A History of Theology



Yves Congar OP
Translated and edited by
Hunter Guthrie, SJ

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Yves M.J. Congar, O.P.

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Front cover photo: Yves Congar OP, 1967. Photo from the Archives of the Province of France, with thanks to Fr Bruno Dominique La Fille OP

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Publishers Note

The Congar section in the archives of the Dominican Province of France is in the basement at the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir (rue de la Glacière, Paris), next to the Couvent St Jacques. The section is on two sides of a very large series of compactors, and is full of boxes catalogued by year and often within that by subject. In addition, there is a handy reference folder detailing in summary the contents of each box. There are of course archives of material by many other members of the Province of France. Congar's is undoubtedly the largest of all the collections in the archives.

The Congar section in the archives takes up thirty metres in total with many, many boxes of files in folders with a simple classification system of numbers. Congar kept all his correspondence, envelopes included often, and it has been well indexed by one of the Provincial Archivists of the Province of France some years ago. Finding the right box with the correct documentation takes some time, but none-the-less it delivers results that are much needed in research and this is due to the work done by both Congar and the Archivists over time. Sifting through all the documents that he kept on a particular topic or book also takes time; he kept snippets from many sources, but also none-the-less it produces an incredibly rewarding result.

One finds carefully preserved original type-written letters of sixty or seventy plus years ago, complete with his hand-written notes on these letters, or notes he made for a response on matters for correction, addition or omission. Often these are very small pieces of paper. In looking at these documents, one gets a feel for Congar's mind, the developments in his thought on a project and his method

of work, the respect (and the disputes) that others—publishers, theologians, other Dominicans—displayed towards him, as well as a deeper insight into his theology. In sum, these files are a necessary addition to our understanding of Congar.

Inside one of these boxes there is a set of documents, going back to the 1940's, regarding the original article and the then manuscript of what was to be entitled *A History of Theology.* The file includes at the top of the documents and correspondence a small piece of paper, almost a 'post-it' note where Congar noted the percentage of his original manuscript that had been omitted in the French Catholic Encyclopaedia article that was published some time before this new text. It amounted to about 1/3 of the original manuscript that was omitted. Congar used the original text he had written as the basis of an expanded manuscript of what was to be later translated; the re-write which he explains in the preliminary pages of this book.

As said, Congar was meticulous in keeping all correspondence, which have been assiduously archived, and these archives are and will always be an invaluable source for anyone researching Congar and his work and his many articles and books. It is in these same archives, for example, that one can find the original type written text, take from his notebooks, that became the book published of his journal of the Second Vatican Council. Both the original note books and the type written text are filed in a box in the archives, as is hand written text (on very fine paper), of his yet unpublished journal from the Second World War. His journal from the First World War, written as a child (and therefore before he was a Dominican) he did not put in the Provincial archives, which began to be gathered together before his death, but it was found in his room after he died.

The files, for what was to become *A History of Theology*, contain original correspondence, some in French and some in English, to and from Congar with the publisher and others (including hand written letters by **Étienne Gilson**,

who played an instrumental role in encouraging Congar to re-write the text and publish the book), of how this work came to be published in English by Doubleday, with notes on the additions and corrections to be made by Congar and who was responsible for the translation and the final publication.

In the correspondence found in the Paris archives there is a letter of November 1959 from Anton Pegis, Editorial Director at Doubleday in New York, to Congar, while he was living in Strassbourg in 'exile', the first letter regarding the publication, which makes the connection with Gilson. 'Professor Gilson has forwarded to me your letter of October 16, 1959, in which you were kind enough to consider in a favourable way the publication of your article "Thélogie" in English.' The letter also deals with the issues around the fact the original publisher Letouzey 'suppressed about one third of your original text', and that 'it may be that the publisher has no rights in the circumstances' and adds 'however . . . it would be correct to inquire whether this is the case'. The letter leaves it to Conagr, as author, to make the inquiries, which he did, and he was allowed to rework the manuscript. (The correspondence between Congar and Letouzey is also in the archives.) The letter from Pegis finishes with a proposal that a Fr Eschmann of Toronto be the translator of the work once it was received. There is no note in the files from Congar about this proposal and presumably this is a Fr Ignatius Echmann OP (1898–1968), a German Dominican who was professor of philosophy at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Torronto from 1942.

Some time elapsed before Congar completed the work, including (after his 'exile') the period of his involvement with the Second Vatican Council, and the final draft was sent to New York in 1966. By that time, for whatever reason, it was clear Fr Eschmann would not be the translator, possibly due to ill health or advancing age as he died in 1968 at the age of seventy.

In a letter, of May 1966, by JF Bernard (no mention of what his position is in the company) to Congar, and after Doubelday 'were delighted to receive the manuscript', he, Congar, is told who would now be the translator. 'You may be interested to know that the translator of the book will be Hunter Guthrie SJ, a former rector of Georgetown University and a most able and accomplished theologian and translator. Father Guthrie was, coincidentally, one of the censors of the Archdiocese of Paris who read (with highest approval) the original manuscript in 1939.' Guthrie makes no mention in the Doubleday book, published in 1968, of this earlier acquaintance with the Letouzey article.

Sadly, and somewhat oddly for Congar, the files in the Archives do not contain a copy of the original French manuscript from which the French translation into English was made. This publishing house has tried over a number of years with various sources to locate the original French manuscript so that a new French edition could be made, but this search has come up with nothing. Congar wrote it in a time before photocopiers, and it seems Congar did not keep a copy, not even a carbon copy, of what he sent to the American publishers to be translated. This does seem rather odd for Congar. Alas also it seems the translator, Guthrie (he died in November 1974), did not keep a copy or the copy in his personal files (held by his Jesuit Province in America), that is the original French document, and those responsible today for the Doubleday files do not have the files with the manuscript either.

Who has the original French text? Does it still exist somewhere? Was there only the one copy made by Congar and not kept by anyone? Was it not returned Congar by Doubleday? Was it returned to Congar by Doubleday, and later mislaid? (However, if by chance the manuscript and the letter were there in the files, were they taken from the files at some stage and never returned, or kept in someone's personal files or, worse still, destroyed?

There are, thus, limitless possibilities as to what has happened to the text sent to New York in 1966

If the original still exists somewhere it is a mystery that has not been solved to date despite a number of years of research and contacting different groups and individuals including those who took over the Doubleday publication list.

But if it does exist somewhere, one day it may turn up in a cupboard or in a file that has long been forgotten. What a find it would be! . Anyone who reads this who may know of its location, ATF Press would be very happy to hear from them!

The files in the archives of the Province of France do not refer to the possibility of a French edition. So, in a rather unusual situation for Congar this full text we have in English was never published in French and so is the only version of the full manuscript of this important text by him. However, we do have the English translation and with gratitude to all concerned, including Jean Michele Pontin OP, the current Provincial Archivist of the Province of France, we all owe a debt of gratitude, and now have this new edition including a preliminary piece by the American theologian Thomas O'Meara OP.

It is, then, a great pleasure and with much satisfaction after much work over a number of years, that ATF Press provides this new edition to the theological world.

Hilary Dominic Regan
Publisher
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August 2019

Introduction

Thomas F O'Meara, OP

These pages offer a new edition of Yves Congar's *History of Theology*. This work began as a lengthy article appearing in the multi-volume *Dictionnaire de Théologie* in 1946 entitled '*Théologie*'.[1] Congar wrote that he, Fr M-D Chenu, and Fr Henri-Marie Féret in the 1930s planned to write a history of theology. Their work load, World War II, and Chenu's teaching in Canada interfered. He used some of his notes for that project for the article begun in 1938. The manuscript was completed by the Dominican priest as he was mobilized for service in the French army because World War II was just beginning.

After being captured by the Germans he attempted to escape; that was punished by internment in the stricter camps of Lübeck and Colditz. Those experiences of repression prepared him—he later observed—for the censorious measures to come in the 1950s from the Vatican because of his advocacy of ecumenism and historical approaches to ecclesiology. Later he did not hesitate to compare the Holy Office with the Gestapo.[2] Returning from the war, Congar looked at what had been published in the *Dictionnaire* and found that his text had been cut by about two-fifths. He edited and improved the original text, restoring many of

1. Congar, '*Théologie*', in *Dictionnaire de Théologie* 15: 1 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1946), cols. 341–502.
2. Étienne Fouilloux, 'Un théologien dans l'Église du XXe siècle', in *Bulletin de literature ecclésiastique,* 106 (2005): 22. Fouilloux speaks of Congar's theology 'illuminating the path of the church traversing history' ('L'apport du Père Congar à la théologie du XXe siècle', in *Gregorianum,* 83 [2002]: 507).

the deletions; that work was not published in French but translated into English in 1968.

Yves Congar's family lived in Sedan in northeast France, although he was of a people whose native land was to the west, Celtic Brittany. Congar's mentor was the great medieval scholar of the structure and synthesis of Thomas Aquinas, M-D Chenu. He founded a school emphasising historical knowledge as well as contemporary ministry. In that French Dominican seminary of Le Saulchoir Congar studied and then taught. History was the way to bring past ages and thinkers to life and, equally important, let them contribute to contemporary renewal. Aquinas—not only in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries but in the twentieth century—could be a force for leading the Roman Catholic Church in new directions. Congar spent his life studying the history of the structures and institutional theories of the *ecclesia*. He catalogued topics and ideas from publications in ecclesiology appearing in Europe and around the world. He was also a Roman Catholic pioneer of ecumenism with Protestant and Orthodox churches.

After World War II there was no lack of teachers and pastors, theologians and activists who said that the Roman Catholic Church needed to enter into a revitalisation to help present the Gospel in a positive and attractive way. That renewal energized a spectrum of ideas and church institutions. Not a few seminaries and schools north of the Alps broke out of the sterile intellectual framework imposed after 1850 by the Vatican, a monopoly of one philosophy and its related philosophical theology drawn from medieval scholasticism. The sole purpose of theology was to defend doctrinal definitions and ecclesiastical laws. Years passed, and that new version of 'school-thinking', a neo-medievalism, was dominant up to Vatican II. It was mainly philosophical, Aristotelian, a textbook collection of definitions and divisions. Some claimed it to be the thought of Aquinas, but the neo-Thomism from 1850 to 1950 was neither a medieval thought nor the prized theology of Aquinas. According

to Otto Pesch, neo-scholasticism held the real theology of Aquinas 'under house arrest'.[3]

Franciscans and Benedictines, Dominicans and Jesuits, universities like Louvain and Munich—each developed after 1900 accurate, expansive, and Christian interpretations of medieval thinkers. That theological rebirth could serve the present and could be in dialogue with the approaches of modern philosophers. Christian ideas and church forms had the power to express in new ways the reality of the church, local and universal. 'Anyone who did not live during the years of French Catholicism after the war missed one of the finest moments in the life of the Church. Through a slow emergence from misery, one tried in the great freedom of a fidelity as profound as itself, to rejoin in a gospel way the world, a world of which the church could become an integral part for the first time in centuries.'[4] While Congar was composing the article, '*Théologie',* he was also organising a series of future books in ecumenism and ecclesiology, *Unam Sanctam*, and was writing the first volume for that collection, *Chrétiens désunis,* a pioneering study of Catholicism within the ecumenical movement.[5]

Congar's 'Preface' to the history published in 1968 discussed how theology since 1939 had unfolded as new approaches to theology began to replace neo-scholasticism. Patristic and biblical studies appeared in a considerable number. The related to a new secular appreciation of time and emphasised the historical structure of revelation. Theologies after 1950 faced new questions and areas

3. Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin, Grenze und Grösse einer mittelalterlichen Theologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald,1988), 197. Congar called Thomas Aquinas 'the master-teacher of realism', (Fouilloux, 'L'apport du Père Congar', 508).
4. Congar, *Dialogue between Christians. Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism* (London: G Chapman, 1966), 32.
5. Congar, *Chrétiens désunis* (Paris: Cerf, 1937). The series *Unam Sanctam* had over thirty-five volumes up to the time of Vatican II when it produced commentaries and studies on the Council. A new series began around 2014.

of discussion: some did this by employing the traditional, creedal arrangement of information (Michael Schmaus), while others fashioned a theology out of personal or social thought-forms and orientations drawn from contemporary philosophy (Karl Rahner). If Vatican II has opened the way further, 'it has given only a vague indication of the theological work of the future'.[6]

Congar's temporal overview of 1500 years of intellectual history, after a discussion of the history of the word, 'Theology', treats six periods, six cultural ages of Christian thinking. Here theology is a spectrum including, for instance, spirituality, moral theology, and ecclesiology along with the thought-forms behind all of them. Hervé Legrand sees Congar's overall method and approach as beginning with the history of doctrines but presenting and locating them in a wider realm of culture. He sees the unity of Christian teaching and of Catholicism to be a unity in diversity. The dialectic of revelation and culture, repressed in recent decades, is now being restored.[7] The New Testament follows this approach as do the first centuries of Christian teaching and thinking. While Congar's book has its limitations in terms of treating mainly the Western Church in Europe, the sections themselves are something vital and relatively new. They look at history as cultural periods, each with a beginning, a flourishing center, and a conclusion leading to the next epoch. Out of a moment of originality and newness a particular cluster of ideas has wide influence. In each age human activities from metaphysics to painting have an identity through a collection of particular forms. History is neither a rigid narration nor one age or philosophical expression. Faith and church are developmental, varied, vital, and organic.

6. Congar, *A History of Theology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 18.
7. Hervé Legrand, 'Yves Congar (1904 – 1995): une passion pour l'unité', in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique,* 126 (2004): 549.

The six epochal chapters offer not only information but historical context and insight: they retain their value today. The Dominican historian treats somewhat the cultural context of these six periods of theology. For instance, patristic theology first existed in the world of pagan culture with its philosophies and religions. Christians were not arguing against some dubious teachings of religion, but they lived within a world of science and morality that was in various ways not Christian or Jewish. The second section, 'From the Sixth Century to the Twelfth Century', describes the little known age leading from the early theologians of the church (increasingly neglected) to the new kinds of European schools with some knowledge of Aristotle and literary figures like Alcuin. The twelfth century receives its own section, for that century sees the emergence of the school, the inquiring question, the open discussion, and the organic *summa*. The section of sixty pages on the thirteenth century (some of the final pages are dedicated to a decline in the fourteenth century) offers Congar in the realm he knows so well and has creatively formed, Thomas Aquinas and medieval theology in the universities. There follows a section on the Reformation. The pages on scholasticism in the sixteenth century and after Trent remain a valuable summary of that age with its theological method, organized textbooks, and theology as spirituality. The period from the seventeenth century is informative, and its understanding of thought forms like pyramid or descending Dionysian illumination are helpful for understanding the model of central church administration that has lasted up to the present time.

Neo-scholasticism yielded in the late sixteenth century to a 'Tridentinism'. That was not the Council of Trent (which has its place in tradition) but a system developed under the influence of popes after Trent. It sought to control and reduce to one ideology every aspect of Catholic life and faith, furthering Roman centralization and the repres-

sion of all that was new and extra-Roman.[8] There was a particular emptiness in the control exercised by Rome between the end of the Baroque and Vatican II. Congar learned from history to reject what he called the hyperinactivity of the Vatican, the church as thoroughly defensive, and the neglect of Christology and pneumatology.

The last section carries forward the movement of the late Baroque and then looks at the nineteenth century, particularly at ecclesiology and theological method among German theologians. It reaches the twentieth century by surveying theologians and books that represent some dialogue between Catholicism and modern philosophy. This concluding section ends with pages on 'Conditions of Theological Work and Progress'. They treat the relationships of theology to the Christian spiritual life and to the universal church. What are the contributions of theologians to the church? Is not some freedom necessary for the theologian to proceed? Congar, however, offers little here on theology in the future, perhaps because that was considered in the 'Preface'.

History is omnipresent and liberating. 'Everything is absolutely historical including the person of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is historical; Thomas Aquinas is historical; Paul VI is historical. Historical does not mean just that Jesus came at a certain point in time but that one must draw today the consequences of this fact, He is conditioned by the time

8. Bernard Lauret, editor, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology. Conversations with Yves Congar* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 3–5. Congar rejected every reactionary fundamentalism in the church fixated on this or that phrase or devotion. That '*intégrisme*' held a false way of conceiving what was supernatural and rejected healthy manifestations of human nature and subjectivity. 'A refusal of the modern world, a taste for all that is determined by the mode of authority comes basically from a contempt or a misunderstanding in regard to that which is presented as view of humanity, a development, and as emergence of new perspectives in history' (Congar, 'Mentalité 'de droite' et intégrisme', in *La Vie Intellectuelle,* 52 [1950]: 657).

in and through which he lives.'[9] At Vatican II among the theologian-experts, the '*periti*', Congar was remarkable for his influence, past and present. Illustrative is an entry in Congar's diary for the end of the Council on December 7, 1965. 'I left the Basilica slowly and with difficulty; a number of bishops congratulated me, saying that this was very much my work. Looking at things objectively, I did do a lot to prepare for the Council, to elaborate and diffuse the ideas the Council made its own. At the Council itself I worked a lot.' He lists sections of the documents on the church and on revelation that are from him as well as the introduction and the conclusion of the text on ecumenism and that on non-Christians. Parts of the documents on foreign missions, priests, and religious liberty hold his ideas. 'In short, this morning, that which was read came very extensively from me.'[10] Richard McBrien wrote: 'By any reasonable account, Yves Congar is the most distinguished ecclesiologist of this century and perhaps of the entire post-Tridentine era. No modern theologian's spirit was accorded fuller play in the documents of Vatican II than Congar's.'[11] Vatican II is a significant marker and goal in the history of Western Christian theology as presented in this book. The European ecclesiologist Hervé Legrand observes: 'It is very rare that the personal destiny of a theologian prefigures and influence the course of the life of the Church.'[12] In some ways the course of the recent history of theology in this volume is heading towards Vatican II.

Within this history of theology Congar's own theology is present: seminal, historical, global, and structural. The

9. Jean Puyo, *Jean Puyo interroge Yves Congar 'Une vie pour la verité'* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1975), 43.
10. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile* II (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 510f. My translation.
11. McBrien, 'Church and Ministry. The Achievement of Yves Congar', *Theology Digest.* 32 (1985): 203.
12. Jossua, 'Yves Congar. La vie et l'oeuvre d'un théologien', in *Cristianesimo nella storia,* 17 (1996): 1.

Church was moving from a past, Latin set of precise doctrines and religious rituals back to the sources of the New Testament and the early theologians. The institutions of today are themselves products of the past. A biblical and pneumatic reality may have grounded this or that papal ritual. Sacramentality or ministry had a source and history greater than Baroque episcopal vestments or Latin canons. In the incarnational process of the Christian church underlying sources lead historical forms and ideas to becomes concrete in new movements for social justice or in expanded ecclesial ministries.[13] At the same time, an absence of philosophy as the inner dynamic (and not as another aspect of a historical culture) is rather absent. The history of Christianity is very much a dynamic continuity of institutions (including the papacy). An emphasis on important ideas and perennial institutions is central, while schism and heresy and separation are to be avoided as abnormal. Thus unity, church, tradition, and history emerge as aspects of Congar's way of thinking and writing. They are, of course, the titles of his important books.

For the Dominican, Vatican II was not a group of regulating documents but an event whose challenging time and broadly influential creativity was beginning. When he was asked about deliberations in the United States on ecclesiological issues like a national pastoral council or a role for members of the church other than archbishops in the selection of bishops he observed: 'The upheavals in the post-conciliar era have their roots not in Vatican II but in the constrictive decades or centuries before it . . . It is astonishing how the post-conciliar period has so little to do with the Council. The post-conciliar questions are new and radical.

13. A collection of essays and talks by Congar from the end of the Council into the postconciliar years is René Rémond, editor, *Le Concile de Vatican II* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984). A large history of theology but one focused on the theologies of the church is *L'Église de saint Augustin* à *l'époque modern* (Paris: Cerf, 1970).

"Aggiornamento" [now] means changes and adaptations to a new situation.'[14]

The Ecumenical Council liberated Christian realities for the church. This will not just be for Europe. 'The requests from Africa or Asia for a true inculturation are authentic requests from the church as its moves in the journey of the human race.'[15] In the 1950s Congar had called a 'wide world' the church's 'parish'.[16] Now he observed a new 'Catholicity' in the Church. It has two sources: the fullness of the grace of Christ, and the virtual infinity of creation and the development of the human species.[17] The challenge posed by the modern person and contemporary society is twofold: the perspective and creativity of the subject and the unfolding of history. 'It is not *in spite* of time and its course but in them that the Church brings forth the gifts of God and realizes them.'[18] Christians cannot avoid time with its expansion and its delays, for into that dynamic stream God's gifts come. Yves Congar spent his life serving history, and it rewarded him with change and even progress.

14. Letter to Thomas O'Meara (1970); see William W Bassett, editor, *The Choosing of Bishops: Historical and Theological Studies* (Hartford, CT: Canon Law Society of America, 1971); *A National Pastoral Council: Pro and Con* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1971).
15. Congar, 'Situation au moment de "Ecclesiam Suam"', in *Le Concile de Vatican II,* 32.
16. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish; Salvation and Its Problems* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961) 17; a new French edition appeared in 2000.
17. Congar, 'Les religions non bibliques sont-elles des médiations de salut?', inEcumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies, *Year-Book 1972–1973* (Jerusalem: Tantur, 1973), 82.
18. Congar, 'Pour un sens vrai de l'Église', in *Cette Église que j'aime* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968, 94). 'The vision of the Council—that of *Lumen Gentium*—has been resolutely that of the history of salvation given a destiny by eschatology. The Council has taken in the best of biblical, patristic and theological studies of the past thirty years preceding it, but also it has been a pastoral council; doctrinal certainly but in a pastoral vision and directed by pastors' ('Situation au moment de "Ecclesiam Suam"', in *Le Concile de Vatican II,* 27).My translation.

Foreword

In an ecumenical age, this is an ecumenical work, both in content and composition.

In content it presents a theology which is at once historical and modern. In composition it is the original work of a Dominican, translated and amicably edited by a Jesuit—nothing could be more ecumenical.

The work is truly a masterpiece. In this day of cloudy thinking it comes to grips with reality at every point that is important for man's relationship to himself and to eternity.

It is a work of scholarship and still a text geared to the student's needs and his problems. It is a basic orientation course for the start of a college curriculum in theology. For it introduces the student to all of the great names in Catholic thought, together with their methods and conclusions.

In keeping with the ecumenical age, Martin Luther has his say and, indeed, a very good one.

From its pages those of all faiths, or none, can come to an adequate understanding of the march of Christian theological thought during the last two thousand years.

May 1968 Hunter Guthrie, S.J.

Preface

This book substantially reproduces the article entitled "Théologie" which appeared in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* published at Paris in 1938–39. My manuscript was sent to the editor, Msgr. Amann, on the second of September 1939, just as I was preparing to leave for the general mobilization prior to World War II. Returning from the war at the end of May 1945, I was surprised to see that the editor had discarded about two-fifths of my text. It was a question at times of useful simplifications replacing long heavy arguments, and in these cases I have let the changes stand. At other times, however, there were deletions that weakened the text and its documentation, and in such cases I have restored the deleted passages. This fact alone is evidence that the present text is more complete than that published in the *Dictionnaire*.

It has, moreover, another claim to relative perfection. I have tried to update the present work, particularly in its historical section. Since 1939 there have been many books devoted to the object and method of theology. On these topics it was certainly my duty to provide a well-documented summary for my readers. I acknowledge the fact that the result is somewhat short of what I envisaged. Several paragraphs should have been rewritten, but time and opportunity were simply not available. My excuse is that I bowed to the friendly pleadings of eminent historians and of my editor. I have, however, introduced rectifications and sufficient and necessary additions, so that this revised edition meets the exigencies of honesty and, hopefully, answers a real, current need.

What has been published during the past thirty years on the life of the world and of the Church deserves more than a simple up-to-date bibliography. The theological situation, in fact, even the idea of theological endeavor, has changed in a quarter of a century. Nevertheless, it is well to remember that the continuities are more profound than the differences.

What has been called the "new theology" (radical as it may seem) is, in fact, more traditional than similar advances in other intellectual disciplines. Many eminent contemporary theologians are finding that their research turns up traditional leads and data in the economy or history of salvation, in eschatology, anthropology, etc. If we simply trace the evolution of theological ideas since 1939 we will discover an inspired and profound renewal of traditional Christian thought. This is not to say that no serious problems have arisen from the pact that Catholic theology seemed to have had with medieval or post-tridentine Scholasticism.

Let us therefore have a look at what has taken place since 1939 and thus find out where we are today.

In France, 1944–46 were years of intense fermentation. Two new collections of theological works appeared in print. The first was *Sources chrétiennes* (1942) which translated several books of the Greek Fathers, in particular those of Origen. The second series was called *Théologie*, which began in 1944 with *Conversion et grâce chez S. Thomas d'Aquin* by Fr. H. Bouillard, and *Corpus mysticum*, and two years later published Fr. H. de Lubac's *Surnaturel*. It was thought that these publications were the beginnings and first expressions of a "new theology," whose manifesto seemed to have been an article published by Fr. Jean Daniélou, "Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse," in *Études*, avril-juin 1946. In addition, new thinking on the nature of theology itself was expressed by Fr. M. D. Chenu in an essay entitled "Une École de Théologie" and a book by Fr. L. Charlier, *Essai sur le Problème Théologique*, published in 1938. Both of these works were put on the Index

on February 6, 1942.[1] Fr. Charlier had outlined a critique of the nature and validity of theological conclusions, which it must be admitted never gained much support. Fr. Chenu's work examined the role of spiritual experience in the orientation of theology and also the value which the life of the Church has as a *locus theologicus*. The problem arose when, in a very questionable manner, these ideas of a vitalist religious conception of theology were grouped together and published, each in its own perspective, by Fr. Th. Soiron, G. Koepgen, and Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar.

The choice of certain treatises translated in *Sources chrétiennes* (for example, the "Introduction" to one of Origen's works) strongly suggested that the typological, spiritual, and even allegorical exegesis of the Fathers was favored to the detriment of the literal sense. A chapter in the *Corpus mysticum* entitled "Du symbole à la dialectique" tried to encourage a return to a rich but wider interpretation in preference to the conceptual analysis on which Scholasticism thrived. Finally a sentence from Fr. H. Bouillard was cited: "When the spirit evolves, a truth remains immutable thanks only to a simultaneous and correlative evolution of all its ideas and to the fact that these preserve the same relation to each other. A *theology which is no longer in tune with its time is a false theology*."[2] Now this could be interpreted as a profession of historic and philosphic relativism, for it would seem that the invariant dogma, which the faithful profess formally to respect, remained foreign to ideas, that is, foreign to the concepts in which theology had given them a workable expression at some given date. Hence, it was left open to question what was to become not only of St. Thomas' theology but of theological science as he defined it. What, in brief, was to be the value of dogmatic formulas? Some professional Thomists, and particularly the Dominican Father R. Gar-

1. *AAS*, t. XXXIV, 1942, p. 37.
2. *Conversion et grâce chez S. Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris, 1944, p. 219. From this passage the usual quotation is simply the sentence I have underlined.

rigou-Lagrange, soon gave expression to their disturbance and their questions. The authors, and even more forcefully the Jesuit collaborators of *Sources chrétiennes* and *Théologie*, defended their position and explained it. They maintained that even though their position was basically modernistic, it was not necessarily destructive. It centered on two key points: (1) a distinction which was really a disjunction between *faith* and *belief*, the latter being the ideological structure in which faith finds expression; (2) the conception of the relation between dogmatic pronouncements and religious realities as a relation of symbol to reality, not as an expression *proper* (however inadequate) to reality.

The writings of 1944–46, which dealt with certain points of doctrinal history, had encountered to a certain extent the same problem as the Modernists, viz., the variations in the representations and the intellectual construction of the affirmations of faith. But this, of course, is a problem encountered in the pursuit of any historical knowledge. These authors solved the problem by distinguishing between an invariant of affirmations, and the variable usage of technical notions to translate essential truth in historic contexts differing culturally and philosophically. For them, first of all, the *invariant* was a set of affirmations having a real content of truth. And secondly, in the differing notional translations which the theologians had given, there existed an analogy of relations or a functional equivalence between the notions used to express that truth. In this way they escaped the accusation of ruinous anti-intellectualism and dogmatic relativism justly brought against the Modernists. There remained grounds, however, for suspecting that a penetrating philosophical analysis had furnished no clarification to the concept, reasoning, and systematization of theology.[3] Indeed,

3. The discussion had not gone as far as a philosophical reinterrogation regarding the place of the concept in our perception of the truth, its nature and value. Some interesting reflections on this subject by Fr. Ed. Schillebeeckx in *Approches théologiques*. I. *Révélation et Théologie*. Bruxelles, 1965, pp. 223–84, 340–45.

the simplified teaching of the schools and manuals, and even the authority of St. Thomas himself, seemed to have been infringed. Certain positions and formulations generally considered settled—and almost canonized—had been brought into question. The anxiety aroused was for the most part artificial. At the time, however, a certain few fashioned the fantastic idea of a "new theology" which moreover they were incapable of defining—as this author has learned from personal experience a good hundred times between 1946 and 1950.

It is true that Pius XII had used the expression "new theology" in his discourse of September 1946 to the general Congregation of the Jesuits.[4] The tenor of this discourse had been repeated to the general chapter of the Dominican Fathers (without a repetition of the expression "new theology").[5] Shortly after these two discourses, the Encyclical *Humani Generis* specified the precise points about which the Holy Father foresaw the danger of certain "novelties."[6] The dangers denounced arose from excessive concessions made to modern philosophies, dialectic materialism, existentialism, historicism, or—as is very evident today—irenics. They fostered a distrust of the use of reason in apologetics and theology, a weakening of speculative theology and of the value of dogmatic formulas, a neglect of the ordinary *magisterium*, and a failure to return to scriptural and patristic sources.

Today the crisis has passed, if indeed there was ever really a crisis. As always the problems remain. They are grounded in a situation whose component parts it may be

4. AAS, t. XXXVIII, 1946, pp. 384–86.
5. *Ibid*., pp. 386–88.
6. AAS, t. XLII, 1950, p. 561 *sq.; Denz*. 3875–99. Fr. G. Weigel's article, "The Historical Background of the Encyclical *Humani Generis*," *(Theological Studies*, t. XII, 1951, pp. 208–30) would draw from my pen certain reserves. But "Gleanings from the Commentaries on *Humani Generis*" (pp. 520–49), a sort of bulletin on the Encyclical's commentaries, is well documented and instructive.

useful to outline briefly. I distinguish three principal elements, to which must be added the influence of ecumenism; but this latter is difficult to evaluate particularly with regard to the notion of theology.

The first is a renewal of the sources which nourish theological thought, at least by giving it incentive and appeal. Pius XII himself in the document where he undertook the defense of reason and speculative theology of the classical type recognized that "the study of the sources has always been a principle of rejuvenation for the sacred sciences, whereas speculation which neglects to delve again and again into the deposit of faith proves sterile."[7] Now the means of biblical and patristic source-research are incomparably better and more abundant today than in the nineteenth century. The deepening of our knowledge of history and philology have resurrected interest in more than one question. Contact with the primary sources has raised other questions dealing with the very nature of theological work: Revelation takes place in the framework of history or of an "economy." But are a conceptual-deductive method and an ordered plan of study following merely the formal sequences, sufficient and apt to amass and correlate all the data of Revelation?[8] And isn't it true that many of the concepts borrowed by St. Thomas from Aristotle and used by Scholasticism do not really convey exactly the concepts found in Sacred Scripture? Where in the great Scholastic syntheses are the biblical notions of *alliance, agape, flesh, know, hesed, justice*, and indeed the common notions of *word, kingdom*, and *truth*? There is definitely a gap between what we find under these headings in a good treatise or a good lexicon of biblical theology, and what we find in the great Scholastics or in our classic manuals.

7. *Aumani Generis: AAS*, pp. 568–69; *Denz*. 3886.
8. See my study on "Le moment 'économique' et le moment 'ontologique' dans la Sacra Doctrina," in *Mélanges* M.-D. *Chenu*., Paris, 1966.

Finally, the questions and the difficulties raised by the Modernists, and again in 1944–6 in entirely other circumstances, basically refer to the concept of Revelation itself. The gap between notions which we have just pointed out exists primarily in that area. A one-sided approach to Revelation has considered it to be a collection of statements of a philosophical type dealing with realities which almost entirely escape our experience—as though it were a collection of theorems whose demonstration the teacher simply would not give. But for the past sixty years there has been a better understanding on the one hand of the economic and historic structure of Revelation, and on the other of its essential aim of alliance, i.e., to establish an interpersonal relation between God and His people. The dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* of Vatican II (18 November 1965) has finally appropriated these values without the prejudice to a definite intellectual content. This is very important for the future of Catholic theology, since it solves many problems or at least renders them less problematic.

A second source of renewal which seems to be very efficacious is the new awareness which the theologians have not only of the real state of the world from the standpoint of faith, but also of their role with regard to this situation. The theologians have always worked in the Church and *for* the Church. For a long time, however, the majority of them produced their theology exactly as though the world had not become foreign to the affirmation of the faith which they distinguished and subdistinguished and over which they poured ratiocination. This is still the situation in certain schools and concerning certain questions (for example, aspects of Mariology). But a number of theologians have taken a better view of the link which binds theological work as a reflection on faith to the Church's duty of proposing the faith successfully to the men of this day and age. This link imposes on the theologian duties which transcend the service he can render by scientifically interpreting and theologically clarifying the realities of missionary activ-

ity or the pastoral ministry. In the theology of the Incarnation of the Son, for example, he must find room for the sacraments and eschatology, and even in the mystery of the Three Divine Persons he must examine the questions about human beings and propose solutions. Such a program is well within the directive proposed by Vatican I on the profit which our intelligence draws from contemplating the relation between the great mysteries and our final goal.[9] But this is not merely a question of enriching a treatise by the addition of a new paragraph. It is, rather, a question of establishing a new dimension of reality—a fifth dimension probably—which, in keeping with the nature of Revelation, embraces God and man and treats at length of the religious link between them.

I cannot exaggerate the importance of the new consciousness which theologians have acquired of their responsibility to the Church and to the internal credibility of the faith which the Church must offer mankind. There is less question today of technical details derived from standard theological systems; interest in a school's position—so often linked with Religious Orders—continues only in those rare, isolated spots not yet shaken by the great question, "What is our purpose in the world?" The passion for a conclusion-centered theology is also well in abeyance.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the most active currents of thought are those allied to the phenomenological method and to the philosophy of existence. Consequently, they tend to center reflection on man. Three great features or three great themes demand attention as a result of this reflection on the existential experience of man. First, the specificity of the personhood and all that pertains to it. People cannot be considered merely as simple things or objects. Beginning in this way, not only the consideration of certain realities (for example, the body, sacraments, the realities of conjugal love, the eschatological realities) appears in a new light,

9. Sess. Ill, cap. 4: *Denz*. 1796 (3016).