

THE PRACTICE OF THEOLOGY AS
PASSION FOR TRUTH: TESTIMONY
FROM THE JOURNALS OF
YVES CONGAR, O.P.

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ABSTRACT

Yves Congar, O.P. (1904-1995) is widely considered the most important Roman Catholic ecclesialogist of the twentieth century and one of the most influential theologians at the Second Vatican Council. His personal diaries *Journal d'un théologien 1946-1956* and *Mon journal du Concile*, recently published posthumously in France, enhance our appreciation for the character and spirituality of this extraordinary theologian. These journals testify to the passion for truth that inspired and sustained Congar's theological vocation through both his difficult years of censure and the exhilarating conciliar period. The witness and example Congar offers can be instructive to our own continuing practice of the theological discipline.

I. Introduction

On April 13, 1904, a child was born in Sedan, France to Lucie Desoye and Georges Congar. He was christened with the name Yves. One hundred years later, we celebrate the centenary of the birth of a man who became a great ecumenist and ecclesialogist, a Dominican whose contributions were of such import that he was eulogized by Peter Steinfels as "one of a handful of scholars who utterly changed Roman Catholicism."¹ The narrative of Congar's life has been well told by Étienne Fouilloux.² The French historian traces Congar's odyssey from Dominican novitiate and vibrant years at Le Saulchoir through his captivity as a prisoner of war during World War II, his theological censure and ostracism in the 1940s and 1950s, and his dramatic reversal of stature during the Second Vatican Council, where he served as one of the most important and influential theological advisors. In 1994, Congar's service to the post-conciliar church culminated with his ap-

¹Peter Steinfels, *New York Times*, 12 August 1995, p. 9.

²Étienne Fouilloux, "Friar Yves, Cardinal Congar, Dominican: Itinerary of a Theologian," trans. Christian Yves Dupont, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 17 (1999): 63-90.

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pointment to the College of Cardinals. His theological labor, rooted in a deep love for the church, focused on the reunion of divided Christians and the renewal and reform of Roman Catholicism itself. Together with Saulchoir confrères Marie-Dominique Chenu and Henri-Marie Féret, Congar worked for reunion and reform through historical research that uncovered dimensions of the ecclesial tradition that had been buried in the defensive theologies of the post-Reformation era. Congar reinvigorated traditions such as the theology of the church as the Mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Among his publications are the landmark works *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (1939), *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église* (1950), *Lay People in the Church* (1965), *Tradition and Traditions* (1966), and *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (1983).³ To the bibliographies of Congar's works, which run to nearly 1800 books and articles, we can now add his posthumously published personal diaries, *Journal d'un théologien 1946-1956* (2000) and *Mon journal du Concile* (2002), which chronicle the painful years of his censure and exile and the demanding but exhilarating conciliar period of 1960-1966.⁴ As a theologian committed to historical method, Congar was well aware that a dearth of sources impedes the exercise of the theologian's craft, and his journals were in one sense an intentional archive, a gift to subsequent generations intended to help us understand more about a period in the Catholic Church in which so much was veiled in secrecy.⁵ Congar's *Journal d'un théologien 1946-1956* is also a personal testimony, even as he explains to his readers that it is

³*Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, trans. M.A. Bousfield (London: Centenary Press, 1939); originally published as *Chrétiens désunis. Principes d'un 'oecuménisme' catholique*, Unam Sanctam, 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1937); *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église*, Unam Sanctam, 20 (Paris: Cerf, 1950; 2nd ed., 1969). *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965). Originally published as *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc*, Unam Sanctam, 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1953; 2nd ed., 1954; 3rd rev. ed., 1964). *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (London: Burns and Oates, 1966). Originally published as *La Tradition et les traditions. Essai historique* (Paris: Fayard, 1960) and *La Tradition et les traditions. Essai théologique* (Paris: Fayard, 1963); *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury, 1983). Originally published as *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 3 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1979-80).

⁴Yves Congar, *Journal d'un théologien 1946-1956*, edited and annotated by Étienne Fouilloux (Paris: Cerf, 2000); Yves Congar, *Mon journal du Concile*, 2 vols., edited and annotated by Éric Mahieu (Paris: Cerf, 2002). Translations here of both journals are mine. Topography follows original French text. For bibliographies of Congar's published writings, see Pietro Quattrocchi, "General Bibliography of Yves Congar," in *Yves Congar: Theology in the Service of God's People*, ed. Jean Pierre Jossua (Chicago: Priory, 1968), 189-241; n Nichols, "An Yves Congar Bibliography 1967-1987," *Angelicum* 66 (1989): 422-66.

⁵Étienne Fouilloux, introduction to Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 14.

not a full-fledged memoir, but simply a record of his ideas and actions.⁶ Editor Étienne Fouilloux describes the chronicle as a “journal of the soul”—during the nadir of censure and exile, it became the “journal of a soul inconsovably wounded.”⁷

Congar’s journals constitute a valuable resource for historians of the twentieth-century Roman Catholic Church, particularly historians of the Second Vatican Council. In this essay, however, I will use the journals not for a comprehensive historical analysis of the period they chronicle, but simply as the primary source for reflection on Congar’s exercise of the theological vocation. These journals bear witness to the character and spirituality of a scholar widely considered the most important Roman Catholic ecclesiolgologist of the twentieth century. The motto of the Dominican order is *Veritas*, and Congar often prefaced the handwritten drafts of his essays and books with the heading *Veritas domina mea*. “I have loved the truth,” he professed, “as one loves a person.”⁸ From the pages of his personal journals, we gain a deeper appreciation of the meaning of this profession. This essay highlights a variety of ways in which Congar’s journals offer a lived example of the practice of theology with passion for truth.

II. Truth Sought Through Dedicated and Open Scholarship

Congar was renown for his assiduous work habits. He labored long hours—from early morning to late at night—to recover forgotten or neglected aspects of the ecclesial tradition in the pages of patristic and medieval texts, or to seek out the fault lines of the divisions that had fractured Christian unity. From his journals, we learn that the many difficulties with Vatican authorities that beset him in the years before the Council only reinforced in his mind the importance of ecclesiological scholarship, strengthening his laborious determination. “Il faut travailler!”⁹ (“We must work!”) was his battle cry in the “great combat for the truth.”¹⁰

His approach to theological scholarship is notable not only for its indefatigable character but also for its combination of firm conviction with a suppleness and openness of mind. In his journals, Congar differentiates his own approach to theology from that of his youthful

⁶Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 11 and 25.

⁷Fouilloux, commentary in *Journal d'un théologien*, 15 and 399.

⁸Jean Puyo, *Une vie pour la vérité. Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar* (Paris: Centurion, 1975), 38-39. See also Congar, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology: Conversations with Yves Congar*, ed. Bernard Lauret, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 71; André Duval, “Yves Congar: A Life for the Truth,” *Thomist* 48 (1984): 505-11.

⁹Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 363. Fouilloux notes that each of his interviews with Congar since 1966 ended on this note (*ibid.*, 363 n. 357).

¹⁰On the struggle for truth as combat, see *Journal d'un théologien*, 246, 271, 275.

mentor Abbé Daniel Lallement and the Jacques Maritain circle, which the youthful Congar had attended as a quiet and shy observer under Lallement's tutelage. "I have understood," he writes, explaining his separation from Lallement, "with an ever increasing and expanding clarity, that complete homage to the truth demands that one attribute the quality of the absolute only to the unique point that is really absolute, and that one recognize the relative in its own truth, in exact proportion to this truth."¹¹ He critiques Lallement and Maritain's *cercle de Meudon* for its identification of Thomism (or more precisely, Congar qualifies, the Thomism of John of Saint Thomas, Cajetan, and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange) with *the* absolute truth.¹² In the 1940s and 1950s, Congar's relation with Vatican authorities ran aground over a similar difference of perspective. In his assessment, one of the reasons for this conflict was that a magisterial authority had been given to a theology that represented the position of one theological school.¹³ Truth *is* real, Congar firmly believed, but our encounter with truth in all its fullness will be an eschatological event, and as a people on earthly pilgrimage we must pursue truth with a supple openness to new insight and perspective.¹⁴ This suppleness is a striking feature of Congar's essay "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," published when he was no less than sixty-seven years old. This essay offers a critical assessment of the theology of ministry Congar had articulated in previous works like *Jalons pour une Théologie du Laïcat* and outlines an alternative approach. "I have not ceased learning," he explains, "and still learn new things each day, beginning afresh to glimpse or lay hold of the most elementary matters."¹⁵

III. Freedom for Truth

"If you search for liberty," Congar advised, citing Bonhoeffer, "learn first discipline."¹⁶ The theological openness that Congar practiced was grounded in an interior freedom sustained by a life of prayer.

¹¹Ibid., 43.

¹²Ibid., 35, 43. He did exempt Jacques Maritain himself from the absolutist position held by some members of the circle.

¹³Ibid., 221.

¹⁴On truth as an eschatological reality, see Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:34.

¹⁵Yves Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 169-70.

¹⁶Yves Congar, *Esprit de l'homme, Esprit de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 5. Reference is to the Preface of Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1955).

One morning, in the difficult year of 1954, when Congar was removed from his position at Le Saulchoir under pressure generated by the Vatican's displeasure with his work, he was praying the office while en route to Paris by train, when a verse of Psalm 32 resounded as if it had been personally directed to him: *Intellectum tibi dabo, et instruam te in via hac qua gradieris. Firmabo super te oculos meos.* (I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.) "I feel within myself," Congar writes in his journal, "a sense of great interior freedom. I believe that this freedom comes to me from the truth."¹⁷

Yet interior freedom must be supported by the structures of ecclesial life, and Congar believed that the Dominican order, with its constitutions and electoral processes, allowed for more freedom of thought than was possible within the Jesuit order or within the Roman Catholic Church at large. "From our [Dominican] point of view, from the point of view of a loyal service to the truth, from the point of view of the future of liberty and of truth in the Church and in the world, it is a treasure without price. There is a profound link between the state of thought and the state of life."¹⁸ The liberty that Congar treasured was not the rootless freedom of irresponsibility, evasion, or escape, but the freedom "of engagement and of real presence."¹⁹ It was a freedom appropriate to the supremely dialogical character of human nature and human intelligence, a freedom for open discussion and exploration.²⁰ In his Vatican II journals, we learn just how vital this freedom was to Congar's understanding of theology. When the arrival of the worldwide body of bishops changed the tenor of the constrained preparatory sessions into a true conciliar event, Congar noted with appreciation that the church was now in a state of dialogue. "She feels alive with the enriching contact with others and a milieu committed to free discussion, marked by the seal of open questioning and liberty."²¹

¹⁷Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 238. Reference is to Ps 32:8 (Nones of Monday); trans. NRSV.

¹⁸Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 243; see also 139, 242, and 425-26.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 297.

²⁰Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:145. Congar celebrated the open, dialogical character of the work of Thomas Aquinas, one of the many aspects of the theology of the Dominican master that he greatly admired. See *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology*, 70. Elsewhere he writes: "Every intellectual act, every content of consciousness, has an intentionality which transcends its limits: the intellect seeks a fullness which demands the totality of experience. For this reason, communion with other minds and the dialogue whereby it is achieved are essential to the search for truth." *Dialogue Between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism*, trans. Philip Loretz, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966), 147.

²¹Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:145; see also 1:182.

IV. *The Truth of Human Encounter*

Congar was an avid reader, yet he knew that there is more to truth than can be found on the shelves of libraries. During a sojourn in Paris in 1932, he asked permission of his Provincial Jourdain Padé to take classes at the Protestant Faculty of Theology in order to pursue his ecumenical commitments. Padé reluctantly agreed, even as he made it clear that he could see no usefulness in such things, for whatever the Protestant Faculty might have to say that was of interest could be found in their books. "I responded," Congar recounts in his journal, "that I would go precisely to find that which one cannot find in books. I have quickly understood and more and more appreciate that, in all domains, nothing can replace direct, concrete, living contact."²² Only this direct personal contact, Congar was convinced, can make the work of ecumenical reunion possible.²³ In 1948, in need of a *nihil obstat* for a new edition of *Chrétiens désunis*, he maintained that ecclesiastical authorities with no lived experience of the ecumenical movement were not suited to evaluate his book fairly. "I told the Master General [Emmanuel Suarez] that a purely theoretical, academic, deductive competence was insufficient; one cannot regard as competent one who does not have a *concrete* and personal experience of the Dissidents [the term used at this time among Catholics of the Protestant and Orthodox] and of the actual situation of things."²⁴

V. *A Truthful Response to the Questions and Suffering of the World*

The fractures of the divided body of Christ, Congar believed, had hindered the church from offering a compelling witness to the world. The church exists for the service of God and humanity, and it is the theologian's responsibility to respond to the intellectual questions and human needs of his or her era. In Congar's journals, his critique of Alfred Loisy and the Modernists is accompanied by an expression of resolve that it was the responsibility of his own generation to respond in a thoroughly ecclesial way to the authentic issues and problems that modernism posed. Loisy himself may have been misguided in his con-

²²Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 26.

²³Yves Congar, *Chrétiens désunis. Principes d'un oecuménisme catholique* (Paris: Cerf, 1937), 249 and 338.

²⁴Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 156-57. Fouilloux explains that the term "Dissidents" was reaffirmed in Catholic parlance by Pius XI in the 1928 encyclical *Mortalium animos* (Fouilloux, "Friar Yves," 71).

Notably, Congar's emphasis on the importance of personal experience as opposed to a strictly theoretical and deductive competence is comparable to the inductive method Jacques Dupuis describes as foundational to contemporary interreligious dialogue. See Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 8.

clusions, but the questions to which he was attempting to respond could not be ignored.²⁵ Nor could one ignore the profound suffering and travail of the world. Congar's very decision to enter the priesthood came in the wake of his experience of the First World War, which led him to relinquish dreams of becoming a medical doctor in order that he might preach conversion to humanity.²⁶ Years later, interred in the Nazi prisons of Colditz and Lübeck when captured while serving in the French army during World War II, Congar wrote in a letter to himself, "I will never again be able to work as if people did not suffer and certain forms of academic work will be henceforth impossible for me."²⁷ Congar's journals express his support for the "Priests in Working Class Blue," Dominicans who left behind their white habits to work in shipping docks and factories in solidarity with the laboring classes.²⁸ "I have been led," he reflects during the Council, "to a solitary life, wedded to the word and to paper. This is my part in the plan of love. But I also want to be engaged with this plan in heart and in life, and that this service of ideas itself be a service *TO HUMANITY*."²⁹

In the 1940s and 1950s, Congar found little support in Rome for his commitment to intellectual and social responsiveness. Walking the streets of Rome in 1946 with Féret, Congar delighted in the opportunity to stroll along the Appian Way, to descend into the Catacombs, and to see at every turn a monument that brought the past alive. Rome, he reflects, is an extraordinary and unique city where the past becomes present.³⁰ Yet his appreciation for history come alive is clouded by the sense that Rome has become a place where history is stagnant—Rome seems to be a closed world, an island of marble aloof from humanity. All the luxury, the palaces, the accumulated treasures—did they not remove the central governing organs of the church far from people and their lives, from the real movements of the times and the problems of the world? Did the church in Rome exist in an "unreal, artificial world, characterized by a triumphant immutability and a false air of glory?"³¹

²⁵Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 24, 59, and 70.

²⁶Congar's childhood diaries recount his experience of the war years and have been published as *Journal de la guerre 1914-1918*, edited and annotated by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Dominique Congar (Paris: Cerf, 1997). Congar describes his realization of his vocation in Puyo, *Une vie pour la vérité*, 15-16.

²⁷Jean-Marie Le Guillou, "Yves Congar," in *Bilan de la théologie du XXe siècle*, eds. Vander Gucht and Herbert Vorgrimler (Paris: Casterman, 1970), 2:797.

²⁸Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 237 and 237 n. 82. Congar considered his minimal contact with workers and the poor to be one of his limitations as a theologian. See his "Reflections on Being a Theologian," *New Blackfriars* 62 (1981): 409. On the worker-priest movement, see Oscar L. Arnal, *Priests in Working-Class Blue: The History of the Worker-Priests (1943-1954)* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1986).

²⁹Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:384.

³⁰Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 73.

³¹*Ibid.*, 119.

Congar laments a seminary system that produced clerics trained to have all the answers at the same time as it sheltered them from exposure to real life and real questions.³² There was a need, he was convinced, for an open Christianity and a Christian theology that dealt in human realities, not just repeated formulas.³³

Years later, the ceremonies marking the beginning of the preparatory sessions of the Second Vatican Council reinforce Congar's perception of Rome's aloofness. On November 14, 1960, he stands at St. Peter's and witnesses the procession of all the colleges of Rome with their 10,000 assistants, the Swiss Guard, forty cardinals, and several hundred bishops and archbishops, all garbed in finery and proceeding with impeccable decorum. Returning to his room in the Angelicum after this pageantry, he strays into one of the working-class quarters of the city: "extremely narrow streets without sidewalks," he notes in his journal, "laundry hanging out of the windows, workshops of artisans, banners inviting one to vote communist. . . . And I tell myself that what I have just come from watching, that which we 'did' at St. Peter's, has NOTHING to do with THAT world THERE."³⁴ As a theological advisor to the Council's bishops, Congar works to draw attention to the pressing problems of the church and the world and embraces with enthusiasm Chenu's proposal that the Council issue a declaration to all humankind. "It seemed to me immediately that this initiative was INSPIRED, that it is THIS which it is NECESSARY TO DO!"³⁵

VI. *Evangelical Truth*

In Congar's commitment to speak to the social and intellectual questions of his era, and in his efforts at ecumenical reunion and church reform, the Gospel was his inspiration and his guide. He took heart from the evangelical commitment he witnessed among so many in the church during the post-war period, and lamented that this was not fully appreciated in Rome:

I feel every day here [in Rome], with pain and anguish, the abyss that exists between the Christian people and the hierarchical authorities, especially those who are Roman. It is not only a distance nearly infinite in the manner of seeing things, but a difference of framework, a heterogeneity on the plane of spiritual existence. Rome is a stranger

³²Ibid., 95.

³³Ibid., 106.

³⁴Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:31.

³⁵Ibid., 1:100; see also 1:102.

to these profound evangelical preoccupations that are *the* great concern of our faithful.³⁶

The hierarchy, in his judgment, considered the laity who were involved in various ecclesial movements to be insubordinate, without recognizing the Christian character of their position taken in the name of the Gospel. “C’est tragique!”³⁷

As a theological advisor to the preparatory commission of the Second Vatican Council, Congar was disappointed with the drafts of the preparatory texts: the language was narrowly scholastic and insufficiently evangelical, and Scripture was used only in an ornamental fashion rather than as the overarching norm and framework of the documents.³⁸ The central focus and even the ultimate source of the theology of these schemata was the church itself, not the word of God.³⁹ “I am not at all trying to weaken confidence in the hierarchy,” Congar explains to Cardinal Ottaviani when challenged by him, “but the Church should think less about herself; if she would give herself totally to the service of the Gospel, all her authority would come from this.”⁴⁰ In St. Peter’s, Congar gazes at the many statues of founders of religious orders—Ignatius of Loyola and others—each in their own niche. “Would that these statues could speak!” he exclaims. “What would they say? I imagine the discourse of men and women of God, consumed with the flame of the Gospel.”⁴¹

When the work of the preparatory commissions was done and bishops from all across the globe gathered in Rome for the formal opening of the Council, a Bible was ceremoniously installed on a throne to preside symbolically over the gathering. “BUT,” Congar wonders in his journal, anticipating this moment, “WILL IT SPEAK? Will anyone listen?”⁴² In his view, it was imperative that the Council leave behind “the miserable logic of the ‘Donation of Constantine’” such that the church might be converted “to an evangelism that allows it to be less *OF* the world and more *TOWARD* the world.”⁴³ The church must relinquish the trappings of the Byzantine empire and the Renaissance princes and become at once modern and evangelical.⁴⁴ To this end, Congar participates in a working group of theologians and bishops on

³⁶Congar, *Journal d’un théologien.*, 251.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:59.

³⁹Ibid., 1:57, 59; see also 1:62 and 1:96.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1:37.

⁴¹Ibid., 1:106.

⁴²Ibid., 1:107.

⁴³Ibid., 1:109.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1:115-16.

the topic “Jesus, the Church and the Poor” and authors *Pour une Église servante et pauvre* during the conciliar sessions.⁴⁵ He urges the Council to address the issues of world hunger and the threat of nuclear war. “*Da pacem!*” he prays, writing in his journal of the evangelical exigency of peace.⁴⁶ When he learns that the Pope daily received money to support the work of the Council—much of it from poor people, the widow’s mite—he observes that “today as with Dominic and Francis under Innocent III, it is the evangelism of the poor that sustains the Church.”⁴⁷ The Council fired his own desire “to be evangelical, to try to be a *homo plene evangelicus*.”⁴⁸

VII. *The Truth of Human Communion*

Congar’s early years at Le Saulchoir illustrate the potential of religious life to foster a truly communitarian existence. Among the Saulchoir Dominicans, he finds friendships that are “more than friendships. They are relations of fraternity, of life lived fully in common and in mutuality, where one is not simply present with another but truly one with them, living together.”⁴⁹ Chenu, who served as Regent during this period, was the indispensable catalyst of Le Saulchoir’s ethos and accomplishments. “He was luminous, generous, open to all, kind and supportive . . . a teacher, a friend, an incomparable brother.”⁵⁰ Congar and Chenu enjoyed the kind of fellowship and communion that is forged by a sharing of daily life, the partaking of experiences both simple and profound.⁵¹ Chenu had that indefinable *mystique* that engenders a collaborative team spirit, and under his leadership the Saulchoir had an élan of service to the needs of the church that took

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 1:217 and 1:362. His journal initially refers to his book by the title *L’Église au service des hommes*. It is eventually published as *Pour une Église servante et pauvre* (Paris: Cerf, 1963) and translated into English by Jennifer Nicholson as *Power and Poverty in the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964). Repeatedly throughout his journal, Congar expresses his conviction that the church must become the church of the poor, a concern shared by bishops such as Himmer, LeCaro, and Camera (*Mon journal*, 1:193, 1:217, 1:484, 1:492). At the same time, Congar is critical of any kind of “class consciousness” and, Fouilloux notes, cannot be considered a social-political “progressive” (*Journal d’un théologien*, 286 and 286 n. 5). Congar’s reservations about appeals to class consciousness are evident in his critique of the use of Marxist analysis by some liberation theologians (*Fifty Years*, 82-85). Yet, Congar wrote in 1966 that the glaring disparities of wealth in the world were unconscionable and could only be resolved by a voluntary reduction in the excessive standard of living of the rich nations. See his “Poverty in Christian Life Amidst an Affluent Society,” in *War, Poverty, Freedom: The Christian Response, Concilium* vol. 15, ed. Franz Böckle (New York: Paulist, 1966), 49-70.

⁴⁶Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:145 and 1:515; see also 1:40 and 1:161.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 1:170.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 1:108. See also *Journal d’un théologien*, 271.

⁴⁹Congar, *Journal d’un théologien*, 52.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 58.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 57.

expression in such common projects as the publication of the *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*.⁵²

In 1942, Chenu was removed from his position as Regent and his book *Le Saulchoir* placed on the Index.⁵³ Then, in the so-called “Raid on the Dominicans” of 1954, Congar, Féret, Chenu, and Pierre Boisselot (director of Éditions du Cerf) were removed from their posts because of Rome’s dissatisfaction with the orientation of their work, and Congar began a lonely period of exile that would take him to Jerusalem, Rome, Cambridge, and Strasbourg.⁵⁴ While this history is well documented, Congar’s journals give us new insight into his own response to this ostracism. He attempts, we learn, to turn his imposed isolation into spiritual opportunity; while on excursion to Egypt during his year in Jerusalem, he seeks the solitude of God, like Moses on Horeb or Paul on Sinai.⁵⁵ But sometimes his greatest consolation comes from memories of the past. Returning to Cambridge after a month home in France with family and friends, he reminisces about the happiness that comes “from a presence and a communion, the presence of those whom I love and who love me, those with whom I have something in common; a communion in that which one loves, that which one lives, that which one desires, that which one does.”⁵⁶

At times, however, neither memories of France nor the invocation of Moses or Paul can bridge the relationships that have been broken by ostracism and exile. The journal entries from the months at Cambridge express an inconsolable desolation. “There is,” Congar writes, in September of 1956 as autumn comes prematurely, “an inexpressible feeling of emptiness and absence. . . . There is emptiness around me, no one who is truly a friend . . . no one with whom to have communion, nothing to do but put black ink to paper.”⁵⁷ Standing outside under a tree waiting for the rains to clear from the grey skies, he weeps bitterly. “Shall I always be a poor man all alone, shall I travel without end to suitcases, shall I always be alone and with nothing, like an orphan?”

⁵²Ibid., 61. On the broader fraternal network of French theologians at this time, see Mark Wedig, O.P., “The Fraternal Context of Congar’s Achievement: The Platform for a Renewed Catholicism at *Les Éditions du Cerf* (1927-1954),” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 17 (1999): 106-15.

⁵³Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir* (Kain-lez-Tournai, Belgium: Le Saulchoir, 1937). Congar noted in his journal that Chenu had been misread, misinterpreted, and unjustly treated (*Journal d’un théologien*, 109-10).

⁵⁴See François Leprieur, *Quand Rome condamne. Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers* (Paris: Cerf, 1989); Thomas F. OMeara, O.P., “Raid on the Dominicans: The Repression of 1954,” *America* 170 (4 February 1994): 8-16.

⁵⁵Congar, *Journal dun théologien*, 272. Congar interpreted Gal 1:17 and 4:25 as an indication that Paul had gone to Sinai.

⁵⁶Ibid., 418.

⁵⁷Ibid., 419.

'*Dominus autem assumpsit me*': these tears, will God not hear them?"⁵⁸ He acknowledges that there are transcendent things that no person can ever take away from us. "But this is not sufficient. . . . We are beings of flesh, with a heart of flesh."⁵⁹ He compares himself to a leper, to an alpinist without equilibrium, and to a dying man.⁶⁰ When Denys For-estier, O.P. writes to suggest that Congar return to work on the comprehensive treatise on the church he had long ago envisioned, Congar responds in his journal, "I am no longer the man that I was. The man who envisioned or began that treatise is dead, or he is very sick."⁶¹ Reminiscing about the profound joy and truth of human affection, he writes, "I am not happy without my brothers . . . the quality of their friendship, of their sentiments, of their questions. The real purity and depth of the religious life that some of them lead."⁶² With them and with other friends he once had a true experience of the communion of saints, a realization of the *magna nobis testium*.⁶³ Now, he is painfully alone. "With the exile, and perhaps also with age, and especially here at Cambridge, I have seen arise in me an ontological need—like thirst after a long road or an exhausting physical labor—to love and be loved."⁶⁴

VIII. Obedience and Fidelity to the Truth

Congar was deeply committed to his Dominican vocation but, in the 1940s and 1950s, it was no easy matter to reconcile his vow of obedience with his dedication to truthful scholarship. "I work," he reflects in his journal, "in very delicate sectors, on the frontiers—I can be held suspect, I can be censured."⁶⁵ Yet he would not be voluntarily silenced. "I cannot but think and say what I believe to be true. I should be prudent? But I am to the best of my ability. . . . I accept the risk of these troubles and even of the Index. But that which one knows is true, well-founded, one cannot but say it."⁶⁶ Sure in his conviction that his ultimate commitment was to God rather than to ecclesiastical authorities, Congar responds to the censure that he did indeed receive with an

⁵⁸Ibid., 419. Reference is to Ps 18:17 and Ps 27:10.

⁵⁹Ibid., 420; see also 428.

⁶⁰Ibid., 434 and 432.

⁶¹Ibid., 432.

⁶²Ibid., 422-23. His experience with his community was not uniformly of this character. The censure he had received left him feeling wounded and even traumatized (ibid., 296-97).

⁶³Ibid., 422.

⁶⁴Ibid., 428.

⁶⁵Ibid., 72; for additional references to his work as a "frontier" see also 160 and 221.

⁶⁶Ibid., 162; see also 165 and 185.

attitude of interior resistance.⁶⁷ Should he ever be given an interdiction to stop writing completely, he tells Suarez, he will not consider himself bound by this, even if in fact he stops writing for a time.⁶⁸ And “if they impose *Roman* censors upon me,” he writes in his journal, “I will work, I will write, and then I will deposit my work in the Institute of France or with a notary with instructions that it is to be published after my death. I accept God, his examination. Very difficult. I do not accept the Gestapo. . . . I do not have the right to sacrifice the service of the Truth. I will simply be more exigent in this.”⁶⁹

Even so, at some level Congar had to acquiesce to the censure placed upon him, and he worries about his complicity in a system that he opposed:

There is certainly a candor in the manner in which I submit to the Master General. I never go to meetings with him without the idea that he is the successor of Dominic, and his very person in the economy of grace. But for several weeks I have been asking myself if there is not, in this simplicity, also a form of complicity, and, if, in my child-like abandonment, I do not dispense myself from having to judge and respond as a man. The Master General does whatever he wishes with us. He is our only link with the apparatus of the Roman Curia and the “Holy Office”; he always comes announcing that there is peril of death and that the benign amputation that he demands or suggests can avert this. (And we then cry, “*Domine non solum pedes, sed et manus et caput!*”)⁷⁰ But as he invokes the secret operation of the “Holy Office” and the Roman Curia, one never knows if this is justified, or if it comes from him or from further up. He is always a little like Petain making the sacrifice of his person, demanding a total confidence, and in the end collaborating with an abominable régime. How to be obedient and not “collaborate”? This, in sum, has been my problem from 1940-1945.⁷¹

What was he to do? The crisis of 1954 made it brutally clear to him “that my positions are not—are no longer—those of the Roman Church, although I believe them to be absolutely Catholic.”⁷² Soon, he fears,

⁶⁷On God as the Truth, see Congar, *La foi et la théologie* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), 75.

⁶⁸Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 312. See also 211 and 234.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 196. This is not the only instance in this journal in which he refers to the Holy Office as the “Gestapo.” See also 95, 242, and 246. Fouilloux questions this terminology, which seems to him to be an exaggeration (Fouilloux, commentary in *Journal d'un théologien*, 246 n. 133).

⁷⁰A reference to Jn 13:9.

⁷¹Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 270.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 302; see also 236. He identifies the following as positions of the church that he finds inconsistent with Scripture and tradition and cannot in conscience accept: an

something has to break.⁷³ He wonders whether he should relinquish his canonical mission to teach in the name of Rome and find another apostolate such as teaching children, or living a strictly monastic life. In some ways this would be the honest path to take. “But my vocation,” he counters, “is research and doctrine—doctrinal service for the people of God. Would it not be an evasion, a betrayal, to do something else?”⁷⁴ He considers limiting his work to areas in which research is still possible—strictly historical investigations that make no interpretive claims and draw no conclusions about the present day—or restricting himself to the preparation of works to be published after his death. He even contemplates the possibility of being laicized, or leaving the Catholic Church and joining the Orthodox, although there, he believes, he would feel imprisoned in other ways. “I have a priestly and Dominican vocation,” he concludes. “One is only happy in their vocation. This represents the will of God.”⁷⁵ He resigns himself to patience, a virtue he experiences not as a moral quality but as a dimension of the life of the Spirit.⁷⁶

In 1955, he must revisit these questions. Several of his manuscripts gather dust, each denied permission for publication, and he is working on a new book with no hope that it will receive a *nihil obstat* in the current ecclesiastical climate.⁷⁷ He accepts these restrictions as a kind of poverty—a poverty of an absolute kind that requires a renunciation of his activities, his relationships, and his own will. “I am reduced to *nothing*,” he writes in his journals, “except my soul, I no longer have anything.”⁷⁸ Simultaneously, however, he wonders if his obedience, which could be interpreted as a kind of spiritual poverty, might also be a betrayal of his commitments:

That for which I reproach myself is not a lack of obedience, but rather having obeyed too completely. For to obey is easy, it does not demand much. But do I have the right to let everything go? Do I not

ecclesiology that glorifies and absolutizes the Roman Curia and practically eliminates the proper reality of the *ecclesia*, developments in Mariology that make Mary *the* object of worship, an anthropology that lacks respect for human persons, and a refusal to have any appreciation at all for Luther or other “Dissidents” (*ibid.*, 303-04; on these points see also 295-96).

⁷³*Ibid.*, 304.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 305.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 306.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*; see also 404.

⁷⁷The manuscripts he could not publish were “Études conjointes pour une théologie du laïcat,” “Mission, sacerdoce-laïcat,” *Le Mystère du Temple*, and a second edition of *Chrétiens désunis*. The work in progress that he refers to was published in 1970 as *L'Église. De saint Augustin à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Cerf, 1970). See Fouilloux, annotations in *Journal d'un théologien*, 403 n. 20 and n. 21.

⁷⁸Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 401.

have a responsibility to humanity to speak and to be engaged? A pure and simple obedience releases one from all this with one blow; but have I this right? I am not sure. . . . I cannot avoid telling myself that the service of truth may one day lead to a certain refusal to do certain things. I made a vow in the hands of my superiors, but I made a vow to *God*. Will fidelity to this vow to God and to the truth someday lead me, perhaps, into conflict with the structure of the Roman Church?⁷⁹

He resolves to continue his writing, well aware that the work that he is quietly doing is outside the accepted boundaries of his superiors. "I am conscious of *no* duplicity," he reflects, "I serve the truth with loyalty and integrity. I have never not said what I thought. The truth, that is my sovereign, where will it lead me? This is indeed the question."⁸⁰

IX. *A Truthful Examination of Conscience*

Congar reproached the Holy Office for its secretive character, for its lack of due process, and for its unwillingness to permit even the minimum of pluralism that would allow for serious theological debate.⁸¹ While he welcomed "objective criticisms, on the scientific and theological levels," he resented shadowy processes and whispered critiques.⁸² Rome, he suggested, contemplating the history of the Reformation and post-Reformation eras, had need of an examination of conscience.⁸³ It is a sign of Congar's great integrity that his journals also bring the scrutiny of conscience to bear upon his own life. In his journal entries for 1955-1956, a period in which he is anguished by his forced exile to Cambridge and sees no possible end to his tribulations other than death, his writing takes on a tone of self scrutiny. He laments the obstruction of his work, the breaking of his relationships, the interference with his apostolate. He has been egregiously wronged. But his pain does not prevent him from scrutinizing his own response to this affliction with penetrating honesty. There has been, he determines, a degree of self-love and pity in his suffering.⁸⁴ He reproaches himself for having given too much importance to his theology as *his* work—work for which he would receive recognition. Admixed with his motives of service to God, he acknowledges in a letter to his mother, "I had desired a certain success and human glory."⁸⁵ Moreover, he reflects:

⁷⁹Ibid., 403-04.

⁸⁰Ibid., 404.

⁸¹Ibid., 121, 137, 185, 221, 280, 309, 349, 433.

⁸²Congar, Letter to Marie-Rosaire Gagnebet, O.P., cited in Fouilloux, "Friar Yves," 77.

⁸³Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 304.

⁸⁴Ibid., 423.

⁸⁵Ibid., 429.

[M]any are much more unhappy than me. I think about the three-fifths of the world's people who are malnourished and miserable, about all the people held in concentration camps in all the police states. I think even of Algeria, of Jean [his nephew, called to Algeria and separated from his wife and young child.] I think of you and your difficult life in service of others and of Papa who is ill. It seems to me that I have been excessively selfish in my pity, my groans, and my tears.⁸⁶

He confesses, as well, that in his passion for his own theological labors, he has too often neglected other persons, and failed to pay enough attention to poetry, music, art, and the joy of shared leisure. He has loved his own work to the point of sacrificing everything for it—not only his own pleasure and rest but also his communion with others.⁸⁷ In the end, he concludes, what will ultimately matter is how one has given love—a realization that in some ways makes his exile even harder to bear. “I do not have anyone to love,” he laments, “anyone to whom to give something. Ah! The instinct to be a father is powerful. It is, for me, without object and without possibility to become reality.”⁸⁸

X. *The Truth of Cross and Resurrection*

Congar's ordination card pictured St. Dominic at the foot of the cross, captioned by these words attributed to Tennyson: “But none of the ransomed ever knew/ How deep were the waters crossed.”⁸⁹ This paschal spirituality shaped the exercise of his theological vocation throughout the course of his life. The cross, we learn from his journals, enabled him to endure opprobrium and the painful loneliness of exile without accepting the legitimacy of the sufferings imposed upon him:

I revolt against the injustice, the lie, the iniquity. I have a desire to vomit. I hold on during Compline and Matins. . . . I put myself before Christ in agony, on the cross: he, the pure one, the perfect saint, suffered the assault of discouragement and willingly accepted to be treated as the blasphemer who was justly condemned and chained. I hold on to this contemplation of Christ overcoming his disgust through the Amen of his will. The evil with which I unite myself is less than his. But, once more, I pass through some extremely difficult hours.⁹⁰

The cross united Congar not only to Jesus Christ, the innocent victim of derision and injustice, but also to the suffering of the world. “I com-

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., 423.

⁸⁸Ibid., 430.

⁸⁹Congar, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology*, 20.

⁹⁰Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 365.

plain,” he writes. “But so many others have been or are more unhappy than I. My comrades who never returned from captivity [from Nazi war camps], all the poor people throughout the world, whom life permits to just barely exist in order to suffer, who have not been given the opportunities that, in spite of all, I have had.”⁹¹ His thoughts turn to the difficult life of his mother, and to an elderly Polish woman to whom he has recently given extreme unction, a woman born in Tzarist Russia in 1914 who raised six children as she lived through wars, displacements, and three years in Siberia. “Since my time in Sedan,” he reflects, “I have better understood and practiced communion with the cross of humanity, united to the cross of Christ. When I prepare myself to say mass, I take up the condition before me and assume my cross of the day, my part in the cross of the world.”⁹²

During the Second Vatican Council, Congar is at times so moved and uplifted by this extraordinary event that his eyes fill with tears.⁹³ In some sense, the Council relieves the burdens he has carried—the cross of ostracism and exile, the cross of a beloved church that had seemed impervious to evangelical reform. Yet, throughout the Council, Congar shoulders another burden, a neurological disease that doctors can neither precisely diagnose nor successfully treat. “I am dead with fatigue and can barely climb the stairs,” he writes in his journal during the preparatory session of the Council.⁹⁴ “I have no more strength and my arms fall, limp.”⁹⁵ Over and over again, his Council journals testify to his physical ordeal, which is of such a degree that one wonders how he ever carried out his intense schedule of meetings, lectures, conferences, and writing:

It is very difficult to walk. . . . My left leg, in the calf, is as if dead [October 19, 1962]. . . . I can scarcely write. My entire right side is fatigued [November 30, 1962]. . . . My hand and arm are not strong. I can scarcely hold my pencil [March 11, 1963]. . . . I can scarcely guide my right arm [October 1, 1963]. . . . I am not strong and finish each half-day exhausted [October 8, 1963]. . . . My health is VERY bad. I am incapable of making all the required gestures at mass, unable to walk. NO strength [November 5, 1963]. . . . I am dead with fatigue and headache [April 20, 1964].⁹⁶

At one point he is feeling so poorly that he is unsure if he will live

⁹¹Ibid., 421.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Congar, *Mon journal*, 1:241 and 1:405.

⁹⁴Ibid., 1:31

⁹⁵Ibid., 1:61.

⁹⁶Ibid., 1:121-24, 1:280, 1:351, 1:419, 1:445, 1:518, 2:59; see also 1:151, 1:180, 1:368, 1:397, 1:399, 1:472, 1:510, 1:516, 1:519, 2:40, 2:49, 2:346.

through the following year.⁹⁷ He wonders whether his suffering and that of others is part of the invisible, mystical history of the Council, and his thoughts turn to this passage from the Gospel: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it" (Mk 8:34-35).⁹⁸

XI. *Doxology, Discipleship, and Truth*

No exposition of Congar's practice of the discipline of theology can be complete without attention to the centrality of doxology in his spiritual life and theological work. Congar believed that liturgical action ritually and symbolically synthesizes the fullness of a mystery that can be fragmented in other forms of the Christian tradition, and he considered liturgical immersion absolutely critical to theological activity.⁹⁹ "I still consider the highest mode of theology to be doxology," he resolved. "It is content to refer, in praise and adoration, to the Reality who is 'light beyond all light.' It anticipates the eschatological communion in which there will be only praise."¹⁰⁰ It is clear from his journals that the psalms were indispensable to his own spiritual life. One evening in 1950, under a cloud of suspicion from Rome, Congar writes in his journal that he has just recited Psalm 91, "one of the psalms that has accompanied me throughout my entire life, whose truth I feel in so many dangerous or difficult times."¹⁰¹ He pens the initial words of several verses from this psalm that he carries with him from Compline: "You who live in the shelter of the most high. . . . The pestilence will not come near you." In times of anguish, the words of Psalm 130 rise from his heart as lamentation: *De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine!*¹⁰² The psalms also bear hope: "Our help is in the name of the Lord who has made heaven and earth" (Ps 123:8). Psalmody, Congar reflects, expresses "faith that consists in obeying God without knowing where God leads us, the faith of invincible hope."¹⁰³

The doxological movement of faith expressed quintessentially in psalmody should be characteristic of all theology, Congar maintained,

⁹⁷Ibid., 1:529.

⁹⁸Ibid., 1:573. He also cites 2 Cor 12:10.

⁹⁹See, e.g., Congar, "Reflections on Being a Theologian," 406.

¹⁰⁰Congar, *Word and Spirit*, trans. David Smith (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 5.

¹⁰¹Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 165; see also 275. For further discussion see "The Psalms in My Life," in Congar, *Called to Life*, trans. William Burridge (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 11-17.

¹⁰²Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 273.

¹⁰³Ibid., 289.

for theology aims ultimately not to circumscribe God in our finite conceptual systems but rather to serve the creature's movement towards the destined end of divine union. Congar cited with approbation Aquinas' definition of an article of faith: *Perceptio divinae veritatis tendens in ipsam*.¹⁰⁴ We tend toward God's truth, Congar explains, although we cannot grasp it conceptually. When we express our belief in God we do not define God but rather "express a movement or thrust of faith by which we are taken up."¹⁰⁵ Theological truth is ultimately expressed by lives of discipleship lived in the service of others and in praise of God, for revelation is not a "reified truth but a dynamic truth, a truth that happens, a practical truth in St. John's sense."¹⁰⁶

XII. Conclusion

Congar's contributions to twentieth-century Roman Catholic theology and the Second Vatican Council are well known. His posthumously published journals add to our knowledge of his scholarly accomplishments a deeper appreciation of the passion for truth that guided him throughout his life, shaping his exercise of the theological vocation and sustaining him through years of tribulation. "My resistance can only consist in this," he writes during his exile of 1954, "to never slacken, but to continue and intensify even more my service of the Truth."¹⁰⁷ Congar's journal reflections do not address the methodological and philosophical challenges that theological truth claims face today in our fragmented postmodern world. His theology employs a Thomist realist epistemology, supplemented by awareness of the historicity of human knowledge, but he did not have the training in philosophy that would have prepared him to engage modern and postmodern challenges to this Thomist approach.¹⁰⁸ "To think of [Congar] as a philosopher concerned with elaborating a theory of truth *per se* would be a mistake," William Henn explains.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Congar's journals do offer insight into the character and spirituality of a theologian committed to truth's pursuit.

¹⁰⁴Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 5. Reference is to In *III Sent.* d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, qa 1, obj. 4 and *ST IIa IIae*, q. 1, a. 6. Congar notes that Albert the Great and Bonaventure also described articles of faith in this manner.

¹⁰⁵Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 5.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 6. He is citing here Claude Geffré, *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie* (Paris: 1982), 1:124.

¹⁰⁷Congar, *Journal d'un théologien*, 271.

¹⁰⁸On Congar's Thomist and historicist approach to truth, see William Henn, O.F.M.-Cap., *The Hierarchy of Truths According to Yves Congar, O.P.*, *Analecta Gregoriana* vol. 246 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1987), 29-101.

¹⁰⁹His approach to truth must thus be elucidated, Henn writes, in "an indirect way." *Ibid.*, 25.

The Christian community, as Stanley Hauerwas has articulated, lives through a narrative structure—stories old and new that shape the ethos of our lives and serve as exemplars of virtuous practices that form character.¹¹⁰ If we too are to practice theology with truth's passion, Congar's life story suggests, Catholic theology must be carried out with diligent scholarship that combines firmness of faith conviction with an openness of mind and the willingness to learn and to change and reformulate ideas. Theology requires freedom at the level of both the inner spirit and academic and ecclesial structures; this entails discipline on the part of the theologian, and an academic and ecclesial ethos that welcomes studious inquiry and genuine dialogue about all areas of theology, including topics that generate disagreement or controversy and approaches that push forward the frontiers of the discipline. Truth must be sought not only in library stacks or in the canons of reason, but also in human encounter and human relationships—with persons of other denominations and other religious traditions, and with people of all walks of life, especially the laboring classes and the disenfranchised, whose struggles can easily be forgotten in the haven of a seminary or university campus. The theologian must be responsive to the intellectual questions and human needs of his or her era, striving to carry forward the theological tradition in a manner that is of service to the human family, so many of whom live with suffering and affliction. Theology conducted with a passion for truth flourishes through a shared life of Christian communion and proceeds in a manner that is thoroughly evangelical, challenging the status quo in the name of the Gospel, the good news of the in-breaking of God's reign, for the subject matter of theology is not a reification or an abstraction but a "truth that happens, a practical truth in St. John's sense."¹¹¹ Fidelity to this vocation may well entail suffering. Theology practiced as passion for truth, Congar attests, is rooted in the worship of God, and requires an examination of conscience that honestly scrutinizes our own motivations and actions. This scrutiny must be both personal and ecclesial. It is painfully clear from the anguished testimonies in Congar's journals that the theological vocation can only flourish in a church with structures and practices that support truth's pursuit. Such a church operates not through ostracism and censure, but grows from relationships that respond to the need that Congar felt so keenly in Cambridge: the ontological need, which we all share, to love and to be loved.

In our world where scandal stains the political realm, the economic realm, and even the Catholic Church itself, Congar's passion for

¹¹⁰Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

¹¹¹Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 6.

truth is a clarion call that can speak not only to practicing theologians but also to the Christian community at large. His priestly vocation began with a call to preach conversion to humanity in the wake of World War I, and, one hundred years after his birth in 1904, this call to conversion still beckons us today. The witness of Congar's example invites all Christians to an evangelical life, summons the theological community to the passionate and relentless pursuit of truth, and calls the Roman Catholic Church to ongoing reform. "What the Church needs today, as always," wrote Joseph Ratzinger in 1963, in words that could serve as a fitting encomium to Congar, "are not adulators to extol the status quo, but men [*sic*] whose humility and obedience are no less than their passion for truth: men who brave every misunderstanding and attack as they bear witness; men who, in a word, love the Church more than ease and the unruffled course of their personal destiny."¹¹² Such a person was Yves Congar, O.P., *serviteur de la Vérité*.

¹¹²Joseph Ratzinger, "Free Expression and Obedience in the Church," in *The Church: Readings in Theology*, ed. Albert LaPierre, Bernard Verkamp, Edward Wetterer, and John Zeitler; trans. John Chang and Justin Clements (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1963), 212 (cited in Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, cover page).