

Methodologies: Assessing the Relationship Between the *Ressourcement* of Radical Orthodoxy
and the *Aggiornamento* of Liberation Theology in Hope of Ecumenism

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Dialogue thrives on friendship, and most especially on service. All this we must remember and strive to put into practice on the example and precept of Christ. But the danger remains. Indeed, the worker in the apostolate is under constant fire. The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth.¹

–Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*

Introduction

“Ecumenical theology is the result of theological reflection oriented to the goal of unity: the unity of the church, the unity of humankind, and the unity of the creation, in the perspective of the Kingdom of God.”² Ecumenical theology was the heart of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and it is the heart of this paper, which engages with the methods of some of the key participants at Vatican II. On the docket at Vatican II were sixteen documents, four of which were the highest in rank. These four, called “constitutions,” are: “One the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*); On the Church (*Lumen Gentium*); On Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*); and On the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*).”³ It is of this last “constitution” that the focus of this paper relates. This paper assesses an ecumenical attempt at unity between radical orthodoxy (RO) and liberation theology (LT) based on their respective theological methods that answer the question How should the church relate to the modern world? differently. I discuss RO’s methods from the perspective of reformed radical orthodox theologian James K. A. Smith, and LT’s methods from the perspective of Latin American liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, using *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* as Smith’s primary text, and *A Theology of Liberation* as Gutiérrez’s primary text. More importantly, I discuss the sources of

¹ Pope Paul VI, “*Ecclesiam Suam*,” Encyclicals, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html (accessed December 12, 2013).

² Marry Tanner, “Ecumenical Theology,” in *The Modern Theologians*, 3rd ed., eds. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 556.

³ John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 2.

their methods, such as Vatican II and Medellín, focusing on some of the their mutual sources, such as Henri de Lubac and Yves-Marie Congar (influential voices at Vatican II), to see if a hope for unity can be mined.

The thesis of this paper is as follows: I argue that one way to foster productive dialogue between RO and LT for the sake of ecumenism means admitting to some of the so-called “weaknesses” in their own methods that others find incorrigible, while needing to find common ground in a doctrine of mutual high regard between RO and LT. Allow me to elucidate with the query How should the church relate to the modern world? looming in the background. RO’s main method of retrieving sources from Vatican II contributors, such as de Lubac and Congar,⁴ is the French *ressourcement*, which means a “return to the sources”—scripture, as well as to the patristic fathers and medieval theologians. Its “blemish” is that it romanticizes the literature of the unification of the patristic fathers failing to take seriously the objects of their contention. LT’s main method of retrieving some of the same Vatican II sources as RO, as well as different sources (viz., the bishops at Medellín, who were writing in the spirit of Vatican II), is the Italian *aggiornamento*, which means “updating” or “modernizing” the church via integrating the natural to the supernatural. Its supposed blemish, crudely put, is that by its own method of (Rahnerian) integralism it “naturalizes the supernatural.”⁵ But without having a mutually acknowledged and highly regarded common denominator of doctrine between them the hope of their unity for dialogue is unlikely to launch.

I believe the ecumenism of both RO and LT is significant because one can hardly not notice the curious coincidence that their main theological methods stem from the same sources,

⁴ Congar was “appointed consultant to theological commission that was to prepare doctrinal texts for the bishops to consider when they met.” Joseph A. Komonchak, “Vatican II As Ecumenical Council,” *Commonweal* 129, no. 20 (November 2002): 13.

⁵ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 207.

yet there is not a lot of research being done that I am aware of that brings them into fruitful conversation over the root problem of their disagreements.⁶ This, of course, begs the question that ecumenism is important. I defer then to scripture, whereby Christ intercedes to the Father on behalf of his beloved: “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity....” (John 17:22-23, NASB)

I structure my paper in the following way: in section one, I discuss RO’s main arguments and methodologies, in that order, but I discuss them separately so as not to confuse them. I also address RO’s most important influences throughout; in section two, I discuss LT’s main arguments and methodologies, in that order, but I also discuss them separately so as not to confuse them, as well. I also address LT’s most important influences throughout; in section three, I assess an ecumenical attempt at dialogical unity between RO and LT based on their methods and sources. And then I argue for a strategy to bring RO and LT together, which entails practicing epistemic humility via acknowledging what have been perceived as methodological weaknesses by their interlocutors. I wrap up this section by addressing the need to find common ground in a doctrine of mutual high regard; and lastly, in section four, I address a critique of ecumenical theology.

§1 James K. A. Smith’s Radical Orthodoxy

§1.1 Radical Orthodoxy and Argumentation

⁶ I would like to let the reader know that I am aware of radical orthodox theologian Daniel Bell and his work on liberation theology, in which he discusses RO and LT’s shared affinity for socialism and their disdain for capitalism. See Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (New York: Routledge, 2001). The focus of this paper, however, is theological methodologies not political methodologies.

In this section, I start with a quick introduction to RO and then move to describe its seminal claims.

RO is not shy about attaching its identity to theological premodern literature, although it uses the postmodern language from which to springboard into contemporary dialogue. That is, RO “speaks the idiom of contemporary continental thought . . . [while] tak[ing] on such thought in a polemical sense . . . and then . . . recover[ing] an alternative, Christian vision by returning to decidedly premodern sources.”⁷ This means that for RO authentic Christian *postmodernism* goes back to the patristic and medieval origins of Christianity, hence, the name, *radical* orthodoxy, in which “radical” refers to returning to the root of the Christian faith.⁸ Smith distinguishes but relates the two words—“[radical orthodoxy] is orthodox insofar as it seeks to be unapologetically confessional and Christian; it is radical insofar as it seeks to critically retrieve premodern roots (*radix*)”⁹—in order to distinguish authentic Christianity from liberal Christianity, which in today’s contemporary epoch calls itself “postmodern,” although it is really *hypermodern* (i.e., more of modernity). I do believe, however, that I am getting ahead of myself. I deal with RO’s strategy (method) in more detail in the “Radical Orthodoxy and Methodology” section of this paper. I now turn to explain the five central claims RO makes that are germane to our topic.

First, RO claims that everything that is material and finite, including epistemology and politics, is attached to God, who is immaterial and infinite. In simple theological jargon, immanence is suspended from transcendence. In this way, everything “participates” in God, and

⁷ James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping A Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 43.

⁸ For D. Stephen Long RO is “*radical* not only in re-membering the *roots* (*radix*), but also in re-membering the intrinsic and necessary connection between theology and politics, and this calls into question modern politics, culture, art, science, and philosophy.” D. Stephen Long, “Radical Orthodoxy,” in *Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 131 (emphases in original).

⁹ Smith, 66.

necessarily so: “a *participatory* ontology that understands transcendence [i]s an essential feature of material reality.”¹⁰ This participatory ontology is made possible because of something called the “analogy of being.”

Second, RO claims that the right way to comprehend the divine is by analogy, hence, the *analogy of being*. RO retrieves the analogy of being from the medieval Christian philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, who, according to Smith, holds that the best way to understand God is by analogy because the Creator is *qualitatively* different from the creation, since “God’s very essence *is* existence, whereas the creature ‘is’ only to the extent that it receives the gift of being from the Creator, in other words, to the extent that the creature *participates* in the being of the Creator.”¹¹ But what if rather than asserting that the Creator and the creature were qualitatively different, we were to assert that “the Creator and the creature exist in the same way or in the same sense”?¹² God would be merely *quantitatively* different than humankind. This is Smith’s definition of the modern assertion of Duns Scotus’ “univocity of being,” which fueled the modern notion of autonomous reason. But how does this univocal ontology lead to reason being autonomous?

RO holds that the modern rejection of the ontology of participation leads univocal ontology to autonomous reason. This is the third claim. Supposedly, once Scotus dropped the bomb of univocal ontology onto the theological playground of his time, human *being* became a category “unhooked from participation in God,”¹³ as did the sacred from the secular, and thus human autonomy was born. And with human autonomy came autonomous reason, which was

¹⁰ Ibid., 185 (emphasis in original).

¹¹ Ibid., 96-7 (emphases in original).

¹² Ibid., 97.

¹³ Ibid.

perceived as universal, neutral, and objective, since the immanence of materialism “flattened” the ontology of transcendence with its denial of the ontology of being. According to Smith, human “autonomy” and “autonomous” reason as seen in the public sphere are actually the two faces of nihilism. So what is the solution to nihilism?

RO holds that the solution to nihilism is the recovery of Platonism “through an Augustinian filter.”¹⁴ This is the fourth claim. For RO, an authentic or true *postmodern* reading of Plato suspends the material from the transcendent. Only this suspension “is able to guard the material from nothingness, from dissolving into the *nihil*.”¹⁵ This implies that Plato affirms embodiment. Smith recalls Catherine Pickstock’s interpretation of Plato from the Iamblichian tradition of Neoplatonism, whereby Plato not only affirms embodiment, but views it as “sacramental or liturgical, generating an account of sociopolitical life that revalues embodied existence rooted in an ontology that espouses . . . a nonreductive materialism.”¹⁶

Besides retrieving premodern sources like Plato, which RO interprets theologically as evidenced in its view of an Augustinian Plato, RO inherited the influential strategy of *ressourcement*. “In the 1940s and 1950s, the *ressourcement* helped to liberate Protestants from tired liberalism or oppressive fundamentalism, while also freeing Catholics from neo-scholasticism.¹⁷ Opponents of *ressourcement* derided it by calling it “*la nouvelle théologie*” (“the new theology”),¹⁸ since this strategy was interpreted not so much as “returning to the

¹⁴ Ibid., 108.

¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Gabriel Flynn, “*Ressourcement*, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to *Nouvelle Théologie*,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 223-4.

sources” as subverting the doctrinal traditions of the church, and thus, starting a new theology.¹⁹

Some of the seminal exponents of *ressourcement* are, but are not limited to, Henri de Lubac, Yves-Marie Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Jean Daniélou.

And lastly, RO’s claims that theological liberalism “accommodat[es] theology to modernity rather than grounding itself in revelation.”²⁰ This is the classic liberal correlationist project of modern theology that Smith traces back to Tübingen, Germany. “Here the agenda is to correlate the claims of Christian revelation with the structures of a given culture or politico-economic system.... [which] aims at ultimately making sense of revelation in terms that are . . . universally accessible,” (35) assuming “a confidence in the neutrality of the ‘secular’ sciences....”²¹

§1.2 Radical Orthodoxy and Methodology

RO’s identity is intimately entwined with its methodology; they are distinct yet inseparable. RO’s personality seems to be in part formed by a participatory ontology and

¹⁸ “*Nouvelle théologie*” was a pejorative term used towards the advocates of *ressourcement* coined by a Dominican theologian, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange. These advocates were not seen as “returning to the sources” so much as deviating from the traditional doctrines of the Catholic Church, which Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange perceived as a *new* theology. See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “La nouvelle théologie, où va-t-elle?,” *Angelicum* 23 (December 1946): 126-45. Also, “Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical *Humani Generis*, which warned against theological deviations. These included a false ‘irenicism’ with respect to ecumenism. Soon various French theologians were ejected from their teaching positions and severely restricted in publishing. Yves Congar and several of his Dominican confreres were among the targets of these Roman sanctions (see ‘Raid on the Dominicans: The Repression of 1954,’ by Thomas F. O’Meara, O.P., in *America*, 2/5/94).” Peter J. Bernardi, “A Passion for Unity,” *America* 192, no. 12 (April 2005): 10. Moreover, the encyclical “warned that certain schools of thought had fallen into ‘relativism’ in doctrinal theology. The ‘innovators’ were accused of displaying ‘contempt of scholastic theology’ as well as false interpretation of scripture and some specific theological errors.” Gabriel Flynn, “*Ressourcement*, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to *Nouvelle Théologie*,” 230.

¹⁹ “Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) and Jean Daniélou (1905-74), the editors of *Sources chrétiennes*, were the leading practitioners of *ressourcement*, while Congar and Chenu represented a strongly historical approach to theology.” *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁰ Smith, 71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

Aquinas' analogy of being. But to question *how* RO constructed these beliefs and from them the arguments that follow, which reproach modernity for its rejection of the analogy of being and its exclusion of the transcendent, is to move beyond its content to its methodology. According to Smith, Graham Ward has constructed a principle that enables us to better understand RO's methods: " 'Employing the tools of critical reflexivity honed by continental thinking . . . Radical Orthodoxy reads the contemporary world through the Christian tradition, weaving it into the narrative of that tradition.' ”²²

RO's methodology then is both philosophical and historical. It is philosophical in that it draws on contemporary continental philosophy, which is associated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. According to Smith, RO is indebted to continental philosophy "because of the legacy of Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and others who, though subjected to sustained critique by RO, are nevertheless seen to be grappling with the internal breakdown of the Enlightenment project."²³ *In nuce*, although RO is not fully aligned with all the beliefs of French and German continental philosophers, it does find an ally in those who criticize autonomous reason as evinced in Enlightenment theory.

RO is also historical for ways that have already been discussed: it draws on the resources of key Vatican II ecumenists like de Lubac and Congar, who themselves draw on the resources and themes of the patristic fathers and medieval theologians. I would like, however, to take the time here to briefly unpack the main the difference Smith sees between the *ressourcement* of RO and the *aggiornamento* of LT, of which I deal with more fully in section three of this paper.

²² Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics," in *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 106; Smith, 68.

²³ Smith, 43.

In his book, Smith contrasts *ressourcement* with *aggiornamento*. The strategy of the former looks to the past drawing on Christian philosophers like Augustine, whose substance of thought “resonates with the postfoundational project that rejects the autonomy of reason and hence also the autonomy of the sociopolitical sphere.”²⁴ That is, influenced by Augustine’s foundational epistemology of either “paganism or true [Christian] worship,”²⁵ RO’s postfoundational epistemology of starting with the premise of true Christian worship, by which reason and the socio-political sphere is interpreted, also holds with Augustine that “there is no secular, non-religious sphere as constructed by modernity.”²⁶ The strategy of the latter looks to the present to modernize the methods of the church by accommodating theology with modern humanist philosophy, which “establish the methodological rules for confessional reflection...”²⁷ That is, LT “accept[s] the results of secular science as the foundation to a supplemental theological reflection.”²⁸

In sum, RO’s methodology enables it to *construct* a contemporary theology from its retrieval of historical sources in order to “speak to postmodernism”²⁹ and *deconstruct* secular modernity manifested in the Enlightenment project of LT.

§2 Gustavo Gutiérrez’s Liberation Theology

§2.1 Liberation Theology and Argumentation

²⁴ Ibid., 47.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 153.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 68 (emphasis in original).

In this section, I start with a quick introduction to liberation theology and then move to describe its seminal claims.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian born, Roman Catholic theologian and Dominican priest, penned his watershed work *A Theology of Liberation* in 1971 soon after Vatican II and Medellín or Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM II) (1968), both of which greatly influenced his socio-political agenda. Gutiérrez is authoring an attempt at critical reflection on Christian praxis (i.e., a commitment to theological-social-political reality), in which the church *denounces* oppressive societal structures in Latin America. It also functions to *announce* the politicizing function of the gospel within a commitment to liberation in solidarity with oppressed Latinos/as. The church embodies this commitment by being a church for/of/with the poor, which in turn enables the poor or those who suffer injustices to take charge of their own destiny.

LT makes a number of central claims, too many to describe below, so I have decided to condense them to five, dealing mainly with the doctrines of anthropology, soteriology, theology, hamartiology, and ecclesiology. I address them in that respective order.

First, LT claims that the ultimate goal of theological reflection is to create a new human order. While theological reflection criticizes the values of society and the church, it also makes explicit the values of faith, hope, and love intrinsic to its *raison d'être*. This reflection should contribute to a more concrete commitment to the process of liberation with its ultimate goal of creating a new humanity.³⁰ Medellín spells this out on a global scale: the church in Latin America “encourages the formation of national communities that reflect a global organization, where all of the peoples but more especially the lower classes have . . . an active and receptive,

³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, [1971] 1973), 81.

creative and decisive participation in the construction of a new society.”³¹ In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutiérrez goes on to say that the creation of new human persons from “nonpersons”—the human being who is not treated with human dignity by society—will be authentic *only* if this endeavor is undertaken by the oppressed *themselves*.³² “It is from within the people that the culture of oppression is on its way to being abolished. Indeed this is the only way in which a genuine social and cultural revolution can be carried out.”³³ It is important to point out that Vatican II dealt with the issue of human dignity in detail under the pastoral “constitution” on the Church in the Modern World.

Second, LT claims that people are saved when they open themselves up to God and others, whether they know it or not. (Karl Rahner’s influence of universalism expressed in his famous phrase “anonymous Christianity” has made an obvious impact on Gutiérrez.)³⁴ That is, salvation “embraces all of human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ.”³⁵ Thus, there are not two histories, one sacred/spiritual and the other profane/earthly; rather, history is one. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen speaks for LT when he says, “The idea of integral

³¹ Medellín, “Justice,” 7, <http://personal.stthomas.edu/gwschlabach/docs/medellin.htm> (accessed December 12, 2013). Cf. “The Vocation of Man” by Eduardo F. Pironio: “Artisans of [their] own destiny, [humankind] has a concrete mission in time and also a divine call.” Eduardo F. Pironio, “Christian Interpretation of the Signs of the Time in Latin America Today: The Vocation of Man,” in *Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops: The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council*, vol. 1, ed. Louis Michael Colonnese (Bogotá, CO: Celam, 1970), 115-6.

³² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 193.

³³ Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 193.

³⁴ See Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: A Brief Introduction* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2007 [1997]), 32-7.

³⁵ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 85.

liberation insists that ‘spiritual’ and ‘earthly’ belong together and can never be divorced from each other, as has often happened in classical theology.”³⁶

It is important to note that RO is in complete agreement, since the natural (associated with reason and the secular) and the supernatural (associated with faith and the sacred) should be understood as varying intensities of grace of a single spectrum (order of existence) rather than two different realities.³⁷ Of course, RO blames LT’s correlationist approach for making divine revelation universally accessible although cut off from participation in God.

Third, LT claims that humanity is the living temple of God, and when we meet others we meet God. To know God which is to love God is to establish just relations with others, especially in recognizing the rights of the marginalized.³⁸ “The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent.”³⁹ Medellín agrees: “[W]here . . . social peace [as a work of justice] does not exist there will we find social, political, economic and cultural inequalities, there will we find the rejection of the peace of the Lord, and a rejection of the Lord Himself.”⁴⁰

Fourth, LT claims that sin is a social injustice breaching fellowship with God and others, not an individual, private reality, which turns a blind eye to the injustices of the world like exploitation and imperialism. Thus, “[s]in demands radical liberation, which in turn necessarily

³⁶ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World: Christ and Reconciliation*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 87.

³⁷ Smith, 44.

³⁸ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 110-11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁰ Medellín, “Peace,” 14c.

implies a political liberation.”⁴¹ Of course, this radical liberation is found only in the great Liberator—Christ, whose death and resurrection redeems us from sin and all its consequences: hunger, misery, oppression, hatred, etc.⁴² Liberation theology is evangelizing in Christ’s name that he has set us free, which is “an authentic imitation of Christ.”⁴³ Kärkkäinen has done us a great service by explaining why liberation theologians side with the “from below” approach, in the methodological debate between “from below” and “from above,” vis-à-vis Christology: “Liberation Christologies and Christologies from the Global South by and large opt for a From Below approach . . . [because] traditional Christologies, with their focus on creedal traditions . . . lead to christological discussions with no or little relevance to praxis.”⁴⁴

And lastly, LT claims that the church must both *denounce* the existing politico-social order and *announce* a new society in faith. This utopia cannot come to fruition if the church does not critically reflect on the theological meaning of human liberation through historical praxis (commitment to concrete politico-social reality) “regarding both the present state of social injustice and the revolutionary process which is attempting to abolish that injustice. . . .”⁴⁵ This annunciation is in vain if it is not the annunciation of the gospel. The annunciation of the gospel has a politicizing function, which “is made real and meaningful only by living and announcing the Gospel from within a commitment to liberation, only in concrete, effective solidarity with people and exploited social classes.”⁴⁶ “The Lord’s distinct commandment to ‘evangelize the

⁴¹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 103.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 172.

⁴⁴ Kärkkäinen, 45.

⁴⁵ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 151.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 153.

poor' ought to bring us to a distribution of resources and apostolic personnel that effectively gives preference to the poorest and most needy sectors...."⁴⁷ *In nuce*, the gospel is politicized when the church becomes a "poor church" with preferential option for the poor.

§2.2 Liberation Theology and Methodology

LT employs the contextual resources of ecumenical councils, such as Vatican II and Medellín, and people who have a heart for ecumenism, such as de Lubac and Congar. Both councils thematically speak of the longing for *change*, but Medellín stresses liberation from servitude, to construct a holistic praxis, which includes all facets of reality, such as theology, sociology, politics, etc., in which to criticize modern injustices. In a general sense, it is this desire for *change* or "renewal of faith" that characterizes LT's *aggiornamento*: David Grumett say that for de Lubac "[t]he twentieth-century patristic renewal to a very large extent made possible . . . the *aggiornamento*, or deep renewal of faith, manifested in the official proceedings of the Second Vatican Council."⁴⁸ That is, "the twentieth-century patristic renewal" or *ressourcement* led to the "renewal of faith" as expressed in Vatican II. As any good contextual theologian Gutiérrez starts with the needs of a localized people looking holistically to theological-social-political praxis to suffer in solidarity with the people in the interests of liberation. "[T]he starting point is the committed action of Christian people [to serve others. Moreover] only from the ground of commitment does one have access to the reality of biblical truth...."⁴⁹ Thus, there seems to be no

⁴⁷ Medellín, "Poverty," 9.

⁴⁸ David Grumett, "Henri de Lubac: Looking for Books to Read the World," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 247.

⁴⁹ Samuel Escobar, "Liberation Theology," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 331.

historical-theological truth without historical-theological praxis. That is, truth can only be found in concrete, historical events in which humans are personally involved. (This was a direct effect of the tutelage of Marie-Dominique Chenu and Yves Congar.) Praxis (as committed thought and action) then is dialectic. In particular, historical-theological praxis as *thought* must traverse the boundaries of theory into an involved commitment as *action* to be worthy of the name.⁵⁰

This is reminiscent of what RO believes about the relationship between theory and practice: “For RO, there is a symbiotic, reciprocal, and necessary relationship between the two.”⁵¹ Retrieving Herman Dooyeweerd as a source, RO holds that the necessary dialectic between thought and action can be described as a “ ‘theoretical attitude.’ ”⁵² Stanley Hauerwas also has something to say about thought/*ecclesia* and action/*mores*: “[T]he church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic.”⁵³ And according to Smith, John Milbank, agrees: “The church does not *have* a social theory; it *is* a social theory.”⁵⁴ For Milbank that means that Christian social theory is “first and foremost an *ecclesiology*, and only an account of other human societies to an extent that the Church defines itself, in its practice, as in continuity and discontinuity with these societies.”⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Robert McAfee Brown rightly notes that “praxis” as practice should not be seen as a contrast with “theory,” but as a special affinity between them, in which “a ‘praxis situation’ is one in which theory and practice are not separable.” Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 65.

⁵¹ Smith, 232.

⁵² See Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought*, vol. B/4, ed. James K. A. Smith (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, [1960] 1999), 13-17; Smith, 232.

⁵³ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 99.

⁵⁴ See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*; Smith, 233 (emphases in original).

⁵⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 380 (emphases in original).

I would like to make clear that for LT *praxis* as committed involvement to thought and action is not new. For better or worse when seen as involvement in the cause of social and political liberation, it is a Hegelian-Marxist principle. (RO says, “For *worse!*”) Gutiérrez’s novel contribution was to employ it and baptize it in *theological* praxis inspired by scripture. But how can RO critique LT for holding to the same dialectical method? It is true, RO does prescribe to a social theory, since “[h]umankind was created for communion,”⁵⁶ which means, for William T. Cavanaugh, that “through the *imago dei* our participation in God is a participation in one another.”⁵⁷ But that that social theory is “first and foremost an *ecclesiology*,” a church, which “defines itself . . . in continuity and discontinuity with . . . [other] societies.”⁵⁸ The church, according to RO, should not be “rooted in an uncritical acceptance of the findings of Marxist theory as the neutral data of a secular science.”⁵⁹

LT also uses scripture as its theological method. Gutiérrez claims that the entire Bible, starting with the story of Cain and Abel, reveals God’s affinity for the poor.⁶⁰ It is important to note that is not by happenstance that God’s predilection for the weak things of this world elicits his gratuitous love as action. This is meant to be an example for us today. He goes on to say that the same revelation is given in The Beatitudes “for they tell us with the utmost simplicity that God’s predilection for the poor, the hungry, and the suffering is based on God’s unmerited goodness to us.”⁶¹ Gutiérrez’s method has a moral consequence: as Christ suffered for and with

⁵⁶ William T. Cavanaugh, “The City,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York, Routledge, 1999), 182.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 380 (emphases in original).

⁵⁹ Smith, 45.

⁶⁰ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxvii.

the poor to liberate them, so should we suffer with them in order to assist in their liberation. The struggle of the prophets and *the Prophet* is inspiring: “Since liberation theology is a critical reflection on the word of God received in the church, it will make explicit the values of faith, hope, and love that inspire the praxis of Christians.”⁶² But just so that we are not misled to believe that scripture *alone* is the epistemic starting point for theological praxis, Gutiérrez encourages us via Congar to start with social realities: “ ‘Instead of using only revelation and tradition as starting points, as classical theology has generally done, it must start with facts and questions derived from the world and from history.’ ”⁶³ Maybe this is why, according to Mark W. Elliott, Joseph Komonchak accuses Congar of “subordinating dogma to experience in the aftermath of *Humani Generis*....”⁶⁴

§3 Methodologies: *Ressourcement* and *Aggiornamento*

§3.1 Vatican I vs. Vatican II

In 1959, Pope John XXIII announced that he felt inspired to convoke an ecumenical council, which he chose to call Vatican II (1962-1965). He gave two vague reasons for its function, according to John W. O’Malley: “The first was to promote ‘the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people,’ and the second was to extend ‘a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated churches to participate with us in this feast of

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., xxxiii.

⁶³ Yves Congar, *Situation et tâches*, 72; Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 9-10.

⁶⁴ Mark W. Elliott, “*Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (2013): 326. *Humani Generis* (1950), according to Pius XII, is an encyclical letter “Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine.” Pius XII, “*Humani Generis*,” Encyclicals, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis_en.html (accessed December 12, 2013).

grace and brotherhood.”⁶⁵ The first statement was significant because it was framed in positive parlance rather than characteristically “negative terms of warning or condemnation”⁶⁶ as had been the public statements of the First Vatican Council. For example, Robin Darling Young writes, “Vatican I . . . contains eighteen canons after its constitution *On the Faith*, and each says, of the holder of a particular objectionable doctrine, *anathema sit*: ‘let him be accursed.’ Not Vatican II: its rhetoric is not judicial, but *epideictic*, inspirational in the ancient style.”⁶⁷ The second was also significant because it “extended a hand of friendship to other Christian churches”⁶⁸ where before Vatican II, these so-called “Christian” churches were treated as the prodigal sons and daughters of the Roman Catholic Church.

Part of the reason Vatican II took so long was because of an in-house debate between proponents “of the original documents” and those “who opposed them.”⁶⁹ The latter group, the minority, failed to appreciate “*la nouvelle théologie*” of the former group, which called for a *ressourcement* of premodern Christian literature. A quote from de Lubac, which he originally published in French in 1947, encapsulates the “new” vision: “Let us abide by the outlook of the Fathers: the redemption being a work of restoration will appear to us by that very fact as the recovery of lost unity—the recovery of supernatural unity of man with God, but equally of the unity of men among themselves.”⁷⁰

⁶⁵ John W. O’Malley, “Introduction,” in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?*, ed. David G. Schultenover (New York: Continuum, 2007), 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Robin Darling Young, “An Imagined Unity,” *Commonweal* 139, no. 15 (September 2012): 14.

⁶⁸ O’Malley, “Introduction,” 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Shepherd and Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius, [1947] 1988), 35. “De Lubac believed profoundly in the power of the

§3.2 Tension Between *Ressourcement* and *Aggiornamento*

The Enlightenment project of modernism had inimical effects on *ressourcement théologiens*, but inspirational effects on *aggiornamento théologiens*. The former saw the answer to unity in the church in looking backward to *consensus patrum* (“agreement of the [Church] fathers”), the latter saw it in looking forward from modernism to a church of renewed tradition. What these views held in common was that “[c]hanges needed to be made in the Church to make it more viable in the ‘new era’ that the council assumed was dawning.”⁷¹ But even with the mantra of *change* reverberating off the walls of the Vatican, the French *ressourcement* and the Italian *aggiornamento* seemed to be in tension. On the one hand, the Council “took as axiomatic that Catholicism was adaptive even to ‘the modern world.’”⁷² For liberation theologians like Gutiérrez this gave traction to his theology “From Below” (to borrow an earlier term from Kärkkäinen). That is, the historical praxis of the church that is committed to the dialectic of thought and action, in which theory informs action and action corrects theory, starts “from below” or with the needs of a localized people and not “from above” with impersonal, propositional truths, which rarely lead to action.⁷³ On the other hand, *ressourcement* was also a formative voice at the Council calling the church to “return to the sources with a view to making changes

church Fathers to inspire engaged and rigorous theology, stating: ‘Every time, in the West, that Christian renewal has flourished, in the order of thought as in that of life . . . it has flourished under the sign of the Fathers.’” Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 317-18; Grumett, 247.

⁷¹ O’Malley, 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷³ Kevin J. Vanhoozer is informative here. In *The Drama of Doctrine*, Vanhoozer appropriates a helpful metaphor of theatre in conjunction to theology to serve the church in understanding the necessary integration of theory/doctrine and praxis/real life with theatrical parlance, in which theology is likened to drama, scripture to script, doctrine to direction, Holy Spirit to director, and church to company in one integrated and unified performance or “theological understanding.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2005), xii.

that retrieve a more normative past.”⁷⁴ To be clear I am assuming that the inherent tension between RO and LT is predicated on the inherent tension between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*. Analytically speaking, because there is tension between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, there is also tension between RO and LT. It is this tension with RO and LT that I am attempting to bring into “right” relationship by taking a realistic look at their respective methods. Maybe the answer can be found in the equivocation of *aggiornamento*.

George Lindbeck, a “delegated observer” at the Council, writes about the genesis of this tension vis-à-vis Vatican II:

The *ressourcement* [*nouvelle théologie*] and *aggiornamento* people at the Council thought of themselves as collaborators. *Ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* were understood to be two dimensions of the same reality. But the dimension labeled “*aggiornamento*” could be used in a program of *accommodation* to the modern world, rather than one of an openness to the modern world; and when that happened, *aggiornamento* fell into opposition to *ressourcement*.⁷⁵

If Lindbeck is correct and both methods were in cooperation before *aggiornamento* was interpreted as “accommodation,” rather than “openness,” it would seem natural for an ecumenist to prescribe a simple remedy of jettisoning any notion of “accommodation” associated with *aggiornamento*. But, admittedly, this seems too naïve. To assume that *ressourcement théologiens* like Smith and *aggiornamento théologiens* like Gutiérrez can begin to collaborate because the latter have diametrically shifted their methodological paradigm (“from below” to “from above”) is to expect too much from *aggiornamento théologiens*, even from an ecumenical perspective.

I propose then that *ressourcement théologiens* like Smith and *aggiornamento théologiens* like Gutiérrez, in epistemic humility, acknowledge that their own methods may contain

⁷⁴ O’Malley, 64.

⁷⁵ George Weigel, “Re-Viewing Vatican II,” First Things, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/re-viewing-vatican-ii-an-interview-with-george-a-lindbeck-2> (accessed December 13, 2013).

“weaknesses,” which may foster dependency towards their academic brothers and sisters. It is to these “weaknesses” that I now turn.

§3.3 Methodological Argument

§3.3.1 Liberation Theology’s “Weakness”

According to RO, LT interprets the knowledge of God as universally accessible, which “liquidates” scripture (to borrow a term from Graham Ward)⁷⁶ or “naturalizes the supernatural.”⁷⁷ More specifically, RO understands LT as accommodating modernity by correlating the claims of Christian revelation with the politico-economic system of Marxism.

John Milbank explains the major consequence of the correlationist method, in which LT is imbued:

From the Rahnerian version of integralism to an embracing of Bonhoeffer’s dialectical paradoxes of secularization is an easy step: the social is an autonomous sphere which does not need to turn to theology for its self-understanding, and yet it is already a grace-imbued sphere, and therefore it is *upon* pre-theological sociology or Marxist social theory that theology must be founded. In consequence, a theological critique of society becomes impossible. And, therefore what we are offered is *anything but* a true theology of the political.⁷⁸

In other words, if we follow the facile transition from Karl Rahner’s German version of integralism,⁷⁹ which integrates the natural to the supernatural, to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theological-sociological dialectic of seeing the social sphere of immanence paradoxically as autonomous (and thus unsuspending from transcendence) and yet saturated with the grace of God,

⁷⁶ See Graham Ward, *True Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

⁷⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 207.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 208 (emphases in original).

⁷⁹ According to RO, the German version of integralism, spearheaded by Rahner, is contrasted with the French version of integralism, spearheaded by de Lubac and Congar, which RO is rooted in.

we fall into the trap of not being able to critique society from a theological perspective because there is no criterion from which to tell the difference between the natural from the supernatural. Relating this to LT specifically, LT's methodological strategy of constructing a theological edifice upon a Marxist foundation then seems self-serving and self-justifying, from RO's perspective. LT's pre-theological sociological foundationalism serves and justifies its own social agenda as being practically theological because it starts with the politico-social principle of simultaneously *denouncing* societal injustices and *announcing* the politicizing function of the gospel within a commitment to liberating those societal injustices. But if politics is unhooked from transcendence, yet exists in a fallen world simultaneously saturated with sin (as evidenced by the oppression of the powerless) and the gift of divine grace, what is to temper it from justifying a self-serving program for those in power? Now, I move to answer the question What are the academic skeletons in RO's methodological closet?

§3.3.2 Radical Orthodoxy's "Weakness"

To start I provide a background for "*la nouvelle théologie*"; more specifically, I start by recalling the moral and spiritual milieu in which Henri de Lubac wrote. De Lubac found himself disenchanted with the spiritual complacency of French Catholics in a post-war world (WWII). He longed for inspiration; he found it in the conception of church unity. Thus, he developed an allergy towards Christian dualisms, including "the long-dominant Thomistic construal of nature and grace,"⁸⁰ which "tended to rend the cosmos into natural (autonomous) and supernatural elements."⁸¹ His writings were meant to inspire two kinds of people: those whose quest for

⁸⁰ Young, 13.

⁸¹ Smith, 44.

meaning had been disoriented because of the Second World War, and those who had been subjected to the modern disease of individualism. According to Robin Darling Young, de Lubac “prescribe[s] a premodern antidote . . . : unity rediscovered in the fathers.”⁸² To most people de Lubac longed to engage the modern world. But to others like Young “to regard de Lubac as a reformer eager to engage the modern world is to misunderstand him.”⁸³ Young argues that de Lubac’s unity of faith via *ressourcement* is, in fact, *an imagined unity*.

Of course Young is not only critiquing de Lubac’s *ressourcement*, but all methods of *ressourcement* that romanticize the literature of the patristic fathers being unified in faith:

What is crucial to understand is that de Lubac’s early works presuppose a *catholica* that cannot be demonstrated to have existed, since early Christianity arose among small congregations riven by intense argument—as anyone can discover in its earliest documents, the letters of Paul. For example, de Lubac’s evocation stifles the voices of the third-century controversy that guided Origen’s exegesis. It overlooks Irenaeus’s catalogue of rebutted heresies. He ignores the cultures of early Christianity that were neither Greek nor Latin, and fails to account for the mutual borrowing among pagans and Christians.⁸⁴

The fact that de Lubac’s *oeuvre* does not mention these clashes that have “always accompanied public Christian discourse”⁸⁵ is troubling for his *ressourcement*, says Young. (I am assuming that Gutiérrez would agree.) Had de Lubac incorporated and wrestled with them in his writings, “its influence might have been felt in a more realistic way when incorporated into the documents of an ecumenical council charged with *aggiornamento* . . .”⁸⁶ Now that the gauntlet has been thrown down RO’s nostalgia towards *ressourcement* seems obvious. Ironically, it is the same problem

⁸² Young, 17.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

RO critiques LT for, but in this case, it is turned on its head. RO criticizes LT for *uncritically* accepting Marxism as the “expert” on politics.⁸⁷ But, according to Young, it seems that RO is the one that is guilty of uncritically appropriating foundationalist ideals. Both RO and LT’s methods, respectively, seem to harbor “weaknesses” from the perspective of their interlocutors. This is not to suggest that either *ressourcement* or *aggiornamento* is in any way invalid or irredeemable, but rather to argue that either method, left to itself, is not beyond reproach. What I propose, then, to foster unity between RO’s *ressourcement* and LT’s *aggiornamento* is to ground these methods in a church doctrine that is highly regarded by both. I believe that doctrine to be Christology.

§3.4 A Proposal: Unity in Christ

I turn to a few Christological quotes from Yves Congar, John Milbanks, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Medellín, in order to instigate productive dialogue.

According to Congar, via Gabriel Flynn, “*ressourcement* could be accomplished only by way of a *recentrement* (a re-centering on Christ), thereby effecting ‘a return to the essential, to Jesus Christ, especially in the central mystery of Easter.’”⁸⁸ If the focus of *ressourcement* is *recentrement*, the purpose of *recentrement* for Congar is unity in the Church. Jean-Pierre Jossua writes that after WWII, of which Congar was a prisoner, Congar became aware that an ecumenical vocation is an ecclesiological vocation.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 207.

⁸⁸ Yves Congar, “Il faut construire l’Église en nous,” *Témoignage Chrétien* 7 (July 1950): 1; Gabriel Flynn, “Yves Congar and Catholic Church Reform: A Renewal of the Spirit,” in *Yves Congar: The Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Dudley, MA: Eerdmans, 2005), 106.

⁸⁹ Jean-Pierre Jossua, “In Hope of Unity,” in *Yves Congar: The Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Dudley, MA: Eerdmans, 2005), 170.

As mentioned earlier, RO's seminal method, which overlaps its content blurring the line between them, is *ressourcement*. John Milbank's work is no exception. Although Milbank does not develop a plenary Christology, he attempts to engage theology, particularly Christology, with language and culture aiming to make "the Christian *logos* sound again afresh [or not so strange]." ⁹⁰ According to Milbank, the thesis in chapter five of his book is a kindred spirit with Karl Barth's Christocentric emphasis. He echoes the medieval tradition encapsulated by Meister Eckhart, when he says that when we "form the image of Christ . . . we genuinely participate in Christ and not as a kind of sub-personal, quasi-material inclusion." ⁹¹ And in what sounds (vaguely?) reminiscent of LT's normative ethic of a new human order, Milbank suggests that "[t]his recovery [of 'any true receptivity of God' in Christ] alone allows us to fulfill our own self-creation." ⁹²

Of course LT's *aggiornamento* of modernizing the church and starting "from below" by suffering in solidarity with a localized people group (Latin Americans) is ideally actualized in Christ—the great Liberator, who "*freely* decides to give his life in solidarity with those who are under the power of death." ⁹³ Robert McAfee Brown writes that for Gutiérrez "Christ does not just liberate us from the consequences of individual sin, but from the power of social sin, or, as it is now often called, 'systematic evil.' This is what he describes as 'integral liberation,' liberation of the *whole person*, which makes full human reality possible for us." ⁹⁴

⁹⁰ John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 1.

⁹¹ Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 140-41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 141.

⁹³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, [1984] 2003), 92 (emphasis in original).

⁹⁴ Brown, 114 (emphasis in original). The Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops concurs: "we are concerned with the whole man in the process of transformation and development of our [Latin] people, we

The situation of injustice has been called “institutionalized violence.” Moreover, it is a “sinful situation,” says Medellín, because “where . . . social peace does not exist there will we find social, political, economic and cultural inequalities, there will we find the rejection of the peace of the Lord, and a rejection of the Lord Himself.”⁹⁵

§4 A Critique of Ecumenical Theology

Skeptics of ecumenism may argue that attempting rapprochement via uniting two or more academic communities, such as RO and LT, based on a centralized doctrine is an exercise in futility. I would disagree. Typically, this type of skeptical argument operates on the flawed assumption that if something may be the case, then it is the case. But that does not follow. By analogy I use a common philosophical argument against this kind of foundationalism to explain. Skeptics of Cartesian foundationalism like to argue that we cannot be absolutely certain that every human being is not a brain in a vat or “a brain hooked up to a sophisticated computer program that can perfectly simulate experiences of the outside world.”⁹⁶ A similar thought-experiment is illustrated by the movie *The Matrix* (1999), whereby human minds are enslaved within the Matrix (an artificial reality), unless one becomes unplugged from it. “How can you be absolutely certain that we’re not in the Matrix, right now?” asks the skeptic. My answer is, “You’re right. I can’t be *absolutely* certain.” But that does not mean that I *am* a brain in a vat or that I *am* plugged into the Matrix. Thus, because I do not have sufficient reason to believe

want to enable the people themselves to be the authors and builders of their own progress....” Juan Landázuri Ricketts, “Inaugural Address in Bogota: Need for a New Order,” in *Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops: The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council*, vol. 1, ed. Louis Michael Colonnese (Bogotá, CO: Celam, 1970), 25.

⁹⁵ Medellín, “Peace,” 14c.

⁹⁶ Lance P. Hickey, “The Brain in a Vat Argument,” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/brainvat/> (accessed December 13, 2013).

otherwise, I will continue to live my life as though it were not the case. The same goes for the skeptic who says, “How can you be so sure that your argument for ecumenism will work?” My answer is, “I’m not *so* sure.” But that does not mean that it *cannot* work. I am *prima facie* justified in continuing to believe, until proven otherwise.

However, in general, there is a challenge to ecumenism that has been suggested that may be helpful in strengthening my argument. Marry Tanner forms it as a question: “what is the *goal* of the unity that motivates ecumenical conversation?”⁹⁷ I propose the model of “united not absorbed.”⁹⁸ That is, RO and LT ought to be united in their mutual high regard for the doctrine of Christology, but neither RO nor LT should absorb the other via subjugation. That does not mean, however, that one should not lead the other. I propose that we take a lesson from de Lubac who recognized that “[t]he twentieth-century patristic renewal to a very large extent made possible . . . the *aggiornamento*, or deep renewal of faith, manifested in the official proceedings of the Second Vatican Council.”⁹⁹ That is, “the twentieth-century patristic renewal” or *ressourcement* led to the “renewal of faith” as expressed in Vatican II.

I also propose that RO’s *ressourcement* should continue to engage the historical present aiming at contextualization. In other words, merely retrieving the resources of the Christian tradition is only part of the solution to ecumenism. “*La nouvelle théologie*” must engage with and evangelize to the modern world for it to fulfill its overarching goal of “repairing the breach” (to quote from Isaiah 58:12) between nature and grace.¹⁰⁰ There is a complementary overlap here

⁹⁷ Tanner, 570 (emphasis added).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Grumett, 247.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Ruddy, “*Ressourcement* and the *Enduring* Legacy of Post-Tridentine Theology,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187.

with the historical praxis of LT, which holds to the necessary dialectic between thought and action. It is encouraging to see *ressourcement théologiens* like Henri Bouillard advocating for contextual theology: “A theology that is not relevant or contemporary (*actuelle*) would be a false theology.”¹⁰¹ I close with this quote from Robert J. Schreiter, who balances the dialectic between thought and action: “Theology cannot remain only with reflection; nor can it be reduced to practice. Good reflection leads to action, and action is not completed until it has been reflected upon.”¹⁰²

Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council’s concern for establishing a closer link between the church and the modern world was a drastic change from the concerns of the First Vatican Council. George Lindbeck observes the concern (tension) at the Council between *nouveaux théologiens* and *aggiornamento théologiens* when he recalls that “*aggiornamento*” was associated with the church accommodating the modern world, rather than “*aggiornamento*” being correlated with “openness” to the modern world. In confirmation, Smith adds that the liberal agenda of modernizing the church actually “accommodat[es] theology to modernity rather than grounding itself in revelation.”¹⁰³ This tension between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* has been inherited by RO and LT, since RO prescribes to a “return to the sources” and LT prescribes to “modernizing” the church. But RO’s method of *ressourcement*, advocated by Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, and others, is, seemingly, not without its problems, least of all de Lubac’s

¹⁰¹ Joseph A. Komonchak, “*Humani Generis* and *Nouvelle Théologie*,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 146.

¹⁰² Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis, 1985), 92.

¹⁰³ Smith, 71.

nostalgic notion of *ressourcement*, which romanticizes the unified writings of the patristic fathers. But neither is LT's method of *aggiornamento* without its peccadillos, says Milbanks, exposing the major consequence of its correlationist method as failing to critique society from a theological perspective. Thus, in the name of ecumenism, I offer a way forward for both RO and LT. I propose that they acknowledge the respective "weaknesses" alleged by their interlocutors, practicing epistemic humility, which fosters a dependency on others. Moreover, I propose a unifying factor: to agree on a common denominator of doctrine between them. I suggest Christology. But what is the goal of this unifying factor? I propose the model of "united not absorbed,"¹⁰⁴ whereby RO and LT are united doctrinally to one another without being absorbed into the theology or methodology of the other. I also propose that as far methodologies go *ressourcement* lead *aggiornamento* taking a lesson from de Lubac. But if *ressourcement* is going to take the lead, being accountable to *aggiornamento*, then I suggest that *ressourcement* continue to engage the historical-social-political present aiming at contextualization.

I close with this idea on theological methods that relates the *reflection* (on premodern Christian literature) of *ressourcement* and the *contextualization* (social-political practice) of *aggiornamento*. In chapters eight and nine of Kevin J. Vanhoozer's book, *Remythologizing Theology*, he tackles the doctrine of divine impassibility arguing for a remythologizing of God's communicative actions (i.e., "theodrama") as depicted in scripture. He contrasts the remythologizing model with the models of mythologization and demythologization, whereby the former construes God as one who is "tormented by a strong, possibly irrational, passion that causes him to suffer change,"¹⁰⁵ and the latter construes God's emotions as being merely a

¹⁰⁴ Tanner, 570.

¹⁰⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 415.

projection of human emotions onto God (i.e., “anthropomorphism”). I relate Vanhoozer’s project to the binary methodologies discussed in this thesis. Without the contextualization (*aggiornamento*) of LT, RO’s *ressourcement* suffers from demythologizing theology by making social-political practice a static (figurative?) reality. But without the reflection (*ressourcement*) of RO, LT’s *aggiornamento* suffers from mythologizing theology by making theology all about the “participation in the contemporary struggle for justice,”¹⁰⁶ rather than participation in God. The collaboration between RO’s method of *ressourcement* and LT’s method of *aggiornamento* escapes the pitfalls of both mythologization and demythologization *remythologizing theology* by allowing the return to the authority of scripture to lead the contemporary church to put into practice its three Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

¹⁰⁶ David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989), 140.

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