elle soit fausse, mais nous disons qu'elle est insuffisante.⁷⁶

Moreover, he is insistent that this does not stem from thinking human nature merely abstract: I have the same nature as Socrates *because* we share the same finality; but I have only an 'abstract' link with any hypothetical 'pure nature'.⁷⁷ But why think that such a lack of identity is the right *kind* of non-identity to destroy the argument 'God could have made me without this call; therefore he is free in making me with it?' Lubac does not engage with this question philosophically at all and his immediate reasons are not philosophical: thinking this way is simply not patristic enough; neither the Fathers nor St. Thomas 'reasoned about a "disexistentialised" humanity'.⁷⁸ (Lubac notes in passing that even in his day there were those who simply accused St. Augustine of 'romanticism' for the *fecisti nos*.⁷⁹). But the answer seems to be that he is simply working with a very different understanding of 'gratuity'. Lubac cannot see why, even if we granted the identity of some purely hypothetical 'state of pure nature' with our own, any fact about it would affect the gratuity of *my* finality—because he does not think that gratuity is about the presence or absence of that finality at all, but is rather a quality of that finality itself. He is 'trying to show (without leaving the limits of this world as God has made it, and as alone we know it, by any kind of abstract fiction) that the gift which God offers of himself is and *could only be* completely free, so that we could not imagine a purer or higher gratuity'.⁸⁰

⁷⁰De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, 87 n.1. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 86. ⁷²Ibid., p. 87. ⁷³Ibid., p. 82.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 84. Lubac, citing Rahner, says *ordered*. In his terminology he is indeed, as Feingold charges, inconsistent, but we shall employ *constitutive* for the consequences of the natural desire Lubac will later term *non-ordering*.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 85. ⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 89–90. ⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 90–1. ⁷⁸Ibid., 92–6 (95). ⁷⁹Ibid., p. 93. ⁸⁰Ibid., 103 my italics.

The existence or not of the finality is, for Lubac, a separate question from its gratuity once it exists.

The gratuity of a gift

*Pas de don gratuit, s'il ne peut être refusé par le donateur.*⁸¹ Lubac's challenge is the notion of freedom at work, which he thinks hopelessly anthropomorphised. 'The gift of God, the gift which is God himself, assimilated to a simple present one man gives another!'⁸² Instead, he proposes, make an analogy with something of the same category—our creation itself. Just as it is illegitimate to imagine existence as the first of many gifts given by God to some preexisting thing (as though a present which is fundamentally separate from both giver and receiver), so the finality with which God has constituted my nature is not added to some unfinalised nature existing temporally or hypothetically before it.⁸³ By this Lubac seems to mean something like: in God's creation of a human soul he creates directly⁸⁴ *ex nihilo*, and the form given to that soul is determined only by God himself. But God's determination is not thereby unlimited: he could not create a vegetable or irrational soul for a rational man. On the other hand, nothing external impinges upon God to force a rational soul to be such-and-such a soul: this stems from God's own creation. Shall we then say that God is free in his creation of a rational soul, given that a rational soul must be such-and-such a soul? One has here, of course, to distinguish between (i) freedom from external constraint and (ii) freedom in carrying out a specified action. God is certainly free in sense (i) (He need not create at all, and when he does, he is not thereby subordinated to any external pattern), but can we meaningfully speak of a freedom in sense (ii)? Certainly, insofar as freedom is seen in its ancient teleological splendour: "freedom for the Good"; that freedom which to sin is to lose. But this freedom is not the same freedom at all, nor is it the same freedom of which the scholastics treat (*libertas agere vel non agere*, *libertas a coactione* and *libertas a necessitate* are all instances of the first kind; whereas the second would be termed something like *libertas in agendo*). Call this first freedom *liberty*, so that God is 'at liberty not to create', 'at liberty to create as he pleases'; and call the second *freedom*, so that God's creation of such-and-such an entity is a *free* creation precisely because it is a faithful creation of such-and-such an entity.⁸⁵ Now, Lubac is concerned with this kind of freedom. The possibility of non-creation and the possibility of non-calling to the beatific vision establish liberty of the first sort; but freedom of the second kind: freedom in the particularity of a creation, a calling—this, Lubac thinks, is real gratuity.

He tries to establish this by various arguments. God's gifts differ from ours in being the exemplar, not a deviation; thus they must have a *higher*, not merely the same, gratuity that we have in giving.⁸⁶ God could have not created, and 'he could have not called *this being which he gave us to see him*'; but there is a distinction between his gratuity in creating (nature) and his gratuity in calling (to a supernatural end), the one stemming in part from the created order itself, the other a unique self-giving of God to that order which partakes thereby in the freedom of God in Himself.⁸⁷ The

⁸¹Ibid., p. 106. ⁸²Ibid., p. 106. ⁸³Ibid., pp. 106–8.

⁸⁴The same argument, mutatis mutandis, could be made about the material creation of the body.

⁸⁵It is in this sense that the Magisterium has made use of the Pauline 'law of liberty', *Nihilque tam perversum praeposterumque dici cogitarive posset quam illud, hominem, quia natura liber est, idcirco esse oportere legis expertem: quod si ita esset, hoc profecto consequeretur, necesse ad libertatem esse non cohaerere cum ratione: cum contra longe verissimum sit, idcirco legi oportere subesse, quia est natura liber. Isto modo dux homini in agendo lex est.* Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas*, 1888, 6.

⁸⁶De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 109. ⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 110–3.

ultimate end of man is like the creation of man at the 'end' of the ladder of creation, or the birth of Christ as the 'end' of the history of Israel: it has an 'entirely gratuitous novelty'.⁸⁸ The 'constitutive' sense of this desire is not an *ordering*:

Le « fond » de l'âme spirituelle, ce « miroir » où luit secrètement l'Image de Dieu, est bien, comme dit Tauler, le « lieu de la nativité » de notre être surnaturel : il n'en est pas le germe ou l'embryon. Il en est bien la « capacité » — tel est le mot d'Origène, de saint Bernard, de saint Thomas, de beaucoup d'autres, — mais il n'en est pas pour autant la participation, même initiale et lointaine, « qu'il suffirait de développer et d'enrichir ». Il n'en constitue même pas la promesse, du moins tant que la Promesse objective n'a pas retenti. Le désir qui jaillit de ce « fond » de l'âme est un désir « par privation » et non par « commencement de possession ».⁸⁹

Thus, if we are to speak thomistically, this is not a 'disposition', indeed 'the natural "capacity" which corresponds to the natural "desire" is not in the slightest a "faculty"; it is only a *aptitudo passiva*' and thus, although 'the being which desires to see God is in fact *capax illius beatae cognitionis*, it does not follow that its nature is itself *efficax ad videndum Deum*'.⁹⁰

This argument is interesting: previously, Lubac has been claiming a *general* disanalogy between human and divine giving, in terms more rhetorical than systematic. Here he makes an argument not about the kind of *giving*, but about the *gift*: the natural desire is, in fact (although Lubac is loath to admit it) wrapped up with a kind of 'specific obediential potency' quite distinct from any other faculty. It is easy to see why this should be so: it is the faculty of losing one's faculties, the ability of being transformed from without by grace in ways which, although ultimately they leave nature intact, are not necessarily desired by nature at all. Here Lubac's occasional uses of words like *mortification* (equally, indeed strikingly, present in Blondel) begin to make sense. The desire to see God corresponds to a purely passive aptitude to be *given over* to God in order to be made capable of seeing him, an end which is *not at all* 'proportionate to nature'.⁹¹ It is in this context that I would situate Lubac's defence of the gratuity of God's response to this desire by arguing that we desire the gift *as gift*.

Lubac cites a few authors here in support of this thesis,⁹² but as usual he *equates* an emphatic denial of any exigency in the desire for God with his account of that desire, and thus only establishes half his thesis. 'The case of the desire for God is *sui generis*.... "The absolute gratuity of our filial adoption by God the Father transcends, without absorbing, the absolute gratuity of creation".⁹³ Thus the distinction between 'given' and 'gifted' (*datum/donum*) and the incomparable distinction between creation and grace are subsumed without argument into the paradigm Lubac presents: there can be no exigence,

Et cela, sans restriction, *en toute hypothèse*.⁹⁴

Quite; but from the neo-scholastic point of view this is a *petitio principii*.

⁸⁸De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 114. ⁸⁹Ibid., p. 116. ⁹⁰Ibid., p. 117. ⁹¹Ibid., pp. 117–8.

⁹²Remarkable for 'their essential agreement, not just in the doctrine—which goes without saying for an aspect of the Faith so fundamental—but even in their habitual choice of words'. *ibid.*, p. 119.

⁹³Ibid., 120. The citation is Romeyer. ⁹⁴Ibid., p. 127.

Nature summoned

Lubac, however, is going about things differently. It is not (as he keeps insisting) nature which has any purchase on the supernatural, rather 'it is the end which is prior, and which summons and recruits the means'.⁹⁵ The citation is Claudel, who has like Lubac a *penchant* for paradox. Yet 'if the supernatural is first in the order of intention...it does not follow that created nature is in itself the slightest bit in continuity with the supernatural in the order of execution.'

Autrement dit, et tout simplement, toute l'initiative est et reste toujours de Dieu. En tout, Dieu est premier. « Avant qu'ils appellent, dit le Seigneur, je répondrai. »

Tout simplement. Rien n'est plus simple en effet, et rien ne serait plus simple à comprendre, par là même à admettre, si tout n'avait été peu à peu compliqué et embrouillé.⁹⁶

From this perspective, indeed, there is nothing 'peculiarly Scotist'⁹⁷ about this claim. Distinguish we all we like between that non-ordering desire and the infusing of ordering grace by the acquisition of the supernatural virtues; both are still entirely free. It follows 'again, very simply' from the freedom of creation: God's will is always first; man only responds; man is not in any sense able to impinge upon God. Man is what God will he is; and what God wills is that Man should see him *per essentiam*.⁹⁸

Any other conception of nature is, Lubac thinks, an abstraction from this 'historic', this 'existential'⁹⁹ nature we in fact have.¹⁰⁰ For intellectual nature (*nature spirituelle, âme, esprit*) is distinct from any other kind of nature: it alone can rise above itself, above everything in thought, and it alone can reflect on what it seeks.¹⁰¹ Thus Lubac can mingle St. Thomas with Ricoeur¹⁰² in his sketch of this nature, which he recognises is *not* a neo-scholastic definition:

Ce n'est point à dire, encore une fois, que l'être spirituel soit dépourvu de « nature » ou d' « essence », ainsi que plusieurs le disent trop facilement aujourd'hui. Ce n'est point davantage à dire que sa nature soit moins fortement « structurée » que celle des autres êtres, dont tout l'horizon est à l'intérieur du cosmos. C'est-à-dire, tout simplement, que cette « nature » est autre... Si donc l'on se content de définir en général la nature comme « une essence bien définie, ayant ses lois propres, ses moyens naturels », pareille définition s'appliquera aussi bien à la nature des esprits qu'à celle des animaux, des végétaux ou des corps bruts... Mais on ajoute parfois que cette nature a toujours et nécessairement « sa fin correspondant à ses moyens »; on veut parfois que toute nature, même spirituelle, soit « une essence qui se repose dans le bien qui lui est proportionné ou qui poursuive ce même bien »... A de telles adjonctions, il nous est impossible d'acquiescer.¹⁰³

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 128. ⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 128–9. ⁹⁷Ibid., p. 129. ⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 132–3.

⁹⁹Here Lubac cites Rahner to dispute the need for any existential *faculty* as 'a kind of medium' through which God acts. His standpoint is rather that of Man *in his existential totality*.

¹⁰⁰De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 136–7.

¹⁰¹Lubac insists quite properly that this is no fruit of 'modern philosophy': the unique status of the nature of men and angels is a given in the Tradition. *ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 149. ¹⁰³Ibid., p. 150.

But Lubac also thinks this is St. Thomas' position. In defence of this he cites *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, (III).6.4.5, which explicitly considers desire arising from the desire to know; *De Malo*, 5.1.resp, which is concerned with the loss of original justice resulting in original sin no longer disposing Man to receive those graces necessary to see God; a latin summary of *Scriptum super Sententiis*, p. 4.49 attributed to the text itself¹⁰⁴—a text which is concerned to establish that the ultimate end of man is the vision of God—elided (with ellipsis) with *Contra Gentiles*, 3.53 which is concerned with the need for divine help in reaching this end; the text already cited from *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, and *Summa Theologica*, III.9.2.3, which is concerned with claiming that the vision of the blessed is properly a vision by *elevated nature*, and thus properly the vision of Christ in his humanity, despite his possession of the much higher knowledge of God He has in His divinity.¹⁰⁵ None of Lubac's texts is in fact arguing his claim: all are compatible with it, but all are equally compatible with Feingold's neo-thomistic claim that we have a 'naturally elicited desire' distinct from our connatural desire. But Lubac has given himself away: in addition to Ricouer he has cited Merleau-Ponty to disagree with him over Gabriel Marcel; and among the theologians Guardini comes in to witness to the unique *existential* status of Man.¹⁰⁶

Thus there are two claims in Lubac's 'Christian paradox': one, that man is called to an end above him which *will be made truly his* by God, a claim which Lubac shares with the entire Tradition, and the other, that this calling is proximate and existentially constitutive to him independent of any activity of the intellect, a claim on which Thomas is largely silent and which would probably have been unintelligible to him, and which Lubac's critics, down to Feingold, have mistaken for the claim that this calling is natural in exactly the same way any other natural property is his. But that this calling is quite unique even among existential data Lubac has been quite explicit.

Called nature at work

So far we have read *Le mystère du surnaturel* extremely closely, an attention justified by the role Lubac's claims have played and play in the controversies we are looking at. We have found two claims: a universal calling of Man to God, such that if Man does *not* reach this end he will be damned, and if he *does* he will be blessed, and yet an end he cannot reach by himself; and the claim that this calling is existentially proximate. It is this second claim (which, conflated with the first, forms the 'natural supernatural desire' of which Lubac's critics can make neither head nor tail) which is actually operative in Lubac's theology. For Lubac had a purpose: this existentially proximate desire which is, if not our *birthright*, at any rate the gift we are given, is something we can hardly believe is there. It is unknown outside Christianity: neither Classical thought,¹⁰⁷ nor Eastern mysticism,¹⁰⁸ nor the Averroists,¹⁰⁹ nor marxism,¹¹⁰ nor modern metaphysics¹¹¹ can make any sense of this call *beyond* one's origin. If the soul is eternal it must have always been; if it is called to God it must be because it had some spark of the divine already within it; or else it is only earth-bound.¹¹² The sheer historicity of our nature—that God 'as he has willed to give himself, could have willed not so to do; as he has willed to speak, could have willed to keep silent', of the Good News which should be wrapped up with a particular announcement 'in night, at Bethlehem'¹¹³—this is scandalising. So much so, that though echos of the truth are to be found everywhere,¹¹⁴ it is only because 'to us, the marvel has been *told*'¹¹⁵ that we

¹⁰⁴And cited imprecisely. ¹⁰⁵De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 152–3. ¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 156–7. ¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 157–8. ¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 158–9. ¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 159–60. ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 160.

¹¹²Ibid., pp. 161–7. ¹¹³Ibid., p. 168. ¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 168–72. ¹¹⁵Ibid., 172, my italics.

need not (with so many theologians today: here Lubac cites predominantly Cajetan) 'adopt as a principle the idea St. Thomas Aquinas stated as objection to be refuted': that nature only drives us towards that which is within its grasp.¹¹⁶

In other words, Lubac thinks this claim—the proximate call to something unimaginably higher, founded not on anything divine in us but on the free gift of God—is apologetic. Hence his extreme annoyance at what he takes as its loss among the moderns. Thus Lubac tells an ironic narrative, beginning with Cajetan¹¹⁷ and ending with innumerable modern commentators. Lubac is magisterial: 'already, shortly after Cajetan, Denys the Carthusian—perhaps more personal and more modern than he is sometimes reputed to be...a little intoxicated (*grisé*: Lubac probably intends the intimation of the white Carthusian habit becoming grey) by his neoplatonic reading (supplied to him in abundance by his friend Nicholas of Cusa), derived from it the idea...'¹¹⁸ 'Saurez did not merely content himself with exposing the doctrine of Cajetan and the "moderniores": contrary to Dominic Soto and François Tolet, he approved of it...'¹¹⁹ The direction of the narrative has already been established, and Lubac can deal in summary fashion (complete with large lists of passages to consult) with a narrative of decline in which the eccentric Soto and Tolet are striking exceptions, before turning with irony on his less brilliant opponents:

C'est encore le même principe que le P. Joseph de Tonquédec invoque pour l'opposer à la doctrine blondélienne, dans ses *Deux études sur « la Pensée »* (1926). Pour lui, « un désir de nature est, par essence, proportionné à la nature »; il ne peut « se porter vers ce qui se trouve en dehors des possibilités, des capacités de la nature »; en effet, « la nature ne saurait aspirer à ce qui briserait ses limites, abolirait ses caractères propres, et par conséquent la détruirait ». Le P. de Tonquédec estime que c'est là une évidence. Cependant, comme il veut être l'interprète non seulement de l'évidence mais aussi bien de saint Thomas, il apporte en preuve un texte du *De Malo*... Mais en réalité, un tel texte prouverait trop s'il prouvait ici quelque chose : en fait, il ne traite pas de notre sujet.¹²⁰

"It is rare," Anatole France once said, "that a master belongs as firmly as his disciples to the school he founded".¹²¹ Lubac regard as a complete invention the "thomistic" principle that a nature is defined as bounded by that which is 'connatural' with it; once absent this and, indeed, his opponents' (generally second-rate) arguments fall to the ground. Yet he is convinced that, since this existentially proximate desire is a truth of the Faith, it is these opponents who are falsifying the traditional notion of 'nature'. That they are doing so by an appeal to common sense is doubly vexing: St. Thomas, for all his appearance of 'saving the Philosopher' works from revelation (and from the reflection of Augustine);¹²² Soto, Scotus (!), Gregory of Valencia, these, against Cajetan's *Corruptorium sancti Thomæ*¹²³ speak for the truly Christian approach to mystery.

Que la nature humaine... ne puisse désirer d'un vrai désir, d'un désir véritablement ontologique, que la fin qu'elle est capable de se donner elle-même ou d'exiger de forces correspondantes : ce principe, invoqué

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 176. ¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 179. ¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 183. ¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 187.

¹²⁰De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, p.190. Tonquédec was the author of a number of polemical anti-Blondellian works remarkable both for their intensity and for their complete incomprehension of Blondel's position, who is stubbornly reduced to neo-scholastic absurdities which are laboriously pointed out.

¹²¹De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 192. ¹²²Ibid., pp. 193–5. ¹²³Ibid., p. 198; the phrase is Gilson's.

par tant de scolastiques modernes à la manière d'un principe premier, n'est, redisons-le avec le R. P. Guy de Broglie, qu'une « fausse évidence ». « Verité de simple bon sens et de tout repos » disait le P. Pedro Descoqs, croyant ainsi l'autoriser. C'est bien cela, en effet : fruit de cette sorte de bon sens endormi qui ferme l'accès à toute vérité. De ce « bon sens » superficiel qui refuse tout paradoxe en le traitant d' « incohérence » et d' « abus de mots ». De ce « bon sens » vulgaire, qui ne cesse d'édulcorer le christianisme...¹²⁴

Instead, we should *start* with the paradox, and bring everything into line from there.¹²⁵

This proceeding is not merely incidental. 'This mystery of the supernatural... appears a little as though it were the form in whose interior all the other mysteries of the faith would come to be written'.¹²⁶ Other *mysteries*: whilst, Lubac admits, there is progress in theology and new concepts are forged to express the hitherto inexpressible, 'these explanations... are insufficient to give account' of the deepest mysteries, 'at any rate, to give account of them *completely*' and we have recourse to mystery:¹²⁷

La Vérité reçue de Lui sur Lui *doit* échapper à nos prises, en vertu même de son intelligibilité supérieure : *intellecta*, elle ne peut être *comprehensa*. Distinction élémentaire, sur laquelle un Descartes s'entend avec saint Augustin comme avec les Scolastiques.¹²⁸

Intellecta non comprehensa. Lubac's target, once again, is not a particular doctrine concerning an elicited desire for God (which, after all, is itself perfectly capable of appearing mysterious, and which in the last analysis is held only because the Faith teaches it), but an intentional *stance*: the 'comprehensive' vision blind to being changed. Indeed, Lubac insists that we *can* reach a synthesis,¹²⁹ providing we are prepared properly to confront the mystery. Is this not what the Pope himself calls for in his latest encyclical?¹³⁰ The example—with its explicit mention of resolving problems 'in the living reality' of the Church', has not weathered well, and helps to associate Lubac with 'vitalism' or 'immanentism' in the heresiological vocabulary of contemporary Thomism. But Lubac is not speaking here of experiential knowledge of the desire for God, but of antinomies in general: the paradoxes of the faith, when they come to a head (as they did in questions of schismatic baptism, or the readmission of apostates, or the validity of Sacraments offered by immoral ministers) are in fact resolved historically.¹³¹

Likewise, Lubac is not claiming that we start with our experience of desire and build from there. That grace is gift and that we are called to see God are truths of the faith; but our reflection 'is not the construction of concepts by which we try to make

¹²⁴De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 201–2. ¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 208. ¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹²⁷Henri de Lubac, 'Le problème du développement du dogme', *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948), pp. 130–60, Lubac, like Chenu, Congar and indeed Labourdette (142) refused to reduce development to logical deduction. Certainly we can *see* (144) how e.g. the Immaculate Conception flows from the gospels, but this vision is not logical certainty: 'new eyes open on a new world' (157, deliberately invoking Rousselot). Before she reasons about doctrines the Church has a *supernatural* apperception (149). This illumination opens our eyes: it doesn't reveal *new* material (150). But the problem of dogmata "present but invisible" remains; the best we can ultimately do is to admit that the case of revelation is *sui generis* (156) and exists, not to satisfy our curiosity, but to 'call' us to heaven. (157).

¹²⁸De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 213. ¹²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 216. ¹³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹³¹Saying this, of course, presupposes that such resolutions are ultimately the work of the Spirit in the Church, and not blind historical chance or scheming.

our paradoxes less striking, but the cashing out of them (*l'expérience que nous en faisons*) across all our personal and collective history'.¹³² The citation, once again, is Merleau-Ponty. Thus Lubac is really offering two arguments against the 'system building' of the 'pure nature' theologians: *methodologically*, this is not how one goes about things: this building of speculative castles in the air only solves problems by obscuring them; and *internally* 'pure nature' solves nothing, since in *this* order—absent the fall—God remains obliged to us.¹³³ Systematisation fails to be convincing precisely because Lubac has adopted the standpoint of Merleau-Ponty (and, for all their differences, Maréchal and Gilson and Blondel, not to mention Josef Pieper), a standpoint from which problems are not solved by a process of *transferring* perceptions into concepts (*préciser un problème en le posant conceptuellement*) and *then* resolving on the level of the concepts, but rather by seeking to lead the intellect to an *apperception* of the world from which the resolution can be (however dimly) grasped. But this is simply to observe that in philosophy Lubac is thoroughly modern.

This is far more important for Lubac than any detail of his opponents' system which he thinks does not work. He readily observes that 'there are in St Thomas two series of texts, but when they seem to contradict each other in vocabulary, they are speaking of two different orders: the first, for example, the order of necessary consequences, the second of free will, or again one series speaks of an appetite of nature, the other of an act of elicited desire, etc'¹³⁴ But this latter is precisely Feingold's solution! Once again Lubac skates rapidly over his texts, as he has already skated rapidly over the notion of velleity—simply because he equates it with impossibility.¹³⁵ One simply must stop turning the incomparable actions of God into any kind of analogous human act: just as the analogy of a gift I could really not give is really a reduction of God's freedom to our liberty, so the interposing of a conceptual or real temporal sequence—so that God creates and *then* calls misses the point: 'the offer of grace expresses, in the domain of moral freedom, the same act of divine provenance which the call to the supernatural expresses in the ontological domain'.¹³⁶ Once again, Lubac's challenge is on the level of the whole philosophy, not any one claim.

Lubac's Pure Nature Argument

Having thus cleared the ground, Lubac can finally ask what speculative fruit a consideration of pure nature might actually bring. He is careful to situate himself in a long line of chiefly modern thinkers (and as careful to distinguish himself: we will come to *Ressourcement* and Blondel in chapter 3 on page 73, but for now is worth observing that Lubac explicitly endorses Bouillard's claims about the difference between Blondel's 'transnatural' and the Christian supernatural¹³⁷). All, despite their differences, agree with the ancients about one thing: the *inquiétude* of man 'until he rest in God'; indeed, all call themselves Thomists on precisely this point: yet all disagree! Having thus cleared the ground for yet another theory (and rehearsed his cherished attack on 'modern consensus'), Lubac is able to posit (though he adds, which is by now *de rigueur*, that he *need* not) a purely natural creation. In this state, taking a line from a rather general claim in Pseudo-Dionysius, man would be 'without principle and without destiny (*fin*). Man would be unknown to himself; what is more, he would be ignorant of his own ignorance, ignorant because God had not revealed it to him. Clearly that is: neither revealed himself explicitly (and thus revealed the desire), nor *goaded* man

¹³²De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 221. ¹³³*Ibid.*, pp. 222–3. ¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 226. ¹³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 224–5. ¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 227. ¹³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 233–4.

with it, made him unquiet. Since Lubac also thinks that Man's obscurity to himself is part of his bearing the image of God¹³⁸ there might be a problem here: such a being might not be as clearly in the image of God as we are. But Lubac did not intend to go here; already he has abandoned speaking of *natura pura* with the observation that we are not in this boat, and thus *we* are a mystery to ourselves precisely because we are called to God, who is mystery and has summoned us to that mystery. This mysterious summoning is existentially discoverable; it is sensible in act (albeit purely negatively), but it is not introspectable. It is not 'part' of me; rather it is a summons to *all* of me. Thus if *natura pura* is to be a foil for anything it is a foil for mystery: without desire things might well be a lot simpler—but we are not there. Rather we are in this strange halfway house, capable of recognising *that* we desire (or rather: are desiring), but incapable, without revelation, of knowing *what* we desire. Returning to the passage with which this chapter opened, we can now see that Lubac is not merely rhapsodising:

Que de doctrines humaines, que de faits humains il serait aisé d'évoquer, tout au long de l'histoire humaine, témoignant en l'homme, plus ou moins obscurément, de l'universel désir de Dieu! Mais, en lui-même, ce désir n'en demeure pas moins caché « dans les profondeurs ontologiques », et seule la révélation chrétienne permettra d'en interpréter les signes, comme de l'interpréter lui-même correctement.¹³⁹

At this point the Lubac of *Paradoxes*, of *Sur les chemins de Dieu* and the rapturous passages of *Catholicisme*, takes over. Finally he has cleared away all the obstacles and he can claim both 'all desire God' and 'none can know it in themselves'; the Gospel is good news, but it is a scandal; the faith is easy, but it is hard—this is the terrain on which Lubac is really at home, and which he considers his work finally to have opened to him:

Disons-le donc une fois de plus en terminant : Dieu aurait pu se refuser à sa créature, tout comme Il a pu et voulu se donner. La gratuité de l'ordre surnaturel est particulière et totale. Elle l'est en elle-même. Elle l'est pour chacun de nous. Elle l'est par rapport à ce qui pour nous, temporellement ou logiquement, le précède. Bien plus — et c'est ce que certaines explications que nous avons discutées nous ont paru ne pas assez laisser voir — cette gratuité est toujours intacte. Elle le demeure en toute hypothèse. Elle est toujours nouvelle. Elle le demeure à toutes les étapes de la préparation du Don, à toutes les étapes du Don lui-même... Comme le Don surnaturel n'est jamais en nous naturalisable, jamais la béatitude surnaturelle ne peut devenir pour nous, quelle que soit notre situation réelle ou simplement concevable, un terme « nécessaire et exigible ». Mais aussi, comme l'écrivait naguère le R. P. L. Malevez... « l'étape de la nature pure est infailliblement dépassé par la plénitude de l'Amour créateur »...

La réponse est inscrite dans la nature de notre intelligence, qui ne peut recevoir la Révélation divine sans qu'aussitôt surgissent en elle mille questions, qui s'engendrent les unes les autres. Elle ne peut faire autrement que de s'efforcer d'y répondre. Mais dans ses explications, toujours tâtonnantes, si loin qu'elle paraisse aller, elle sait qu'elle ne s'avance

¹³⁸De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 260. ¹³⁹Ibid., p. 271.

jamais à la rencontre de terres inconnues... « Béni soit le Dieu et Père de
notre Seigneur Jésus Christ, qui... nous a élus en Lui... »¹⁴⁰

And this, Lubac clearly thinks, is *in principle* an election of all.

Nature and Grace in the Nature-Grace Debate

The immediate debate

It would be singularly unenlightening to pursue the debate which irrupted on the publication of *Surnaturel*. None of Lubac's critics noticed his real purpose; most of them assumed he was either in bad faith or confused. *Humani Generis*—much as Lubac liked to claim himself untouched by it—was clearly aimed at what was *taken* to be his position,¹⁴¹ and Lubac was immediately demoted to a realm of quasi obscurity: in our contemporary *patois*, he was cancelled. That he insisted (quite reasonably) that his argument could be squared with the encyclical, and he had said as much before it was published availed nothing. Of this history it is perhaps better to say as little as possible.¹⁴²

The contemporary debate: Milbank and Hütter

Post concilium things inverted; thus they remained until comparatively recently. That there was a two-storey model of Nature and Grace invented by later Scholastics, and that Lubac had successfully demolished it, entered theological historiography just about when (for reasons this thesis will ultimately address) the parameters of Catholic Theology exploded. The *Blessed Rage for Order* of the older Scholastics had

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 289–91.

¹⁴¹Such, in any case, was Lubac's opinion: he thought someone had revised the text to neuter his condemnation, substituting a phrase he had in fact repeatedly asserted. (Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, Œuvres Complètes 33, paris: cerf, 2006, p. 72) Lubac was quite correct in claiming he avoided condemnation—and, *pace* Milbank, had arrived at this position *before* the encyclical. (Jacob W. Wood, 'Henri de Lubac, *Humani Generis*, and the Natural Desire for a Supernatural End', *Nova et vetera* 15.4 [2017], pp. 1209–1241, 1229ff; substantially repeated in Jacob W. Wood, *To stir a restless heart, Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace and the Desire for God*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2019, 415ff) On the other hand there can be little doubt that his mature position was equally unacceptable at least to the drafters (and probably unintelligible to the pope).

The encyclical caused a great deal of controversy. Anticipated for several months, it was surprisingly mild, a fact one camp underlined and the other endeavoured to minimise, (Rég. Garrigou-Lagrange, 'La structure de l'Encyclique "Humani generis"', *Angelicum* 28.1 [1951], pp. 3–17) whilst the secular press contented itself with the kind of misunderstandings which excersised Dupanloup after *lamentabili*. (C. Calvetti, 'Dai commenti alla enciclica « Humani Generis »', *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 43.1 [1951], pp. 85–90) The *Nouvelle revue théologique* published the text with an introduction 'légèrement minimisante, mais franche et loyale' followed, eventually, by four exegetical articles. But this irenic approach was opposed by Pierre Charles—largely responsible for the publication of the article *Surnaturel* and for the blocking of the article *Le Mystère du surnaturel*—who wanted to name names, and resigned from the editorial board when the General (once again the matter immediately became political) directed a conciliatory tone. (Guillaume Cuchet, 'L'encyclique Humani generis, la Nouvelle revue théologique et la querelle des deux commentaires', *Nouvelle revue théologique* 142.3 [2020], p. 361)

The same Charles, Lubac notes, wrote (to a friend at the Jesuit house at Enghien) in 1951 'on me vexe en m'attribuant même une paternité éloignée'—which Lubac clearly took as a reference to its *content*. The preceding clause admits another explanation: 'si je l'avais rédigée, elle serait en meilleur latin'. (de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, p. 301) Simple academic condescension, or equivocation allowing Charles to disguise his change in sympathies whilst preserving friendship?

¹⁴²Lubac gives a restrained account of those years and the role his thesis on the natural desire played in them in *ibid.*, 68ff.

given way to necessary pluralism, driven by forces internal to scholasticism itself;¹⁴³ Theology was variously supposed to be entering a “pluralistic”, “post-modern”, or “post-scholastic” era. Lubac’s demolition of the old order featured—and features—as large in this narrative as engagement with his texts was small; that a few Dominicans likely disagreed was a party question.

What reignited the debate—this time with the heat mostly on the other side—was Feingold’s Roman doctoral thesis, which maintained that Lubac was wrong and the commentators right. The general response ‘was one of considerable irritation.’¹⁴⁴ We are interested in this debate for two reasons: *all parties adopt a view of Tradition which Lubac (and I) reject, and (courteously) defeating Lubac is a set-piece battle in the resurgent Thomism which is one of the few encouraging signs in contemporary theology (albeit one from which I differ on the question of intentional Tradition).* But whereas Lubac’s new opponents differ methodologically, his new supporters differ substantially. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Milbank’s defence of Lubac against Feingold.

This book—*The Suspended Middle*—certainly caused “considerable irritation” among Thomists. Hütter (who refers to it consistently as an ‘opuscule’) is typical:

Milbank characterizes Feingold’s work as “arch-reactionary”, “written to reinstate a Garrigou-Lagragne type position”, and his exegetical method as “much like that of the proof-texting of a Protestant fundamentalist”, hence representing the “die-hard”, “paelaeolithic” neo-Thomism. Moreover, in a less than subtle form of invective, Milbank denies his interlocutor the honor of being named correctly by consistently misnaming him throughout as “Feinberg.” The readers of Milbank’s treatise...are thus invited to entertain the suspicion of some sinister right-wing ecclesiastical conspiracy.¹⁴⁵

Odium theologicum; but Hütter’s anger is predicated on the (correct) diagnosis that Milbank’s work is political, and a political project antithetical to what Hütter takes as the practice of traditional theology: to reason as Milbank does is to cease to be Catholic. (To reason, then, as Feingold is to be authentically Catholic.)

According to Milbank, Lubac was squarely implicated by *Humani Generis*: he thought it impossible that an intellectual creature be created without it being called to the beatific vision. Milbank’s immediate evidence for this hardly proves what he thinks it does: Lubac wrote to Blondel ‘how can a conscious spirit be anything other than an absolute desire for God?’¹⁴⁶ which is, after all, a question, but one to which the answer of *Le mystère du surnaturel* is emphatic: God *could* have not called me, but I should be radically different; yet God would not thereby have wronged me. Lubac’s target is precisely to show how these two are compatible: that the *paradigmatic* form of spirit is to be called *and yet God would not wrong it by not calling it*. This is indeed a

¹⁴³David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order, The new pluralism in theology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; Gerald A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism, The internal evolution of Thomism*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1989.

¹⁴⁴Reinhard Hütter, ‘Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God, a relecture of *summa contra gentiles* III c.25 après Henri de Lubac’, *The Thomist* 73 (2009), p. 526.

¹⁴⁵Reinhard Hütter, ‘*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*, Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold’s and John Milbank’s Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God’, *Nova et Vetera* 5.1 (2007), pp. 81–132, p. 88. The section is headed ‘...or why Feingold is not Feinberg...’.

¹⁴⁶John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle, Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, p. xi.

paradoxical (and I think ultimately untenable) position, but it is Lubac's.

Lubac's protests are Milbank urges, simple deceit. After *Humani Generis* Lubac was a 'stuttering, perhaps traumatized theologian'¹⁴⁷ unable to reconcile his instinctive loyalty to the papacy with his intuitive certainty of this truth: to be an intellectual spirit is to be called to God, and thither tend all.¹⁴⁸

Milbank grounds his claim in the overall thrust of Lubac's position. Lubac sees the origin of speculations on *natura pura* in 'a logic of self-regulation and self-sufficiency'¹⁴⁹ which, in the long run, leads to political individualism and moral ruin; he refused to abandon Thomas not merely because he was a useful authority but because St. Thomas refused to leave any corner of existence unscrutinised by the light of the faith, indeed

For just this reason, de Lubac ceaselessly favored 'science' and theological dialogue with science. This is in part why he liked Origen: he admired his literal concern with place, time, season, and measurement. This is also why he later celebrated Cusa's and Bérulle's attempt spiritually to respond to the new heliocentric cosmology; it is finally why he spent so much time reflecting, alongside Teilhard, on the import of evolutionary theory.¹⁵⁰

In this Milbank is extremely perceptive: most commentators simply ignore Lubac's Teilhardianism.¹⁵¹ The faith is paradoxical: without paradox (Milbank seems to mean: without the mystical) belief is impossible.¹⁵² But from this Milbank makes a strange deduction: other than in the form condemned in *Humani Generis* Lubac's claim is obscure. Much is made of the fact that in *Surnaturel* Lubac had spoken of a kind of forestaste in the desire itself, which in the later book he explicitly rejects. In rejecting this, 'Lubac's apparent concessions to the Church hierarchy' 'shift him more to a Scotist (and even latently Jansenist) exposition of his theory — which makes the natural desire for the supernatural not any longer participatory, but only vaguely aspirational.' Whence the question: 'but is de Lubac consistent? Or does he even really mean this?'¹⁵³ Milbank notes that Lubac does not in fact seem to think the desire so very impotent. But rather than question his reading of *Le mystère du surnaturel*, he simply assumes that Lubac is really covering himself.¹⁵⁴ This is a decidedly curious reading:

if this desire is already grace then there is nothing in human nature of itself—prior to all specific culture and history, even if one allows that this human nature is a cultural nature—which urges towards the beatific vision. Then one is back with extrinsicism.¹⁵⁵

Milbank presents this as a reading of Lubac's argument, but Lubac's reasoning is the precise inverse: what makes current theology "extrinsicist" is a defective account of *grace*. To insist that God is *interior intimo meo* is exactly to insist that *grace* is natural to us (that is: that it does not do violence to our nature). That Lubac thinks the natural desire for God is *not* a strict instance of *grace* (albeit God's interaction with it is) is predicated on a claim about the nature of rational spirit (which Lubac thinks can be open to horizons of whose nature it is unaware) in view of which an "elicited" desire barely looks like a desire at all. Likewise, his rejection of *Rahner's potentia obedientialis*

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 8. ¹⁴⁸Milbank's judgement of Lubac's later output is not defended.

¹⁴⁹Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, p. 22. ¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 24. ¹⁵¹I return to this on page 166.

¹⁵²Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, 28 n. 22. ¹⁵³Ibid., p. 42. ¹⁵⁴Ibid., 43ff. ¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 44.

is not a rejection of a “middle term” (between God’s call and our *élan simpliciter*—Lubac *does* think the soul has an obediential potency—but a rejection of the idea that a potency can, by being ‘specific’, bring along its own teleology.

Likewise Milbank claims too much when he takes Lubac’s admission of a counterfactually possible state of pure nature—which Lubac does indeed say would be so radically different from that which we know that it would not have our ‘concrete’ nature—to entail an absence of *culture* in such a world!¹⁵⁶

Milbank discerns a change in direction between *Surnaturel* and the later works. These are not, he tells us, any kind of reactionary conservatism (Lubac apparently attributing post-conciliar woes to ‘an implicit unacknowledged collusion between Rahnerian liberals and Levebrite reactionaries’¹⁵⁷). Indeed the *new* reactionaries like Feingold are *actually* liberals like Rahner (since a liberal is someone who tries to preserve a nature free from grace, and thereby, presumably, a secular realm—although Milbank does not trouble to spell this out). His evidence is a posthumously published chapter on tripartite (body-soul-spirit) anthropology, in which Lubac draws on some of the mystical ideas (which receive their clearest expression in Eckhart) on a possession of God by being Spirit, and *Pic de la Mirandole*. Milbank’s reading of this latter (very interesting) work is again peculiar:

Here the inward mystical tension of the *capax Dei* is shown (following the Fathers) also to be an external cosmic and cultural tension. As in itself ‘nothing’, the entire Creation aspires to return to God and to acknowledge God and can only fully do so in Man the Microcosm. In apparently endorsing this thematic (as he did also in the case of Teilhard de Chardin’s theories), de Lubac seems to say (despite occasional denials) that the cosmos is unimaginable without Humanity, which holds all of Creation together. In addition, he appears to say the Creation *as such* involves grace, since it is, in the first place, the entire *cosmos* that has a natural desire for God, while spiritual existence, especially human existence, is the *upshot* of this circumstance.¹⁵⁸

On the one hand Milbank is once again quite right to note (what most readers of Lubac ignore) this cosmological claim. On the other hand, he is faithful neither to Lubac nor to himself in failing to distinguish between the general principle of *exitus-reditus*, and the special case of that principle in the intellectual nature of Man which Lubac calls the natural desire. To speak of *grace* being essential to creation merely because God is its teleology is to confuse grace with God’s action *simpliciter* (and also to contradict what Milbank had earlier urged about the desire *not* being grace!). The internal contradiction is mostly verbal—Milbank goes on to clarify that all he means to claim is that ‘deification is not there because of creation, but rather creation is there because of deification’¹⁵⁹—but the confusion of grace with divine action is not. Milbank’s thesis is not so much wrong as too mystical. It makes no effort to distinguish the intentional standpoint of the theologian and the mystic; and whilst Lubac deplores the separation of theology and spirituality, he does not confuse the two.

The same thing can be said of the rest of the argument. Milbank’s contrast between Lubac and Balthasar is somewhat parenthetical and need not concern us here; his discussion of “Thomist criticism” is (*pace* the insulting terms) quite interesting;¹⁶⁰ his

¹⁵⁶Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, pp. 46–7. ¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 54. The claim—if one takes ‘Levebrite’ to refer to Lefebvre—is defensible. ¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 58. ¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁶⁰Milbank holds that *convenientia* is a far stronger notion than the neo-scholastics allow, and thus

contrast between Scotus and Aquinas and observations on the changing meaning of *influentia* are extremely useful.¹⁶¹ But his chief argument returns rather abruptly at the end. After a simply bizarre extension of the “nuptial” analogy, we are told that Lubac in fact failed to realise that Pius XII was wrong because the Church has a male priesthood¹⁶² and his belonging to a ‘particular generation’ ‘did not fully prepare him to deal with a new probing of the genuinely (as opposed to spuriously) problematic dimensions of patriarchal authority.’¹⁶³ Had he done so, he would have landed in...what? Milbank does not say: his text closes abruptly with the observation—

Never specifically consented to by de Lubac, but always exerting its own original lure, was Origen’s vision of *apokatastasis*: the universal Christological salvation of spirits and through this, the eternal re-establishment of all things. *C’est du réel précis.*¹⁶⁴

Is this supposed to be Lubac’s position? Or its logical extension? Should we be originists, or merely something like it? Does this *apokatasasis* entail universalism, or is it merely a mystical claim that all *shall* be well (in some manner as yet unseen)?

All this Hütter saw and rejected.¹⁶⁵ But Hütter is not interested in saving Lubac, but in saving Feingold and St. Thomas. That Milbank’s reading of Aquinas is indefensible is beyond doubt (one detects a note of irony when Hütter laboriously explains that it is unlikely St. Thomas believed in *apokatastasis*¹⁶⁶). But Milbank’s reading of Lubac is equally indefensible for exactly the same fundamental reason: neither his Aquinas nor his Lubac are subjected intentionally to the Tradition.

The same failure to appreciate *Ressourcement* applies to the entire movement of which Hütter is only one representative. One immediately objects that there is no reason to expect a Thomistic revival to do justice to a completely different theological school. *Ressourcement Thomism* is a title *non sans malice*, but the noun is adjectival: a Thomist *Ressourcement* (or indeed a Thomist resurgence¹⁶⁷) is a welcome development, but it has nothing to do with *Ressourcement*. Indeed; but this does not prevent Lubac’s trenchant criticisms of the Thomism of his day obtaining, at least in a muted sense, of a similar movement. The evidence is not hard to find: to take just one example of the kind of mentality Lubac attacked, since Transubstantiation is *de fide*; expressed in Aristotelian vocabulary and ‘Aristotle has once and for all established this science of being’, Aristotelianism (at least in its Thomistic form) is *de fide*.¹⁶⁸ Much more could be said about this movement. It sets out, admirably, to recover the unity of Catholic theology amid the ruins of pluralism; it is no brash re-assertion of neo-thomistic hegemony, but a serious (and frequently successful) effort to absorb all that is true into an archetypically Christian language. And yet in one important respect it is lacking: reflection happens entirely within this framework, as a matter of proper reasoning from properly cited authorities. The *concerns* of these authorities are assumed to be perfectly assimilable to the reasoning in question. If the Fathers (or even St. Thomas)

they do not wriggle out of a truly *natural* desire merely by limiting Thomas’ claims to arguments from *convenientia* (as Feingold does).

¹⁶¹Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, p. 95. ¹⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 109. ¹⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 113. ¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁶⁵In short, de Lubac is assigned the role of forerunner to the self-proclaimed movement of Radical Orthodoxy and its continuation of “Origen’s vision of *apokatastasis*” Hütter, ‘*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*’, p. 90.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 117. ¹⁶⁷William L. Portier, ‘Thomist Resurgence’, *Communio* 35.3 (2008), pp. 494–504.

¹⁶⁸Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering, eds., *Ressourcement Thomism, Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010, p. 78.

sometimes spoke rather more as though they were praying, this is simply style. If *Ressourcement* wishes to sound the same way this is simply *bad* style, obscuring as much as it reveals.¹⁶⁹

In other words, it is not just in apologetics that one turns to essentially simple quasi-substances. The hard distinction between spirituality and theology which Lubac attacked is nowhere more in evidence than in the framework *Ressourcement* Thomism everywhere adopts. A *ressourcement* in St. Thomas (or even just a textual retrieval) is a thoroughly good thing, but without a renewed intentional stance *vis-à-vis* the whole Tradition it is still that gradual substitution of one certainty for another, retreating scientifically from the mystery, which Lubac denounced. It has not *remembered* the Tradition.¹⁷⁰

Thus although modern Thomism has cooled the fire of Lubac's polemic, his argument still stands. *A fortiori* his recent champions: entirely absent in Milbank's work is the note which we have seen is so *piquant* in Lubac of the Augustinian theologian, on his knees before the work begins. (This is a matter, not of piety, but of genre.) Entirely absent is Lubac's repeated *and yet*: such-and-such a notion is defensible (as we have seen, Lubac explicitly says that an hypothetical state of pure nature is defensible, reflection on a connatural end for such a nature is defensible, reflection on an elicited desire is defensible, and so on) *and yet* in this author *already* it has lost its traditional breadth, *already* it is become an independent question, *already* it is separated, vitiating, cut off, unfruitful. Lubac's target is a certain way of doing theology, which he thinks is untraditional, before it is any claims about that theology. Milbank here does theology in a thoroughly idiosyncratic way: substantively, neither papal encyclicals (which might be expected for a non-Catholic theologian) nor the western tradition of predestination are given any kind of weighting. But much more importantly, Milbank is *methodologically* askew. His is exactly the free-running speculation which Lubac attacked as separating theology and spirituality, albeit falling this time on the side of the spirituality. And in this respect Feingold, who shares Lubac's *substantive* concerns (and is thus closer to him than his erstwhile champion) is equally askew. Even where Feingold is right (and he seems to me to be at least defensible) Lubac would still charge him—and resurgent Thomism—with missing the point.

Criticism: Feingold on Nature and Grace

Feingold's *Natural Desire to see God* has successfully moved the debate back to shortly after Lubac started it, taking it off in a different direction with a courtesy almost entirely lacking in the immediate responses and exactly the same arguments. One does not publish a tome of 466 pages of neatly numbered arguments unless one intends thoroughly to resituate the debate and is unable to do so within the usual channels. Indeed, Feingold simply 'advances his inquiry and arguments as if none [of recent theological history] had ever happened.'¹⁷¹ He sets out to deal with two claims Lubac makes: that the pure-nature tradition began in a theological backwater and only replaced a traditional consensus after the Jansenist controversy, and that Thomas held that we had a 'natural desire for the supernatural'. In other words he

¹⁶⁹One might also note that when it comes to particular *Ressourcement* controversies the movement is frequently simply wrong, as is White when he reads Chenu's famous claim in about theology and spirituality as historicising 'the doctrinal content of faith itself.' Hütter and Levering, *Ressourcement Thomism*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁰Cf. Lewis Ayres, 'The Memory of Tradition, Postconciliar Renewal and One Recent Thomism', *The Thomist* 79.4 (2015), IV, VII, VIII.

¹⁷¹Hütter, '*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*', p. 91.

treats the question purely as an internal matter for Thomist commentary.

Feingold is thoroughly charitable: he bemoans the polemic which has taken over this question (whilst subtly excusing any of Lubac's excesses); praises Lubac as a writer, denies the centrality of the "natural desire for the supernatural" to his overall thought (thus preserving it from the coming onslaught) and agrees with Lubac's 'pastoral' insistence on the natural desire for God as a cure for the ills of secularism.¹⁷² The 'two-storey' model is indeed bad; but what has replaced it? Feingold is too polite to say what he clearly thinks (a one-storey model of naturalised grace).¹⁷³ But whereas Lubac saw a path from the natural to the supernatural, Feingold sees an *interface*: human nature contains (i) natural elements which grace can supernaturalise (*gratia supponit naturam*) and (ii) a receptive ability—the "specific obediential potency"—which allows God, so to speak, to re-work our nature from without whilst preserving its integrity. For Feingold desire for God is always natural, and desire for the beatific vision *becomes* natural along the course of a Christian life.

Thus, *prima facie* Feingold's position and Lubac's are not so very far from one another. Feingold at least acknowledges (what Lubac's contemporary critics stubbornly ignored) the pastoral importance of the question: 'contemporary man has lost the sense of the supernatural character of the Christian promise and vocation; this is the great pastoral problem that faces us today.'¹⁷⁴ At this point the similarity ends. Lubac's method was never scholastic, even when his sources were: he wove them together, frequently quoting several paragraphs before continuing in a voice which oscillated between theirs and his. Feingold abstracts, even when reading Lubac. Thus rather startlingly can he say 'Lubac does not directly explain why he maintains that the desire to see God "constitutes" man's nature, but his seems to be because he identifies the natural desire to see God with our supernatural finality itself, and he applies the principle that a nature is defined or constituted by its finality.'¹⁷⁵ Lubac, of course, takes his stand on very different premises: the *fecisti nos ad Te* is an existential observation, not a principle: the principle comes *from* the observation if it enters at all. Feingold's Lubac is a curious reconstruction, the more as Feingold precedes (correctly) to use the language of God's "call", without apparently seeing how such a call could hardly be other than constitutive. Feingold operates purely on the speculative plain; Lubac simply observes that, historically, the call of God and our response (or non-response) *is* what constitutes us (or if one prefers: our natures). Thus it is no surprise that Feingold will miss the main point of Lubac's argument. But Lubac did throw down the gauntlet to interpreters of St. Thomas, and it is only fair to hear them out when one such responds.

Feingold's overview is classical: there are two ends for Man, one connatural and one supernatural, although the connatural is closed to us now. 'Nevertheless, it is not idle or useless for theology to speak about a connatural end for man, for this notion of an end that corresponds to our nature *as such* is absolutely necessary to distinguish the natural and the supernatural orders, and to show the gratuitousness of our supernatural end.'¹⁷⁶ (Lubac rejected the notion of a "natural order" except by abstraction.) So far Lubac agrees. St. Thomas says that our *final* end is the beatific vision; and that we have a *natural* desire for this.¹⁷⁷ The question then, is: what kind of desire? Desires are either intellectual acts (in which case we speak of them being elicited by knowledge of a good) or innate inclinations (in which case we think

¹⁷²Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to see God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters*, Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010, pp. xxxiv–v.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, pp. xxxiv–v. ¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. xxxv. ¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 303. ¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 2. ¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 3.

of them as appetites).¹⁷⁸ This distinction, Feingold acknowledges, is nowhere to be found in St. Thomas, (!) but it is very useful, and besides ‘Thomas himself clearly distinguishes without using a fixed terminology.’¹⁷⁹ Since the rest of the work assumes the validity of this distinction—and Lubac had explicitly challenged the reading of categories into St. Thomas—this is a little hasty; but if we grant it we find a distinction between *naturally* elicited and *freely* elicited acts: the former being intuitive and the latter deliberative.¹⁸⁰ Now, “natural” elicited desires are not innate (because we have defined elicited desires as not innate). Thus a *natural* elicited desire—i.e. a desire which arises intuitively on the presentation of knowledge—can consist simply in an ability to recognise the attractiveness of a proposition *when that suggestion is once made*. Barely twenty pages into the book we are out of the woods: all that is left to do is to propose a ratcheting model where our desire is first elicited by the presence of God in the world, leading to a natural (but responsive) desire to know Him, disposing us to respond to His grace, whereupon an elevated form of the same elicited desire can complete the process.

All this Feingold sets out in an excellent and thorough exegesis which it would be pointless to follow more closely. The notion of connaturality and the correlative, but distinct, argument by *convenientia* are given proper place; a careful exegesis of Thomas’ texts sets the two issues side by side; Thomas’ use of the Aristotelian principle that an end should be within the grasp of the nature which seeks it, and his clear rejection of this in the case of the desire for God, are highlighted in exemplary fashion. The Scholastics are engaged with in a manner they would not find disorientating (unlike Lubac’s). Cajetan’s argument is carefully presented and the inadequacy of his method (assuming that Thomas speaks “as a theologian”) acknowledged—precisely because of the facticity of the natural desire for God independent of revelation.¹⁸¹ Feingold is very careful to show that Cajetan’s objections are valid all the same, and that he himself seems to have tried another argument (which is also Feingold’s). Lubac is a Scotist; with a Scotist notion of natural inclination, to him ‘Cajetan’s position (and that of subsequent Thomists for the following four centuries)’ must appear ‘radically deficient, implicitly denying that human nature as such is immeasurably perfected by grace and glory.’¹⁸² This, once again, is a perfectly valid argument, but it is not Lubac’s: Lubac thought he had evidence of that deficiency and then went looking for its cause, not the other way round.

Unfortunately Feingold cannot make head or tail of the distinction between the abstract and concrete nature. He tells us that Lubac did *not* hold that an uncalled humanity would have a different nature (it seems to me truer to say that Lubac holds such a humanity to have a different *concrete nature*) because ‘such a solution would render impossible de Lubac’s threefold distinction, seen above, between (1) the creation of a spiritual nature, (2) the imprinting of a supernatural finality, and (3) the offer of grace, such that the first does not imply the second, and the second does not imply the third.’¹⁸³ But Lubac invented this distinction as an example of how *not* to think of things!

C’est là un procédé de dissociation et d’étalement spontané, inévitable, conforme à la nature de l’intelligence humanise, laquelle est toujours, au moins en un premier temps, *intellectus dividens*. Impossible donc de m’en dispenser, si je veux me faire une idée correcte, quoique encore bien inadéquate, du double bienfait initial dont je suis redevable à Dieu.

¹⁷⁸Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, p. 11. ¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 16. ¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 17. ¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 182. ¹⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 337.

La première de ces deux formules : « Dieu m'a donné l'être », exprime à sa manière une totale continence, elle traduit l'écart radical qui existe entre mon essence et mon existence. Pareillement, la seconde formule...exprime à sa manière la totale gratuité du don surnaturel par rapport au don même de l'être...entre ma condition de créature et ma filiation divine.¹⁸⁴

To speak of what Lubac clearly considers as formal distinctions (and imperfect distinctions at that) *implying* each other is sheer nonsense. Feingold is entitled to reason constructively, but it does not follow that he can construct a serviceable form of Lubac's argument. Indeed he is once again completely backwards. To move from a phenomenology to a metaphysics is to make a decision invisible on the level of the phenomena. But Lubac's metaphysical decision is other: Lubac bakes the tension into his notion of "nature", rather than resolving it into *conflicting* ideas and then harmonising them by *distinguo*. (After all, the chapter in question begins with Lubac declaring that he is *not* going to talk *bon sens*.) The question is *why* Lubac would engage in such an endeavour (if not by simple muddle-headedness or a pernicious denial of objective truth, as his early opponents assumed).

A dozen such exegetical *loci* could be supplied. Feingold's Lubac has no more to do with Lubac's real concerns than Lubac's Cajetan has to do with his own. It does not follow from this that no harmonisation is possible. Indeed, Feingold's final position is not so very incompatible with Lubac, although the very compatibility underlines exactly how far they are from each other. 'Many twentieth- and twenty-first-century theologians,' Feingold tells us, 'have charged that the Thomistic consensus, by denying an innate natural inclination to the vision of God, has made our supernatural end *extrinsic* to human nature and thus not naturally magnetic for us.'¹⁸⁵ This is of course backwards: Lubac charges 'the Thomistic consensus' with treating grace as extrinsic and thereby deducing an extrinsic end, but never mind. Feingold agrees that it would be a problem if our final end were not 'naturally magnetic'. But this is not the case: the natural desire, intermediate between our innate desire for a connatural end and theological hope is exactly what effects the magnetism. Feingold distinguishes *four* 'states' of desire: (i) an innate inclination for our connatural end, (ii) a naturally elicited desire for the vision of God (the act corresponding to (i)) which is conditional without grace and Revelation, i.e. it might not happen, (iii) an elicited unconditional desire for same, as effected by grace and revelation, which is the act of hope, and (iv) the (supernatural) habitual inclination of this virtue (thus resulting from sanctifying grace). The purpose of these distinctions, however, is to analyse 'the *transformation and conversion* of this desire from the natural to the supernatural plane.'¹⁸⁶ Feingold is *not* constructing a two (or four) storey metaphysics, but an account of exactly that historical call of every particular individual with which Lubac is really concerned.¹⁸⁷ The difference is that he inserts baptism into it: whilst many collapse (i) and (ii),

this confusion could stem from a misinterpretation of personal experience in the theologian. If one is in a state of grace, one has an abiding absolute inclination for the vision of God (fourth kind of desire). Although this cannot be directly experienced, its effects and fruits can be

¹⁸⁴De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, p. 106. ¹⁸⁵Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, p. 431.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 433. My emphasis.

¹⁸⁷This final position is also Hütter's, who explicitly recognises its compatibility with Lubac's project even in rejecting (what he takes to be) Lubac's language: Hütter, 'Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God'.

experienced (such as the act of hope: the third kind of desire), and might lead one to think that this innate and absolute inclination is imprinted on human nature itself, rather than being an effect of sanctifying grace.¹⁸⁸

An absolute and abiding desire for the beatific vision is the birthright of those who have been constituted sons and daughters of God through the grace of Baptism, and thus can yearn after their celestial inheritance, and the face of their Father. How can one who has not yet become a son of God through justification have an innate appetite for an inheritance that does not yet belong to him?¹⁸⁹

Ultimately the question is apologetic. What desire *can* we preach to the unconverted? What about the action of grace *outside* baptism? (Is it not ridiculous to place the baptised pagan not only in a better *objective* position, but in a better *subjective responsiveness* before the preaching of the gospel?) Feingold's desire to preserve the sacramental order (and his insistence that heaven not be taken for granted¹⁹⁰) is salutary, and his complaint against the vilification of half a century of theology¹⁹¹ and concomitant plea that we harmonise the *whole tradition*¹⁹² is eminently reasonable (as is his concession that Lubac is right to insist on a Christian humanism¹⁹³). Yet with all this Feingold is unable, ultimately, to understand the *urgency* which drove Lubac's polemic. His synthesis is *trop peu existentiel*.¹⁹⁴

Style and Content

There is thus something else at work in Feingold's tome. Consider his treatment of de Soto, who had presented a Scotist reading of St. Thomas on this issue to resolve the problems in Cajetan's interpretation (and whom Lubac cites for his negative judgement on Cajetan in a passage endorsing in very general terms a Scotist reading¹⁹⁵):

Furthermore, de Soto argues that short of the vision of God, our will can never be completely satiated by any object whatsoever, as testified by experience as well as by the famous text of St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord..."[...] In support of this he adduces various Biblical texts and themes[...]

This Biblical and Augustinian argument of de Soto is beautiful and persuasive. However, the problem is that he fails to distinguish natural from supernatural desire. When the Psalms speak of a desire to see the face of God, it seems necessary to understand these texts in terms of a desire in the psalmist that is aroused by grace and supernatural faith, hope and charity[...]¹⁹⁶

Feingold's treatment of Soto's argument is careful: he presents it,¹⁹⁷ reduces it to five theses and responds to them in turn¹⁹⁸ and then presents three numbered conclusions.¹⁹⁹ Soto cannot be right in the end, since (i) his thesis was immediately challenged and gained no traction, (ii) if one is to be a Scotist one must be a *consistent* Scotist, and a consistent Scotist would hold that *knowledge of* the innate desire comes only from revelation, giving the position no apologetic power, (on this, as we have

¹⁸⁸Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, p. 434. ¹⁸⁹Ibid., p. 443. ¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 443. ¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 440.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 447. ¹⁹³Ibid., p. 443. ¹⁹⁴Cf. de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁵De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 196–7. ¹⁹⁶Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, p. 203.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 197–9. ¹⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 199–206. ¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 206.

seen, he completely ignores Lubac's own apologetic strategy) and (iii) Soto is mixing Thomas and Scotus eclectically, which is hardly faithful to either of them. Fortunately the problem which Soto set out to address—the insufficiency of Cajetan's proposal—has been solved, in the previous chapter, by observing that the desire can be elicited by the *natural knowledge* of causes, not the revealed knowledge of creation,²⁰⁰ and since we all have *that* it is perfectly universal.²⁰¹

And yet something is lacking. Need we understand the Psalmist's longing for God 'in terms of a desire...aroused by grace and supernatural faith, hope and charity?' Conversely, what theologian would object to the claim that the prayers of the Psalms, and indeed the whole Scriptures, spring from and seek the theological virtues? *And yet*—and this 'and yet' is one only of stylistic objection. To pass so quickly from the apparent 'beauty and persuasiveness' of an argument to a summary explanation of its conceptual confusion; to pass so quickly from St. Augustine or the Psalms (quoting only the barest minimum, for after all, who does not know that the citation finishes 'and restless are our hearts until they rest in Thee?'), to pass, without lingering a moment in the beauty and the persuasiveness, to the making of distinctions—these are not faults of reasoning, nor less of charity in reading (and Feingold is always charitable), but they are nonetheless a claim and a limit on the kind of theology being done, and a restriction of its domain.

What has become of the restless heart? For Mansini it had retired 'before a more mature Episcopal experience'; it was not a reality for all, but only for some. For Feingold it is simply *hors de sujet*: restless hearts belong in preaching, or in prayer, or in apologetics. In theology they are a distraction if they linger any longer than it takes to decompose them into propositions about desire, nature, and ultimate ends. The phenomenology of restlessness has nothing to contribute beyond its facticity.

Natural or Proximate?

If the arguments until this point have succeeded, we have established our thesis: Lubac is concerned to safeguard a particular kind of apologetic appeal on grounds he claims Thomistic, which Feingold is very happy to grant him on grounds *he* claims Thomistic, whilst rejecting those of Lubac as thomistically incoherent. Simultaneously, Lubac is objecting to the very *style of thought* by means of which Feingold is (and the Neo-Scholastics are) able to pose and resolve the question; a question which Lubac is as convinced must be resolved existentially as Feingold is convinced must be resolved theoretically. Meanwhile, Lubac charges the neo-scholastic tradition with all manner of ills: it has wrought 'separation', hastened secularisation and brought about the end of Christian society; and Thomism retorts in kind that Lubac (or at any rate his position) has denigrated the natural, destroyed the objectivity of philosophical reasoning and left us flapping around between unsatisfactory attempt to derive objectivity from 'analogical' reasoning and a complete intellectual free-for-all. Feingold, for his part, stays refreshingly above such a fray and points out that most likely source of modern atheism is to be found in modern and early-modern atheists like Hegel, though he does add non-thomistic Catholics like Descartes, and that in any case the solution is 'forming students in the authentic tradition of St.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 199.

²⁰¹As the page ranges illustrate, Feingold goes into considerably more depth with Soto's individual arguments, but the point we are making could be derived from any of them.

Thomas'.²⁰²

These two schools are in fact compatible, but only by adopting the intentional position Lubac seeks to restore. Before showing this it is worth clearing up one claim: although Lubac and Feingold (and their respective traditions) disagree over who can be said to have a desire distinctly *for the beatific vision*, neither disagree that there are in fact no men on earth created in a state of 'pure nature': all are in fact destined²⁰³ to the beatific vision, even, if one believes in it, any souls who should end up in Limbo.²⁰⁴

Feingold states repeatedly that ordination to the vision of God is the birthright, not of all people, but of the baptised. 'Thus the exclusion of an innate natural inclination for the beatific vision better manifests the necessity of the sacraments and the supernatural virtue of charity.'²⁰⁵ This against Lubac, who is taken (correctly) to hold that whatever *he* means by 'natural desire' is, if not the birthright, at least an objective fact about 'concrete human nature' and by extension every concrete human being. Feingold cannot make sense of what Lubac thinks this 'desire' is: as he observes, Lubac repeatedly states that it is not 'an ordination', but does not explain how this might be possible; and Feingold simply assumes he is being inconsistent.²⁰⁶ But he observes at least this much: one *effect* of the 'calling' is that it can be invoked, and invoked as constitutive. On Lubac's terms, I may say to anyone: *you are made for God*. Now, Feingold on his terms is also unclear: he does not state explicitly whether I may make this claim to anyone, and if so on which grounds, although he has several.²⁰⁷ But he certainly would have no objection if we were to gloss the claim so: *your ultimate happiness lies only in God, and this is why nothing else satisfies*, and this form is sufficient for my argument here.²⁰⁸

Likewise Feingold can make no sense of Lubac's claim to be dealing with a 'concrete, historical' nature, and for the good neo-scholastic reason that 'the very distinction between "abstract" and "concrete" nature is out of place and incompatible with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition' since 'it is the *individual* that is historical and concrete, not the nature or the essence itself'.²⁰⁹ About this Feingold is completely correct, and Lubac's use of 'concrete nature' in reading St. Thomas is indeed ut-

²⁰²Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, p. 393.

²⁰³Whether they reach this destiny or not.

²⁰⁴What is perhaps surprising is the absence of any real discussion of Limbo: absent Limbo and all either reach a supernatural end, or are damned. Despite occasional mentions in passing, Feingold is uninterested: *Natural Desire to see God* has only 11 entries under 'Limbo' in an index which runs to 21 pages, and he is chiefly concerned to argue that on Lubac's premises Limbo would involve suffering, which is clearly *not* Thomas' position (from which he draws the conclusion, not that there is a Limbo involving suffering, but that Lubac is wrong about St. Thomas). Lubac himself has (to my knowledge) nothing to say about Limbo. This absence on both sides is perhaps explained when we realise that Limbo (with or without suffering) is not an *ultimate* destiny for anyone in this order, but merely a contingent limitation which *fortasse materialiter eadem est cum beatitudine naturali* (Cathrein, 'De naturali hominis beatitudine', p. 399).

²⁰⁵Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, pp. 443, 442–3.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 295 *passim*.

²⁰⁷I may invoke it on the basis of (i) an elicited natural desire to know God following from the natural discovery of causes and the inference to the first cause, which Feingold presumably thinks exists under some psychological cloak or other in every rational psyche; or (ii) on the supposition that the person in question has experienced grace, since Feingold does not (of course) think that merely because grace is *generally* given through the sacraments it is *exclusively* so given, or again (iii) on the basis of the specific obediential potency, which whilst it does not *order*, is capable of *responding*—to the grace of which I might well be the conduit in this moment. Only in (ii) would my appeal be to a desire unequivocally for the *beatific vision*, but Feingold (and the tradition he represents faithfully) is not without apologetic resources, even if in moments of over-reaction a Mansini might so paint it. See the emphatic conclusion: *ibid.*, pp. 443–7.

²⁰⁸Note that this is completely consistent with this happiness being a merely *connatural* happiness, providing that (as Feingold insists) it does lie in God.

²⁰⁹Feingold, *Natural Desire to see God*, p. 335.

terly anachronistic—but this anachronism does not, apparently, warrant considering whether or no Lubac is really working within a scholastic framework at all.

It is not merely *natura* which is up for dispute. The ‘desire’ of which the neo-scholastics speak is not an existential postulate. If not “dead”, it must exist with *some* experiential corollary, but this is cause and effect: were I prevented from experiencing it—by sudden incapacity, say, directly upon receiving baptism, or by nightly sleep—it would not go away. By contrast, when Lubac says ‘desire’ it is *this existential desire* which he names. I do not say ‘empirical’: the desire is not directly *experientiable*, but it *does* form an inherent part of the gaze which the subject turns to the world. From the (neo-)scholastic standpoint it is metaphysics which grounds psychology. From the Lubacian standpoint being is discovered in—behind—our existence. There is no inherent contradiction (*pace Heidegger*) between the phenomenological and metaphysical methods, but their terms of reference are naturally distinct. (In this I adopt one side of a tension which is apparent in Lubac: on the one side his style is resolutely immediate—“existential”—on the other he considers himself a theologian practising dogmatic theology as much as his critics.²¹⁰)

From this perspective it is the scholastic framework *in toto*—and not merely the two orders of nature and grace—which is problematic. Or rather it is the scholastic *viewpoint* which is limited.

Conclusion: Intentionality and the Tradition

The distinction I have been highlighting throughout this chapter is not simply a disagreement about the content of our apologetics, nor even its style. Even if Lubac is wrong about St. Thomas, and should have found a natural inclination which is not immediately a desire for the *supernatural*, but only for something beyond nature²¹¹; and even if his apologetic project can be built on the more minimalist theory provided by Feingold, once the latter’s reasoning has been properly inscribed within its limits and essentially simple quasi-substances and other *a priori* theological paraphernalia are not allowed to pollute our public discourse; and even if Feingold’s (and the manualist tradition’s) schematic reduction of the realm of grace to the sacraments is taken for the paradigmatic discourse it clearly is: even if all this is said and done, there remains something fundamentally *right* about Lubac’s writing which is fundamentally *wrong* about that of his opponents.

This fundamental difference is not substantial, but intentional. Indeed it is able to stand out across a great deal of substantial confusion. In Lubac’s approach to the Tradition, the mystical (which Feingold nowhere treats of) is prior. More, the Mystery is prior. For Lubac there is an *attitude* to be learned from St. Thomas (but equally from St. Augustine and St. Theresa, not to mention the Greek Fathers) before there is a

²¹⁰This is not the only possible argument. Wood, whose treatment (Wood, *To stir a restless heart*) materially advances beyond the impasse which has existed since at least *surnaturel*, tells the history as the conflict between the Augustinian *fecisti* and the Aristotelian order of nature. Neither Lubac’s hypothesis of a sudden rationalism beginning with Cajetan, nor Feingold’s claim that Cajetan’s solution, despite needing correction, was the general hypothesis all along turns out to be correct. Moreover Wood recognises (p. 428) that the question is apologetic. Nonetheless, although his solution is the only serious attempt I have seen which may actually do justice to the concerns of both sides, and his history seems to me (incompetent though I am to judge) entirely plausible, he opts, ultimately, for the other side of Lubac. But the question I am ultimately interested in answering arises in the prologomenon to systematic thought, and I am thus committed to remaining on the first plane.

²¹¹Blondel: *transnatural*

doctrine to be understood; an intellectual *habitus*; an aesthetic sense, an *intellective* virtue. It is this intentional stance, this acquired *taste*, which Lubac identifies with “the Tradition” and which he charges his opponents most strongly with not having—or rather, being afraid to allow out of the confines of “spirituality.” (I shall turn to the relation between spirituality and theology in chapter 4 on page 117.) It is this acquired virtue which Lubac, and *Ressourcement*, takes as a definition of Tradition, and which I intend to defend in this thesis.

From this intentional standpoint the objections of the scholastics can seem rather foolish. To the complaint that he had exalted the natural at the expense of the supernatural Lubac was completely deaf. To object that an apologetics of beauty would lead to Romantics gazing at sunsets rather than churchgoing Catholics seemed absurd.²¹² This standpoint was formulated before Lubac by Blondel, as we shall see in chapter 3 on page 73. But it was formulated in opposition to a very different attempt to make the faith accessible to modernity by *reinventing* the Tradition, ignoring the standpoint Lubac considered essential. I turn, then, to the Modernist crisis, and show how Chenu and Congar consider it the symptom of a loss of exactly this intentional tradition.

²¹²The matter can be put quite simply—but this is to get ahead of ourselves—by observing that if one wants people to come to Church because of their sense of beauty, and not merely watch sunsets, one had better have a liturgy with a good deal more of the grandeur of a sunset in it.

CHAPTER 2

Modernism and Ressourcement

Timor Domini sanctus, permanens in sæculum sæculi:
iudicia Domini vera, iustificata in semetipsa... Delicta quis
intellegit? ab occultis meis munda me: et ab alienis parce
servo tuo. Si mei non fuerint dominati, tunc immaculatus
ero: et emundabor a delicto maximo.

Monday at Prime

...illud ante omnia notandum est, modernistarum quem-
libet plures agere personas ac veluti in se commis-
cere; philosophum nimirum, credentem, theologum, his-
toricum, criticum, apologetam, instauratorem...

Pascendi

Modernism was a traditionalist endeavour. It was born from a conviction that the doctrines of the Church—the whole theoretical edifice of theology, philosophy, and history, the “teachings” contained in innumerable textbooks and works of apologetics and devotion, booklets and sermons—had all come crashing down, undermined by (German¹) historical scholarship; combined with an unwillingness to let go of the name *Catholic* and the current of the Tradition, grounded in a sincere love of all that had apparently been undermined. The Modernists, therefore—with every appearance of reluctance—set about saving the Tradition at the cost of its traditional meaning. Nowhere is this more visible than in the decidedly curious novel of Fogazzaro, *Il Santo*, a kind of cross between a novel by Bernanos and a socialist tract, which ends with a bizarre scene in which the reformer, guided by a “spirit”, reaches the chambers of Pius X and discusses the state of the Church, exacting from him a commitment “not to condemn the Liberal Catholics”. In reality Pius began by condemning the book² and went on, a year later, to condemn the movement it represented, bringing about the downfall of the figures thinly veiled behind many of the characters—and, in a pattern which was to recur innumerable times, thereby granting Fogazzaro brief international fame. (“No doubt” said Tyrrell of another book, “they will advertise it for you on the Index.”³)

¹Pace Alfred Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire religieuse de notre temps*, vol. 2, Paris: Nourry, 1931, p. 364.

²*Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1907, p. 96.

³Thomas Loome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism, A contribution to a new orientation in*

All of this matters for us both positively and negatively. Positively, Modernism set out to respond to an aesthetic, stylistic incongruity: the Tradition simply did not seem thinkable in the contemporary world. A grossly overrated confidence in “criticism”, then in its adolescence vitiated the project. But what *Ressourcement* set out to do in retrieving the *spiritual* Tradition and making the faith thinkable in contemporary terms was, more or less, the ultimate goal of Hügel or Bishop, or Loisy or Tyrrell in their first period. Modernism not only serves to pick out *Ressourcement* as a response to this challenge: it also explains the welcome it received. Thus the second significance: Negatively, the anti-Modernism repression is behind the sorry state of Catholic theology: or rather, the institutional naivety and the breakdown of magisterial authority after the council is part of consistent narrative beginning with a different kind of naivety and the abuse of authority half a century before.

Anti-Modernism could not explain the curious love the Modernists demonstrated for the Tradition they were mutilating. Why not (as an exasperated *Pascendi* wonders) have the courage of your convictions and leave the Church if you think her doctrines false? The answer is obvious enough: the Modernists (and *Ressourcement*) held that there is something other than deductive force in the Church’s Tradition; that what is handed down in the history and life of the Church has an attraction which no mere accumulation of true propositions could ever have. The revolution the Modernists proposed is unacceptable not only because the bogeyman of “historical scholarship” is not nearly so terrible as all that, and a great deal of Modernist arguments are entirely circular. It is unacceptable because it gives a false account of this *other* aspect of the Tradition, reducing it to an internal sentimentalism with no *objective* connection to the propositional clothing which attempts to express it. (In their defence it was a counsel of last resort.) But this other aspect was simply invisible to the anti-Modernists—whence their incomprehension—whose account of Tradition was thereby equally defective.

Thus both Modernism and Anti-Modernism are fundamentally concerned with conflicting theses about *Tradition*. This was (as we shall see) generally visible to the Modernists themselves. Unfortunately it was less visible to the Anti-Modernists, whose choice of epithet has created the unfortunate (and spurious) impression that what was at issue was Modernity itself, rather than the relationship between Modernity and its history.⁴ I have, then, three arguments to make. Firstly: that Modernism was motivated by a sense of the untenability of traditional Catholicism as conventionally expressed coupled with a conviction of its truth in some “other” plane, i.e. a crisis in the reception of the Tradition; and that it was itself an untenable response; secondly, that anti-Modernism failed to address this crisis of plausibility and merely made this problem worse; and thirdly that *Ressourcement* saw things in these terms and *did* endeavour to address exactly this problem.

I begin with *Pascendi* and the Anti-Modernists’ account of Modernism. This for two reasons: the usual account of Modernism is premised on *Pascendi* being entirely wrong (that is, defending the indefensible); by showing that *Pascendi* is generally right (albeit thoroughly uncharitable) we can simply sidestep a great deal of controversy. But more importantly, *Pascendi* shows—somewhat by exaggeration—exactly what makes the Modernist reimagining of the Tradition untenable, and what, therefore, any successful attempt at retrieval must look like. Unfortunately *Pascendi* also marks the high-water

modernist research, Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1979, p. 399.

⁴A confusion which the scholarship has simply made programmatic: Darrell Jodock, ed., *Catholicism contending with modernity: Roman Catholic modernism and anti-modernism in historical context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

mark of an intolerance which refused to see any problem at all. We thus turn to the Modernists, and see their frustration with this intolerance. *Pascendi* accused them of having no motivation but pride; in reality Tyrrell and Loisy sought to save the Church from impending epistemic calamity. But I show that their project is sufficiently similar to *Pascendi*'s account of it to fail exactly as claimed; and meanwhile their premises are highly doubtful. Underlying both ends of this unprofitable argument is a failure to grasp the true nature of a living tradition. I present *prima facie* evidence that *Ressourcement* did grasp it; the rest of this thesis will be devoted to fleshing this out.

Digitus in oculo?

The general consensus on *Pascendi* (and *Lamentabili*, and *Quanta Cura* and the *syllabus*) dates from at least the mid-nineteenth century:

One of us began listing off the witticisms attributed to Mgr. Duchesne—his comment on the political naivety of Pius X ('He is, after all, a venetian gondolier in the Bark of St. Peter: he tends to bump into into things.')

And again: 'have you read the latest bull, *digitus in oculo*?'⁵

Duchesne was a scholar and early inspiration of Loisy, a historian whose criticism of the legend of apostolic institution of the diocese of Sens got him into serious trouble with the archbishop. In many respects he, like Dupanloup, represents an earlier tradition of 'liberal' Catholicism, whose *a priori* commitment to the absolute accuracy of the usual presentations of the Church and its history was decidedly minimal, but who recoiled in horror from what appeared to him the internal inconsistency of actually thinking the Tradition historically baseless and trying to believe it anyway. Another history of the shock the Catholic Church experienced in the last century, and from which it is still reeling, could be told by tracing the constructive tradition of such "orthodox liberal" scholars,⁶ rather than tracing the very different history of *Ressourcement*'s ultimately mystagogical confrontation of the problems of modernism and modernity.⁷

Duchesne's *bon mot* epitomises the usual response to the anti-modernist documents: they represent a foolish instance of self-harm on behalf of the papacy; a denying of the modern world; a papal straw man which picked out nobody at all, a kind of anti-scholastic bogey which could be condemned *in toto*, thus preserving

⁵Gsell, in Jean-Louis Quantin, 'Érudition Historique Et Philologique De L'âge Classique Aux Lumières', *École pratique des hautes études. Section des sciences historiques et philologiques. Livret-Annuaire* 150 (2019), pp. 357-364, p. 359. The passage continues with Anatole France casting doubt on their authenticity. The narrative is ubiquitous; see e.g. William J La Due, *The Chair of St. Peter: A History of the Papacy*, Maryknoll, 1999, pp. 231-53.

⁶Or indeed, the work of the Bollandists two centuries before.

⁷For an exhaustive overview of this fascinating man, see the conference proceedings *Mgr Duchesne et son temps*, Rome: École française de Rome, 1975, available online. Note here esp p. 365 'Il y a des limites.' where Duchesne insists he will not try to reconcile with the faith a history which flatly denies everything it claimed to be based on. (See the summary pp. 495-7.) Duchesne, in the end, had the good sense not to involve himself in the biblical question at a point when it was almost impossible to write anything on it without censure, and believed deeply in the fundamental truth of the faith and the right of the Church to protect that faith. Despite Poulat's general tendency to make *everyone* a modernist, 'Loisyism' is a pretty good definition of modernism as *Pascendi* meant it, and Duchesne was indeed no loisyist (365). In the event, Duchesne found his *Histoire ancienne de l'Église* placed on the index in 1912, and immediately submitted without, however, retracting anything. *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*, Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1912, ark:/13960/t3716pf9v, pp. 56, 103.

the notion (essential to scholasticism) that the world is composed of tightly defined systems, going by epithets like *modernism*, *hegelianism*, or *pragmatism*; themselves mere straw men.⁸ It remains to be seen if this is the case.

Pascendi's synthesis

Pascendi was published with an editorial footnote explaining that it 'wonderfully illustrated and completed' *Lamentabili*, since it presents a thorough analysis of the 'whole modernist system, rightly defined as the gathering up of all heresies' (*collectio omnium haeresum*⁹); the footnote continuous with the curial relief that *at last* something has been done about this problem.¹⁰

This note of pent-up frustration is palpable throughout. The Modernists are the worst heretics the Church has ever seen. Their chief error is boundless audacity, drawing any conclusion to which they are led, 'abhorring none'. They are well placed to deceive, since they lead lives of great activity, *assidua ac vehemens ad omnem eruditionem occupatio* and are reputed to be 'of austere morality': this is almost an accusation. Proof of their bad faith is to be found in the *callidissimum artificium* they employ to escape correction: presenting their doctrines 'independently from one another' in fact, *firmi et constantes*, they form a coherent whole.¹¹ Thus the pontiff must—laboriously—synthesise it for them.¹²

Thus the problem is *Modernists*, who are spreading *Modernism* (under the cloak of their duplicity and good reputation) in an otherwise healthy Church, for devious reasons of their own. Framed thus, Modernism can be analysed without troubling to inquire as to why anyone might hold it, and this the encyclical does at length. Everything stems from philosophical agnosticism¹³ which excludes knowledge of anything but brute material phenomena *ab initio*. The Modernist, scientifically atheistic, is unable to find God in history, and consequently falls back on a doctrine of immanence ('vital immanence') to explain the genesis of religion.¹⁴ Religion springs from a privileged *sense*,¹⁵ a motion of the heart of man, or 'as Modern philosophy calls it', the subconscious.¹⁶ This sense points to a great Unknowable beyond the individual: a mystical encounter with God who, discovered in the depths of the human psyche, somehow joins himself mystically with the individual. This sense is not merely the origin of faith, but the seat of revelation; indeed it is the revelation of God by God, directly to the soul; consequently, every effort must be made to subject official teaching to the general religious consciousness.

This primal religious experience gave rise to religious history, where ordinary phenomena are *transfigured* by endowing them with a religious light, and then *dis-*

⁸This claim has been repeated too many times to cite exhaustively. See e.g. Lawrence Barmann, *Baron Friedrich Von Hügel and the modernist crisis in England*, Cambridge England: University Press, 1972, pp. 196–7.

⁹There is a slight but important distinction between *collectio* (collection, gathering, synthesis): the encyclical itself has *conlectum* = collected works, and *synthesis*. *Collectio* or *conlectum* is a perfectly sensible word to use for 'synthesis' but it does not imply any *synthetic* unity: it can be a perfectly natural gathering up of disparate ideas without forcing them to work together.

¹⁰For the Latin: 'Pascendi dominici gregis', *Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1907, pp. 593–650; for a translation: Pope Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 1907. Reference are to the Acta.

¹¹*Pascendi dominici gregis*, p. 595. ¹²*Ibid.*, p. 596. ¹³*Ibid.*, p. 596. ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 597.

¹⁵*sensum*. The official English has *sentiment* (as does the French), doubtless to indicate that the concrete noun is intended, but the word is now devoid of any meaning and does not in any case capture in English the link between the thing sensed and the faculty of sensing, which is what *Pascendi* ultimately accuses the Modernists of replacing the reason with. This defect is not apparent in French, where *ressentir* corresponds naturally to *sentiment*.

¹⁶*Pascendi dominici gregis*, p. 598.

figured as symbolic truth comes to be attributed to them as historical fact. Thus the work of critical history is to peel back the layers of symbolic deformation in order to get at the original phenomenon. In practice one simply removes everything which seems incongruous with purely human action, 'an odd way of reasoning indeed, but that's Modernist criticism'.¹⁷ This amounts to a complete naturalising of religion. From all this a number of conclusions follow (all of which are fair summaries of *bona fide* Modernist positions): dogmata are merely incidental signposts to this primal experience¹⁸ subject to radical revision if they no longer accord with the religious spirit¹⁹ belief is reduced to experience (i.e. the Modernist as believer is purely subjective);²⁰ the Faith is simply *more true* than other religions (because the Church points to a *more authentic* religious experience) and her tradition is a communication and prolonging of the original religious experience.²¹ This framework is evolutionary: survival is proof of fitness, and the *life* of the Church proves its truth.²² In the end the Faith has been assimilated to some *a priori* construction;²³ in practice the supposed hard separation between faith and science results in a domination of science over faith.²⁴

What then is this immanence? Some simply mean the Augustinian sense of the heart yearning for God; others confuse primary and secondary causation and absorb the supernatural into the natural; still others (the most consistent) are simply pantheists.²⁵ The Modernists engage in a riot of redefinitions: faith becomes feeling, sacraments are reimagined as phrases which have 'caught on'²⁶ and just as inspiration in some general sense is admitted 'everywhere, but nowhere in the Catholic sense',²⁷ so violence is done everywhere to the language of theology: the Modernists profess to believe everything and then define it out of existence. In theory this is bad enough; in practice it is terrible: they would have the Church democratised²⁸ and subject to the state;²⁹ the magisterium would be forbidden to forbid;³⁰ scholastic philosophy would be taught as yet another obsolete system; theology rebuilt on the history of dogmata, and couched in the language of modern philosophy; history of the modern (atheistic) kind; catechesis rewritten to conform to supposed 'modern needs'; worship diminished in externals (although some are rather in love with symbolism and there is disagreement on this point); the Index abolished; morality replaced by activism (Americanism); celibacy abolished; and, in short, everything remade in the image of modern secular prejudice.³¹ Yet this is all based on a completely circular system! The historian gets his presuppositions from his agnostic philosophy;³² the critic gets his history from the same poisoned source;³³ the conclusions are then supposed to come from their proximate sources, but are in fact all contained in the starting assumption. *Apriorismus*, the Latin insists again and again, with considerable justice and less than Classical style.³⁴ First we assert something circular, such as that the Fourth Gospel is nothing but contemplation (i.e. symbolism) on the basis that it is unhistorical; then we go looking for the evolution of the texts,³⁵ an evolution 'born from and responding to the evolution of the faith'.³⁶ Thus in practice the Bible and the Faith are full of statements which are false taken literally, but true taken symbolically: this amounts

¹⁷Ibid., p. 600. ¹⁸Ibid., p. 602. ¹⁹Ibid., p. 603. ²⁰Ibid., pp. 604, 610. ²¹Ibid., p. 605. ²²Ibid., p. 606. ²³Ibid., p. 622.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 606–7. *Pascendi* cites Gregory IX condemning the overweening rationalistic pretences of Parisian Scholastics. So trivial has the opposition between 'scholastics' and 'non-scholastics' become that it is customary to point this out with relish, as though it constitutes a *faux pas*, although I am unable to see how. In any case the footnote in ASS reveals that the drafters were well aware which text they took the passage from.

²⁵Ibid., p. 610. ²⁶Ibid., p. 612. ²⁷Ibid., p. 613. ²⁸Ibid., p. 612. ²⁹Ibid., p. 616. ³⁰Ibid., p. 617. ³¹Ibid., 631f. ³²Ibid., p. 621. ³³Ibid., p. 623. ³⁴*Tota ibi per apriorismus*: *ibid.*, p. 624. ³⁵Ibid., p. 624. ³⁶Ibid., p. 625.

to attributing a useful lie to God and is actually heretical.³⁷

Moreover, the authors are clearly in bad faith; arrogant, swollen with pride, etc.³⁸ The consequences of their methods are ruinous³⁹ and the measures adopted are correspondingly severe. Most importantly for our narrative, books savouring of modernism are to be forbidden seminarians as more deadly even than pornography. Even those non-Modernists of good repute who try to harmonise modernity with the faith, and who thereby send people off down the wrong road are forbidden.⁴⁰ (This clause is almost a throwaway, but it tars *everyone* who uses “the language of modern philosophy” with the same brush, and insults them for good measure as *expertes theologiae*, ‘lacking in theology’.) Censorship everywhere; a new bureaucracy to support it; priests banned from editing journals without permission; conferences (and synodal paths) banned; and, since the rot is already everywhere, vigilance committees, meeting *in camera*, in every diocese to sniff out secret Modernists.⁴¹ After a brief and highly sensible diversion on the question of relics and pious traditions the encyclical extends the jurisdiction of the vigilance committees over vaguely defined ‘social matters’ (thereby maximising the political infighting which would result) and commands that the bishops are to make triennial reports on the progress of the extirpation of Modernism, and the doctrines finding favour among their clergy. Despite the precision of the earlier definition of Modernism, we are left with a far more general bogeyman: citing Leo XIII, the encyclical inveighs against those who argue for ‘a new order for Christian life; new notions of the Church, the new needs of the Christian soul, a new social vocation for the clergy, or other things of that sort’.⁴²

Heresy and Orthodoxy

Two things are going on in *Pascendi*. On the one hand, isolated from the vituperation, there is an account of a condemned way of thinking which is indeed clearly incompatible with Catholicism. Occasionally here there are over-reactions: denying that the bible is composed of pious fictions is not fundamentalism, but the argument from the rejection of the noble lie risks confounding symbolic exegesis with falsehood. But the argument is classic and hardly an innovation in *Pascendi*.

The encyclical’s practical solution, on the other hand, was deadly. In the face of a sense of the impossibility of believing Catholic doctrine in the modern world, a system is established which in the last analysis will be able to compel blind obedience. The machinery of a police state—denunciations, vigilance committees, censorship everywhere—is deployed with centralising force. (Thus the Bishops, required to report every three years to the Pope ‘lest what We have said should fall into obeisance’ are at once treated as potential enemies and subordinates, whilst at the same time obliged to treat ‘their clergy’ in the same way; and clergy can hardly be expected to treat ‘their faithful’ any differently. The net effect is thus to make everyone simultaneously overbearing with inferiors and cringing before superiors.) Not one word is said *against* ‘the state of Modern Man’—the encyclical merely condemns *one* attempt to respond to modernity—but the net effect was, predictably, to tar everyone with the same brush and present modernity as nothing but an aberration to be condemned, and two dangerous asides—the insulting and condemnation of those of good faith who inadvertently spread Modernism, and the extension of the vigilance committees to

³⁷‘Pascendi dominici gregis’, p. 629.

³⁸Such terms pepper the encyclical and I have omitted to point them out: at several points (e.g. p. 626) the document collapses into cursing and then collects itself to carry on with the exposition.

³⁹and they are not merely *ad hominem* *ibid.*, p. 627. ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 643. ⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 647. ⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 648.

social matters—blunt the precision of the definition, and make it possible to proceed against just about anyone.

In a large part this was due to a confusion of genres. Already the *syllabus* had been the object of heated newspaper polemics which did little except muddy the waters. *Lamentabili*, the new syllabus, was much discussed; *Pascendi* was a quite unique instance of the papal mind explaining itself, couched in generally nontechnical language, and immediately translated for mass distribution. Various quarters had suggested drawing up a list of *positive* propositions more easily to explain the syllabus (although in the event nothing came of it); and *Pascendi* in translation fulfils a similar role. It was immediately duplicated, summarised, discussed, and in one quite remarkable case turned into a kind of catechism, the *Catechism on Modernism* which 'reproduces, in its entirety and in the exact order of its ideas, the encyclical of our Holy Father the Pope' interspersed with the most strained and fatuous questions: 'What is one of the primary duties appointed by Christ to the Sovereign Pontiff?', 'Has such vigilance been necessary in every age?' and so forth.⁴³

This stylistic blunder points to the novelty of what *Pascendi* tried to do: *both* the traditional work of defining and thereby excluding a heresy, *and* an attempt to *tell the story* of the position condemned, in such a way as to persuade the reader of its absurdity. Likewise, the inquisitorial system established has, in its general shape a long pedigree, and Catholic theologians have lived under similar systems with little real difficulty, *so long as they were concerned with enforcing subscription to and rejection of carefully enunciated theses*. What marks out *Pascendi* is the confusion of these two ends: the inquisition launched to combat bad *ideas* rapidly devolved, in practice, into a police state concerned with infractory *people*; and, predictably, ended up dominated by the kind of people who rise to the top in systems of government by force. In so doing it failed in two distinct ways.

Firstly, it failed where it was right, since *pascendi* is a fairly decent summary of the positions of Tyrrell and Loisy. From outside this was visible:

In the famous papal encyclical...there is an elaborate description of the modernist views against which the encyclical is aimed. It has been denounced by leading Modernists as utterly unjust. [...] And yet an impartial observer can hardly fail to recognize that the encyclical contains on the whole an admirable diagnosis of the situation. [...] Too much emphasis is laid on philosophy and too little on historical criticism. The theological opinions of perhaps no single modernist are accurately reflected in the document, and certainly much less than justice is done to the personal motives of those condemned....

But a number of tendencies...are here depicted, in spite of some exaggeration and of a natural lack of sympathy, with adequate correctness on the whole.⁴⁴

⁴³xiii, 1 J. B. Lemius, *Catechism on Modernism*, trans. from the French by John FitzPatrick, London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1908, The catechism was translated from the French and appears to have had reasonable distribution.

⁴⁴Arthur C. McGiffert, 'Modernism and Catholicism', *The Harvard Theological Review* 3.1 (1910), pp. 24–46, p. 28. The author intends to suggest the Modernists would be welcome as protestants. Tyrrell's articles in the *Times*, which whilst ridiculing the expressions of *Pascendi* and proposing an ironic counter-synthesis, accept the basic idea that 'scholasticism' is incompatible with 'modern thought' (Nicholas Sagovsky, *On God's side, A life of George Tyrrell*, Oxford England New York: Clarendon Press Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 225); albeit his initial reaction was to point out that the whole thing was so poorly worded as to catch nobody at all. It has been argued that this represents an internal tension in the encyclical—that Rome

What McGiffert calls ‘less than justice’ is, in fact, *Pascendi*’s imputation of the very worst possible motives (alongside a good deal of personal invective) to the Modernists.⁴⁵ This rather sorry fact stems from a confusion of genre. Heresiology is—in theory—the study not of heretics but of heresies; more specifically it is the agreeing of tightly defined errors which leave the faith open to seek between them for illumination.⁴⁶ But in *pascendi* the natural tendency to muddle the two is given full reign, with the predictable (and regrettable) result that we cannot now avail ourselves of its precise definitions without apologising for its internal excesses, and if we go to the trouble we shall be dismissed together with the whole sorry affair.

This, however, is a contingent problem: sixty years of bad application, from *Pascendi* to Vatican II, have tainted a good idea.⁴⁷ Secondly, however, the diagnosis of *pascendi* is essentially incomplete precisely because it is heresiology, and the Modernists challenged not the assortment of doctrines which pontiff, Office and numerous worried committees busily protected, but the whole paradigm in which this kind of work made sense. It was exactly the lack of *sense* in Catholicism which lead Tyrrell (or Loisy or even Hügel) to reinvent it; it is exactly this loss of *sense* which plagues contemporary theology and which *Ressourcement* sought to address.

The Modernists

Modernism had long roots⁴⁸ and any number of really quite different thinkers might fall under its banner.⁴⁹ For our purposes I limit myself to two representative systems: the evolutionary Modernism of Tyrrell, and the historical Modernism of Loisy. Tyrrell is one of the best fits for the position *Pascendi* sketches; he was a close friend of Bremond, who forms a kind of proto-*Ressourcement* figure, and in rejecting Tyrrell’s position whilst celebrating his funeral (and thereby suffering suspension) Bremond epitomises the deep sympathy for the modernist *question*, and the rejection of the modernist *answer* which characterises *Ressourcement*;⁵⁰ lastly because he is clear and systematic, and saw (more perhaps than others) whither his doctrines tended. Loisy, as the *cause célèbre* of both the modernist and antimodernist movements in France,

intended to bring down liberal Catholicism, and constructed a theological bugbear with which to do so. (The most convincing argument for this position of which I am aware is in Looome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism*, ch. 2)

Certainly Looome is quite right to observe that the modernism was condemned, whilst Modernists largely ‘got off scot free’ but does it follow from this that the encyclical was ‘a sleight-of-hand trick’ whose purpose was ‘to scare the children’ such that they would accept ‘their father locking them up in a dark closet’? (p. 93)

⁴⁵‘Il m’insinua que les hardiesses de ma pensée pourraient être en rapport avec certaines libertés d’un autre ordre.’ Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire religieuse de notre temps*, p. 320.

⁴⁶I am deliberately avoiding the usual language of “speculation”, although this is its etymological sense.

⁴⁷If one does not allow some condition to play this role modernism becomes utterly undefined, and for which any number of vacuous claims can be made: Modernism will save the environment;(Edward P. Echlin, ‘Modernists and the Modern Environmental Crisis’, *New Blackfriars* 69.822 [1988], pp. 526–529) modernism is to thanked for the survival of Catholic scholarship; or, on the other hand, modernism is behind every evil the Church faces (including many which were unimaginable in 1907), and, as Lefebvre put it in a moment of temper, the Pope stands excommunicated by Pius X.

⁴⁸Looome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism*.

⁴⁹Marvin R. O’Connell, ‘A Montage of Catholic Modernists’, *Nova et Vetera* 5.4 (2007), ed. by Matthew Levering and Thomas Joseph White, pp. 881–94.

⁵⁰Bremond is an ambiguous character: he kept up a correspondence with Blondel and Loisy without letting on to either. Poulat establishes on incontestable (autograph) evidence that he was the author of a pseudonymous defence of Loisy (Sylvian Leblanc, *Un clerc qui n’a pas trahi, Alfred Loisy d’après ses mémoires*, Paris: Émile Nourry, 1931). But from this he deduces, (Émile Poulat, *Une Oeuvre clandestine d’Henri Bremond, Un clerc qui n’a pas trahi*, Rome: Ed. di Storia et letteratura, 1972, 27ff, 31ff), in typical fashion, a

is important as a figurehead, but a good deal less important as a thinker. He ended an atheist, which immediately disqualified him from any kind of direct appeal; he endeavoured to modernise without claiming to recover and, lastly, Blondel had taken up a middle position against him which stirred up a completely different controversy, and thus for *Ressourcement* Loisy's questions are largely mediated (and obscured) by Blondel's engagement with them.

I am concerned with two claims here: firstly, that Tyrrell and Loisy had a distinctive set of questions to which they returned a more or less distinctive set of answers, and that both of these broadly match the sketch given of them in *Pascendi*; and secondly, that both authors (and thus by extension Modernism in general) are motivated by a sense of the *incongruity* of (i) the findings of "critical history" and (ii) the anthropological vocabulary of "modern man" with traditional theology. This sense of incongruity is shared with *Ressourcement*, although the *answer* is emphatically rejected.

Tyrrell

George Tyrrell, *quondam* S.J. is a frustrating study in many respects: his published works—at any rate, once he felt himself under suspicion—are frequently ironic to a greater or lesser degree, and in a few instances represent the precise *inverse* of his position; he frequently sounds like a Chestertonian parody of German scholarship, writing of 'a complexus of feelings, judgments, and impulses, a "spirit"' and liberally sprinkling hyphens:

Our life-task is one of unification, of building-in these accumulating experiences so skilfully as not to destroy, but rather to perfect the harmony of our multitudinous thoughts, desires, and sentiments.⁵¹

Perhaps most distressingly, his thought is bound up with his history—a history of provocation on Tyrrell's part, persecution on behalf of Roman authorities, well meaning attempts to calm the situation by the English Jesuit hierarchy and a good deal of misunderstanding all round. This history is sufficiently distressing to have occasioned dubious "explanations" from scholars who seek something other than the mere ideas to explain how on earth obviously conscientious people could have been so violently at odds with one another.

It is this history, more than any innate tendency in liberal thought, which provoked such outbursts as:

It seems to me very important just now to insist on the undoubted truth that the Jesuits are really at the bottom both of the political & the intellectual intransigence of the Vatican...Plainly they have worked steadily & consistently to bring France into the condition of England after the Reformation; to have it a sort of mission country where their services would be indispensable, & the secular clergy thrust into the background...This

decidedly heterodox Bremond. Yet Bremond's Loisy is defended, ultimately, as Catholic. The judgement of Goichot (albeit predating Poulat's book, although he was aware of the claim) seems correct: Bremond ultimately—like Hügel—saw a natural mysticism behind all religion, and took some refuge in it from his own difficulties with prayer. His impulsive letter to Blondel on learning of the death of his wife moves naturally and in all appearance sincerely to a promise immediately to offer a requiem. (Henri Bremond and Maurice Blondel, *Correspondance*, ed. by André Blanchet, vol. 2, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1971, 491)

⁵¹George Tyrrell, *Through Scylla and Charybdis, The Old Theology and the New*, London: Longmans, Green & co., 1907, p. 38.

is really their ideal; they whisper about it *intra parietes domesticos*. Their present occupation in France is (in the words of the late General) “to keep the nests warm” so that when the carcass is prepared the eagles (or vultures) may come back in their hundreds & divide the prey among them. A careful collation of the various articles of the *mot d'ordre* sort, which have appeared in the *Civiltà*, *Études*, *Stimmen*, and have heralded the developments of the last year one by one ought to reveal the whole plot.⁵²

These are the words of an angry man (did Tyrrell *really* think the Jesuits had engineered the law of separation of Church and State?) but the grievance is real and Tyrrell's reasoning logical enough: the Jesuits are deliberately encouraging the Church emphatically to teach complete nonsense in order to provoke a crisis in which only they will be able to teach obedience to such manifest nonsense. For Tyrrell, by the end, was convinced that a great deal of scholastic theology was manifest nonsense. His final position, as expressed in perhaps his clearest work, *Through Scylla and Charybdis*, is emphatic:

This last struggle of dogmatism is doomed to the fate of its predecessors; theology and ethics as intellectual interests must inevitably be free from the direct control of faith with its practical and religious interests. *The notion of revealed theology will prove as incoherent and fallacious as that of revealed astronomy, cosmogony, chemistry, medicine, or any other sort of revealed science.*⁵³

I will turn to this position—and to Tyrrell's clearly stated *problématique*—in a moment. But although it has been told far better elsewhere⁵⁴ Tyrrell's history is relevant for our purposes as the history of a *methodological* disagreement.

JESUITISM AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Born protestant, Tyrrell drifted into the Society of Jesus *via* high-church Anglicanism. He was soon confessing at the Jesuit Church in Farm street whilst attending Catholic Mass and communicating at *Anglican* Mass.⁵⁵ Few can stand such a contradiction long, but Tyrrell perhaps least: soon he was Catholic, and, in the initial fervour of conversion, seduced by an exaggerated popular account of the Jesuits.⁵⁶ Despite his almost immediate misgivings, he persevered through a spartan novitiate (“After breakfast there was a reading from *Rodriquez on Christian Perfection*. Tyrrell deplored “the daily half hour wasted over the banalities and fallacies of Rodriquesz' mischievous and much overrated book”); later he commented ‘cold baths and interesting work are of more help than disciplines and chains’⁵⁷) including a proceeding apparently calculated to ruin Jesuits:

Every novice had from time to time to endure the public admonition or ‘ring’. For this he knelt on the floor in front of the Rector. The other

⁵²Tyrrell to Houtin, 16 September 1906 Loome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism*, p. 398.

⁵³Tyrrell, *Through Scylla and Charybdis*, pp. 227–8, my italics.

⁵⁴When one completes the documentation of the excellently told *On God's side* (Sagovsky, *On God's side*) with the account of roman actions in *A view from Rome : on the eve of the modernist crisis* (David Schultenover, *A view from Rome : on the eve of the modernist crisis*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1993) one has all the essential details.

⁵⁵Sagovsky, *On God's side*, pp. 9–10. ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 13. ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 18–9.

novices would be invited to make their criticisms of the unfortunate penitent, criticisms which might be elaborated upon by the Rector. Sometimes the tension and shame were too great, and the man in the centre gave way to tears, which was considered by the others a great loss of face.⁵⁸

One can scarcely imagine a better way to ruin a young man. Certainly Tyrrell took away from it a nascent resentment of the “tyranny” of the Society.

Tyrrell missed the next two years of the novitiate: he was considered proficient enough in classics to go straight to philosophy. Thus he found himself in the middle of the controversy over scholasticism after *Aeterni Patris*. Predictably he took the part of insurgent Thomism, although he seems to have been genuinely captivated by Aquinas.⁵⁹ Then there was theology, which only made him more combative:

[In debate, Tyrrell] moved that ‘Apart from the divine prohibition, no valid reason has been adduced so far against the practice of lying.’ This he won, despite an amendment that ‘the above proposition is to be condemned as offensive to pious ears, pernicious, impious, scandalous, captious, rash and savouring of heresy.’⁶⁰

After an interlude of several years teaching in Malta, and a year in a parish, Tyrrell was sent back to teach philosophy, where he promptly reentered the controversy over *Aeterni Patris* and—tellingly given his later career—played politics with the General and Cardinal Mazzella.⁶¹ But he was already looking for trouble, writing that Thomas should be taught as *literature*, without worrying about internal assent,⁶² and he soon found himself dismissed. He wrote off to the *General*, complaining that

Superiors have not had the courage or the charity to remonstrate with me or point out what was wrong or excessive. To this moment I have not been told definitively the causes of complaint against me.⁶³

Thus, implicitly, these complaints would have to be complaints which Tyrrell judged reasonable. A position far from incomprehensible, but very different from that notion of obedience held by the Society: Tyrrell was (Thomistically) putting the intellect before the will.

Thus already Tyrrell saw the work of intellectual argument very differently from his superiors, as a competition in which ideas stood or fell by their individual merits, and not by the respect due to an overarching system. So much is simply to say that in William James’ terminology he was an anti-systematic. But one might easily be anti-systematic in temperament and thoroughly unremarkable in conclusion. And so Tyrrell was unimpeachably orthodox and even conventional in his early output; then as he came into contact with religious difficulties a director prized for his breadth of outlook and “modern” expression; and eventually distinctly heterodox. What is important is that at every stage he considered his position to stand intellectually on its own grounds, whilst his superiors considered him more or less rebellious *independent* of the truth of his claims, precisely because he had no interest in keeping up ‘the time honoured way of putting things’.⁶⁴ Conversely, Tyrrell saw ‘keeping up the time-honoured way of putting things’ and, ultimately, holding to the (general, overall) *truth*

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 22. ⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 27–30. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 34.

⁶¹Tyrrell had extracted a letter of approval from the latter, and a letter of condemnation from an English opponent (extracted at the very least under false pretences), which he then sent up to the General with affected naivety, asking whom he should follow. *ibid.*, pp. 45–6.

⁶²Ibid., p. 47. ⁶³Ibid., p. 48. ⁶⁴Tyrrell summarising cardinal Vaughan’s objections: *ibid.*, p. 85.

of that way of putting things as irrelevant. The faith was not mediated by the system: the system merely described the faith.

Such an attitude of independence was perhaps not the best fit for the Jesuits; even less fitting was Tyrrell's tendency to get involved in polemics with a linguistic acuity which rendered him a decidedly dangerous opponent. He was not above stage managing: when the Bishops wrote a joint pastoral on liberalism (a document actually drafted in Rome⁶⁵) which presented the transmission of the faith as an entirely passive matter of docile acceptance, Tyrrell tried writing *both* sides of the controversy under different pseudonyms in an ultimately vain attempt to get controversy going.⁶⁶ But it was the irony of his relatively unoffensive *A Perverted Devotion* which ultimately did for him, as the resultant loss of any respect for his superiors (coupled with something briefly rather like falling in love with Maude Petre) which led him to request release from his vows as a Jesuit and seek an incardination which, in the end, did not come. Refusing conditions—censorship of private (theological) correspondence—imposed by Rome, Tyrrell was in the end expelled from the Jesuits (despite having initiated the proceedings himself) and suspended *a divinis* not penally, but by the absence of incardination (an ex-religious being in a peculiar place canonically and automatically suspended, something Bremond apparently was unaware of and simply ignored). Once again authority found it convenient *not* to charge him formally with heresy and he was not excommunicated until he attacked *Pascendi* in the *Times*; and then only by his Bishop (Amigo), and for refusal to subscribe to *Lamentabili*. Clear as Tyrrell's heterodoxy ultimately was, the complete absence of anything resembling a trial, or any opportunity to defend himself, and the choice of political means over direct confrontation embittered him until he no longer cared to see *any* truth or justice in his condemnation.⁶⁷

It was this heavy handed use of authority, rather than any theoretical concerns, which led Tyrrell to conclude that authority itself was the problem, and to espouse, at times, a radical Protestantism:

My first encyclical would remind my brethren that as all my authority derives from the *populus Romanus*; so theirs from the faithful of their several dioceses; that each diocese in a *societas perfecta* and only of its own free and reversible choice federated with any other; that the bond of any bigger aggregate is free and spiritual; in no sense juridical; that Masses etc. are valid because they are the acts of a community ('when two or three', etc.); that orders are simply delegation and can take any form the community chooses, e.g. Tom Dick or Harry *might* be told off to say Mass just for one occasion, and possess orders for half-an-hour; that orders are only indelible because and when the community so will it.⁶⁸

Yet this was as much protest as it was serious. By instinct Tyrrell was always Catholic:

It was a bad Xmas for me and '*lampades nostrae extinguuntur*' has been on the tip of my tongue all the while. Saying the Midnight Mass for the nuns for whom it was all so real, life-giving, factual and tangible I could fain have cried out '*date nobis de oleo vestro*', hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt and loathing the thin and windy manna of criticism and truth.

⁶⁵Schultenover, *A view from Rome : on the eve of the modernist crisis*, ch. 4.

⁶⁶Mary Jo Weaver, 'George Tyrrell and the Joint Pastoral Letter', *The Downside Review* 99.334 (1981), p. 34.

⁶⁷For the details of this rather sorry story, see Sagovsky, *On God's side*, Chs. 12-3.

⁶⁸Tyrrell to Matthew, 15 Dec 1908 *ibid.*, p. 242.

And then appealing to my emotional feebleness, round came the Waits at 2 a.m. with the 'Glad tidings of great joy' till I could have damned all the critics into hell.⁶⁹

In other words, criticism *drove* him to see that the simple faith of the nuns was untenable (since the events in which they so easily believed had not in fact taken place), and what was left for a man who would *not* abandon his faith was some attempt radically to alter the claims of the faith without quite denying them, making them true "in some higher sense." Tyrrell made this explicit:

Take, for example, the cultus of Mary; think what place she holds and has held for centuries in the life of the church and of the faithful...

Yet if criticism is right, if we are to eliminate the protoevagelia of Matthew and Luke and the Gospel of S. John, in which Mary is but the symbol of the Jewish church, and the allusion to her in Acts I, what is left to us of all this creation or construction of faith and piety? Mary was but the wife of Joseph, and by him the mother of Jesus and of his brothers and sisters, and all that we are told of her is that she did not believe in him... Thus the Mary of Catholic faith and devotion is a pure fabrication of theology and sentiment.

And so, too, if we consider how the doctrine of the Incarnation, or of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Presence, or of the Sacraments and priest powers is woven into the very texture of Catholic life and practice, it is perfectly idle to say that the modifications required by philosophical and historical criticisms affect merely the "pleasant things"...Most of all, they affect our trust in a tradition which has deceived us so deeply, so extensively, so arrogantly, and for so long...

[...] We may pardon the instinctive, if not very intelligent, hostility displayed towards criticism by the official upholders of that tradition, and by the millions who look to it for the spiritual daily bread. Ask the liberal to paint the glories of that New Jerusalem which is to rise on the ruins of the old and the pencil falls from his fingers on the blank sheet. *Religio depopulata*—that is all he has to show. Ask him what he has to give in lieu of what he taken, and he answers: Truth.⁷⁰

Thus Tyrrell's motivating concern was ultimately conservative: he sought to *preserve* the Tradition when it appeared to have lost its traditional justification; and he was convinced of the impossibility of this "naive" construction by historical and critical evidence he was (by his own admission⁷¹) unable to judge: the demonstrative force of exactly that "German historical scholarship" which he thought demolished traditional theology was grounded in an inductive judgement of the general progress of modern thought, and the inaccessibility of the traditional motives of belief. In other words he was convinced *affectively* of the "sterility" of traditional theology and the "vitality" of (then) contemporary thought. Thus at bottom Tyrrell's problem was apologetic—and he, like Loisy, had gained a reputation as an apologist before losing

⁶⁹Tyrrell to Bremond, 29 December 1902 *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁷⁰George Tyrrell, 'Religion and Truth', *Essays on Faith and Immortality*, ed. by Maude Petre, New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1904–6, pp. 151–3; Cf. the letters in Looze, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism*.

⁷¹Sagovsky, *On God's side*, Ch. 11.

his faith.

A PERVERTED DEVOTION

The first signs of controversy in Tyrrell's written output concerned a short essay he wrote on the problem of Hell.⁷² 'A Perverted Devotion' attacked the ease with which some could reconcile themselves with the eternal damnation of others. The essay is deeply ironic—Tyrrell begins by suggesting, with mock seriousness, that there is a permissible (albeit not essential) devotion corresponding to every doctrine, and that insofar as the doctrine of Hell is a special instance of the doctrine of divine justice, it permits of a devotion if we are so inclined—adding 'we can conceive a person having a special devotion towards that doctrine and dwelling upon it frequently with a certain pleasurable complacency' in case we have not got the point.⁷³ In reality, of course, Tyrrell intends to show that the doctrine of Hell is a terrible mystery, forced upon us by the logic of the faith and accepted as a truth beyond reason.⁷⁴ His tone is relentless:

the particular gratification that certain minds get out of the *materiality* of the fire can only be accounted for by a nervous dread of in any way making the doctrine mysterious, or removing it from the jurisdiction of common-sense—of that semi-rationalism, which delights to express and explain things spiritual in terms of matter... They will tell us that, though it does not affect the spiritual substance *per modum combustionis*...it does so *per modum alligationis*...not, however, that the withes and straps by which the spirit is fastened to the flames gall its limbs and members, but that its sense of propriety and self-respect is hurt by its unseemly embodiment in gross material flames—an explanation which...unwittingly substitutes moral for physical pain.⁷⁵

This kind of writing was bound to stir up trouble. The article was delated to Rome⁷⁶ and subjected to withering criticism from censors whose English was apparently defective: objection was taken to the use of the word *devotion* in relation to Hell, quite missing the double meaning which Tyrrell's sarcasm depended on.

Tyrrell replied acidly that if one wanted to know the meaning of English words one was better off looking in a dictionary than casting about for some Latin root with a similar spelling (Newman had earlier made the same point with very much the same

⁷²After from a few early works of which he was heartily ashamed, (Sagovsky, *On God's side*, pp. 50–1) Tyrrell's early works were conventional reimaginings in the style of the early Merton ('A new gospel is not worth listening to; while to say the old things in the old words is tiresome.' George Tyrrell, *Nova et Vetera, Informal meditations for times of spiritual dryness*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1898, p. iv)

⁷³George Tyrrell, 'A Perverted Devotion', *Essays on Faith and Immortality*, ed. by Maude Petre, New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1899, p. 160.

⁷⁴A few decades later Knox would make exactly the same claim in a context which revealed that it was a common enough position by the thirties—which could scarcely happen overnight. The difference, of course, is that Knox had an unimpeachable reputation for orthodoxy (and a gentler irony). Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties, A correspondance about the Catholic Religion*, 2nd ed., London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952, pp. 51ff.

⁷⁵Tyrrell, 'A Perverted Devotion', pp. 166–7.

⁷⁶Sagovsky, *On God's side*, p. 86.

issue⁷⁷ he also objected that he was not being taken in context.⁷⁸ This reply merely inflamed the General (who read it, with characteristic incomprehension, as an insult to the *Catholic* sense of devotion and further evidence that Tyrrell was out of hand⁷⁹) and the first period of Tyrrell's ecclesiastical career was over; he retired to a house 'for those with problems in their vocation' and immersed himself (unbeknownst to his superiors, who would doubtless have been worried) in the study of Modern works, and schemes intended to demonstrate publicly his good standing in the Jesuits whilst, in fact, playing no such role.⁸⁰

A MUCH ABUSED LETTER

Tyrrell's *Letter to a university professor* was the immediate cause of his expulsion from the Jesuits.⁸¹ The letter was written privately (in all appearances, as an actual letter sent to a genuine professor of anthropology whose faith was in jeopardy) and appears to have circulated a little; portions of it were eventually translated as "advanced modernism" in a conservative Italian journal; Tyrrell, having not yet seen the letter, wrote to the General that he was sure 'the substance of it—all that you would most dislike—is founded on a letter written by me two or three years ago';⁸² and indeed, he had only to correct the mistranslation of 'involuntary' by *voluntaria*⁸³ and add a few quibbles.

Tyrrell then expresses his distaste (by mendacious praise) for 'cudgel controversialists'.⁸⁴ But his reasoning is startling: 'since the Divine Will' 'fights on both sides, giving energy to conqueror and conquered alike, this one-sided sympathy cannot be the divinest and best.'⁸⁵ Likewise, a plea for the priest and Levite, whose conduct, apparently, might be quite as defensible as that of the Good Samaritan⁸⁶ is liable to shock—the more so as Tyrrell casts *himself* as the Samaritan. Thus Tyrrell proceeds, damning his opponents with faint praise, and presenting the Church's official position as demanding wilful ignorance and reliance on one's intellectual betters,⁸⁷ until one is tempted to wonder whether his *ad hominem* is not simply a sell out. But Tyrrell's line of attack is the community: it, too, is subject to psychological analysis,⁸⁸ and thus it too can be thought of as possessing *unconsciously* a truth which it struggles to perceive consciously.⁸⁹ Thus he proceeds by discounting everything 'for argument's sake'⁹⁰ until he runs up against a kind of necessary Deism; a Deism which ends up looking rather more personal;⁹¹ there must be a 'religion behind all creeds':⁹² well then, Catholicism is clearly the 'most effective instrument' of this religion⁹³ which, on these premises, is a kind of argument for its truth—albeit not for the truth of its

⁷⁷Newman's engagement in the *Rambler* affair, where a chance reference to *consulting the faithful* before the definition of the Immaculate Conception was thrown out as a parallel to *the faithful making known their opinions* on the completely unrelated question of the legitimacy of non-Catholic parliamentary commissioners visiting Catholic schools (a reference which offended the professor of Theology at Ushaw and led to a protracted, ruinous debate for Newman, whose career as a writer effectively ended until the *Apologia*, at the end of which Newman was delated to Rome)—bears an interesting parallel to Tyrrell's case. In both cases the Latin meaning of a word was urged against its possible sense in English; in both cases the opponent seemed rather pig-headed than otherwise, and the hierarchy betrayed a moral panic close to despotism ('Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England, and you will see that he will make use of the laity against your Grace': p. 42) and in both cases vindication in argument did not come. *ibid.*, intro; pp. 54ff

⁷⁸An argument which has been tried often, rarely with success: Baudelaire Charles and Théophile Gautier, *Les fleurs du mal*, Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1868, p. 253.

⁷⁹Sagovsky, *On God's side*, pp. 91–2. ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, chs. 8, 9.

⁸¹Tyrrell provides an account of the dénouement in George Tyrrell, *A Much Abused Letter*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1906, pp. 1 ff.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 7. ⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 11. ⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 23. ⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 22. ⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 25. ⁸⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 41–2.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 54. ⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 55. ⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 51. ⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 71. ⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 74. ⁹³*Ibid.*, p. 75.

dogmata.

The same line is taken with the notion of Christ: firstly we have ‘christs of all ages, races, religions, and degrees’;⁹⁴ thence we derive a ‘mystical Christ’, such that

When you hear Mass you can still do so with a desire and intention of uniting your life in self-sacrifice with this endless, world-wide self-sacrifice of the mystical Christ...⁹⁵

And from this rather bizarre proposition (but Cf. Teilhard!) we can, apparently, build everything back, providing we are prepared to look on official theology as so much phantasmal system-building—with arrogant pretensions, claiming ‘the consensus of theologians cannot err.’⁹⁶

Tyrrell’s irony⁹⁷ and the nature of a bootstrapping *ad hominem* were entirely lost on his critics.⁹⁸ But his methodology was more than enough to condemn him:

...theology which strives to translate revelation from the imaginative language of prophecy into the conceptual language of contemporary scientific thought; which strives to define Christ and to define the Church so as to satisfy the exigencies of our understanding... The understanding is subject to a process of rapid transformation from generation to generation. According as the results of experience, observation, and inquiry accumulate, new arrangements, new systems of classification, new methods are requisite to deal with this tangle of matter and get it into serviceable shape and order. It is the function of theology to find place in *this* system, for the truths of the Christian revelation...⁹⁹

This is not *ad hominem*: this is only the introduction. Likewise for the rest of the letter: Tyrrell claims in the same breath that the letter ‘supposes explicitly that things are as bad, not as the writer but, as the recipient imagines’; yet refuses to disown his argument: ‘There is no statement...which is not theologically defensible. Yet...it is a medicine for extreme cases.’¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, ‘I...am in the same position as they’—if not in the same *condition*—‘and I am bound in conscience to share with my fellow-sufferers those considerations which enable me to cling to the church with implicit faith in spite of temporary theological obscurities’¹⁰¹—in other words to get at the truth *behind* the obscuring dogmata. The arguments are *ad hominem*, but the position is Tyrrell’s.¹⁰²

In *this* sense—intentionally, affectively—Tyrrell, unlike Loisy, would remain Cath-

⁹⁴Tyrrell, *A Much Abused Letter*, p. 84. ⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 87; Tyrrell apologises for his general rudeness to theologians on p. 96.

⁹⁷those responsible for the Crucifixion were ‘on the whole’ ‘perhaps more wrong than right’: *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹⁸Throughout this thesis I use the phrase *argumentum ad hominem* in its original, Lockean sense: ‘to press a man with consequences drawn from his own principles or concessions.’ (John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, London: Tegg, 1825, IV.17 (524)) Such an argument is not a fallacy, but all it can do is demonstrate the incoherence of another position: since the premises are assumed hypothetically, they cannot be relied upon for any positive conclusion. (For a brief history, see Hans Hansen, ‘Fallacies’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2023, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023)

⁹⁹Tyrrell, *A Much Abused Letter*, p. 29. ¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 7. ¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

¹⁰²It is possible to argue *ad hominem* to a positive conclusion, providing either the arguments used stand on their own, or one eventually throws them away. Tyrrell was damned on either horn: if his minimalism stands by itself, why trouble believing conventional doctrine at all? And if the arguments are not *true*, one is converting by duplicity.

olic.¹⁰³ But the theoretical catastrophe required desperate measures:

As to *symbolism* it has been always the device through which religious transitions have been *healthily* accomplished. Where the priests resist symbolism, the result is what we see in France – an abrupt & disastrous breach with [the] past; a crude revolt against religion in any form. Here in England there is enough religious spirit left to make a fairly quiet transition possible. And so though I do not pretend to be *theologically* orthodox (God forbid!) I will continue to call myself Catholic & Christian. As a programme of *action* I wish all Modernists would unite on their *minimum* & leave outstanding differences to the future. That *minimum* is the denial of papal infallibility & juridical supremacy.... It would ensure the sympathy of the whole world. Our *first* need is freedom from this tyranny. The battle has been won for scholars by Döllinger & Friedrich & Schulte, but the results have never been popularised. It is you Latins who have popularised the absolutist principle – all or nothing; the Pope or atheism; no Pope no Catholicism etc. The idea of limits & constitutional authority, of a legal opposition as a co-factor of government has gone out of your minds through centuries of Caesarism – political or ecclesiastical. Your republics & democracies are as absolutists as your monarchies. That is what makes it so hopeless. And then the Italians' national vanity & avarice cling to the Pope-God.¹⁰⁴

Loisy

For my purposes it is sufficient to establish that Loisy, like Tyrrell, proposes an evolutionary Church whose *content* is more or less entirely subordinated to its *life*, thus bringing him more or less under the condemnation of *Pascendi*, and showing exactly where he and *Ressourcement* differ on the notion of Tradition. Thus we consider only one work, and only one element within that work. It is worth noting immediately that Loisy is a great deal more complicated, both as a thinker and as a Catholic, than this sketch is able to suggest, but the element presented here is still authentically his.¹⁰⁵

L'ÉVANGILE ET L'ÉGLISE

Loisy's *L'évangile et l'église*¹⁰⁶ is a response to Harnack's then radical ideas on the origins of Christianity and its subsequent corruption by organised religion. Despite

¹⁰³The refusal of Catholic burial was for fear of public scandal after Bremond and Petre wrote a letter to the Times to establish that Tyrrell had died 'fortified by the rites of the Church' without any recantation. Bp. Amigo—no friend in any case of Modernism—could hardly ignore such a challenge. In the event he was buried in the Anglican churchyard, and Bremond said the ordinary graveside prayers and blessed the coffin, for which he was suspended. (Sagovsky, *On God's side*, by his bishop: 261; but in fact the suspension came from Rome, a fact successfully kept quiet, mentioned freely in letters: Bremond and Blondel, *Correspondance*) The suspension was lifted after Bremond subscribed to *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili* and apologised for 'tout ce qu'il a fait et dit de répréhensible au moment des funérailles'—a formula the elasticity of which suggests that the implementation of *Pascendi* could still be mild-mannered, at any rate when the accused was prepared to subscribe and deliberately submissive. (Barmann, *Baron Friedrich Von Hügel and the modernist crisis in England*, 230 n. 2; cf. 229.)

¹⁰⁴Tyrrell to Houtin, 4 January 1908 Loome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism*, p. 402.

¹⁰⁵For a broader portrait, see Pierre Guérin, 'La Pensée religieuse d'Alfred Loisy', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 37.4 (1957), pp. 294–330.

¹⁰⁶Alfred Loisy, *L'évangile et l'église*, 3rd ed., Bellevue: Chez l'auteur, 1904.

his protest that he is not engaged in apologetics¹⁰⁷ Loisy's basic target is to present some acceptable sketch of the true relation between history and theology in such a way as to be convincing to his interlocutors, whilst at the same time avoiding a mere *ad hominem*: Loisy intends what he says to be *true*, albeit incomplete. His basic method is to replace Harnack's frenzied attempt to strip away later developments in order to get at the aboriginal reality with a respect for the *life* of the Church: if we are allowed to view the evolution of the Church as demonstrative of its origins, then much of Harnack's criticism falls flat.¹⁰⁸ Such reasoning was unlikely to please; equally unpopular was Loisy's immediate jump into source-criticism¹⁰⁹ and willingness to acknowledge historical errors in the gospel narratives. More damning still would be Loisy's assertion that a great number of biblical events—the transfiguration, for instance—were in reality symbolic expressions of the divinity of the Resurrected reflected back into his earlier life; but still, the resurrection remained. What is interesting here is Loisy's *method*: development is proof of vitality, of the religious spirit truly capturing the essence of Jesus' claim, and thus a sign that the critic is on the right track.¹¹⁰

In his particulars Loisy seems mostly to trade one oversimplified idea for another:

L'idée du royaume céleste n'est donc pas autre chose qu'une grande espérance, et c'est dans cette espérance que l'historien doit mettre d'abord l'essence de l'Évangile, ou bien il ne la mettra nulle part, aucune autre idée ne tenant autant de place et une place aussi souveraine dans l'enseignement de Jésus.¹¹¹

which is fundamentally meaningless as hope must be hope *for some object*, and if, as Loisy avers, the *object* is the Kingdom, we immediately drag in the whole conceptual question of the eschaton, with its myriad definitions needed to make any kind of sense of our language. This is exactly what Loisy does¹¹² whilst ignoring the problem.

So far, however, so unsurprising, and Loisy might legitimately object that he is not doing metaphysics, but simply showing, *contra Harnackem*, that the 'kingdom of heaven' is a social concept, and thus brings in the community from the very beginning, thereby legitimising the later developments of that community. His targets are polemic: Harnack had urged the subtraction of anything in the old testament from the new in order to determine what was distinctive; Loisy shows that if it comes to that there is very little *entirely* absent from the old, and that in any case Jesus did not reason this way.¹¹³ It is somewhat unclear to what degree Loisy places the coming of the kingdom here on earth and what degree it comes in the hereafter, but he clearly entertains both ideas and, like Harnack, rejects any purely social reading as anachronistic. Indeed the rejection of anachronism is his target:

L'Évangile n'est pas entré dans le monde comme un absolu inconditionné, se résumant en une vérité unique et immuable, mais comme une croyance vivante, concrète et complexe, dont l'évolution procède sans doute de la force intime qui l'a faite durable, mais n'en a pas moins été nécessairement influencée en tout, et dès le principe, par le milieu où elle s'est produite et où elle a grandi. Cette croyance se définit dans l'idée du règne de Dieu. L'idée du Dieu Père n'en est qu'un élément, traditionnel, comme

¹⁰⁷Loisy, *L'évangile et l'église*, p. vii. ¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. xxiv–xxx. ¹⁰⁹Ibid., ch. 1. ¹¹⁰e.g. *ibid.*, p. 23. ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹²elle est objective et ne consiste pas uniquement dans la sainteté du croyant ni dans l'amour qui l'unit à Dieu, mais elle implique toutes les conditions d'une vie heureuse': *ibid.*, p. 42.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 45ff.

tout le reste, par son origine, et qui a son histoire, comme tout le reste, dans le développement général du christianisme.¹¹⁴

This argument is certainly sufficient to deal with Harnack: the essence of the gospel consists in something which has to be worked out, and thus the historical process of working it out can be attached to the gospel, and we are home and dry. Yet the cost of this method is high. It is in this context that one must understand Loisy's celebrated formula: *Jésus annonçait le royaume, et c'est l'église qui est venue*—not come to *replace* the kingdom, but come as a necessary organisational step on the way to realising the kingdom, for Loisy goes on:

Elle est venue en élargissant la forme de l'Évangile, qui était impossible à garder telle quelle, dès que le ministère de Jésus eut été clos par la passion. Il n'est aucune institution sur la terre ni dans l'histoire des hommes dont on ne puisse contester la légitimité et la valeur, si l'on pose en principe que rien n'a droit d'être que dans son état originel. Ce principe est contraire à la loi de la vie, laquelle est un mouvement et effort continuels d'adaptation à des conditions perpétuellement variables et nouvelles. Le christianisme n'a pas échappé à cette loi, et il ne faut pas le blâmer de s'y être soumis. Il ne pouvait pas faire autrement.¹¹⁵

This would offend any number of contemporaries by the mere *suggestion* of historical development, but the more intelligent would be able to reconcile it with the faith so long as the development in question was the unpacking of a moment of revelation too great for any one time. After all, the bible itself witnesses to a developing understanding of the faith among the Apostles. But this is just what Loisy denies. Yes, the original ideas are still present in their developed form:

La conservation de son état primitif était impossible, et la restauration de cet état l'est également, parce que les conditions dans lesquelles s'est produit l'Évangile ont à jamais disparu. L'histoire montre l'évolution des éléments qui le constituaient. Ces éléments ont subi et ne pouvaient manquer de subir beaucoup de transformations reconnaissables, et il est aisé de voir ce qui représente maintenant, dans l'Église catholique, l'idée du royaume céleste, l'idée du Messie agent du royaume, l'idée de l'apostolat ou de la prédication du royaume, c'est-à-dire les éléments essentiels de l'Évangile vivant, devenus ce qu'ils ont eu besoin d'être pour subsister. La théorie du royaume purement intérieur les supprime et fait abstraction de l'Évangile réel. La tradition de l'Église les garde, en les interprétant et les adaptant à la condition changeante de l'humanité.

but, crucially, this is attributable not to God (at any rate not to Jesus) but to the evolutionary effect of time:

Il serait absurde d'exiger que le Christ eût déterminé d'avance les interprétations et adaptations que le temps devait provoquer, puisqu'elles n'avaient aucune raison d'être avant l'heure qui les rendait nécessaires. Il n'était *ni possible* ni utile que l'avenir de l'Église fût révélé par Jésus à ses disciples. La pensée que leur léguaient le Sauveur était qu'il fallait continuer à vouloir, à préparer, à attendre, à réaliser le royaume de Dieu. La

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 72. ¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 156-7.

perspective du royaume s'est élargie et modifiée, celle de son avènement définitif a reculé, mais le but de l'Évangile est resté le but de l'Église.¹¹⁶

Thus *in practice* Loisy's dictum implies, however much he asserts the contrary, a limitation in the horizons of Jesus and thus a defect in Christology. In vain does Loisy point out a great deal of similarity between his evolutionary church and the traditional notion of the Church Militant being replaced with the Church Triumphant. He does not consider it necessary to show either (i) how the *metaphysical* elaborations of the Church were contained somehow in the experience the Apostles had of Christ on earth (which will be Blondel's approach) nor (ii) how the development of this Church is actively providential. Neither step is impossible and he would doubtless plead that he is not doing theology; but the net effect of his presentation (quite aside from occasional assertions which are scarcely reconcilable with orthodoxy) is to replace the idea of truth with a narrative of historical exigence.

Thus, even without the crude misrepresentation of a dictum out of context which is so common (for Loisy the Church *is* the Kingdom, albeit developed beyond Jesus' horizons) what Loisy is suggesting is nothing less than the wholesale replacement of the traditional idea of revelation with a new doctrine of the gradual inspiration of a community *mistakenly* under the impression it is elaborating a primal revelation.¹¹⁷ Loisy then *does* (as *Pascendi* charges the Modernists) take life as proof of truth, although he is not (*pace Pascendi*) interested in *speculative* truth. For Loisy, the formulae of the faith are not to be treated outside the context of their role in the life of the Church: it is this life which gives them meaning and in which they play a role. Very well: but are they *true* or not? Taking these principles to their logical conclusion (which Loisy, whose interest in philosophy seems to have been limited, does not) the question is absurd: the very guarantee that these ideas, and not others, properly adapt the original message *is* the life of the Church.

This is an idea at once extremely close and totally removed from the doctrine of tradition which *Ressourcement* proposed and I intend to defend. It differs in that for Loisy, this concordance is brought about by the evolutionary life of the Church and not in any sense grounded in the metaphysical content of the original. In practice Loisy went a lot further and treated a great deal of the new testament as mythological expression of later philosophical ideas, but even discounting all these asides as ultimately irrelevant to his argument, we are still left with the question of *why* (for instance) the hypostatic union should be true and the contrary false, merely because a Church which has adapted successfully to such-and-such a time has proclaimed it in the past. Loisy's history, despite his intentions to the contrary, has a metaphysical content precisely because metaphysics is excluded *ab initio*. If the Church did not come to say X rather than not-X because X (understood, of course, in the theological and philosophical grammar in which it is posed) is *truer* than not-X, (but merely because its adaption and such-and-such a time demanded the rejection of not-X and the enunciation of X, for reasons whose truth value is of no concern to us) then we have no reason to hold X merely because the Church is successful and does so. Phlogiston was a successful theory in its time; so was blood-letting. But if the development of the Church is not only evidence of a vitality which testifies to the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit, but actually a quantitative accumulation of

¹¹⁶Loisy, *L'évangile et l'église*, 157, my italics.

¹¹⁷He continues exactly as one would expect: the Roman church is the most successful at fulfilling this mission of adaption whilst remaining faithful to the coming of the kingdom (p. 168); the development of doctrine is a necessary condition of the Church adapting itself. (ch 5)

true propositions (whatever *else* it may be) then our ideas need to be metaphysically and not merely chronologically grounded in their predecessors, all the way up the chain and back to the first preaching of the gospel: and it is precisely this notion of development which Harnack and Loisy agree in regarding as unfruitful.

Thus, whilst Loisy's notion of development might be sufficient, like Tyrrell's, as an *argumentum ad hominem* providing one then threw it away and accepted the veracity of doctrinal statements on *other* grounds, it is ultimately incompatible with faith, unless that faith is content to remain without concepts. An option equally unpalatable to the Anti-Modernists and to *Ressourcement*.

FALLOUT

After *Pascendi* and *Lamentabili* it was clear such ideas were not in favour. Leaving aside provocations on Loisy's side and from the anticlerical government in general¹¹⁸ as ultimately irrelevant in matters of conduct, the denouement is remarkable for the staggering absence of Christian charity displayed by the authorities. Loisy refused unqualified subscription to *Lamentabili* and proposed a middle ground;¹¹⁹ this was rejected; Loisy appealed to Rome and wrote directly to the pope, proposing to sacrifice his scholarly career, withdraw his books from publication, and retire in silence rather than violate his conscience. The response was calculated cruelty:

J'ai reçu du Rév. abbé Loisy une lettre...en laquelle il fait appel à mon cœur ; mais cette lettre, il ne l'a pas écrite avec cœur.

All Loisy's proposed sacrifices are nullified *par la protestation explicite de ne pouvoir renoncer au résultat de ses travaux*. Rather Loisy should submit, and then,

L'Eglise, loin de lui imposer le silence, sera bien heureuse qu'il puisse manifester la pureté et l'intégrité de ses rétractations en mettant en pratique le précepte donné par saint Rémi à Clovis: *Succende quod adorasti, et adora quod incendisti*.¹²⁰

'And the young men spake unto him saying; thus shall ye answer them: my little finger is thicker than my father's right hand; my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.' To such an authority only one reaction could be expected: 'what portion have we in David?'¹²¹

In any case the major excommunication which followed, and the almost total loss of faith on Loisy's side,¹²² ended his ecclesiastical importance. In later years he devoted himself to publishing on critical questions, and increasingly acerbic semi-biographical works, in which he published liberal extracts from the letters of his

¹¹⁸Loisy had already been nominated to two sees in 1902; needless to say the nominations were rejected: Harvey Hill, 'French Politics and Alfred Loisy's Modernism', *Church History* 67.3 (1998), pp. 525–6.

¹¹⁹Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire religieuse de notre temps*, 313ff.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 360–1. This remarkable text is apparently conserved in the original Italian in the archdiocesan archives—yet apparently still unpublished.

¹²¹When the *succende* was read out, Loisy exclaimed: *cela n'a pas de sens!* (*ibid.*, p. 365) In any case he could not understand why Rome would desire *lying* submission (pp. 358, 363) and judged, bitterly, that the Church was prepared to break a mind in order to save a soul: 'Je sais bien et je savais dès lors qu'ils ne sentaient pas l'atrocité de leur tyrannie, qu'ils se jugeaient bons, et que, suprême horreur, ils l'étaient. Ils étaient cruels et absurdes avec bonté, incurablement. Ils voulaient me tuer l'esprit, pour me sauver de l'erreur. J'avais disserté sur les inconvénients du régime intellectuel de l'Eglise catholique à cette heure, je voyais ce régime dans l'étalage de son fanatisme bienveillant, de sa cruauté charitable, de sa bonté homicide' (p. 363)

¹²²Guérin, 'La Pensée religieuse d'Alfred Loisy'.

correspondents, sat in judgement on their intelligence and tended to imply that they were rather less orthodox than they let on.¹²³ Loisy's influence in the Church was effectively over, although he continued to provoke polemic, including in his defence.¹²⁴

Conclusion: the Modernists' target

Both Tyrrell and Loisy ultimately have the same concerns: (i) reconciling the faith with the findings of history, and (ii) paying due respect to religious experience, without which there would be no religion. In both cases the solutions adopted failed, above all because they gave up on any real motive for faith to replace the apparently defunct traditional candidates. The faith will withstand *some* attack on naive assumptions of facticity and corresponding re-reading of fundamental documents, but not a wholesale shift of the entire paradigm. What justifies believing after such a shift? What establishes continuity between those who profess that a doctrine means X and those who profess that the statement is *literally* false, but indicative of a greater truth—a truth whose correspondence with the earlier formula is retrodictable but so far from predictable as to be a patent contradiction? What, in sort, guarantees the *continuity* of such a religious change? *Pascendi* was quite right to protest that the whole thing did away with a true faith entirely. (Moreover its “caricatured” historian taking his premises from agnostic philosophy looks a good deal less implausible.)

To this challenge—the survival of the faith in the face of “modern science” (which meant history, and evolutionary history at that¹²⁵) and modern self-understanding (i.e. anthropological and philosophical discourse) the answer of the Modernists was effectively a transposition into a different system, which claimed to retain everything which was essential in the old. The answer of the Anti-Modernists was to teach modern man to speak Latin, and to belittle (with some justification) the philosophical presuppositions of his history. The answer of *Ressourcement* was to effect a *translation* not of dogmata, but of the contemplative attitude from which the dogmata had been elaborated. Such a translation was predictably continuous exactly insofar as it was faithful; grasping in a different idiom the intentional standpoint from which the dogmata were elaborated rendered them retrodictably accessible.¹²⁶

¹²³Such tactics were not welcome: see Lagger's protests (Louis De Lagger, 'Mgr Mignot et M. Loisy' [1933], pp. 164–5) or Rivière's stinging review of one such work (Jean Rivière, 'Alfred Loisy, George Tyrrell et Henri Bremond, 1936' [1937]). In any case Loisy appears to have demonstrably overstated his case, as did the professedly atheist Albert Houtin, who went a good deal further still. The bitterness of Houtin's quarrel with Loisy could still shock in 1961 (Pierre Guérin, 'La Vie et l'Œuvre de Loisy' [1961]).

¹²⁴'Si émouvante et convaincante qu'elle paraisse au lecteur entièrement détaché que je suis moi-même, cette apologie eut dans le milieu catholique un succès tout contraire...' Leblanc, *Un clerc qui n'a pas trahi*, p. 11. The whole work continues in the same vein. Cf footnote 50 on page 46.

¹²⁵Pace Michael F. Reardon, 'Science and Religious Modernism', *The Journal of Religion* 57.1 (1977), pp. 48–63. Although Reardon certainly demonstrates that Le Roy and Wilbois directly considered the problem of the meaning of statements in *physical* science (p. 54) (and one could construct a kind of pragmatist philosophy of science from Blondel) in point of fact none of the authors we are concerned with did so. Blondel (and Laberthonnière) had, in any case, as little time for the philosophy (Laberthonnière: 'or rather the absence of philosophy' 'Lucien Laberthonnière, le « Annales de philosophie chrétienne » e l'enciclica *Pascendi*', *La condanna del modernismo, Documenti, interpretazioni, conseguenze*, ed. by Claus Arnold and Giovanni Vian, Rome: Viella, 2010, p. 143)) of Le Roy as for his politics.

¹²⁶This method is a good deal more modest: it presumes the basic reliability of the traditional historical claims and would have been useless to Tyrrell exactly insofar as he thought them exploded. Fortunately they aren't.

Ressourcement

This translated contemplative attitude is what I mean by *Ressourcement's* account of Tradition. I will turn in a moment (chapter 3 on page 73) to its philosophical basis, and then show it in action as the reuniting of Spirituality and Theology (chapter 4 on page 117). Thus the speculative claim stands or falls with my account of *Ressourcement* Tradition. But I must show historical claim (that *Ressourcement* saw things in these terms) to be at least plausible.¹²⁷

So far I have argued that, *pace* most historical interpreters,¹²⁸ the Modernism of *Pascendi* was to be found, broadly speaking, in the principal writers who ended up condemned by it, albeit with a completely different genesis and a different motivation. Moreover, although the *reality* of the Anti-Modernist campaign deserves everything which has ever been urged against it, the *theory* was nothing so silly as a general condemnation of Modernity for being Modern, or any of the other abundant caricatures.¹²⁹ The crisis was, fundamentally, a clash of ideas, and yet these ideas are curiously absent from most scholarly treatments of it.¹³⁰ What is almost entirely

¹²⁷I am skating lightly on the details, but as will become clear at the end of this thesis the work these notions do is ultimately limited to pointing out the genesis of the contemporary problems in the Church. Ultimately I am interested not in the doctrines (which have changed), nor in specific textual inheritance (nor the tired question of whether such-and-such a contemporary position or theologian is “modernist”) but in the two underlying *attitudes* which confronted one another in Modernism and Anti-Modernism, and the failed attempt by *Ressourcement* to show both insufficient *as attitudes*.

¹²⁸The general historiography of Modernism cannot be read with naivety. In French the field is dominated by the legacy of Poulat, (*quondam* worker-priest, co-founder of the sociology of religion at the CNRS). Poulat is textually impeccable, but assumes not only the *oversimplification* of Modernist/Anti-Modernist historiography (Emile Poulat, “Modernisme” et “Intégrisme”. Du concept polémique à l’irénisme critique’, *Archives de sociologie des religions* 14.27 [1969], pp. 3–28) but its factitiousness. Every “liberal” figure has a faith *sui generis* but certainly not orthodox—greater protest being greater evidence. Thus he suggests (*pace* any serious evidence) the probable absence of orthodox faith in Duchesne (An assertion now widespread Roger Aubert, ‘Du Nouveau Sur Mgr Duchesne’, *Revue théologique de Louvain* 8.2 [1977], p. 197) and numerous others. At times his narrative verges on fiction (e.g. the simply bizarre chapter written in the first person from Loisy’s perspective: Emile Poulat, *Critique et Mystique, Autour de Loisy ou la conscience catholique et l’esprit moderne*, Paris: centurion, 1984); at times he is entirely allusive. (Émile Poulat, ‘Un Jésus moderniste’, *Commentaire* 2.70 [1995]) His popular articles are as well written as they are conceptually confused. (E.g. Émile Poulat, ‘laïcité: de quoi parlons-nous?’, *Transversalités* 108 [2008], pp. 9–19)

Similar considerations (accounting for style) apply to the English, which descends via Vidler.

¹²⁹To take one example: Dupanloup (“liberal” bishop of Orléans; *Académicien*) is supposed to have proposed a novel “method of thesis and hypothesis” to explain away the Syllabus, of which the most fantastic accounts are given. In reality Dupanloup simply pointed out that the *contrapositive* (Dupanloup: *contradictoire*) has been confused with the *converse* or the *contrary*. The negation of “all Xs are Y” is not “no X is Y”, but “some X is not Y”. Thus in Dupanloup’s vocabulary the *general* statement (“Government should promote individual freedom”)—the *thesis*—may be acceptable whilst some instance of it (“laws against blasphemy should be revoked”)—the *hypothesis* may not. (Félix Dupanloup, *La convention du 15 Septembre et L’encyclique du 8 décembre*, 34th ed., Paris: Douniol, 1865, pp. 101, 105)

Newman made exactly the same point (‘all that the pope has done is to deny a universal’ John Henry Newman, ‘Letter to the Duke of Norfolk’, *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans*, vol. II, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900, p. 267), and the *Month* even considered drawing up a suitable list of particular propositions, before deciding it politically unwise.

¹³⁰For an excellent example, see Schultenover, *A view from Rome : on the eve of the modernist crisis*. Schultenover begins conventionally enough, with the memoirs of Fr. Martín, superior general of the Jesuits at the time of the expulsion of Tyrrell. He asserts immediately that ‘politics and theology were one’ (53) meaning *ecclesiastical* politics, and then proceeds to suggest that Martín’s dislike of Tyrrell was rooted in the Spanish-American war (67); and that Anti-Modernism was basically down to a traumatic loss of political prestige (164). He is thus driven elsewhere for some kind of explanation of the strength of the Roman reaction, and finds it in the most puerile stereotypes about the ‘Mediterranean Mind’ (168–76), for which the most preposterous claims are made, culminating in the quite gratuitous claim that this picture of a world of mafiosi, loyal to insiders and quite ruthless to those outside, is all down to Freudian influences (175).

lacking from our scholarship is a serious exploration of whether Modernism (on *Pascendi's* terms or any others) was ultimately *right* or not, and if so why—in other words, a serious theological engagement with Modernism, or at least its *problématique*. Absent this and we are left with politics.

Ultimately, *Pascendi* was useless, even whilst being largely correct. It was not even wrong to place philosophy *before* history in its account of the modernist position. But where such an insight, gently worded, might have opened up from the inside the apparently closed system of historical criticism in which Tyrrell lamented to find himself, laden with the usual heresiological insults and more than the usual patronising tone it was destined to fall on deaf ears. The anti-modernist movement proceeded along the lines suggested at the end of *Pascendi* (that is, by denunciations, vigilance committees, suppression, persecutions: in a word, as a police state) and not by the arguments suggested at the beginning. This history will continue to dog our argument, vitiating every attempt to avoid the catastrophic loss of systematic foundation which destroyed the edifice of post-conciliar theology. Inherent in this proceeding was a *lack of response* to the real questions the Modernists had posed. For the rest of this thesis I will sketch a position—which I believe to be more or less that which *Ressourcement* put forward—which endeavours to do exactly that; for now I confined myself to two examples of *Ressourcement* figures engaging with Modernism in order to show that their engagements are far too fundamental to be a mere smokescreen.

Chenu

What the Modernists lacked was not data, but eyes to see. Without the right kind of attention, more data only made matters worse: the “traditional” schemata of the neo-scholastics became for Tyrrell only a more confused jumble of irrelevances the more he learned. We have already seen Lubac making the same diagnosis about the theoretical edifices built up on the distinction between nature and grace: ‘too well separated to be really distinct’ this ‘doubling’ was ultimately a *stylistic* blunder, resolved by a sustained attention to the mystery of existence, before it was a conceptual mistake. Indeed, Lubac’s position stands (at any rate if the argument of the previous chapter succeeds) *independently* of his schematic claims.

We find the same focus on the intentional position of the thinking subject explicitly contrasted with the Modernist’s attempt to replace a worn out system with one completely different in Chenu’s *programme* for the Dominican house of *le saulchoir* whose regency it would ultimately lose him:

If Revelation, then, plays out in time, as part of an historical process—sacred history, but history all the same—centred on the historical fact of the incarnation; and if ever since then what is revealed has been written and presented in historical actions [*faits*] and texts, we find ourselves confronted head-on by this question: is not theology, and the faith which inspires it, subject to the jurisdiction of historical criticism? A suggestion which would seem *prima facie* to sacrifice the faith to relativism, and thereby to confine the work of theology inside a domain within which we could never truly encounter the *word of God*.

(Cf. Harvey Hill, ‘The politics of Loisy’s Modernist theology’, *Catholicism contending with modernity: Roman Catholic modernism and anti-modernism in historical context*, ed. by Darrell Jodock, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 187–9)

This is simply the problem of the historical method, and the consequent organisation of exegesis and the history of dogmata within the study of theology. One knows the sense of impending disaster [*inquiétude*] this gave rise to, which seemed to hang over theology for a good thirty years, not merely over its orthodoxy, assailed by modernism [*battue en brèche par le modernisme*], but over its own interior comportment, and the balance of its program of studies. A holistic account of the faith and its economy (*la notion intégrale de la foi et de son économie*) will allow us to consider this problem and establish our educational program without succumbing to the same fears.¹³¹

Thus for Chenu, the modernist *problématique* is completely intelligible, even if it is wrong. The question of history is indeed central, but a closer attention to the very historical process the Modernists were so sure rendered the faith suspect would, in fact, lead to quite the opposite conclusion:

Theology flows out of faith: faith gives birth to it, by faith. It is born from the weakness of faith, from its radical weakness: that radical weakness inherent when a mind (*esprit*) assents to propositions which it neither perceives nor can take the measure of.¹³² But it is born also from the strength of faith: that strength which stores up in a soul striving to grasp hold of the real perception of the mysterious divine reality, *substantia rerum sperandarum*.

Which is to say: certainly, faith is an historical event in the life of the believer, an event more or less mystical; but it is precisely this event which consists in 'assenting to propositions beyond the measure of the intellect'. *The phenomenological structure of faith points to a real, thinkable (if not graspable) reality*. Theology is not (as Tyrrell (and Bergson) present it) a *post-factum* attempt to make sense of a basically opaque *datum* of mystical experience, measured against that experience only indirectly and with difficulty. Rather the experience of faith is concrete. *What it is that we believe* is as contained in the act *believing as that we believe*; even if *what it is* is only imperfectly graspable (because it is more, not less, than we can say). Thus for Chenu

It took the conjunction of modernist historicism *and a false theology of the faith* to provoke, around the year 1900, such a crisis in the study of the sources of revelation and the development of the theological method. Such a modernist historicism took history as an absolute (whereas only the faith is absolute); such a false theology of the faith gave up on its substantially *supernatural* character fearing that otherwise it would prove impossible rationally to defend the notion of a mystical assent.¹³³

By 'history' Chenu does not merely mean 'historical science'. The consensus of historians is, of course, imperfect, and the consensus of Biblical historians in the early twentieth century was a good deal further from perfect than any of the Modernists realised. But Chenu is concerned with what is *revealed* in a historical event considered

¹³¹Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Une école de théologie, Le Saulchoir*, Paris: Cerf, 1985, pp. 134–5. Tr. rather free.

¹³²Chenu is here alluding to the technical sense of the *measure* and *measuring* of knowledge in Thomas: *measuring* knowledge *makes* things as they are, where knowledge which is *measured* by things simply conforms to the world. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York: Benziger, 1947, I.14.8.

¹³³Chenu, *Une école de théologie*, p. 138; my italics.

simply as such. Only the eyes of faith are able to see the supernatural at work: to the historian the most supernatural event is considered only in its mundane (and thus natural) effects. Chenu seems for a moment to drive a complete wedge between faith and science, theology and history:

Historical (biblical) exegesis and the history of dogmata (Tradition) are by their very name works of history, and thus as history carried out according to its ways and procedures, in the light it is able to bring to bear, with complete sincerity and loyalty to the historical method; whilst scriptural, patristic, symbolic and all the rest of positive theology develops in the light of faith and according to its criteria, since positive theology is a true branch of theology.

Yet this distinction is only formal, not real:

The road from Athens to Piraeus is not the same as that from Piraeus to Athens. Should the distinction between these two seem an entirely abstract act of discernment, and their correlation subtle, it should be remembered that the correlation of the divine and the human in revelation—that revelation of the word of God which reached its apex with the revelation of the Word made flesh—is itself of a matter of subtle conception and expression. As to the apparent over-subtlety of discernment involved in speaking thus, it is precisely these methodological abstractions which—as in any scientific endeavour—guarantee the probity of research and supply an internal ordering to the process. The disciplined consideration of *formal objects* is one of the most precious gifts imparted by a Thomistic education; and it was precisely the terrible confusion of ideas, methods and vocabularies, even among the best theologians during the modernist crisis which underlined the necessity and even the urgency of making these distinctions.¹³⁴

The road from Athens to Piraeus is not the same as that from Piraeus to Athens. In other words, the intentional stance with which one approaches the bare historical facts is constitutive of one's conclusions; and recognising these stances—making the formal distinctions between branches of study—is precisely what prevents one *either* compromising one's scholarship (as Chenu suggests the neo-scholastics had done) or ending in heresy (as the Modernists did). From this difference of intentional stance Chenu elaborates the entire distinction between history and theology, excluding *ab initio* the kind of *historical* conclusion that 'orthodoxy [is] impossible' to which Tyrrell came. There remains, of course, the possibility that there is *no* historical datum on which faith can be built (i.e. that the resurrection never happened, or that the virgin birth was purely symbolic, or that Christ did not in any sense found a Church). This Chenu does not address since he (rightly) assumed it nonsense; but the vast majority of the arguments for such positions brought forward by a Harnack or a Loisy are predicated on precisely this confusion of intentional stance which Chenu addresses.

Congar

The same reasoning, *mutatis mutandis*, can be found in Congar, both in his early and later periods—with, once again, the same concern for existence we earlier saw in

¹³⁴Chenu, *Une école de théologie*, p. 139. Once again my translation is necessarily rather free.

Lubac. In Congar's case the sources are always voluminous, but for an authoritative statement on his understanding of the work of theology we could do worse than to turn to his article of the same name in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*. The article is enormous: it spans 161 columns with multiple subheadings in which Congar presents an exposition of the history, structure, conditions, crises and practice of theology from the fathers down to 1946, giving bibliographies in multiple languages for each section. The text was "translated" into English and published as *A History of Theology*; unfortunately the translation is so inaccurate as to be useless when it is not merely risible; a fact which would be unimportant had not the "new preface" of Fr. Guthrie's translation had Congar made the startling claim that *Ressourcement* authors maintained that

even though their position was basically modernistic, it was not necessarily destructive. It centred on two key points: (1) a distinction which was really a disjunction between *faith* and *belief*, the latter being the ideological structure in which faith finds expression; (2) the conception of the relation between dogmatic pronouncements and religious realities as a relation of symbol to reality, not as an expression *proper* (however inadequate) to reality.¹³⁵

Fortunately for this thesis, Congar said nothing of the sort. Guthrie claimed his preface to be an entirely new work by Congar, but it was in fact published elsewhere,¹³⁶ and a reviewer at the time noticed that Congar had in fact said the opposite:

Ces auteurs ne professaient pas la philosophie ruineuse qui caractérisait essentiellement les positions modernistes et que l'on peut résumer en ces deux points: (1) une distinction, voire une disjonction, entre *foi* et *croissance*, celle-ci étant la structure idéologique dans laquelle s'exprime celle-là, (2) la conception du rapport entre les énoncés dogmatiques et les réalités religieuses comme un rapport de symbole à réalité, non d'expression *propre* (même si elle demeurait inadéquate) à réalité.¹³⁷

Thus Congar in 1967 (or just before) considered that Modernism was 'ruinous', and consisted precisely in making the hard distinction between 'apparent' and 'actual' truth with which *Pascendi* charged the movement. This is in accord with what he says about Modernism in the article to which this essay was (curiously) attached as preface:

Modernism brought into sharp relief for catholic theology the double problem of its correspondence (*homogénéité*), even at its most scientific and rational, with Revelation, and its relationship with its sources—positive theology—henceforth to be submitted to historical and critical methods: the Bible, the history of Tradition and of institutions, and so on.¹³⁸

¹³⁵Yves Congar, *A History of Theology*, ed. and trans. from the French by Hunter Guthrie, New York: Doubleday, 1968, p. 10.

¹³⁶Congar apparently reused prefaces and I have seen substantially identical prefaces in multiple theses.

¹³⁷Congar, *Situations et tâches de la théologie*, 1967, cited in David L. Balás, 'A History of Theology by Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P. (review)', *The Thomist* 34.2 (1970), p. 321.

¹³⁸Yves Congar, 'Théologie', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. by Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangenot and Emile Amann, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1946, col. 341–502, 441. (Lit. *états anciens et mobiles de la tradition et des institutions*.)

But this is to take Congar backwards. Reading forwards, his claims are much more interesting than merely not modernist. The majority of Congar's article is historical (even when systematic) and he considers *modern theology* to be characterised 'above all' by

(1) the birth of new problems and intellectual needs; (2) the breaking up of the sense of *system* (*synthèse*) and *unity* so characteristic of the Middle Ages (and this in all domains); and (3) the birth of new forms of activity and research. This breaking apart began in the fifteenth century and continued apace until the mid nineteenth, when attempts at elaborating some kind of new system began to be made.¹³⁹

These new attempts Congar classifies into 'humanist, lutheran, scholastic (traditional), mystical and scholastic (progressive)'—a somewhat eclectic collection, but Congar's view is broad and some kind of classification was necessary. All these forms of thought respond to the "new" problems—which began in the fifteenth century!—which are in turn classified into (1) spiritual and vital needs, (2) the pressure of criticism and history and (3) a new cultural and anthropological orientation in society. In the first category we find the usual claims about late mediaeval thought descending into endless philosophical hair-splitting and losing the *theological* sense of the great mediaeval theologians, but also the rise of a more or less anti-theological mysticism. Yet for Congar the reaction which led to this flight into mysticism is not "anti-scholasticism" but 'the need to go beyond *ratio* and discover *intellectus*'—that is, the language of Roussetot, applied by him and later by Lubac to the *twentieth* century. Likewise, 'historical criticism' begins not abruptly in Germany in the eighteenth century, but among the humanists and mixed up with all the confusion of the Reformation; and most interestingly, the 'new cultural and anthropological orientations' begin for Congar with the subjectivism of Renaissance anthropology, and

this is extremely important and is of concern for theology not merely externally but structurally. For theology, by definition, implies at the very beginning the act of faith, and as it elaborates upon it depends on human thinking (*usage de l'esprit humain*). But the impetus we find here tends to affect, more or less, the conception of these two things: that of the act of faith, and of the labour of the intellect. New demands, *barely elaborated in the religion of countries which remained Catholic*, grew up rather in German and English speaking countries, which had become largely protestant, and thence they were to come to again, toward the end of the nineteenth century, in the form of those problems and attempted solutions which, poorly dealt with under the defective forms of "pragmatism" and "modernism", continue to trouble our theology today when we find them on our doorsteps.¹⁴⁰

From this larger perspective all the movements Congar named have this in common: they are driven by more or less the same problem (the new anthropological and hence philosophical orientation of modernity) and all more or less fall apart into increasing specialisation and arcanity.¹⁴¹ Against this backdrop emerges the *new* theology—manualism—which builds a more or less homogenous system of doctrines out of really disparate materials by the force of an overarching schema, and eventually

¹³⁹Congar, 'Théologie', 441. ¹⁴⁰Ibid., 412. ¹⁴¹Ibid., 431.

finds itself thereby effectively subject to whatever philosophical presuppositions have been drawn upon to parcel up the terrain.¹⁴² This is pure *Ressourcement* historiography because it is pure *ad fontes*, but Congar writes without rancour. The problem with the manuals, for him, is not that they are “dry and stuffy” or any other such worn out slogan (Congar’s own textbook writing is perfectly capable of being “dry and stuffy” if concision and not style is the order of the day) but that the *old* manuals (the Encyclopedias) lacked any real internal order. Thus he moves on to consider the renewal of theology in the nineteenth century, passing briefly and positively over so-called “Romantic theology”;¹⁴³ devoting more time to a (positive) analysis of neo-scholasticism (the *new* manualism or rather commentary, distinguished from the old by its attentiveness directly to its scholastic sources, albeit only within its own ahistorical framework)¹⁴⁴ and a sketch of the rise of criticism¹⁴⁵ before turning to ‘the crisis in the teaching of theology and Modernism’.

Congar considers these to be more or less equivalent: because theology could not be *taught* in a manner which could make sense of the kind of “learned criticism” traditional doctrines were receiving in all quarters by the mid-nineteenth century, students were forced to cast about for some notion of their own devising. Modernism was an attempt to plug this hole which, Congar claims, failed properly to distinguish between *dogma* and *theology* (i.e. between the theological reality and its systematic presentation) and thus thought that *both* had to come down under the withering fire of criticism, or survive as mere unconnected symbols of an in fact completely different truth.¹⁴⁶ This is Congar’s claim from 1967 with which we began, but situated in its historical narrative it is more than a mere assertion that *Pascendi* had a point: this rupture between (symbolical) statement and truth is the conclusion of a long process of confusion between the theological superstructure without which doctrine would be invisible or at least entirely indefinite, and the doctrine itself, and Modernism has had the salutary effect of bringing that distinction out into the foreground.¹⁴⁷

This distinction, Congar thinks, is the real way forward, and it is exemplified in works like Gardeil’s *Le donnée révélé et la théologie*; yet it is a distinction without an opposition: theology is concordant with doctrine, and doctrine with revelation.¹⁴⁸ This is what Congar sees as the distinctively *theological* response to the problems posed by modern criticism (methodologically)¹⁴⁹ and “the modern orientation” in general (he insists for good measure on the need for a truly *speculative* content if such theology is going to have any content at all).¹⁵⁰ In other words, for Congar, as for Chenu, the Modernist *problématique* was a tremendously distorted version of a real question, and *that* question was a particular and burning version of a general question which had been building up steam ever since the disintegration of the old mediaeval order demanded with increasing insistence that *any* system should justify itself on the strength of something more than mere internal relation. Congar is perhaps the weakest *Ressourcement* author in response to this question, adept at formulating the problem and articulate about the role of *praxis* (and particularly, of liturgical *praxis*) in uniting system and faith, and yet lacking in any concrete liturgiology. Thus it is all the more striking to find Congar attributing the search for something which should *authentically* capture the faith in speech to the (legitimate) drive beyond mere *ratio* to *intellectus*, and tracing that thread all the way to the Modernist crisis and beyond. For Congar, then, as for Chenu (although with a great difference of emphasis which is more deep rooted than the simple difference between an encyclopedia article and a

¹⁴²Ibid., 431–5. ¹⁴³Ibid., 436. ¹⁴⁴Ibid., 436–8. ¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 438–9. ¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 440. ¹⁴⁷Ibid., 440–1.
¹⁴⁸Ibid., 443. ¹⁴⁹Ibid., 445. ¹⁵⁰Ibid., 446.

lecture) it is not simply *what* one says which matters: it is the speech of the whole person toward the whole object in the whole context.

prima facie Conclusion

Thus Congar and Chenu are both saying something which is neither modernist nor recognisably anti-modernist, and it is methodologically similar to what we found Lubac saying in a different (apologetic) context earlier. Neither of them directly addresses the problem of refuting the Modernists piecemeal; both consider the Modernist crisis to have brought something *else* into sharp relief, and both think that part of that something else is the problem of *teaching* theology. This is perhaps surprising until one realises that most pedagogical strategies are apologetic in nature: we present mock examples, demonstrate the *logical* inferences from positions with *narrative* conclusions (“if one held X then one would *end up by* holding Y”) and in short engage in a kind of apologetic theology in miniature. Thus it is no surprise that a crisis in the *understanding* of theology should be a crisis in theological instruction.

Yet there is something else too—and this perhaps invisible to either author, but central to the argument I shall make later. The teacher does not merely propose and play out arguments, he *inculcates an intentional stance* which is both *prior* to and generally *decisive of* the effectiveness of any content presented. Thus it is interesting to see that for Chenu the problems of Modernism are effectively problems of intentional stance. The same obtains (albeit less directly) for Congar: if there is a real distinction between the theological expression of a doctrine and the doctrine itself, and *yet* the formulae used are not merely symbolically apt but really *proper* to their object (we shall consider the problem of grounding theories in reality by means of action in chapter 3 on page 73 and chapter 5 on page 139) then the process of making this distinction without separation demands something beyond mere verbal subtlety if it is to mean anything at all. By inference, there is something wrong in the way Modernism *looks at the world*, something lacking in its intentional stance (and, likewise, in the Anti-Modernist refusal to grant *any* distinction between expression and reality). In this, however, we are getting ahead of ourselves, and it suffices for now to note the correlation of Chenu and Congar on the same basic conclusion that (i) the Modernist *question* was a real question and that (ii) the Modernists themselves misunderstood it, and thus posed a patently false answer.

Conclusions

Une église en quête de liberté

The first and most obvious conclusion from this sorry history is that no-one is quite so terrible as he who persecutes for a righteous cause. Tyrrell was unquestionably treated shoddily; Loisy, whose letter of submission is the more wonderful when one considers just how far he was from seeing any *truth* in the charges of Authority, was treated indefensibly. This is not just a pious moral: the perfectly legitimate question of the *truth* of the Modernists’ claims has been obscured by a natural revulsion at their treatment.¹⁵¹ (It is this which stands behind much scholarly attempt to rehabilitate

¹⁵¹So careful a historian as Fouilloux becomes positively enraged: Étienne Fouilloux, *Une Église en quête de liberté, La pensée catholique française entre modernisme et Vatican II (1914-1962)*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1998.

Modernism. ¹⁵²)

This was the immediate reaction of proto-*Ressourcement* authors. Laberthonnière wrote to Blondel:

Ce qui m'opprime c'est ce au nom de quoi l'on condamne et ce qu'on veut mettre à la place de ce que l'on condamne. Je n'ai aucune attache à ce qu'on nie, c'est absurde. Mais ce qui me fait peur c'est ce qu'on affirme, c'est ce qu'on met en acte: car cela ne vaut pas mieux que ce qu'on nie. *Il faut qu'une telle attitude puisse se concilier avec le rôle salutaire que Christ a confié à son Eglise.*¹⁵³

Blondel had counselled a short statement in the *Annales* stating that nobody there had ever held any of the condemned propositions, but Laberthonnière reacted angrily:

dans l'encyclique il n'y a pas que les erreurs condamnées, il y a le torrent d'injures, il y a l'organisation de l'inquisition nouvelle. Et je vous avoue que pour compte, autant j'accepte la condamnation des erreurs autant je répugne au reste.¹⁵⁴

Thus he saw the course the century would take, and which was perhaps more than anything else responsible for the postconciliar disintegration of Catholicism:

Tyrrell might be mistaken, but I truly believe he is less mistaken—that he has fallen into a less dangerous error, in the circumstances we find ourselves in, than that of all those *servile* flatterers who surround us: who treat the pope worse than the basest courtier ever treated Louis XIV.... We will pay dearly for this. Poor France! Poor Church!¹⁵⁵

The conclusion to be drawn from all this persecuting is that, when all that can be said for human passion and sinfulness has been allowed, the fundamental *fury* of a Pius X or a Merry dal Val was a fury of *betrayal*: the Modernists were deliberately rendering those to whom the gospel must be preached incapable of receiving it, by destroying the very foundations of belief itself—the recognition of true authority, and the submission of one's judgement to the *ecclesia docens*. And the raging of a Tyrrell or the frustration of a von Hügel was directed at exactly the same betrayal: by shutting itself off from modern ways of thinking and talking, the Church was quite unjustifiably binding the gospel up with a lot of mediaeval baggage, and demanding a gratuitous humiliation from modernity: 'you have not entered yourself; and you hinder those who would enter'. The very fire of the persecution stemmed from the fact that incommensurable ideas were at play.

¹⁵²For Maher, (Anthony Maher, *The Forgotten Jesuit of Catholic Modernism: George Tyrrell's Prophetic Theology*, Baltimore, Maryland Minneapolis Minnesota: Project Muse, Fortress Press, 2018) for instance, Tyrrell's thought was simply unfairly suppressed and dismissed by stuck-in-the-mud autocrats until Vatican II came along and liberated it. The indubitable ferocity of that suppression liberates him from any need to engage in detail with the anti-modernist position: it was merely half politics, half ignorance.

¹⁵³Arnold and Vian, 'Lucien Laberthonnière, le « Annales de philosophie chrétienne » e l'enciclica *Pascendi*', p. 148, my italics.

¹⁵⁴Arnold and Vian, 'Lucien Laberthonnière, le « Annales de philosophie chrétienne » e l'enciclica *Pascendi*', p. 151; In the end a short Declaration was published: Bremond and Blondel, *Correspondance*, Nn. 349ff.

¹⁵⁵Arnold and Vian, 'Lucien Laberthonnière, le « Annales de philosophie chrétienne » e l'enciclica *Pascendi*', p.. 160. My translation.

Ressourcement: a response to Modernism?

Thus even in trying to make sense of the history, we are driven (if we reject the kind of anthropological psychoanalysis to which Schultenover is reduced¹⁵⁶) to the clash of incommensurable conceptual schemes: to a clash of ideas. Moreover, these are *bad* ideas. Pius X's anthropology was quite as bad as Loisy's. The one could not see how the teaching authority of the Church could be infallible except by being reducing it to a harmless mysticism; the other could not see how the human intellect could be anything other than a servant, docile to command. If Loisy was a heretic, Pius (at least in the *affair Loisy*) was a pure voluntarist. Yet these positions simply reproduced their doctrinal attitudes. The pontiff was a positivist about Tradition, which consisted *either* in dogmatic pronouncements *or* in the imperfect material for future such fixed formulae; in both cases guaranteed only by authority. Loisy's tradition is at first glance much better—the faith is known only by living in the historical tradition, yet is separate—but the absence of any objective criteria leads in practice to a *replacement* of the 'tyranny of theology' with a denial of objective theology *simpliciter* and an unmasking of the religion *behind* religion.¹⁵⁷ Neither the orthodox incomprehension nor the heresy can be allowed the final word, or we are forever in this bind.

Is *Ressourcement* a response to Modernism? In the very limited sense in which I intend to defend this claim in the wider thesis (specifically: that *Ressourcement* responded simultaneously to broadly the same set of "modern" problems to which Modernism responded, and to the problem of the -entrenched counter-positions of Anti-Modernism): yes. *Ressourcement's* response to Modernism serves to *pick out* the movement—to distinguish it from so much other theologising which went on—and is a good path, ultimately, to its fundamental concerns. But it can play this role because Modernism *was*, both in reality and in the eyes of *Ressourcement* a real, comprehensible thing (a thing crudely oversimplified but not fundamentally mistaken in essentials by *Pascendi*), and because *Ressourcement* authors consistently developed exactly the positions we have seen in Chenu and Congar—that is, claimed that there was a real need to articulate the faith in "the language of modernity" in such a way as to "open up" the faith; to make it speakable, visible, credible. Thus, whilst *Ressourcement* authors *did* spend time directly addressing the "opening up of modernism from the inside" they spent just as much time "opening up the faith" or perhaps "opening up scholasticism from the inside" (as we saw Lubac doing a chapter ago). In other words, the project was one of translation—in the liturgical or etymological sense: the *hearer* was the one to be translated, taken out of his comfortable assumptions and shown the grandeur and mystery of the faith.

All this is getting ahead of ourselves; for now it is sufficient to remark that the catholic world into which *Ressourcement* came was largely formed by the kind of fruitless polemics we have examined in this chapter, and that *Ressourcement*, for all its decided sympathy with both sides (a genealogical sympathy with Modernism, as before the crisis there was little difference between a Tyrrell and a Bremond; and an ultimate belief in the *truth* of the faith and the reliability of the ancient formulæ) rejected exactly this way of going about persuasion. *Ressourcement* was *not*, as Mettepenningen suggests, the intellectual inheritor of Modernism.¹⁵⁸ But it did take the challenge of the Modernists far more seriously than *Pascendi* ever did.

¹⁵⁶Vide infra, footnote 130 on page 61.

¹⁵⁷Émile Goichot, 'Henri Bremond et Alfred Loisy', *Entretiens sur Henri Bremond*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 1967, chap. 11, p. 234.

¹⁵⁸Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology, Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II*,

London: T&T Clark, 2010, p. 144. Mettepenningen treats the claim as self-evident, since (i) contemporary critics thought so and (ii) both disliked Scholasticism. As Boersma notes, (Hans Boersma, 'Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II - By Jürgen Mettepenningen: Reviews', *International journal of systematic theology* 14.4 [2012], p. 489) *Ressourcement* addressed (many of) the same problems as Modernism, but its approach was completely different. Broadly the same narrative is common, as in Jon Kirwan, *An Avant-garde Theological Generation, The Nouvelle Théologie and the French Crisis of Modernity*, Oxford: OUP, 2018, Gerard Loughlin, 'Nouvelle Théologie, A return to Modernism?', *Ressourcement, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. by Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, Oxford: OUP, 2012, pp. 36-50 or the bizarre (and frequently tendentious) Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz age Catholicism, Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919-1933*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Boersma's own definition ('*nouvelle théologie* wished to reconnect nature and the supernatural, so as to overcome the rupture between theology and life': Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology, A Return to Mystery*, Oxford: OUP, 2009, p. 5) is a good deal better, and the account he develops is extremely perceptive. Much of my argument parallels (and is indebted to) his; we differ on the role of Liturgy, the emphasis I have placed on the acquired *habitus* over any conclusion, and my insistence that the legacy of *Ressourcement* is not in question: it failed, and the Church is in crisis in part for this reason. See also the equally perceptive Hans Boersma, 'Analogy of Truth, The Sacramental Epistemology of *Nouvelle Théologie*', *Ressourcement, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. by Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, Oxford: OUP, 2012, pp. 157-71.

CHAPTER 3

Ressourcement and Philosophy

Ressourcement is a distinctly philosophical endeavour. To return *ad fontes* is itself an epistemological claim (there would be no point in seeking purer waters if one did not think that something had been *lost* with the passage of time); to return *ad fontes* as *Ressourcement* sought to do it—by learning to speak an older language, rather than simply in order to verify such or such a proposition which has come to capture rather poorly the claim it is supposed to represent—is to wrap that claim up in what we would call a philosophy of language and what they called (when they called it anything at all) a “vital” or “immanent” or “subjective” philosophy, or a ‘philosophy of action’.¹

This work was done with considerable clarity by two philosophers on whom Congar and Lubac drew explicitly and whose influence can be felt throughout *Ressourcement*: Blondel and Roussetot. Unfortunately both sought to express ideas in a philosophical vernacular which was singularly ill-suited and correspondingly lacking in clarity. Roussetot’s effort—itself extremely precise—was cut short by his untimely death, rendered *avant garde* (and thus condemned both to popularity and to misunderstanding) by a piece of staggeringly idiotic internal politics in the Jesuit order, and has only recently come under any serious attention again. Blondel, whose prose, whilst hardly straightforward, is not really any harder than, say, Bergson, suffered from the fact that he coined a vocabulary which was promptly reinvented by a different, albeit related, movement—pragmatism—which was itself then promptly misunderstood and made its way into the heresiological lectionary of both contemporary rationalism and contemporary anti-Modernism. Anti-Modernism may be gone, but the (entirely erroneous) claim that a pragmatist is someone who equates truth with utility is alive and well in both popular discourse and academic philosophy.

Thus my first task is simply to show what Blondel and Roussetot were in fact saying, and the absence of any relation between this and the account of their critics. (In the case of Garrigou-Lagrange, such absence appears to have been wilful.) But as the name of the Sacred Monster of Thomism shows, there is another history here: *Ressourcement* was viewed with great suspicion precisely because it was supposed to be leading back to Modernism *via* pragmatism. Thus part of this history has to be told here as well, in any case well enough to establish that in the eyes of their critics, Modernism, Pragmatism and *nouvelle théologie* were one and the same error—because all concern with the (“immanent”) conditions of approaching truth was subjectivist

¹This amounts, *mutatis mutandis*, to the same thing.

relativism, and all concern with the formation of intellectual habits was “pragmatism”. (As with Modernism, the condemned pragmatist bogeyman is indeed an error.) It is this question of the conditions for perceiving truth (and not epistemology directly) which concerned *Ressourcement*.

I therefore turn at last at the end of this chapter to the positive claim I wish to make about *Ressourcement* the movement. What unites these otherwise very different philosophers on whom *Ressourcement* drew is a kind of objective consideration of the subjectivity of the thinker—or what phenomenology would later do by bypassing the subjective/objective distinction entirely. In very different domains both have landed on the realisation that the truth is in fact perceived by a thinker, and if this thinker does not have the aesthetic sense—the virtue, the *habitus* of truth—to see the truth, any amount of system-building is useless. Thus both Rousselot and Blondel present the faith (the one *ad intra*, the other *ad extra*) as a schooling in epistemological aesthetics. The project of *Ressourcement* was to retrieve this schooling—from the Fathers, where the hard separation between theology and spirituality had not yet relegated aesthetics to a merely reactive discipline—and from a close attention to the things of the Church (and viewed thence, the world).² Its glory was that it succeeded so largely; its weakness was that this very insight which constituted the movement was never itself the object of any sustained reflection. It is our curious privilege to have seen everything called into question.

Blondel and the transnatural élan

“Your thought,” observed an exasperated examiner at Blondel’s viva “is obscure; the way you write only obscures things further!” To which rather unanswerable criticism Blondel replied:

C’est en effet l’honneur de l’École française que la clarté... Mais il y a une certaine clarté qui, ainsi que le remarque Descartes lui-même, est souvent trompeuse et dangereuse, parce qu’elle laisse à ceux mêmes qui ne comprennent pas l’illusion de croire qu’ils ont compris, et parce que, leur voilant la complexité réelle des choses, elle les expose à tout réduire à une sorte de simplisme indigent : l’intelligence complète de la pensée cartésienne n’est sans doute pas moins laborieuse que celle de la pensée hégélienne. *Le style doit être un instrument de précision qui donne tout le sentiment et rien que le sentiment de l’inévitable difficulté des choses.* On aura beau faire, on ne rendra jamais aisément accessibles certaines méditations qui demandent une initiation analogue à celle des mathématiques supérieures.³

There is more than a little malice in the suggestion that precision of style is there to communicate subconsciously—*donner le sentiment*—the ‘inevitable difficulty of things’. But if the claim is more than a quick rejoinder it is programmatic. To give a sense of the *difficulty* of things to one who has moved too quickly from a sketch of reality to logic-chopping is not to tell him anything *about* things at all: it is an approach not metaphysical but methodological.⁴

²In this I mark exactly how close I think this project comes to that of Balthasar.

³J. Wehrlé, ‘Une soutenance de thèse’, *Études Blondéliennes*, ed. by Jacques Paliard and Paul Archambault, vol. 1, Paris: PUF, 1951, pp. 79–98, p. 88, my italics.

⁴The comparison with mathematics is (probably inadvertently): Blondel had little interest in the

Thus is it no surprise that Blondel was to find himself mired in controversy not so much for his thesis as for a set of articles, one of which, aiming to communicate this “difficulty”, promptly lost him the support of Catholic letters, the remaining pair (dwelling on this prologue to reasoning) sealing his fate and proving him right when his critics failed to notice the distinction. These works, misunderstood, mediated and falsified *L’action* (which was in any case far too dense for his critics to bother to read); properly understood they throw light on what is otherwise quite an impenetrable work. Most importantly, they introduced a new *methodology*, which filtered far more widely than Blondel’s specific arguments, and which would have a foundational influence on *Ressourcement*.⁵

On setting out to philosophise

In the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* of 1906 Blondel published two articles entitled *on the starting-point of philosophical enquiry*. When Maréchal was to pose the question in a very similarly titled series⁶ he meant: on what do we *base* our enquiry? But Blondel really did mean: how does philosophical enquiry get going, in practice? He distinguishes between *prospection* (direct insight) and *reflection*,⁷ showing that we can hardly *begin* by reflection without something on which to reflect,⁸ nor can we critique without some notion to critique,⁹ nor can we simply offer *prospection* as the initial insight upon which we then reflect, for the move from *prospection* to *reflection* is too subtle properly to be aware of it—and thus to be aware of the fact that we have begun.¹⁰ This latter argument is weaker, but Blondel seems to mean the *prospection* itself must be “preloaded” with a certain intuition about its object, since when we introspect it we discover an inchoate account of the conclusions we then flesh out rationally. Whence this content?

Excepting direct inspiration, philosophy must begin with the life of the philosophising subject, with the *connatural* knowledge we *already have* of the world as it becomes apparent in the reciprocal engagement between *prospection* and *reflection* which occurs in the activity of the mind—that is, in the mind’s reflection on the solution present in the attitudes we have adopted toward the world in our lives.¹¹ It is no use seeking to shrug off so much pre-philosophical prejudice; this is simply to

subject) precise: advanced mathematics demands not a false reverence for how “difficult” it is—which is entirely counter-productive—but an openness to how *strange* the obvious arithmetical truths one learns in childhood actually are. The popular devotee of “scientific advances” is as incapable of doing pure mathematics as the arithmetician who “cannot see the point.” The ‘initiation’ is thus *aesthetic*: one has to learn to *look at* the problems differently.

⁵Blondel’s approach did not come from nowhere: a methodological examination of the subject is already present in Pascal. With Ravaisson the interaction between acquired disposition and external order became an object of inquiry (Alexandra Roux, ‘Ravaisson, de l’habitude à la grâce, Dialogue avec Pascal’, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 144.1 [2019], pp. 21–38), explicitly presupposing a discord between will and action. (Bertrand Saint-Sernin, ‘Spiritualisme et action selon Ravaisson’, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 144.1 [2019], pp. 7–20) Blondel’s apologetics, *malgré lui*, is not so very dissimilar from that of his supervisor Ollé-Laprune from which he distinguished it so sharply.

Broadly similar methodologies are visible in French philosophy are visible to this day, notably in the case of Bergson.

⁶Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique, Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*, 4 vols., Museum Lessianum. Section philosophique, Bruges: Charles Beyaert.

⁷Maurice Blondel, ‘Le point de départ de la recherche philosophique (Premier article)’, *Œuvres complètes, 1888–1913*, ed. by Claudes Troisfontaines, vol. II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, pp. 529–33.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 533–5. ⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 540–1. ¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 541–6.

¹¹Maurice Blondel, ‘Le point de départ de la recherche philosophique (Second article)’, *Œuvres complètes, 1888–1913*, ed. by Claudes Troisfontaines, vol. II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, pp. 549–50.

adopt the inverse position. A basic definition of what is *rational* is, in fact, whatever is *natural* for us to do.¹²

Rather than seek to get 'behind the data' one seeks to get 'inside' the action whereby one perceives it:

we must substitute for the deceptive problem of the relation between ideas and objects or beings...an entirely different question: the relation between our thought and our action, between our current knowledge and the implicit condition (*état*) which it presupposes and prepares.¹³

Il faut substituer: that is, as the subject of our enquiry. The question is not whether a true proposition is one which is adequate to reality¹⁴ but how we get at such a proposition in practice. The answer—again, Blondel is reasoning *de facto*—is by following our insights:

taken in its overall unity there is in that action which constitutes our subjectivity an internal principle which orients, which drives, demands and which judges our fragmentary acts and thoughts. The philosopher must work at becoming fully aware of this fundamental orientation, at determining and articulating its normal rules of operation (*exigences*), at discovering and forestalling these judgements, in order to absorb (*intégrer*) consciously and philosophically that which arises spontaneously in the living subject, and to absorb in practice (*dans la vie*) every truth which appears in conscious and philosophical reflection. In place of the abstract and chimeric *adaequatio speculativa rei et intellectus* is substituted the methodical pursuit of the *adaequatio realis mentis et vitae*.¹⁵

This is a programme for philosophical ascesis. *In point of fact* everyone follows his nose; clearly not all are correct. What—other than the tautological answer of 'being correct'—marks the difference between a good and a bad philosopher? Or to pose the question in more familiar language: what makes a good *epistemic agent*? Blondel's answer—as we shall see—is a phenomenology of the philosophising subject, in which he seeks to show that the truth has a peculiar character of its own and a peculiar pull on our lives. But here he has simply posed the question.

GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE AND DE TONQUEDEC

In place of the abstract and chimeric adæquatio speculativa rei et intellectus is substituted (se substitue) the methodological pursuit of the adæquatio realis mentis et vitæ. Blondel, despite his policy of avoiding confrontation at all costs, rarely expressed himself felicitously: he had a penchant for incomprehensible neologisms (both he and Bremond mock it in their correspondence), accusing his opponents of *monophorism* (which meant little more than close-mindedness, was elaborated at great length, and was about as good a systematic fit for the disparate rabble of conflicting interests gathered against him at *Action Française* as *Pascendi* was for the modernists), and tended to write phrases which, taken ever so slightly out of context, meant the inverse of what he

¹²For a thoroughgoing defence of this claim, see Linda Zagzebski, *Rational Faith, Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.

¹³Blondel, 'Le point de départ de la recherche philosophique (Second article)', p. 555.

¹⁴Although the dictum is actually that the *intellect* is adequated, rather than the proposition, a nuance which does a great deal of work in Roussetot's thought, as we shall see.

¹⁵Blondel, 'Le point de départ de la recherche philosophique (Second article)', p. 556.

intended. So it was with this programmatic claim: firstly, one needs the adjectives *speculativa* and *realis* (or one needs to read the article, or at least its title) to see that we are concerned here not with the theory of knowledge, but with the question of philosophical *practice*. *In point of fact*, if one engages in philosophy properly, one finds that one's days are occupied not in sitting in an armchair speculatively adequating one's mind with things, but disciplining one's intellectual life in order to attain a dim, yet potent, sense of the radiance of truth which shines through everything if only we would take the time to see it. The problem with the scholastic claim is that it tells us little about how to do it: adequation is not an operation. Blondel saw logic-chopping (to which he confessed he was too addicted) as getting in the way of real perception.

Likewise, the phraseology demands an enclosing context: *why* is something substituted for something else? Unfortunately Blondel is ambiguous: the claim is methodological, but it could be taken as epistemological. Again, *realis* refers to the *Blondellian réel*, which (like the Bergsonian) is a term of art, naming the higher, intuitive approach to truth which guides the well-accorded intellect whenever it seeks mere propositional ('notional') knowledge. But nothing stops a determined critic from reading it simply as an intensifier, a further insult to the (implicitly) "unreal" scholastic formula.

Determined critics were not slow to appear. Blondel was to be pursued relentlessly (and idiotically) by Fr. de Tonquedec, whose prose is too foolish to waste any time on here,¹⁶ and whose criticism was only the preeminent example of a cottage industry devoted to demonstrating his errors. To all of this Blondel, as was his policy, said nothing, but eventually the criticism reached Rome, in the form of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance and his campaign against resurgent Modernism.

Garrigou-Lagrance is interesting for our purposes for two reasons: firstly, he effectively coined the phrase *nouvelle théologie*¹⁷ and is as near as can be found to a champion of the anti-Ressourcement cause; secondly, he is yet another giant of this period whose legacy is ill digested. A distinguished authority on mysticism, Garrigou-Lagrance was singularly uncharitable to anyone who challenged him, as a naive Maritain was to find out.¹⁸ Garrigou-Lagrance's explicit criticism of Blondel had to wait until his general attack on "new theology". (I shall return to this article in chapter 4 on page 117.) But in order to see how Garrigou-Lagrance's quarrel with Lubac, Bouillard *et al* was *methodological* one has first to see how he muddles Blondel's philosophical methodology.

Blondel appears after four pages devoted to accusing Bouillard of relativism, in a

¹⁶See particularly *Immanence* (Joseph de Tonquedec, *Immanence, essai critique sur la doctrine de M. Maurice Blondel*, 2nd ed., Paris: Beauchesne, 1913) which explicitly ignores all of Blondel's protests of misunderstanding, and then laboriously demolishes a straw opponent. Blondel despaired of *un livre entier de fausses notes...c'est le record de la sottise*. (Henri Bremond and Maurice Blondel, *Correspondance*, ed. by André Blanchet, vol. 2, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1971, Nn. 401).

¹⁷Various figures can claim to be the first to use the phrase (Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology, Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, p. 4), but it became a technical term *in french* with 'La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle ?'

¹⁸There is little serious scholarship on Garrigou-Lagrance. The less-than-scholarly Richard Peddicord, O.P., *The Sacred Monster of Thomism, An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrance, O.P.*, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005, for instance, assures us of his sainthood on the basis that he slept on a hard bed and eschewed pillows—an argument which would also canonise Queen Victoria. Maritain kept quiet on his bitter quarrel with Garrigou-Lagrance, but it is hard not to see him behind the *grand théologien de mes amis* (albeit whose friendship *ne s'est jamais démentie*) who presented the *sérieux reproche* that Maritain assumed good faith in non-Christians. 'Est-ce que la Loi Nouvelle n'a pas été promulguée? Est-ce que dans presque tous les pays de la terre, la Parole de Dieu n'a pas été annoncée? Est-ce que la grâce manque à personne? Quand nous parlons à des non-chrétiens, c'est un devoir envers la vérité de présupposer que - sauf exception... - ils ne sont pas de bonne foi.' Jacques Maritain, *Le paysan de la Garonne*, 6th ed., Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966, p. 120.

footnote on the observation that if theology is a perpetual search for better ways of saying things which *replace* what has come before (as we saw Schillebeekx suggesting in the introduction), then “what becomes of the notion of truth?”

Blondel écrivait [...] « A l’abstraite et chimérique *adaequatio rei et intellectus se substitue la recherche méthodique de droit, l’adaequatio realis mentis et vitae* ». Ce n’est pas sans une grande responsabilité qu’on appelle chimérique la définition traditionnelle de la vérité admise depuis des siècles dans l’Eglise, et qu’on parle de lui en substituer une autre, dans tous les domaines, y compris celui de la foi théologique.¹⁹

Indeed; but Blondel of course has proposed no such thing. Garrigou-Lagrange has misquoted very tellingly: he omits the adjective *speculativa*, but includes *realis*—in other words, he misses the parallel, taking *real* as an intensifier, and he assumes the claim is epistemological. But Garrigou-Lagrange was French and well aware that the word *droit* has no possible meaning in this sentence (it was in fact a misprint dating from an earlier draft which contrasted *de fait* with *de droit*);²⁰ that he left the misprint in suggests *speculativa* was not omitted quite by accident.²¹

Be that as it may, Garrigou-Lagrange has not finished:

Alors la question très grave revient toujours : la proposition conciliaire est-elle maintenue comme vraie per conformitatem cum ente extramentali et legibus eius immutabilibus, an per conformitatem cum exigentiis vitae humanae quae semper evolvitur?

Once one has said *that*, of course, the matter is settled, and Garrigou-Lagrange can finish off his opponent, citing *Pascendi* on the Modernist’s twisting of eternal truths, and rattling off a list of condemned propositions which have, in fact, nothing whatsoever to do with Blondel.²² Blondel wrote back: not only was his text *mutilé* and its wider context ignored, but

Je n’ai jamais substitué à la philosophie de la pensée et de l’être une philosophie de l’action. Mais, ayant consacré deux tomes à la Pensée et voulant aborder l’étude des êtres en rapport avec l’Etre, je ne pouvais méconnaître le rôle inaliénable de l’action soit fidèle soit rebelle. Il était donc nécessaire d’indiquer comment et pourquoi l’option humaine peut contredire, sans la (*sic*) supprimer jamais la valeur des principes premiers dans la réalité de la rébellion même.²³

¹⁹Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle ?’, *Angelicum* 23.3/4 (1946), pp. 126–145, 129 n. 2.

²⁰Blondel, ‘Le point de départ de la recherche philosophique (Second article)’, 556 n. 1; Peddicord gives the rather remarkable translation of ‘the right adequation’. Peddicord, O.P., *The Sacred Monster of Thomism*, p. 76.

²¹Garrigou-Lagrange observes the missing word in Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘Vérité et immutabilité du dogme’, *Angelicum* 24.2/3 (1947), pp. 124–139, p. 125, but claims it irrelevant, *car il est manifeste qu’il s’agit, en cette définition traditionnelle, de la vérité spéculative*—that is, using “speculative” to name a field, rather than an activity. In any case he admitted privately to not having read Blondel, but simply having the “problematic passages” pointed out to him: Oliva Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel, A philosophical life*, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010, p. 284.

²²Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle ?’, pp. 130–1. Garrigou-Lagrange dismisses the idea that Blondel has nuanced his position by a misreading of *l’Etre et les êtres*, where Blondel’s observation that *in point of fact* there are no “unavoidable” truths—one can always be pig-headed—until one has admitted that they present *as such* is turned into the claim that nothing is true.

²³Blondel and Reg. Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘Correspondence’, *Angelicum* 24.2/3 (1947), p. 210.

Other than the first sentence, this is simple protest against assertion. Blondel continues with what is in fact a very brief summary of his philosophical *methodology*, in which the light of truth illumines the path of the philosopher, but which looks like an attempt to broaden the notion of “truth”—that is, if one does not read the first sentence, which Blondel makes no effort to emphasise. As to Garrigou-Lagrange’s real argument:

Quand on me reproche de méconnaître la suffisance absolue de la définition de la vérité, *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, ce serait à moi de protester contre cette réduction aux mots *res et intellectus*, à la contenance tout à fait insuffisante : *res* en effet ne suffit pas à désigner les plus hautes réalités, et l’intellect n’épuise pas la science des choses et des êtres, ni la réalité des opérations intimes de notre conscience ou de nos devoirs, ni la vérité profonde de notre destinée surnaturelle. Il y a donc carence dans une doctrine à laquelle on voudrait me réduire.²⁴

To all this Garrigou-Lagrange could not of course help responding. (Blondel does not help his case by protesting, at the end, that he has a signed affidavit of something Pius X once said to his Bishop, although it is clear that he fears a belated attempt at condemnation.) Aside from claiming that he had not, in fact, misquoted anything (‘Nous avons rapporté intégralement ce texte plus haut, *art. cit.*, avec tout son contexte, (!) et nous maintenons que cette proposition, telle qu’elle est formulée, ne saurait être admise.’²⁵—since, presumably, an elided sentence is quite enough to make sense of Blondel!) explaining once again that if truth is not immutable it is not true and repeating his claim that the Office had condemned “12 propositions extracted from the philosophy of action”.²⁶

But his real intention (we shall turn later to the politics of this argument) was to appear conciliatory:

Pour terminer des discussions qui durent depuis plus de quarante ans, nous lui demandions de bien vouloir rétracter le mot « chimérique » et d’écrire, non pas « se substitue », mais « se complète par... ». Pourquoi ? Parce que la connaissance affective par connaturalité ou sympathie com-

²⁴Ibid., p. 211.

²⁵Ibid., p. 212.

²⁶‘12 proposizioni denunciate’, *Il monitore ecclesiastico* 1 (1925), pp. 194–5. The propositions are, in fact, a smorgasbord of heavily overqualified ‘modern’ ideas (I, for instance, condemns the idea that concepts *nullo modo possunt constituere imaginem realitatis...etsi partialem tantum*: not even Bergson falls under so ridiculous a claim!), but the phrase ‘philosophy of action’ is nowhere used (a footnote refers to *la dottrina del « pragmatismo » e dell’« immanentismo evoluzionistico »*, *ch’è base delle dottrine modernistiche*.—which show quite how vague these heresiological terms often were). The target of the propositions is doctrinal relativism. Garrigou-Lagrange cites V, which seems more aimed at Bergson who *had* claimed *veritas est semper in fieri...in motu quodam perpetuo*. In any case Blondel would roundly deny the idea that *in toto progressu nihil unquam ratum fixumque habeatur*. Far more interesting is IV, which condemns rejecting the *actus intellectus*: Blondel simply *ignores* it. IX (printed ‘XI’) condemns the judgement that ‘classical’ apologetics *est methodus puerilisque*, adding for good measure *neque respondet legitimis exigentiis humanae mentis qualis est hodie*. Quite aside from being perfectly ridiculous, such a ‘doctrinal’ proposition seems as far outside the realm of legitimate authority as the *gloriosum est Ecclesiam* Chenu was made to sign. Nonetheless it is clearly aimed, albeit second hand, at the controversy over apologetics in which Blondel had maintained that the classical method was practically useless. Likewise X condemns rejecting the argument from miracles, but defines *miraculum in se nude sumptum as factum sensibile quod soli potentiae divinae attribui potest*, thereby missing the point. XI (*praxis religiosa legitima non est fructus certitudinis...sed...medium unicum obtinendi de hac veritate certitudinem*) hits Pascal but misses Blondel, who faced the problem explicitly, whilst XII vitiates rejecting doctrinal certitude by mixing it up with ‘*anxius...progrediendi*’.

plète bien la connaissance notionnelle, mais suppose la valeur de celle-ci par conformité au réel, et ne se substitue pas à elle, si l'on veut éviter le pragmatisme²⁷ vers lequel glisse la philosophie de l'action.²⁸

What, at first glance, could be more reasonable? (Blondel was unlikely to be fooled: Garrigou-Lagrange continues by making it clear that doing so will repudiate everything he has written.) But the great concession thus won would, in fact, simply be what Blondel held all along (although the laboriously worked out certainty of the accompanying article, where Garrigou-Lagrange defends the proposition that only true things are true, would likely leave him impatient: what use is such a closed certainty in persuading anyone?²⁹). Why, then, did Blondel not point out Garrigou-Lagrange's misreading more explicitly?

By this comparatively late point the earlier *methodological* distinction has given rise to a real distinction of *discipline*. For the late Blondel (as is apparent from the second *L'action*) *connaissance réelle* is not a mere starting-point for *connaissance notionnelle*: notional knowledge is in reality a poor (albeit necessary) substitute for the true perception of the soul. In other words, Blondel has become an intellectualist.³⁰

This is why, whilst Blondel and Garrigou-Lagrange were answering different questions and thus talking past each other, *neither* seemed aware of the fact. Blondel's response to Garrigou-Lagrange is perfectly correct on his own premises—knowledge by intellection is only one of the activities (*adaequatio speculativa*) of the mind, whereas in *all* its activities the subject is involved (*adaequatio realis*)—and perfectly incorrect on Garrigou-Lagrange's: shorn of the adjective, replacing *res* with *vita* turns an imperfect formula into one patently false.

Yet there is something else, to which I shall return in a moment: a strange formal parallel with that account of the role of grace in the act of faith which Rousset sought to counter in *The Eyes of Faith*: that account whereby grace was competitive with reason and supplied whatever was lacking in a reasonable demonstration, so that it had *more* to do for the unlearned than the learned. Garrigou-Lagrange—who

²⁷Garrigou-Lagrange's *pragmatisme* is equally wide of the mark. Blondel actually coined the calque on *pragma* before immediately withdrawing it (Maurice Blondel, 'Lettre à la société française de philosophie, Concernant le rapport de D. Parodi, « La signification du pragmatisme », *Œuvres complètes, 1888-1913*, ed. by Claudes Troisfontaines, vol. II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, pp. 635-44; Michael J. Kerlin, 'Blondel and Pragmatism: Truth as the Real Adequation of Mind and Life', *The Reception of Pragmatism in France and the Rise of Roman Catholic Modernism, 1890-1914*, ed. by David G. Schultenover, S.J., Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009, pp. 122-42, 131ff) when the word entered the heresiological lexicon. (William Turner, 'Pragmatism', *Catholic Encyclopedia* [1911]) The equation of truth with utility has actually been defended (Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism, Essays 1972-1980*, Brighton: Harvester, 1982) despite James explicitly denying it: William James, *The Meaning of Truth*, London: Harvard University Press, 1975, pp. 99-116. For James, utility is a guide to what is *meant* by a claim. (The exception is religion, which James *defines* as a kind of 'over-belief' providing a 'moral holiday' (*ibid.*, p. 5). Since religion is *a priori* untrue, its only "truth" is this utility; but the claim is pure *apriorismus*.)

James considered Blondel a pragmatist in *his* since. But Blondel always spoke of bringing out something *implicit* in action: James commented 'implicit is bad' (Kerlin, 'Blondel and Pragmatism: Truth as the Real Adequation of Mind and Life', p. 126) and in general was suspicious of exactly that natural order of things which Blondel was ultimately concerned to defend.

²⁸Blondel and Garrigou-Lagrange, 'Correspondence', p. 212.

²⁹Rég. Garrigou-Lagrange, 'Nécessité de revenir à la définition traditionnelle de la vérité', *Angelicum* 25.3 (1948), pp. 185-198.

³⁰In point of fact this transition happened earlier: Blondel was already reluctant to give much space to "notional reasoning" in 1893, but his entrenched position in the second *L'action* results more or less in a practical abandonment of the distinction in favour of a purified notion of reasoning *tout court*. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that by 1946 the distinction he himself had made was as invisible to him as it would be to *Ressourcement* and to his opponents.

was no supporter of Rousselot—seems to consider connaturality to be *competitive* with intellection (and applicable to those objects *not* properly contained under *res*). Yet as Rousselot had written to Blondel ‘under all knowledge *per rationem* there is a certain knowledge *per connaturalitatem*: this is the *a priori* condition of true knowledge.’³¹ Under this account connaturality is of a different *order* to intellect and will; even objects known (intellectively) *per adaequationem mentis et rei* are known *in adaequatione mentis et vitae*, in the recognition *that* one has encountered such-and-such an object, an intentional recognition involving one’s whole narrative.³² Intellection is something I *do*, willing something I am aware of doing. But quasi-intellection *per connaturalitatem* (which, as Rousselot makes clear elsewhere, is concerned with the singular) is not an operation at all: it is an active passivity, a ‘listening’, a contemplation. As such it is not the privileged faculty of perceiving grace (and thus it cannot fulfil the role of some privileged interior feeling which, to bring Blondel under *Pascendi*, Garrigou-Lagrange seeks to find) since if we perceive grace *by sympathy* we have then to become aware *that* we have done so *by intellection*—or as Blondel would say, it is only in the analysis of the overall pattern of our activity that we become aware of *what* we have an affinity for.

This single insight underpins all Blondel’s thought. We are interested in it on two levels. Firstly, Blondel’s apologetics is extremely close to what we saw in Lubac; his theory of Tradition is developed by Congar; whilst the philosophical anthropology developed in his study of Action anticipates the account of God’s action in history which we will see in the discussion of spirituality. Blondel, then, is materially interesting in the genealogy of *Ressourcement*. Secondly, Blondel’s work is characterised by a methodological *stance* (simply invisible to his critics), a proto-phenomenology concerned with the orientation of the acting subject—exactly the same transposition of domain *Ressourcement* attempted (similarly invisible to *its* critics). In fact Blondel anticipates my argument, since he has worked out (albeit nonliturgical) account of liturgical action forming precisely the dispositions needed to receive grace (here: faith). *Ressourcement*’s failure to develop this lead features large in its ultimate failure, and I shall propose exactly this development at the end of this thesis. Thus I shall sketch Blondel’s claims, but my real concern is the viewpoint he adopts to claim them.

Taking hasty conclusions back a step: Apologetics

Blondel’s letter³³ on apologetics—in reality six articles—seeks to address the problem of convincing the *philosophical* unbeliever. In the face of this challenge all of contemporary apologetics is, Blondel thinks, useless. Firstly there is deficient philosophy (*fausse philosophie*) which is obviously useless;³⁴ worse is fake philosophy (*philosophie fausse*) and the mock-righteous anger of those who ‘see too clearly to see at all’.³⁵ Arguments from physical science are not *philosophical*; nor is the argument from historical fact (after disposing of rational prejudices), although it is at least not *wrong*.³⁶

³¹Pierre Rousselot, *Essays on Love and Knowledge*, ed. by Andrew Tallon and Pol Vandavelde, trans. from the French by Andrew Tallon, Pol Vandavelde and Alan Vincelette, vol. 3, *Collected Works*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008, pp. 117–8.

³²In this I differ from Tallon whose ‘triadic soul’ seems to make affectivity a faculty. Pierre Rousselot, *Intelligence, Sense of being, Faculty of God*, trans. from the French by Andrew Tallon, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999, intr.

³³Maurice Blondel, ‘Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d’apologétique et sur la méthode de la philosophie dans l’étude du problème religieux’, *Œuvres complètes, 1888–1913*, ed. by Claudes Troisfontaines, vol. II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1896, pp. 97–174.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 103. ³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 104. ³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 104, 106.

The most it can show, however, is that the faith is *fitting*; but this, whilst sometimes effective, is no *argument*, *un bel abri qu'une toile de Raphaël contre l'épée impitoyable de la dialectique!*³⁷ Worse: either we make the supernatural too good a fit for the natural and lose its difference, or our *fittingness* is weak and we lose the argument. No better is the claim that our life *in point of fact* seeks a framework only Christianity can provide: the *anima naturaliter christiana* line is also not 'philosophical' for Blondel, since it leaves the relationship between natural and supernatural undefined; and why then should they come into any relationship?³⁸ "Traditional" apologetics proceeds either by proving the existence of God and the fact of revelation, or simply pointing to the impressive comprehensiveness of Thomism.³⁹ But the former is still not "philosophical", and the latter is actually counter-productive in an age which finds Thomism far from attractive. In any case the relationship between nature and supernature is still open, and having rejected spiritualism Blondel has demolished the entirety of contemporary apologetics and can turn to the real problem philosophical enquirers have today.

The problem may surprise. It is in fact the problem of Hell, or more specifically, of damnation. I cannot save myself, but I can damn myself.⁴⁰ Whence this unjust disproportion? How can my rejection of something which by *definition* is beyond my grasp be so momentous? The answer is found by the 'method of immanence', which means the comparison between what we *claim* to think and what, in fact, drives our living. The transcendent is immanent to us *insofar as it is an idea* (Blondel makes a good deal of this rather dubious *distinguo*).⁴¹ When we examine our living we discover that the supernatural is *necessary* for us, not as a gift among gifts, but as something which has *already* 'as though by a secret grace' touched every soul (albeit differently).⁴² Yet since we discover only our *lack*—which is immanent to us—this method is properly philosophical and can, indeed, open up the others.⁴³

Whether Blondel's apologetics succeeds need not concern us. Likewise his dismissal of contemporary apologetics (and his insistence that e.g. a miracle is no proof to one who is unable to see it as such⁴⁴) earned him the enmity of most of Catholic letters. But his *target* is interesting. Blondel in effect buys the presuppositions of the atheist philosopher and opens his philosophy up from within, asking only that the philosopher consent to an examination of his *life*. It is a sustained effort in *ad hominem* which—not having falsified anything—does not have to be thrown away when successful. Blondel, unlike Tyrrell, starts not with what his interlocutor *thinks* but what he *does*, what he cannot help doing.

TRADITION AND DEVELOPMENT

What Blondel did *ad extra* he did *ad intra* in the face of Modernism. Modernism itself left nothing of Christianity but a free-running deism.⁴⁵ The reactionary tendency to impose a late-scholastic understanding on the historical data by judicial *fiat* he dismissed as *extrinicism*,⁴⁶ reserving particular scorn for the apologetic question-

³⁷Blondel, 'Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d'apologétique et sur la méthode de la philosophie dans l'étude du problème religieux', p. 110.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 114, 117. ³⁹Ibid., p. 118. ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 126. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 129. ⁴²Ibid., p. 132. ⁴³Ibid., p. 135.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁵Maurice Blondel, 'Histoire et Dogme', *Œuvres complètes, 1888–1913*, ed. by Claudes Troisfontaines, vol. II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, pp. 399–401, 426–7.

⁴⁶'A barbarous neologism' *ibid.*, pp. 394–9 entailing fideism or an absurd immanentism: either way the historical data is evacuated by a methodology incapable of limiting itself.

begging of the *disciplina arcani*.⁴⁷

Blondel points out that the strict independence of history is in fact an anachronism, at odds with the inter-related nature of modern study, and moreover entails a metaphysical commitment: “‘don’t philosophise!’—well, that’s philosophy’;⁴⁸ ‘real history’ by contrast ‘is made up of human lives; and the life of man is metaphysics in action’; abstraction *realised*, which the historian ‘always more or less poet’ seeks to bring to life in his selection and telling of the historical data.⁴⁹ ‘Pure history’ makes real a distinction only formal and betrays the dynamic of life–metaphysics (abstraction; theory)—when it suits the critic, who ‘alternates’ *histoire réelle* and *histoire scientifique* infinitesimally, betraying both fields.⁵⁰ This is *historicisme*, once again ‘*de fausse philosophie et même de philosophie fausse*’.⁵¹

Within a comparatively short time the *historical* record of the εὐαγγέλιον became—as Loisy and Harnack noted—the metaphysics of incarnation and redemption. So convergent and rapid was the expression that there must have been something in the original experience which sought *this* kind of expression.⁵² Blondel takes up the example of the delayed *parousia* (*on attendait la parousie; c’est l’Église qui est venue*).⁵³ To see simply a misunderstanding corrected by priestcraft is psychologically absurd. But in the Tradition this passage from immediate to abstract, from lived to thought, is normal. Tradition is that which maintains the vitality of theology, ‘experience always in action’, and hence in a startling phrase ‘Tradition anticipates the future and is positioned to shed light on it by the very effort of remaining faithful to the past’.⁵⁴

Tradition is neither ‘fixed deposit’ nor ‘piled-up novelties’, not a last resort but a constant means of operation, not research nor dialectic nor some untestable ‘mystical empiricism’ but simply the (objective) life of the Church.⁵⁵ The positive affirmation is a good deal weaker than the negative, and *Ressourcement* will try to fill it in, but the basic conclusion is already here:

en face de toutes les nouveautés intellectuelles ou de toutes les hypothèses exégétiques, y a-t-il dans l’expérience totale de l’Église un principe autonome de discernement: en tenant compte des idées et des faits, la foi traditionnelle tient également compte des pratiques éprouvées, des habitudes confirmées par les fruits de sainteté, des lumières acquises par la piété, la prière et la mortification.⁵⁶

Thus for Blondel the tradition is something fundamentally alive—indeed it is the life of the Church—and yet still her objective norm. But this is only a special—and objectively privileged—case of Blondel’s general account of the relationship between life and thought. I shall return to the question of the conditions of receiving the Tradition in the next chapter; for now I set up the philosophical apparatus for considering that receptivity.

Action and Plot

Blondel’s opus begins with a dilemma. *Oui ou non, la vie humaine a-t-elle un sens, et l’homme a-t-il un destiné? Oui ou non: can we or can we not make sense of a life which ‘enters one end of the banqueting hall and flies out the other like a swallow’?*⁵⁷ The question only appears dual in English: *sens* still means ‘direction’, τέλος; *destiné* still

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 442–3. ⁴⁸Ibid., 401–6 (405). ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 405. ⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 406–9. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 399.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 417–20. ⁵³Ibid., p. 416. ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 434. ⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 436–8. ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 440.

⁵⁷mihi uidetur, rex, uita hominum praesens in terris...quale cum te residente ad caenam...accenso

echoes sufficiently of *destination*. The question being asked is the plot, the flight-path of the swallow:

I act: without even knowing what action is, without having wished to live, without truly grasping who I am or even if I am.

Yet this question is not automatic. It must first appear:

This simulacra of being which acts in me, these actions light and fleeting as a shadow—I hear it said that these bear a responsibility eternally weighty; that not even at the price of blood may I attain nothingness because for me *it is no more*: that in this way I will be condemned to live, condemned to death, condemned to eternity!⁵⁸

For Blondel as for Augustine it is before God—or at any rate before eternity—that I am become a question unto myself.⁵⁹ Before the claim of Christianity that my eternal destiny hangs upon something as small as my actions I am immediately driven to ask *what kind of thing* my actions—the story they tell—and *what kind of thing* their *sens*, their telos, might be. To insist upon the dilemma, to ask ‘is life meaningful or is it not?’ and to insist further upon the kind of meaning it rapidly becomes apparent Blondel seeks, the *sense* of a story, is to pose a narrative question in a way neither classical nor early modern metaphysics is wont to do.⁶⁰ Moreover, the question ‘does the narrative of my life have a meaning, a sense, does it—in the french idiom—*seek to say something?*’ implies, if one is able to give a positive answer, that it has a modal component. If I have a telos, *how ought I* to realise it? And if I do *not* have a telos, how will I, in practice, orient and drive my thoughts and actions?⁶¹

NARRATIVE NECESSITY

The answer, Blondel thinks, is found in what the story of my life *cannot help* but say.⁶² This he considers under the slightly strange rubric of *determinism*; a problem usually compounded by not knowing would count as determinism.⁶³ Blondel apparently does know—but he doesn’t tell us. He considers various “determinisms:” mathematical,⁶⁴ physical (scientific)⁶⁵ which is built upon the mathematical, what seems to be a distinct or at least generalised phenomenon in ‘deductive determinism’,⁶⁶

quidem foco in medio, et calido effecto caenaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnia turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium, adueniens unus passerum domum citissime peruolauerit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens, mox per aliud exierit. Venerabilis Beda Presbyter, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, 2.13.

⁵⁸Maurice Blondel, *L'action, Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950, p. vii.

⁵⁹Aurelius Augustinus, *Augustine Confessions*, ed. by James O'Donnell, vol. I, Oxford: OUP, 2012, X.33. The Augustinianism of Blondel's style is quite deliberate.

⁶⁰For a sustained examination of just what this neglect of narrative entails for Aristotle's account of virtue—and thus ultimately of the human person—see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed., Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984, ch. 12.

⁶¹The language of narrative is mine, although Blondel uses it in this context on one occasion, speaking of the *drame* of our life and its *denouement*. Blondel, 'Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d'apologétique et sur la méthode de la philosophie dans l'étude du problème religieux', pp. 132/610.

⁶²Blondel used this method in his own personal discernment: Maurice Blondel, «*Mémoire*» à monsieur Bieil, Saint-Maur: Édition Parole et Silence, 1999.

⁶³The observation is classic: Peter Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 45–66.

⁶⁴Blondel, *L'action*, p. 59.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 78.

determinism as opposed to contingency by Kant⁶⁷ (!) and (again apparently distinctly) the ‘universal determinism of phenomena’⁶⁸—but never offers a definition, much less a criterion. We do however have some indications: mathematical determinism seems to mean simply the unfolding of mathematical reasoning, where the manner in which the conclusions are contained in the premises appears with striking force. Physical determinism is discussed in the context of finding causal explanations which will reliably explain and predict. Universal determinism is discussed after pointing out that all phenomena succeed and are linked to other phenomena. Clearly Blondel is not treating of *metaphysical* necessity at all.⁶⁹

What is determined is what *appears* not to be able to be otherwise: a narrative which *could not be told* otherwise. The increasing orbits of the determinism Blondel has identified concern narratives of increasing scope: first the mathematical series in which each step is contained in the last, where a mis-step would not merely not make sense but not count as mathematical reasoning at all; then the scientist’s account of reality which tells a story in which every event follows directly from the previous (and the extraneous are excluded); then the universal historical determinism of *all* events, because *all* events are part of some intelligible narrative (this, after all, is what Blondel endeavours to show). The problem is that this would seem to make an agent’s actions not *his*: that actions may be constrained by plot is, after all, the whole point of tragedy. Thus Blondel must show that freedom and determinism are of a different order:

Le sujet n’est pas dans la série, mais il y est constamment représenté; il n’apparaît pas dans le déterminisme total, mais il est, dans chaque détail, le principe de la variété et de l’action. Il faut l’y voir.⁷⁰

This Blondel then proceeds to do. From this arises a startling claim:

Ainsi, pour étudier l’intégration consciente de l’action, je décris le dynamisme automatique de la vie interne. J’y montre l’apparition nécessaire de la liberté, au sein du déterminisme psychologique. J’établis que cette liberté ne se conserve qu’en sortant d’elle-même pour se soumettre à une hétéronomie, pour conquérir à la volonté ce qui lui échappe et pour se jeter dans l’action opérante. Bref, le subjectif ne se maintiendra intact, complet et sincère qu’en « s’objectivant ».⁷¹

Blondel then proceeds to give an account of the self as that agent which receives, makes sense of, and then continues its own history. My freedom consists precisely in the fact that at each stage in my history I recognise whence I have come, where I am and whither, then, I am going, and then choose it. Can I not then choose something else? Of course: but in so doing I will simply tell a different narrative, not only forwards but backwards: my choice now will ratify different antecedents and the *sens* of my life will henceforth be different. Action constitutes personality: freedom is the power of recognising and integrating consciously that historical development which even plants integrate unconsciously.⁷² Determinism turns out simply to mean

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 80. ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁹In this Blondel is, for once, not innovating: *determinism* is used in French philosophy more broadly than in English: frequently it simply names *strong influence*, as opposed to the “freedom” of one who, living authentically, knows how to make up his own mind. Whence (anecdotally) a definition apparently given in class: “determinism is the belief that my actions are caused by things”!

⁷⁰Blondel, *L’action*, p. 92. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 104. ⁷²Ibid., p. 105.

‘the explanatory narrative for an act’; freedom means ‘the acting of the agent who makes the narrative’. Both are descriptions of the same event from different vantages. Moreover, only by considering my actions—that is, by considering the narrative I tell by means of them—do I discover what it is which made up my past: actions are ‘a ship’s log cast in the water to determine its speed’.⁷³

Yet Blondel’s phenomenology of acting is more subtle: when I act I as it were ‘launch’ an action which has its own logic and continuity. If I throw myself off a building it will be some time before my action reaches its end—but there is nothing I can do to stop it once it has started. If I choose to say or not to say some unpopular thing I unleash consequences beyond my control, which will shape my future action—either by my acceptance or my resistance of what they seem to demand—and thus become part of the *narrative* necessity of future actions whereby alone they are intelligible. To act, then, is more or less to *submit* oneself to one particular reading of one’s past, to commit oneself, weakly, to some future action and certainly to a future decision. Thus the freedom which emerged necessarily from my past recedes as I contemplate the future my act unrolls: freedom comes from necessity and submits itself once again.⁷⁴

PLOT

What Blondel has sketched here is no more a justification of *liber arbitrium* than what Bergson would propose (and the inquisition reject).⁷⁵ Instead it is a phenomenology of free will: the freedom to read, and then to write, the plot of one’s life—a freedom within very curious limits. For the narrative freedom I have in acting comes hand in hand with the perplexing narrative *intelligibility* of my life: or in other terms, if there is a plot, who wrote it and where is it going?

This is, in fact, the point of *L’action*. Blondel distinguishes between the *volontaire* and the *voulu*, the willing will (*volonté voulante*) and the will which has so willed it (*volonté voulue*). The freedom of which we have spoken is that of the *volonté voulante*, but the will to will such-and-such a free act is not free from the dynamic inherent in *being a will*. How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled? Blondel sets out to see if harmonisation is possible ‘purely on the natural order’.⁷⁶ The problem stems from the account Blondel has given of freedom: freedom seems to imply a submission, even a sacrifice (to the specificity of the future): but in virtue of what am I compelled to sacrifice myself? And what of that fact that, since my freedom consists in ratifying in part *what I shall become*, and this in turn depends upon what I have *just* become in beginning to act, my realisation of any such ratification is always partial?⁷⁷ In narrative terms: I know how to play my role without knowing what it is that that role shall entail; I *will* to fulfil a function only partially known. Thus there is at least this discrepancy: the *volonté voulue* can never be fully realised in the fragmentary nature of my actions—this Blondel asserts as a generally recognisable phenomenon—and can thus neither derive wholly from nor point wholly to my action, such as I experience it. Or, again in narrative terms: my role is *greater* than any particular action I effect; I am constantly driven to fulfil imperfectly something which seems to demand of me a totality I am unable to give.

This need not yet be any transcendental postulate: Blondel shows that the simple exigences of being embodied impose a kind of disproportion between the two wills insofar as I encounter ‘an organic resistance’ to the realisation of the true will in

⁷³Blondel, *L’action*, p. 188. ⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 193–98. ⁷⁵Bruno Neveu, ‘Bergson et l’Index’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 4 (2003), pp. 454–51. ⁷⁶Blondel, *L’action*, p. 42. ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 132.

any action (I am, after all, bound by space and time).⁷⁸ But these attempts to locate the object of the underlying will all fail (largely by assertion—but phenomenology is rather inductive); the internal determinism, the plot, of the *volonté voulante* is always discoverable. The last hope is that it might turn out to be a purely internal matter, a disproportion in my psyche: but it is precisely in encountering the world, in death, life, suffering and joy that I discover not merely that I know the world but that I interact with all external realities affectively; more, that their affective structure has for me a *sens*, a meaning in the narrative of my life. This underlying affective structure, as I experience it driving my actions, is the *volonté voulue*.⁷⁹

Thus at last Blondel is able to pose the question:

Qu'est-ce donc que ce mystérieux x qui n'est ni le néant ni le phénomène, quoiqu'on ne puisse concevoir le phénomène ou le néant sans le comprendre dans la pensée qui les admet?⁸⁰

What, in other words, is it that we are seeking?

Dans notre connaissance, dans notre action, il subsiste une disproportion constante entre l'objet même et la pensée, entre l'œuvre et la volonté. Sans cesse l'idéal conçu est dépassé par l'opération réelle, et sans cesse la réalité obtenue est dépassée par un idéal toujours renaissant. Tour à tour, la pensée devance la pratique, et la pratique devance la pensée; il faut donc que le réel et l'idéal coïncident, puisque cette identité nous est donnée en fait; mais elle ne nous est donnée que pour nous échapper aussitôt. Quelle étrange condition de vie que cette mutuelle et alternante propulsion de l'idée et de l'action! comme deux mouvements d'une vitesse périodiquement inégale se fuient et se rapprochent tour à tour pour coïncider en un point, il semble que toutes nos démarches oscillent autour d'un point de coïncidence où elles ne se tiennent jamais, quoiqu'elles y passent sans cesse.⁸¹

This is not merely the observation that we desire more than we can do. Desire outstrips reality, but reality outstrips desire (*volonté voulue*). The idea is exactly parallel to that of freedom arising “necessarily” from the past and receding necessarily in the future: this is a *narrative* teleology, a sense that we are being driven *somewhere*, that the *sens* of our lives is both undeniable and unknown.

TRANSNATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL

Here, in fact, we find the restless heart which Lubac extols (and Mansini doubts) in training, straining beyond itself: ultimately, beyond the natural. From this perspective we can get at exactly what is at stake in the largely fruitless debates which Blondel stirred up and Lubac continued. A strange parallelism is at work: the formal structure of Blondel's account of the role of connatural knowledge is identical to the formal structure of Rousselot's account of the role of grace in faith; and the formal structure of Blondel's anthropology is identical to that of Lubac's account of the relationship between grace and nature. This immediately sheds light on an initially perplexing phenomenon one encounters in these debates: the same kind of response is deployed on the *natura pura* question as it is on the means-of-knowledge question or the role-of-philosophy question. That there is no direct connection between holding that

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 154. ⁷⁹Ibid., p. 334. ⁸⁰Ibid., p. 344. ⁸¹Ibid., pp. 344–5.

being, rejection of which is damnation and acceptance of which is salvation. A good number of interpreters have stopped here and shown how Blondel endeavours to move from acceptance of the former to realisation of the latter, from philosophy to apologetics. There is, however, a middle stage.⁸⁴ If the latter concerns the *supernatural* and the former the ‘natural’—by which Blondel (like Lubac) almost always means the sphere of human experience,⁸⁵ that which is immanent to us—this middle is the *transnatural*. Yet the word itself is problematic: Blondel coined it after *L’action* in a context which made it clear he was referring to the state of man *who was directed from nature to a specifically Christian supernature*.⁸⁶ This is the form in which his later thought is frequently posed, as we shall see. But it is not the hypothesis of the first *L’action* which considered the transnatural from the perspective of a vague, ill-defined need for something ‘beyond’, *before* eventually postulating the Christian supernatural and showing, very rapidly, that an account of the transnatural state of man deduced from revelation was indeed compatible with the “philosophical transnatural” considered from below.

Bouillard summarises this transnaturalness in three propositions: (i) that the immanent notion of the supernatural—the recognition of the condition of transnaturalness—is generated negatively, by man’s failure to find fulfilment in the natural order, that is, in the world immanent to him; (ii) that when this vague notion encounters Christianity’s theological account—treated purely as a hypothesis—it receives further verification; this account seems to fill the right gaps; (iii) since the science of action is not action, and the verification of this hypothesis must be experienced, only the experience of faith can discern in Christianity the gift of God.

This explanation was initially defended by Blondel, and certainly leaves the gratuity of the *Christian* supernatural intact.⁸⁷ But it failed to be understood by Blondel’s Catholic critics, and he at length abandoned it for the classical argument that God was free not to grant a supernatural end, limiting himself to the question of the psychological signature of this grace.⁸⁸

This account of transnaturalness, where man bears within him ‘the anonymous presence of an immanent supernatural’, to use Deschamps’ phrase, came about largely because in Deschamps’ apologetics Blondel discovered an account, sanctioned by the First Vatican Council, which lent credence to his philosophy at least as a kind of *praeparatio evangelica*.⁸⁹ Thus Blondel points out that ‘what no doubt gave rise to so much misunderstanding and confusion was the mixture, in theory and in controversy, of different states that are actually united in reality, but which must be distinguished in the scientific knowledge that we should have of them’.⁹⁰ These states consisted in the state of nature, the state of original justice, the fallen state, *the transnatural state*, and the supernatural state. Where Blondel in the first *L’action* spoke of nature he had in mind the transnatural state in which we find ourselves: that state in which we discover a teleological process in our lives pointing beyond us without knowing *where*, in fact, it points; when Lubac spoke of the ‘natural desire for the supernatural’ he was considering not this transnaturalness but an explicit recognition of the supernatural to which the transnatural in fact points—an explicit recognition which had to be

⁸⁴This is the Duméry/Bouillard controversy, in which I follow Bouillard. One should note that Bouillard’s objection is not that Duméry is *wrong*, but that, by ignoring the middle stage, he compromises *malgré lui* the philosophical value of Blondel’s insight.

⁸⁵Henri Bouillard, *Blondel and Christianity*, trans. from the French by James M. Somerville, Washington: Corpus, 1970, pp. 81–2.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 89. ⁸⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 84–7. ⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 90. ⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁹⁰“Le problème de la philosophie catholique” cited in *ibid.*, p. 92.

revealed. Thus too hasty an identification should be avoided: Blondel's argument (at any rate here) is deliberately limited to our (unaided) horizons.

Liturgical Action

This distinction allows us to make sense of Blondel's account of religious action, which he still thinks philosophical. What interests him is its *rubrical*, apparently scripted, nature. He refers to it as *pratique littérale*, an odd term which reminds one of those proofs of the evils of antinomianism from the Purification of Our Lady:

Car fi Marie, pour éviter le scandale, se fait un devoir d'abandonner
ses plus justes prétentions, pour se conformer à la pratique littérale
de la loi...⁹¹

Here the sense is very clearly 'by the literal fulfilment' of a law which did not necessarily oblige. *Littéral* connotes that careful obedience, that submission to external practices which Our Lord (to take a better example) manifested in his baptism. (In English: *practice of the letter*.) Blondel is very deliberately setting up the most disdainful description of religious action he can find. The term is introduced just when, by anthropomorphism, the superstition of idolatry opens into something greater:

By this extension of ceremonial [from sorcery to priestcraft] which corresponds to a clearer consciousness of the unfathomable depths of every action, the very concept of the sacred object becomes intellectualised and is thereby humanised. With the emergence of *la pratique littérale* a new spirit is introduced, the sense of a god not merely demanding a tribute, not merely an egoist or a fierce tyrant, but who desires of human actions that they should be *what they must be*, as though their perfect and regular expression were necessary to his own perfection.⁹²

This *pratique littérale*—I shall leave the term untranslated⁹³—is a far cry from the Christian practice Blondel will eventually endeavour to defend. Yet it has in common this recognition that actions 'must be' some way, must be performed 'perfectly', not by capricious demand of some divine tyrant but by a kind of inner logic—yet a logic taught by priestcraft.

Here, once again, we have free action manifesting itself in a submission which becomes the condition of future (free) action; but in this case the very formality of the submission is apparently demanded (ultimately) by one *outside* the veil of the natural. This, however, is not (yet) his point; rather, he is interested in how *naturally* this *transnatural* intentionality fits into the pattern of our acting. Can this be generalised? Blondel considers a number of problems, but for our purposes it is sufficient to examine two: the interaction between revelation and philosophy, and the problem of sacramentality. This is, in fact, an account of the receptivity necessary to perceive the Tradition: and Blondel thinks it is formed liturgically.

⁹¹Richard and Dominicains de Fauxbourg Saint-Germain et rue Saint-Honoré, *Dictionnaire Universel, des sciences ecclésiastiques*, vol. 4, Paris: Jacques Rollin, 1761, p. 646, Sermon on purification.

⁹²Blondel, *L'action*, p. 309. My italics.

⁹³Avoiding at least Doherty's 'literal practice' which seems to me even less clear: Cathal Doherty, *Maurice Blondel on the Supernatural in Human Action, Sacrament and Superstition*, Leiden: Brill, 2017.

REVELATION AND PHILOSOPHY

What can be said, *philosophically* about dogma? If it were merely an empirical fact—if revelation had either happened or not, but if so consisted entirely in authoritatively pronounced but effectively arbitrary propositions—nothing at all. Worse, the notion would be unintelligible⁹⁴—although this follows from the fact that Blondel has defined the intelligible as that which is accessible to the acting, reflecting subject by virtue of his acting, and is thus a somewhat hollow victory. But what is essential is that there should be some way of reaching toward the possibility of revelation from *within* the ‘open’ philosophy he has constructed. Something *within* human willing, human acting (the two terms being ultimately equivalent) must desire and recognise revelation, without revelation becoming (as for Schleiermacher) either identified with or even substantially authenticated by this premonition. At this point the dialectic becomes tremendously subtle and must be quoted at some length to avoid distortion:

Il faut en effet s’entendre sur la nature des symboles expressifs qui seuls peuvent, du dehors, apporter à l’homme la réponse positive qu’il réclame : ils ne sauraient être que des signes à double entente, justement parce que la souveraine originalité de la vie intérieure n’admet que ce qu’elle a digéré en quelque façon et vivifié. Ces signes, si éclatants qu’on les suppose, ne sauraient donc avoir une efficacité nécessitante; ils ne peuvent offrir l’infini que sous les traits du fini. Et c’est même là, pour les esprits déliés, un des plus difficiles obstacles à surmonter : car il semblerait presque naturel de trouver l’absolu dans la suppression du relatif, et la vie sur-naturelle dans la mort sensible. Mais ressaisir l’être sous des espèces sensibles; admettre qu’un acte particulier, contingent et borné, puisse contenir l’universel et l’infini; prendre dans la série des phénomènes, un phénomène qui cesse tout entier d’y appartenir, voilà le prodige. Les grandeurs spirituelles n’ont rien de cet éclat qui force l’assentiment en s’imposant aux sens, rien de cette évidence qui violente l’entendement sans réserver l’entière liberté du cœur. Ce qui en est visible aux yeux, ce qui en est clair à la pensée, semble en contredire et en cacher l’invisible beauté. En sorte qu’il serait presque plus facile d’y croire, sans ce qui est sensible et raisonnable en elles : épreuve singulière de l’esprit, que ce mélange de lumière et d’ombre où, à défaut de la pleine clarté, il semblerait que la pleine nuit fût seule possible. Et pourtant n’est-ce point là le désir formel du cœur, n’est-ce pas l’invocation instantane de la volonté? Que l’inaccessible se rende accessible, on le demande; et, si la merveille semble consommée, on refuse d’y croire comme à un scandale trop fort pour la raison.⁹⁵

These ‘signs of double signification’, this ‘infinity contained in finitude’ is a kind of incarnation and thus a kind of veiling. *Rien de cette évidence qui violente l’entendement sans réserver l’entière liberté du cœur*: the clue is at the end—such a *certain* sign of the supernatural would so much negate faith, as to be in a sense *unnatural*. Yet that which ‘seems to hide its invisible beauty’—a matter of taste, and one recalls Claudel’s conversion at Vespers, but Blondel is stating the case as bleakly as he can—only *seems* to do so. Certainly, it would be easier to believe in the night of the senses; easier to believe in that which is beyond nature if nature itself seemed wholly eviscerated. But

⁹⁴Blondel, *L’action*, p. 394. ⁹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 395–6.

in what sense would this be a fulfilment of desire? Is there not a certain duplicity in the critic who demands that the faith be made apparent, and then objects when in human language it appears all too human?

Blondel underlines the point by considering miracles: miracles are, traditionally, *signs*—signs then of what? Not so much of the breaking in of the supernatural into the natural order as of the fact that when that breaking-in occurs, the event is still reportable as an historical event among events. The supernatural does not, in fact, eviscerate the natural—and thus disbelief is always possible. (This is the corollary of the state of man being transnatural.) Thus in one sense ‘there is no doubt nothing more in the miraculous than in the least of ordinary occurrences—but again, there is nothing less in the most ordinary occurrence than in the miraculous.... What they reveal is that the divine is not merely to be found in those things which seem to surpass the accustomed power of man and of nature, but everywhere, even where we acknowledge willingly the sufficiency of man and of nature.’⁹⁶ And thus ‘miracles are only miraculous to those who are ready to recognise divine action in the most habitual acts and events’:⁹⁷ those not merely willing to recognise that *there can be* miracles (a point which sometimes needs to be made), but also those for whom the ordinary is signficatory—and thus the extraordinary can be extraordinarily signficatory.

Thus, likewise, the question of dogma, of the external (and of any practice it may demand) cannot arise directly from revelation (for without a willingness to see some truth carried by formulas supported by authority, authority would simply not be heard), nor can it come from nature, which is there to be *used* by the divine, not itself to speak:

C'est d'une initiative interne que jaillit cette notion. Mais comment cette disposition toute subjective saurait-elle reconnaître au dehors s'il y a en effet un aliment préparé pour calmer cet appétit du divin? et, après qu'on a senti l'inévitable tourment de l'infini, après qu'on a sommé Dieu de soulever les voiles du monde et de se montrer, comment discerner cette présence, si elle est réelle? comment reconnaître cette réponse authentique, si elle est vraiment prononcée?⁹⁸

Here Blondel poses in effect the paradox of the *Meno*: how shall we recognise the divine, unless we already know what it is? As in Plato the solution is a *mythos*—the *mythos* Blondel has been telling of the fundamental desire behind all action—which flourishes here in a state of stillness, of receptivity:⁹⁹ beyond that Blondel really has nothing to say.

All this has seemed somewhat nebulous, and Blondel turns to what *in fact* goes on in Christianity to substantiate it:

C'est ici, encore et surtout, que se manifeste la souveraine efficacité et la puissance médiatrice de l'action. Car, d'une part, c'est par le canal de l'action que la vérité révélée pénètre jusqu'à la pensée sans rien perdre de son intégrité surnaturelle; et, d'autre part, si la pensée croyante, tout obscure qu'elle demeure parmi les rayons que la foi répand de son inaccessible foyer, a un sens et une valeur, c'est parce qu'elle aboutit à l'action et trouve dans la pratique littérale son commentaire et sa vive réalité.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Blondel, *L'action*, p. 396. ⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 396–7. ⁹⁸Ibid., p. 397. ⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 168–9. ¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 400.

TRANSNATURAL SACRAMENTAL PRACTICE

Here again, what seemed insoluble in the abstract will be solved in practice. For Blondel action is prior: a plausible piece of philosophical architecture is one which tallies with what we find in the narrative. Where interpreters like Duméry solve the “problem” of sacramental action by appeal to the intellectual coherence of dogma with an intellectualist philosophy,¹⁰¹ Blondel solves the problem of dogma by appealing to the reality of sacramental practice. The problem is of conformity: *comment introduire et faire vivre en nous une autre pensée, une autre vie que la nôtre?*¹⁰² But this is the same problem which Blondel has already showed was solved in practice in the question of societal co-action, in shared community narratives. The question now is whether a narrative can be shared between heaven and earth without heaven *first* providing some earnest:

Par où donc cette vie supérieure saurait-elle s’insinuer en notre vie, s’il est vrai qu’il faut que, dans son principe même, elle soit absolument indépendante de notre initiative? par où lui donner accès: par nos pensées? mais on ne peut croire sans agir; par nos actes? mais on ne peut agir sans croire; et, dans ce cercle parfaitement clos de la vie intérieure, il n’y a, semble-t-il, point de porte ménagée à l’intrusion d’une opération étrangère. Comment donc faire descendre, dans ce vide qui demeure tout grand ouvert au centre de notre vie, cet indispensable et inaccessible secours?¹⁰³

This chicken-and-egg problem is, Blondel insists, real, and a serious obstacle to many. The classical solution, famously enunciated by Pascal, is to act as though one did. So common is the advice it has entered the vocabulary of *Chanson*, as here with Georges Brassens:

Mon voisin du dessus, un certain Blais’ Pascal
M’a gentiment donné ce conseil amical

« Mettez-vous à genoux, priez et implorez
Faites semblant de croire, et bientôt vous croirez. »

Rather unsurprisingly, things do not work out as intended. The trouble is that *simply* to act without faith will not do: the intentional character of faithful action presupposes that one is *faithful*. Blondel has thus to show that there is at least a kind of precursor to faith available—in the transnatural orientation he has discovered—and that whilst there cannot really be *faithful* action there can at any rate be its natural analogue—and since, Blondel confidently insists, the supernatural is in fact there, waiting, any properly receptive natural action will open one up to it, and grace will do the rest.¹⁰⁴

The argument is hurried: *transnatural* is doing a good deal of work here. As an account of intentional *stances* it is striking: the prospective convert has to submit willingly to ‘insignificant and humiliating’ practices;¹⁰⁵ only by this *activity* can the faith grow. This will, Blondel knows, appear a scandal in an era where the internalisation of religion was in full swing. But Blondel has already demonstrated that the interior life itself is something we become aware of only in our action *ad extra*; it is a small thing to repeat the demonstration for religion.¹⁰⁶ Thus the only remaining

¹⁰¹Henry Duméry, *La philosophie de l’action, Essai sur l’intellectualisme blondélien*, Paris: Aubier, 1948, 162ff.

¹⁰²Blondel, *L’action*, p. 400. ¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 401. ¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 402–3. ¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p. 408. ¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 414–5.

question is the *source* of this coaction: whence liturgy?

Pour que ces actes rituels ne se réduisent pas à une fiction idolâtrique et pour qu'ils égalent la foi dont ils doivent être la vivifiante expression, il est requis qu'ils soient, non pas une invention de l'homme et l'effet toujours imparfait d'un mouvement naturel, mais l'expression de préceptes positifs et l'imitation originale du dogme divinement transcrit dans des commandements distincts. Il ne suffit pas qu'ils deviennent le véhicule du transcendant; il faut qu'ils en contiennent la présence réelle et qu'ils en soient la vérité immanente. Caro Verbum facta. Dérivées du dogme, la discipline et l'autorité des prescriptions positives deviennent elles-mêmes des dogmes originaux. Il faut une pratique; et toute pratique qui n'est pas donnée comme un ordre surnaturel est superstitieuse. Ce n'est rien si ce n'est pas tout.¹⁰⁷

Blondel's defence of dogmatism *via* the *dogmatisme pratique*¹⁰⁸ of the liturgy seems to fall over the even larger hurdle of showing that a rite which has its own ordinary history is somehow *divine*. It is much easier, conceptually, to proceed in stages: to show the possibility, of revelation, argue for its historical facticity, and then move to a minimalist account of the Church. Unfortunately this, Blondel thinks, is the wrong *kind* of argument to bring one to submit to the "humiliation" of external revelation. What is needed is to bring about a shift in the direction of a whole person—and by Blondel's anthropology, only a pattern of acting can do such a thing. This argument will be strongest in theory¹⁰⁹ and weakest in practice. Blondel does not engage in any historical attempt to prove the fittingness of Christian liturgy: this would, he thinks, no longer be philosophy. Instead he deliberately makes the case as hard as possible by attacking "superstitious action." The solution is to be practical: once we have established that action *can* play this role, the prospective convert simply has to try it.

Mysticism?

All of this begs the question: is Blondel engaging in philosophy at all? Is this not, as critics tended to assume, a scripted mysticism encountering an equally compromised supernatural?¹¹⁰ *Mutatis mutandis*, this is the controversy Lubac stirred up; in fact it is the controversy *Ressourcement* triggered in general, to which I shall turn in the next chapter: is this not a simple confusion of domains? The question is ultimately whether the intentional stance necessary to receive something greater can be thought without smuggling in what is in fact received; Blondel's answer is that he is proposing, not a mystical *insight*, but an intellectual virtue.

Maritain had written to Bremond:

¹⁰⁷ Blondel, *L'action*, p. 416. ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 416. ¹⁰⁹ Doherty, *Maurice Blondel on the Supernatural in Human Action*.

¹¹⁰ A parallel question is the definition and status of a *christian* philosophy. On this there was a great controversy, in which nearly everyone of interest to us took a position: Blondel maintaining that there was a uniquely *philosophical* mode of Christian enquiry which looked, unsurprisingly, like *L'action*, Maritain maintaining that *philosophia* came before *sacra doctrina*, and Lubac, tellingly, holding that it was effectively theology, at any rate as the words were understood by Maritain. See Gregory B. Sadler, ed. and trans., *Reason Fulfilled by Revelation, The 1930s Christian Philosophy Debates in France*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011. The controversy is too dense to go into here, but shines an excellent spotlight on the different prejudices at play.

Monsieur l'abbé et cher ennemi,

[...] Vous voulez que je vous dise les hérésies que j'ai trouvées? Hélas, elles sont là; elles me percent le cœur.

Votre hérésie, c'est Blondel (*credo in Blondellum*) [...] Je vous assure que je n'ai aucune prévention contre Blondel, — une réelle sympathie au contraire; je me suis appliqué de tout mon cœur à interdire à ma critique toute pointe acerbe, et à ne pas user des avantages trop faciles que Blondel offre à ses adversaires.

—in other words to find verbal contradictions and engage in logic-chopping with an adversary whose prose was deliberately poetical—

Mais la vérité commande. [...]

En définitive et pour parler *gros* et *clair*, l'hérésie en question c'est tout simplement la confusion de l'ordre naturel et de l'ordre surnaturel, la transposition de la connaissance mystique dans l'ordre de la connaissance naturelle ou philosophique, l'hybridation de la connaissance naturelle et de la sagesse infuse. Voilà le fond de la *connaissance réelle* de Blondel[...]. Vous me dites qu'il est facile d'identifier la connaissance réelle de Blondel à la connaissance mystique. Je crois bien! C'en est la contrefaçon philosophique. Ne sentez-vous pas qu'il vole aux mystiques, — je dis aux âmes en qui le baptême porte tous ses fruits divins de contemplation —, un bien qui est leur bien propre et réservé, pour le rendre commun à tous, et l'octroyer aux philosophes.

« Des deux connaissances dont nous disposons... », dites-vous..Non, tous les hommes ne disposent pas de la connaissance mystique...

« Connaissance intellectuelle du vrai et connaissance mystique du réel... »...Attention ! La connaissance mystique ne porte pas sur n'importe quel réel, mais sur Dieu...

From this the only logical step is the position we have already seen Mansini adopt, albeit less charmingly:

Autre hérésie, qui ne fait qu'une avec la première...confusion de la présence d'immensité, par laquelle Dieu est en toute chose créée, dans la pierre comme dans l'homme, et de la présence de la grâce, qui *seule rend possible* une expérience et un toucher senti et une saisie actuelle de Dieu, par *l'union de charité*....

Certes les mystiques ont la clef de l'apologétique, mais parce qu'ils voient, eux, le cœur humain dans la lumière divine; non, parce que leur sagesse et leur mode de connaître serait accessible à ceux qu'ils veulent convertir. J'entends bien que le retour vers l'intime de soi-même,...est en effet une disposition requise.... Mais...parce qu'il purifie leur regard, ôte les obstacles, et permet aux certitudes naturelles de l'intelligence de jouer librement, comme à leur volonté de se rectifier.

—which is to say, to perceive (inter alia) that one's soul is an irreducibly simple quasi-substance, and to resolve to do something about its destiny.

It is striking, indeed, how little the conversation has changed. These pages predate *Surnaturel* by twenty-three years and Mansini by eighty-six, and yet the quarrel has,

if anything, deteriorated. Bremond sent the letter to Blondel, who—observing that it was fruitless, *vous ne le dédomicanisez pas; mais j'espère bien qu'il ne vous néo-thomisera pas!*—replied at length:

Que redoute [Maritain]?, et quel est le principe de ses griefs? — il craint...que je « naturalise le surnaturel », par une hybridation du rationnel et du mystique ; et il redoute par-dessus tout l'ὕβρις d'une philosophie qui présumerait d'escalader par ses moyens propres les sommets célestes, de forcer les divins. — De *cela*, je puis le dire, j'ai autant d'horreur que lui.... *Et plus ego.*

This, Blondel points out, he has always asserted, but assertion is after all not much of an argument. Maritain has missed the fact that

à côté ou même au-dedans de la connaissance abstractive et notionnelle, j'ai marqué l'existence, souligné l'importance, décrit le processus d'une autre connaissance, distincte et solidaire à la fois de la pensée discursive, connaissance concrète et connaturelle, plus vraiment pleine, fondant, complétant la connaissance notionnelle qui aspire en effet à se parfaire en une connaissance *réelle*. — Or...[Maritain] identifie « la connaissance mystique » comme si j'avais jamais présenté comme *mystique* et dénommé telle la connaissance *par connaturalité*, et comme si les exemples que j'avais fournis d'après les maîtres eux-mêmes n'étaient pas tous empruntés à des expériences communes.

Mystique is used here in Maritain's sense, and Blondel is arguing *ad hominem* with an opponent for whom he has some respect, hence his readiness to speak of connatural knowledge *completing* the natural, although the comparison is backwards from that we saw demanded by Garrigou-Lagrange, with notional knowledge seeking completion in *connaissance réelle*, rather than the latter making up a few lacunæ in the former. But it is Maritain's position which seems absurd to Blondel: if *connaissance réelle* is the preserve of the engraced contemplative, the rest of us are stuck with an 'artificial, mimetic knowledge', happening to use the same words for things but with as little relation "as between the dog-star and a barking dog". Rather than accept so ridiculous conclusion we are forced to acknowledge that

la connaissance abstractive, par concepts et discours, n'épuise pas le mode naturel et humain de connaître. Et non seulement il y a, de fait, un autre mode humain et naturel de connaissance concrète et commune, mais encore la connaissance par percepts [sic=immediate perceptions] et concepts se fonde constamment sur cette autre pensée à la fois distincte et solidaire des opérations discursives....

nonetheless, *pace* the refusal of the epithet *mystical*, this knowledge is in fact imperfect and recognisably related to the mystical:

Je n'ai pas moins insisté sur les déficiences naturellement incurables de la connaissance réelle que sur celle de la connaissance notionnelle, et tout le ressort de mon argumentation gît même en cela. Mais pour être inchoative et humainement inachevable, cette connaissance n'en est pas moins une connaissance réelle, solide et requérante tout ensemble

But this is simply the condition of humanity *tout court*. Frequently grace has to supply what was (in theory) naturally achievable; and even when it builds on a proper natural foundation, it still does not compete:

L'étude discursive des *motifs de crédibilité* n'altère pas le caractère, tout autre, du *motif de foi*; la foi de science peut subsister sans usurper sur la foi de foi...pourquoi donc une certaine connaissance réelle du naturel des êtres naturaliserait-elle...les états spirituels et les dons mystiques...? Pourquoi l'*acquis* nuirait-il à l'*infus*? Et comment d'ailleurs l'*infus* se passerait-il de tout *acquis* préalable ou concomitant, de toute faculté proportionnée et exercée, de tout *habitus moralis et metaphysicus*?¹¹¹

Blondel goes on to suggest that Maritain presumably thinks Pius XI heretical for suggesting that *moral* and *intellectual* virtue go hand in hand; as a barb the claim is amusing, but as a summary it is revealing. What Blondel seeks is a kind of intellectual ascesis in order to gain an intellectual virtue, a “proportioned faculty”—precisely to be open to the supernatural. In this sense, then, this is a “natural mysticism” preparing the way for the supernatural; an attentiveness, not an acquisition.

Indeed, this was a distinction Blondel had always insisted upon. On another occasion where Bremond had been charged by his censor with *certaines expressions qui semblent enlever toute distinction entre nature et surnature, humaniser le divin ou diviniser l'humain*, Blondel sympathised with his incomprehension—*avec la méthode et l'intelligence de cet homme, l'Evangile et saint Thomas seraient vite brûlés!*—and then set out to explain the charge:

D'une part, je trouve parfois excessive votre tendance à assimiler la mystique naturelle, esthétique, etc., à la mystique proprement surnaturelle; il y a non seulement une différence de degré, d'objet, de mode, mais une hétérogénéité entre certains états affectifs ou intellectuels qui « réalisent » notre vie ou la vie concrète des choses en nous, et l'action transcendante, dilatante, transformante de Dieu dans l'âme déiforme.

Ironically, the clearest definition of *connaissance réelle* comes in a letter! It is an intellectual or affective state which—the french *réalise* is stubbornly multivalent, and Blondel is punning on *bring about* (cf. *réalisateur*) and *make real*—brings us into sympathy with reality. Blondel is simply a Continental philosopher: his first concern is *authenticité*, and *connaissance réelle* simply names the authenticity of one who does not obscure a particular thing behind a set of abstractions. But note that this is considered a *natural* mysticism, distinct from the supernatural *but preparatory of it*:

D'autre part, je trouve parfois excessive votre tendance à considérer les états proprement mystiques comme excentriques à la vie normale, obscure, anonyme, mystérieuse de la foi et de la piété courantes, comme impliquant des jouissances et des illuminations qui en seraient « la marque essentielle », la singularité et la nouveauté originales. Vous semblez suivre le P. Poulain plus que Saudreau et plus que saint Jean de la Croix, lequel fait si peu constituer l'état mystique en ce que nous pouvons sentir ou voir, même surnaturellement, en cette vie, qu'il établit fondamentalement son ascèse et sa doctrine mystique sur l'évacuation des grâces

¹¹¹Henri Bremond and Maurice Blondel, *Correspondance*, ed. by André Blanchet, vol. 1, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1970, Nn. 562–5 (1923).

sensibles et des visions le plus divines — ce qui permet d'autant mieux de maintenir la continuité entre l'union la plus haute du mariage spirituel chez les grands privilégiés de la sainteté et les humbles états obscurs de l'enfant ou du rustre en état de grâce. En sorte que, tout à la fois, vous me paraissez parfois trop rapprocher et trop séparer...

There are two claims here: not only is the *natural* mysticism of *la connaissance réelle* a natural step on the way to *supernatural* mysticism (which is the preserve of the faith), but the faith *itself* is continuous with supernatural mysticism: the faith of the “rustic in a state of grace” is a perception of the *same* reality as seen by the enraptured saint. How so? The question is how one defines “perception”:

Enfin, par instants, malgré ce que vous dites de l'excellence de la connaissance *réelle* au-dessus de la *notionnelle*, il me semble que vous reveniez à la conception, au langage des théologiens de l'abstrait, lesquels impliquent que la vraie science sera analogue à leur pensée savante plus qu'à la concrète, et qui dès lors attachent une importance excessive au côté soi-disant lumineux et instructif des révélations mystiques...¹¹²

Certainly, mystical experiences are frequently translated into speculative propositions. But it is for her life (and not her metaphysics) that one reads St. Teresa—or in Blondel's terms for her real, and not merely notional, insight.

There are a number of things to observe here. One is that the question of the “natural desire” was in the air long before Lubac apparently invented it, and that Blondel proposed much the same solution, albeit with an important clarification (the distinction between the phenomenologically accessible transnatural, and the divinely revealed supernatural, which is at the very least obscured by treating the question as Lubac does). Another is that Blondel's solution is *explicitly* grounded in an account of the relation between intellection and (mystical) contemplation. But most striking of all is that what on one plane Blondel considers serious philosophical endeavour (worthy, indeed, of a doctorate!) he is quite happy to call *mystique esthétique*. (Likewise he speaks repeatedly of ‘mortification’ as a precondition for *philosophical* endeavour.) For Blondel the *habitus* of philosophy is in the philosopher.

The death of the philosophy of action

Blondel died surprisingly late, in 1949; Bremond suddenly in 1933; Mme Rose Blondel had died many years earlier, in 1919, after a long illness;¹¹³ the *Annales de Philosophie chrétienne* in 1913 (when the entire run with the fiery Laberthonnière as editor¹¹⁴ and Blondel as proprietor had been placed on the index, an unprecedented action apparently largely political in motivation) and *le Sillon* and Blondel's conferences (the *semaines sociales*) had died in 1910 by the direct intervention of the pope.¹¹⁵ *L'action*

¹¹²Bremond and Blondel, *Correspondance*, Nn. 434/435 (Sep. 1915).

¹¹³*Ibid.*, Nn. 490, 491.

¹¹⁴Bremond and Blondel referred to him almost exclusively as “Malébranche.”

¹¹⁵Pope Pius X, ‘Notre charge apostolique’, *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*, Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1910, pp. 607–633 This is normally told as a political fight with *Action Française* (which despite also being a non-Catholic movement and at times flirting with direct violence was for a long time highly popular in Rome). (Peter J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française, The Clash over the Church's Role in Society during the Modernist Era*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2009, Cf.). Yet whilst some of Pius' reasoning is at the least curious—certainly, only the love of God can sustain true human love, but it is at least severe to reduce all love outside the Church to a similitude easily washed away by the

was long out of print, as Blondel refused to re-issue it;¹¹⁶ the new *L'action* was twice as long and so carefully clarified as to be unreadable—thereby obscuring the fact that a good third of the argumentation of 1893 was all but absent. As a movement, then, “the philosophy of action” was yet another promising start which went nowhere. *L'action* has been sporadically reprinted and even translated (rendering it even less intelligible), but although copies are not hard to find, rare is the theologian who has read more than a few pages. Blondel’s papers are preserved, and a few specialists still work on them; the *Collected Works* appear to have stalled at the second volume.

Yet if the texts are forgotten, the influence on Catholic theology has been enormous. Rare is the survey of recent theology which does not mention him, approvingly if superficially. Rare is the work of any length on Vatican II which does not dub him the philosopher of the council (although the title is *honoris causa* and as soon rescinded as given); far more importantly for our purposes, every *Ressourcement* figure speaks approvingly of him and several acknowledge a debt apparently fundamental. (Even in this case, as we shall see below, the *textual* engagement is minimal.) Moreover, this influence is real: Blondel’s *methodology* is fundamental to *Ressourcement*’s reasoning.

Unfortunately this methodological influence is unexamined in *Ressourcement* for the same reason that led Blondel to speak at cross-purposes with Garrigou-Lagrange: the methodology and the intellectual consequences, seen from within, have telescoped into one another. I turn then to the other great philosophical influence on *Ressourcement*, who explicitly worked the other way round, prescinding from methodological questions and examining the act of perception *within* the context of the act of judgement. Together Blondel and Rousselot provide the materials for at any rate a reconstruction of a “*Ressourcement* philosophy” serviceable for our purposes, to which we turn at the end of this chapter.

Rousselot

Rousselot—who until his death in battle in 1915 was Blondel’s contemporary—was a great many things at once. In incidental articles he can be something of a French Chesterton, with all the charm,¹¹⁷ occasionally dubious history¹¹⁸ and indeed the patriotism of that latter.¹¹⁹ His output was astonishing, both in breadth—clearly at times articles had simply been assigned him, although he acquitted himself of them very well¹²⁰—and in consistency. His first published work, a eulogy for the poet Heredia (in fact a relation), praised him for his aesthetic realism, showing *le réel à*

Passions (and all too naive about the frequent failings of those within the Church)—and he is likely wrong to see revolutionary ends for the movement, the policy adopted was remarkably mild: individual groups were to come under the leadership of their Bishops (nothing is said about dissolving) and clergy are to withdraw, supporting the movement from without by providing the sacraments, and the epithet “catholic” is to be added to the name. Should any groups refuse, pleading that they are concerned purely with economic and political matters, the Bishop is to inquire—and if they are telling the truth, “he must naturally” leave them alone! The contrast with the excesses of the anti-modernist campaign could not be more striking.

¹¹⁶Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel*, 285ff.

¹¹⁷Jacques Beauclerc (Pierre Rousselot), ‘À travers les revues: Revues allemandes’, *Études* 123 (1910), pp. 867–75; Pierre Rousselot (Jacques Beauclerc), ‘À travers les revues: Revues anglaises et américaines’, *Études* 122 (1910), pp. 557–68.

¹¹⁸Pierre Rousselot, ‘À propos de l’édit de Milan’, *Revue critique des Idées et des Livres* 23 (1913), pp. 513–25.

¹¹⁹Albeit his prose here is decidedly Gallic: Chesterton would never have written *quel délicieux bonheur de souffrir, patrie... pour toi qui nous as tant donné!* Pierre Rousselot, ‘Lourdes et Paris’, *Revue pratique d’Apologetique* 18 (1914), pp. 747–52.

¹²⁰Pierre Rousselot, ‘Vertu et probabilité: une théorie nouvelle’, *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 3 (1912), pp. 495–6.

travers la réalité (congratulating him at the same time, in some of the strangest praise ever given poetry, for resembling *la vision d'un paysage où tout serait d'une éclatante et uniforme blancheur!*).¹²¹ This notion of the *real* visible in reality but hidden from casual observation, was to be his consistent interest. To get at this *real* is an act of perception, but Rousselot thinks, a truly *intellectual* act, albeit one not *rational*.

Intellectus

Rousselot's (french) doctoral thesis was revolutionary. Since, however, it had little direct effect on *Ressourcement* except on Lubac—and then only really with respect to the supernatural—we leave most of it unexplored. Rousselot himself summarises his thesis: *l'intelligence, pour S. Thomas, est essentiellement le sens du réel, mais elle n'est le sens du réel parce qu'elle est le sens du divin.*¹²² *Intelligence*: that is, intellection. Discursive reason is a consequence of the substandard state of embodied intelligence; *simplex intuitus* is the *paradigmatic* case. Thus St. Thomas can be a thoroughgoing aristotelian about 'this sublunar world' whilst 'platonising' when it comes to the ultimate questions.¹²³ Moreover, in this simple intellection we have, Rousselot thinks, a shadowy grasp of the *singular*.¹²⁴ (Exactly how to square this with St. Thomas' insistence that we perceive the *general* is, sadly, outside our scope, except to note how amenable this idea is to the contemplative attitude Rousselot will take up in the question of Faith.)

But whilst we cannot live without ratiocination, nothing forces us to make it the *model* for our theory of knowledge. Abstraction—at any rate verbal abstraction—is, Rousselot thinks, denaturing. Of necessity we consider everything *qua* such-and-such when arguing; but God's knowledge, which creates and sustains all things, is not by formality, and the *intuition* which guides our ratiocination is likewise direct.

Moreover, we can purify it, *in our action*. Intellection—understanding—gives rise necessarily to action.¹²⁵ But since it does so *by virtue of being seen as such-and-such* we appear to encounter a determinism—*mutatis mutandis* the same "narrative" determinism we saw in Blondel, only now from the point of view of the act of judgement. The solution is to recognise that we can *judge our judgement*—but that in so doing we do not escape the conclusion that if we judge *well* our judgement is *driven* by our knowledge; and if we judge *poorly* our knowledge also suffers.¹²⁶ Indeed, if we deny our higher nature and learn only to love on the animal plane, we do so only by the directive effect of our intellection *on our action*.¹²⁷ If, by contrast, we act *virtuously*, we grow in knowledge—not, clearly, propositional knowledge, but intuitive. Rousselot's intellectualism is in fact compatible with Blondel's immanentist analysis of the human condition.

BLONDEL'S IMPLICIT INTELLECTUALISM

This thesis—for all that Rousselot sought to correct what he saw as a one-sidedness—is not necessarily foreign to Blondel. Duméry claims to show that the philosophy of action is not merely intellectual, but 'merits the name of an *intellectualisme intégral*';¹²⁸ and moreover, the thesis has the explicit endorsement of Blondel.¹²⁹ The lines are

¹²¹Pierre Rousselot, 'Heredia: pourquoi il fut grand poète', *Études* 105 (1905), pp. 385–90.

¹²²Pierre Rousselot, *L'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908, p. xi.

¹²³*Ibid.*, pp. 55–61 (61). ¹²⁴John M. McDermott, *Love and Understanding*, vol. 229, *Analecta Gregoriana*, Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1983, pp. 28–31.

¹²⁵Rousselot, *L'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*, pp. 211–4. ¹²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 217–8. ¹²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹²⁸Duméry, *La philosophie de l'action*, p. 29. ¹²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 11–2.

familiar: Duméry complains of betraying reality by limiting thought to abstraction or betraying thought by granting an emotional, “intuitive” grasp distinct from the intelligence.¹³⁰ Instead we posit an intellection, although since Blondel does not use the word Duméry has to find it in our recognition of the overall *pattern* of acting. This pattern for Blondel is only intelligible against a horizon more than merely natural,¹³¹ thus here, too, intellectualism implies a recognition that things are intelligible only in the light of their ultimate destiny.¹³² But Duméry claims more than this. Action does not merely *reveal* structure, it *gives rise to it*:

likewise, [the philosophy of action] is a *philosophy of the concrete*, because, rather than conceiving of being as something inerte, it makes of it an activity which gives rise to ontology (*un agir ontogénique*), itself the principle of fulfilment (*principe de réalisation*). Action engenders being just as it has engendered (its) idea: “*esse sequitur operationem*”.¹³³

ontogénique is not a felicitous choice of vocabulary; one can excuse it used analogously in 1893¹³⁴ but it is harder to make sense of here. Duméry at times uses *ontogénie* in the restricted sense, as a synonym for *development*; but frequently he means to contrast a “static” ontology with a “dialectic” ontogeny; or, less intoxicatingly, the process of abstraction with the Blondellian analysis in which I gradually discover the direction in which everything is in fact pointing. The idea is to make this *ontogénie* a participation in God’s creative knowledge of the world, and thus a (strangely otherwise described) act of *simplex intellectus*.

La Création ne se comprend que comme une Médiation infinie. A partir de Dieu, type et norme, le monde se déploie comme un réseau de relations, dont Il fait la consistance, parce qu’il en est le Lien substantiel. La cohésion des sensibilités humaines n’est garantie que si le Médiateur, devenu volontairement passif de la réalité qu’il crée, lui donne une portée absolue : c’est lui qui justifie, en dernière analyse, notre anthropomorphisme.¹³⁵

This is certainly the doctrine Blondel’s speculations on Leibniz had suggested. But it is not quite the doctrine of *L’action*: the passage to which Duméry appeals¹³⁶ speaks strictly hypothetically of the incarnation as an *Amen* to the universe and includes the ‘voluntary passion’ which could hardly be a necessary guarantee of knowledge.

A closer examination reveals that Blondel is once again talking in terms of the narrative of human action which in point of fact entails a ‘mortification’, a sacrifice—strangely Duméry misses¹³⁷ the fact that this ‘exigence of our existence’ is in point of fact conditional upon the state in which we find ourselves. Blondel, who in *L’action* limits himself to precisely that immanent reality has no need to specify this, but in endeavouring to construct an intellectualism it is necessary to point out that this ‘voluntary passivity’ should really be simply that receptiveness which classical thought made the basis of contemplation.¹³⁸ Thus it is certainly true that Blondel has ‘placed the world back in the orbit of Divine Wisdom’,¹³⁹ but he is well aware that the particular shape of *that* narrative depended on more than simply creation.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 27. ¹³¹Duméry thinks it explicitly *supernatural*. ¹³²Duméry, *La philosophie de l’action*, pp. 83–4.

¹³³Ibid., p. 85. ¹³⁴Blondel, *L’action*, p. 194. ¹³⁵Duméry, *La philosophie de l’action*, p. 125.

¹³⁶Blondel, *L’action*, p. 461. ¹³⁷Duméry, *La philosophie de l’action*, p. 128.

¹³⁸Itself an intellectual disposition: see Rik van Nieuwenhove, ‘Contemplation, intellectus, and simplex intuitus in Aquinas, recovering a Neoplatonic theme’, Durham Research Online, 2017.

¹³⁹Duméry, *La philosophie de l’action*, p. 126.

More troubling still is Duméry's conclusion:

L'ontogénie de l'action n'a plus rien de comparable à l'ontologie de la substance-chose; elle est une dialectique de participation réelle à l'aséité divine.¹⁴⁰

In this Duméry is only partially right: Blondel never denies the notion of *substance*, or that of ontology for that matter. But the latter half—on which the claim to be an intellectualism, perceiving things by participation in the creative knowledge of God, rests—is certainly true. Nonetheless we have succeeded at considerable cost: in making explicit what is only latent in Blondel, Duméry has elided reflection *on action* with reflection *tout court*. We have lost the *narrative* sense of Blondel's thought, reducing it simply to a method of intellection.

The eyes of faith

Working from within the act of intellection these problems do not arise. The First Vatican Council had defined that

Deu[s]...per ea, quae facta sunt, naturali rationis humanae lumine certo cognosci...[potest]¹⁴¹

A good deal of debate can be summed up by asking whether *certo* is an adverb, agreeing with *cognosci*, or an adjective, agreeing with *lumine*. Semantically the answer is almost certainly an adverb (an adjective would naturally be placed earlier in the clause); theologically the issue is a good deal less clear. Are we claiming that God can be known *certainly* by (the light of) ungraced reason, or are we claiming that the *light of reason* is such that it can illumine the things of this world so as to show (unmistakably) their divine craftsman? In other words, is this (wholly natural) recognition of the existence of God (the canon goes even further, clarifying that we perceive *Deum unum et verum, Creatorem et Dominum nostrum*: the height, that is, of natural theology) the conclusion of unfettered *reasoning*, or the spontaneous intellectual *perception* of an unfettered *soul*? (Everyone agrees that *in practice* such perception is vanishingly rare: the action of grace in removing the fetters is rarely distinguishable from revelation. But what grace does is radically different in the two cases: in the one we end up with a better intellect; in the other we gain a contemplative *insight*.)¹⁴²

Mutatis mutandis, this is the problem of the act of Faith. Faith is reasonable, but not a conclusion of unaided reason; it is distinct from ordinary conclusion, but not antithetical to it; it is equally present in the learned and simple believer; it is impossible without grace but not irrational, and it is distinct from the *natural* conclusion discussed above, yet gives rise to it if (as usually) it is not already present, without that conclusion thereby becoming irrational.

¹⁴⁰Duméry, *La philosophie de l'action*, p. 130.

¹⁴¹Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, 1870, II.1 (the canon actually anthematises the inverse claim, but in this case the contrapositive is clear).

¹⁴²It is a curious thing that the former claim is encountered more commonly in English and the latter in French. Where *Humani Generis* speaks of the difficulty of the prejudiced intellect in perceiving *tam multa ac mira signa externa* of the Faith and our ability to resist even *supernis afflatibus, quos Deus in animos ingerit nostros*, the English translation has 'external proofs' and 'the impulses of actual grace'. (Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 1950; Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 1950) The French speaks of *signes extérieurs éclatants* and *célestes lumières que Dieu verse en nos âmes*. An example merely anecdotal—and the English of the Vatican website is consistently bad—but one of which it would not be hard to multiply the instances.

In the face of such antinomies there are generally three solutions. The first is to throw up the whole thing, declare it mysterious, and abandon the problem; but it is difficult to see how this avoids making the act of faith at least a-rational if not irrational; and in any case this proceeding is uncomfortably close to quietism. The second is to sketch a variety of *different* accounts, depending on the state of the believer, so that the simple faith of the charcoal-burner, grounded in the reasonable judgement that the Church is competent in matters of faith *gives way* to the informed faith of the theologian, who has direct access to far more *credibilia* (whilst remaining ultimately dependent on authority), and the *natural* conclusion of an Alasdair MacIntyre weighs in favour of accepting supernatural faith, whilst the promptings of grace in a C. S. Lewis permit him to reassess the probative value of the Five Proofs.¹⁴³ The third solution is to move the problem away from what is normally thought of as reasoning. *Prima facie* there is no reason why the four examples I have given should not be equally endowed with some *other* faculty; but the problem then, of course, is to show that this account is rational at all.

Intellectualism, and the concomitant connatural affinity of the mind for the Truth, is a tempting target. Connaturality ‘makes us see, it does not dispense us from seeing’;¹⁴⁴ specifically it makes us see things *in their totality*. I can read Hamlet a dozen times without understanding; ‘my eye falls on one word’ and *now I see*.¹⁴⁵ But my perception is still intellection: what connaturality has done is to *open my eyes*. Yet this intellection is not a separate judgement. I do not “perceive new evidence” about Hamlet and then reason my way to a better conclusion. Seeing is understanding, *when one sees directly*—that is, by *simplex intuitus*.¹⁴⁶ Coming to believe, for Rousselot, is far more like falling in love than it is like concluding on the strength of probability.

Had this been all the thesis would have been merely interesting. But Rousselot attacked another problem: on the one hand faith is *free*; on the other it is *certain*.¹⁴⁷ Make these two distinct acts—one of love and the other of intelligence, and grant them reciprocal causality, and one can get it to work. But Rousselot wants to make *one and the same act* answer fully for both.¹⁴⁸ This act of simple intellection has done away at one sweep with the notions of “scientific faith”, the (separate) “judgement of credibility”, the *process* of believing and then seeing—all these are merely ratiocinative workings-out of a fundamentally atomic intuition.

Si l’explication ici proposée a quelque mérite, c’est celui de donner à l’amour, dans l’acte de foi, un rôle essentiel, mais sans détriment aucun de l’intellectualité la plus rigoureuse. Le sentiment n’est pas pour nous séducteur de l’intelligence, la liberté est génératrice de l’évidence. C’est l’intelligence, corrompue par le péché, qui est libérée par l’amour surnaturel...¹⁴⁹

But of course, all this has been achieved at the cost of making the act of faith, at first glance, a good deal more like mysticism than philosophy. Rousselot’s thought is his own, but the consequence is the same as for Blondel: the notion of what counts as

¹⁴³I note in passing that MacIntyre is one of the few known instances of the apologetic *cursus* sketched in the manuals, having become first a Thomist, then a Theist, and finally a Catholic.

¹⁴⁴Pierre Rousselot, ‘Les Yeux de la foi (I)’, *Recherches des Science Religieuse* 1 (1910), p. 250.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 253. ¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁴⁷In this context Rousselot deals with the problem of “gaining the natural analogue” of faith: whatever one can achieve by acting *as though* one believed, it is certainly not supernatural faith. Pierre Rousselot, ‘Les Yeux de la foi (II)’, *Recherches des Science Religieuse* 1 (1910), pp. 444–475, 445–6 n. 2.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 451. ¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 463.

knowing has expanded significantly.¹⁵⁰

Minimal Rousselotianism

The account I have just given reduces Rousselot's insights to two minimalist claims: (i) that the act of knowing is *intellectual* before it is *rational*, and thus prior to every purely rational phenomenon—including that of concepts¹⁵¹—and (ii) that, correspondingly, the act of faith is not so much pre-rational as super-rational. These claims are unquestionably Rousselotian, and it is at least plausible that Rousselot's thought—at least at the stage at which it was unnaturally arrested—can be built out of them. Nonetheless to do so implies that Rousselot's insight is effectively separate from the philosophical soil in which it grew up: Rousselot is not *inherently* a Thomist: so long as we are able to give an equivalent account of intellection, we can more or less run with the ideas as much as we like. This certainly is the use I intend to make of these ideas, but it is not the use Rousselot himself made of them, and it is not how the little—but serious—reflection on Rousselot has gone. (In my defence I am interested, not in its internal coherence, but in the *methodological* presuppositions of Rousselot's thought, since this—so I shall argue—is what *Ressourcement* actually took from him.)

Viewed internally there are a number of problems with Rousselot's claims, of which Rousselot himself was well aware. To these my solution has been to lift the claim about the level of the debate. Rousselot's claims about knowledge of the singular and the material—really, claims about knowledge of the *particular*—sit awkwardly in philosophy because they are really claims about the act of *simplex intuitus* itself—or rather of that act in contemplation. Here the particular is known, not in abstraction, but as a particular instance of God's creative act—a particular haecceity as much as a particular quiddity, for all that (with Thomas) Rousselot is content to have that haecceity grounded in the (material) confluence of multiple quiddities—or in other words as itself. The act of contemplation is not one of abstraction, but of perception, of seeing beyond by seeing what is really there.¹⁵² From this perspective—but in saying this I am simply dodging the question!—the internal problems of the coherence of Rousselotian Thomism can be worked out as required: the basic insight is secure.

McDermott, in his masterly PhD thesis on Rousselot,¹⁵³ has no truck with this.

¹⁵⁰ This position leads neatly to the same theory of Tradition as we saw in Blondel: just as faith has a different *object* from the knowledge, but it still a kind of seeing—a vision of the mutual illumination of doctrine—so the multiplicity of dogmata vanishes when, among themselves, they illumine the reality of the faith—which remains larger than any conceptual translation. This only leaves the question of whether we have got the translation *right*, and here Rousselot simply appeals to the history of the Church. Pierre Rousselot, 'Note sur le développement du dogme', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 37 (1950), pp. 113–20. Unfortunately this study went unpublished, and thus had no textual influence on the debate.

¹⁵¹ Here, like Rousselot, I assume that concepts are more or less linguistic entities, i.e. the "concept" of the Trinity just is the doctrine of the Trinity (and "Thomas's concept of the Trinity" just is Thomas's doctrine of the Trinity). Of course one could be a Platonist about concepts too, and assign them some reality beyond merely pointing to objects. Since neither Rousselot nor *Ressourcement* develop any systematic account, I am content to take Rousselot's critique to imply only that a true concept is true only by pointing to the reality it signifies, and thereby corresponds (like any ratiocinative object) "only analogously"—which as we have seen is not a claim of weak correspondence, but a claim of the *kind* of correspondence between two objects of different orders. Thus in my judgement Rousselot is perfectly consistent to speak of concepts being *absolutely* true and *analogous* at the same time: they are really, and not analogously, true, but they (like the whole of language) signify by way of analogy—as even the notion of "signifying" is itself derived analogously from a real sign.

¹⁵² Pierre Rousselot, 'Petite théorie du développement du dogme', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 53 (1965), pp. 355–90.

¹⁵³ McDermott, *Love and Understanding*.

Either Rousselot's vision works or it doesn't; and as he shows, Rousselot adopted a number of positions in attempt to get out of this bind. If he does *not* escape, Transcendental Thomism comes crashing down, taking Lubac (and *Surnaturel*) down with it.

Other go further: Talon has Rousselot make connatural apperception a *faculty*, restoring the platonic triadic soul—thus risking separating knowledge and love, or minimising the *intellectual* component of our affinity for the Truth. McCool has Rousselot a relativist, whose concepts are *mere* analogies, 'no more than the imperfect human substitute for the angelic intuition', 'no more than approximations of the real form, subject to constant revision and development'.¹⁵⁴ Whatever may be the merit of these discussions—and that of McDermott, in particular, has a serious claim on our attention, being grounded in a thorough immersion in the entirety of Rousselot's œuvre, published and unpublished—they seem to me all to have the same serious shortcoming: none of them is aware of the intellectual rupture which separates us ineluctably as much from Blondel and Rousselot as from Garrigou-Lagrange. McDermott assumes that Lubac can be treated as a Thomist (indeed, he repeatedly refers to him as a Transcendental Thomist, which is even less defensible¹⁵⁵); and yet as we have seen, Lubac is in an important sense not a Thomist: his *natura* is not that of St. Thomas, and his terms of reference are unavoidably proximate, even in his reading of the Fathers. More importantly, his *style* is not that of St. Thomas: always he seeks to *present*, and not to abstract. "At bottom, every style dictates not only how we should say things, but what sort of things we may say." (C. S. Lewis)

And yet, as we have also seen, Lubac *does* frame *Surnaturel* as a work of Thomistic commentary, and that not merely from any sense of self-preservation: he is quite convinced that his doctrine is in reality St. Thomas'. It was not at all obvious to Lubac that he was pursuing a different intellectual task from Garrigou-Lagrange. The very stylistic objection of Lubac's critics—that stylistic objection which leads Feingold simply to *ignore* Lubac's style entirely—the fact that Lubac's theology is, to his critics, mere mystical poetry—was either invisible to him or struck him as too unimportant to comment on.

At first glance McDermott, then, is faithful to Lubac in treating him as simply a very odd Thomist. Yet the price for this conformity is high: what becomes of the apologetic *immediacy* we saw in Lubac's *concrete nature*, or his attempt to argue not by deduction but by a kind of inductive reasoning which turns out to be extremely close to the mysticism of *Paradoxes*? (McDermott is quite right to see this text as central.) We have here exactly the same problem as that of Blondel's missing *distinguo* in response to Garrigou-Lagrange. What Lubac takes himself to have in common with St. Thomas, and what Blondel thought he shared with Garrigou-Lagrange is a *sense*—a sense of the living Tradition, in which to be faithful to a particular author means firstly to be faithful to *that shared Tradition*. This Tradition is still ours, but if the thesis of *Ressourcement* is correct we have forgotten how to read it.

¹⁵⁴Gerald A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism, The internal evolution of Thomism*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1989, pp. 53–4.

¹⁵⁵John M. McDermott, 'De Lubac and Rousselot', *Gregorianum* 78.4 (1997), p. 752.

Ressourcement

Explicit heritage?

Ressourcement certainly drew on (then-)contemporary philosophy. Lubac in particular was not slow to acknowledge a foundational debt to Blondel and Rousselot:

Parmi les contemporains fréquentés au temps de ma formation, j'ai une dette particulière envers Blondel, Maréchal et Rousselot. Je n'ai pu connaître personnellement...Rousselot... En revanche, dès 1919, j'ai eu communication de tous ses papiers...

Blondel he had visited, and read thoroughly—not, as legend goes, under the blankets at night, but with the knowledge if not the unambiguous blessing of his professors. But Blondel was still alive; Rousselot—a member of the same order, and in Lubac's opinion unjustly suppressed posthumously—was in need of a champion. Three times efforts were made to publish his papers, the second time by Lubac, but « *Rome* » a *fait chaque fois barrage*, and then

la troisième tentative fut faite au lendemain du dernier Concile. On aurait pu alors sans peine réaliser le projet. Le cadre de notre collection « Théologie » y semblait propice. Mais personne, chez nous, parmi les hommes en place, ne s'y intéressait plus; je me suis heurté à l'indifférence.¹⁵⁶

Of Maréchal I have said nothing—I am incompetent to do him justice—but in any case Lubac was no systematic Maréchalian:

Ce qu'il y avait de très remarquable chez le Père Maréchal, c'est qu'il n'était nullement enfermé, comme tant d'intellectuels, dans ses théories, cependant très systématisées. Il avait l'esprit plus vaste que ses idées.¹⁵⁷

What mattered to Lubac, then, was less a systematic philosophical framework as a philosophical orientation (an orientation he called *existentiel*, before renouncing the word after Sartre). Which is not to say that his generation was not marked as dubious for frequenting unapproved authors—

au sortir du Jersey (j'avais alors vingt-sept ans), où régnait encore l'esprit suarézien, j'avais été noté sévèrement comme thomiste (d'un thomisme, il est vrai, revivifié par Maréchal et Rousselot). C'était ce que l'on appelait de ce temps-là « ne pas tenir les doctrines de la Compagnie ».

—his superiors, as Lubac makes clear elsewhere, mixing up the charge of infidelity to Suarez with that of infidelity to Thomas. In any case Lubac had little time for such labels:

J'ai connu un thomisme traditionaliste à la Bonald, un thomisme patronnant « l'Action française », un thomisme inspirateur de la Démocratie chrétienne, un thomisme progressiste et même néo-marxiste, etc. (pour ne rien dire de fantaisies innocentes telles que le thomisme de la loi scout, etc).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, Œuvres Complètes 33, Paris: cerf, 2006, p. 16.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 17. ¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 147.

(Lubac, as he acknowledges, was not the right kind of systematic thinker to be labelled by anything ending in -ist.¹⁵⁹)

Congar's theory of Tradition is extended from Blondel's;¹⁶⁰ even Bouyer recognised that *L'action* did for philosophy what Newman (and he) did for spirituality.¹⁶¹ Elsewhere, however, the connection is weaker: for Daniélou one is obliged to point out that he and Blondel thought history important and disliked manualism; and for Chenu things are fairly hopeless.¹⁶²

Yet this kind of inheritance, following the footnotes (and more plentiful allusions) is dubious even in Lubac's case—Lubac had a keen sense of loyalty and kept his own council, and *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* is as much homage to the writers Lubac thought we should read as autobiography. McDermott's puzzlement about the *aporix* in what he sees—and Lubac is quite content to have seen—as a development of Rousselot is as telling as Lubac's clearly amused answer. (Less persuasive, as I have noted, is McDermott's attempt to resolve these problems by better systematisation.) Ultimately, should we not be looking for a philosophical *prologomenon* on the level not of explicit theses, but of a general approach?

Methodological heritage

Sic et non. There remains one final distinction to be made: I have appeared to argue that Blondel and Rousselot share a particular methodology, and that *Ressourcement* owes this to them, (albeit in a different domain). This claim is both too precise and too vague. Too precise, because a *methodology* implies a systematic way of going about thinking, something reflective and more or less enunciated; but what I really want to pick out is a *habit*, a *style*—a question of taste. Too vague, because it is perfectly possible to think like Blondel or Rousselot and come to any number of conclusions, whereas what is startling when one sets Blondel alongside Lubac's apologetic or Congar's account of Tradition¹⁶³ or Rousselot alongside Chenu's or Daniélou's spirituality is that they are simply doing the same thing.

In part this is because Rousselot and Blondel are indicative of a far wider philosophical movement (a direct line leads from Bergson to contemporary "Continental" philosophy, and backwards from Bergson and Blondel to Ravaisson, whilst Maréchal and Rahner are behind a great deal of modern systematic theology). (In part it is because Blondel and Rousselot happened to be the thinkers who were discussed.) Ultimately, it is because all were engaged in the same kind of aesthetic reception of *the Catholic Tradition*—but this I shall argue for in chapter 4 on page 117.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁶⁰I return to this on page 152.

Congar insisted—*pace* his repeated citation of him—that he had in fact discovered Blondel late (Yves Congar, *Une vie pour la vérité. Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar*, Paris, 1975, p. 72) and drew instead on Möhler. (Charles MacDonald, *Church and World in the Plan of God, Aspects of History and Eschatology in the Thought of Père Yves Congar o.p.* With a forew. by Yves Congar, Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1982, pp. vii–x) For reasons of space I say nothing about the Tübingen School here, but my argument is not remotely challenged if in fact the same methodology exemplified by Blondel can be found more widely.

¹⁶¹Louis Bouyer, *Newman's vision of faith, A Theology for Times of General Apostasy*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986, p. 31.

¹⁶²Michael A. Conway, 'Maurice Blondel and *Ressourcement*', *Ressourcement, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. by Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, Oxford: OUP, 2012, pp. 64–82.

¹⁶³In the latter case the connection is (as we shall see) textual.

Conclusion: pre-philosophy and pre-theology

Ressourcement, then, is a distinctly philosophical endeavour, but only if one allows the meaning of the word “philosophy” to take on the resonances it had for Blondel and Rousselot, and which were stubbornly denied them by their critics. Far more important than the identification of any particular philosophical vocabulary (making Lubac an existentialist *avant la lettre*—*non obstant* his protests, or Daniélou a failed socialist, or Congar a Thomist, at times despite himself) is a shared *practice*: *Ressourcement* thinkers refuse to engage in speculative reasoning (duly adæquating their concepts with reality and neatly deducing their conclusions) without *first* turning to the ascetic and aesthetic preparation needed, and seeking to grasp the initial *insight*, the *connaissance réelle* which alone can guarantee that one is not merely philosophising (or theologising) into the void.

Expressed thus the claim is not very interesting. Manualism is an easy target for the accusation of over-intellectualism (textbooks tend to stick to the kind of deductions suitable for the classroom—and the lecture-slot) and plenty of thinkers railed against it.¹⁶⁴ What is interesting is the *particular* pre-theology of *Ressourcement*, built on the *particular* pre-philosophy of Blondel and Rousselot (or rather typified in their work): interesting, that is, for our purposes since it seeks to find this necessary orientation in a contemplative stance which is exactly the stance required (and sought elsewhere) for attentiveness to the Tradition. Metaphysics here has the same task as spirituality, albeit in a different domain.

¹⁶⁴Textbooks are a peculiar genre, and when Congar tried his hand at writing one the family likeness came out: Yves Congar, *La foi et la théologie*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962

Defining Ressourcement?

The partial sketch offered at the beginning of this thesis can now be filled in by distinguishing what I take as the *Ressourcement project* from the authors in whose writings it is more or less contained. The *Ressourcement* project of Lubac in the nature-grace debate was not so much the retrieval of a lost traditional insight (as he took it to be) as the retrieval of an avowedly traditional way of *seeing the world*. The sources to which *Ressourcement* turned were sources of this spiritual intentionality; the *ressourcement* it sought as much a matter of spirituality and aesthetics as of content.

On these grounds any number of thinkers are *Ressourcement* thinkers. Balthasar is the obvious candidate—who is more convinced that theology is an aesthetic pursuit “on one’s knees” than he?—although Bouyer would also have to qualify. Yet I shall insist that Bouyer is *not* helpfully thought of as belonging to the same movement as Congar and Lubac: his background is completely different, his interactions with unquestionably *Ressourcement* thinkers look like the exchanges of independent thinkers with overlapping concerns, and he was an Oratorian, living a very different kind of life from the Jesuits Lubac and Daniélou or the Dominicans Chenu and Congar. Moreover, he did not draw on Blondel or Rousselot and set out to address not the lingering effects of Modernism, but the ossification of Liturgical practice. Thus what I mean by *Ressourcement* is a movement which

- (i) sought to recover the *sense* of the Tradition, in order to
- (ii) bring a detached modernity to see that its existence was intelligible only in this light, thereby
- (iii) inverting the method of the Modernists and addressing their (otherwise ignored) concerns whilst
- (iv) showing the *attractiveness* of the Faith exactly where neoscholastic system-building seemed to reduce belief to a matter of the head entirely detached from the heart.

Whilst historically

- (1) centred on the Dominican house of *le Saulchoir* and the Jesuit house of *Fourvière*;
- (2) taking its methodological inspiration from Blondel (and Rousselot); and
- (3) deeply concerned with the French Church and the French people, particularly in the chaos of 1939–45.

On these premises Balthasar is mostly excluded¹⁶⁵ (albeit we shall consider *Théologie et Sainteté*); *a fortiori* Rahner and Maréchal. Nonetheless if items (i), (ii) and (iv) can be found elsewhere, item (iii) is a distinctive feature of at least what I mean by *Ressourcement*, precisely because of item (2); whilst items (1) and (3) are only as arbitrary as any historical particularity. And it is with history that we are concerned, since both the gradual obscuring of the Tradition and *Ressourcement*’s attempt to retrieve it are intelligible only as part of the story of counter-reformation Catholicism.

¹⁶⁵One can argue for Balthasar as a *Ressourcement* figure, particularly given his friendship with Lubac. See Cyril O’Regan, *Renewing Nouvelle Théologie*, 22nd Jan. 2019 for an overview and Cyril O’Regan, ‘Von Balthasar and Thick Retrieval: Post-Chalcedonian Symphonic Theology’, *Gregorianum* 77.2 (1996), pp. 227–260 for the corresponding account of Balthasarian *Ressourcement* theology, but see footnote 22 on page 119.

Defining Tradition

Thus more interesting (and less vacuous) than my definition of *Ressourcement*-the-movement is the question of what I mean by “tradition” in this sense.

Tradition is not its monuments. When Trent avoided (and Vatican II definitively rejected) separating Scripture from Tradition, more was at stake than simply the observation that Scripture, too, had been handed down. Separated, both Scripture and Tradition are plausibly little more than stores of beautiful but unclear propositions. (*Patet omnino falsam esse methodum*, declared Pius XII, *qua ex obscuris clara explicentur*: magisterial precision has *replaced* what was contained only *obscure ac velut implicite* in the *sacri fontes*.¹⁶⁶) But if Scripture is part of Tradition, Tradition cannot consist simply in supplementary material (any more than in commentaries). Scripture is handed on at Mass, in the Office, in devotional use, in florilegia as much as in systematic commentary. Scripture comes with the baggage not merely of *what* it has been made to say—as the *in idipsum* of Compline is not lightly corrected when one knows Augustine¹⁶⁷—but of *how* and *when* it has said it. In other words the Tradition is dispositional as much as it is propositional. (In this I follow Blondel in making tradition the life which maintains *and is maintained by* the monuments.)

Still, it will not do to replace one partition with another. The disjunction between dispositional and propositional suggests that we have two classes of propositions, one of which has the other as subject. This is not false—there *are* dispositional propositions which are rightly called Traditional¹⁶⁸—but it is at several removes from reality. Before there can be dispositional propositions there must be dispositions. But dispositions—intentional stances—are a matter, not *primarily* of reflection, but of habit, of virtue. And before there can be virtue, there must virtuous actors. Tradition, then, is not primarily an object for our reflection. It is something which is *lived*—exactly as Christianity or Monasticism is lived. More precisely, it is the form *according to which* something is lived. This is not quite the ‘objective’ reduction to that *in virtue of which* something can be called traditional from which I distanced myself in the introduction. *Traditional*, as an adjective, qualifies a person; and a traditional person is someone whose (aesthetic) *sense* of the Tradition is reliable: more, just as the chaste person *naturally* acts chastely, and is thus able to bring the virtue to new circumstances, so the elaboration of the Tradition depends chiefly on individuals. To say this is not to render Tradition unobjective, any more than virtue ethics gives the supposedly virtuous a license to redefine terms as they see fit. But it is to introduce a particular class of problems: what is to count as traditional, if one needs to be traditional to see it? and how is the explicit discourse by which this virtue is to be passed on to avoid simply replacing it? In ethics, as is well known, the solution is by exemplars—authorities who are agreed to possess a virtue, and can thus judge conduct—and shared practices which mediate the *sense* of ethical language.¹⁶⁹ Exactly the same thing is true of Tradition. It

¹⁶⁶Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*. I exaggerate: Pius’ concern was attempts to *contradict* the magisterium. Nonetheless his solution is one-sided.

¹⁶⁷James Swetnam, ‘A Note on *In Idipsum* in St. Augustine’, *The Modern Schoolman* 30.4 (1953), pp. 328–331; Cf. Augustinus, *Conf.* P. IX.11.

¹⁶⁸Whether practical (“When the Eucharist is exposed, genuflect on both knees”), doctrinal (“Magisterial pronouncements are to be received with *obsequium religiosum*”) or anything else, what is expressed in the disposition exists more or less independently as part of the ordinary intentional life on which the reason depends. This pattern holds more widely: contrition is not the recitation of a formula (“act”), but a disposition, or more properly an intentional stance. The formula is essential, but a one-sided reduction of the intentional to the rational leads to that uneasy attempt to plug the gap with invented “fervour” *independent* of the contents of the formula of which “devotional” books readily furnish examples.

¹⁶⁹Linda Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, Oxford University Press, Apr. 2017; Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski,

is this which *Ressourcement* meant by a *living* Tradition.¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately *Ressourcement* thought that exactly these continuity-forming practices were *not* functioning, by and large, whilst the authorities refused, on principle, to speak a language intelligible *ad extra*. Thus the Tradition was reduced to its monuments, and a largely unintelligible debate over their sense, conducted entirely independently of their intentional context. It was this problem which *Ressourcement* tried (and failed) to address, and to which we turn in the next chapter. But it is helpful to distinguish this question from what is usually meant by the problem of Tradition and to see (at the very least) that directly attacking the problem of the *sense* of the Tradition is generally absent in (for want of better phraseology) both “conservative” and “liberal” approaches to the problem. The *virtue* of Tradition is a subject on which recent theology has been curiously silent.

Discerning Tradition: the hermeneutic of continuity

The first project of interest is that which responded to Benedict XVI’s call for a reading of the Council informed by a ‘hermeneutic of continuity’. This the pontiff contrasted with a ‘hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture’. The passage is well known, but bears quoting:

[Such a hermeneutic] risks ending in a split between the preconciliar Church and the postconciliar Church. It asserts that the texts of the council as such do not yet express the true spirit of the council. It claims that they are the result of compromises in which, to reach unanimity, it was found necessary to keep and reconfirm many old things that are now pointless. However, the true spirit of the council is not to be found in these compromises but instead in the impulses toward the new that are contained in the texts.¹⁷¹

Note that this is framed as a question of the texts: in point of fact two groups of statements can be identified; the question is what to do about them. Either they are ultimately incompatible and one set should be jettisoned, or else the new are in fact in harmony with the old, either saying the same thing in new words or materially advancing the same principles. To get at this one has to get at the history (the rest of Benedict’s speech is devoted to the conciliar context), and one has to go through the texts closely. The remainder of the work is devoted to doing this with the thoroughness appropriate to a handbook; it would be tedious to reproduce any of it here.

Instead I want to underline its methodology: what makes this project possible is a distinction between what is epiphenomenal and what is essential, or between principles and (necessarily contingent) situations.¹⁷² Likewise, perfectly ordinary material decisions lie behind the chaos of the postconciliar years:

It has become commonplace to criticize the council for not having stated this or that element or aspect of Catholic teaching. More perceptive writers have noted that the fault lies not with the council and its doc-

Epistemic Authority, A theory of trust, authority and autonomy in belief, Oxford: OUP, 2012.

¹⁷⁰This was the claim of Daniélou’s ‘Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse’: see chapter 4 on page 120.

¹⁷¹Matthew B. Lamb and Matthew Levering, eds., *Vatican II, Renewal within Tradition*, Oxford: OUP, 2008, p. x.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 439.

uments but with inadequate and misleading efforts to implement the renewal the council called for. These efforts were too often informed by theologies that failed to appreciate the fundamental continuity of Catholic tradition. After the council many Catholics in North America received doctoral training in programs that emphasized discontinuity. Departments of theology at Catholic universities in North America have many or even a majority of faculty members who did not get their doctoral degrees in Catholic programs. In Europe, some Catholic scholars internalized the liberal versus conservative framework of the media coverage of the council, which had a similar effect of promoting a hermeneutics of rupture rather than renewal and reform within tradition.¹⁷³

In other words, a series of poor contingent decisions—bad luck—lead to a situation in which those most incompetent to expound the faith were entrusted with doing so; the solution is proper education. Even as a concluding remark this is too convenient: whence this apparent universally poor decision making—and more importantly, how did so many Catholics swallow an account of the Faith apparently so askew? Something else, on Lamb’s own premises, is needed to make sense of all this: a tradition which is the mercy of a few misguided curricula seems to have no *internal* consistency to it at all.

Moreover, this project of correction is pursued on the level of the monuments themselves, and the target is not so much a critical reception of *tradition* as a critical reception of *Vatican II*. Since the conclusion is more or less known from the outset, its critics can always complain that it has about it the circularity of that phrase of Pius XI repeated as late as *Humani Generis, nobilissimum theologiae munus illud esse, quod ostendat quomodo ab Ecclesia definita doctrina contineatur in fontibus*.¹⁷⁴ From this there are two retorts: either one doubles down on the apparent circularity by constructing some *a priori* reason to believe what the Church has defined; or one endeavours a fundamental sifting of the Tradition itself.

Challenging Tradition: Anne Carpenter

One recent, radical attempt to do exactly this is Anne Carpenter’s *Nothing Gained is Eternal*.¹⁷⁵ Carpenter’s purpose is explicit:

Christian tradition is a problem. A problem of history, of truth, and of both together. It is a problem made all the more problematic by Christian sin and infidelity. If Christians hand on divine truth in their living of history, it is also the case that they hand on their wrongs in history. This book is preoccupied with the concrete coexistence of truth and sin in Christian historical action, with how the Christian memory of Christ can be in some way a real memory, and with how sin might unbind that memory’s reality.¹⁷⁶

Much of this problem, according to Carpenter, concerns specific evils of colonial history for which the tradition is somehow accountable, and which I shall avoid discussing here.¹⁷⁷ But for our purposes it is more important to notice how she goes about addressing this issue. She begins by appealing to something “else” in Tradition:

¹⁷³Lamb and Levering, *Vatican II*, p. 440. ¹⁷⁴Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*.

¹⁷⁵Anne Carpenter, *Nothing Gained is Eternal*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022. ¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. xi.

¹⁷⁷Thereby avoiding descending to polemic: a great many of these claims strike me as barely established

Often enough, Christians treat tradition *in* its concreteness, in terms of practices, liturgies, councils, doctrines, texts. The trouble that I am after, in this sense, does not at first appear to be a trouble at all: look at tradition, we say, and see what it is. But what is it? What am I seeing, and how do I see it? Can we give it a definition or treat its boundaries with precision? *Has* tradition boundaries so that Jerusalem can turn its back on Athens?¹⁷⁸

—a distinction not unlike that I made at the beginning of this thesis between Tradition objectively and subjectively considered. Moreover we appear to start in the same way: after appealing to Longergan for an account of history as action (and action as involving the whole person), we turn to Blondel, for his specific sense of *réel*, the ratcheting apologetic of *L'Action* and, naturally, *Histoire et Dogme*. Carpenter's specific concern shows itself in the next step: I have largely glossed over the sorry history of the *semaines sociales* as extrinsic to our argument; she instead tells the narrative as the missing piece before she can draw the conclusion:

What the monophorists most of all forget is the radical, supernatural equality of all human beings before one another in Christ. Here Blondel directs his opponents to the heart of supernatural revelation, which is also a radically supernatural *action* that elevates all human beings before the God who loves each of them, both lending to them and cherishing their infinite dignity. French Catholic integralism, most especially Charles Maurras's sort, has no plan except to enforce itself through greater power over the weak. No *convincing* is necessary at all. In fact, quite the opposite. But this violent imposition of one schema over another through the effective and practical execution of exterior force, a Catholic realpolitik, forgets absolutely the dignity and freedom *in Christ* that everyone has, including that of the monophorists' opponents.¹⁷⁹

This—the free persuasiveness of a Tradition conceived of as the action of the Church impelled by God, as opposed to the quasi-fascism of blind submission—is the point of departure.¹⁸⁰ From here we turn to Péguy—a figure sufficiently enigmatic that one can go in any number of directions, but Carpenter is interested in him as a challenge to easy inherited ideas, beginning with his conception of Joan of Arc:

'She had to be Christian and martyr and saint against the French and against the Christians. She found unfaithfulness installed in the very heart of France, in the heart of Christendom. She had to break that long habitude. She had to climb back up that long memory. That's what I call being a saint and martyr twice.' So Péguy's memory of Jeanne is in a

or stated on no evidence, and many of them (for instance the claim that 'there is no reason for colonialism' (70)) as demonstrably false, at any rate on the surface meaning of terminology which seems to be used in quite unconventional ways. I take this opportunity to register my protest at the notion that 'race is supported fundamentally by Christian tradition and its theology. Modern race is a Christian invention' (xvii): scientific racism is (as a matter of historical fact) of atheist origin, whilst racism more broadly is quite literally as old as sin. The Tradition has always held that in Christ there is 'neither Jew nor Greek': when sin has frequently forgotten this, the Church has invariably had saints to remind her of it.

¹⁷⁸Carpenter, *Nothing Gained is Eternal*, p. xii. ¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁸⁰I note in passing that Carpenter is exaggerating a little for effect: as we have seen, Blondel has a lot to say about submission to the apparently ridiculous external impositions of the faith. It is interesting that she never connects *pratique littérale* (the phrase occurs once, in English: *ibid.*, p. 167) with liturgy.

real way antimemorial; it is a kind of remembering that fixes her in the present tense, ascribing it to her. It is, to be precise, an antinostalgic remembering, because it is not about her pastness but about remembering her presence in the present.¹⁸¹

from this we can move the emphasis from what is inherited to how it is said again:

By an act of recommencing in the present, what is living in the past can be brought to new fruition, resulting in a “deeper,” a revolutionized, humanity and tradition. These *péguyiste* principles can be applied to sacred tradition, most of all in the “original gesture” (today) of the Eucharist, which is primarily God’s action. What this means is that a turn to the “sources” or “resources” of tradition also involves itself in the purifying act of commencing today. Péguy’s rejection of pure reiteration allows instead for “deepening” or development.¹⁸²

Here tradition has ceased to name something which is passed on and come to be a way of being in the world. Carpenter substantiates this, drawing on Balthasar, both for his emphatic (and, it is worth noting, entirely uncompromising) rejection of any falsity, any hidden abuse of power in love,¹⁸³ and for his account of God’s action:

A theo-dramatic account of tradition relies on the mechanisms of representation (or mission) and kenotic obedience. What this means is that Christian tradition is “about” kenotically making room for God’s saving action in itself, an action shaped by the cross.¹⁸⁴

Whence

My position has been that history is human action (Lonergan), that human action is “metaphysics in act” (Blondel), that this metaphysics-in-action contains a potency for newness or its abrogation (Péguy) in a struggle over ultimate and relative meaningfulness (Balthasar).¹⁸⁵

Here, somewhat abruptly in the overview I have just given, the exegesis ends.

This apparent abruptness comes from my avoidance of Carpenter’s other project. The motivation for an account of tradition which has focused on tradition as *action* is perfectly obvious in the light of the other project of this book: since most of our traditional inheritance is defiled by racism, we had better have some way of being faithful to what was truly good in it whilst radically criticising (“critiquing”) it. The trouble (or the strength, if one really does think the tradition so hopelessly tainted) is that this criticism comes entirely from outside. It is not really clear that Carpenter is speaking about tradition at all: Blondel’s critique of integralism, for instance, or Péguy’s republicanism, is an interesting subject in its own right but has little apparently to do with the faith delivered to the Saints. Exactly the same argument could be made about the argument I am advancing. We are both speaking of Tradition at one remove from its content. But whereas I am interested in something *under* Tradition, something conceptually prior—the conditions of its transmission—Carpenter is interested in a kind of criticism which—since it reforms, remakes and rules things out or in—stands conceptually *above* the Tradition. There is nothing inherently wrong with this (if we refuse to argue about whether things are right we

¹⁸¹Carpenter, *Nothing Gained is Eternal*, p. 89. ¹⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 102. ¹⁸³*Ibid.*, pp. 152–3. ¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 153–4. ¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 157.

shall be at the mercy of the first charlatan who claims his eccentricity traditional), but the fundamental question of what grounds this criticism still remains: exactly as it did in the apparently entirely opposed case with which we started.

Conclusion: the curious silence of the sense

Returning to that apparently circular definition of the task of theology, as showing (apparently *post factum*) that the dogmata, the *doctrinæ ab Ecclesia definitæ*, are contained in the sources, one can see why avoiding the notion of a *normative* tradition—tradition as yardstick, not tradition as heritage to be sorted and partially disposed of—is attractive. The trouble is that Theology *does*, traditionally, begin with what is acquired. The difference between the definition (received even today in all quarters) of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum*, and the apparently ridiculous suggestion that that the theologian should begin his day with a list of propositions *ab Ecclesia definitæ* and end with a list of proofs *de fontibus* is stylistic. *Quaerens* we can swallow: the humble search of faith for something never fully satisfied; *ostendere* seems to pick out the worst sort of “conclusions theology”. When every allowance for style and context has been made—Pius XII is really concerned with insisting that this demonstration cannot undermine the sense of what has been defined—the formula does pick out something problematic in its account of Tradition: the relation between what has been defined and the sources from which it is to be justified seems backwards. If this is a theory of tradition it is one of extrincisism.

Nonetheless it is exactly what, at first glance, Benedict XVI called for, and our first group of authors endeavoured to supply: one begins with the assertion that the Council (in this case) must have taught what the Church always held, one goes through what appears to be novel, and one presents it either as a legitimate development or a surprising instance of the same thing.¹⁸⁶

Moreover, it is curiously close to what Carpenter ended up in by adopting precisely the inverse approach. By the end of¹⁸⁷ the contents of the Tradition are no clearer than they were at the beginning,¹⁸⁸ but the problems have become concrete:

The being of Christian tradition and its existence as the central engine of ever-transmuting racial deeds and logics, and as also (and more essentially) the engine of profound inequities underneath racializing categories, need to be thought together—since they are so entangled in the concrete—in order that they might be separated, however painfully.¹⁸⁹

The target here is different, but the method is ultimately the same: we begin with what the tradition *cannot* say, and we disentangle this from what it apparently does say (with the difference, here, that we can apparently reject a lot more—although Carpenter gives no criteria for what can or cannot be thrown out). The charges are different: *Vatican II* is accused of concordism, whilst Carpenter appears open to the accusation of eclecticism, but the problem is the same: it is *not* clear, at any rate to the critics, what *does* establish the tradition, what rules anything in or out, or what constitutes legitimate development and what is deformation.

On the level of the phenomena this problem seems to me unanswerable. Doubtless a good deal can be done by decent archival research and careful exegesis—there are

¹⁸⁶For an exemplary case, see Dulles’ article on ecclesiology, which is structured as a refutation of “controversial” claims. Lamb and Levering, *Vatican II*, Ch. 1.

¹⁸⁷Carpenter, *Nothing Gained is Eternal*. ¹⁸⁸By design, since Carpenter wanted to construct a different kind of account: *ibid.*, pp. 193–4. ¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 194.

historical claims which are simply false—but the uneasy suspicion that one is either dancing to the tune of Authority or genuflecting to the *Zeitgeist* (to summarise the criticisms of the two approaches presented here) remains. Likewise the act of faith will always be describable as willing blindness or unjustified enthusiasm.

The solution to both problems is the same. So long as the problem of faith remains a discussion of the legitimacy of lending assent on the basis of probable credibilia it will always appear unsatisfactory. The formulation is perfectly legitimate—faith is an act of rational assent, and credibilia *are*, like all phenomena, ultimately judged by the intellect and thus subject to probabilistic calculation—but it misses the intentional structure of the act itself. To one granted the eyes of faith all this talk of evidences and authorities is secondary: as Rousselot quite correctly pointed out, the first act is one of vision—an act inherently intellectual and thus pre-rational. The purpose of the other, secondary discussion is ultimately to clear away all the obstacles cluttering up this intellectual vision; to dispose the soul to receive what God must grant. *The intentional stance is prior*: everything else flows from it.

But it is exactly this which is absent from both works. The sense of the tradition, and our sense of it, do not enter into the discussion. The more striking claims Carpenter makes (and the claim that the Christian Tradition is the central engine of ever-transmuting racial deeds and logics, i.e. of racism, is certainly striking) seem to me not so much to miss the point as to be talking about something else entirely. There is plenty of racism in the Church's history, but none of *that* is Tradition. Likewise the quarrel over the interpretation of Vatican II seems to me entirely secondary: it matters very little whether a text is a compromise of outmoded and new claims or a consistent witness to perennial doctrine expressed in novel language for a new era. Before we can begin the problem of exegesis we have to confront the problem of ascesis.

It is this which distinguishes the two descriptions of theology I contrasted earlier. The subjection of the intellect when faith seeks understanding, and the apparent subjugation when one is sent off to the sources with a printed list of what one may find therein—unfairly to characterise the injunction of Pius IX—differ in their intentionality. Or in other words the only hope for persuading one's interlocutor that one is engaged in a well-founded inquiry, and not in bootstrapping some idiosyncratic project¹⁹⁰ is, ultimately, to show things in a new light, to bring them to a new vision: to come to share the intentional orientation from which this grounding makes sense. But this is to come to share the *sense* of the Tradition.

¹⁹⁰Each day seems to witness the rise of programs and institutions designed around restoring attitudes and systems of really a rather recent Christian past.... And what is under threat most often are norms and apparatuses no older than the nineteenth century.... It is so often the bluster of a false history' Carpenter, *Nothing Gained is Eternal*, p. 174

CHAPTER 4

Spiritual Tradition and Theological Tradition

Ah se le nazioni sono fatte sanabili, molto più sanabili sono i mali della Chiesa; e ingiurioso al suo divino Autore mi parrebbe il pensare, che quegli che pregò l'Eterno Padre di rendere « tutti i discepoli suoi una cosa, come egli e il Padre erano una cosa sola » permettesse poi che per sempre fra la plebe ed il Clero durasse un tanto muro di separazione...

Ma se la piaga è sanabile, chi applicherà alla medesima il farmaco salutare?
Il Clero.

Rosmini, *Cinque Piaghe*

Theology and Sanctity

That all the great saints of the early church were, almost without exception, great theologians 'is perhaps one of the most striking and most ignored facts of Church history' declared Balthasar in 'Théologie et Sainteté'.¹ Whence their influence:

les fidèles trouvaient dans la vie de ces hommes comme un exposé transparent de leur doctrine, le gage de son valeur ; ils s'assuraient ainsi de l'authenticité du maître et de son message. De là aussi, pour eux-même, la certitude de ne pas s'écarter du canon de la vérité révélée...

In this they were simply continuing the logic of the Gospel: Christ whose existence *est l'exposé vivant de son essence*² preached no abstract truth, but demanded conversion. All of this was true of the Fathers, who were naturally both doctors and pastors.³ Catechesis and apologetics were, with very few exceptions, holistic. *Or il faut reconnaître qu'il n'en est plus de même aujourd'hui*.⁴ Theology, albeit separated from philosophy, is greatly enriched by scientific study. Philosophy, naturally, is concerned with a concept of truth in which revelation does not enter. The *adaequatio* is *theoretically* true, but the link between the True and the Good is banished to (philosophical) anthropology.⁵ St.

¹Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Théologie et Sainteté', *Dieu Vivant* 12 (1948), p. 17. ²*Ibid.*, p. 18.

³Only a few monkish exceptions like Jerome or Maximus stand out, but in their very asceticism they sought a greater union of doctrine and life: *ibid.*, pp. 18–9.

⁴The history of so excellent a document as *Dei Filius* is an excellent example....

⁵Von Balthasar, 'Théologie et Sainteté', pp. 19–20.

Thomas is one of the last of the old conception of the doctor *qui ne peut pas ne pas être un Saint*.⁶ After him arises *devotion* (St. Francis de Sales is, slightly oddly, given the honour of being *fondateur propre de la « Spiritualité »*); thither flee the saints from the arid air of theological speculation. Bremond proves the point: what on earth would the Fathers have said of the notion of a specific *metaphysics* of the Saints? Let alone of a *sentiment religieux*!⁷ Henceforth the Church is to have two standards: the *Summa* in theology and the *Exercices* in “spirituality.”⁸

Un certain nombre, pourtant, avait conscience d'un déficit ; Denis Pataou chercha à retrouver l'unité par les sources ; beaucoup, à sa suite et avec les Benedictins, se dépensèrent à critiquer, traduire, éclairer le texte des Pères. En vain : c'est bien le mot qu'il faut prononcer devant cet énorme effort, car il est resté tout entier un effort d'histoire, sans toucher à la connaissance vivante du dogme.⁹

Theology, for the saints, is frequently an exercise in penitence, so detached is it from spirituality.¹⁰ Mysticism is Spanish rather than Biblical.¹¹ The supposed solution of “kerygmatic theology” only underscores the rupture.¹² *La vraie théologie, la théologie des Saints*¹³ is all but unknown. The *event* of revelation has disappeared from dogmatics, whilst so-called scientific exegesis only falsifies its text.¹⁴ The only solution is a wholesale reintegration of theology and spirituality, a retrieval of theology as prayer¹⁵ and a rediscovery of the theological climate of the fathers. *C'est alors que notre théologie priante et soumise pourra à l'infini nourrir la sainteté et susciter la prière*.¹⁶

The article is justly famous, but it has lead, rather inaccurately, to the supposition that this position is uniquely or originally Balthasarean. As a conceit this is harmless enough,¹⁷ intended seriously it reads the history of French theology backwards.¹⁸ More importantly for our purposes, the history of the article in question tells against such an idea. After translation, the article was sent to Daniélou for inclusion in *Dieu Vivant*, founded expressly to publish serious spiritual theology for a wide audience. Daniélou sent it to Lubac, together with a review of *Surnaturel*. Lubac wrote back the next day: the review was interesting, but radicalised his position, whilst as to Balthasar—

Je suis perplexe. C'est un très beau morceau. Il paraîtra trop libre d'allure, trop critique, et même ce qu'il a de plus positif et de plus sage ne sera pas admis par nos Scribes, lesquels, assis comme les autres dans la Chaire de Moïse, ne savent même plus dire, depuis longtemps, ce qu'il faut faire. Peut-être aussi le P. de Balthasar n'insiste-t-il pas assez sur le caractère inévitable (et donc providentiel, et donc bon à sa manière) de certaines

⁶ Von Balthasar, 'Théologie et Sainteté', p. 21. ⁷ Ibid., pp. 21–2.

⁸ Balthasar arises at this strange conclusion by a misreading of can 595, which merely prescribes that all religious are to carry out yearly exercises, without specifying their nature.

⁹ Von Balthasar, 'Théologie et Sainteté', p. 23. ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 23. ¹¹ Ibid., p. 24. ¹² Ibid., p. 26.

¹³ Ibid., p. 28. ¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 28–9. ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 30. ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁷ Marie-David Weill, 'Théologie et sainteté dans l'œuvre de Louis Bouyer', *Nouvelle revue théologique* 139.2 (2017), pp. 218–34, for instance, takes the title of the article as an (excellent) key to Bouyer's thought, where both desired to reestablish this essential link *malmené depuis la fin du Moyen Âge* (219).

¹⁸ Sometimes this is extreme: Antoine Birot, 'Bouyer, entre Thomas et Balthasar', *Laval théologique et philosophique* 67.3 (Apr. 2012), pp. 501–529, Bouyer is castigated for being *tout pétri de saint Thomas* (503), ascribing Christ's sacrifice to his human nature (507), adopting a Thomist christology (508), failing to be a patripassionist (! 509, 512), or a universalist (510), and preferring the traditional (liturgical) understanding of Holy Saturday (514). Birot's Balthasar is almost as idiosyncratic as his Bouyer, but throughout he *assumes* that the logic of a spiritually-aware theology is typified by Balthasar.

évolutions dans le mode de penser. Aussi paraît-il un peu se contredire, quand, vers la fin, il dit qu'il ne s'agit pas de rien faire « au détriment de la philosophie et de la théologie thomistes ». On verra là une clause de style, presque une hypocrisie... il faudra qu'il l'explique davantage, non seulement en cette fin d'article, mais un peu partout, *passim*, par une manière plus nuancée de présenter les choses.¹⁹

Perhaps, Lubac adds, he is being weak, but *l'heure n'est pas aux aventures!*

The question weighed on his mind, since five days later Lubac wrote to Daniélou again:

Décidément, j'ai le sentiment bien net que la publication de ces pages du P. de Balthasar serait fort dommageable, pour lui et pour nous tous: une sorte de réédition, en pire, de l'impression produite sur certains par votre article d'avril 46. Pertinacité grave dans l'anti-thomisme et l'anti-intellectualisme...²⁰

This time he is emphatic: the review of *Surnaturel* should be scrapped. Daniélou wrote back two days later in agreement on both points and promising to do nothing without first consulting Lubac;²¹ the article was eventually revised and published a year later.²²

The article of Daniélou's to which Lubac referred was 'Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse'; the storm it had caused had not yet died down. In this article (which bears every sign of having been dashed off in a hurry) Daniélou took aim, in summary fashion, at everything he thought in need of reform in the Church, and largely proposed projects he was directly involved in as a solution. (More widely, the projects proposed here are a good index for "Ressourcement endeavours.") 'The problems of theology and religious philosophy' are, Daniélou declares, no longer the preserve of an elite minority: they are spreading, in *Théologie* or *Unam sanctam*, or in the movement for the education of the laity (including that conducted by his mother!). This is driven by two things: the need for a 'more substantial' spirituality, and the virulence of contemporary atheism.²³ Unfortunately, scholastic theology gives one the sense of unreality. This was felt strongly by Modernism; alas the solution was untraditional, and anti-Modernism only made the problem worse. Some immediate reaction was needed, and Neo-thomism and the Biblical Commission *ont été ces garde-fous. Mais il est bien clair que des garde-fous ne sont pas des réponses.*²⁴ This phrase is typical Daniélou: not only is it perfectly true,²⁵ it is calculated to cause as much annoyance as possible: one could hardly expect someone as sensitive of the reputation of the

¹⁹Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, *Correspondance*, vol. 48, Œuvres complètes, Paris: Cerf, 2021, LT141 11 October 1947.

²⁰Ibid., LT142 16 October 1947.

²¹Ibid., LT143 18 October 1947.

²² Balthasar had already displayed a different inclination from Daniélou and Lubac: in *Présence et Pensée* (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Présence et Pensée, Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris: Beauschesne, 1942) he compared the thought of previous centuries to outmoded architectural styles: Gothic is admirable, neo-Gothic anachronistic, and rejected replacing 'neo-scholasticism' with 'neo-patristics'. (p. viii) Tradition is a one-way street of conceptual development (pp. ix-x), and we remember the thought of the fathers 'like an adult remembers the profound intuitions of adolescence'. (p. xi) The purpose of historical theology, in this model, is to retrieve lost insights in order to use them in *new* system-building.

²³Jean Daniélou, 'Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse', *Études: revue fondée en 1856 par des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus* 249.6 (1946), p. 5.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²⁵Daniélou does not say that neo-thomism is a *garde-fou*, only that it played this role. The word is

theology of the schools as Garrigou-Lagrange to take the insult lying down. But Daniélou has not finished exposing himself to foolish attacks: Modernism was the poor expression of *exigences authentiques*; add to this the modern insistence that thought should be ‘engaged’—is this not the boast of both marxism and existentialism?—and it is clear that Christian thought, too, must learn to speak a different language, no longer ‘treating God as an object’, but instead ‘as God’, ‘as Subject’; responding to the needs of *l’âme moderne* and taking into account ‘science and history’, all the while offering a ‘concrete’ response which ‘engages the whole person’.²⁶

This will be done, firstly, by *le retour aux Sources*: the bible, the fathers, and the liturgy.²⁷ The former has been more or less lost since the thirteenth century and the triumph of *sacra doctrina* over *sacra pagina*; it is being recovered today, particularly by the ‘applied phenomenology’ of form criticism—the epithet, as frequently in Daniélou, is either trivial or false—beginning with Bultmann (!) *et al.* and recently incorporated by Catholics: *Des études comme celles de Kittel sur Logos ont enrichi la théologie*.²⁸ Equally lightly sketched is patristics, ‘one vast biblical commentary’²⁹ and history, as in Lubac’s *Catholicisme*.³⁰ The communal aspect of salvation is coming back into (contemplative) regard,³¹ liturgy, a ‘third source for theological nourishment’ is bringing mystagogy back to life, as in Bouyer’s *Le Mystère Pascal*.³² (Needless to say Daniélou has little idea about the Liturgical movement and cites Rousseau’s *Histoire du Mouvement Liturgique* apparently unaware that it sketches the triumph of the pastoral movement rather simplistically.)

While we are at it we might as well claim the support of atheistic philosophy: Marxism, of which Daniélou gives a patently bizarre derivation³³ is, like Christianity, concerned with the greater destiny of humanity over my immediate needs; existentialism ‘opens up the abyss of Man’ and his liberty—like Pascal!—leading naturally to the spiritual; *ces deux abîmes obligent donc la pensée théologique à se dilater*; but *il est bien clair en effet que la théologie scolastique est étrangère à ces catégories*.³⁴ Whence the need for a new style which, fortunately, Daniélou and his friends are in the process of writing: *les générations précédentes ont accumulé des matériaux; il s’agit maintenant de construire*. A task demanding a particular kind of author:

Il faut que se lèvent pour cela des hommes joignant à un sens profond de la tradition chrétienne, à une vie de contemplation qui leur donne l’intelligence du mystère du Christ, un sens aigu des besoins de leur temps et un amour brûlant des âmes de leurs frères, des hommes d’autant plus libres à l’égard de toutes les formes humaines qu’ils seront liés plus étroitement par le lien intérieur de l’Esprit.³⁵

Daniélou, clearly, had not benefited from Lubac’s criticism: even for a manifesto the article is singularly light on content and open to misunderstanding—when indeed not visibly lacking seriousness. But it was not merely this which lead Lubac to think of

sometimes overtranslated in English: in reality it is perfectly normal French for ‘guard rail’ or ‘safeguard’, particularly in an interpersonal context.

²⁶Daniélou, ‘Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse’, pp. 6–7. ²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7. ²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 9–10. ³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 10–11. ³¹*Ibid.*, p. 11. ³²*Ibid.*, pp. 11–2.

³³*Héritier de la philosophie scientifique dont il est la plus récente systématisation, enrichissant l’évolutionnisme biologique de Darwin d’un évolutionnisme sociologique et le matérialisme vulgaire de la dialectique hégélienne, représente un élargissement de notre vision du monde-extérieur. Il correspond à cette découverte des immensités de l’espace et du temps dans lesquelles le destin de l’individu et même celui de l’espèce humaine n’apparaissent plus que comme des épisodes minimes.* The curious thing is that Daniélou could engage very well with Marxism in his political writings. *ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 13–4. ³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 21.

it when revising Balthasar's. The arguments—both light on detail—are fundamentally the same. What Daniélou calls 'engaged' thought is, as the conclusion makes clear, *spiritually* engaged. The problem with neoscholasticism is its *spiritual* irrelevance, at any rate for the mass of laity to whom it seems wholly unreal. The solution is *spiritual* symbolism: the typology of the Bible reveals the *sens* of salvation history, which in turn supplies a hermeneutic of history entirely different from but fulfilling the same role as Marxist theory: a dialectical spiritualism if one will. The impulse which gave rise to the anti-rationalist philosophy of existentialism is satisfied in realising the *spiritual* depths of the soul, as encountered in contemplation (and played out in the Liturgy, but Daniélou, like all *Ressourcement* authors, fails to take this seriously enough); and, most importantly, the reform will only be successful if it is carried out by *spiritual* thinkers.

Sources Chrétiennes

Moreover this project of mining the (Greek) fathers for the materials for a contemporary theology was, for Daniélou and Lubac, deadly serious. The first volume of *Sources chrétiennes* came out in 1942, in occupied France. The idea dated from at least 1938, but it had been refused by the General for financial reasons.³⁶ With permission for a more limited endeavour eventually granted, Gregory of Nyssa's *life of Moses* sold out quicker than it could be printed. Indeed the problem of paper was the chief obstacle³⁷ followed closely by an antisemitic (secular) censor³⁸ and the tendency of collaborators, heavily involved in the resistance, to flee at a moment's notice.³⁹

This was not the largely scholarly collection it would eventually become: the Jesuits had no intention of competing with Migne, and printing greek was hard (the first greek text would not come out until after the war) and of little use for the primary purpose, as evidenced by the long introductions: these were texts destined for popular consumption, primarily (but not exclusively) by Christian laity. (The title originally was to be simply *Sources*; "chrétiennes" was added at the last minute to avoid confusion with a short-lived review.⁴⁰) By 1943 Daniélou could boast that Gregory was being discussed in German prisoner-of-war camps.⁴¹ But the war simply made more urgent a program decided in advance. Why shouldn't the greek miracle—the incorporation of Christianity into a pagan society—repeat itself?⁴²—as Fontoynt asked in 1938; *Chaque fois, dans notre Occident, qu'un nouveau chrétien a fleuri, dans l'ordre de la pensée comme dans celui de la vie, (et les deux ordres sont toujours liés), il a fleuri sous le signe des Pères* wrote Lubac in 1967.⁴³ (Insofar as *Ressourcement* succeeded—and

³⁶Étienne Fouilloux, *La Collection « Sources chrétiennes », Éditer les Pères de l'Église au XX^e siècle*, Paris: Cerf, 2011, pp. 73–6.

³⁷'Les questions de papier sont de plus en plus terribles' de Lubac and Daniélou, *Correspondance*, LT48 September 1942; LT 63 & *passim*.

³⁸Fouilloux, *La Collection « Sources chrétiennes »*, p. 29.

³⁹de Lubac and Daniélou, *Correspondance*, LT50 October 1942 This is not the only time *Ressourcement* responded to the war with spirituality: Lubac's wartime writings are almost entirely spiritual analyses of the shortcomings of both fascism and the christianity which had failed to oppose it.(See the writings gathered in Henri de Lubac, *Résistance chrétienne au nazisme*, Œuvres complètes 36, Paris: cerf, 2006) He would deploy the same line later against Marxism, notably in *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*(Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*, Paris: Cerf, 1959) and *Athéisme et sens de l'homme*(Henri de Lubac, *Athéisme et sens de l'homme, Révélation divine/Affrontements mystiques/Athéisme et sens de l'homme*, Œuvres Complètes 4, Paris: Cerf, 1968).

⁴⁰Fouilloux, *La Collection « Sources chrétiennes »*, pp. 31–2. ⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 88–9. ⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴³Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, Œuvres Complètes 33, paris: cerf, 2006, p. 318.

within limited bounds it did—this was again true.⁴⁴) But this claim went hand-in-hand with a theory: the Church flourished when theology and spirituality informed one another, and withered when they became separated. We have already seen Chenu *define* a theology as the product of spirituality; Daniélou would say exactly the same thing, having spiritual and theological schools possessing *exclusive* insights:

Un point toutefois important à noter. Il est vrai que la théologie a droit de donner les principes, tandis que les faits relèvent de l'histoire. Mais encore faut-il bien prendre garde à ne pas appliquer les principes de telle école théologique à n'importe quelle spiritualité. Il est clair par exemple que les rapports de la contemplation et de l'action, tels que les conçoit la philosophie de saint Thomas, ne peuvent aucunement rendre compte de spiritualités comme celle de saint François ou de saint Ignace. Il en résulte que si la théologie peut nous aider à comprendre la spiritualité, la spiritualité à son tour fera dans bien des cas éclater nos cadres théologiques et nous obligera à concevoir divers types de théologie.⁴⁵

Criticism

All of this, naturally, provoked a reaction. *Nous n'avons pas qualité pour exposer la vraie pensée de M. Gilson*, declared Labourdette in what was to become only the first and most thoughtful article in a controversy which would eventually see most of *Ressourcement* under sanctions of some kind or another—a trifle irrelevantly, since Daniélou is expressly correcting Gilson here:

Nous ne pensons pas que ses très belles études...entraînent le moins du monde une conception aussi simple. C'est un très grand bénéfice pour comprendre une synthèse théologique, en apprécier l'orientation profonde, de voir en effet dans quel climat spirituel elle a été élaborée, à quelle expérience, à quelle intuition fondamentale elle répond. Mais cela n'empêche nullement que du fait même qu'elle est passée sur le plan de la formulation intellectuelle, cette théologie devient justiciable de tout autres appréciations que la spiritualité dont elle émane.⁴⁶

In any case does not Daniélou's claim lead to the absurdity of objectively contradictory systems being true at the same time? Precisely because theology is a science, there can only be *one* true account (however couched); elaborating this synthesis out of disparate data is precisely the function of scientific inquiry, in theology as in physics.⁴⁷ Considered thus,

s'il était vrai que la théologie de saint Thomas ne puisse rendre compte

⁴⁴Michel Fédou, "'Sources Chrétiennes': Patristique et renaissance de la théologie", *Gregorianum* 92.4 (2011), pp. 781–796.

⁴⁵Jean Daniélou, 'Théologie et spiritualité dans l'histoire', *Revue du Moyen-Age latin* (1945), p. 65.

⁴⁶Labourdette, 'La théologie et ses sources', *Revue Thomiste* (1946), pp. 353–71, p. 368 n1.

⁴⁷It has become *de rigueur* to deny that this holds in fact of the physical sciences. This, certainly, is the position of Feyerabend (Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, London: Verso, 1988). But it is neither the methodological assumption of any work of science I have ever read (which have universally assumed that inferior models are useable *given* that under such-and-such assumptions they 'approximate' to a higher model, itself approximating to reality) nor necessarily entailed by the famous 'paradigm shifts.' See Hasok Chang, 'The Persistence of Epistemic Objects Through Scientific Change', *Erkenntnis* 75.3 (Nov. 2011), pp. 413–429.

des expériences auxquelles se réfère le P. Daniélou, il faudrait simplement en conclure qu'elle n'a point atteint en cela l'universalité que demande une vraie science.⁴⁸

This is exactly the response which Chenu encountered with *Une école de théologie*, albeit this time in public.⁴⁹ In both cases the statement is exaggerated (Daniélou's *aucunement* means *parfois*) and the response is a category mistake. Labourdette, tellingly, replaces "spiritualities" with "experiences": it simply does not occur to him that spirituality could be anything other than phenomenal (and thus pre-scientific) or reflection on these phenomena (and thus scientific on its own grounds). But Daniélou, who unfortunately was neither a systematic thinker nor a disciplined writer, is in fact proposing more or less the theory Bouillard worked out in greater detail, a theory of the *continuing* interaction between theology and spirituality (to which we turn in a moment).

Labourdette perceived the root of the disagreement, and his title is precise: on what source is theological reflection to draw? After the opening pleasantries he cuts to the chase: *Sources chrétiennes* is *orientée par une intention, un esprit commun*; visible in the introductions, notes, and choices of texts, and explicitly set out in the parallel collection *Théologie*.⁵⁰ He is fair-minded: the *choc* of the Platonism of the Greek fathers is no bad thing, although rumours of the ensuing demise of scholasticism are much exaggerated.⁵¹ But he fears a programme, and identifies 'Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse' as a manifesto of anti-scholasticism. *Nous estimons... que, très précisément sous la forme que lui a donnée saint Thomas, la théologie scolastique représente l'état vraiment scientifique de la pensée chrétienne*.⁵² *Libre au P. Daniélou de se vouer à une théologie « dramatique »*—provided he leaves Thomism alone. In any case Thomism is just as 'open to life' as existentialism, marxism or evolutionism.⁵³ Daniélou's rhetorical excesses are legitimately put in their place, but Labourdette has already missed his mark: Daniélou was not proposing the substitution *en bloc* of one system by another,⁵⁴ but the abandonment of *separated* "scientific" theology, and

⁴⁸Labourdette, 'La théologie et ses sources', p. 368 n1.

⁴⁹Chenu was summoned to Rome, interrogated, and made to sign a perfectly ridiculous set of propositions, the most ridiculous of which begins *Gloriosum est Ecclesiam habere systema S. Thoma: tamquam valde orthodoxum*. (Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians, From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mystery*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, p. 9. Kerr expresses incredulity that 'grown men' came up with such a ridiculous "proposition".)

In point of fact these propositions (which the benevolent interrogators—who considered the whole affair fraternal—noted Chenu signed without trouble) were intended—on express testimony—simply as an insurance against possible bother from the Office, i.e. self-protection! (Étienne Fouilloux, 'L'affaire Chenu', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 2.98 [2014], p. 289) Once again we see the police-state regime in action: what Chenu had meant was of little interest to his bureaucratic superiors (and no interest to Garrigou-Lagrange, who was as usual convinced that he had understood, and as usual wrong). Whence, in fact, the most idiotic of the propositions, which stemmed from ignoring the guillemots when Chenu declared *il ne fut pire disgrâce pour le thomisme que d'être traité comme une « orthodoxie »!* (*ibid.*, p. 287)

This was not the first time the authorities had worried: denounced by two students in 1932 the house had been the subject of inquiries, but in the end the decision was taken to hit *La vie intellectuelle* instead. (Étienne Fouilloux, 'Première alerte sur le saulchoir (1932)', *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 96.1 [2012], pp. 93–105) Chenu's removal would not take long: after *Une école de théologie* was placed on the index in 1942 the Saulchoir was at last struck. The details of this sorry affair are strikingly similar to that of 'La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?': an article, this time in *L'Osservatore*, by Mgr Parente; a false genealogy; internal satisfaction in the order by a private response but a refusal on "prudential" grounds to respond publicly. It is not difficult to see how the Church's official organs came to be treated with such contempt.

⁵⁰Labourdette, 'La théologie et ses sources', p. 354. ⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 355. ⁵²*Ibid.*, pp. 358–9. ⁵³*Ibid.*, 359n1.

⁵⁴and certainly Labourdette is quite right to dismiss his facile attempt to drag in "contemporary thought": *ibid.*, p. 369.

lesser projects of translation; and, more importantly, the reunification of theology and spirituality. The rest of Labourdette's argument only shows how invisible this was to him, nowhere more so than when he tries to use the argument from "evolution" *ad hominem*: Thomism is doing very well contemporaneously, *ergo* it is the true contemporary form.⁵⁵ Daniélou no more than Chenu pretends to build anything on such a nonsensical notion of 'progress'. But Labourdette's real worry is that this all leads to theological relativism, and the clearest example he finds is not in Daniélou, but in Bouillard.

Since Bouillard's thesis ultimately poses a problem *Ressourcement* would resolve on by the unity of theological reflection with a consistent spirituality (although Bouillard himself offers no solution), and since a misunderstanding of the text featured largely in the reaction stirred up by Daniélou's article it is worth considering closely.

Systematic relativism?

The controversy over *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* is entirely concerned with a few pages of the conclusion.⁵⁶ For most of the work Bouillard has argued that Thomas modified his position on prevenient grace both as his thought developed (and notably when he became aware of the council of Orange), and as his theological and philosophical equipment shifted. But this latter effect applies just as much to his interpreters. Thus

le problème de la préparation à la grâce, par exemple, ne se pose que dans une théologie où la grâce est conçue comme forme, au sens aristotélicien. [...] Une préparation à la grâce est nécessaire parce que, selon Aristote, une forme ne peut être reçue que dans une matière disposée.⁵⁷

but with the gradual abandonment of Aristotelian physics from the sixteenth century, the diminution of the role of form and matter *elsewhere* obscured their internal relations in theology.⁵⁸

This is not to say that the doctrine has been lost:

nous n'entendons pas nier la continuité doctrinale qui relie saint Thomas aux Pères et les modernes à saint Thomas. Si nous n'y insistons pas, c'est qu'elle est assez évidente...⁵⁹

Taken out of context⁶⁰ this looks like special pleading. In fact Bouillard is simply summing up, very accurately, what he has done. If we take doctrinal consistency as a given, how do we make sense of several really quite different theological vocabularies?

Ne voit-on pas comment le même souci d'affirmer que notre justice vient de Dieu et qu'elle est absolument gratuite a fait naître successivement des notions et des systèmes différents? Grâce-qualité, motion divine, *auxilium Dei speciale*, grâce actuelle élevante ont tous été conçus, à leur époque, pour exprimer la gratuité du don divin. Pour maintenir dans de nouveaux contextes intellectuels la pureté d'une affirmation absolue,

⁵⁵Labourdette, 'La théologie et ses sources', p. 362.

⁵⁶Bouillard observes in passing that Thomas neither denied nor held *natura pura*: Henri Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin, Étude historique*, Paris: Aubier, 1943, pp. 77-8. In the event Lubac's claims dominated this controversy to the near exclusion of all other positions.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 214. ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 215. ⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶⁰As Labourdette does: Labourdette, 'La théologie et ses sources', p. 364.

les théologiens l'ont spontanément exprimée en des notions nouvelles. *Quand l'esprit évolue, une vérité immuable ne se maintient que grâce à une évolution simultanée et corrélative de toutes les notions, maintenant entre elles un même rapport. Une théologie qui ne serait pas actuelle serait une théologie fausse.*⁶¹

This last phrase by itself was to cause enormous grief for Bouillard. Without exception his critics ignored the fact that the claim is retrospective and linguistic. Firstly, Bouillard thinks that this pivoting *within* a system to maintain the same internal relation has *already* happened in the history he has sketched. It does not remotely follow that *any* alternative statement is just as good, only that *in point of fact* continuity between historical languages entails internal shifting. Secondly, this is a linguistic claim.⁶² Bouillard might have said (with greater precision) that theologoumena are enunciated in a conceptual as much as a spoken language. Just as the gradual loss of fluency in, say, mediaeval Latin or patristic Greek cannot but leave the reader increasingly unaware of references and nuances which had earlier seemed simply obvious, so our conceptual vocabulary shifts with the use we make of it. Absent a *living* vocabulary and we will seek to understand a statement by translating into terms closer to us, thereby incorporating it into a different system. This is simply what the mind *does*.⁶³ It is in *this* sense that a theology which is not current is false: I cannot simply repeat the vocabulary of yesterday without *of necessity* either reinterpreting it (however faithfully) or, by failing to see where in fact I *do* differ, falsifying it.

Nonetheless, continuity—true reinterpretation—is possible. How so? Firstly, clearly, by historical research (the more I see the same claim playing out in different contexts the better I will understand what is really being claimed). But whilst Bouillard can hardly deny the value of historical theology in an historical study,⁶⁴ this is only to observe the procedure in practice, not to give an account of it. Again, if in practice we can observe the difference between affirmation and representation⁶⁵ it still remains that we can only gesture at the former without engaging in the latter. On this Bouillard is a little too hasty: whilst he is quite right that Trent has not made Aristotelian metaphysics *de fide* (and right again that Thomistic Aristotelianism is not remotely identical with Aristotle *tout court*: transsubstantiation is simply nonsense in classical Aristotelianism), and right that the council uses a number of phrases, including from scripture, for the same claim about justification⁶⁶ this is not a simple matter of substitution. Taken together these assertions form a system, but one *intentional* rather than *scientific* (the scientific claim being one element).⁶⁷ Other such *intentional* claims are possible; under the conditions Bouillard sketches other *scientific* claims may be also, although it is one thing to speak of *inevitable* substitution, and quite another (as

⁶¹Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 219. My italics.

⁶²It is regrettable that these discussions developed quite in isolation from anglo-german philosophy of language and of science: the problems of theological systems are a special case, but not remotely *sui generis*, of the problems of systemic and paradigmatic shift.

⁶³Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 220. ⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 224. ⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 221–2.

⁶⁷There is more to this particular example than almost all commentators observe. The Catechism (“of Trent”) suggests that if (which is generally to be avoided) the priest must speak of transsubstantiation, he should begin by demonstrating the mystery of substance itself. When the congregation has grasped that *the same water* is present under completely different accidental forms, he can then gesture at *that* presence, showing (*ostendere*) that Christ is present *as substance is mysteriously present in any compound*. In other words, the priest is to cultivate the right *intentional* stance, and then the metaphysics will be, if not understood, at least correctly bracketed. *Catechismus ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini ad Parochos*, Ratisbon: Georg Joseph Manz, 1745, 2.4.2ff.

we saw in the introduction) to invent new hypotheses *ex nihilo*—an articial procedure which generally leads to artificial solutions.⁶⁸ But this account is also lacking, for even the “scientific” claim (grace as formal cause) has an intentional component and would be meaningless without it. I shall return to this problem in a moment.

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

The phrase from Bouillard which Labourdette had thought lead him (despite himself) to relativism appears on the first page of ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle ?’, where Garrigou-Lagrange draws the conclusion: *la théologie de S. Thomas n’étant plus actuelle, est une théologie fausse*. Where Labourdette, genuinely desiring to open a debate,⁶⁹ leaves open the possibility that he has misunderstood, Garrigou-Lagrange is quite certain that Bouillard is engaging *within* the scholastic paradigm, declaring *either* that a theoretical notion (substance/accident; form/matter) is an accurate portrayal of reality *or* that it is not. That Bouillard appear to offer the consolation prize of having been, in effect, a decent metaphor in the past does not remotely mollify him. Either Trent spoke accurately or it did not; either dogmata are true or they aren’t. Bouillard’s attempt to have his cake and eat it, holding *both* doctrinal permanence *and* systematic relativism is clearly a smokescreen for relativism *tout court*.⁷⁰ In vain did Bouillard protest—in a justificatory note demanded by the General of all the Jesuits attacked by Garrigou-Lagrange—that changing theological systems could be true by way of analogy, since their access to truth was ultimately by means of *analogia*. Having obtained this private note somehow Garrigou-Lagrange responded to it point-by-point in an incredibly flatfooted article, an indiscretion which moreover won Bouillard a certain respect from the General, who permitted a public response, something effectively denied to Lubac.⁷¹ Aside from repeating *ad nauseum* that there are no true contradictions, Garrigou-Lagrange can be remarkable:

Des notions différentes d’une même réalité peuvent être différentes seulement comme le concept confus et le concept distinct d’une même chose, alors elles sont univoques, ou au contraire ces notions différentes sont si

⁶⁸Marcus Pound, ‘Eucharist and Trauma’, *New Blackfriars* 88.1014 (2007), pp. 187–194. Thus one begins by asking whether ‘Aristotle’s ontology has resonance for our ears’, concludes negatively, and then proposes something quite artificial: ‘if the Church is to converse with the wider cultural milieu about transsubstantiation, then the contemporary voice most suited is Lacanian psychoanalysis’. (!)

⁶⁹In this he was entirely unsuccessful: Garrigou-Lagrange for his part prematurely foreclosed the debate, congratulating his (apparently) defeated opponents with having provoked a useful controversy, (Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘Les notions consacrées par les Conciles’, *Angelicum* 24.4 [1947], p. 230) whilst the anonymous response (‘La théologie et ses sources. Réponse.’, *Recherches des sciences religieuses* 33 [1946], pp. 385–401) (apparently written by Lubac) was more protest than engagement. His criticism is mostly flat-footed, but to attribute this failure simply to disdain on the part of the Jesuits seems unduly hasty. *Either* frank discussion *or* the régime of the police state; *vel libertas vel tyrannis*. Again and again we see the intellectual confusion of Catholicism in the last century directly attributable to the twin idiocies of Modernism and anti-Modernism.

⁷⁰Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle ?’, *Angelicum* 23.3/4 (1946), pp. 127–9.

⁷¹Bouillard also benefited from the somewhat insincere support of Boyer (great adversary of Lubac), who had examined his thesis. After apparently suggesting for a while that the controverted phrases had been added later, he professed surprise that anyone could misunderstand Bouillard. (C. Boyer, ‘Conversion et grâce chez S. Thomas d’Aquin’, *Gregorianum* 27.1 [1946], pp. 157–160; de Lubac and Daniélou, *Correspondance*, p. 481)

This was not the only time Boyer was to find himself *dans l’embarras*: it was at his explicit invitation—under orders, naturally—that Lubac was to give a conference on Teilhard: (Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard Explained*, trans. from the French by Anthony Buono, New York: Paulist, 1968, p. 1; de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l’occasion de mes écrits*, pp. 174–5)

opposées entre elles que l'une est la négation de l'autre.⁷²

Exactly why there cannot be a difference of formality is unclear.

That Bouillard's thesis was presented entirely historically (as we saw, he thinks the loss of Aristotelian physics has *already* changed the scholastic account of grace) was simply invisible to Garrigou-Lagrange, whose insistence that he was invulnerable to charges of ignoring the context since 'he had read everything before and after very carefully'⁷³ is only less plausible when he establishes—laboriously—that an “affirmation” is a subject and a predicate joined by the verb to be, and thus cannot be meaningfully distinguished, as Bouillard does, from a notion.⁷⁴ If this was all we would have nothing more than *odium theologicum*, or its cognate wilful stupidity. But whilst Bouillard's claim (*pace* Garrigou-Lagrange) is perfectly intelligible, he has not attempted an account of it. Such accounts as have been attempted have been frequently worse even than the caricature so decisively here dismembered. What *does* guarantee a continuity of affirmation between two apparently disparate systems? And what legitimises the motion towards a new systematic framework which Bouillard had considered entirely retrospectively, but which Daniélou clearly desired?

For Garrigou-Lagrange—and for the theological mindset of which he is simply a highly uncharitable exemplar—the question does not arise. Indeed, simply to *pose* the question, as he thought (mistakenly) Bouillard and (correctly) Lubac and Daniélou had done, is to be suspect. It is thus that he is able to take the question of development as key to *la nouvelle théologie*. Whence the celebrated assertion, frequently quoted as out of context as Garrigou-Lagrange's own citations:

Conclusion. Où va la nouvelle théologie? Elle revient au modernisme. Parce qu'elle a accepté la proposition qui lui était faite : celle de substituer à la définition traditionnelle de la vérité : *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, comme si elle était chimérique, la définition subjective : *adaequatio realis mentis et vitae*.⁷⁵

Here we come full circle, for between his misreading of Bouillard and this assertion comes the misreading of Blondel we saw in chapter 3 on page 73. The second half of Garrigou-Lagrange's argument against *Ressourcement* consisted in mistaking a *methodological* claim for one epistemological; the first half—because what *Ressourcement* will propose as an answer to the problem of continuity—consists in mistaking spiritual for speculative theology. The error is not only the same: it shows in both cases the thoroughgoing relegation of the thinking or praying *subject* to an appendix to the theory. It is little wonder that to Garrigou-Lagrange the claims of *Ressourcement* that the Tradition was in danger of being lost were as unintelligible as Newman's had been to Gillow. That one could *simultaneously* hold all the theoretical statements and have lost their sense seemed so absurd that both simply assumed their interlocutor was preaching sentimentalism.

It remains to be shown (*i*) that *Ressourcement* adopted this attitude to spirituality in practice and (*ii*) that in so doing it attempted, in practice, an answer to the questions which Garrigou-Lagrange posed without realising it.

⁷²Garrigou-Lagrange, 'Les notions consacrées par les Conciles', p. 219.

⁷³Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, 'Vérité et immutabilité du dogme', *Angelicum* 24.2/3 (1947), p. 133.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 134. ⁷⁵Garrigou-Lagrange, 'La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?', p. 143.

Ressourcement Spirituality

Paradoxes: Lubac

Lubac's writings—explicitly spiritual or not—are distinctly mystical: they seek to present (rather than to analyse) the mysterious presence of God in the world, the supernatural calling which, as we saw at the beginning of this thesis, Lubac thinks is at once immediate and invisible to everyone.⁷⁶ Nowhere is this clearer than in his apologetic writings. *De la connaissance de Dieu* makes this clearer almost by its faults: what is one to make of the obviously fallacious ontological argument whereby we prove the existence of God by noting that if we invent the concept of God it is not, actually, a concept of God at all?⁷⁷ But Lubac is not attempting a deductive argument at all: he simply puts the two conceptions side by side to show that, *internally*, our conception of God does *not* behave as yet another object: the absolute qualitative difference between God and creatures is, *also*, a difference of intentional stance. Or rather it should be. It is God's 'incessant self-revelation is incessantly imprinting his image' in Man, which constitutes him.⁷⁸ 'The proof is within me'⁷⁹—not accessible by introspection, but discovered, in true Blondelan fashion, in my contemplation of the world.⁸⁰ 'Nous sommes un élan vers l'Absolu';⁸¹ 'the sacred is already in the "natural"'.⁸² To see this requires good will,⁸³ particularly in an age like ours which has 'lost the taste for God'.⁸⁴ 'On ne peut pas faire l'économie de Dieu.'⁸⁵ For 'thought will never grasp being, but from its first steps it already touches it. It would not proceed at all unless it were already there.'⁸⁶

Predictably, given the Augustinian inclination of the book and Lubac's expressions on the supernatural, the book was withdrawn from Jesuit libraries in the sanctions after *Humani Generis*. Lubac replaced it as soon as he could with *Sur les chemins de Dieu*,⁸⁷ pained by the spiritual harm "classical" apologetics might do and convinced of his ability to show people the plausibility of the christian mystery.⁸⁸ The same prose-poetry and the same attempt to bring the reader to *see* characterise his three imitations of Pascal's *Pensées*, the *Paradoxes*⁸⁹ which date across his whole career. The explicit purpose of these texts was to cure the spiritual ills which prevented modern man from thinking straight (quite naturally, the collected edition adds a set of essays arguing exactly this).⁹⁰

Lubac would deploy exactly the same argumentation after the council *ad intra*, with the same intention: to *show* rather than to *prove*. Thus *Les Églises particulières dans l'Église universelle* is as much concerned to insist on the 'anonymous tyranny' of the Modern world, the world a *fabrique de phosphor* (Claudel), whence, ultimately, our failure even to grasp the traditional vocabulary (hence for 'soul' we put 'subjectivity'...) ⁹¹ For Lubac it is ultimately a loss of vision which has led to theoretical chaos

⁷⁶Lubac himself would refuse the epithet *mystic*. Whilst he *studies* mysticism—orthodox and heterodox (Joachim)—his phenomenological prose-poetry should not be confused with mystical writing. Lubac sought to show the symbolic world the Mystics perceived; mystical writing frequently (as in Eckhart) tries for conceptual clarity: if it appears opaque it is from the nature of the experience it tries to analyse, not (as in Lubac) as a performative stylistic choice.

⁷⁷Henri de Lubac, *De la connaissance de Dieu*, 2nd ed., Paris: Témoignage Chrétien, 1948, p. 15.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14. ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 45, 16, 77. ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 47–8. ⁸¹*Ibid.*, pp. 94–5. ⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 63. ⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 85. ⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 68. ⁸⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 66–7. ⁸⁷Henri de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, Aubier: Éditions Mouton, 1956. ⁸⁸De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, p. 81.

⁸⁹Collected: Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes*, vol. 31, Œuvres complètes, Paris: Cerf, 2010.

⁹⁰Emilio Brito, 'Cardinal Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes*', *Revue théologique de Louvain* 3 (2001), pp. 436–7.

⁹¹Henri de Lubac, *Les Églises particulières dans l'Église universelle*, Aubier: Éditions Mouton, 1971, pp. 212–5.

(and interior disorder). We have lost the Personal God; all we have are ‘abstractions’, ‘objectifications’.⁹²

Optimism: Chenu

Chenu, every bit as rhetorically rapid as Daniélou—a few paragraphs of clarification in *Une école de théologie* would have gone a long way to calming the crisis—was, by contrast, relentlessly optimistic. On only one significant occasion does he seem resolutely pessimistic:

Chrétien, mon frère, nous ne devons pas nous le dissimuler...ce n'est pas seulement dans notre raison, c'est dans notre foi même que le déclenchement de la guerre nous a accablés et frappés de stupeur. Une question brutale, posée tout d'un coup, sur Dieu notre Père.

L'atmosphère spirituelle de 1939 est toute différente [de 1914]...nos soldats sont partis avec un courage froid, volontaire, dur, sans ce sursaut imaginaire qui, en 1914, les faisait chanter.

[...] Du fléau de la guerre, horrible et stupide, délivrez-nous, Seigneur.⁹³

Even allowing for rhetoric, there is enough evidence of false optimism in the French military in 1939. But the next sentence is the key to this supposed pessimism:

Mais alors, Seigneur, comment l'avez-vous pu permettre?⁹⁴

The answer, Chenu says—clarifying that he is concerned with God's *permissive* will⁹⁵—is that if God permits such suffering, *C'est que de cette folie il se prépare à tirer un bien immense pour l'entière humanité*.⁹⁶ This suffering will win

le prix de la VÉRITÉ dans les rapports entre peuples et nations, prix absolu qu'un mensonge industrialisé et centuplé par un « ministère de la propagande » méprise odieusement...Et puis, second espoir magnifique, cette solidarité totale de l'humanité, que nous sentions croître douloureusement déjà, dans les travaux de la paix, et que révèle tragiquement cette guerre.⁹⁷

Leaving aside the instrumental account of suffering (it is perhaps ironic to note that at least on this Balthasar and Chenu are in accord) Chenu's millenarianism here in *La Vie spirituelle*⁹⁸ is only the emphatic form of his usual optimism. He published frequently in the journal (27 articles in total, spanning his whole career) invariably and strikingly positive in tone.⁹⁹ Not that Chenu was not scholarly: his scholarly output—in history and patristics¹⁰⁰ was thoroughly scientific,¹⁰¹ even if one sometimes feels

⁹²Ibid., pp. 217–9, 223. ⁹³Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Chrétien mon frère', *La Vie spirituelle* 61 (1939), pp. 5–6. ⁹⁴Ibid., p. 5. ⁹⁵'Le mal reste le mal. Et Dieu l'abomine doublement...' ibid., p. 11. ⁹⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 13. ⁹⁸'...ascétique et mystique'. These epithets were dropped after the war.

⁹⁹M.-D. Chenu, 'Aux incroyants', *La Vie spirituelle* 9 (1923), pp. 93–5. When, as often, the article is a review, he can be cloying: 'de fines et opportunes observations' Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Chronique de théologie mystique. Idéal monastique et vie chrétienne', *La Vie spirituelle* 7 (1923), p. 443; Cf also Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Une religion contemplative', *La Vie spirituelle* 43 (1935), pp. 86–9, (which is nonetheless quite right to observe that contemplation and action are not competitive); or the frank hagiography of Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Une doctrine, une œuvre, une vie', *La Vie spirituelle* 51 (1937), pp. 86–9.

¹⁰⁰M.-D. Chenu, 'De l'oraison', *La Vie spirituelle* (1921), pp. 219–28.

¹⁰¹Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Pour l'histoire de la notion de philosophie chrétienne', *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 21 (1932), pp. 231–5.

that he sketches a little too quickly.¹⁰²

If his dogmatic history is at times strikingly concordist—reading *Unam Sanctam* after his article on it is quite startling¹⁰³—the conclusions are unremarkable. In other words, Chenu was a perfectly sincere catholic academic. It is in matters of practical judgement, not in doctrinal theory,¹⁰⁴ that the first signs of a radically different approach emerge.

In another popular journal—this time *La Maison-Dieu*, whose success Daniélou's article of two years previously had taken as a positive sign—Chenu was asked to intervene in a debate the editors had managed to stir up by publishing an anonymous sermon shortly before. This sermon set out a *Don Camillo* situation: a communist deputy had come to the village and promptly organised a number of events to annoy the Catholics—a ball in the middle of Lent, a projection at the same time as the stations of the cross, exams on the date of Holy Communion and so on. The priest in question promptly ceded on everything, moving what he could and *discouraging* mass attendance on the feast of St. Joseph (19 March, not *opifex*). Naturally the communist secretary, considering the battle won, promptly left. At this point a note of unreality enters: not only does *La Maison Dieu* draw the conclusion that the Church had in fact *triumphed*, since the 'charity' of the pastor—in treating the public life of his parish as an irrelevance—had resulted in the departure of the thorn in his side, but Chenu proceeds to draw out a pastoral theology, in which the 'natural' community (!) is respected by the Church, and the 'pastoral relativism' of different customs in different contexts is taken into account before insisting upon them.¹⁰⁵

Underpinning this curious politics is a distinctive account of the missionary role of the church to the working classes. Quite how far Chenu differed on this from Daniélou can be seen from the difference of tone in their responses in a radio program prepared for the opening of the council. One could not hope for a better witness either to the period, or to what Bouyer called the 'dictatorship of journalists':¹⁰⁶ the program, after demonstrating that almost nobody in the congregation from which the initial interviews are drawn has any great idea what the council is to be for, promptly sets about informing us, sketching a reformist panorama as vague as it is far-reaching. Politically it is clear where we stand:

Nous voici de nouveau dans une paroisse de la banlieu parisienne. Autour du micro un comptable, un militant ouvrier, un dessinateur, un membre du service des douanes, un chaudronnier...¹⁰⁷

Among the invitees—12 in 49 minutes with a great deal of commentary and several

¹⁰²Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Naturalisme et théologie au XII^e siècle', *Recherches de science religieuse* 37 (1950), pp. 5–21.

¹⁰³Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Dogme et théologie dans la Bulle *Unam sanctam*', *Recherches de science religieuse* 40 (1952), pp. 307–16.

¹⁰⁴Although Chenu (in a typically deferential review) is perfectly correct that St. Thomas considers original sin as the loss of something *superadded*—original justice—and not a positive 'wound' in our nature, one is not quite sure what to make of the observation that for classical theology 'l'homme déchu se trouve en sa nature...du moins extrinsèquement, dans une situation inférieure à celle de l'état de nature pure. Cette nuance et ces précisions sont-elles en parfaite homogénéité avec la pensée de saint Thomas?' (M.-D. Chenu, 'Ascèse et péché originel', *La Vie spirituelle* 7 [1923], p. 551) The claim is too quick to be sure, but it *could*—surely not?—imply that original sin hardly enters into the picture at all. In 1939 at any rate things were clear: 'l'homme a péché. Il vit dans le péché.' (Chenu, 'Chrétien mon frère', p. 11)

¹⁰⁵Marie-Dominique Chenu, 'Un sermon, ou simple histoire : note théologique', *Maison-Dieu* 13 (1948), pp. 173–6, The original article is reprinted directly before.

¹⁰⁶Louis Bouyer, *La décomposition du Catholicisme*, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷Jacques Lonchamp, ed., *Le Concile printemps de l'Église, À quoi le Concile va-t-il répondre*, 1962, 00:00.

non-credited interviews, i.e. less than four minutes per subject!—were both Chenu and Daniélou. Chenu is introduced as a theologian *très spécialement à l'écoute des hommes de notre temps*.¹⁰⁸ What Chenu has discerned is that the 'great event of these times' is the *monde nouveau qui s'élève* in the non-western two-thirds of the world ('Africa, Asia, south America'), a world whose novelty consists in being *proletarian*.¹⁰⁹ (Since we can also encounter the proletariat in working-class districts in the west we can, according to Chenu, engage this other world.) In response to this a new kind of missionary effort, typified by Charles de Foucault, is needed: rather than (as we would say) underlining our privilege by engaging in 'good works', we need simply to live *avec les gens*.¹¹⁰ (Quite what this has to do with the proletariat, who were nowhere near Foucault's hermitage—or indeed, quite how Chenu has swallowed the idea that the "third world" forms one unified proletariat mass of workers, a statement risible in the case of Africa, but repeated nonetheless in Soviet propaganda, is unclear.) Thus for Chenu the goal of the council is *not* ecumenism, at any rate by gathering dignitaries, but 'that the workers should hear the word of God'.¹¹¹ By this we will end up with 'the very same Church entirely renewed by encountering these men' who actualise 'values which, until now, have remained dormant in her'.¹¹²

Thus not only does Chenu think the most pressing task facing the Church is the dialogue with Marxism, he thinks that in doing so the Church will gain spiritually. This was not new to him: in 1941—whilst Lubac and Daniélou were hunting for paper for *Sources chrétiennes*, Daniélou found it for *Spiritualité du travail*.¹¹³ From the soviet realist cover art—crossed hammer and torch in red surrounded by a cog in red, *almost* red stars, and a rectilinear uppercase reminiscent of posters for the *Leningrad Symphony*, this is a "popular" work, complete with illustrations in the requisite style;¹¹⁴ in content unremarkable,¹¹⁵ in method it starts with the material and works backwards to the spiritual. Chenu would make this methodology explicit a year later:

il ne s'agit pas ici d'étudier les conditions économiques, sociales, politiques, selon lesquelles doit s'organiser le travail dans ce monde nouveau... Nous voudrions seulement fixer l'esprit général de chacune de ces conditions...ou...la source de leur dynamisme.[...]

Nous sommes d'ailleurs trop en grade contre une certaine philosophie « spiritualiste » du travail... L'homme et un esprit incarné. Nous préférons céder à l'apparence d'un matérialisme historique (!), plutôt que d'oublier, dans un pseudo-moralisme, les dures conditions concrètes....

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 11:27. ¹⁰⁹Ibid., 12:57. ¹¹⁰Ibid., 13:54. ¹¹¹Ibid., 15:07. ¹¹²Ibid., 15:37.

¹¹³Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Spiritualité du travail*, Paris: Éditions du Temps présent, 1941.

¹¹⁴slaves building a temple, one being whipped, whilst philosophers hold forth in the foreground: *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹⁵The middle ages are held up as a model; (pp. 10–11) work is a means, not an end (p. 23); socialist hymns witness to a great spiritual desire mistaken about its object (p. 36) since man is in fact only fulfilled in work when he *cooperates* with God (p. 39). Alienation in the world is cured by a 'christian poetry of nature' (p. 40). The book is summed up in an abominable woodcut of Christ the carpenter surrounded by disparate workers (including a housewife: p. 46): doctrinally unremarkable, but couched in the language of the *mouvement ouvrier*. (This is set out explicitly in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Pour être heureux, travaillons ensemble*, Paris: PuF, 1941)

What theory there is can be found in *Théologie de la matière*, a serious attempt to sketch a Maritainesque theology of work in the vocabulary of the *mouvement ouvrier*. Despite its thoroughness (and the historical narrative is, as always, handled extremely competently) it is not clear quite what Chenu is arguing for. The material realism of St. Thomas, hitherto imprisoned in scholastic theory and having little effect on a basically dualistic christianity () is to be liberated—but Chenu does not really have any idea *how*, and his spirituality amounts to little more than a few observations on the dignity of work and society.(*ibid.*)

Mais aussi importe-t-il à percevoir, dans ces conditions concrètes, l'exact élan intérieur, la « mystique », qui [l']anime...¹¹⁶

Daniélou—*mutatis mutandis*: Lubac—took exactly the inverse approach. In the interview of 1962 he was asked whether the council was likely to achieve Church unity. This would be rather hasty, but, he thought, it would certainly *aim* at it. But unity demands first a reform, specifically a return to the sources; thence the Church will be able to 'adapt her exterior organs' so as better to address the world; thus the question of unity will be able to be seriously posed.¹¹⁷ Thus for Daniélou it is the sources, and not the world, which are primary (as is shown clearly enough by the difference between his and Chenu's response to the war).

Spirituality and History: Daniélou

One generally looks in vain for explicit spiritual advice in Daniélou. Not that he was not in the business of giving it—he devoted himself to very little else for the last several decades of his life—but that in print he concerned himself almost exclusively with the problem of history. History, for Daniélou, is the domain *par excellence* where the action of God plays out; contemplative attention to history—its record in the bible, and the famous (but at least here defined) 'signs of the times'—reveals the fingerprint of its Author. 'History', then, sounds a great deal more like symbolic exegesis than science: in fact Daniélou approaches it as a kind of contemplation, where the fruits of this contemplation are translated into (frustratingly vague) politics.

This connection between history and spirituality for Daniélou is such that he sometimes simply replaces one with the other. One looks in vain for any comment on either humanism or spirituality in 'Humanisme et Spiritualité':¹¹⁸ in fact Daniélou simply presents a précis of his account of Church history, exactly as (at far greater length) in *Nouvelle histoire de l'église*¹¹⁹ or as in his most important work, *Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire*.¹²⁰ These themes are remarkably consistent over his œuvre: the 'linear' history of Judaism against pagan 'cyclical' history; the gradually revealed universal scope of salvation history;¹²¹ the parallel existence of sacred and profane history side-by-side in a world in the process of salvation, and the corresponding corporate nature of salvation. Leaving aside a few technical studies and incidental writings Daniélou more or less brings the same argument to bear everywhere. Yet the most striking thing about all these themes—at any rate here—is their thoroughgoing mysticism. This is not a philosophy or theology of history, but materials—hints, thumbnail sketches—for contemplation, alongside more or less gnomic classifications which turn out to be not explanations but greater mysteries (creation, redemption, election), which he contests himself with tracing through scripture without ever attempting to reduce to theory.

Daniélou *does* think that they are demonstrable as a matter of historical and biblical exegesis. But far more important is that they comport a certain *attitude* and

¹¹⁶Chenu, *Pour être heureux, travaillons ensemble*, pp. 3–4.

¹¹⁷In any case the secretariat for unity now exists, so the question has become official Lonchamp, *Le Concile printemps de l'Église*, 18:09.

¹¹⁸Jean Daniélou, 'Humanisme et Spiritualité', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 7, 1, Paris: Beauchesne, 1969, col. 947–52.

¹¹⁹Jean Daniélou, *Nouvelle histoire de l'église, Des Origines à Saint Grégoire le grand*, vol. 1, Paris: Seuil, 1963.

¹²⁰Jean Daniélou, *Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1953.

¹²¹'Universalism': Daniélou emphatically believed in the possibility of damnation and uses the word (frequently) only in this sense.

entail a kind of symbolic contemplation both of history and of scripture. This is the closest Daniélou comes to a worked out spirituality; one finds it, curiously enough, more in his practical than his theological works. In *L'oraison, problème politique*, for instance, beside the simple Chestertonian delight in turning things on their heads—arguing for the financial support of the Church from the socialist principle that all wealth belongs to the State,¹²² or demanding a ‘new Christendom’ so that the ‘poor’ (which Daniélou refreshingly takes to be all those who have not the leisure to engage in theological disputation) may believe easily¹²³—runs a consistent argument: the good of Man consists in knowing God; this happens mostly in prayer; thus society must be systematically structured as a place of contemplation. Such contemplation begins with actually learning to pray:

On me dira: il n'est pas nécessaire, pour être un homme d'oraison, de consacrer nécessairement du temps à prier. On peut trouver Dieu à travers toutes chose. Ceci est parfaitement exact. Mais on commence à pouvoir trouver Dieu à travers toutes chose quand on a commencé par le trouver au-delà et en dehors de toutes choses.¹²⁴

The attitude this entails is set out by Daniélou in many places, but with great clarity in perhaps his best popular work—which has, moreover, the benefit of dating from far later in Daniélou's intellectual development, demonstrating the same approach even when the formulation has come to be far more classical, *The Scandal of Truth*.

‘For Plato, the opposite of truth is error; for the Bible, the opposite of truth is a lie. A lie consists in giving an appearance of existence to what does not exist; truth consists of detaching oneself from appearances in order to adhere to reality.’ In this the great master is Augustine, ‘who showed the close connection between the quest for the Truth and conversion of the heart, and described the theological infrastructure of the intelligence's destiny.’¹²⁵ Daniélou gives a (good) sketch of the preliminaries of this virtue¹²⁶ and then moves on to the question it poses, especially as played out in (then) contemporary politics. When we have demolished the false pretences of various attempts to hide from the question we come, interestingly, to poetry, for which Daniélou has curiously harsh words:

The poetic act is a spiritual exercise, but a spiritual exercise of a mysticism of darkness, whose night is not the overwhelming brightness of divine light which blinded the sight of John of the Cross, but the “vast, black, and bottomless” night which is the negative radiance of primordial nothing. Mysticism perhaps, but an inverted mysticism. . . .

[...] The business of poetry for the past century has been to constitute itself as a mystical experience, belonging to a mysticism in which poetic activity is presented as an absolute experience. True, this has conferred upon it a seriousness, a dark luminousness, a dignity that it never knew when it was but a handmaid. The handmaid wished herself queen. But this sacrilegious ambition is precisely what we are denouncing. We are denouncing it because this mysticism is a false mysticism, which has nothing in common with that of John of the Cross, but is the topsy-turvy

¹²²Jean Daniélou, *L'oraison, problème politique*, Fayard, 1965, pp. 19–20. ¹²³*Ibid.*, pp. 9–17. ¹²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹²⁵Jean Daniélou, *The Scandal of Truth*, trans. by W. J. Kerrigan, Baltimore: Helicon, 1962, p. 10. That this all sounds rather like Maritain is, historically, no surprise.

¹²⁶avoiding *curiostas*: ‘the word “interesting”, so characteristic of our modern vocabulary’, doubt, false sincerity and pride: *ibid.*, pp. 11–4.

image of it. We denounce it also as a mystification—a hoax, because it betrays itself as feckless and ultimately a joke.¹²⁷

The harshness stems from the fact that such sophistication can (and Daniélou insists, does) satiate—for a while—the mystical appetite. ‘Poetry is not prayer.’¹²⁸ Thus, ‘poetry reached this awakening to full self-awareness only through a kind of original sin, when, a victim of its own dizzying loftiness, it thought it could not be save by determining to be *all*.’¹²⁹

The curiousness of the subject—it is hard for an Englishman to take literature quite so seriously—should not blind us either to the practical intention (Daniélou aims at the sophisticated reading public who have begun drifting from the Churches—a demographic which has only grown enormously in France) or the genre of this writing. Daniélou’s account of christian truth is, in fact, mystical: it is an account of the spirituality needed to encounter that truth.¹³⁰ This is set out in chapter V, where Daniélou, after denying the value of the exchange of world-views (*audiemus te de hoc iterum*) proceeds to set one out, or rather to set out the symbolism in virtue of which he can give exactly the same account of sacred and profane history one finds everywhere, into which analysis he can make everything else fit.¹³¹

The pattern is important (and I could have demonstrated it from any number of texts). Apparently intractable practical or theoretical problems are in fact the product of a defective *vision*; repairing the vision requires ‘a conversion of the heart’ to which the reader is lead by a sketch of the ‘linear’ sacred realm cutting across the confused repetition of the secular. Once we have eyes to see, we realise that God’s fingerprints are everywhere: creation, history, liturgy and scripture—in ascending order by frequency—are full of *types*: symbols which all point to one Archetype.¹³² But once we have this symbolic vocabulary, the terms of speculative theology (*a fortiori* dogmata) are no longer inaccessible. If the early Daniélou tended to emphasise the sufficiency of the spiritual vocabulary and the late a Maritainesque endorsement of “Traditional theology”, the properly *theological* vocabularies are in both cases illuminated by the spiritual approach—exactly as Lubac’s frequent scholastic citations

¹²⁷Daniélou, *The Scandal of Truth*, p. 55.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹³⁰His account of this encounter is by this point classically thomistic, with the mind perceiving being by an infallible act of intuition: *ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³¹I am avoiding discussing Daniélou’s *systematic* thought in detail as it can be shown to be a fairly exact translation of the same concerns we have seen in Lubac, with Man’s ultimate *sens* discovered only in God. Here I am interested only in Daniélou’s approach.

¹³²The parallels with Claudel, who viewed systematic theology as a dead end and wrote ‘symbolic’ Scriptural commentaries are more than incidental: unlike Lubac, who never exchanged anything but pleasantries with Claudel or Maritain, (Which did not prevent publishing an entire volume for their 17 letters, ‘a practice one thought reserved to ancient historians’ Paul Airiau, ‘Cardinal Henri De Lubac, Jacques Maritain, Correspondance et rencontres. (compte rendu)’, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 164 [Dec. 2013], p. 238) Daniélou frequented their circle exactly when the other *Ressourcement* figures were coming under suppression, which goes a long way to explain how Daniélou was quite uniquely unscathed. Indeed, Lubac wrote to his superior (de Lubac and Daniélou, *Correspondance*, pp. 479, 482) to complain of, inter alia, Daniélou’s intemperate support for Claudel’s attack on a french Bible which had vitiated a reference to Christ he found in Zach 13:6. (The exegesis is indefensible: *in die illa* the false prophets will deny prophesying *homo agricola ego sum!*; when one objects *quid sunt plagæ istæ in medio manuum tuarum?*—which are evidence of previous prophesy—they will reply, *untruthfully his plagatus sum in domo eorum qui diligebant me*. Thus Gélín took *ben yadeka* (=between your hands) as ‘on your chest’, i.e. a reference to self-inflicted wounds in (false) prophetic frenzy.)

As Lubac’s later defence of Daniélou shows, these were differences of detail: the fundamental symbolic insight was shared, even if Lubac would work it out without much concrete reference to individual symbols.

are qualitatively different from anything from the pen of, say, Labourdette.

Conclusion

What are we to make of these disparate strands? I have skated lightly over Chenu's intellectual evolution—in reality he moved noticeably to the left after he was dismissed from le Saulchoir—but in any case it is the directions which concern us. Already here we see the two trajectories which would crystallise after the council into *Concilium* and *Communio*. Nonetheless, whilst with hindsight Daniélou is right, and Chenu wrong, about the attitude to take to communism or the wider world (Daniélou had the great advantage of being a good deal less naïve), this is ultimately incidental for my purposes. Both Chenu and Daniélou in their retrospective manifestos (however inadvertent) start from the assumption that a *spiritual*—intentional—tradition has been lost with the ossification of theology. Chenu's ultimate strategy—for all that his historical studies would continue seriously throughout his life—was ultimately to construct a *new* spirituality; inevitably leading, by his own insight, to a new, half-baked, theological synthesis. (It was Chenu who would send his students out in '68 “to make history and not merely study it.”) The line of Daniélou and Lubac, for all their differences of temperament, was the inverse (whence *Sources chrétiennes*). In this it was basically sound. What would lead, ultimately, to a failure of retrieval, appeared to both authors as a matter purely pastoral—the working out of spirituality in the Liturgy. But before we turn to this fatal weakness we have one final systematic question to answer.

Intentional and Scientific Systems

The question posed, implicitly, by Bouillard, and foreclosed prematurely by his neo-thomistic critics (and above all by Garrigou-Lagrange) was never to my knowledge the subject of any sustained reflection by *Ressourcement* authors. The reason for this is perfectly simple: *Ressourcement* did not set out to replace any system with another. This can be seen clearly in ironically exactly that text of Lubac's which was generally taken to do exactly this: *Corpus Mysticum*. What Lubac regrets in this historical inversion of the referents of the terms 'mystical' and 'real' is not remotely Eucharistic presence¹³³ but the loss of the corporate sense of the *real*—tangible!—presence of Christ in the Church gathered at prayer.¹³⁴ But we have his solution: it was to this problem (the loss of the *communal*) that *Catholicisme* was addressed. Yet nowhere in that book (and indeed nowhere else) does Lubac ever propose adopting a new, better, or more contemporary system for expressing such-or-such a dogma. Indeed the subtitle of *Catholicisme* is either misleading or precise, because countable *dogmata* never enter into the discussion one way or another. Either *dogma* is simply shorthand for *theology* or, more probably, Lubac thinks that what is held in holding fast to Denzinger is, in fact, a Catholic view of the world—the view sketched (*inter alia*) in *Catholicisme*.

¹³³ Quite aside from their careful doctrinal orthodoxy, *Ressourcement* thinkers were simply far too symbolically minded to have any time for materialistic attempts to do away with the presence. Even Teilhard—who is frequently heterodox if not simply heretical—is inclined to *extend* the real presence, rather than deny it!

¹³⁴ The presence is not *made* but *encountered* by the assembly, *pace* John Paul II. László Dobszay, *The restoration and organic development of the Roman Rite*, with a forew. by Laurence Paul Hemming, London: T & T Clark, 2010, pp. xi–xiv.

The history of this subtitle—of which I am entirely ignorant—is ultimately secondary. For Lubac *did* endeavour—explicitly, and throughout his *œuvre*—to present this Catholic vision. It is for this reason—to return to the beginning of this chapter—that *Sources chrétiennes* was launched: the fathers are a privileged place of encounter with this vision (the same things goes, notwithstanding the differences between Lubac and Daniélou, for symbolic biblical exegesis, and for liturgical mystagogy, although as we shall see in the next chapter, this was mostly not forthcoming). Moreover, it is clear from the style of *Catholicisme* (or ‘Paradoxe et Mystère de L’Église’, or nearly anywhere else) that it is this spiritual continuity which allows Lubac to weave such a disparate tapestry. Lubac neither proof-texts his sources (he quotes at length, and except when engaging in history, such as in *Surnaturel*, with little regard for context) nor incorporates them systematically—we do not, for instance, contrast a platonising text from one of the Gregories with the augustinianism of a scholastic to extract the underlying claim. With very few exceptions, the text functions directly, presenting the reality, for contemplation (in this sense Lubac’s sources are almost universally treated as poetical). But *via*¹³⁵ the text, the reality appears, and with it the doctrine. That the doctrine is couched now in one terminology, now in another is—with the single exception of *Surnaturel*, where Lubac thinks that an errant conception has come to be substituted for the true—a matter almost of indifference. (Indeed, of all *Ressourcement* authors, Lubac had perhaps least problem with expressing things in scholastic maxims.)

Intentional Tradition

In other words in Lubac—indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, in all *Ressourcement*¹³⁶—what we see is not the conscious translation of one system into another, but the sustained retrieval of spiritual—intentional—stances. Of necessity, since Lubac is not writing scholastic theology, the doctrinal content is translated into a new systematic context—systematic by virtue of bringing multiple claims together, if not elaborated systematically. In other words what we see happening in Lubac is exactly what Bouillard observed in the history of scholastic commentary on grace and freedom. In Lubac’s case what has guaranteed the continuity is this intentional—spiritual—stance.

At this point the definition I gave of Tradition in chapter 3 on page 73 can be clarified. What Lubac or Daniélou or Chenu (or indeed Congar, although for reasons of space I have not considered his spirituality) sought to do in the reunion of theology and spirituality was not to present an account of Tradition, but *of the sense of* the Tradition. What was lost with the divorce between spirituality and theology was not theological or spiritual insight, i.e. not anything *in* the Tradition. All this could more or less be found by looking in the right places. What was lost was the *sense* it had in the Tradition—not the meaning, again perfectly accessible, but the contemplative illumination which ought to have underwritten that meaning. *Ressourcement* sought a

¹³⁵À travers le text on voit le réel, d’où la doctrine: some propositions are simply better suited to one language than to another.

¹³⁶To demonstrate this exhaustively would demand far more space than we have, but the question is important only on the strictly historical plain, on which I am already vulnerable. For the purposes of sketching the *positive* account of *Ressourcement* I am more interested in defending it is sufficient to observe that, differences of style aside, Daniélou has no interest in system-building. Congar is far more systematic, but the best passages of *Vraie et Fausse Réforme dans L’Église* or *La Tradition et les traditions* are distinctly poetical in style. I consider Chenu’s serious contribution to *Ressourcement* as a movement to date more from the era before *Une école de théologie*—after this point his writings simply did not have the same circulation and importance as, say, Congar’s. But this is exactly the theory of *Une école de théologie*!

retrieval of Tradition because it sought a retrieval of the *sense*, the *habitus*, the virtue of the Tradition. But—and here I was earlier too hasty—this sense is not *itself* the Tradition, even subjectively considered. It is, in one domain, the virtue of *prudentia*, without which the other virtues cannot act at all. (Musical sense is not musicianship, but what enables musicianship to be properly deployed.)

This is far more important than the particular account of tradition and development one adopts. I have been working, more or less, with Blondel's theory, where the Church discerns spontaneously in the face of innovation what is or is not hers, coining some things explicitly, but depending in general on the same sense which led to the discernment in the first place. One can challenge this theory easily enough—it is more of a sketch than a theory—but, besides explicitly rejecting identification with logical deduction, *Ressourcement* does not really have a clearer claim. For Lubac the problem of dogmata somehow present *invisibly* in the original *depositum* yet elaborated, ultimately, by the mystical discernment of the Church (sometimes *against* the deductive arguments of theology) is a real problem, to which his only solution is to invoke the presence of the Spirit.¹³⁷ The Church is analysable up to a point, but the action of God is not, ultimately, for our intellects, but our salvation. There are not two Traditions, spiritual and theological, which need to be reunited. There is only one Tradition, whose *sense* is given by grace (and thus whose reception is 'spirituality'). To be sure there are many claims in theology (or spirituality or philosophy) which are more or less traditional, and whose merits can and should be debated. But this debate presupposes a shared access to the *sense*. It was this the Modernists lost (rendering them invulnerable to argument); it is this the world cannot grasp (rendering it mostly unreachable by apologetics); it is this the "existential" attention of Blondel or Rousselot was able to bring into the foreground; it is this which the cerebralism of theology had neglected for so long that it risked losing a handle on, and collapsing into incommensurable pluralism—exactly as happened.¹³⁸ And it was this which the intentional formation of a retrieved *theological* spirituality was supposed to supply.

I have however been ignoring an objection concerning the equation I have made between 'spiritual' and 'intentional'. Does this not reduce the spiritual to the experiential—and thus inadvertently adopt the standpoint of Labourdette? This objection is, I think, far more important. It ought not to obtain: our spiritual life *ought* to play out in our intentional life; and our intentional life certainly limits, in practice, the horizons of our spiritual.¹³⁹ *Solvetur ambulando*: the proof that spirituality can be picked up by the kind of intentional work Lubac's purple passages or Daniélou's historical sweep is doing comes, ultimately, in the liturgical realisation to which both distinctly point. But it is precisely at this crucial point that *Ressourcement* thought begins to become unstuck, and it is precisely for this reason that a certain unrealism—despite careful efforts to prevent it—can sometimes be found in the more practical passages, above all at the distance of half a century. We turn, then, to the missing plank—Liturgy—for want of which the *Ressourcement* retrieval of Tradition was, ultimately, to fail.

¹³⁷Henri de Lubac, 'Le problème du développement du dogme', *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948), pp. 130–60, The same point could be made from Congar or Daniélou.

¹³⁸*Ressourcement* feared not pluralism, but the artificial adoption of one such system by main force.

¹³⁹Cf. the distinction between spiritual, religious and interior life Louis Bouyer, *Introduction to Spirituality*, trans. from the French by Mary Perkins Ryan, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961, pp. 1–3.

CHAPTER 5

Ressourcement and Liturgy

Have ye not known, ye fools, that have made the present a prison,
That thirst can remember water and hunger remember bread?
We went not gathering ghosts; but the shriek of your shame is arisen
Out of your own black Babel too loud; and it woke the dead.

Chesterton, *Mediaevalism*

The logical end for the argumentative arc I have been sketching is in liturgical practice. If receptiveness to the Tradition turns out to be as much a question of spirituality as of theology (or of aesthetics as of theory), the paradigmatic case of that reception will be—almost by definition—the Liturgy. (Catherine Pickstock is quite right to speak of ‘the liturgical consummation of philosophy’.¹) But here we encounter a problem: whilst *Ressourcement* authors *did* make exactly this argument (above all Congar, who was most concerned with the theory of Tradition), the most striking aspect of *Ressourcement* liturgiology is its absence.

Chenu is useless for this project:² he gives us almost no liturgical reflection of any serious interest. Daniélou is at first sight promising, but *Bible et Liturgie* is stubbornly textual, and whilst there are materials in his political writings, they are aimed *ad extra*.³ Congar is worse, since he can draw exactly the *opposite* conclusion from that I intend to defend, and tries to maintain *both* that the Liturgy is the school of the faith in which the Tradition forms a new generation *and* that it is hopelessly out of touch with the modern world, serves a basically didactic purpose, and needs a thoroughgoing revision in order to present an effectively independent *traditum* to a new, industrialised humanity. That Congar explicitly contradicts every one of these

¹Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing, On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, Unfortunately her argument is muddled by rhetorical excess (it is simple nonsense to call Transubstantiation ‘the condition of possibility of all being’; “spatially oriented matēthesis” is a perfectly decent, indeed unavoidable, way of conceptualising broadly physical objects (chairs and tables, websites and emails)) and an apparent unfamiliarity with the *praxis* of the rite she describes (hence commenting on inaudible words, and the absurd claim that *munda me Domine* means ‘worldify me O Lord’: quite aside from latinity the gestures are clearly about *putting off* the world). Nonetheless, when completed by a thorough attention to liturgy as an *action* (and not merely a text) the argument stands.

²I.e. for the claim that the grand arc of *Ressourcement* thought terminates in liturgy, by grounding the sense of the Tradition in the liturgical act.

³‘Je n’ai pas besoin de décrire les conséquences pratiques que nos théologiens iconoclastes tirent... Ils sont prêts à liquider le cycle liturgique comme expression d’une sacralisation du temps liée à la civilisation rurale...’ Jean Daniélou, *L’avenir de la religion*, Paris: Fayard, 1968, p. 110.

claims almost in the same breath as advancing them only confuses the issue further. Lubac is worse than useless, for whilst any number of objections to post-conciliar reforms can be found, they are exclusively *ad hoc* and he simply avoids discussing liturgy itself—liturgical action, the meaning and gestures of rites, its historical development, its philosophy and, at any rate theoretically, its relation to theology—at all: a Lubacian liturgiology is pure construction from material which seems actively to avoid, rather than merely ignore, the question I claim is fundamental.

Only one figure consistently advances the line I am arguing: Louis Bouyer. Yet, by my criteria, Bouyer is not really *Ressourcement*: his thought does not in any meaningful sense emerge as part of the general response to Modernism; he had nothing to do with Rousselot and very little to do with Blondel (although a great deal to do with Newman); and he was neither a Jesuit nor a Dominican, but an Oratorian, and eccentric even for that eccentric order. Thus it is the more remarkable that Bouyer's thought is in almost all respects the exact parallel of the *Ressourcement* project—indeed, Bouyer (who does not feature in *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology*) is a *better* fit for Boersma's definition than any *Ressourcement* theologian⁴—and even more striking that his diagnosis of the post-conciliar crisis addresses the same *lacunæ* as (at any rate) Lubac's—but which Lubac cannot really make sense of. Yet Bouyer has an etiology, consistently throughout his œuvre. Moreover, he leaves implicit or unemphasised exactly what *Ressourcement* thinkers tend to emphasise: there is a *prima facie* compatibility here.⁵ Thus I show that it is possible to reason backwards—from the liturgical context—into the account of the Tradition which *Ressourcement* obtained (but never fully made concrete) by reasoning forwards.

This puzzle is explained by three things. The first is that *Ressourcement* was not the liturgical movement, and simply assumed that liturgical questions could be left to that movement; had it not veered decisively away from the mystical this confidence might not have been misplaced. The second is that, once one realises that this question is just considered outside their competence, *Ressourcement* authors do have an explicit, albeit minimal, account of liturgy which is at the very least compatible with what I am sketching here. The third is that precisely *because* liturgical mysticism is *not* allowed to play the foundational role it should in *Ressourcement's* thought, something else frequently took its place. This is most striking in the case of Lubac: Teilhard's (largely erroneous) mysticism seemed to him such a striking insight precisely because it was a *cosmic* mysticism. Lubac's Teilhardianism (ignored by most commentators!) is as central to his thought as it is unsatisfactory, but his intuition that the Faith *ought* to conduct a concert of the poetical, the mystical, *and also the material*, is thoroughly justified. Yet the paradigmatic context for this unity is liturgical, ritual action; absent that context and the *sense* of how everything fits together is missing.

It is ultimately for this reason that *Ressourcement's* retrieval of Tradition was, in the long run, a failure. There is no need to dwell here on the symptoms of that failure,

⁴*Ressourcement* does not merely reunite nature and supernature, but does so in a 'sacramental ontology', visible in the liturgy, as ch. 4, the culmination of Boersma's account of the 'reconnection' between nature and supernature which constitutes this 'sacramental ontology' (p. 32), makes clear. Indeed, Boersma claims that 'in addition to biblical and patristic *ressourcement*, the reintroduction of earlier patterns of liturgical celebration also ranked high in Daniélou's programme'—'Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse', which Boersma (correctly) applies to the whole movement—since 'he was convinced that liturgical *ressourcement* would allow for the retrieval of "contemplation of realities hidden behind the sacramental signs"'. (ibid., p. 3) But Daniélou's article, whilst as we have seen nodding at just about every 'advanced' idea he liked, has no systematic discussion of Liturgy, and Daniélou's own study of liturgical symbolism has nothing to say about liturgical *celebration*. Cf. ch 7.

⁵Unfortunately we do not have the space to work this compatibility out at length.

which in any case varied—Lubac found himself unable to publish; Daniélou, always a firebrand, divided his days between works of charity, ministering to a diminishing community of nuns, and advising people not to join the Jesuits; whilst Congar remained cautiously optimistic and Chenu appears to have had little problem, if any, with the way things were going. Far more interesting is its nature. *Ressourcement's* retrieval of Tradition has a remarkably consistent logical shape to it: all the disparate strands we have seen come together in Congar's claim that the '*habitus* of theology is in the theologian'⁶ or rather that the *habitus* of the Faith is in the faithful. Yet every engagement with the postconciliar crisis sidesteps this insight, and goes straight for the particular details of a particular error, ignoring the wider aesthetic vision without which such argumentation is bound to sound (as in fact it did) as reactionary intransigence to the unconvinced or belated endorsement to those who have all along insisted on the errors of subjectivism and the objective truth of the faith. *Ressourcement*, under *force majeure*, had *already* abandoned its own project (when the house is burning down one needs an extinguisher, not an architectural discussion of the control of flammable insulation). But this was because one crucial aspect of this project had *not* become apparent: in liturgical and devotional practice we find not merely an example, but the *means* of this retrieval. What *Ressourcement* half recognised, and what Bouyer correctly arrived at by a complementary path, is, as I shall argue in the next chapter, the only way through the chaos in which we find ourselves. For now I show (i) that *Ressourcement* liturgiology is frustratingly undeveloped, (ii) that in Bouyer we have a project which could have filled this role and (iii) that in at least Lubac's case the substitute is recognisably fulfilling the same role. Before all of this, however, I should at least clarify what I am in fact claiming for the role of Liturgy, and situate this in recent liturgical theology. Although my liturgical argument (like my argument about Tradition) explicitly prescind from the "objective" to focus on the subjective—or rather intentional—effects at play, its objective parallel is far closer to the themes of a good deal of recent scholarship than might at first appear. (Where we differ, as will become clear in the next chapter, is more over what in fact took place in liturgical development which, unfortunately, has gravely imperilled continuity.)

Excursus: Liturgy and Theology

On the last page of his study of Liturgical Theology, Caldwell makes the following argument:

In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ratzinger sets out to search for the foundations of the liturgy, for the inner structure of the rite that, unchanging though living, is maintained from generation to generation. He acknowledges that only engaging this form with integrity allows the participants access to the living content of faith, and itself is the means of both preserving and animating this deposit as the *mysterium fidei*. By carefully elaborating the theological categories of liturgy and divine revelation...this study effectively shows that the foundation, inner structure, and mode of transmission are the same for liturgy and revelation. Essentially, then, there can only be a single search for foundations in which common categories are mutually enlightening: for the fundamental truths of revelation, faith

⁶Yves Congar, 'Théologie', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. by Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangenot and Emile Amann, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1946, col. 341–502.

and worship are one.⁷

In one sense there ought to be nothing surprising about this claim. Many distinctions, when pushed far enough, have the tendency to reveal themselves as merely formal; in the case of the Faith the notion that everything is a formality is classic. But what Caldwell is claiming is not merely that the same reality turns out to be behind both the Mass and the Summa, but that liturgy *itself* is Revelation: the carrying out of liturgy *is* the revealing of the gospel. Caldwell's notion of revelation is quite distinctive and I shall turn to it (and to his main argument) in a moment. But beginning with the conclusion has a tendency to emphasise themes which of necessity are otherwise muted: when one has established one's thesis one can begin to cash it in; it can start to do real work, illuminating what until now was ultimately being used to justify something else. So it is here: until now Caldwell has appeared to be arguing about the role of Liturgy in *fundamental* theology, and the interaction between theology and liturgy. But the immediate context for his claim here that the 'foundation, inner structure, and mode of transmission' are identical in Liturgy and Revelation is a criticism of the thought of Benedict XVI for not going far enough in his treatment of liturgy, for treating Revelation as the real subject matter of theology, with liturgy a separate witness to some third thing. Ratzinger has a theology of liturgy, but only an implicit liturgical theology: liturgy is not true *theologia prima*.⁸

This is not quite the same claim as Caldwell's main thesis, and comes with a different baggage. *Theologia prima*, in any case in the sense being used here, is not the *theologia fundamentalis* of the schoolbooks: it is opposed not to *lattheologia speculativa*, *positiva*, *apologetica* or any other sub-discipline, but to the whole ensemble which foundational theology (to gloss the term *fundamentalis*) establishes. All this is second-order theological reflection, *theologia secunda*: primary theology is not reflective at all: it is lived.

Theologia Prima and Theologia Secunda

In this formulation the terminology comes (at least⁹) from Aidan Kavanagh,¹⁰ but the work which first comes to mind—of which Caldwell is well aware¹¹—is of another American liturgist, David Fagerberg. *Theologia Prima*¹² distils a number of currents—Fagerberg cites Schmemmann as often as Kavanagh, with Lossky close behind, whilst drawing somewhat parenthetically on various Lutheran theologians and liturgists—implicit in recent liturgical thought (particularly when that thought draws heavily on Eastern sources) into a form which at first glance is the exact fit for the argument I have been making. The stated goal of *Theologia Prima* is to 'deepen the grammar by which we speak about liturgy':

The tradition once connected liturgy, theology, and asceticism easily and naturally and necessarily, and that is the tradition I am trying to understand. I do not want to dilute theology with liturgy, I want to dilate

⁷Philip Caldwell, *Liturgy as Revelation, Re-Sourcing a Theme in Catholic Theology*, Renewal: Conversations in Catholic Theology, Minneapolis: fortress press, 2014, p. 505.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 499–504.

⁹The notion of a first theology is probably too old to have an origin, but if the latin tag was widely used before the last third of the twentieth century I am unaware of it.

¹⁰O.S.B, *quondam* leader of the American liturgical movement; later critic of some of the reforms.

¹¹Caldwell, *Liturgy as Revelation*, p.499 n. 8.

¹²David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima, What is Liturgical Theology?*, 2nd ed., Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2004.

our grammar of liturgy until our Christian doctrine and our Christian life find their rightful home there.¹³

The first thing to notice is that there are three items here, not two: *asceticism* is the missing plank without which theology and liturgy seem only tangentially related.¹⁴

But Fagerberg is using “theology” somewhat loosely:

[The first chapter] discovers that liturgy is the place of communion with God; that asceticism is the imitation of Christ by a liturgist; and that the end of liturgical asceticism is sharing God’s life, rightly called *theologia*.¹⁵

This is not the only redefinition. ‘Liturgist’ he uses to mean “participant in liturgy” (since other than “celebrant” there is no word to pick out engaging in liturgical worship); liturgy itself names something fundamentally Christian, distinct from mere ritual worship: ‘not the religion of Christians’ but ‘the religion of Christ perpetuated in Christians’, by which he explicitly means that ‘the religion Jesus enacted in the flesh before the Father is continued in the Church, liturgically’.¹⁶ Thus

Liturgy and asceticism and *theologia* cannot be understood apart from each other. This means liturgy is not ritual cliché in need of theological additives and supplemental spiritualities. But so long as liturgy is misperceived in this manner, the widespread mistake will continue to spread even more widely that liturgical renewal has more to do with relocating furniture in the sanctuary than with reallocating hearts to God. Liturgical asceticism capacitates the liturgist. Christian asceticism is a substantially liturgical activity.¹⁷

This *theologia* is *theologia prima*; just as the distinctly Christian Liturgy (Fagerberg sometimes terms it *leitourgia* to make the distinction) is the reality *behind* (or *within*) such-and-such a celebration of the Mass, so *theologia prima* is the spiritual encounter with God (normatively in liturgical action) which underpins any meaningful theological endeavour.¹⁸ Second-order reflection does not supplant *theologia prima*; rather, ‘the role of tradition is to protect the *lex orandi* by means of the Church’s *lex credendi*,

¹³Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴Many of these comments on asceticism and the entire first chapter date from the second edition: Fagerberg actually transferred an intended chapter of *On Liturgical Asceticism*. (David W. Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013) This later, excellent, work draws heavily on Eastern thought (although he notes that the same arguments could be made from the west, and his clear familiarity with Bouyer’s spirituality suggest he would know where to turn). I regret that out of timidity I have left the subject of Asceticism largely unexplored: I can only defer to those more qualified to speak.

For the sake of my argument in these last few chapters it is sufficient to observe that one would struggle, in any case, to find the word in any diocesan or papal document of the last fifty years, or to hear it in more than a smattering of homilies. Fagerberg is quite right to say that Asceticism is ‘the third leg of a stool that is wobbly without it’, (ibid., p. ix) the other two being Liturgy and Theology. Since Asceticism is, by definition, the interface between the substance of the Faith intellectually considered (theology) the life of the faith before God in worship (liturgy) and the individual, the worshipper, the theologian, it is not too much to say that it is ultimately for want of this leg that the Church (in my diagnosis) has begun to wobble. Ultimately, more even than we need a restoration (and development) of traditional liturgy, we need a restoration of that asceticism which Fagerberg is not wrong to qualify as liturgical.

¹⁵Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, p. 5.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁸Fagerberg never says that *theologia prima* is confined to an individual, and his extensive use of Eastern spiritual sayings shows that he thinks it can be communicated. But the atheist dialectician playing with the

this law of belief which itself was born in the Church's womb of prayer.'¹⁹ On this Fagerberg is completely clear: liturgy is not primarily materials for reflection or a stylistic toolkit: liturgical action is theological, and so liturgy is theology:

Both liturgy and theology suffer a distortion when they are severed from one another. The goal of the liturgical theologian is not to insinuate liturgy into theology, or to persuade the theological community to include more sacramentaries in its bibliography pages, or urge that a more doxological spin be placed on our language. The goal of liturgical theology is to gainsay the presupposed dichotomy insofar as it exists at all.²⁰

The practical conclusion from this is, however, that liturgy plays a *pre-rational* formative role. If

theology is in crisis when it is divorced from the life of Christians living the Church's faith. Yet that is what has happened to theology because it has been made into an exclusively intellectual activity, a subdiscipline of the academy.²¹

—then the solution is liturgical practice. It can appear that what is needed is more *reflection*:

Theology suffers a crisis when its logic no longer comes from the liturgy, which is God's action in the community of faith, for then *lex credendi* no longer flows out of *lex orandi*. This is the crisis that Schmemmann characterizes as scholastic theology, school theology.²²

but the appearance is illusory: Schmemmann's 'logic' means nothing as concrete as "deductive logic", and in any case his summary rejection of "scholasticism" is enough to warn against any schematic resolution. 'What the patristic period knew naturally *and existentially* has been forgotten by today's liturgical consciousness.'²³ Thus although liturgical theology is itself second-order reflection on the 'epiphany of the faith'²⁴ that is liturgy, *theologia prima* is distinct from *theologia secunda* in that something experiential—something existential—directly grounds the reflection, or rather that one is reflecting on something one *does*, in which one becomes aware of not being the only actor: 'liturgical theology can be considered genuine theology because God acts in the liturgy.'²⁵ Thus the action of God in the liturgy gives rise to our attempt to speak it,²⁶ and this is liturgical—primary—theology. Can we go further, and close the circle: does liturgical theology not also exist to dispose us better to worship liturgically, to show us the Liturgy anew? Fagerberg seems to say so:

Leitourgia establishes theology the way tradition establishes icon, and gospel establishes homily. It is not mainly a chronological relationship,

Summa is still indebted to the *theologia prima*—the spiritual experience—which animated St. Thomas and all his sources. In scholastic terms Fagerberg seems to be assigning *theologia prima* the role of intellectual insight; by extension his argument runs parallel to that of the previous chapter: where the theological experience of liturgical action is reduced to 'spirituality' it will still continue to influence and drive theology, but its connection will be unexamined. (Cf. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, pp.66ff, where he insists that what qualifies *theologia secunda* to criticise liturgy is itself grounding in the *lex orandi*.)

¹⁹Ibid., p. 99. ²⁰Ibid., p. 78. ²¹Ibid., p. 78. ²²Ibid., p. 79. ²³Ibid., p.82 (my italics). ²⁴Ibid., p. 80.

²⁵Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶I apologise for the ungrammatical construction, but 'to present' is already too detached for what Fagerberg is getting at.

but a normative one. Christians believe what they believe, because they know what they know by doing it.²⁷

but the implication (although clear) remains implicit: aside from telling us that it has little to do with rearranging furniture, Fagerberg (here) avoids the subject of liturgical reform and the related question of how *theologia secunda* is supposed to *demonstrate* that it is sufficiently formed in the *lex orandi* to be worth listening to when it criticises.

By now the term *theologia prima* has broadened, and reflection on the *theologia*, the encounter with the Presence in liturgical action, also qualifies, even though second-order in form. Thus the distinction between the two is not a matter of form, but of content and style: primary theology (at any rate judging by Fagerberg's own style, and his frequent citations) is allusive and seeks to *present* the mystery enacted in its fundamental subject (liturgy), where secondary theology has as subject matter all that enunciating primary theology has crystallised into dogmata, and seeks to give an intellectually sound account. *Theologia prima* very nearly expresses that *sense* behind Tradition which I claimed we lack a word for;²⁸ whilst the work done by *style* in distinguishing reflection upon liturgy (*theological secunda*) from liturgical reflection (*theologia prima*) is exactly the same as in my claim that the *style* of *Ressourcement* (at any rate at its most typical) distinguishes it categorically from the theological endeavours of its opponents. Were one to write this thesis backwards, starting with liturgy, one could easily expand these ideas into the claims with which I started. Nevertheless there is a difficulty with this method: when one has said all that can be said for the priority of *theologia prima*, it is not quite clear what, if anything, *theologia secunda* is supposed to take from it on the theoretical plane. (At times it can seem that everything boils down to the claim that theologians should pray more.) One solution is to attack the problem from within theology itself. This is the approach Caldwell takes, and to which I now turn.

Theology and revelation

Caldwell begins with an historical narrative covering much the same period as my own. We step through Modernism, construed (largely uncritically) as a search for a real encounter with revelation—Blondel comes first, taken as representative in his concerns, with the caveat that he was never condemned—through the birth of the liturgical movement and on to *Ressourcement*, where the subject comes into view:

Obvious parallels can be made between the issues that Pius XII recognizes as central to the liturgical movement and themes that other theologians had been seeking to emphasize from the 1930s onwards that were collectively being termed *nouvelle théologie*: that is to say, the active engagement of the Christian subject in the historical reality of the world, a rejection of a disconnected and overly objective theology, a return to the biblical sources and the whole doctrinal tradition, and the development of an anthropology that was determined as much by a supernatural as by a natural end.²⁹

²⁷Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, p. 118.

²⁸Very nearly, because I am determined to remain on the level of the phenomenon itself and not reduce it to the style which endeavours to communicate it, and because although the normative context for both is identical, tradition acts more widely than any qualification of *theologia* can properly suggest. These distinctions are ultimately formal, however.

²⁹Caldwell, *Liturgy as Revelation*, pp. 86–7 This is not all: a little later we read 'while liturgy needed to

Caldwell continues to step through this new theology: Lubac (briefly), Rahner (in greater depth, since he attacked the problem of fundamental theology directly); and then we are on to the Council, with *Dei Verbum*'s enlarged account of revelation and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s non-reductionist account of the sacraments. The tenor of the history is clear: questions which began on the fringes, condemned as heretical, have ultimately been posed by the Church herself: how does God speak? How are we to know his voice? The old way of answering these questions is inadequate, at any rate for modernity.³⁰ This he terms *extrinsicism*: in a different domain it is the precise corollary of my use of that term. Sign and signifier seemed linked by little more than authority; an unsatisfactory picture, but what does one put in its place?

It is here that Caldwell's argument is a good deal less emphatic than the claim with which we began. This seems to be by design: he traces the thought of four theologians (Latourelle, Dulles, Marsili and Martelet) through the rising discontent with official theology of the preconciliar decades to the postconciliar mode, where Revelation has become the person of Christ, and the Church herself is seen as sacramental. All authors can be quoted speaking positively of the link between liturgy and revelation; thus Latourelle:

It is precisely in the measure in which the Church lives to the full her reality as a sacrament, an efficacious sign, that she will become at the same time for those outside her the sign of the coming of salvation into the world. *At this point, the sacramental economy and the economy of the signs of revelation meet and tend to coincide.*³¹

or Marsili:

The sacred signs...are framed in liturgical feasts. *It is this ritual framework that facilitates the believer's perception that the common thread within the sign economy is the paschal mystery of Christ.*³²

shed ceremonial accretions and a spirit of rubricism in order better to appreciate the mystery it contains, the theology of grace needed to shed its disdain for the mundane and the cold objectivism of scholastic theology' (Caldwell, *Liturgy as Revelation*, pp. 87–8) Every assertion in this appears to me dubitable: to speak of ceremonial as *accretions* betrays a fundamentally flawed anthropology; the spirit of rubricism has *not* been shed (the rubrics have merely drastically changed, but it matters not if one insists on lace or devotes considerable time to inveighing against it: the motivation is the same); the accusation that neo-scholastic theologies of grace *disdained* the mundane is entirely unsupported and probably false (they simply regarded the *effects* of grace as subordinate to the thing itself, which was their subject), and in any case undermined by the (equally unsupported and mostly meaningless) accusation of 'cold objectivism': the manuals have a great deal to say about the mundane, but the hard distinction between practical and speculative theology relegates the discussions to different chapters. I mention this not to attack Caldwell—it is a throwaway comment of no significance for his argument—but simply to point out how widespread uncritical narrative-spinning of this period has become. The fact that despite disagreeing in some measure with nearly the entirety of Caldwell's opening historical narrative (his reading of Modernism is highly uncritical; he draws uncritically on McCool's suggestion of a necessary internal collapse of neo-scholasticism, a theory which again seems to me at least questionable, but which we do not have space to discuss here, whilst his claims about Tridentine liturgical reform beginning with textual revision, as opposed to post-conciliar reform beginning with pastoral experience seems to ignore the textual history of the Roman Missal (whose *forma normativa* was produced by a process more philological than creative), the explicit provision in *quo primum* for the preservation of all other rites not of recent creation except in the face of the *unanimous* consent of a diocesan chapter, and the pastoral situation imposed on the church by the breakup of Christendom—the Roman books, after all, were introduced in England by missionary priests trained at Douai) I can in fact adopt most of his conclusions serves to emphasise the different targets of our arguments. This distinction is valuable and I shall return to it below.

³⁰Caldwell spends little time on it, but his four theologians all agree that Modernity is singularly unimpressed by collections of divinely revealed propositions with tacked-on "motives for belief".

³¹Caldwell, *Liturgy as Revelation*, p.170 (my italics). ³²Ibid., p.278 (my italics).

But the strong claim: that ‘the foundation, inner structure, and mode of transmission are the same for liturgy and revelation’ is arrived at not by structural comparison, but by showing theological endeavour ending up again and again in sacramentality.

This is perfectly deliberate: the problem identified by Marsili, who complained that the liturgical movement was not going anywhere since (in Caldwell’s words) ‘the principles of liturgical theology, present at the movement’s inception, were not assimilated by theologians who continued to regard the liturgy as, at best, a superior *locus theologicus*’³³ is only solved by showing not that every theological puzzle has an answer in the liturgy, but that there is no theological question whose normative context is not ultimately liturgical. Neither Caldwell nor any of his exemplars proposes *substituting* liturgical for fundamental theology. When one starts with liturgy it is unclear quite what advice one has for (secondary) theology; when one starts with (secondary) theology, liturgy appears as the terminus of any and every investigation (it is here that the Word is heard, here that the Person of Christ is revealed, here that the Church is found) without it being terribly clear what *single* difference this makes to the original theory. (I am ignoring the various carefully enunciated differences of which Caldwell is well aware (such as the difference made by the priority of symbolism, and the contradictory accounts of symbolism this gives rise to). But my purpose here is to show the contrast, not to criticise Caldwell.) Thus at times Caldwell can sound almost plaintive:

The liturgy is the self-manifestation of God in a unique mode, and until fundamental and dogmatic theology fully grasp that fact, they will be impoverished in their understanding of both the phenomenology and the content of revelation, and of its shape and modes of transmission.³⁴

It is perfectly true that Caldwell frames his work as continuing a conversation which has only recently begun: some of these ideas are barely half a century old, at any rate in their coining. Yet the same tension we found in Fagerberg is present here: *that* liturgy plays a foundational role in theological endeavour is far more obvious and easier to establish than *how* it does so—that is, if one is after an account not of how such-and-such a theological problem can be answered liturgically or boils down to liturgical categories (like symbolism or sacramentality), but of how *leitourgia*, the Liturgy behind liturgical action, underpins theology—the daily activity of theologians. I shall turn to this repeated question in a moment, but there is one more parallel to observe before drawing distinctions, which serves to heighten the contrast.

TRADITION?

Revelation, as the term of art around which Caldwell’s argument is constructed, is not an easy concept to pin down. It is not so much that he does not define it (although the investigation is not philosophical and little time is spent on hashing out terminology), but that it is the subject of investigation, and consequently frequently now one, now another aspect is foregrounded. But there is a detectable pattern in all four authors: revelation starts out naming *revelata* and comes to name the process by which those *revelata*—if they are still there as a countable object at all, and are not simply subsumed into *revelatio*—are communicated, the context in which they are encountered.³⁵ Eventually the concept broadens to include not merely what is strictly

³³Ibid., p. 302. ³⁴Ibid., p. 490.

³⁵At times this later concept appears earlier, and Caldwell can appear to be saying that there are new

revealed—which is ultimately the person and character of Christ—but what God has continued to do in the transmission, elaboration and understanding of this revelation. In other words, Caldwell’s Revelation begins to look a good deal like Tradition, at any rate as I have been using the term.

In one sense this is hardly surprising: I have been insisting that the distinctions we make between aspects of the Faith are ultimately formal, and the connection has long been recognised (even if we limit revelation to “revealed propositions” with the narrowest textbook, we find that tradition is promptly established to “transmit” these propositions). But the parallel can be pushed further: Revelation, in the full sense which Caldwell ultimately ascribes to it, is the precise corollary of Tradition, in the sense in which I have been using it. Revelation is word: Tradition is hearing; Revelation is speech: Tradition is silence. (I shall return to this definition, which is I think ultimately the best definition of Tradition possible, at the end of this chapter.) Moreover, Caldwell’s narrative is explicitly one of *ressourcement*, and at least one of his figures (Martelet, who published on Teilhard) might be defended as *Ressourcement*.³⁶ Thus there is an interesting *prima facie* compatibility between the argument I am making here about *Ressourcement*’s intentional engagement with Tradition (and its implicit connection with liturgy), and the argument Caldwell makes about recent “new” theology’s structural engagement with Revelation (and its more or less explicit connection with liturgy). One should not push concordism too far, but the arguments are at any rate compatible. But this compatibility (on which I do not lean, and which would require far stronger argumentation to lend any argumentative support) serves to highlight a fundamental disagreement.

Theory and Practice

In theory, then, the claims I have been making for Tradition have at least a formal parallel in (some) recent liturgical theology: the notion of liturgy as the paradigmatic context for the transmission of something greater than merely verbal is very much alive and well; if one allows my redefinition of Caldwell’s Revelation as something much more akin to the sense of the Tradition than to revelation as traditionally conceived then we are at least saying similar things; and Fagerberg’s Liturgy behind liturgy (*leitourgia*) corresponds exactly, in the formal structure of things, to my distinction between the *sense* of Tradition, and anything in or about Tradition. (The correspondence in this case goes much further, as we saw: Fagerberg thinks our problems are fundamentally intentional and will be cured with liturgical asceticism, a subject on which he is admirably frank.) Moreover, Caldwell draws on *Ressourcement* figures to reach his conclusion, whilst Fagerberg’s authorities can frequently be found in Bouyer (who, as we shall see, makes substantively the same claims about the primacy of Liturgy and—although for reasons of space I shall mostly leave this unexplored—its role in the transmission of Tradition).

And yet: two fundamental differences divide the argument I am making from that of either Caldwell or Fagerberg (and by extension, from much recent theological thinking on liturgy, and much recent critical liturgiology). The first is that whilst Fagerberg *does* spend considerable time on the *sense* given by liturgy (and equal time on the ascetic preparation required to receive it) the notion of that sense itself is not

revelata as time goes on, i.e. ‘after the death of the last apostle’, to fall foul of the traditional formula. Contextually it is clear that this is not the sense, but this is another argument for the tentative proposal I make here.

³⁶Not under the definition I gave at the beginning, but that definition was purposefully narrow.

foregrounded. (In part this is simply because I am arriving at liturgical theology by the long route of the sense of the Tradition: when one starts with liturgy it is far easier simply to appeal to practice.) But if this intentional interface between worship and the worshipper is just about present when one lays stress on the liturgical side of liturgical theology, it is all but absent when one begins from the theology. If Caldwell discusses the concept I have missed it. Moreover, there is no reason to expect him to do so: an objective consideration of the interaction between liturgy, theology and tradition (or revelation) is a perfectly admirable endeavour in its own right. But if I am correct that *Ressourcement* was more concerned with the formation of the *sense* than of claims about the content, more concerned with re-gaining the *vision* of the sources than of increasing those sources on which theology could draw, the account is missing something of importance. For all that Caldwell insists (rightly, I think, if my transposition of his notion of revelation is correct) that revelation (tradition) is *experienced* more than *discovered*, his account is ultimately at one remove from the phenomena themselves.³⁷

It is this which allows both authors to ignore what seems to me the most fundamental contemporary problem in the transmission of Tradition: the fact that all is *not* well on the level of the phenomena. The Liturgy, as we know it today, has been tampered with heavily *exactly* at this interface, and in at least some cases in pursuit of an account of the relationship between liturgy and theology which is the complete *inverse* of what Fagerberg defends and Caldwell assumes: an extrincism which considers the rite so much material with which to work. In this respect it is telling that Fagerberg, despite his irenic inclusion of a number of Lutheran thinkers (avoiding theological debate) draws almost exclusively on Eastern sources to advance his argument.

For our purposes it is sufficient to observe the account I am advancing here is not in any sense foreign to contemporary reflection on liturgy and theology. But I am chronicling the history of one failure to bring this idea to fruition. Fagerberg can write eloquently of liturgical asceticism, citing the Desert Fathers, but asceticism has been removed from the liturgy; Caldwell can defend the structural parallel between liturgy and tradition (or revelation) but the lectionaries have been heavily re-made, avoiding awkward passages. Whether I am right that this came about *because* of a loss of the knowledge of the sense of the tradition and an inversion of priority between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, it came about, as I argue in the next chapter, *in the context* of such a loss. But the more one insists that the Liturgy is the normative form, the structure and the expression of the Faith and its transmission, the more vital this problem becomes.

For now I confine myself to showing that *Ressourcement* was half aware of this interface between theory and practice in the liturgy, and that some then-contemporary thought was aware of it, and built a theory on this interface which turns out to be almost the precise analogue of what we have seen in *Ressourcement*.

Ressourcement, *Liturgy and Tradition*

What *Ressourcement* does have to say about the liturgy can be covered fairly briefly. Lubac and Daniélou have a great deal of textual observation about liturgical symbolism,

³⁷It is, incidentally, for these reasons that my reading of Modernism, anti-Modernism and Blondel's philosophy differs so strongly from Caldwell's account. The hard distinction between, for instance, Blondel's claims about apologetics and those of Loisy or Tyrrell recedes as soon as one lumps them together as

but no reflection on liturgical practice to speak of. For Chenu—at any rate after *Spiritualité du travail*—liturgy is essentially communitarian; only because it *assume les requêtes et les ressources de l'homme, de la communauté chrétienne* does the liturgy *implique, confirme et consacre une anthropologie*.³⁸ The grandeur of the liturgical movement is the attention it paid to what is in *man*;³⁹ given *le sentiment diffus... d'une humanité en marche au milieu des pires tragédies* we need, naturally, communal liturgies to oppose to the false communitarianism of communism.⁴⁰ This, apparently, is what the laity want; whence the metric: *la liturgie renaîtra donc à la mesure de la renaissance des communautés vraies*.⁴¹

Chenu is aware that the Liturgy is an end in itself⁴² and the context in which the practical *équilibre* between apparently contradictory realities—inspiration and discipline;⁴³ *logos* and *ratio*⁴⁴—is worked out, but in practice the *primary* reality is communitarian. Likewise in theory his account of sacramental action as recapitulation of salvation history is Bouyer's (or Daniélou's).⁴⁵ But, excellent as the theory often is, it seems hardly to enter into the realisation of *une efficace pratique pastorale*.⁴⁶ Since the same ideas are worked out in greater detail in Congar I shall not consider Chenu's liturgiology further.

Congar was eminently practical, and rejoiced (from Colditz) when the *Centre du pastorale liturgique* was set up, precisely because it was practical.⁴⁷ That the centre was founded on a letter by Bouyer which was in fact a criticism of where it would end up doubtless passed him by.⁴⁸ What was needed was *reality* 'apt to be interiorised'⁴⁹ as opposed to *rite* (a term strictly negative).⁵⁰ The trouble was that the liturgy had been elaborated in a pastoral society, but the modern world is mechanical;⁵¹ the educated—Congar takes himself as the example—are able to draw much from the rite, but all this is beyond the simple faithful, for whom the notion of, say, a “seven-fold spirit” is meaningless.⁵² Congar, then, is a bad liturgist. Moreover he has no real idea what he wants: ‘real preaching’

s'adresse, de manière à être entendue de lui, à un auditoire réel d'hommes qui gagnent leur vie, sont mariés, ont des enfants et aussi des responsabilités concrètes dans le monde des hommes. Qui, donc, propose des choses

“methods of immanence” without observing the palpable difference in intentional stance, which alone of those three Blondel foregrounds. (In Caldwell's defence this history does very little work in his argument.)

³⁸Marie-Dominique Chenu, ‘Anthropologie et liturgie’, *Maison-Dieu* 12 (1947), p. 53. ³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 60. ⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 61. ⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 63; the insight is attributed to Bouyer without citation.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 63. ⁴⁴*supra-rationnel et l'infra-rationnel (!)*; *ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁵Marie-Dominique Chenu, ‘Les sacrements dans l'économie chrétienne’, *Maison-Dieu* 30 (1952), pp. 9–10.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁷Yves Congar, ‘Pour une liturgie et une prédication « réelles »’, ed. by François-Xavier Ledoux, Paris: Cerf, 1948, p. 37.

⁴⁸This letter (Louis Bouyer, ‘Lettre au P. Duployé’, Louis Bouyer and Georges Daix, *Le Metier de théologien, Entretiens avec Georges Daix*, Paris: France-Empire, 1943, p. 238) rejects liturgical archaeology (p. 234) and the reduction of liturgy to ‘external cult’: instead it is the ‘spontaneous expression of the one soul of the church’ and the best means of bringing that ‘soul’ to ‘atomised christians’ and pagans. (p. 234) Thus on the one hand Bouyer promotes all the usual means—translation of ‘catechetical’ components, instruction, communal singing necessitating simpler melodies even sometimes *versus populum* (of which he later speaks very differently)—whilst insisting on not losing what we have: ideally the mass should be sung, but low masses should be *messes dialoguées en latin* (p. 238) (the *messe dialoguée en français* being mostly paraliturgical distraction). Aliturgical devotions will naturally become reintegrated, whilst some will die off of their own record, but the *tabula rasa* attitude is explicitly condemned. The end goal is gaining the *viewpoint* from which the Bible (elsewhere: and the Fathers) will become accessible, learning to see the sacral cosmos. Almost as important is restoring the liturgical year in ordinary life.

⁴⁹Congar, ‘Pour une liturgie et une prédication « réelles »’, p. 42. ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 48. ⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 49.

vraies et telles qu'on puisse les dire, les yeux dans les yeux, à un homme normal et pas seulement à des femmes, à des enfants ou à des bonnes sœurs (!)⁵³

—which is to say (as Congar, who entered the Dominican order young and had no practical experience of any of this, might have done better to clarify) not merely avoiding moralising, but “practical”, exactly as the Liturgists demanded. Exactly why there is no place for spirituality or exegesis in homiletics (or for addressing women, children or nuns, although the contrast is purely rhetorical) is as opaque as the rest of Congar’s liturgical assertions. But his concerns are real: the laity have a role to play (albeit the priesthood of the baptised is not fundamentally a liturgical priesthood; but the Mass consecrates the whole mission of the Church).⁵⁴

All of this matters for two reasons: liturgy is the culmination of ecclesiology and the *locus* of the handing-on of tradition. In liturgy the members of the Church act in their several ways—the priesthood of the laity is not sacerdotal and, aimed at consecrating the world in daily life, participates only receptively in the Mass⁵⁵—from this harmony her structure appears, not as exterior “hierarchology”, but as the charismatic life of the community itself. (At times this emphasis on ecclesiology leads Congar to material error: ‘la messe n’obtient son effet spirituel que dans la communauté’,⁵⁶ is odd in light of the Requiem: either the community need not be present (which in context is absurd) or Congar has simply forgotten that the fruits of the Mass *can* be applied far beyond those who show up. Nonetheless the general claim is sound.)

More interestingly for our purposes, Liturgy is where Tradition is handed on, not by being explained, but by being enacted:

si la ferveur n’est pas créatrice de vérité, la liturgie contient, livre et exprime à sa manière la totalité de mystères dont l’intelligence et le dogme lui-même n’ont formulé que certains aspects.

On a aimé, ces dernières années, souligner le fait que la célébration liturgique et principalement les sacrements sont un canal par lequel la Révélation...nous parvient;... Cet aspect du culte doit plaire aux protestants, aux réformés surtout, qui définissent le sacrement comme *verbum visibile*...

Or, l’autel et la chaire sont deux lieux différents de la communication du salut dans l’Église. La Tradition est gardée et communiquée par l’autel comme par la chaire...

Une communion spirituelle, intentionnelle, est mesurée par ma ferveur et se cherche sur la base d’une représentation, la communion réelle permet au mystère d’opérer, bien au-delà de mes projets, selon le réalisme de ce don définitif, de cette ultime venue, que Dieu a faits en venant corporellement à nous, en nous donnant son corps...Dans le sacrement, on reçoit, on tient et on transmet plus qu’on ne saurait exprimer et comprendre. C’est pourquoi, tout en sachant de quelle immense valeur sont les fêtes et les célébrations pour inculquer une vérité, surtout dans

⁵³Ibid., p. 49. ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁵Yves Congar, ‘Structure du sacerdoce chrétien’, ed. by François-Xavier Ledoux, Paris: Cerf, 1963, 164ff.

⁵⁶Yves Congar, ‘L’« *ecclesia* » ou communauté chrétienne, sujet intégral de l’action liturgique’, ed. by François-Xavier Ledoux, Paris: Cerf, 1967, p. 118.

l'esprit des simples, il faut éviter, en « utilisant » trop les rites liturgiques et sacramentels pour l'instruction des fidèles ou des demi-païens qui sont attachés à ces cérémonies, de laisser envahir la liturgie par les explications doctrinales ou érudites, ou même de la traiter en occasion d'endoctrinement. Le style de l'enseignement que la liturgie fait dans sa confession de la foi, ou celui de la profession de foi qu'elle fait dans sa louange (profonde théologie des textes doxologiques!) n'est pas un style de professeur ni même de théologien : la liturgie procède simplement, avec l'assurance de la vie, à l'affirmation de ce qu'elle fait et du contenu de ce qu'elle livre en le célébrant. *C'est le style propre de la Tradition, qui communique les conditions de la vie en communiquant la vie elle-même.*⁵⁷

Thus it is no surprise that Congar could claim that at least half his theology came from the liturgy—but it proved impossible to translate such insights into propositional argumentation. Tradition is 'the *sense* of things', and it is this which liturgy is most apt at giving.⁵⁸

This, in turn, is grounded in a theory of tradition explicitly derived from Blondel.⁵⁹ Tradition just is the life of the Church; from time to time the Church "mints" what has hitherto been "lived" so that it is now "known", but she still maintains both the undefined and the now defined as part of her life. This life is not a depository for inchoate propositions so much as the condition for making sense both of propositions and of itself: 'there exists a communion with the Gospel under the two species of text and ecclesial life'.⁶⁰

Nonetheless we have a conflict here. For every statement praising the liturgy for inculcating a *sens* we have a text complaining that it is aimed at a 'pastoral' society long gone. For every assertion of the hallowed nature of the forms, preserved as contact with a past whose *sens* will be unintelligible to us if we lose them, we have a cheerful readiness to accept complete innovations. Congar's liturgical instincts were ultimately a lot better than his theorising, which more or less follows (including in its contradiction) the internal contradictions then developing in the liturgical movement. It is perhaps unsurprising that about the question of the rite itself he simply could not see the issue:

J'ai aimé la messe latine que j'ai célébrée pendant près de quarante ans. Mais je ne voudrais pas y revenir. J'ai récemment assisté (et, comme prêtre, concélébré) à une messe dite de saint Pie V, célébrée pour l'enterrement d'un ami. Franchement, c'était pénible. L'assistance n'a pas dit un mot; elle ne voyait rien et n'entendait presque rien de ce que le prêtre, dos au peuple, faisait à l'autel.⁶¹

Exactly why Congar could not *sing* the requiem—particularly as there were apparently enough clergy present for a high mass, at any rate with straw subdeacon—is of less importance than the perspective revealed in the phrase 'what the priest was doing at altar with his back to the people'. But the fact that Congar had such an elevated theory of the liturgy and such a weak sense of its traditional praxis—he goes on to suggest that the new rite in Latin with the roman canon is indistinguishable from the old—merely proves my point. *Ressourcement* did not look to the Liturgy in any

⁵⁷ Yves Congar, *La Tradition et les traditions, Essai Théologique*, vol. 2, 2 vols., Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1963, p. 118, my italics.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120. ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122–30. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶¹ Yves Congar, *La crise dans l'Eglise et Mgr Lefebvre*, Cerf, 1977, p. 39.

functional sense because it simply did not occur to it to do so.

The Liturgical Movement

Liturgical work was supposed to be done by the liturgists. In all appearance it was (certainly Congar never seems aware of the tensions Bouyer bemoaned at the CPL, and Daniélou and Chenu continued publishing cheerfully in *La Maison-Dieu* without ever asking themselves if the journal was truly *liturgical*). Yet the liturgical movement had always been a loose-knit phenomenon.⁶² It had its origins in the restoration of Benedictine life at Solesmes under Guéranger. But Guéranger is himself a contested figure: he was rigidly ultramontanist and frequently attacked the Gallican prefaces as “Jansenist” (which is at least dubitable); and his historical scholarship was necessarily incomplete.⁶³ Nonetheless the *Année liturgique* made the liturgy *popular* exactly when it seemed popular devotion was becoming entirely unliturgical; and Solesmes started a revival in (congregational!) chant-singing, just when gregorian chant threatened entirely to disappear.⁶⁴

By the mid-century at least three strands are discernible: the benedictine movement, concentrated around Maria Laach (whence Casel), Solesmes, and a few other houses; its broader academic extension (in which one would count for instance Jungmann, as well as a benedictine like Botte), and a growing “practical” movement which would eventually all but absorb the other two. For this school, the Mass simply *is* the experience of those who celebrate it. Thus Gelineau (whose rather angular psalm-tones are the reason for the odd accents printed in English office-books, and can still sometimes be heard) can say with complete sincerity:

Think back, if you remember it, to the Latin sung High mass with Gregorian chant. Compare it with the modern post-Vatican II mass. It is not only the words, but also the tunes and even certain actions that are different. In fact it is a different liturgy of the mass. We must say it plainly: the Roman rite as we knew it exists no more. It has gone. Some walls of the structure have fallen, others have been altered; we can look at it as a ruin or as the partial foundation of a new building.⁶⁵

This passage has often been used in polemics; it has been less often understood. Where objection has been made to Gelineau’s revolutionary fatalism (he continues

⁶²Alcuin Reid, ed., *T & T Clark companion to liturgy*, London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016, The history of the Liturgical Movement has been comprehensively studied. For a sense the historical background see; particularly Alcuin Reid, ‘The Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement’, *T & T Clark companion to liturgy*, ed. by Alcuin Reid, London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016, p. . Useful material is also present in Alcuin Reid, *The organic development of the Liturgy, The principles of liturgical reform and their relation to the twentieth century liturgical movement prior to the Second Vatican Council*, Farnborough: St. Michael’s Abbey Press, 2004, Ch. 1.

⁶³The judgement of Rousseau is probably correct: Guéranger’s work, like that of Migne, hardly qualifies as ‘critical’. “But what modern critic has done anything like as much to popularise?” O. Rousseau, *Histoire du Mouvement Liturgique*, Paris: Cerf, 1945, p. 15.

⁶⁴The story is not quite so simple: Ratisbon chant, for instance, was authoritatively abandoned in favour of Solesmes—whereas it is dubious that either have any claim to represent a *historical* “pure chant”. This was likely of little interest to the participants, whose ideas on the chant were aesthetic rather than archaeological.

The story of liturgical reform might be very profitably told from a musical point of view; indeed the fact that almost none of the reformers were competent musicians (Bugnini directed a choir but had little time for real musicians) goes a long way to explaining the artificiality of the whole thing.

⁶⁵Joseph Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*, trans. French by Dinah Livingstone, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978, p. 11.

‘we must not weep over ruins’), the truly revolutionary idea is that a radical change in the experience of the Mass is all that is needed for a radical change in the Mass itself: in other words, the Mass is reduced to the experience of the community which celebrates it, whether before or after the Council.

This attitude is programmatic: everything is modelled on human experience. But since the liturgy is *not* fundamentally (or even essentially) a human action *tel quel*, the resulting incoherence is quite simply a category mistake dragged out over various chapters. Thus Gelineau, having observed that celebration *versus populum* in a ‘Gothic’ Church is ridiculous—one cannot possibly see what is going on from the back, and indeed one “only sees people’s backs” promptly concludes what we have too many Churches and should get rid of them—since they were mostly built to gratify regional pride in any case (Ch. 3). Repeatedly he will diagnose a real problem, only to give a factitious solution—such as observing that people do not appear to *believe* and then claiming that they do not, in fact, understand;⁶⁶ or that those who do not believe do not wish to take communion, but that the liturgy is aimed at the faithful, thus we need additional liturgies *not* aimed at the faithful;⁶⁷ or that the Mass is now considered as a Community celebration, but that people (tellingly: laypeople) naturally object that most parishes do *not* form a social community at all, which leads Gelineau on yet another elaborate (and completely unpractical) planning scheme, this time of sub-communities organised around social gatherings with multiple kinds of celebration, all combining at points into greater communities.⁶⁸

In all this Gelineau represents the logical extreme of the “pastoral” approach to liturgy: if the liturgy is simply an end for the formation of faith and is failing to do so, it must be changed until it does. The faith *as such* is entirely separate from its liturgical expression—indeed, it appears to be more or less inaccessible even in the liturgical celebration itself, whose *primary* focus is the bringing about of the kingdom, understood as the social Church.⁶⁹ That, quite coincidentally, he is broadly correct—the experiential differences between the preconciliar and reformed liturgies are sufficiently striking to constitute a rupture in the transmission of tradition, and the experiential sense in which ‘the roman rite no longer exists’ (*pace* its widespread and growing celebration) is indeed responsible for the loss of dispositional training which is at the root of much confusion in the Church today—is less important for my argument than the fact that, quite sincerely, he cannot conceive of *either* liturgies as anything other than the actions of the communities which gather to carry them out. None of which is to say that Gelineau does not think liturgy is about prayer (he does), or that it is not devoted to God (on the contrary) or should not be informed by tradition (although his suggestion—I cannot tell whether seriously or not—of an “exit of the psychopaths” to correspond to the ancient “exit of the catechumens” is certainly novel⁷⁰). But the *ritual structure* is considered to have no function to play besides the purely utilitarian, and the liturgy *qua* liturgy is identical with this

⁶⁶This facile inability to conceive of intelligent disagreement is not confined to theology. One recalls the sincere confusion of certain journalists when recent laws were being widely disobeyed: perhaps, they said, the government’s *messaging* was not clear enough?

⁶⁷Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*, p. 40.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, Ch. 5.

⁶⁹See e.g. *ibid.*, p. 48, where the only criticism of a complaint that one cannot ‘celebrate the eucharist with people [one doesn’t] know’ is that it ‘reveal[s] an incomplete understanding of the mystery of the liturgical assembly’ (my emphasis). In place of the Mystery, we now have the secondary end of the unity of the Church, effected by the Eucharist, elevated to the status of ‘mystery’ and thus made prior. A better inverting of Lubac’s thesis in *Corpus Mysticum* would be hard to imagine.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 39.

structure.

Thus we have here two incompatible models of the relation between liturgy and tradition. In one of them, the liturgy is the paradigmatic *locus* of tradition; in the other it is something more or less external, drawn up in pursuit of some laudable end aimed at for reasons external to the liturgy itself. But this is the very tension which, in the case of Apologetics, Lubac resolved in favour of the Tradition! A similar resolution was prevented here in part by historical circumstance—the same neo-scholastic opponents of *Ressourcement* were concerned with the liturgical movement, apparently on similar grounds, and “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”—but mostly simply by ignorance. I turn, then, to Bouyer, who *did* recognise the problem and sought to address it, exactly as *Ressourcement* did in the case of Modernism.

Bouyer’s Charge

The Pontificate of John XXIII and the Council were supposed to inaugurate a revival in the Church we hardly dared hope for, it seemed so impossible. The rediscovery of the Bible and the Fathers, the Liturgical Movement, the Ecumenical Movement; a rediscovery of the Church in her most authentic tradition joined to a new openness to modern problems by a return to the theological and catechetical sources: all this, which had belonged to a small elite of no consequence and readily suspected by the authorities was suddenly (or at any rate rapidly) going to spread everywhere, having converted the leaders of the Church. Only a few years have passed since, but one has to admit that the subsequent history does not bear much resemblance to this hope. Unless one puts one’s head in the sand it must be admitted that what we are seeing looks less like the hoped-for regeneration of Catholicism than an abnormally rapid decomposition.⁷¹

So far there is nothing particularly remarkable about this work. Many books of the kind were written after the council, and many were written by figures more or less attached to *Ressourcement*. Congar, who was rather more positive than Bouyer, could still speak of ‘a crisis everywhere: everything is in question’,⁷² albeit rejecting the idea that it had anything to do with the liturgical reform or the council;⁷³ Lubac was more trenchant;⁷⁴ and Daniélou’s estrangement from the Jesuits over the direction things

⁷¹Louis Bouyer, *La décomposition du Catholicisme*, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968, pp. 7–8.

⁷²Yves Congar, *Interview, 1977/1978*, 02:20–09:30; Cf. Yves Congar, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology, Conversations with Yves Congar*, trans. from the French by John Bowden, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, pp. 49–50.

⁷³Congar, *La crise dans l’Eglise et Mgr Lefebvre*, This text contains some interesting admissions on the Liturgy to which we will return.

⁷⁴‘Those who manipulate our liturgies’ show a startling ‘lack of psychology combined with a dictatorial spirit’; (Henri de Lubac and Jacques Maritain, *Correspondance et rencontres*, vol. 50, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Cerf, 2012, p. 116, Cf. 119–23) the Church is overrun by ‘neo-modernists’ (ibid., p. 234) and the Council’s directives are not so much to blame as the fact that we are busily implementing the complete opposite. (Henri de Lubac, ‘L’Eglise dans la crise actuelle’, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9, Paris: Cerf, 2010, p. 236) Rather than seeking an ‘*approfondissement* of the mystery’, a shallow ‘*gnosis* which thinks itself superior’ is everywhere, (ibid., p. 234) leading to an uncritical criticism (ibid., pp. 234, 250–1) which subjects the Church to the world exactly when the world needs saving; (ibid., pp. 226, 35) nowhere more present than among “theologians”. (Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l’humanisme athée*, Paris: Cerf, 1959, p. 240; Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l’occasion de mes écrits*, *Œuvres Complètes* 33, Paris: cerf, 2006, pp. 134–6) Lubac, by this point, was not popular with the “theologians” and was even at times unable to publish: Morard Martin, ‘Une lettre du Père de Lubac à Jean Châtillon et un épisode récent de la théologie du ministère sacerdotal’, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 87.2 (2003).

were going in is legendary—leading to the incongruous spectacle of a cardinal having no duties other than chaplain to the dwindling community of sisters with whom he lived, and practising almsgiving among the most despised of Paris, in the rooms of one of whom—a prostitute—he subsequently died of a heart attack whilst (on her account) bringing bail money for her imprisoned husband.⁷⁵ It is frequently asserted—although I have yet to discover any documentation—that the Jesuits suppressed their own investigation clearing him of any wrongdoing in order to spoil the reputation of a trenchant critic. Balthasar—a good bellweather for *Ressourcement* thinking if not by my criteria *Ressourcement* itself—published a number of short works, of which *A Short Primer for Unsettled Laymen*⁷⁶ is perhaps the most representative example of a diagnosis entirely symptomatic: why, he asks plaintively, should the conciliar claim “some things should be changed” have morphed so quickly into “nothing must remain the same?” To this question Balthasar can give no satisfactory answer. Nor, ultimately, can Lubac (when his postconciliar controversialism rises above the level of grumbling to attempt an answer) although his diagnosis—that we have simply *forgotten* the tradition—is at any rate more etiological than Balthasar’s; nor does Daniélou offer a consistent theory beyond the simple observation that the bottom has been pulled out of Catholicism and everything is in a state of increasingly chaotic free-fall; nor yet does Congar’s rather more irenic—I suspect because rather more isolated⁷⁷—prose offer anything beyond an invitation to dialogue and an increasing tendency to fall back on exhortation by exclamation mark.⁷⁸ Only Chenu forms a notable dissent, and Chenu’s place in the genealogy of what became “creation spirituality” represents, in fact, a distorted version of the claim Bouyer makes; the same distorted version which is visible in Teilhard and which, as we shall see, underlies Lubac’s otherwise rather puzzling enthusiasm for what, with the benefit of hindsight and its critical distance, we can see as the rather confused mysticism of Teilhard.

All of these responses are notable in their failure to hit the mark which Bouyer, more or less consistently, hits—and which he had been emphasising, as we shall see, since long before the council. For Bouyer’s postconciliar diatribes are remarkable both in their precision, and—if one makes due accounting for the genre—in their mildness.⁷⁹

Bouyer does not remotely idolise the pre-conciliar Church. Its problem was *in-tégrisme*, and at least Bouyer gives this tired word a definition: ‘making authority

⁷⁵For a brief discussion of Daniélou’s death, see Jonah Lynch and Giulio Maspero, eds., *Finestre aperte sul mistero*, Genova-Milano: Casa Editrice Marietti S.p.A, 2012; Emmanuelle de Boysson, *Le Cardinal et l’Hindouiste, Le mystère des frères Daniélou*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1999, pp. 236–43.

⁷⁶Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Short Primer for Unsettled Laymen*, trans. from the German by Sr. Mary Theresilde Skerry, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985.

⁷⁷Congar was ensconced in the *Hôpital des invalides* from 1986, and was already very unwell by the mid seventies: whilst he carried on working, his later writing and interviews frequently complain that he is out of touch. Thus even *La crise dans l’Eglise et Mgr Lefebvre* is mostly based on articles and ‘correspondents’, and at times Congar is apparently unaware of things which were easy enough to document (e.g. p. 35, where he is apparently unaware of straightforward claims of lay celebration and the corresponding practice of communal recitation of the eucharistic prayer, both of which were then in evidence).

⁷⁸Note the sudden prevalence of this punctuation Congar, *La crise dans l’Eglise et Mgr Lefebvre*, pp. 84ff.

⁷⁹Most post-crisis works are either precise or mild, although mention should be made here of Maritain’s gently ironic *Le paysan de la Garonne* (Jacques Maritain, *Le paysan de la Garonne*, 6th ed., Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966). The fact that Maritain’s work was generally extremely poorly received in the press of its day gives some idea how unpopular such works were. Maritain’s approach is completely different, and he attributes everything to conceptual errors (‘One does not criticise a book by Jacques Maritain: it is impossible to do so without getting dragged into an ideological discussion’: Jean-Paul Roux, ‘Jacques Maritain. *Pour une philosophie de l’histoire*. (Compte-rendu.)’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 160.2 [1961], p. 246). Nonetheless his conclusion is not incompatible.

an absolute' equivalent to 'petrifying Tradition';⁸⁰ the resulting progressivism is, he avers, as much an *extrinsécisme*, since it identifies the Tradition with such an *ipse dixit* account of authority and then rejects the two. This *intégrisme* is fundamentally opposed to Tradition. It was allied with traditional *claims* merely by historical accident, as is evidenced by the catholic attitude to non-catholics:

I remember the inadvertently revealing reaction of a priest to whom I mentioned all those exemplary elements of the Catholic Tradition which so many Anglicans have recovered, and to which they seem far more deeply attached than many Catholics: "but that is all worthless, since they do not do so in order to obey legitimate authority." In other words...the essence of Catholicism is not truth (attested to and maintained by authority), but authority, considered as the source of a truth which has no value in itself, but only by the *ipse dixit* which validates it.⁸¹

With this mindset the effect of the liturgy itself can be extrinsic, and one can simply *command* the desired effect: 'since authority, or tradition (that tradition of which Authority could say *Io sono la tradizione!*), was the source of everything, everything consisted in obeying it, and it seemed that the best obedience would be one perfectly unintelligent and totally uninterested.'⁸²

Io sono: there is actually reasonable evidence that this preposterous phrase was uttered.⁸³ In any case it entered the critical vocabulary, and Bouyer is relentlessly critical: of the passivity of the "real catholics" and their devotions;⁸⁴ but above all of the *system* which had allowed Scripture and Liturgy to become 'purely decorative'⁸⁵ lest their 'vitalism', as suspect as 'in Newman and Blondel' but difficult to condemn, should endanger the stability of the "real Catholics".⁸⁶

With the *content* of the faith apparently only material for specialists, Catholic identity became heavily nationalistic, opening the way for its later switching of political allegiance.⁸⁷ Ultimately,

to this badge-Catholicism, true catholicity, which is the living unity of communion in supernatural love, would always seem a protestant ideal...it would never be (as Möhler saw before Khomiakov) anything but the individualism of a clan, or in the end, of one man (more totemised than divinised) over against the individualism of all. It could never admit more than *one* sacred language, one liturgical tradition (fixed for ever by authority), one theology (not Thomist, whatever it claimed, but more "john-of-st-thomasist"), one canon law (entirely codified), etc. The riches, so concordant yet so plural, the openness of the thought of the Fathers would always be suspect...⁸⁸

This is the prose of an angry man—Bouyer had always been sharp, but here he is bitter—but this should not blind us to its fundamentally consistent argument. Bouyer has a coherent etiology of the crisis which, by 1968, was accelerating but not remotely as visible as it would be by the middle of the next decade (and a refreshing

⁸⁰Bouyer, *La décomposition du Catholicisme*, p. 100. ⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 102. ⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁸³John W O'Malley, *Vatican I, The council and the making of the ultramontane church*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2018, p. 212.

⁸⁴*pas la mais les dévotions*, 'the various scapulars were particularly practical, since they ensured everything for you and insured you against everything, without your contracting any onerous obligations thereby—not even the need to think of them.' Bouyer, *La décomposition du Catholicisme*, p. 105.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 106. ⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 107. ⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 114. ⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 119. (The reference is to *sobornost*.)

sense of its magnitude⁸⁹), and his criticism of the pre-conciliar Church is so strident precisely because he is convinced that its worst aspects are flourishing, without their erstwhile correctives. In other words, as soon as the artificial barriers of authority are removed, the well-bred children ‘run off to a house of ill repute and, naturally, contract syphilis’⁹⁰ because their obedience was ultimately only servile. The root of the current crisis, for Bouyer, is a lack of respect for the *living* Tradition in the preconciliar Church—“prophetic Tradition” (Newman)—that Tradition which the magisterium—“episcopal tradition” (Newman)—exists to protect and to nourish.⁹¹ Where people scarcely live the Tradition for its own sake or rather for the sake of its truth, the only two options are the tired alternatives of progressivism and integrism, both useless: ‘how could the integrists, with their back turned to the world, be missionaries? how could the progressives, open to the world but no longer aware of the slightest truth to bring to it, do any better?’⁹²

We must in the end shrug off our consoling—or rather anaesthetising—illusions. There is no “salvation without the Gospel”, there is no “anonymous Christianity”, there is no “implicit Church”. These are merely the chimeras which clapped-out Christians have made for themselves, to dispense them from carrying out the task which awaits them, but for which they have lost the means—and they know it.⁹³

And yet Bouyer considers that at bottom this is a problem in how the Church worships, or more specifically with how the Church *prays*.

This concern is perfectly practical. Thus, when discussing the possibility of a kind of secular institute of consecrated virgins to transform society from within, he immediately states:

In ideal circumstances which, obviously, our present circumstances can hardly be construed to be, their parish Church should be their chapel. Barring that, they will certainly discover with a little luck and, if possible, a small car, some place, monastic or not, where people still pray in the Catholic fashion and where the “Eucharist” is celebrated in a manner which makes it possible to recognize it as a Catholic Mass.⁹⁴

⁸⁹I do not know if the Council, as is said, has delivered us from the tyranny of the Roman Curia, but what is sure is that, whether it meant to or not, it has delivered us (after being delivered itself) to the dictatorship of journalists.’ Bouyer, *La décomposition du Catholicisme*, p. 10.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 125. Bouyer apologises for the crudeness of the comparison but insists on its aptitude.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 127ff.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹³*Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁹⁴Louis Bouyer, *Woman in the Church*, trans. from the French by Marilyn Teichert, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1979, p. 105 If this idea seems at best quaint and at worst disturbing (as the worst excesses of Balthasar have tended to render any discussion of an already difficult issue) it is worth noting that society was very much more in foment in 1976 than it is today, and new *structures* seemed a natural response to sudden social amorphism (we who are heirs of the resulting individualism cannot see how radical the loss of the (generally stable) family as social unit in fact was). Bouyer, in any case, is thoroughly sensible.

For Bouyer, even the relation between the sexes (and thus the ultimate meaning of ‘man’ and ‘woman’) is to be seen *in the light of the Mystery* (and not read into that mystery). Thus he begins both this work and the far longer *Woman and Man with God* with a theological (and in the latter case biblical) exegesis of the mystery of redemption as it touches on the embodied state of man. Sin enters the picture as the deformation of creation, touching everything and dividing it; Christ’s redemption prototypically restores, but access to it is only via the Cross. Thus approach to the Mystery is by asceticism, (the skilfulness with which Bouyer deals with this theme in regard to Marriage is particularly striking, the more so given the extreme difficulty of writing sensibly on the question: Louis Bouyer, *Woman and Man with God, An essay on*

This is not merely sniping at “Eucharists” of which Bouyer does not approve. Already in 1966 he had written a thorough theological, historical and liturgical account of the Eucharist, precisely because he considered that, in the heady winds of the postconciliar springtime ‘the most fantastic theories’ were everywhere, which ‘once put into practice, would make us lose practically everything of authentic tradition that we have still preserved’; and yet the desires for a ‘fully living and real’ Eucharist were entirely legitimate.⁹⁵ What was at issue was not merely the explosion of invented Eucharistic prayers but a disturbing tendency among Catholics, in their desire for a “communal” Eucharist, to *reduce* the celebration to its purely subjective effects, after the manner of early Protestantism, precisely when Protestantism is laboriously regaining the Catholic doctrine! Thus, after the obligatory account of the development of the Eucharist, from which emerge the notions of *presence*, *sacrifice* and the conforming of the worshippers to the Mystery celebrated, Bouyer turns to Protestantism, tracing a gradual return from memorialism to a realisation that the Eucharist is a participation in the atonement itself, and one which constitutes the Church (Ch. 12). Placed alongside the usual account of the gradual replacement of the liturgy with private, subjective devotions, which ultimately engender the Protestant rites when devotion replaces the liturgical scaffolding around which it grew up⁹⁶ the claim is clear: two opposing errors are at large in the world, and Catholics are busily climbing out of one in order (apparently) to leap straight into the other. Among Catholics an ultimately false mysticism of purely incidental details is in danger of replacing the Mystery;⁹⁷ among Protestants a denial of the Sacrament gravely imperils any faith. Thus protestant Eucharists are too *noisy*, too full of subjectivism for contemplation; whilst among Catholics all congregational participation is done *on their behalf*—meanwhile the sacral action has become increasingly buried under purely artistic music.⁹⁸

For our purposes the point is simply this—Bouyer thinks the Eucharist has, for us, a function: a function subordinate to and only possible because of its primary existence as the eternal worship of God. This function is precisely to lead us to that Mystery; *inter alia* because without weekly—daily—contact with sacramental reality our faith will become purely abstract.

the place of the Virgin Mary in Christian theology and its significance for humanity, trans. from the French by A. V. Littledale, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ch. 5) with theology offering a reflection on the role and character of this fundamental attitude rather than a conclusion which endeavoured to bypass the process of sanctification and describe the sanctified. Our Lady is the type of this *par excellence*, for both in her perfect faith and in her redeemed humanity She typifies the praying Church.

In this respect Bouyer is exactly parallel to Lubac. Lubac’s Mariology is incidental and ecclesiological. Thus—with none of Bouyer’s happy *pudeur*—*Méditation sur L’Église* concludes with a chapter (Ch. 9) on ‘The Church and the Virgin Mary’ in which Lubac takes Our Lady as the Type of femininity, and *thereby* the Type of “mother Church”. In this case the point is the other way round—contemplation of Our Lady shows us the Church—but the theoretical framework is the same *Mystère chrétien* which Lubac claims animates the *Canticum Cantorum* (Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur L’Église*, Paris: Éditions Mouton, 1953, p. 317). Lubac, like Bouyer, treats this perception as getting at a real common structure in existence, such that it is not mere analogy to see the Church in Mary and Mary in the Church: it can be ‘the moment where the whole faith of the Church comes pouring over one’ (*ibid.*, pp. 292–3, taking as example Claudel’s conversion *during the magnificat* at Christmas vespers.)

⁹⁵Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist*, trans. from the French by Charles Underhill Quinn, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, p. xi. The English edition runs to 484 pages.

⁹⁶Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed., London: Dacre Press, 1978.

⁹⁷Thus e.g. replacing *gratitude for participation in the Mystery of redemption* with *gratitude for quite unrelated graces received via the Sacrament*. Bouyer, *Eucharist*, p. 382.

⁹⁸This claim—and the corresponding claim that the silent canon probably arose from a desire to get on with things whilst the *Sanctus* was being sung—is scattered throughout his writings (eg *ibid.*, pp. 371, 380) Like most scholars who are not also musicians he misses another cause of the elaboration of choral

Mystery

The theological centre of Bouyer's thought is the notion of mystery—specifically, *the* Mystery of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Son of God. On one level this would be trivially true of *any* christian theology, but Bouyer uses “Mystery” technically, in the sense in which Casel popularised it. Since Casel's influence on the language of liturgiology (the phrase “paschal mystery” was almost unheard of before him) has been enormous, and the strand in the liturgical movement which he represents is both that which is explicitly taken up by Bouyer and that which is the best fit for *Ressourcement's* general tendency to pass liturgical matters over to the movement, it is worth examining in some detail.

CASEL

Dom Odo Casel was a monk of Maria Laach, itself a centre of liturgical reform. His “Mystery theology” was perhaps the most influential theological idea in the study of liturgy in the last century, and yet he is generally mentioned briefly in passing today—perhaps because he had very little interest in ritual changes.⁹⁹ Casel claimed that the liturgy presents us with, and invites us to participate in, a “Mystery”. Participation in this Mystery—at the lowest level, by participation in the ritual action itself, but far more importantly, by contemplative reception of that action and what it signifies, and thus ultimately by its transformative effect on us—brings us (dimly and mystically) before the reality of salvation itself. Thus the Mystery is not merely a cipher: the “dim” mode of presentation is itself an essential part of the content, a deliberate challenge to the ‘clear light of sober reason’ of which ‘modern man’ is so proud.¹⁰⁰

The Mystery is fundamentally God's *action*.¹⁰¹ Thus by “Mystery” Casel intends to signify the whole redemptive act, including our conformity to it by sacramental participation, thereby effecting our salvation:

Christ in his human nature went through the passion and became Spirit: glorified Lord, High-priest, the dispenser of the *pneuma* and thereby head of his Church. By his sufferings he was healed, glorified; he put aside, along with the earthly condition of his flesh, the ‘sin’ he had freely taken up, when he ‘became sin for us’... This way of salvation was to be ours, too, but in Christ. He became the perfect type for us, not merely in the realm of moral action; but he is the model we are to liken ourselves to... But we cannot do this of our own power; only through a saviour; Christ's salvation must be made real in us. This does not come about through a mere application, with our behaviour purely passive, through a ‘justification’ purely from ‘faith’, or by an application of the grace of Christ, where we have only to clear things out of the way in a negative fashion, to receive it. Rather what is necessary is a living, active sharing in the redeeming deed of Christ; passive because the Lord makes it act upon

interludes: the gradual adoption in the west of a style of singing which, whilst more or less “natural”, is heavily distinct from the spoken voice and precludes the kind of effortless passage between speech and singing which can still be heard in the East. But this can be exaggerated: Catholics, like all people, carried on singing far later than the substitution of choral for congregational responses, and the decline of collective singing is a very recent phenomenon, brought about, apparently, by recording. In any case I have never encountered a liturgy in which all present sung everything equally, except when the congregation was composed of trained singers—which rather proves the point.

⁹⁹Reid, *The organic development of the Liturgy*, pp. 108–11.

¹⁰⁰Odo Casel, *The mystery of Christian worship*, New York: Crossroad, 1999, p. 3. ¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 9.

us, active because we share in it by a deed of our own...For this purpose the Lord has given us the mysteries of worship: the sacred actions which we perform, but which, at the same time, the Lord performs upon us by his priests' service in the Church. Through these actions it becomes possible for us to share most intensively and concretely in a kind of immediate contact, yet most spiritually too, in God's saving acts.¹⁰²

Casel is not merely saying that the Mass re-presents the action of the Cross and enables us to participate in it. The *mode* of this participation is equally important: it is *liturgical* participation in the action of God which sets Catholicism apart from both Protestantism and Pelagianism. *Passive because the Lord makes it act upon us, active because we share in it by a deed of our own*: the Liturgy perfectly interweaves God's action and our response to it, so that the distinction just made is actually formal. This same claim could be about sacramentality in general (where material and efficient causation terminate in different agents), but there it would be opaque, speculative: we *must* believe that it is God who causes grace to flow in sacramentality, else we engage in magic, but if one enquires *how* this is effected we are simply told that God willed that it be this way. Considered as Sacrament (as that which is efficaciously signified) the Mass is, at a superficial level, straightforward. Considered as Mystery (as the signification) any explanation is secondary: a mystery in this sense is not understood by translating it into some other set of claims, as though it were a mere cipher, but by undergoing it. It is in celebrating the Liturgy that Christ hands on *in the action of his Church*, the fruits of his redemption:

Christ's mystery in God's revelation is the saving action of his incarnate Son and the redemption and healing of the church. It continues after the glorified God-man has returned to his Father...the mystery of Christ is carried on and made actual in the mystery of worship. Here Christ performs his saving work, invisible, but present in Spirit and acting upon all men of good-will. It is the Lord himself who acts this mystery; not as he did the primaeval mystery of the Cross, alone, but with his bride, which he won there, his church; to her he has given all his treasures; she is to hand them on to the children she has got of him.¹⁰³

But if the Church acts in the Liturgy *as Christ*¹⁰⁴ these 'treasures' are *Christ's* treasures. Casel is suggesting a very strong identification between the Church's action (in gradually formulating particular rites with particular contents, and in carrying those rites out) and Christ's (in conforming us to his death and resurrection). He takes this

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 14–5, abbreviated.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰⁴Casel's analysis starts with the general reality—the Church, in her Liturgy, rendering praise to God—and avoids, as much as possible, the specific questions with which theology is generally concerned (Fr. X, acting *in persona Christi*, confects the Sacrament). Clarifying his account would entail making a number of theoretical choices—is he claiming that presence *in persona Christi* is mediated by presence *in persona ecclesiae*? (Since Christ is the body of the church.) That the liturgical action of the Church is the (continued) historical action of Christ? What of the “emergency” truncated forms?—questions which he simply ignores and I shall thus leave untouched. What is important is that, however conceptualised, Casel thinks (i) that the paradigmatic context for encountering the action of God *now* is the Liturgy; (ii) that this action is somehow the same as the great Act of creation and incarnation and redemption (salvation history, which is again somehow all *one* action) and (iii) that this encounter is chiefly mediated *mystice*, i.e. *not* by didactic prayers, readings and explanations, partially necessary as these are, but by (a.) the inner signification of the rite and (b.) the action of the Holy Ghost revealing this significance to our contemplation—an intellection only partly comprehensible.

further, and sees a fundamental parallel between Christian and pagan ‘mysteries’, which (he claims) strove dimly for their consummation in the paradigmatic act of the incarnation, redemption and ascension.

Thus Casel approaches liturgy by first considering it theologically, and only then turning to its human side as such-and-such a ritual. “Mystery” names the inner action God effects in the rites of the Church; “liturgy” names our action in carrying out those rites.¹⁰⁵ Only the core of the rite is given by God: the rest is left to be developed by the Spirit in the Church.¹⁰⁶ This development draws quite freely on everything religious in man’s heritage: “else it would not be *catholic*”.¹⁰⁷ Yet from this Casel does not draw the conclusion that the liturgy is fundamentally a made object which can be remade. Our task is not to make it, but (in a very Dionysian way) more perfectly to assume our role *within* its essentially hierarchical structure, seeking neither to progress “up” that hierarchy, nor to remake it in a fashion we find more comfortable.¹⁰⁸ Thus Casel considers the chief function of exterior participation as aiding interior participation, without which it is worthless and which does not *require* exterior participation, and defends the use of Latin:

Is it necessary to turn all texts into the vernacular, make every detail of every rite visible? Does not this take away something irreplaceable, the glow of veneration which means more to the people than understanding every detail? The obviously praiseworthy intention of bringing people back to active participation in the liturgy should not fall into the democratic heresy.¹⁰⁹

This position is subtly different from a mere embrace of aesthetic mysticism (despite Casel’s “glow of veneration”). The point is not that hearing an hieratic language moves us to feel religious, but that ‘making every detail of every rite visible’ actually misses the most important detail of any rite—the mysterious action of God in Christ now made present to us. This is apparent in the three chapters which close the book. Casel laments the rise of non-christian mysticism and the “solitary” mysticism of individual asceticism, as opposed to the truly ancient “christian liturgical mysticism” available to everyone and leading, not to individual contemplation, but to the formation of community.¹¹⁰ This occurs precisely because entry into the Church is entry into the mystery of the liturgy, a mystery which is utterly inexhaustible, as witnessed by the enduring cycle of the Church’s year (Ch. 4) and its counterpart, the daily cycle (Ch. 5). The liturgy exists to bring us to the mystery of God it contains, but as the Mystery itself can never be exhausted, any liturgy which seemed to be wholly graspable would betray its function.

This account was deeply controversial, in part because Casel had said nothing

¹⁰⁵Casel, *The mystery of Christian worship*, p. 40. ¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 41ff. ¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸Casel, *The mystery of Christian worship*, pp. 48–9; Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, ‘The Celestial Hierarchy’, *The Complete Works*, trans. from the Greek by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality, NY: Paulist Press, 1987, pp. 143–191; Pseudo-Dionysius, ‘The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy’, *The Complete Works*, trans. from the Greek by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality, NY: Paulist Press, 1987, pp. 193–259.

¹⁰⁹Casel, *The mystery of Christian worship*, p. 49.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, Ch. 3. In itself this claim is rather dubious—it is probably more accurate to present liturgical mysticism as an attempt to *reclaim* an individualised monasticism which was in danger of setting itself up *against* the Church, as Golitzin has demonstrated for Dionysius (Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy, A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013). Casel builds his historical case on the idea that the liturgy borrowed very heavily from the Mystery religions, which played this formative role in their own communities, but both of these claims are at the very least questionable.

about sacrifice, but mostly because of his explicit claim that this Christian mystery was formulated by the Church on the model of the pagan mystery cults.¹¹¹ Of these two objections the former is far stronger (in the latter case Casel is simply wrong, but dropping the claim does not materially hurt his argument). The usual response is by assertion: the Paschal Mystery is “complementary” to the “emphasis on sacrifice” (commonly “occasioned by mediaeval disputations”). Such a response simply replaces one apparently arbitrary theory of the Eucharist with another, or (as I argue in chapter 6 on page 186, a conservative extrincisism by one liberal). But Bouyer claimed that sacrifice was *integrally* Mystery, and thereby collapsed the apparent tension between Offering and congregation. It is this account of liturgy which, ultimately, leads out of this quagmire.

BOUYER

Bouyer’s account of mystery drew heavily on Casel:

the discovery of the work of Dom Odo Casel, the great liturgist, theologian and spiritual guide of the Abbey of Maria Laach, had at once filled me with delight. I can compare this only with what Newman had to say about his own initiation into the philosophy of the great Christian thinkers of Alexandria, Clement and Origen. Casel’s notion of a ‘mystery religion’ developing spontaneously as Greco-Latin paganism became ready for the revelation of the Gospel, becoming at once a sort of envelope for rites as well as for ideas, and so enabling humanity to make fully its own God’s utterly supernatural gift, this notion not only filled me with enthusiasm but literally dazzled me.

Casel’s view of things...was not so much contradicted as reorganized on a quite different level.¹¹²

But this is to present it backwards. The first paragraph of the introduction, immediately before this quotation, speaks of two ‘intuitions about apparently independent topics’ about which it eventually ‘became obvious’ that ‘there was here only one problem.’ The second of these ‘intuitions’ is ‘that there is a Christian experience which, not alongside Christian faith, still less going beyond it, leads to a personal meeting with God, a union with God in Christ’: in other words, that there is a distinctly Christian mysticism.¹¹³

It is to this claim that the majority of the book is given. Bouyer gives a preliminary sketch of his understanding of “mystery” in St. Paul, which signifies three telescoping ideas: the overall design of God for His creation, apparently (but not really) obscured in the Fall; the recapitulation of that creation in the cross of Christ; and our participation by faith in this latter, which becomes participation in the former. None of this is found *in embryo* in the pagan mysteries; indeed, Bouyer has refuted Casel’s history

¹¹¹For a while an *apologia* for Casel featured in the literature of the liturgical movement, (Thus Charles Davis, *Liturgy and Doctrine*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1966, Ch. 5 expounds Casel’s doctrine excellently; but Davis would later go on to criticise him for being unpastoral: Reid, *The organic development of the Liturgy*, p. 111) but his star faded quickly: the otherwise excellent *T & T Clark companion to liturgy* mentions him only in passing, without a single article devoted to Mystery theology. And yet for a while it was *the* controversy which exercised liturgists!

¹¹²Louis Bouyer, *The Christian mystery, From pagan myth to Christian mysticism*, London: T & T Clark, 2004, pp. 1, 2.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p. 2.

so many times¹¹⁴ the treatment is rather light here.¹¹⁵ The mysteries are simply disappointing: even their hopes are vague, and their reality quite unattractive. They are only *retrodictably* a preparation for the gospel, and that by hinting at promises they manifestly could not supply.¹¹⁶ Thus Bouyer traces the *Christian* mystery to a completely different source: biblical apocalypticism. Whereas the pagan mysteries had awoken a *general* sense of the cosmic, and an instinct for ritual to find one's place in it, the apocalyptic writings discovered the direct action of God in history.¹¹⁷ It was Christ Himself, Bouyer claims, who tied up these strands when he explained 'the mystery of the Kingdom' by fulfilling (albeit unexpectedly) the prophets;¹¹⁸ and most explicitly by his death, whereby as second—final—Adam he restored the cosmos to its proper, dependent, harmony, a harmony which the Church now realises, both here and now by her sacraments, and also ultimately, for 'in representing to God in the Eucharist, day by day, the salvific death of his Son, we hasten his final coming'.¹¹⁹

Bouyer has corrected Casel by realising that the liturgy is a special case of something more general: Christian mysticism. Indeed, the liturgy is only Mystery *because* it participates in the general redemptive action of God and *because*, as ritual, it is able to bring those who partake in it to that which it signifies. On this analysis the controversy over the Mystery breaks down. There can be no possible conflict between Sacrifice and Mystery—not only because the Mass is not *merely* Mystery, but more fundamentally, because the Mystery is ultimately Sacrifice!¹²⁰ A minimalist account of the Liturgy has, in fact, yielded a thorough grounding for a cosmic mysticism. For Bouyer's Mystery is *paradigmatically* present in the Liturgy (as developed at length in *Le Mystère Pascal*), but the Liturgy is only one avenue of approach, and ultimately its ritual participation is designed to provoke and nurture a response of the whole person. In some cases this is explicit:

Lastly it was Edith Stein, a convert from Judaism, by way of Husserl's phenomenology, as leading us back to objectivity – in the sense of submitting to the supreme object of our subjectivity as we approach the gospel, perpetually alive for us through the nourishing of our faith by the liturgy – who was to give the philosophico-theological justification of this evangelical and Pauline mysticism. She did so in language well suited to our time, before witnessing to its truth by martyrdom.¹²¹

¹¹⁴Bouyer had already given exactly the same argument we cover here in Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1962, pp. 93ff., where he explicitly points out that the pagan mysteries *were* the rites, whereas the Christian Mystery is *participated in* by the rite. Cf. Louis Bouyer, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 2nd ed., Paris: Cerf, 1965, pp. 16ff; the most emphatic treatment is in Louis Bouyer, *The Liturgy Revived, A doctrinal commentary on the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy*, Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1965, Chs. 1–2.

¹¹⁵Bouyer, *The Christian mystery*, 35f. ¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 73–4. ¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, Ch. 6. ¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, Ch. 7.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 100, 108.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 287–92. Bouyer refers (p. 290) to the sacrifice/meal controversy between 'integrists and progressives' after the council, dismissing it as failure by both sides to recognise that sacrifices *are* meals. See Louis Bouyer, *Gnôsis, La connaissance de Dieu dans l'Écriture*, Cerf, 1988, Ch. 2, where Bouyer explicitly contrasts sacrifice as propitiatory suffering (leading to 'all those dolorist and masochist imaginings' whereby 'the decay of faith' at the end of the middle ages was to follow the lead 'sketched by St. Anselm' and which has reached its apogee in Girard: p. 38) with sacrifice as *devotion*, giving-over of the sacrificed to God. Thus Bouyer considers the sacrifice of the Eucharist in exactly the same way that he (and all writers of spirituality) speak of "sacrificing" some good, or "the need ultimately to make a sacrifice of everything." (This idea is particularly prominent in Bouyer's spirituality, albeit remaining entirely free from the instrumental and quasi-gnostic sense the notion takes on in Balthasar, and without any dolorism whatsoever.) It is worth noting that this idea is not so very foreign to St. Anselm, for whom *obedience* is the key element in satisfaction.

¹²¹Bouyer, *The Christian mystery*, pp. 258–9.

Cosmos

This cosmological mysticism was elaborated at length. The means of approach are many—biblical, dogmatic, poetic (Bouyer gives extremely perceptive summary judgements of a range of latin, french and english poets¹²²)—but the reality is one: a cosmic mysticism grounded in a cosmic liturgy:

Le premier, et le plus important caractère qui soit commun a leur pensée, et qu'ils doivent directement à la continuation vivante de la tradition des prophètes et des voyants apocalyptiques dans la tradition de la synagogue, c'est que le monde entier, vu comme s'épanouissant a l'entour du monde angélique, du monde intelligible — disons mieux : personnel —, est un monde essentiellement liturgique. Tout le cosmos, dans cette perspective juive et chrétienne, apparaît comme étant d'abord, dans le plan même de la Sagesse éternelle tendant a sa réalisation à travers toute l'histoire cosmique, une célébration de la gloire créée a travers le temps de la création.¹²³

This cosmic liturgy, 'stamped on the façades of the ancient western churches',¹²⁴ is both a participation in and the paradigmatic form of the underlying *élan* of the world to which cosmic *mysticism* responds. At Mass, for instance, angels really *do* bear the Gifts before the Divine Majesty—and yet the angelic presence in the world is always constant, if normally invisible.¹²⁵

We lack the space for a proper consideration of Bouyer's theories here, and in any case they are somewhat peripheral. What is important, though, is that precisely because the liturgical context is paradigmatic it does not in fact dominate. Doctrinal and above all biblical reflection is able to run its course without needing any artificial synthesis because it is elaborated always in reference to its lived, liturgical integration. Thus for Bouyer the liturgy is paradigmatic, but secondary. It is the action of God which is primary; the liturgy is valuable exactly insofar as it brings us to that action, and unhelpful exactly insofar as it fails to do so. Since it has to do this—like the rest of the Church's action—in a world marred by sin, it makes use of many techniques each of which is capable of becoming an end in itself, but which have arisen generally for reasons wiser than those of their would-be reformers. For this reason Bouyer is able *both* to criticise the rise of extra-liturgical devotions *and* to advocate their continuation (with adjustments)¹²⁶ both to extol translation and to insist on the preservation of Latin (lest "understanding" be taken to mean "verbal understanding");¹²⁷ both to extol active participation and to insist on silence;¹²⁸ both to reject any great significance in various "mysterious" details which have arisen in various times, and to point to their pragmatic necessity:

All that remains true of these remarks, grouped together artificially into an apparently coherent whole, is that the influx of recent converts with more or less sufficient (or insufficient) formation led the clergy, naturally enough, to emphasise, tangibly, as it were, the respect due to the sacred rites, indicating their distinction from merely practical usages, from eating and hydrotherapy. The recent abandonment among us of such precautions has shown all too quickly what an evaporation of faith results from it, through a failure to recognise, in the actions of the Constantinian

¹²²Louis Bouyer, *Cosmos, Le Monde et la gloire de Dieu*, Paris: Cerf, 1982, Ch. 17. ¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 323. ¹²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 325. ¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 237ff. ¹²⁶return to this on page 181. ¹²⁷Bouyer, *The Liturgy Revived*, p. 95. ¹²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 72–3.

clergy, a simple proof of pastoral good sense, to which only armchair liturgists could remain blind.¹²⁹

Transposed into the real of liturgy this is the same intentional stance which Lubac took to symbolic exegesis or Daniélou to the historical mysticism of the Fathers. Without having worked it out formally Bouyer operates with the same theory of Tradition as Blondel (or Congar): God acts in the life of the Church, and thus in the record of that life and its self-interpretation we find the surest access to the faith. The difference is that where Congar puts the accent on the theological theory (his account of Tradition, like his ecclesiology, is thoroughly christocentric) and Blondel on the (second-order) reflection, Bouyer's concern is the first-order encounter and response. Where *Ressourcement* is concerned to bring spirituality back into theology, Bouyer is more concerned to bring theology into spirituality (above all in liturgy), as something not absent but obscured.¹³⁰ In Bouyer, then, we find a consistent traditional universe, grounded in the specific Mystery at the heart of the Eucharist as mediated by the Liturgy, illuminating a cosmos which looks remarkably like the world as seen from *Catholicisme*. Unsurprisingly we find Bouyer involved in the common response after the crisis: *Notre foi*¹³¹ carries popular essays (of no particular substance) by Congar, Bouyer and Daniélou, whilst Bouyer joined Lubac (despite fearing his name would sink the project) in forming *Communio*. But beyond this the interactions are minimal. Bouyer fell foul of one of Daniélou's hasty reviews¹³² and responded in kind, but Daniélou declined to take the controversy further.¹³³ There are occasional citations; at times they met. Lubac and Bouyer shared a friendship with Balthasar. Daniélou's *L'avenir de la religion*¹³⁴ is strikingly similar (if, for once, calmer) to *La décomposition du Catholicisme*. But if Lubac (and Daniélou, and with considerable reserves, Congar) and Bouyer agree on the world, their sense of this cosmological mysticism are very different. Bouyer's finds its home in the Liturgy. Lubac's—whilst remaining his own—finds an echo in the bizarre speculations of Teilhard. I thus turn to this confluence, and show by exclusion just how essential the role of the Liturgy is in keeping theology grounded.

Failed cosmological mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin

Recent scholarship on *Ressourcement* has simply tended to ignore Teilhard altogether. Boersma's excellent book mentions him once, in a footnote, to point out that Labourdette's scattergun anti-Fourvière essay mentioned him alongside Balthasar.¹³⁵ A recent "sourcebook" mentions him seven times, twice from this essay, once from the response, twice in Garrigou-Lagrange's 'La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?', and once in a passing reference in an essay by Daniélou.¹³⁶ Another recent collection has one brief essay devoted to him—but it is concerned to show that his "cosmic" theology

¹²⁹Bouyer, *The Christian mystery*, pp. 162–4 (164).

¹³⁰In doing so he is perfectly willing to play fast and loose with terminology, so long as the underlying liturgical or biblical framework is left intact, whence Cdl. Lustiger's observation: *il était le moins conformiste des théologiens, et parmi les plus traditionnels*.

¹³¹A.C. Renard et al., *Notre foi*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1967.

¹³²Jean Daniélou, 'À propos d'une Introduction à la vie spirituelle', *Études* 307 (Feb. 1961), pp. 270–4.

¹³³Louis Bouyer, 'Réponse à Jean Daniélou', *Études* 308 (Mar. 1961), pp. 411–5.

¹³⁴Daniélou, *L'avenir de la religion*.

¹³⁵Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology*, p. 28n1.

¹³⁶Patricia Kelly, ed., *Ressourcement Theology, A Sourcebook*, London: T&T Clark, 2020, pp. 67, 68, 76, 84, 95, 106, 113.

can be seen as (and, implicitly, largely replaced with) an attempt to retrieve a patristic view of creation, and has in fact little to say about any of the themes dear to Teilhard—his evolutionism, the omega point, the cosmic Christ.¹³⁷ The *British Teilhard Network* still exists, but the lectures it sponsors are frequently only tangentially connected (if at all) to Teilhard. Studies on Teilhard are still published, but are mostly either devotional¹³⁸ or ecological;¹³⁹ where they engage with the physical sciences they are frequently highly confused.¹⁴⁰ And yet Lubac devoted *three* books to Teilhard; the first two, it is true, on orders from his superiors, but the third after Teilhard's death, when presumably he was no longer in danger of condemnation; published his correspondence, responded sharply to Maritain's criticism of him, and generally behaved as though Teilhard's ideas were not only worthy of respect in themselves but in some sense coextensive with his own.

There are several reasons for this silence. In the first place, Teilhard's science is nineteenth-century in subject and emphatically nineteenth-century in content. One would be hard pressed today to get any serious controversy going about evolution; one would be hard pressed to find a social Darwinist. The *world* of Teilhard, like that of St. George Mivart which it followed, is gone, and the speculations of both are treated more as a category mistake than a doubtful hypothesis.¹⁴¹ Likewise with Teilhard's urgent campaign to secure Catholic belief in evolution (lest the faith find itself once again embarrassed by science): is there a Catholic theologian today who doesn't believe in physical evolution? is there a theologian whose belief amounts to anything? Then there is the sheer impenetrability of his prose, replete with neologisms. None the less, it is not sufficient to write him off for any of these reasons if one claims to present an account of *Ressourcement's* self-understanding—which clearly, in Lubac's case at least, involved Teilhard.

Teilhard

Teilhard is a frustrating writer, and I am not best placed to expound his thought.¹⁴² At times he says things which are demonstrably wrong, such as that 'something appearing to us as vitally necessary' proves that it will happen,¹⁴³ or that scientific observations are actually observations of the observing subject;¹⁴⁴ or states as facts things which are highly dubitable, such as that Man is necessarily the *axe et flèche*

¹³⁷'The Traditionalist malgré lui, Teilhard de Chardin and Ressourcement', *Ressourcement, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. by Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, Oxford: OUP, 2012, pp. 111–24.

¹³⁸James W. Skehan, *Praying With Teilhard De Chardin*, St Mary's Press, 2000; Blanche Gallagher, *Meditations with Teilhard de Chardin*, Santa Fe: Bear, 1988.

¹³⁹Author Fabel and Donald St. John, eds., *Teilhard in the 21st century, The emerging spirit of earth*, Maryknoll: Orbis; Celia Deane-Drummond, *Pierre Teilhard De Chardin on People and Planet*, London: Routledge, 2006.

¹⁴⁰Lothar Schäfer, 'The Emergence of Consciousness in Biological Evolution and Quantum Reality', *Teilhard and the Future of Humanity*, ed. by Thierry Meynard, New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, pp. 109–34. Schäfer entirely misunderstands wave functions (p. 110), argues from a misunderstanding of nonlocality to a kind of panpsychism (p. 111) and takes a rhetorical comment by Eddington about 'the Natural and the Supernatural' at face value. (p. 113)

¹⁴¹For this now forgotten controversy, see Christopher Olaf Blum, 'St. George Mivart, Catholic Natural Philosopher', PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame, Apr. 1996.

¹⁴²The devastating judgement of Medawar (Peter Medawar, 'The phenomenon of Man (Review)', *Mind* 70.a [1961]) seems correct: 'the greater part of it...is nonsense, tricked out with a variety of metaphysical conceits, and its author can be excused of dishonesty only on the grounds that before deceiving others he has taken great pains to deceive himself.'

¹⁴³Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le phénomène humain*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1956, p. 259.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 25–7.

of Evolution.¹⁴⁵ When he opines directly on doctrine he can be straightforwardly heretical: his eschatology, for instance, is suspect:

Speaking in terms of energy, we have to recognize that Christ intervenes today at exactly the right moment not only to save Man from revolt against Life, justifiably prompted by the mere threat, the mere suspicion, of a total death – but also to give him that most forceful stimulus without which, it would appear, Thought cannot attain the planetary term of its Reflection.

By which abuse of words Teilhard refers to the consummation of the noosphere at the Omega Point. But he goes on:

It is Christ, in very truth, who saves, – but should we not immediately add that at the same time it is Christ who is saved by Evolution?

It was these privately circulated notes which led to Teilhard's first exile;¹⁴⁶ the *monitum* of 1962 against his works *pratermisso iudicio de his quae ad scientias positivas pertinent* (which is only right and proper—but a pity, as Teilhard's science is poor) complains that *in materia philosophica ac theologica* there are quite enough *ambiguitatibus, immo etiam gravibus erroribus, ut catholicam doctrinam offendant*.¹⁴⁷ Issuing a *monitum* was unlikely to please anybody, and in the event Teilhard studies had a brief career, even making school textbooks,¹⁴⁸ before falling into the obscurity in which they are today.

¹⁴⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *Le phénomène humain*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁶ Specifically his suggestions on human origins and Original Sin. Teilhard distinguished two means of accommodating the faith to palaeontology: either an original couple were at some point endowed with an immortal soul, and left no traces, or the Fall happened in some other plane. The former is difficult since a. many presume multiple origin and b. death and decay are a natural part of evolution, Fall or no Fall. Thus he favours the latter, making the fall ultimately the natural condition of imperfect evolution, (*l'inévitable chance du Mal*: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Comment je crois*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969, p. 53) to be overcome by Christ who perfects creation.

Understandably this got him into trouble with Rome and he was required to sign six propositions, the fourth of which affirmed monogenesis whilst acknowledging that it had not been defined: this proposition was to cause Teilhard much suffering, but in the end he signed them all and the matter was more or less closed *pro tempore*. Such the facts; but Grumett and Bentley also suggest (on the strength of very remote witness) that the Holy Office drafted the six propositions and that the whole affair was a political sop to the integrists to offset Pius XI's *rapprochement* with the French state. (David Grumett and Paul Bentley, 'Teilhard de Chardin, Original Sin, and the Six Propositions', *Zygon* 53.2 [2018], pp. 303–330) This last idea (derived from Fouilloux) is presented with no evidence whatsoever except that it explains conduct the authors clearly consider otherwise unintelligible. Kemp demonstrates the absence of any documentary evidence for the involvement of the Office and questions the claims of injustice (pointing out for good measure that the translations of the original are not beyond reproach); (Kenneth W. Kemp, 'Teilhard de Chardin, the "Six Propositions", and the Holy Office', *Zygon* 54.4 [2019], pp. 932–53) Grumett responds very much at cross-purposes with a (probably naive) confidence in testimonial evidence and thorough muddling of the issues. (David Grumett, 'Teilhard, the Six Propositions, and Human Origins: A Response', *Zygon* 54.4 [2019], pp. 954–64)

Again we see (as with Schultenover) the strange unintelligibility of the clash of ideas to contemporary scholars.

¹⁴⁷ *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*, Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962, ark:/13960/t3716pf9v, p. 526.

¹⁴⁸ *Chez un grand savant comme Teilhard de Chardin (!) les données de l'évolution constituent une véritable propédeutique à une philosophie chrétienne de l'histoire* (and thence an acceptance of the whole faith). (André Vergez and Denis Huisman, *Cours de Philosophie*, Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1990, p. 415)

The same textbook contains an excerpt from a book by Claude Tresmontant which presents the following "argument" for the existence of God: the world is in continuous evolution, with every step gaining information. This information is not contained in the previous steps. Where, then, does it come from? God. (*ibid.*, p. 402) This rather muddled version of the argument from design is remarkable in that—like

Nonetheless Teilhard's ideas are not unintelligible. For our purposes at any rate they reduce to two claims, one cosmological and the other historical. Cosmologically, the universe is governed by two processes, physical disintegration and its inverse, biological evolution. Evolution is the apparent miracle whereby the second law of thermodynamics (of whose existence Teilhard was apparently unaware) is overcome, and order comes out of chaos. But this is order is not merely a reversal, but a transcendence: from mere matter comes life ("biosphere"), from life comes consciousness ("noosphere"), a consciousness which reaches its apex in man, but extends backwards to the elementary particles (Teilhard frequently appeals to a kind of Bergsonian panpsychism). Historically this process calls for and moves towards a moment of complete unity, the "omega point." But the closer it gets, the more *personal* it becomes—matter gives rise to spirit, spirit to personality and personal love. Thus the end-point of the noosphere is another transcendence, this time to the "christosphere" and it is Christ—the Cosmic Christ—who is this point, who in his Person unites in his Mystical Body the whole of creation (*pace* the damned¹⁴⁹). Scientifically, of course, this is nonsense. But theologically it is only confused. Teilhard is quite right—as Lubac never tired of pointing out¹⁵⁰ to insist that St Paul attributes, really and not metaphorically, a *cosmic* role to the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Moreover he is quite right to see the Mass as both expressing and mystically working out this cosmic rebirth.¹⁵¹ Again, Lubac is quite right when he points out that Teilhard had a great love for the Tradition and sought to be traditional.¹⁵² The trouble—aside from the highly dubious character of Teilhard's science on strictly scientific terms, which vitiates any attempt to hold him as a model for Catholic engagement with scientific enquiry¹⁵³—is that he inadvertently adopts the method of the Modernists, re-casting the tradition in a new (and highly unsatisfactory) mould. To show this exhaustively would be tedious; far more interesting is how *invisible* it is in Lubac's defence of him.

Lubac does not speak Teilhardese. His interest in Teilhard was chiefly as an apologist, as he wrote to his superiors:

I have no scientific training and I am not really *au courant* of contemporary philosophy. Thus I can only do my best to encourage...

Fr. Teilhard de Chardin is a life scientist of the first rank. His work is of the greatest importance apologetically: indeed it is today indispensable. Building on the data of science itself, by an original argumentation (far more methodological than some of his critics admit) he leads contemporary Man (whose mentality is entirely scientific, frequently to the point of scientism) to recognise the unique status of Man in the universe, the reality of the mind, the transcendence of God, and the necessity of the Church to bring the world Christ and his charity.¹⁵⁴

Teilhard—it completely ignores (i) the second law of thermodynamics, and (ii) the fact that the theory of evolution is supposed to *provide* a source for this "information" *other* than God (whether the theory succeeds here is a different question, but one cannot simply pretend it has not tried).

¹⁴⁹Henri de Lubac, *The Faith of Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. from the French by René Hague, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, pp. 60–1.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 14ff.

¹⁵¹"Messe sur le monde" Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymne de l'univers*, Seuil, 1961, pp. 19ff. Teilhard, unable to celebrate, endeavoured a kind of "spiritual Mass" by analogy with "spiritual communion", imagining the labours of the world offered up (21) whilst "Fire" descends from heaven, entering everything at Communion (33).

¹⁵²De Lubac, *The Faith of Teilhard de Chardin*, p. 4.

¹⁵³Medawar notes his confusion of the term *energy*: matter, time and evolution could be added.

¹⁵⁴De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, p. 272.

But Teilhard was apologetically useful *because* of his cosmology. His science was his mysticism;¹⁵⁵ because his scientific cosmology was mystical. This was how he hoped to demonstrate the necessary existence of God,¹⁵⁶ but also how he hoped to answer what he diagnosed as the fundamental malaise of modernity: insignificance before the universe. His solution, Lubac insists, is not to divinise the world itself—*pace* phrases like “christian pantheism” deployed for effect—but to show it as supplicant.¹⁵⁷ ‘If so many souls have been touched by his message, it is perhaps primarily because he knows how again to make of the universe a Temple.’¹⁵⁸

The trouble is not the (laudable) end, but the means: can Teilhard really escape (as Lubac asserts) the charge of gnosticism or pantheism merely by pleading a *sui generis* scientific vocabulary? (Particularly when that vocabulary is scientific in name only.) And even if so, what is the end result of this re-elaboration of the faith in a novel and untested language? How is it to *incorporate* its converts into the “Roman stock”¹⁵⁹ which Teilhard still claimed essential?¹⁶⁰

This can be seen even internally. Shorn of its liturgical context, mysticism is unbounded. Commenting on Teilhard’s simply bizarre *L’Éternel féminin*¹⁶¹ Lubac—accurately, but apparently without demur—sets out Teilhard’s intention: to present the ‘element of union, of fecundation and spiritualization – ultimately of “virginization”’ thereby considering “chastity in relation to the cosmos”¹⁶²—since the celibate (confused here, but not always, with the chaste) is free from the grasping of Eros by the “metaphysical principle” of union (which is in fact Agape). Nygren’s terminology is not used (Bouyer, however, was aware of it) but the idea, when stated thus, is neither terribly new nor terribly interesting. What Teilhard laboriously constructs (and Lubac laboriously analyses) is the performative attempt to *show* by poetry what elsewhere he tries to show by prose-poetry. This is not, in fact, theology at all, but mysticism, trying to present the mystical insight. Unfortunately like all purely private mysticisms it comes with a lot of baggage. (Teilhard’s account of femininity is at once too close to his *idéal féminine* and too general to make comfortable reading.) Likewise, it is perfectly true that Teilhard’s mystical theology of marriage is not wholly without merit.¹⁶³ But what is good in it is much better expressed elsewhere, and what is strange in it is probably better not expressed. Again, above all it lacks any *context*: neither textually nor practically does it sit in any ascetic or catechetical tradition.

Liturgical and Aliturgical Cosmic Mysticism

It is this lack of traditional inheritance which ultimately sinks Teilhard and vitiates Lubac’s hope in him. As a matter for practical apologetics Teilhardianism was never

¹⁵⁵Henri de Lubac, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. from the French by René Hague, London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1967, 14ff.

¹⁵⁶Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard Explained*, trans. from the French by Anthony Buono, New York: Paulist, 1968, pp. 50ff. Lubac once again shows his ignorance: ‘Is [Teilhard’s] theory of Hominization absolutely proven?’

¹⁵⁷De Lubac, *The Faith of Teilhard de Chardin*, Ch. 4. ¹⁵⁸Jean Lacroix: *ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁹De Lubac, *Teilhard Explained*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁰Criticism was not lacking. Most interesting—albeit provoking Lubac’s ire, particularly as only one text is cited—is Maritain’s irenic portrayal of Teilhard as an inadvertent coiner of false money and gnostic, albeit *personally* believing. In Maritain’s judgement Teilhard ultimately converted in despite of his theories. Maritain, *Le paysan de la Garonne*.

¹⁶¹Here, once again, I can only underline the strange *sensibleness* of Bouyer’s treatment of the question.

¹⁶²Henri de Lubac, *The Eternal Feminine*, trans. from the French by René Hague, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, p. 18.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, Ch. 3.

as useful as Lubac hoped¹⁶⁴ and is long since without appeal. If a general tendency to complain about “Teilhardianism” without having read him (as Lefebvre’s *J’accuse le concile* complained of a “Teilhardian spirit”¹⁶⁵) still features it is, like the interminable nature-grace debate, a set-piece battle establishing a narrative more than a serious attack on a dangerous enemy. But even without this Teilhard is unable to fulfil the cosmological role Lubac clearly seeks. It is not merely that Teilhard’s cosmology is either too metaphorical or too literal. Even if it were not either heterodox or irrelevant it would still be elaborated *in virtue of* something else. Teilhard (and Lubac) were in theory aware of this, whence the constant references to ‘eucharistising’ the world. But it seems never to have occurred to either that the relationship between liturgy and cosmology should be more than private mystical insight. Teilhard may imagine crucible-chalices, but the actual words and gestures of the rite itself are treated purely rubrically.

And yet Lubac clearly *does* feel the need for some kind of mystical cosmology to complete and integrate his own insights. Nor was he the only *Ressourcement* figure to find his theology pushing at the boundaries of practical mysticism.¹⁶⁶ The deeper problem with Teilhard, and thus with Lubac was, as Bouyer saw, the loss of the symbolic. In theory Catholic exegesis—dogmatic and biblical—should never have been literalist. In reality textualism was mistaken for orthodoxy. It was only a matter of time before the inverse error emerged, and rather than trying to make reality conform to a slavish reading of texts never intended to exhaust it—Bouyer has in mind the whole theological endeavour (not merely Genesis)—one should try to find doctrine in a secular discourse which had meanwhile developed wholly independently and for quite different ends, falsifying both the old claim and the new language in the process.¹⁶⁷

Yet—and Bouyer points out that he is almost unique in this—Lubac himself saw this: the whole point of *Exégèse Médiévale* was to draw attention to the enormous,

¹⁶⁴Lubac appears unaware, for instance, of the foolishness of Teilhard taking up arms against Einstein in 1930: de Lubac, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, p. 162.

¹⁶⁵Yves Chiron, *Histoire des traditionalistes*, Paris: Tallandier, 2022, p. 300.

¹⁶⁶In this regard it is interesting to note another figure with indisputably *Ressourcement* origins: Matthew Fox, *quondam* OP, and student of Chenu in 1968. Fox—whose fundamental distinction between “creation spirituality” (which he claims to “recover”) and “redemption spirituality” (which he execrates) is apparently based on a distinction by Chenu between a “spirituality of redemption” and “of creation” in the bible (Bouyer makes exactly this distinction, albeit with precisely the inverse significance: Bouyer, *Woman and Man with God*, p. 62)—would be irrelevant, were it not that his highly unorthodox mysticism not only draws on a *Ressourcement* vocabulary, but is aimed at filling more or less the same aesthetic gap, albeit unconventionally, by means of novel spiritual practices. (Fox’s liturgiology is not incomparable to Bouyer’s.) He laments the anthropocentrism of much post-conciliar worship, its absence of silence and its rejection of this mystery which the Old Rite had handed on without expounding into participation; the trouble is that worship is not consciously “cosmic” enough. (Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ, The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, pp. 212, 219, 220) The diagnosis and the vocabulary are roughly parallel. But whereas Teilhard’s “cosmic” differed from Bouyer’s by its identification of the material universe and its (supposed) history with the κόσμος, thereby minimising the ascetic preparation needed to contemplate the divine order within the natural, Fox simply denies it outright and *identifies* the natural with the supernatural. It is unsurprising that his “cosmic masses” (originally “planetary masses”, they ‘evolved’ to “techno-cosmic” and then “cosmic masses” as the vernacular shifted) bear little resemblance to anything *Ressourcement* authors would recognise, or even to Christian worship. (A description: Maggie Shannon, *The Way we Pray*, Berkeley: Conari Press, 2001, pp. 204ff.)

Nonetheless Fox clearly points to the need for some ritual *context* in which theology is to be handed on, and claims to draw this insight from Chenu (who certainly had nothing to do with experimental liturgies of this kind).

¹⁶⁷Bouyer, *Cosmos*, p. 241.

almost inexhaustible, symbolic potential of scripture, *which in turn demands a framework to make sense of it all*¹⁶⁸—or more precisely, a *context* to form the ‘eyes of faith’¹⁶⁹ which lay *behind* at times admittedly dubious theorising. We depend on this one way or another;¹⁷⁰ it would be better not to have to depend upon a defunct theory.

What Teilhard proposes is simply a new defunct cosmological theory for one old. His evolutionism is little better, scientifically speaking, than numerology. But his vision of a sacramentalised material cosmos (like that of the numerologists) is better than his theory. It was this shared *vision* which led Lubac to think his *theory* was useful, and to make occasional invocations of his anthropology.¹⁷¹ In all of this Lubac never proposes the concrete experience of the Liturgy. Teilhard’s mysticism *about* Mass is not expanded by the Mystery of the Mass; the ‘new eyes’ given in Baptism (*epthathal*) and trained in worship (*praestet fides supplementum / sensuum defectui*) are ultimately an irreducible phenomenon Lubac never tries to explain. What Lubac thought he found theoretically in Teilhard is really present in the concrete celebration of the Liturgy; but cosmological mystagogy was a retrieval too far even for *Ressourcement*.

Conclusion: Silence—the condition of hearing

In a formula at once richly suggestive and frustratingly unelaborated, Lossky applies a saying of St. Ignatius of Antioch to the problem of Tradition:

If again we wished to oppose it to all that belongs to the reality of the Word, it would be necessary to say that the Tradition is Silence. “He who possesses in truth the word of Jesus can hear even its silence (τῆς ἡσυχίας αὐτοῦ ἀκούειν)”, says St. Ignatius of Antioch. As far as I know this text has never been used in the numerous studies which quote patristic passages on the Tradition in abundance, always the same passages, known by everyone....

The faculty of hearing the silence of Jesus, attributed by St. Ignatius to those who in truth possess His word, echoes the reiterated appeal of Christ to his hearers: “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The words of Revelation have then a margin of silence which cannot be picked up by the ears of those who are outside.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸Lubac takes a deliberately extreme example: numerology played a great part in the rendering the Trinity plausible. Whilst discarding the methodology we must preserve the underlying sense of fittingness, or we imperil the doctrine. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale, Les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, vol. 2.2, Paris: Aubier, 1964, pp. 7–8.

¹⁶⁹Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale, Les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, vol. 1.2, Paris: Aubier, 1959, pp. 524–5.

¹⁷⁰‘The role of this exegesis escapes us today, not because it was unimportant, but because it was perfectly fulfilled.’ Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit, L’intelligence de l’Écriture d’après Origène*, Théologie 16, Paris: Aubier, 1950, p. 378.

¹⁷¹David Grummett, ‘Eucharist, Matter and the Supernatural, Why de Lubac Needs Teilhard’, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10.2 (Apr. 2008), pp. 165–178, Grummett shows that there are *prima facie* reasons to think Lubac’s sacramental vision was at times developed in conversation with Teilhard, that Teilhard’s work tried to provide a cosmology, and that Lubac, by failing to reflect on the material cosmos, has little of any practical interest to say to postconciliar liturgical chaos. But I cannot see my way to accept his proposed use of Teilhard (Teilhard is far too incorrect to be useful for anything), or any purely theoretical addition to address a problem which stems from failing to submit one’s theories to the practical evaluation of the liturgy. It is perhaps unsurprising that Grummett’s account of Lubac’s thought it ultimately very different from mine.

¹⁷²Vladimir Lossky, ‘Tradition and Traditions’, Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, Second, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982, pp. 14–5.

This *silence* is, as Lossky's addition of the Greek underlines, anything but passive:¹⁷³ it is something which can be actively listened to (and thus one can fail to hear it), and the ability to do so correlates with the possession of the "ears to hear" which Our Lord seems to imply are the precondition for receiving anything he says at all. Tradition is unthinkable without one who is trained, formed to receive it; and this formation is both a part and a function of the Tradition itself. The Silence and the Word are, ultimately, one: the Tradition transmits not merely the totality of its traditions, or even some whole which is greater than the sum of its parts, but also the consciousness *that* it transmits both itself and the faculty of receiving it; or put differently, the mode of transmission of tradition is more like singing a part in a polyphonic motet than it is like withdrawing cash from an automatic telling machine.

At this point we can make a distinction between the natural problem of continuity, common to everything, and the theological form of the problem posed in the Church, whose sacramental life is more (not less) than merely natural. Granted, the problems of rupture and continuity apply in *any* human endeavour, and the solutions are the same in all cases—there is continuity in transmission whenever there is retrodictable and predictable identity across the chain of transmission, although the precise details of spelling out what counts as prediction and retrodiction in specific contexts is a matter for philosophy, and depends upon the communities involved. But the problem of continuity in the transmission of the Tradition is the problem of continuity in the life of the Church, and the life of the Church is the action of God in history; and thus *theologically* speaking the problem of transmission is bound up with that Mystery which the whole life of the Church, but especially the Liturgy, seeks to present *and to inculcate*. What the Liturgy tries to do—to present, and to draw us into, the saving action of God, accomplished *hapax* at Easter and yet continually renewed, and itself the pattern of *every* action of God and ultimately every action worthy of the name—is the solution to the problem of transmission. Not that the Liturgy is celebrated *in order* to hand on the Tradition (which would be as absurdly circular as if weddings were celebrated "in order to get married"), but because in celebrating the Liturgy the Church *is* handing on her Tradition—precisely because she invites us to become still and to learn to hear, in the silences of the liturgical action, the divine Voice behind everything.

What, then, if we were to begin again and place the liturgical context, not at the end of our account of Tradition, but at the beginning? What would Tradition look like if we turned to the Liturgy—not to its texts, but to the Liturgy itself—to answer the questions we have so laboriously worked out theoretically? Sokolowski's *Eucharistic presence*¹⁷⁴ is one attempt to do just that, and by studiously avoiding the elephant in the room highlights exactly what the problem is. For if we turn to the Liturgy, at any rate as generally experienced, we do *not* find the Tradition forming the eyes of faith with all our theology flowing from it: we find a heavily *re-made* rite, a great deal of politics, and above all a studious refusal to face the problem of rupture and development. Thus I turn at last to the crisis in the Church and her liturgical life.

¹⁷³*Hesychasm*—which more or less picks out the entire Eastern Monastic and Contemplative traditions—is of course derived from ἡσυχία.

¹⁷⁴Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic presence, A study in the theology of disclosure*, Washington: CUAP, 1994.

Ficus enim non florebit: et non erit germen in vineis.
Mentietur opus olivæ: et arva non afferent cibum.
Abscindetur de ovili pecus: et non erit armentum in præsepibus.
Ego autem in Domino gaudebo: et exultabo in Deo Iesu meo.

Friday at Laudes II

CHAPTER 6

Etiology of a Crisis

On a bouleversé le culte catholique, sous le prétexte de le rendre plus accessible aux masses « sécularisées » — en fait pour le rendre conforme aux dadas que les religieux étaient parvenus à imposer, de bon ou mauvais gré, aux autres clercs. Le résultat ne s'est pas fait attendre : une baisse subite de la pratique religieuse, variant entre vingt et quarante pour cent pour ce qui était des anciens pratiquants... mais aucune trace d'intérêt nouveau de la part des autres pour cette liturgie pseudo-missionnaire, et surtout pas des jeunes qu'on se flattait de gagner par ces turlupinades. Et pourtant, les enquêtes sociologiques, même faites par ceux qui souhaitaient qu'elles donnent des résultats tout opposés, sont là pour attester : la proportion des Français qui affirment croire en Dieu est aussi élevée qu'elle a jamais pu l'être à l'époque moderne, pour ne rien dire des époques précédentes, et même le nombre de ceux qui voient dans le Christ son grand révélateur ne parait pas avoir sensiblement bougé. Par contre — et comme on les comprend! — l'Eglise, cette Eglise qui se veut comme jamais « en ouverture », « en dialogue », n'a jamais eu aussi mauvaise presse auprès des Français : ce qui veut dire qu'ils n'ont jamais été aussi dégoûtés par « les curés » que depuis que ceux-ci proclament qu'ils n'ont plus aucun désir d'apporter au monde ce qu'il ne posséderait pas déjà.

Bouyer, *Religieux et clercs contre Dieu*

Ressourcement sought to retrieve Spirituality and reunite it with Theology, but never noticed that this programme was ineluctably liturgical if it was to be ecclesial. Theology instead has been largely reduced to eclecticism; re-written Spirituality is already dated; whilst Liturgy, far from forming a bond of continuity, has been entirely remade to the tastes of a small intelligentsia. Only one thing remains constant: the triumph of extrincisism. Our ruined Liturgy canonises the destructive attitude which had not yet managed to destroy the old Liturgy: the same attitude which refused to face the Modernist question (and thereby left its assumptions unquestioned); which had little time for mystery and none for experience (making the faith a mere deduction); the self-supporting apparatus of mere assertion: *Roma locuta, causa finita*.

These claims are too strong to demonstrate here, although it is a hardy opponent who denies that *something* has gone wrong. I confine myself to sketching a minimal version: (i) there *has been* a rupture in liturgical tradition, which it is at least reasonable to correlate with sociological collapse; (ii) the *Novus Ordo* represents discontinuity in

intentional tradition, exactly where sociological harm might be expected, and does so from a fundamental extrincisism which is shared by many of its opponents. But this is also the discontinuity *Ressourcement* saw coming and tried to address, and thus (iii) the solution, on *Ressourcement* lines, must lie with retrieving this connection in its traditional context—which requires retrieving the ancient liturgy.

Prologue: What rupture?

That there has even been a rupture is frequently denied. Already *Mysterium Fidei* could speak of the *Eucharisticae pietatis uberes fructus* which were ‘hoped’ to flow from liturgical reform—which had somehow made it necessary to issue an encyclical reaffirming the most basic Eucharistic doctrine.¹ This was not yet the *novus ordo*, but the forgotten edition of 1965. With the promulgation of the books of Paul VI this pattern became an authoritative style: documents would come from various congregations or even the See itself asserting in a few general phrases the glorious fruits of the reform, before devoting several pages to a catalogue of errors. Traditionalists were not slow to respond: “is it so very remarkable,” a typical letter from *Una Voce* asks (rather more respectfully) “that the CDF is obliged to insist on the importance of the word ‘soul’, when it has been entirely eliminated from the rite of the dead—seventy-eight references falling to a mere five, which appear to have survived by accident?”² Far more importantly, the pontiff explicitly rejected the argument I am putting forward. It is difficult to find anything positive to say about such statements as the following:

La riforma liturgica? Si possono ridurre a due categorie queste risposte. La prima categoria è quella delle risposte che notano una certa confusione, e perciò un certo fastidio: prima, dicono questi osservatori, si stava tranquilli, ciascuno poteva pregare come voleva, tutto era conosciuto circa lo svolgimento del rito; ora tutto è novità, sorpresa, cambiamento...

Non faremo la critica di queste osservazioni, perché dovremmo mostrare come esse rivelano scarsa penetrazione del senso dei riti religiosi, e lasciano intravedere non già una vera devozione e un vero senso del significato e del valore della santa Messa, ma piuttosto una certa indolenza spirituale, che non vuole spendere qualche sforzo personale d’intelligenza e di partecipazione per meglio comprendere e meglio compiere il più sacro degli atti religiosi, a cui siamo invitati, anzi obbligati ad associarci. Ripeteremo...: primo, che si produca al principio qualche confusione e qualche fastidio è inevitabile; è nella natura d’una riforma pratica, oltre che spirituale, di abitudini religiose inveterate e piamente osservate, produrre un po’ di sommovimento, non sempre a tutti piacevole; ma, secondo, una qualche spiegazione, una qualche preparazione, una qualche premurosa assistenza tolgono presto le incertezze e danno subito il senso ed il gusto d’un nuovo ordine. Perché, terzo, non si deve credere che dopo qualche tempo si ritornerà quieti e devoti o pigri, come prima; no, il nuovo ordine dovrà essere diverso, e dovrà impedire e scuotere la passività dei fedeli presenti alla santa Messa; prima bastava assistere, ora occorre partecipare; prima bastava la presenza, ora

¹Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, 1965.

²Leo Darroch, *Una Voce, The history of the foederatio internationalis una voca*, Leominster: Gracewing, 2017, pp. 421–3.

occorrono l'attenzione e l'azione; prima qualcuno poteva sonnecchiare e forse chiacchierare; ora no, deve ascoltare e pregare.³

Or again:

Nuovo rito della Messa: è un cambiamento, che riguarda una venerabile tradizione secolare, [=age-old] e perciò tocca il nostro patrimonio religioso ereditario, che sembrava dover godere d'un'intangibile fissità, e dover portare sulle nostre labbra la preghiera dei nostri antenati e dei nostri Santi, e dare a noi il conforto di una fedeltà al nostro passato spirituale, che noi rendevamo attuale per trasmetterlo poi alle generazioni venturose. Comprendiamo meglio in questa contingenza (!) il valore della tradizione storica e della comunione dei Santi. Tocca questo cambiamento lo svolgimento cerimoniale della Messa; e noi avvertiremo, forse con qualche molestia, che le cose all'altare non si svolgono più con quella identità di parole e di gesti, alla quale eravamo tanto abituati, quasi a non farvi più attenzione. Questo cambiamento tocca anche i fedeli, e vorrebbe interessare ciascuno dei presenti, *distogliendoli così dalle loro consuete devozioni personali, o dal loro assopimento abituale*.⁴

Pope Paul explicitly endorses the idea that continuity of tradition occurs at one remove from the monuments themselves, by abstracting their doctrinal content, and is thus perfectly compatible with a *prima facie* discontinuity in those means of transmission. It is obvious now that this is *sociologically* false (the chief effect of the liturgical upheavings after the council was to create the *impression* that everything was called into question) but this is merely incidental (it is perfectly thinkable that a less bungled reform would have led to exactly the same final texts without risking so much scandal). In any case none of this is what I mean by rupture. For a pope to indulge the idea that the faithful must suffer through Mass is startling, certainly, but the stated intention was hardly new, if the measures had become drastic. *Sacra igitur Liturgia catholicam fidem absolute suaque vi non designat neque constituit* declared Pius XII, reasonably enough given the adverb, but he added that the *lex credendi* establishes the *lex supplicandi*.⁵ (That this reversal of roles was intended to provide a criteria with which to dismiss apparently “successful” but theologically dubious experiments does not change the fact that the liturgy, for Pius as much as for Paul, was ultimately composed of a divine kernel and epiphenomenal devotions justified by their utility. The difference between the two popes was one of taste.)

Masses celebrated in the sea, or on “sacred” earth, or preceded by pagan rituals expelling spirits, or with confession replaced with deep breathing—to take only recent and easily verifiable examples—are not what I mean by rupture. Nor does the fact that the faithful, already attacked in 1965 for ‘spiritual laziness’, have largely stopped attending Mass, constitute a rupture. The sudden and precipitous drop in Sunday attendance immediately after the council had as much to do with the media-driven “spirit of the Council” and the general rending of certainties as it did with any changes in the liturgy: what had become an *obligation* no longer seemed to have that binding force which, apparently, had hitherto preserved it.⁶

³Paul VI, *Udienza Generale*, 17th Mar. 1965, My italics.

⁴Paul VI, *Udienza Generale*, 26th Nov. 1969, My italics. ⁵Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 1947.

⁶Pierre-Marie Berthe, ‘La chute de la pratique catholique en France autour de 1965 : le précepte dominical malmené’, *Revue historique* 701.1 (Feb. 2022), pp. 171–202.

These are not rupture, but its symptoms. At most they are scandalous; at best they are deviations of no importance, justly reprobated and forgotten. The rupture I am interested in, as Berthe's disquieting sociology demonstrates, cuts far deeper: it is the explicit canonisation of the ruinous divorce between *how* and *what*, between Spirituality and Theology, which both Modernists and Anti-Modernists took for granted. This rupture is with respect to the society of the Church and her symbolic life what Mary Douglas identified with respect to society in general and the anti-ritualism sweeping through the late sixties, or in her terms an attempt to draw both the axes of "grid" and "group" down to zero.

Rupture and Ritual: Theory

These terms come from a field at first glance unrelated: (sociological) anthropology. Douglas attacked the notion of an inevitable "progress" away from ritual; but this is hardly surprising for a social scientist. What makes her account interesting is that she attempted to establish what *social* features undergird both ritualism and anti-ritualism, and thus provides tentative grounds for correlating social and ritual failure.

Douglas establishes a reciprocal causality between the society in which ritual is played out, and the symbolism of the ritual itself. Societies do not become symbolic and thus create rituals; nor do elaborate rituals promptly engender a nuanced symbolic vocabulary. Either can exist without the other, but only in a state of decay, as ritual is either jettisoned or ossified.

This attitude to ritual stems from the fundamental decision made both by societies and individuals within that society: are social relations to be encoded hierarchically ("grid") or based on empathetic projection ("group")? Both are needed (Douglas places them on a (slightly dubious) quadrant diagram). Very broadly, "grid" gestures outwards, where "group", necessarily experiential, turns inwards. Sects and Milenarian movements spring from individual experience and try to sweep away the "rigid" structures holding back paradise on earth; but no large society can survive without structure, and "group" must either re-invent a (generally poorer) "grid", or suffer fissure and schism. More importantly, *religion* is remarkably impaired in "group" societies—which are distinctly anti-ritualistic. When the other world is not hinted at in the structured otherness of *this* world—or rather, when the social rituals of this world do not encode the distinctions which make possible the metaphysics of the other world—religion collapses into good works or disappears entirely. Not only is its structure inaccessible, the very patterns of bodily renunciation and discipline which, Douglas insists, underwrite all symbolism, disappear, promptly dragging down the symbolism itself and thereby impoverishing our discourse⁷—whence her harsh words for those who, cut off from the symbolism of the grid by their "group" upbringing, try to rob the masses (who have no such substitute) of them: 'it is as if the liturgical signal boxes were manned by colour-blind signalmen.'⁸ 'They can't take it, the Dutch bishops who issued this catechism and the open-minded English teachers who seize on it as a watered-down expression of a faith that has practically lost meaning for them. The mystery of the Eucharist is too dazzlingly magical for their impoverished symbolic perception. Like the pygmies...'⁹

Anti-ritualists around us who feel this excitement in the air, rather than

⁷Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 72, 87. ⁸*Ibid.*, p. 42. ⁹*Ibid.*, p. 49.

yield, should feel more practical compassion for the rootlessness and helplessness that inspire it. Then, instead of sweeping away little rituals, such as Friday abstinence, which shore up a sense of belonging and of roots, and instead of belittling the magic of priesthood and sacraments, they would turn their attention to repairing the defences of grid and group. How to humanize the machine is the problem, not how to symbolize its dehumanizing effects.¹⁰

Rupture and Ritual: Practice

That advice went unheeded. If the Church “would look rather foolish” without the laity, she is increasingly embarrassed today.¹¹ Among the various sociological causes for this postconciliar collapse, Bullivant singles out ritual change (Ch. 5), precisely because of the effects of ritual action on group identity. In this field, action was swift and deliberate. Already during the council Congar had suggested that one must *choose* between devotions and Mass,¹² since they competed for a limited amount of devotional attention. Thus alongside the new Mass, the old devotions were systematically eliminated,¹³ and the success of this elimination is still taken as proof of increase in devotion.¹⁴ The likely effect of such a policy is not only the apostasy of those whose faith was whittled away once the contexts which sustained it disappeared (or were destroyed), but the ending of social, “nominal” religion: the Catholicism of those who, whilst claiming not to believe themselves, would still bring their children for baptism, and be married and buried in Church. This is precisely what happened (Ch. 6). Indeed, what took the Reformers decades of savage persecution—the stamping out of lingering Catholic nostalgia¹⁵—was achieved remarkably bloodlessly in the space of only two decades.

Not that persecution was lacking. The atmosphere of repression and suspicion inherited from anti-Modernism made everything intractable: on the one hand the authorities had long confused *vis* with *auctoritas* and were accustomed to demanding *painful* obedience (extending, as we saw, to Paul VI); on the other, several generations of Catholics had been schooled to expose Modernists (when not denouncing Freemasons or Jews) and could hardly be expected to stop overnight. Nevertheless, the opposition was and is a decidedly mixed crowd.¹⁶ Not everyone, even early on, was a Lefebvrist; not every Lefebvrist was a political reactionary. But everyone could read the symbolism—only a few decades after the Occupation—of a resistance to increasingly unrestrained repression. One can still watch¹⁷ as a crowd breaks down the wall built to keep them out of a Church—armed with a battering ram and singing

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹¹Stephen Bullivant, *Mass Exodus, Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II*, Oxford: OUP, 2019, pp. 1–3, 265–70.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹³Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, 158ff; Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing, The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste*, New York: Crossroads, 1990.

¹⁴Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, p. 258; or more recently: *Eucharistic pilgrimage expected to 'restrict' adoration in Chicago archdiocese*, 14th Apr. 2023.

¹⁵Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

¹⁶For France, see Yves Chiron, *Histoire des traditionalistes*, Paris: Tallandier, 2022. Chiron is particularly adept at showing how the sudden suppression of the Old Rite led to an uneasy alliance of very disparate forces, with the old French Right of *action française* only one element in a fractious attempt to tell a convincing story of the chaos.

¹⁷*Traditional Catholics break down doors of locked church in Port Marly*, 1987.

Christus vincit. The proceeding events tell in miniature the story of a bungled reform: the Old Rite had continued here until the death of the parish priest; when the Bishop refused to allow it to continue, parishioners—copying the example of St Nicholas du Chardonnet (which remains occupied to this day)—occupied the Church and brought in a priest of their own, before they were violently evicted by riot police and the entrance bricked up.¹⁸

This is not merely political idiocy and a lack of pastoral provision, or rank disobedience to legitimate authority. These and countless other such incidents are themselves symbols, encoding and transmitting both rupture and defiance. If the objection of Cdl. Seper when John Paul II appeared inclined to permit the “experiment of Tradition”—“Holy Father! They make of this Mass a banner!”—is without merit (only a profound extrincisim could hold that political allegiance could *ipso facto* vitiate the entire Western liturgy), the laws of group identity make *any* contested ritual a political symbol. The two Roman Rites¹⁹ have, by the inevitable process of that very sociological symbolism whose denial lead to such widespread reform, become in many cases two distinct banners. Fortunately this harm, at least, is relatively easy to undo, as the experiment of *Summorum Pontificum* showed.

Theology and sociology

At this point in the argument an objection appears: even if we grant that Douglas’ theory has some explanatory power; and even if we grant, with Bullivant, that the vast majority of apostate Catholics have been driven away by unforced error (allowing that doing *nothing* would have been an error of a different kind²⁰), what has this got to do with theology? Plenty of poor political decisions have been taken by people whose ideas were perfect; plenty of excellent politics has lived alongside conceptual confusion.

To answer this I have to pare back the argument. It may well be that Douglas’ typology stands on its own terms. But I am ultimately unqualified to judge, and half a century tends to blunt any theory. Douglas is interesting here for two reasons: firstly, she was one of the first Catholic academics *outside* of the “usual” subjects—philosophy, theology, history—to raise the alarm, and sociology and anthropology have been the only fields *not* to be remotely surprised that a wholesale destruction of group identity should be followed by group disintegration. Unless we are, as she says, to be ‘inverted materialists’,²¹ denying *any* role to culture and society, we would do well not to spurn such insights.²² More importantly, though, Douglas’ account targets the *kind* of problem which is directly tractable by theology.²³ The relationship between external order—the logical order of the dogmatic treatise and the political order of ecclesiastical hierarchy—and internal experience is a theological problem: indeed,

¹⁸Richard Bernstein, ‘A french parish takes to barricades’, *New York Times* (26th Apr. 1987).

¹⁹For, objectively speaking, we are dealing with two distinct rites, each with its own liturgical culture. For pragmatic reasons Benedict XVI spoke of two forms of the same rite, but the accompanying desire for mutual enrichment—which Benedict’s own liturgical writings make clear would result in the effective replacement of the Novus Ordo with a vernacular development of the books of 1965—show that this was aspirational.

²⁰*Did the Council Fail?* Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, pp. 253ff.

²¹Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, p. 145.

²²The Church appears to be in a flight from demographics. Finding Mass attendance figures is hard; finding ordination statistics nearly impossible—except on the website of the ICKSP, whose exponential demographics are *graphed*. The challenge (and the response it has provoked) is clear.

²³Which, in doing so, has to transform the problem: we cannot, for instance, allow “mysticism” to be reduced so readily to an inter-religious phenomenon.

exactly the problem I have been claiming *Ressourcement* was addressing all along. The trouble is that we do not *really* expect our theories to have consequences—certainly not consequences as drastic as an apostasy rate of one half.

Sociology, likewise, is by nature descriptive: it tends to look circular. When Bullivant proves that credibility was lost when “credibility enhancing displays” did not happen (“credibility undermining displays” sometimes happening instead) the theologian is apt to move on smartly. To do so is to miss not only the technical term (not, in fact, vacuous) but the sociological *locus*: these “displays” are in fact *symbolic*, or more specifically *ritual*. Frequently they are in fact liturgy; when not they stand to liturgy as Douglas’ “symbols” stand to the grid whose order legitimises them and ultimately makes them “natural”.

A pattern emerges. I am *not* claiming that the function of Liturgy is to build group identity, or encode ecclesiology. These are simply things which liturgy, by virtue of being social ritual, *does*, but any number of other “rituals” (in the anthropologist’s sense) do just as much. (The destruction of popular devotions is *more* to blame than the liturgical reforms precisely because liturgy was not playing the role the reformers thought (and I think) it should. One cannot at the end of the day argue with reality, even sociological reality.) But insofar as ecclesiology is the study of the structure of a community founded by Christ and undergirded by the Spirit the relationship is not merely accidental. How we pray changes not only how our social structures encode and reflect that prayer (although this would be enough to give pause for thought); it changes how, on our part, we approach creatures in the light of their creator—our contemplative attitude—and it is at least thinkable that it might effect how *well* we pray and how or whether we are in fact heard. But it was precisely at *this* level that the reforms were so badly botched.

Neglecting intentional context: the Mass of Paul VI

Thus at last I must say something about the substantive changes in the rite itself.

A single example would, in fact, suffice. Bouyer opens *Le Mystère Pascal* with a theological analysis of the vigil services of Tenebrae (which, prior to the holy week reforms of Pius XII were for many the quintessential service of the triduum); thereby he is able to get at the notion of the vigil; and thereby, ultimately, to sketch the intentional position the worshipper adopts before the Paschal Mystery in every liturgical celebration.

This vigil no longer exists. Indeed, there are in fact *no* vigils of the kind Bouyer mentions in the Roman liturgy at all, with the possible exception of the “watching at the tomb” of Maundy Thursday (itself, as Bouyer well knew, a far later development). The so-called “vigil” Masses of Holy Days are simply the transferred feast with minor adjustments; they may be pastorally helpful, but they are not vigils in any sense of the word; the (largely invented) ‘Easter vigil’ is not a *vigil*, but the culmination of a vigil which has long disappeared.²⁴ Tenebrae was effectively forbidden with the Holy Week reforms (*before* the *Novus Ordo*), which forbade the supposedly defective transferring of Mattins they entailed (and abolished the *strepitus*), thereby leaving one with the impractical option of celebrating Tenebrae very early in the morning, or the ridiculous solemn extinguishing of candles in bright sunlight which generally

²⁴Elements of the vigil structure survive in the readings (most of which are usually cut), but the ‘vigil’ begins with the *Lumen Christi*, i.e. the end of the waiting. The pre-Pian service (which is also not a vigil) generally took place in the day.

occurs whenever it is still celebrated.²⁵ As a type for the aesthetic and intentional rupture with which we are concerned the example is perfect; and yet I could have chosen innumerable others. At a stroke some of the most moving services of the Catholic year, with their corresponding artistic, literary²⁶ and musical traditions were simply disposed of. Valiant attempts have been made to preserve it, and certainly the reformers do not seem to have had any objection to the idea of mattins and lauds with extinguished candles, but it is difficult to see why a service whose entire devotional stance has been, in effect, removed—the slow, gathering darkness, culminating in the horrified noise of the *strepitus*; the relentless imploring of mattins counterpoised with the steady consistency of a lauds much like any other lauds; the gradual elaboration of the antiphon over the three days, where Christ’s death (*usque ad mortem*) is further elaborated by his suffering (*mortem autem crucis*) and only then transformed by his resurrection (*exaltavit Eum*)—why such a service should be more than a devotional curiosity. If the attitude of Cordelia to deconsecration is unlikely in an era inured to church-closing, her familiarity with Jeremiah is only more distant.

I have said that the same point could be made in innumerable ways. There are now sufficient scholarly analyses to have no need to repeat their argumentation,²⁷ but it is worth summing up their conclusions. The revised texts have a horror of the “negative” themes: sin and our unworthiness are minimised, whilst God’s abundant love and grace are emphasised, at times so as to obscure the need for repentance. The theme of

²⁵There is something fine, doubtless, about the idea of *Tenebrae* before dawn. But outside of a Monastery such a practice, however fine, is unlikely—and in any case it is ironic to see such romantic notions invoked at the height of “practical” liturgical reform.

²⁶One think of *Brideshead* and Cordelia’s instinctive invocation of *Jerusalem desolata est* to describe the effect of the deconsecrated Chapel.

²⁷First comes Anthony Cekada, *Work of Human Hands: A Theological Critique of the Mass of Paul VI*, Ohio: Philothea Press, 2010, a doubly invaluable book, firstly for the wealth of documentation demonstrating that the reformers *did* set out to “modernise” the theology of the rite (extensive textual comparisons demonstrate they succeeded), and secondly for its thoroughgoing extrinsicism, narrative-spinning, and rigorist conclusion: the *novus ordo* is invalid. Cekada unwittingly proves the insufficiency *both* of the liturgiology of his opponents *and* of his own positivist approach to Tradition. (Cf. Alcuin Reid, ‘Work of Human Hands: A Theological Critique of the Mass of Paul VI by Anthony Cekada’, *Antiphon: A Journal for Liturgical Renewal* 16.1 [2012], pp. 62–65).

The inorganic nature of the Reform has been examined at length. The classic text is Alcuin Reid, *The organic development of the Liturgy, The principles of liturgical reform and their relation to the twentieth century liturgical movement prior to the Second Vatican Council*, Farnborough: St. Michael’s Abbey Press, 2004, although it is largely theoretical; László Dobszay, *The restoration and organic development of the Roman Rite*, with a foreword by Laurence Paul Hemming, London: T & T Clark, 2010 has the benefit of being thoroughly practical.

One of the first serious studies was Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the roman Liturgy, Its Problems and Background*, trans. from the German by Klas D. Grimm, California: Una Voce Press, 1993 (albeit a collection); Gamber seemed to be calling for a ‘reform of the reform’, and the works of that movement are useful, particularly Stratford Caldecott, ed., *Beyond the prosaic : renewing the liturgical movement*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998.

The theology of the collects (which represent the stance of each Mass) has been exhaustively studied by Pristas, whose magisterial *Collects of the Roman missals* (Lauren Pristas, *Collects of the Roman missals, A comparative study of the Sundays in proper seasons before and after the Second Vatican Council*, London: T & T Clark, 2013) not only shows quite how much has been changed, but is an excellent introduction to the theology of the old rite itself by rigorous textual analysis. Slightly more manageable are several articles: Lauren Pristas, ‘Theological Principles That Guided the Redaction of the Roman Missal (1970)’, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 67.2 (2003), pp. 157–195 is the best overview, whilst Lauren Pristas, ‘The Orations of the Vatican II Missal, Policies for Revision’, *Communio* 30 (2003), pp. 611–53 and Lauren Pristas, ‘The Collects at Sunday Mass, An Examination of the Revisions of Vatican II’, *Nova et Vetera* 3.1 (2005), pp. 5–38 provide thorough analysis, the latter tabulated.

Lastly—for outright criticism of papal policy for the past fifty years is always going to be the preserve of a hardy or foolhardy few—there is the gentle criticism apparent in nearly every interesting work of liturgiology of the past few decades. For one excellent example, see Laurence Paul Hemming, *Worship as a revelation, The Past, Present and Future of Catholic Liturgy*, London: Burns & Oates, 2008.

asceticism has been thoroughly and systematically written out. Outmoded concepts—we have already encountered the fate of “soul”, but “miracle” and cognates suffer a similar failure—are gone. Wherever possible the focus is made anthropocentric. In Douglas’ terms, “group” predominates to the exclusion of “grid.” As the old *praxis* de-personified the priest, vesting and ritually purifying him—he dare not even ascend directly to the altar—so the *praxis* of the new emphasis his mediatory role *qua* natural head of the assembly. The result is what Day accurately terms “Fr. Nice Guy”—a performance frequently deeply insecure, and risking banality if music is allowed to hint at the transcendent.²⁸ Celebration *versus* *populum*—despite being long exploded historically—is quasi-universal. Quite aside from the plight of whomever has the bad luck to be in father’s line-of-sight, the entire attitude expressed in *turning* to the East—in the great basilicas, facing *away* from the altar!—is lost; the eschatological dimension is hampered; and meanwhile this great “pastoral” innovation (which actually began as a legitimate attempt at exceptional instruction) entirely fails, as Gamber observed,²⁹ to resemble a meal.

Much more important, though, is the surprising defeat of Mystery, as Casel used the term. Already in 1959 the “pastoral” movement had so little time for silence that the Maritains protested the impossibility of contemplation.³⁰ Likewise for its cognate, asceticism. Here a whole of Christian Spirituality has been as near as possible written out of the liturgy. It is little wonder that *Ressourcement*’s emphasis on fasting and asceticism is entirely invisible in the secondary literature (even Boersma is silent on it). There are only two days of fasting in the entire western calendar. And all this was motivated by the mistaken idea that *despicere* means *despise*—a mistaken idea which could not have struck so many scholars whose erudition was far greater than mine as perfectly natural had the Tradition not been badly bent out of shape by several centuries of Tridentine piety emphasising the value of suffering *in itself* (which is strictly naught), a deep distrust for the things of this world and above all the body *in themselves* (I need hardly recount to what Manichean depths this sometimes sunk) and that curiously Catholic taste for the fallacy of affirming the consequent.³¹ The first step in restoring the tradition is simply to translate accurately: *despicere* means ‘look down upon, count as naught’ not ‘despise’ and certainly not ‘sneer at’, so that *da famulis tuis prospera mundi ex eius imitatione despiciere, et caelestia semper inquirere*³² means ‘grant thy people likewise to count as little the riches of this world and to seek always after those of heaven’ and certainly not ‘to vilify’.

*Sic transeamus per bona temporalia, ut non amittamus aeterna*³³ means ‘we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal’³⁴ as Cranmer rendered it (leaving aside Duffy’s small criticism that *bona* has disappeared). But the *Novus Ordo* does not contain this prayer at all: the Latin became *sic bonis transeuntibus nunc utamur ut iam possimus inhaerere mansuris* at which point we no longer pass through

²⁸Day, *Why Catholics Can’t Sing*.

²⁹Gamber, *The Reform of the roman Liturgy*, Ch VII; ‘it is only the priest who is actually at the table, and standing...The other partakers...are sitting...in the auditorium’ (Siegel, 87–8).

³⁰Jacques Maritain and Raïssa Maritain, *Liturgie et Contemplation*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959.

³¹How often—even today—does one see whole sermons, articles, even books vitiated by founding them upon an argument which moves from rejecting some undeniably objectionable state of affairs to affirming the consequent? Other fallacies of the same logical family join in: thus one rejects that the Church is above the Tradition and concludes that the Tradition is above the Church; rejects that the Pope is always infallible and concludes that he is never (just as an earlier apologetic refused him perpetual fallibility and thus deduced perpetual infallibility). It is impossible for the logical-minded historian not to be struck by the sheer volume of this error in so much popular and even scholarly Catholic writing in the last few centuries.

³²To take at random the collect for today, 23 August. ³³Dom. III post Pentecosten. ³⁴BCP Trinity IV.

the things of this world at all, and they are considered inherently competitive with 'solid things' and must thus be used *up* in order to get at them. The revisers could not get their misunderstanding of the *despicere* out of their heads, and the original English translator went further in theological and linguistic incompetence in giving us 'guide us to everlasting life by helping us to use wisely the blessings you have given to the world.'³⁵

As so often, the Liturgy confronts us starkly with the paradox. We are to take great care to provide the things of this world to those who have them not, but we are to set little store by them; we are to bless God exactly for providing that food which we deny ourselves in fasting; we are firmly to resolve to sin no more without falling into the pride of thinking we might manage it. A Liturgy which thinks nothing of so supreme a blasphemy as *O certe neccessarium Adæ peccatum, O felix culpa* has certainly no intention to hide the lesser paradoxes of the Christian life from us. Indeed, it *cannot*: to resolve on the theoretical plane a paradox which has to be *lived* (at once to love and to count as naught what is loved, sharply to distinguish *uti* and *frui* without losing sight of the fact that both mean 'to enjoy') is to pass from liturgy to theology, and frequently to inculcate the inverse disposition. For these paradoxes are not invented for rhetorical purposes: they are some of the most practical daily problems, and as Blondel insisted so long ago, our actions *will* (whether we like it or not) tend to reproduce themselves in dispositions.

Liberal and Conservative Extrincisism

This extrincisism was not remotely a new development. Worse: it was the mark of orthodoxy, as we saw in *Mediator Dei*. Certainly liturgy could supply much theological *data*, but these data were wholly explicit. One turned to the mass *assumpta est Maria* to defend the dogma, but one saw only its facticity. That the Assumption was first *prayed*—a fact of not inconsiderable importance for Mariology—was irrelevant. This can be most clearly seen in the sorry history of the Eastern Catholic liturgies. *The Banished Heart* sets out in considerable detail the high-handed meddling with which such liturgies were "tolerated". In India, for example, 'although the East Syrians were supposed to be both a schismatical and a heretical (Nestorian) body, the Portuguese clergy coming to India were surprised to find that the local Christians readily acknowledged papal supremacy as a tradition of their Church and seemed blissfully ignorant of the erroneous christological doctrines condemned at the Council of Ephesus...'. But the colonists, and above all the Jesuits, were deeply suspicious and set about 'reforming': 'The violence done to the Keralan Church with the consent of Rome was not simply political and social. Mgr Ros, a Syriac scholar, immediately took it upon himself to 'correct' Malabarese public worship as a first step towards the complete imposition of Latin liturgy and discipline. The Jesuit bishop embarked on a rampage of vandalism quite without precedent in the history of liturgical imperialism. All Syriac books found (or thought) to contain Nestorian errors were burnt, and the Malabarese liturgical calendar was abolished for honouring 'Nestorian' saints... Only the Malabarese Mass (*Qurbana*) remained, and Ros was not satisfied to replace occasional Nestorian phrases with orthodox ones. Although its continued celebration in Syriac was tolerated, the entire eucharistic rite was overhauled. The preparation of the bread and wine, traditionally performed at two side altars... before Mass, was

³⁵Eamon Duffy, 'Rewriting the Liturgy, The theological implications of translation', *New Blackfriars* 78.911 (1997), pp. 22–3.

now transferred to the Offertory...and the use of leavened bread was forbidden. The sanctuary veil...disappeared.... Latin positions had to be observed...[whilst] oriental Mass vestments were destroyed and replaced with Roman ones...’ The echoes of this “unprecedented” liturgical vandalism in 1969 are obvious, particularly when the details are considered: ‘The Europeans altered the appearance of Malabrese churches...all the devotions currently popular in Europe were taught to the Syrian faithful, while their own more liturgically oriented forms of piety were discouraged. Even the traditional laws of fast and abstinence were replaced by the contemporary Latin regulations: when the Portuguese missionaries first tried to oblige (!) the people to eat fish and eggs and drink wine during Lent, many of them fled the European settlements rather than break the “law of Thomas”’.

‘In Kerela the same arrogant bullying of Oriental Christians led not to one schism, but to a succession of them. Malabarese resentment of Latin oppression and interference finally exploded into open rebellion in 1653 when Mar Aithallaha, a Syrian bishop who arrived in Kerala bearing papal credentials, was seized by the Portuguese authorities, turned over to the Inquisition and reportedly put to death.’

Nor was this mere regrettable colonial politics. As late as the late nineteenth century, Fr Toff, superior of a large Ruthenian contingent, described an audience with his (Latin) Ordinary thus:

He [Bishop Ireland] then sharply asked me: (The conversation was in Latin)

‘Do you have a wife?’

‘No! I answered.’

‘But did you have?’

‘I am a widower...’

When he heard my answer, he threw the papers on the table and loudly exclaimed:

‘I already sent a protest to Rome not to send me such priests...’

‘What kind do you mean?’

‘Such as you...’

‘But I am a Catholic priest of Greek rite! I am a Uniate! I was ordained by a lawful Catholic bishop...’

‘I do not consider you or that bishop a Catholic...’

The predictable result of this encounter, once an appeal to his Bishop had been ignored, was defection to the Russian Orthodox Church by (nearly) the entire Ruthenian congregation. ‘It was particularly disgraceful that...the Vatican, instead of disciplining Ireland, acceded to his demands...Accordingly...Propaganda...sent a stern directive to the Greek Catholic bishops...’³⁶

³⁶Geoffrey Hull, *The Banished Heart, Origins of Heteropraxis in the Catholic Church*, T&T Clark Studies in Fundamental Liturgy, T&T Clark, 2010, pp. 194–207. This is not Hull’s only argument: he repeats (with general success) the claims of the early liturgical movement that the Office has been eclipsed by “devotions”, the Mass turned into a “spectacle” and ultimately an act of slightly puzzled obedience. Everything from architecture (with the Church coming to resemble a theatre with raised stage and seating), music (opera replacing chant), art (sentimental rather than iconic) and politics (Romanità) is to blame; the outer strength of the Tridentine church ultimately falsework. Hull paints with broad strokes and some of his judgements can and have been criticised: the histories he tells are invariable more complicated, and he is occasionally

Visible in all these encounters and many more beside is a deep-seated suspicion of liturgy as a school of faith: doctrine is assured, not by liturgy, but by Magisterial authority; consequently the purpose of liturgy (other than rendering praise to God and invoking sacramental grace) is to teach deference to Magisterial authority; consequently everyone must celebrate the one liturgy approved by the pope, in the language of Rome. (Matters with the orientals were further complicated by a largely mythological history of the early councils and the heresies they denounced.) Ironically, much of this damage would be undone in the east after the Council, exactly when the same mindset turned itself to a liturgical instrument in the west which it viewed as ill suited to conforming people to the new doctrinal style.

Unfortunately *this very attitude* is equally at work among many who criticise (or wholly reject) the new Mass. Thus the SSPX—in a perfectly sincere text, prepared for dialogue with John Paul II and also sent to all french Bishops and many clergy,³⁷ *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform*³⁸—lumps “Mystery” in with the idea of liturgy as Revelation as *heterodox* ideas attacking sacramental validity. The text identifies Mystery theology as the intellectual cause of the Mass of Paul VI *via* the novel emphasis on the “Paschal Mystery”.³⁹ This is, in fact, a new “positive” spirituality which does away with redemption and sin,⁴⁰ replacing expiation with revelation. Since there is no expiation, there can be no expiating sacrifice. Rather, the Mass exists to re-present the mystery of Christ’s *resurrection*. This is possible because the Sacraments are no longer seen as *signifying*, but as *mystically containing* their reality;⁴¹ but this in turn dilutes the notion of “sacrament” so far that *everything* remotely concerned with Christ is a sacrament.⁴² It is this ‘quasi-patristic or quasi-scriptural language’ which Vatican II adopted,⁴³ seeing in it a way around Kantian subjectivity⁴⁴ avoiding ‘modern symbolist thought’ (which, needless to say, is sketched as a catalogue of errors).⁴⁵ ‘Looked upon in this way, the liturgy becomes the arena of Revelation which is transmitted to man by means of a rite.’⁴⁶ This mystagogy is novel (the text is slightly unclear and appears to suggest that the notion of mystagogy *itself* is novel) in that (i) it is only interested in effects on the worshipper’s faith derived from the intelligible liturgy, whilst (ii) explaining that very intelligibility in terms of mystical effects produced upon the hearer independently of the ‘surface’ content.⁴⁷ This apparent contradiction is probably not serious: the claim being made is that the liturgy is hereby (i) reduced to something affecting faith (thereby falling foul of Trent⁴⁸) and (ii) treated as the *sole locus* for a revelation which is emphatically non-propositional. In other words the liturgy becomes a tool of psychological manipulation. It is perhaps unsurprising that worship of the Real Presence declines, the ministerial priesthood is sidelined, and a novel concept of the *mysterium fidei* introduced.⁴⁹

All this is traced to the relationship between sacrifice and memorial. Classically the Mass was a sacrifice (and thereby a memorial); now it is to be a (true, objective)

inclined to blame everything on bad faith. But he emphasises for effect, and by starkly distinguishing heteropraxy from heterodoxy—and insisting that the former began long before the latter was really a problem—he has rendered a considerable service in resolving both the liturgical and doctrinal crises. If my analysis does not follow his *dramatis personæ*, I am indebted to his etiology.

³⁷Chiron, *Histoire des traditionalistes*, pp. 390–1.

³⁸The Society of Saint Pius X, *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform, A Theological and Liturgical Study*, Missouri: Angelus Press, 2001.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 48. ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 49, 53–9. ⁴¹*Ibid.*, 67–8. ⁴²*Ibid.*, 69. ⁴³*Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁴Casel is cited, but he is really concerned with the fact that Revelation is not *primarily* propositional, but rather that the propositions are dependent on the mystery.

⁴⁵The Society of Saint Pius X, *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform*, 73–5. ⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 76f. ⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 81–2.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 113. ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 84.

memorial by re-presenting the one sacrifice of Christ (and thereby a sacrifice).⁵⁰ Great effort is expended⁵¹ to demonstrate that these two concepts are incompatible, and *Mediator Dei* is brought in, for did it not declare that:

...mysteria, non incerto ac subobscuro eo modo, quo recentiores quidam scriptores effutiunt, sed quo modo catholica doctrina nos docet, praesentia *contienter* adsunt atque operantur⁵²

and what could be more certainly *incerto subobscuro modo* than a presence by inner participation in the sacrifice of Christ, opposed to the clear and obvious sacrificial actions of the priest, dividing the bread from the wine?⁵³ Ultimately—and the authors are far from triumphant—this novel concept of sacrament ‘which is supposed to be a reality that makes present the divine under the veils of the symbol in order to allow the experience of the divine’ is in fact the condemned Modernist doctrine of symbolism.⁵⁴

This latter, ridiculous, claim is easily rebutted: denial that the sacraments exist ‘merely to nourish faith’ does not entail the ridiculous position that they do not do so or the scarcely less ridiculous position that they do so merely incidentally. Nor is symbolism *properly understood* remotely opposed to sacramental efficacy; and Casel (whose person is spared) has been thoroughly misunderstood. But the fact that the argument relies on the more ridiculous end of theological ping-pong⁵⁵ should not blind us to the fact that the fundamental assumption of *both* parties to this debate is that the *lex orandi* is simply *disposable* by the *lex credendi*. The arguments are, as Bouyer would say, *un pur extrinsécisme*,⁵⁶ and it is this which vitiates and ultimately all but destroyed the one element which should have preserved the Church’s tradition: her liturgy.

Whence?

Thus with Congar (and against Lefebvre) we can say that the crisis did *not* begin with the Modernist (or even Judeo-Masonic⁵⁷) takeover of the Council; or (against any amount of popular whitewashing) with the poor implementation of a basically sound plan; or (as official documents never cease to insist) with unauthorised deviations from a sound official line. Some of these unleashed a response which would otherwise have come far slower but all of them stemmed from and fuelled a more fundamental destruction. Nor did the Modernist crisis (whose deferred and translated effects are really our supposedly contemporary crisis) spring, as Pius X imagined, from a secret conspiracy of bad faith. The fundamental problem was, as *Ressourcement* correctly diagnosed, the emptying of the aesthetic, symbolic content of the Tradition, so that the Faith was no longer its own context. This is the hole through which “rationalism and *apriorismus*” (Pius X) or ‘the smoke of Satan’ (Paul VI) enters, and the sense of the Tradition seeps out. Everything else has simply been a more or less botched attempt to stop the leak. Now that the Roman jackboot is on the other foot we can perhaps see more clearly why such measures inevitably make the problem worse; but we cannot

⁵⁰Ibid., 97. ⁵¹Ibid., 100ff. ⁵²Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, My italics.

⁵³Cf. The Society of Saint Pius X, *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform*, 98. ⁵⁴Ibid., 118.

⁵⁵Basil Mitchell, *How to Play Theological Ping-pong: And Other Essays on Faith and Reason*, London: Hodder and Staughton, 1990.

⁵⁶Louis Bouyer, *La décomposition du Catholicisme*, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968, p. 100.

⁵⁷Chiron, *Histoire des traditionalistes*, p. 300.

see what to do about it. The trouble is that if this analysis is correct, *everyone* is at a disadvantage. “Traditionalism”, as a movement, has some material advantages—one would expect traditionalists to be better acquainted with the monuments of the Tradition—but scarcely escapes the diagnosis. Thus as I turn, briefly, to practical politics, I can be quite certain of having lost the support of all parties.

In gorgeous robes befitting the occasion
For weeks their spiritual and temporal lordships met...

The doors swung back at last: success had been complete.
The formulae essential to salvation
Were found for ever...

Who wrote upon the council-chamber arches
That sad exasperated cry of tired old men:
— *Postremum Sanctus Spiritus effudit* ?

W.H. Auden, *The Council*

Where do we go from here?

Another kind of thesis is needed to show what *should* have been done; another kind of argument is needed to sift *from within* the data of the Liturgy and its wider culture. Liturgy, like all (good) human things, is *semper instauranda; nunquam reformanda*. But if we take Liturgy as the natural fulfilment of the marriage between intentional and schematic inheritance which *Ressourcement* tried (and failed) to bring about, we can at least sketch the role it should play, and thence draw some tentative substantial conclusions. This forms, in effect, a *Ressourcement* argument for the restoration and development of the ancient Western Liturgy.⁵⁸

If, as I have argued, the crisis in the Church is chiefly one of intentionality, several things become apparent. Firstly, it is obvious why so much of our ecclesial and theological discourse consists in talking past one another. We seem to inhabit multiple incommensurable and even antagonistic worlds: doubtless inevitable in anything as large as the Church, this pluralism has become stubbornly irreducible, and yet *none* of the contemporary projects of translation—not resurgent Thomism nor the “orthodox new theology” of *Communio* nor the pragmatism of *Concilium* nor anything else—is able to make noticeable inroads. (Teaching Catholic Theology today is a painfully eclectic business.) Secondly, we see why there is such a striking discordance between parish life on paper and in practice. This, again, is to be expected: it is the degree, not the existence, of discord which is so striking. What we experience falls tremendously short of what we claim: never was a “two storey” model more appropriate. Thirdly, it is not at all surprising that we do not seem to be able to agree on what we do, or do not, believe or its relative importance. A Church in which the interpretation (say) of *Amoris Lætitia* can vary diametrically from diocese to diocese is before anything else a Church whose *symbolic* life has already fractured, so that what seems a question of pastoral practice in Malta becomes a matter of doctrinal coherence in Kazakhstan. Far gone are the days when the *societas perfecta* could more or less be demonstrated by pointing to the uniformity of Catholic self-understanding: never has the Catholic Church looked more national, if not parochial.

Rite and Tradition

All of these are symptoms of the loss not of the *monuments* of Tradition (accessible as never before), but of its *sense*. Thus it is this sense which we must retrieve; but the

⁵⁸At least in that part of the world whose patrimony it is.

formation and transmission of a shared *sense* is a ritual activity: thus we need a ritual solution; and since the loss is one of continuity, the solution must restore it—and thus take as its departure point the traditional, and not the modern, ritual.

This argument is too hasty. To begin with, if it is intentional *context* we seek, we must approach ritual as context-forming. But content, by definition, is not context. Music, with its almost unique power instantly to communicate an intentional stance (phenomenologically the attention given to (“art”) music simply *is* contemplation); gesture, and above all the liturgical *rhythm* are what forms intentionality, at least initially. The fasts and the feasts, the processions: these are the mainstay of the *communal* mediation of symbolism. (To start with, then, we are going to need to bring back fasts and feasts. No surer proof of the cerebralism of the reforms could be wanted than the complete destruction of fasting.)

Only incidentally does all this require the restoration of the *old* rite. As it happens the intentional posture of the reform is backwards. All of these things can exist only if they are not the end: spirituality can orient theology only if it does not aim at doing so—else we are back in *extrinsicisme* and will soon have a narcissistic spirituality and an unmoored theology. The *content* of the reform is important for this argument only insofar as it does exactly this, *but this is exactly what Ressourcement set out to address*. We are no better off substituting an avowedly anthropocentric liturgy (and accompanying theology) for an anthropocentric theology (and accompanying liturgy). The cure for extrinsicism cannot be to embrace it.

Then there is the question of continuity: *as a matter of fact* the discontinuity of the *novus ordo*, both incidentally (in the context of celebration) and essentially (in the writing out of nearly the entire ascetic tradition and its replacement with something highly dubious) ‘will have to be dealt with sooner or later.’⁵⁹ If the faithful of 1942 struggled (in Daniélou’s opinion) to see the Occupation with Christian eyes because they had lost the sense of the grandeur of God in all things—and thus needed the Fathers, the faithful of 2023 are confronted with a rite whose visible manufacturing marks betray a straightforward dualism: matter is there to have form stamped into it, according as we choose. *Vera quia faciendum*.⁶⁰

But all this is accidental. On what principles *ought* we to proceed?

Liturgical Ressourcement

This is the question which *Ressourcement* ultimately both addressed and failed to answer.

If the Tradition is a *sense* before it is a claim, and if learning to perceive this sense—learning the right contemplative attention—is at least as important as preserving such-and-such a claim, then we need to look first not at particular texts and themes, but at the overall liturgical context. What *Sources chrétiennes* sought to do was not (as Pius apparently feared) to replace scholastic system-building with a more flexible patristic model (which could then be twisted into closer conformity with modern prejudice). The intention, as we saw, was to recover the (spiritual) world as the Fathers saw it: what Boersma quite rightly calls a sacramental ontology. Moreover, this recovery was supposed to address practical problems. Only a mystic thinks Gregory of Nyssa will help the Resistance.

A fortiori the Liturgy. The Liturgy is fundamentally a school of *prayer*. Any-

⁵⁹Louis Bouyer, *Mémoires*, Paris: Cerf, 2014, p. 200.

⁶⁰Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004, p. 63.

thing qualified with “liturgical”—anthropology, theology, philosophy—is in this sense second-personal. Like the *Confessions* or the *Proslogion* it exists in dialogue with God, and resists removal from that context; or more properly—for dialogue implies equals—in supplication. The fundamental role of Liturgy is to humble, not to inform, our thought, to submit it to *pratique littérale*. The rationalism which suppressed repetition of word or gesture (at its peak cutting the repeated *mea culpa* as redundant!) betrays not merely a defective anthropology, i.e. a practical error, but a more serious theoretical flaw: a failure to notice intentional context at all. The intentional context of the third *mea culpa* is no more the same as the first than the third repetition of a note is mere embellishment of those which came before. (The road from Athens to Piraeus is not the same the third time, either.) But this failure of attitude—failure of *attention*—is the paradigmatic case of the same extrincism *Ressourcement* always faced. It is a methodological flaw, perfectly compatible (as in Garrigou-Lagrange) with a substantially correct account; a failure of contemplation.⁶¹ By parity of reasoning, then, Liturgy is a school of *contemplation*.

Here again the *old* rite only enters the picture incidentally. As it happens, everything possible was done to remove what made liturgical contemplation possible in the name of *participatio actuosa*.⁶² Atmosphere, symbolism and above all silence count here for as much as content (although one only has to put the Canon alongside the universally used pseudo-Hippolytean anaphora to see how much content has vanished);⁶³ the near-complete destruction of ascetic themes is hardly conducive to ascetic practice.

But “preserved” treasures need retrieval. If Liturgy is the preeminent *school* of prayer, one naturally expects the lesson to be intelligible. This happens first in the non-verbal and it is a foolish error to confuse intelligibility with immediate comprehensibility: no text of any interest is simply the encoding of an otherwise unrelated idea, and ritual texts, particularly when invariant, are modulated by their context. (The road from Athens to Piraeus is not the same as that from Piraeus to Athens.) Little is probably gained by translating the Kyrie. But it is indefensible that the very Gospel should be muttered in a corner or cribbed from a poor paraphrase. This is far rarer today at the old rite than fifty years ago—at the very least the vernacular is almost always read—but a Liturgical *Ressourcement* would probably have to retrieve the meaning here or there,⁶⁴ without (this time) jettisoning the sense.

To be Christian is to speak a second language more or less well: everything we do in Church will be both natural and foreign. But the goal is better to inhabit what we *have*, to conform us to it, to learn to see the world illumined by it, rather than to update it in service of some external vision. Nonetheless this process goes both ways. Just as Lubac rejected the idea that apologetics is carried out by immediately teaching the convert to speak *our* language, so the liturgy is both its own context and

⁶¹That Garrigou-Lagrange’s major work was on contemplation only shows that a “seperated” spirituality and theology can still exist side by side. The irony of the rejection of *Ressourcement* as Modernism is that Lubac and Garrigou-Lagrange actually sought the same thing. ‘La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?’ is, as we have seen, thoroughgoing misunderstanding. But this is exactly the misunderstanding we should expect to flow from the sustained *rejection* of any reflection on “experience” in a practice which, ultimately, *both* sides would agree is a virtue!

⁶²Claims of this kind cannot be rigorously demonstrated, but it suffices to observe an *eastern* liturgy followed by the new and old western rites.

⁶³Far more has gone from the Office, a fact immediately demonstrable from the loss of the cursing psalms and their uncomfortable revelation of our darkness. (See Louis Bouyer, *Gnôsis, La connaissance de Dieu dans l’Écriture*, Cerf, 1988, Ch. 10)

⁶⁴Why is translation always all or nothing?

subject to ours. This requires (as Congar tends to insist) a sensitive pairing of liturgical and parochial life. If “liturgy” means “Mass”—so that every “event” has to open or close with its own Mass—“Mass” will very quickly be reduced to the community’s celebration of itself. It may well make more sense (it is certainly more in accord with *sacrosanctam concilium*) to pray Vespers before catechism, or to spend half an hour in Adoration before turning to a parish’s financial affairs. Likewise at times of local discernment or repentance it makes much more sense for a parish (or diocese, or nation) to fast than to add an anodyne invocation to the list of “intentions.” Where the need is felt to “explain” liturgy in terms of something else, “replacing what is less clear by what is clear”, we are probably simply doing the wrong thing (we are also probably underestimating the sensitivity of our audience).

Here I can do no more than sketch this argument, and *Ressourcement*—as we saw—failed to make it. But the only thinkable conclusion from a movement which was so insistent on getting the Fathers to the faithful in the middle of a war is that *ressourcement* consists not in *replacing* (a process necessarily temporary), but in re-discovering what one already has. Far more pressingly, *ressourcement* cannot be served by the wholesale destruction of the Church’s ascetic and aesthetic life and the attempt to substitute for the reunion of spirituality and theology for which *Ressourcement* worked a novel spirituality, subject to a truly new theology. *Ressourcement*’s retrieval of Tradition has been, so far, a failure. The postconciliar springtime did not lead to a widespread deepening of authentic faith and a retrieval of the christian cosmos of the first four centuries. The methodological pursuit of the adequation of mind and life by the reunion of spirituality and theology has not taken place: academia is more fragmented than ever, and practising theology has little to do with prayer and nothing to do with fasting.

But there is no reason renewal cannot come: no reason, that is, if we begin by recognising the extent of the crisis. The old defences—seminary, school, university, parish, diocese, calendar, devotions—are partly or wholly destroyed. But the Faith and the Mass remain; grace is still able (with our cooperation) to give us new eyes; the sense of the Tradition—Lubac’s ‘something supernatural’ guiding the *ecclesia docens*⁶⁵—can still be gained as it ever was, by prayer and study; the contemplative liturgy, sadly and avoidably politicised but not fundamentally vitiated, continues to nourish and develop faith. A *ressourcement* is possible; *Ressourcement*, despite its weaknesses (partially responsible for its own failure) has considerable riches to supply.

Conclusion: the priority of contemplation

With all this said, the crisis will not be solved by liturgical tinkering. Liturgy has its primary purpose—the worship of God, whereby we pay the debt of justice, which is the virtue of religion—and one secondary: ministering to the assembled faithful, dispensing the Sacraments, proclaiming the Gospel. Distinct from both of these is the calling, salvation, sanctification of those for whom Christ died. If I have insisted at length on the form and content of the liturgical celebration it is because it forms the best—the only traditional—context for the integration of all of this. But that integration is still—as Blondel in his study of liturgical action noted—the particular work of God in engraving a particular soul; or conversely the particular contemplative

⁶⁵Henri de Lubac, ‘Le problème du développement du dogme’, *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948), p. 149.

attention of an individual *qui exardit in pacem Dei sui*. The Maritains remarked very justly:

Liturgy—as we have already noted—is an end in itself, but by its very nature it tends to prepare and to lead to a higher end: Contemplation.

In the end, one forgets the *personal* character of the love to which God calls us. . . . If our God only loved the masses praying and singing together (though he loves them too), he would have betrayed it with one or other of his commandments. But there is only the entirely personal commandment of love: *thou* (and not you) shalt love thy God with all *thy* heart, with all *thy* soul, with all *thy* spirit. But neither heart nor soul nor spirit are social entities. They are individual, or rather personal, and the person is not an object subject to the laws of addition.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Maritain and Maritain, *Liturgie et Contemplation*, pp. 79, 83.

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Translations throughout are mine except as indicated. Except in internal quotes and reported speech, single quotes have been used for reference, and double quotes for approximate paraphrase or “key words”.

Back-references, urls and dois in this bibliography are hyperlinks in the pdf and can be clicked to visit their target.

Where citations of french texts have been interwoven with English, french conventions have been followed, i.e. the grammar has been corrected for the new context. Thus on page 78 I have put *mutilé* (agreeing with ‘text’) for *mutilée* (agreeing with ‘citation [of his text]’) in the original.

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