“One might be tempted to think that, after fifty years, the Second Vatican Council has been sufficiently analyzed and understood. Gerald O’Collins dismisses this assumption in the preface of his book, acknowledging that ‘the documents still astonish [him] in golden bits.’ He maintains that much of what the Council taught remains to be understood, appreciated, and practiced. This is clearly an underlying theme throughout his latest book on Vatican II. As in all of O’Collins’s writings, there is a theological preciseness in his treatment of the Vatican II documents. Such an approach is essential for every theologian who continues to probe and understand the teachings of the Council.”

Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP
Professor of Theology
St. Anselm College

“By any measure Gerald O’Collins has been at the forefront of Catholic theology in the post–Vatican II era. His voluminous writings have put all those seeking a deeper understanding of Christian faith in his debt. *The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning* proceeds from O’Collins’s conviction that ‘much in what the Council taught remains to be appreciated and practiced.’ These lucid, insightful, indeed, magisterial essays are a precious guide toward a fuller appreciation and appropriation of the significance and implications of this epochal Council.”

Robert P. Imbelli
Boston College (Emeritus)
Author of *Rekindling the Christic Imagination: Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization*
“The understanding, interpretation, and implementation of the Second Vatican Council’s teachings remains a task for the Church. Much of the Council’s rich and deeply interconnected teachings is still to be appreciated and received, and the renewal and reform it called for is yet to be realized in practice.

“Gerald O’Collins, SJ, is one of the leading figures in the English-speaking theological world in our time and an eminent interpreter of the Council. In this volume, which brings together a number of previously published articles, his fifty years of penetrating and insightful scholarship are brought to bear on an examination of the radical changes, in some cases reversals, in teaching and policy that the Council announced and to questions of the message and meaning of the Council. He pays particular attention to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the role of Scripture, the approaches of ressourcement and aggiornamento of the Council, the revelatory and salvific dimensions of the divine self-communication, the paschal mystery, the universality of revelation and faith, the teaching on other living faiths, and issues of fundamental theology.

“O’Collins’s scholarship rightly commands the attention of scholars as well as students worldwide, and this most welcome book will undoubtedly serve to further the reception of the Council and the trajectories it initiated.”

Anne Hunt
Executive Dean, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy
Australian Catholic University

“The work of Gerald O’Collins, particularly this book, is a wonderful example of the vitality of the theology of Vatican II in light of the New Evangelization. It is also a much-needed correction to the unnecessary controversy that has recently surrounded Vatican II in some ecclesiastical quarters.”

Massimo Faggioli
Author of True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium
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Called by St. John XXIII of blessed memory on January 29, 1959, the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was widely recognized as the most significant religious event in the twentieth century. Trusting utterly in the Holy Spirit, Pope John hoped that this assembly of Roman Catholic bishops, joined by observers from other Christian churches and communities, would bring about a new Pentecost. He wanted to update and renew spiritually the Catholic Church, heal divisions within Christendom, and alter the Church’s reactionary attitude toward the world.

Vatican II forced Catholics to think hard and differently about their Church. No longer maintaining a vision of the Church as a perfect society, a model elaborated by St. Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) that remained more or less standard among Catholics for well over three hundred years, the bishops at Vatican II acknowledged the need for that “continued reformation to which Christ always calls his Church” (Decree on Ecumenism, 6).

From his election in 1978, St. John Paul II (who as a bishop had himself taken part in the Council) repeatedly asked Jews, Muslims, Orthodox and Protestant Christians, and other groups to forgive crimes committed against them by Catholics. On the First Sunday of Lent 2000 in St. Peter’s Basilica, he underlined the constant need for repentance as an integral part of the Church’s celebration of the Great Jubilee Year. The confession of sins at the Eucharist on that Sunday featured seven representatives of the Roman Curia asking pardon for such sins of the past and of the present as intolerance, anti-Semitism, discrimination against women, and contempt for various cultures and religions.
On June 22, 2003, John Paul II visited Banja Luka in northern Bosnia and celebrated Mass near the ruins of a Franciscan convent destroyed in 1995 by Serbian forces, who were taking revenge for the evils perpetrated by Father Vjekoslav Filipovic, a Franciscan expelled from his order during the Second World War. He led a 1942 attack by Croatian fascists who butchered more than two thousand local Serbs, including hundreds of women and children. “From this city marked by so much suffering and bloodshed,” the pope said in his homily, “I ask almighty God to have mercy on the sins committed against humanity, human dignity, and freedom by the Catholic Church.” The words of John Paul II showed once again how the self-image of the Church has profoundly changed and is still changing as Catholics continue to assimilate two basic themes from Vatican II: (a) being a holy sign as repentant sinners, and (b) being at the service of the world.

The two constitutions on the Church approved by the Council understood the Church to be (a) a visible sign of what the invisible Christ does (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium [LG]) and to be (b) a servant Church that embraces a ministry of justice and peace for the whole of humanity (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes [GS]). The bishops at Vatican II saw the Church as a sacrament of what Christ has done and is doing through the Holy Spirit to bring together all human beings into the kingdom of God.

During the four sessions of the Council and its aftermath, many other Christians and those of other faiths followed with deep interest its progress and, in some cases, affected its achievements. Rabbi Abraham Heschel and Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, the European director of B’nai B’rith, played a role, for instance, in promoting what would be said about Jews in the declaration Nostra Aetate (NA). Rabbi James Rudin compared this declaration to the Magna Carta or the US Constitution because “it broke new ground and provided the mandate for constructive change.” Through the presence of John Moorman, Bishop of Ripon, and his fellow observers, the Anglican Communion made its voice heard at Vatican II, and the opening of the Anglican Centre in Rome in 1966 has assured a permanent representation of that communion at the Vatican. The ecumenical thrust of the Council, encouraged by the presence of observers from nearly every Christian denomination, led directly to the creation of many bilateral dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian churches.
and ecclesial communities. That work continues, sometimes with momentous results. The Catholic-Lutheran dialogue produced such an achievement in the 1999 “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” which was accepted by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation and officially laid to rest divisions over God’s saving gift of righteousness.

Several chapters of this book will examine the radical changes and, indeed, reversals in teaching and policy toward the religious “others” that Vatican II embodied. This deep reform has evoked praise from the leaders of other churches and other faiths—including Rowan Williams who wrote an article for the Christmas 2012 issue of the London Tablet. The outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury highlighted the theological developments that made Vatican II possible, as well as the Council’s legacy and unfinished business. Hence this book addresses not only Roman Catholics but also all “the others,” Christians and non-Christians alike, who continue to be interested (a) in retrieving what the Council taught and mandated about ecumenical, interfaith, and further areas, and (b) in identifying how much of that should still be put into practice.

Vatican II set itself an enormous agenda and, in its sixteen documents, produced thirty percent of the written texts coming from the twenty-one general councils of Catholic Christianity. Understanding, interpreting, and implementing Vatican II’s texts remain a still far-from-completed task. For fifty years I have been studying Vatican II; yet the documents can still astonish me with the golden bits. Much in what the Council taught remains to be appreciated and practiced.

Chapter 3 of this book, for instance, develops more fully a thesis recently proposed by Massimo Faggioli: the first document to be promulgated, the constitution on the liturgy, not only enjoys a chronological priority but also provides a theological key for interpreting what was to come at Vatican II. Chapter 9 explores for the first time the role of the Scriptures in nourishing and fashioning the documents of the Council. There are further items in this book which, I would argue, can help to advance our understanding of what Vatican II achieved.

The book begins by presenting in chapter 1 various currents in what came to be called ressourcement theology (or nouvelle théologie) which retrieved forgotten or neglected themes found in the Scriptures, the fathers of the church, the liturgy, and the works of classical theologians. After sketching five characteristics of the widespread manualist
theology with which ressourcement theology had to contend, the chapter shows how the ressourcement approach transformed the Council’s doctrine on revelation (Dei Verbum [DV]), on the Church (Lumen Gentium [LG]), and on the divine revelation reaching all human beings (Ad Gentes [AG]).

Chapter 2 takes up the challenge that comes from the far-reaching changes within the Catholic Church and in her relationship with others brought by Vatican II. These changes obviously involved a measure of discontinuity with past teaching and practice. Three of the Council’s documents (Sacrosanctum Concilium [SC], Perfectae Caritatis [PC], and Dignitatis Humanae [DH]) drew explicitly on principles to justify the renewal and reform they mandated. This chapter argues that we best understand and interpret the changes as a matter of maintaining and renewing the apostolic identity of the Church.

In a 2010 article for Theological Studies and in a 2012 book True Reform, Massimo Faggioli put the case for seeing the 1963 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy as initiating and setting the agenda for subsequent conciliar documents and decisions. Chapter 3 nuances and enlarges Faggioli’s thesis. At least twelve themes in the constitution anticipate what was to come in later texts of Vatican II. It was the theological starting point for the Council’s teaching and reforms.

Chapter 4 takes up and explores what Sacrosanctum Concilium proposed about five modes of Christ’s liturgical presence (no. 7). It argues that such presence displays ten characteristics: as relational, mediated, personal, free, transformative, costly, bodily, multiform, feminine, and future-oriented. Understood that way, Vatican II’s teaching on Christ’s presence could prove a rich lode of reflection for sacramental theology.

Chapter 5 moves the focus to evaluate what the Council taught about other living faiths in Nostra Aetate and further documents. The current world situation adds a political urgency to retrieving what Vatican II said about Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and other world religions. Right from Sacrosanctum Concilium, we can see how the salvation of all humanity stood high on the agenda for the Council. The positive teaching about the religious “others” that unfolded in Lumen Gentium, Nostra Aetate, Ad Gentes, and Gaudium et Spes prepared the way for groundbreaking initiatives in interfaith dialogue and collaboration.

Chapter 6, “Implementing Nostra Aetate,” reflects on seven ways in which John Paul II (pope 1978–2005) creatively developed and applied the teaching of that conciliar declaration. The chapter also explores
three issues which *Nostra Aetate* raises and which have not yet received adequate attention.

Chapter 7 shifts attention to *Dei Verbum* and six themes that it clearly develops about God’s self-revelation. In passing, the constitution attends to the Jewish and Christian experience of that divine self-disclosure. But to grasp the full scope of the Council’s teaching on revelation, we need to glean from its other documents four further themes: the human condition that is open to revelation; the credibility of revelation; divine revelation reaching those who do not inherit the special history of biblical revelation; and “the signs of the times” that can mediate the divine presence and intentions.

The Constitution on Divine Revelation, along with other conciliar documents, proved fruitful for those engaged with fundamental or foundational theology. Chapter 8 takes up ways in which Vatican II contributed to four trajectories of contemporary fundamental theology: understanding the self-revelation of God in biblical history; interpreting the conditions that open up human beings to this divine self-communication; establishing the credibility of faith; and reflecting on the role of tradition and Scripture in transmitting the message of revelation.

To round off these reflections on Vatican II, chapter 9 investigates the degree to which the Council did in fact hear the word of God “religiously” and “faithfully” proclaim it (DV 1). A careful examination of the place of the Scriptures in two constitutions, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium*, substantiates the conclusion that Vatican II practiced what it preached about the Scriptures being “the supreme rule of faith” (DV 21).

My concluding reflections (chap. 10) are followed by a select bibliography, an appendix on the reform of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a biblical index, and an index of names.

In the London *Tablet* at Christmas 2002, the late Cardinal Franz König, former Archbishop of Vienna, wrote: “the crucial process of reception, that all-important part of any church council, can take several generations. It continues today.” To the extent that this book can further the reception of Vatican II and help promote the trajectories it initiated, I will be very grateful. I dedicate the volume to friends and colleagues who continue to contribute toward understanding and promoting the Council’s teaching: María Carmen Aparicio Valls, Christopher Bellitto, John Borelli, Nunzio Capizzi, Maryanne Confoy,


Finally, I am grateful to *Asian Horizons* for permission to republish “Dei Verbum and Revelation” (*Asian Horizons* 7 [2013]) and to the editor of *The Tablet* for permission to republish “The Reform of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith” (*The Tablet* [July 14, 2012]).

For their generous work in reading carefully this book, correcting errors, and making various suggestions, I wish to thank very warmly Christopher Willcock and several other (anonymous) referees. I am also very grateful to Hans Christoffersen, Lauren L. Murphy, Bill Kauffmann, and others at Liturgical Press for their courteous efficiency in seeing this book through to publication.

Gerald O’Collins, SJ, AC
Australian Catholic University
and The University of Divinity (Melbourne)
Pentecost 2013
Abbreviations

Vatican II Documents

AA  *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People
AG  *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity
CD  *Christus Dominus*, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church
DH  *Dignitatis Humanae*, Declaration on Religious Liberty
DV  *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
GE  *Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration on Religious Education
GS  *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
IM  *Inter Mirifica*, Decree on the Means of Social Communication
LG  *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
NA  *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions
OE  *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches
OT  *Optatam Totius*, Decree on the Training of Priests
PC  *Perfectae Caritatis*, Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life
PO  *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
SC  *Sacro Sanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
UR  *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism
Other Abbreviations

AAS  Acta Apostolicae Sedis

DzH  H. Denzinger and P. Hünermann, eds., Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum, 42nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009)

FT  Fundamental Theology

ND  J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., The Christian Faith, 7th ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2001)

From the late nineteenth century, various currents of what came to be called *ressourcement* theology emerged and aimed at retrieving forgotten or neglected themes found in the Scriptures, the fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the works of classic theologians. This phenomenon included the biblical movement, the ecumenical movement, the liturgical renewal, the patristic renewal (championed, in particular, by those who had launched the *Sources chrétiennes* series), and the renewal of Thomism. Various forms of *ressourcement* theology flowed into and enriched the achievements of the Second Vatican Council.

This impact on the Council’s work was only to be expected. Some of those who led *ressourcement* theology (e.g., Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, and Karl Rahner) became *periti* or expert-consultants who collaborated closely with the bishops in producing the conciliar texts. In his diary entry on the eve of the closing of the Council,


2 See chapters in ibid. on Congar (G. Flynn, J. Komonchak, J. Mettepenningen, and P. D. Murray), on Daniélou (B. Pottier), on de Lubac (D. Grummett), and on Rahner (R. Lennan). Some query the inclusion of Rahner among the leaders of *ressourcement*, since he often refrains from citing particular biblical and other sources. Yet repeatedly one can retrieve precise references that support what he proposes—e.g., to take one example among very many—on the theology of the death and resurrection of Jesus (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. W. V. Dych [New York: Seabury Press, 1978], 264–85).
December 7, 1965, Congar listed what he had contributed—either as initial drafter or as editor of emendations subsequently proposed by the bishops—to eight of the sixteen documents issued by the Council.3 In tackling the impact of ressourcement theology on Vatican II, we will examine first what some conciliar texts say about retrieving valuable sources in the tradition that should revitalize the Church’s teaching and practice. Second, we will describe a roadblock which initially hindered that retrieval from shaping the teaching of the Council: the widespread manualist theology, exemplified by textbooks published in Rome and the Sacrae Theologiae Summa authored by a number of Spanish Jesuits. Third, we investigate how ressourcement theologians worked with the bishops in challenging, revising, and replacing draft documents prepared by the “manualists.” Sampling Vatican II texts will illustrate the way these texts frequently embodied some major and minor themes developed by ressourcement theology.

References by Vatican II to Ressourcement

Those who scour the sixteen documents of Vatican II for explicit references to ressourcement or the return to sources will find something to report. The clearest endorsement of ressourcement comes in the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis of October 28, 1965). The decree emphasizes that “an appropriate renewal of religious life comprises both a continual return to the sources of the whole Christian life and to the original inspiration of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of the times.” Starting from the “supreme rule,” “the following of Christ proposed in the Gospel,” the decree then spells out five principles for this renewal, which should be “promoted under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church” (no. 2; emphasis added).

Apropos of the life of prayer for religious, the decree recommends that they should “draw from the fitting sources of Christian spirituality.”

That means drawing not only from the Eucharist but also from daily contact with “the Sacred Scripture, so that by reading and meditating on the divine Scriptures they might learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:8)” (no. 6).

On the same day that Perfectae Caritatis (PC) appeared, Vatican II also promulgated the Decree on the Training of Priests, Optatam Totius (OT). It proposed a thoroughgoing revision of ecclesiastical studies, which involves seminarians studying biblical languages, Latin, and the liturgical language of their own rite. Knowing the original languages of “Sacred Scripture and Tradition” will facilitate their access to the sources and free them from the sometimes misleading medium of translation (no. 13). Those who teach theology are directed to use a genetic method (see below), which begins by drawing on the riches of the Scripture, the patristic tradition, and the best medieval authors as foundational for Catholic faith and doctrine (no. 16).

Three weeks later, in its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (DV, promulgated on November 18, 1965), Vatican II called on all Christians, and not merely members of religious institutes, to be “nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture,” “the pure and perennial source of spiritual life” (no. 21; see no. 25). The day before the Council ended, in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis [PO] of December 7, 1965), Vatican II exhorted priests to return to the same biblical source: their “sacred knowledge” should be “drawn from reading and meditating on the Sacred Scripture.” This knowledge should also be “fruitfully nourished by the study of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church and other monuments of Tradition” (no. 19).

Two other documents also presented a creative return to biblical and traditional sources as the route to renew the life of the Church. Thus the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium of December 4, 1963) prescribed that texts set to music should be “drawn especially from Sacred Scriptures and from liturgical sources” (no. 121). Apropos of the special position of the Eastern Churches,

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the Decree on Ecumenism (\textit{Unitatis Redintegratio} [UR] of November 21, 1964) earnestly recommended that Catholics should “access more often the spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers which lift the whole human person to contemplate divine matters” (no. 15).

While \textit{Perfectae Caritatis} leads the way in spelling out what \textit{ressourcement} involves, five other Vatican documents emphasize how a creative return to the sources will revitalize the Church’s teaching and practice. Without ignoring other sources that should be retrieved (liturgical sources, the writings of the fathers and doctors of the Church, and, in particular, “the spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers”), the conciliar documents repeatedly stressed the need to return to the Scriptures, the preeminent source for Christian faith and life.\textsuperscript{5}

\textbf{The Challenge of the Manualists}

A sense of how the preconciliar manuals of theology worked can sharpen our appreciation of what \textit{ressourcement} theology stood for and had to contend with when Vatican II was being prepared and began.\textsuperscript{6} Manualist theology, which belonged to what many identify as “Neo-Scholasticism,” was embodied in some of the nine drafts distributed (seven in August and two in November 1962) to the bishops attending the Council. Two of those drafts or “schemata” involved in a special way a manualist approach: on the moral order (\textit{De Ordine Morali}, largely prepared by a subcommission led by Franz Xavier Hürth, who filled out a sketch composed by Sebastian Tromp)\textsuperscript{7} and on the Church (\textit{De Ecclesia}, largely prepared by Marie-Rosaire Gagnebet,\textsuperscript{8} and Tromp, under the watchful eye of Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the head of the Theological Commission).\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{5} For further discussion of \textit{ressourcement}, see chap. 3 below.


\textsuperscript{8} But see H. Donneaud on Gagnebet’s work in retrieving Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of theology as a science: “Gagnebet’s Hidden \textit{Ressourcement}: A Dominican Speculative Theology from Toulouse,” in \textit{Ressourcement}, 95–110.

One might characterize manualist theology as (1) “regressive” in method, (2) conceptualist rather than historical and biblical, (3) legalistic and worried about errors, (4) non-liturgical, and (5) non-experiential. Let me take up in turn those five characteristics.

1. The “regressive” method began with the present teaching of the pope and bishops and returned to the past in order to show how this teaching was first expressed in the Scriptures, developed by the fathers and doctors of the Church, and deployed in official teaching. Manualist theologians read the sources but only in the light of what was currently taught and believed and with the intention of defending what came from the official teaching authority of the Church and, in particular, from the current pope. In the words of Pius XII, “it is for them [theologians] to show how the teaching of the living Magisterium is found in the Sacred Scriptures and in the divine tradition, whether explicitly or implicitly.”

Ressourcement theology used instead a “genetic” method, a return to the sources that studied first the biblical witness and then the subsequent history of doctrinal development. By starting from the Scriptures and the fathers, it tracked, along the lines of John Henry Newman’s view of doctrinal development, the living tradition and what it embodied for growth and change in Church teaching and practice.

2. Largely indifferent to the claims not only of historical consciousness but also of critical biblical scholarship (which, encouraged by the 1943 encyclical of Pius XII, Divino Afflante Spiritu, went beyond lifting “proof texts” from the Scriptures, and studied biblical passages in their full context), the manualists at their worst seemed to imagine that concepts had been transmitted unchanged from one generation of Church teachers and theologians to another. Ignoring the political,

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10 Pope Pius XII, encyclical letter *Humani Generis* (1950), no. 21; H. Denzinger and P. Hünermann, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum*, 42nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009), 3886 (hereafter DzH); J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, 7th ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2001), 859 (hereafter ND). This encyclical was widely and correctly understood to repudiate the *ressourcement* approach of the *Nouvelle Théologie* of French Dominicans and Jesuits.

11 This encyclical and further papal documents (e.g., from Paul VI and John Paul II), to which reference will be made later in this book, are all available on the Vatican website and in various printed versions.
social, and cultural developments of the modern world, they claimed “unprejudiced” access to an objective order and dealt with eternal truths and general laws, from which they felt justified in deducing particular applications. Thus the draft document *De Ordine Morali* drew commands and prohibitions from universal principles of morality, while largely neglecting the central role of love that the New Testament proposes as giving a specifically Christian orientation to life.

3. A legalistic mentality prompted the manualists to assign a wide range of “notes” or qualifications to theological propositions. In decreasing importance, these “notes” ran from the highest level “of defined faith” to the least authoritative, “offensive to pious ears.” The propositions they had crafted allowed manualist authors to indulge in syllogistic deductions and, inevitably, to condemn errors of every kind, often a series of abstractions such as agnosticism, atheism, humanism, materialism, relativism, and subjectivism.

This legalistic mentality was also highly juridical, and in manuals of ecclesiology concerned with the validity of the sacraments and the supreme jurisdiction of the bishops and pope. Congar, de Lubac, and other ressourcement theologians privileged the sacramental character of the whole Church rather than the juridical approach of what Congar called “hierarchology.”

4. Following the seven fundamental principles and sources or “loci theologici” enumerated by Melchior Cano (1509–60), manualists made no room for liturgy and liturgical sources as an important and even essential “locus” for theology. De Lubac’s principle of “the Eucharist makes the Church” was alien to their theological imagination. By making the liturgy the theme of their first officially approved document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the bishops at Vatican II were, one might say, endorsing the principle of “the liturgy makes the Council.” They ranked the study of liturgy and liturgical sources among “the principal courses” for programs of theology (no. 16). Among the texts promulgated in the Council’s final session, *Dei Verbum*, when recognizing “the divine Scriptures, taken together with Sacred Tradition, as the supreme

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rule of faith” (no. 21), specifically mentioned the study of only two items belonging to “sacred Tradition”: “the Fathers, both of the East and the West, and the sacred Liturgies” (no. 23; emphasis added). Much pre-Vatican II manual theology paid little more than lip service to the fathers and none at all to liturgical sources.14

5. The Gospel of John, the letters of St. Paul, the Confessions of St. Augustine, and other classical works established and encouraged an experiential approach to understanding and interpreting the divine-human relationship. A long line of spiritual and mystical authorities examined this relationship in the key of experience. William of Saint-Thierry (1085–1148) was one of very many Christians who explored in depth our spiritual experience. Nevertheless, two modern documents of the Catholic magisterium, Dei Filius (from the First Vatican Council in 1870) and Pascendi (from Pope Pius X in 1907) warned against denying that “external signs” could lend credibility to divine revelation, appealing only to the “internal experience” of individuals (DzH 3033; ND 127), making faith in God depend on the “private experience” of the individual, and maintaining that interior, immediate experience of God prevails over rational arguments (DzH 3484). A justified opposition to one-sided and partial versions of religious experience unfortunately encouraged among manualists the dangerous delusion that somehow we could encounter and accept the divine self-communication “outside” human experience.

Vatican II’s Dei Verbum was to set the record straight. Through the special history of revelation and salvation, the Israelites “experienced the ways of God with human beings” (no. 14). In the post–New Testament life of the Church, so the Council acknowledged, their “experience” of “spiritual realities” has helped believers contribute to the progress of tradition (no. 8). The closing document from the Council, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS of December 7, 1965), was nothing less than a profound reflection on the experience of the whole human family in the light of the crucified and risen Christ. It is in the light of Christ’s revelation that “the

14 When citing fathers of the Church, many manualists simply lifted proof texts from a classic anthology: M. J. Rouët de Journel, ed., Enchiridion Patristicum, 23rd ed. (Barcelona: Herder, 1965). Not content with using anthologies, such leading figures of ressourcement theology as Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac were outstanding patristic scholars.
sublime calling and profound misery which human beings experience find their final explanation” (no. 13). Here and elsewhere Gaudium et Spes aimed to correlate “the light of revelation” with human experience (e.g., no. 33).

Pope John Paul II proved himself an authoritative commentator on Gaudium et Spes. Right from his first encyclical, Redemptor Hominis (1979), he drew on the constitution and repeatedly reflected on human experience. His 1980 encyclical, Dives in Misericordia, began by appealing to collective and individual experience (no. 4) and went on to use “experience” as a noun thirteen times and as a verb six times. His studies of phenomenologists and mystics also help explain the late pope’s interest in human experience, both general and religious. But not many commentators have reflected on the theme of experience endorsed by Vatican II and then running through the teaching of John Paul II. Apart from George H. Williams, only a few have drawn attention to this theme.16

Three Achievements of Ressourcement Theologians

After sketching five characteristics of the widespread manualist theology with which ressourcement theology had to contend, let me take up three dramatic examples of ressourcement theology transforming Catholic doctrine (1) on revelation (Dei Verbum); (2) on the Church (Lumen Gentium), and (3) on divine revelation reaching all human beings (Ad Gentes).

1. The Doctrine on Revelation

In August 1962, just six weeks before the Council opened on 11 October, the bishops received seven official drafts, which included


a “schema” on “the Sources of Revelation” and another on the related topic of “Preserving the Purity of the Deposit of Faith.” In November 1962, many of the bishops at Vatican II were to criticize strongly the first schema, and a majority voted to have the document returned to the Theological Commission for rewriting. Pope John XXIII intervened to confirm the majority view and set up a new joint commission to handle the work of revision. The members of the “mixed commission” were drawn from the Secretariat for Christian Unity and from the Theological Commission itself. In its fourth and final session, the bishops were to approve the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, a text that enjoys theological priority in the corpus of the sixteen documents of Vatican II. In the preparation of that final text, ressourcement theologians played a vital role, not only such well known ones as Daniélou, Rahner, and Joseph Ratzinger but also such lesser known ones as Pieter Smulders.

Josef Frings, the cardinal archbishop of Cologne, asked Ratzinger as his theological peritus to evaluate the seven drafts, and then signed the response he received from Ratzinger and forwarded it to the Vatican. Ratzinger suggested that the schema “On Preserving the Purity of the Deposit of Faith” should be put aside. As for the draft text on “the Sources of Revelation,” it needed an opening chapter on revelation itself and should be revised to avoid pronouncing authoritatively on topics debated among Catholics. In an address to German-speaking bishops on the day before the Council opened, Ratzinger criticized sharply the schema’s version of revelation and its treatment of such controversial topics as the relationship between Scripture and tradition. Ratzinger’s earlier study of Bonaventure’s concept of revelation had allowed him to retrieve the notion that divine revelation is actualized in its outcome, human faith. God’s self-revelation exists in living

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subjects, those who respond with faith. In a lecture given in 1963, Ratzinger was to insist that “revelation always and only becomes a reality where there is faith . . . revelation to some degree includes its recipient, without whom it does not exist.”

Around the time that Frings contacted Ratzinger in August 1962, the papal nuncio to the Hague, Archbishop Giuseppe Beltrami, consulted a Dutch Jesuit, Pieter Smulders, about the same seven schemas. Smulders strongly criticized the schema “on Preserving the Purity of the Deposit of Faith” for one-sidedly presenting revelation as word (locutio Dei) and not recognizing that divine works also belong to the event of revelation. Word and saving deeds belong inseparably together, above all in the supreme self-manifestation of God through Jesus Christ, witnessed by 1 John 1:2-3, a text which would appear three years later in Dei Verbum (no. 1). Through his work as a peritus for the bishops of Indonesia in 1962 and 1963, as drafter of a paper for the “mixed commission” established by the pope in November 1962, and then in 1964 as a drafter of some of chapter 1 of Dei Verbum, Smulders played a major role in the production of the constitution—not least in the “sacramental” view it adopted of divine self-revelation occurring through inseparably interrelated “words and works” (nos. 2, 4, 14, 17).

It has been more or less conventional to assign an ecumenical origin to this way of presenting God’s saving and revealing self-communication, as if the bishops and their drafters consciously wanted to combine here the language of word-of-God theologians like Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann with that favored by Oscar Cullmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and George Ernest Wright about God’s revealing and/or saving acts in history. But a year before the promulgation of Dei Verbum, the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church had already used the scheme of “word/work” when recalling Jesus’ proclamation of God’s kingdom: “This kingdom shines out to human beings in the word, works, and presence of Christ” (LG 5). Even more significantly,

19 On all this, see Wicks, “Vatican II on Revelation,” 641–43.
21 In “Vatican II on Revelation,” 643–45, Wicks summarizes the input that came from Smulders in fashioning the final text of Dei Verbum.
in November 1962, the language of “words” and “works” had already entered the making of Dei Verbum through the paper that Smulders drafted for the mixed commission and through the paper that Daniélou produced for Cardinal Garrone (see below).

The “sacramental” language of Dei Verbum applies equally to “the economy of revelation” and “the history of salvation.” As with the administration of the sacraments, the words and deeds of persons interact to communicate God’s revelation and salvation (nos. 2, 4, 14). Above all in the case of Jesus himself, the words and deeds of one person convey the saving self-manifestation of God (no. 17).

As with Ratzinger’s thinking on revelation being shaped by a retrieval of Bonaventure, the ressourcement theology of revelation coming from Smulders was affected not only by biblical theology but also by Hilary of Poitiers. In the scheme of “words and deeds” as the vehicle of revelation, Smulders, a world-class expert on Hilary, echoed his language. In the opening article of his Tractatus Mysteriorum, Hilary wrote of the biblical “words (dicta)” and “facts (facta)” that, respectively, “announce (nuntiare)” and “express/reveal (exprimere)” the coming of Christ: “et dictis nuntiat et factis exprimit.”

During the first session of the Council, various ressourcement theologians, such as Edward Schillebeeckx, composed and circulated among the bishops critiques of the official schemas and even proposed alternate texts. Rahner produced a critical Disquisitio Brevis on the question of Scripture and tradition. Working with Ratzinger he wrote an alternative to the schema on “the Sources of Revelation,” De Revelatione Dei et Hominis in Iesu Christo Facta. Two thousand copies of this document

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were circulated to the bishops in November just before they began discussing “the Sources of Revelation.”

Various themes from Rahner’s *Disquisitio* and the draft he wrote with Ratzinger were to make their way into the final text of *Dei Verbum*: for instance, “the magisterium is not above the word of God but serves it” (no. 10), and the refusal to adopt the manualist language of Scripture and tradition being “two sources” of revelation. After all, the Council of Trent spoke of only one source, the Gospel itself, which is equivalent to God’s self-revelation in Christ. Rahner, Ratzinger, and other ressourcement theologians prompted the language of *Dei Verbum* about Scripture and tradition flowing from the same divine source, functioning together inseparably, and moving toward “the same goal,” the final revelation of God at the end of world history (no. 9).

In the debate of November 1962, among the bishops who called for a radical revision of the schema on “the Sources of Revelation” was Cardinal Gabriel Garrone of Toulouse, who then became a member of the new joint commission. To supply a fresh prologue he turned to Daniélou, who supplied a draft “On Revelation and the Word of God” that Garrone presented to the commission on November 27, 1962. Many of the Daniélou/Garrone themes found their way into the final text of *Dei Verbum*: for instance, Christ as “the” Revealer of the triune God.

The history of the genesis of *Dei Verbum* offers a dramatic case of the close collaboration of Daniélou, Rahner, Ratzinger, Smulders, and other theologians (and biblical scholars) with the bishops in producing a text that embodies some key themes of ressourcement theology. Before moving to a similar example, the transformed teaching on the Church that resulted in *Lumen Gentium*, let me summarize five major themes from ressourcement theology that *Dei Verbum* incorporated.

(a) First, where manualist theology understood revelation to be the disclosure by God of otherwise unattainable truths, an increase in “supernatural” knowledge making up the “deposit of faith” that is

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26 The text in its original Latin with a German translation was published by Elmar Klinger and Klaus Wittstadt, eds., *Glaube im Prozess: Christsein nach dem II. Vatikanum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1984), 33–50.


28 On Garrone and Daniélou, see Wicks, “Vatican II on Revelation,” 647–50.
“contained in” the inspired Scriptures and tradition, chapter 1 of *Dei Verbum* interpreted revelation as primarily the personal self-revelation of the triune God in Christ, who invites human beings to enter freely into a dialogue of love. As an interpersonal event, revelation evokes a response of faith, understood as a personal commitment of the whole human being inspired by the Holy Spirit (no. 5) and not merely an intellectual assent to the truths now revealed (which the manualists stressed when interpreting faith). *Dei Verbum* presented the divine self-revelation and the history of salvation as inseparably connected and interchangeable (2, 3, 4). To borrow language from St. John’s Gospel, the light of revelation brings the life of salvation, and vice versa.

The climax of this divine self-communication\(^{29}\) and its signs came with the death and resurrection of Christ, together with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (no. 4).\(^{30}\) Through the Spirit the divine revelation given, once and for all, remains a present reality repeatedly actualized (no. 8) until the final consummation of revelation at the end of time (no. 4). Thus *Dei Verbum*, not to mention other documents of Vatican II,\(^{31}\) understands revelation to be a past, present, and future reality.\(^{32}\)

\(^{29}\) By speaking of God “manifesting” and “communicating” himself (DV 6), Vatican II introduced into official Catholic teaching the language of divine “self-communication,” a term cherished by Rahner for holding together God’s self-revelation and self-giving through saving grace. God’s communication is not merely cognitive but constitutes a real self-communication of God that not only makes salvation known but also brings it in person. See Rahner, “Observations on the Concept of Revelation,” in Rahner and Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 9–25, at 14–15. John Paul II took up the language of divine “self-communication” in his 1980 encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (no. 7) and then, repeatedly in his 1986 encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (nos. 13, 14, 23, 50, 51, and 58).

\(^{30}\) Manualist theology lacked any rich, doctrinal appreciation of the revelatory and salvific impact of Christ’s resurrection; they left the resurrection aside or at best reduced it to a “proof” that lent credibility to his divine identity. Thus Jésus Solano, who wrote a standard manual on Christology that ran to 326 pages, devoted less than a page to the resurrection: *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, vol. 3 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1956).

\(^{31}\) On the teaching about revelation to be gleaned from other documents of Vatican II, see Gerald O’Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 63–78.

Essentially completed (as to its “content,” the “deposit of faith” [no. 10] or the “treasure of revelation entrusted to the Church” [no. 26]) in the past with Christ and the apostolic Church, revelation is repeatedly actualized in the event of human faith until its consummation in the face-to-face encounter with God at the end. Here *ressourcement* theology tells a different story from the manuals, which limited revelation to the past and allowed only for an ongoing understanding and interpretation of such past revelation. This was to ignore what one should draw from Bonaventure (see Ratzinger above) and the logic of faith presented by John’s Gospel: since faith is an encounter “now” with God in Christ, so too must revelation be an actual, present self-disclosure of God who invites such faith. As reciprocal realities, faith and revelation occur together.

(b) Second, such teaching on revelation entailed a switch of language: from the manualist terminology of revealed “mysteries” (in the plural) to the terminology of “the mystery” or divine plan now personally disclosed in Christ (no. 2)—the *reductio in mysterium* popularized by Rahner and other *ressourcement* theologians. Talk of “the mystery” forms a major *leitmotif* of *Dei Verbum*: five times this constitution speaks of “mystery” in the singular (nos. 2, 15, 17, 24, and 26) and never of “mysteries” in the plural.

The same tendency shows up in the other texts promulgated by Vatican II: the sixteen documents use “mystery” in the singular 106 times and “mysteries” in the plural only twenty-two times. While not totally avoiding talk of “mysteries” (see UR 11; OT 16), Vatican II preferred to retrieve the biblical language of the “mystery” of the triune God, revealed in the history of salvation and inviting human beings into a new relationship of eternal love (Eph 1:9). For that matter, right from his first encyclical John Paul II exemplified the same tendency. *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) speaks fifty-nine times of “the mystery of redemption,” “the paschal mystery,” “the mystery of Christ,” and so forth, without ever using the term “mystery” in the plural. The pope’s second encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), uses “mystery” thirty-nine times but “mysteries” only twice.

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(c) Third, I have already remarked above on the “sacramental” and historical approach that such ressourcement theologians as Daniélou and Smulders contributed to Dei Verbum. This approach understands revelation to be a living event communicated through words and deeds functioning together in the course of salvation history.

(d) Fourth, the presentation of revelation as primarily an encounter with the self-communicating God put into a new context the whole debate about tradition and sacred Scripture. They are inseparably related in their past origin (the living word of God or divine self-disclosure), present functioning, and future goal (the final revelation to come at the end of history) (DV 9). Revelation, as a living reality, is made known by the inspired Scriptures but cannot be “contained in” anything, not even in the inspired Scriptures.34

In 1546 the Council of Trent declared “the gospel” to be “the source of all saving truth and conduct,” adding that “this truth and rule of conduct are contained in the written books [of the Bible] and the unwritten [apostolic] traditions” (DzH 1501; ND 210). Despite Trent’s language about the gospel (= revelation) being “the source” (in the singular), manualist theology developed the “two-source” theory of revelation, according to which Scripture and tradition are two distinct sources for revealed truths. Tradition could and does supply some truths which are not found in Scripture. In other words, Scripture is not merely “formally insufficient” (= needing to be interpreted and actualized by tradition) but also “materially insufficient” (= not “containing” all revealed truths). This view obviously privileged a propositional notion of revelation: namely, the model of revelation as the communication of truths which would otherwise have remained hidden in God. Although Dei Verbum did not explicitly rule out the “two-source theory,” that theory is certainly much more difficult to maintain in the face of Vatican II’s understanding of revelation (as being primarily God’s self-revelation) and its stress on the unity between Scripture and tradition.

(e) Fifth and finally, in great part the product of ressourcement thinking, Dei Verbum shows a profoundly biblical orientation. It comes as no surprise when it exhorts theologians to make the study of Scriptures the very “soul” of their work (no. 24). This recommendation, taken

from Leo XIII’s 1893 encyclical Providentissimus Deus, drew on an early Jesuit tradition\textsuperscript{35} and the practice of the best medieval theologians, which in their turn reflected the theological method of Church fathers, both Eastern and Western. The prayerful study of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, was “the very soul” of their teaching; their work, which ran to nearly four hundred volumes in the Migne edition, could be described as one vast commentary on the Scriptures.

While Catholic scholars like Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1855–1938) carried forward critical biblical scholarship, de Lubac and other ressourcement figures reintroduced a “spiritual” interpretation of the Scriptures that retrieved the best of the patristic and medieval traditions. In its chapter on the interpretation of the Scriptures, Dei Verbum endorsed both critical and “spiritual” interpretation (no. 12).

The biblical component of ressourcement flowered, however, in the whole closing chapter of Dei Verbum, “Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church” (nos. 21–26). Here the Council dreamed of the whole Church being nourished by the Bible at every level of her existence. A prayerful knowledge of the Scriptures would foster among all the baptized a living union with Christ and a life centered on him and blessed by the Holy Spirit.

Along with the five themes just described, one could scrutinize further the final text of Dei Verbum and note how it embodied other themes from ressourcement theology: for instance, a sense of biblical truth as truth “for the sake of our salvation” (no. 11), as well as an endorsement of a three-stage scheme in the formation of the Gospels spelled out in 1964 by the Pontifical Biblical Commission (no. 19). Add too the pastoral tone and ecumenical spirit of Dei Verbum, which embodied the desires and hopes of Pope John XXIII for the work of Vatican II. Here one should also honor Congar for having years before set out the pastoral and ecumenical needs of the Church.\textsuperscript{36} But let us turn next to the ways in which ressourcement theologians, led not only


by Congar\(^{37}\) but also by Gérard Philips, helped transform teaching on
the Church.

2. The Doctrine on the Church

Above I recalled how Gagnebet and Tromp, under the watchful di-
rection of Cardinal Ottaviani, led the way in preparing a draft text, *De
Ecclesia*. This schema of manualist inspiration highlighted the Church
as a hierarchical society rather than as being a mystery and the whole
people of God. Falling into line with the 1943 encyclical of Pius XII,
*Mystici Corporis*, it identified the Mystical Body of Christ with the Roman
Catholic Church and so used the term “church” exclusively of the Roman
Catholic Church. In the final days of the first session of Vatican II, this
schema was sharply criticized by the bishops (December 1–6, 1962).

Even before that, in October 1962, Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens
had asked Philips to “revise, complete, and improve” this schema on
the Church.\(^{38}\) As a result of the December debate, the schema was
removed, and over several months (February–May 1963) a new draft
was prepared on the basis of the revised text authored by Philips.\(^{39}\) For
some weeks in the spring of 1963, Congar also worked on the revision
that resulted in a fresh draft mailed to the bishops in the middle of the
year. In that revised schema, which eventually became the final text
of *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), Congar worked on numbers
9, 13, 16, and 17 in chapter 2 (“The People of God”) and contributed
to chapter 1 (“The Mystery of the Church”).

Number 16 of chapter 2, with its positive regard for Jews, Muslims,
and others, prepared the way not only for *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II’s
Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions
(October 28, 1965), but also for a key doctrinal principle on the univer-
sal availability of revelation taught by *Ad Gentes*, the Decree on the
Church’s Missionary Activity (December 7, 1965) (see below). But it
was in chapter 1 of *Lumen Gentium* that themes cherished by Congar

\(^{37}\) See William Henn, “Yves Congar and *Lumen gentium*,” *Gregorianum* 86 (2005):
563–92.

\(^{38}\) Giuseppe Ruggieri, “Beyond an Ecclesiology of Polemics: The Debate on the

\(^{39}\) Jan Grootaers, “The Drama Continues between the Acts: The ‘Second Prepa-
ration’ and Its Opponents,” in ibid., 359–514, at 399–412.
and other ressourcement theologians came through even more clearly. In richly biblical and patristic language, that chapter emphasized the sacramental reality of the Church, from which “shines” the “light” of Christ and which is “the sign and instrument of intimate communion with God and of unity among the whole human race” (no. 1). A full spread of biblical images (no. 6) illuminates “the mystery of the holy Church” (no. 5), which “subsists” (= continues to exist [fully]) in the Roman Catholic Church (no. 8) but is not simply identical with the Roman Catholic Church, as Tromp and other manualists claimed. To be sure, the meaning of “subsists” continues to be disputed, with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith offering over the years varying translations, as Francis Sullivan has pointed out. But the conclusion that the Church of God is not tout court identical with the Roman Catholic Church does not simply depend on the translation of “subsistit”; it emerges clearly from other passages in Vatican II documents.

Recognizing in this context how “many elements of sanctification and truth” are found outside the “visible” Roman Catholic Church (no. 8), Lumen Gentium would go on to specify some of these elements: “believing the Sacred Scripture” to be “the norm of faith and life,” belief in the Trinity, and the reception of baptism and “other sacraments in their own Churches or ecclesial communities” (no. 15). Here the Council recognized as “Churches” bodies of Christian not (or not yet) in union with the Roman Catholic Church. Even more specifically in its Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio of November 21, 1964), Vatican II recognized how the principle “the Eucharist makes the Church” operates also for the Eastern Churches not in communion with the Bishop of Rome: “through the celebration of the Eucharist of the Lord in each of these Churches, the Church of God is built up and grows” (no. 15). In other words, while the Church of God continues to exist fully in the Roman Catholic Church, it also continues to exist in other churches or ecclesial communities, above all in the

Eastern Churches, which enjoy almost all the elements of Christian sanctification and truth.

As well as supplying the basic draft that became the eight chapters of *Lumen Gentium*, Philips played a major role, in particular, in developing chapter 4 (“The Laity”) and the application of Christ’s triple office (of priest, prophet, and king/shepherd) to bishops (and ordained priests), and to all the baptized. The teaching/prophetic, priestly, and pastoral/kingly office of the bishops, which had already appeared in the original schema, was further elaborated in chapter 3 (“The Church is Hierarchical”); the priestly, prophetic, and kingly role of all the baptized was introduced, above all, in chapter 4 (“The Laity”). Philips played a major role in these two developments.41

Before the Council opened, both Congar and Philips had written on both the triple office and on the laity. Congar had published a classic study on the laity;42 and in that book he dedicated chapters 4, 5, and 6 to the way in which laypeople share the priestly, kingly, and prophetic (in that order) functions of Christ. In the year Vatican II opened, Philips published *Pour un christianisme adulte*, in which he expounded the three functions of the laity: “A Priestly, Prophetic, Royal People.”43 Yet, at the Council, neither Congar nor Philips seemed to have been involved, at least directly, with the drafting and emending of the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* of November 18, 1965). That document spoke of “the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ”, in which the laity “share” (no. 2). Consecrated as a “royal priesthood” (no. 3), they participate in “the function of Christ, priest, prophet and king” (no. 10). Congar and Philips had encouraged such a *ressourcement* theme—both of them through their publications and Philips through *Lumen Gentium*, promulgated a year earlier and containing in chapter 4 (“The Laity”) a firm endorsement of the priestly, prophetic, and kingly role of all the baptized.

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In the genesis of *Lumen Gentium*, Congar had his significant role, but it was Philips who authored the initial draft, secured an entire chapter on the laity,44 applied the scheme of “priest, prophet, and king/shepherd” to the hierarchy and the laity, defended the collegial character of bishops (who form with the pope an “apostolic college” [nos. 22–23]), and—more than any other expert-consultant—helped to shepherd *Lumen Gentium* through to its final form and promulgation in November 1964.45

Apropos of introducing into the Council’s documents the *munus triplex* of “priest, prophet, and king,” Congar’s hand is most visible in the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. He drafted the text (with the help of Joseph Lécuyer and Willy Onclin), was involved in the revisions, and composed the moving conclusion (no. 22). In this document on the ministry and life of ordained priests, numbers 4–6 take up and spell out in detail what the introduction states: “through the sacred ordination and mission that they receive from the bishops, priests are promoted to serve Christ the *Teacher, Priest*, and *King*” (no. 1; emphasis added). Number 4 details what is involved in priests being “ministers of God’s Word”; number 5 expounds their function as “ministers of the sacraments and the Eucharist”; and number 6 describes their role as kingly “rulers of God’s people” and “pastors” of the Church.

The triple office of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, in which all the faithful share through baptism and some through ministerial ordination, is a major theme of the 1964 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and of two decrees that depended upon it and were promulgated in 1965: the Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People and the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests. *Ressourcement* theology, represented by Congar and Philips, had retrieved this theme of the *munus triplex* from traditional and biblical sources. One can trace it back through John Henry Newman, John Calvin, Thomas Aquinas, and various fathers of the Church to its roots in the Scriptures, both Old Testament and New Testament.46

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44 In the Gagnebet-Tromp, 1962 schema *De Ecclesia*, Philips had largely authored the chapter on the laity. He tweaked this chapter a little for the revised text adopted in March 1963 that became the new base-text for *Lumen Gentium*.


3. Divine Revelation to All

This third section will address more briefly one further ressourcement theme that, thanks to Congar, found its place in the teaching of Vatican II: God’s self-revelation to all people.

Sharply different views of Christian missionary activity led to many difficulties in the drafting, discussion, and revision of Ad Gentes. At the end, however, 2,394 fathers voted yes and only five voted no—a dramatic tribute to the work of Congar and other experts in developing the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity. He played a major role in developing the decree and, especially, in composing chapter 1 (“Doctrinal Principles”), his own work “from A to Z,” as he put it. This is the longest of the six chapters that make up Ad Gentes, as well as including more sources (cited or referred to) in the footnotes than all the other chapters put together. “The patristic references are particularly numerous and excellently chosen,” Heinrich Suso Brechter wrote, “whereas the following chapters quote almost exclusively from conciliar texts and papal allocutions.” In a tour de force Congar quoted or referred to twenty-three fathers of the Church, some of them, like Irenaeus and Augustine, more than once, retrieving remarkable texts that illuminate principles that give life to the Church’s missionary activity, itself based in the missionary activity of the Trinity for the salvation of human beings. Let me cite an example that concerns the divine self-revelation to all people.

To explain “the preparation for the Gospel” (no. 3), footnote two quotes two passages from Irenaeus’ Adversus Haereses: “the Word existing with God, through whom all things were made . . . was always present to the human race”; hence “from the beginning the Son, being present in his creation, reveals (revelat) the Father to all whom the Father desires, at the time and in the manner desired by the Father” (Adversus Haereses, 3.18.1; 4.6.7). Thus Ad Gentes aligns itself with Irenaeus in recognizing the Word as the agent of all creation (see John 1:1-3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). Consequently the Word has

49 Brechter, “Decree on Church’s Missionary Activity,” 113.
“always” been “present to the human race,” and not merely to certain groups or nations.50

Granted the Christological origin and character of creation, right “from the beginning” of human history the Son has been “revealing” the Father to human beings. In all the sixteen documents it is only here that Vatican II applies the verb “reveal” to the knowledge of God mediated through the created world. Clearly this revelation of God through creation and “ordinary” human history allows for endless variety, as “the Son reveals the Father to all whom the Father desires [and] at the time and in the manner desired by the Father.” In contemporary terms, Irenaeus was speaking of the “general” history of revelation (and salvation), in which from the beginning of the human story the Son of God has been revealing the Father.

The two quotations from Irenaeus highlight the universal divine activity by which the word/Son of God was preparing people for the coming of the Gospel. The use of the term “reveal” implies the counterpart of faith: it is with true faith that human beings can respond to the initiative of the Son of God present in and through creation and revealing God to them.51 The divine quest for all human beings takes precedence over any human quest for God. It is primarily due to this divine initiative and not to a human search that “elements of truth and grace,” which constitute “a secret presence of God,” are already found among peoples before they are evangelized and can accept Christ explicitly (AG 9; emphasis added).

The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity echoes what had been said a year earlier in Lumen Gentium about those who had “arrived at an explicit recognition of God and who, not without divine grace, strive to live an upright life”: “Whatever goodness and truth that

50 From the time of Justin Martyr, this real but hidden presence of the Word in the created world and to the human race went under the name of “the seeds of the Word” (e.g., AG 11), another rich theme retrieved by ressourcement theology. See Jean Daniélou, A History of Early Christian Doctrine, vol. 2, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, trans. John A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 41–44.

51 This point (a faith response to revelation made by the non-evangelized) is expressly acknowledged in the chapter of AG for which Congar was responsible: “in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6)” (no. 7).
is found among them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by Him who enlightens all human beings that they may at length have life” (no. 16; emphasis added). As we noted above, Congar helped shape this article of Lumen Gentium about God preparing people for evangelization.52

Conclusions

I have concentrated on examples from Dei Verbum, Lumen Gentium, and Ad Gentes to illustrate the way in which ressourcement theology represented by Congar, Daniélou, Philips, Smulders, and others contributed to the making of the Vatican II’s teaching. One could add many further examples and further names. Let me mention only three further items.

First, Marie-Dominique Chenu had retrieved, ultimately from the New Testament, the language of “the signs of the times” (Matt 16:3).53 The last and longest document from Vatican II, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes of December 7, 1965) picked up this theme: “the Church carries the responsibility of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (no. 4). It is the whole “people of God,” led “by the Spirit of the Lord that fills the whole world,” who try “to discern” in “the events, the needs, and the longings that it shares with other human beings of our age,” what “may be true signs of the presence or of the purpose of God” (no. 11).

Second, the Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio, included the important observation that “there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ among the truths of Catholic doctrine” (no. 11). All truths of Catholic doctrine are important, but some truths (e.g., the Trinity and the

52 On salvation and revelation being available outside the visible Church and on the Church’s role in the divine plan for humanity, see Gabriel Flynn, Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 39–51.
incarnation) are more fundamental than others (e.g., the primacy of the Bishop of Rome). Even if Congar did not work on the drafting of that decree, he helped to originate the principle of a “hierarchy of truths,” a principle ultimately based on his retrieval of the notion of truth and truths developed by Thomas Aquinas.

Third, among the pioneering works of ressourcement theology, de Lubac’s Catholicism is preeminent. It came about when Congar invited de Lubac to put together some articles into a book published by the Unam Sanctam series, directed at the time by Congar himself. Some of the language of what became a classic article in Gaudium et Spes (and was to be cited by John Paul II) about Christ revealing human beings to themselves and all human beings being called to the “same destiny” (no. 22) echoed what de Lubac had written.

Called by Pope John XXIII of blessed memory, Vatican II was the most significant religious event in the twentieth century. One generation has now passed, and a second is well established since the Council ended in 1965. Its teaching is still being received and tested in the lives of believers. In major ways that teaching was shaped by theologians of the ressourcement movement: Chenu, Congar, Daniélou, de Lubac, Philips, Rahner, Ratzinger, Smulders, and others. They left the whole Christian Church a life-giving legacy in what they retrieved from the Scriptures and the great tradition for the documents of Vatican II.

But how did the changes brought by this retrieval affect the identity of the worldwide Church? Did Vatican II bring discontinuity with the past, or did it rather strengthen a deeper continuity with apostolic Christianity? To that issue we turn in the next chapter.