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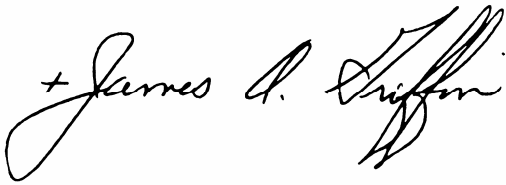


This first issue of ***Dominican Studies*** looks both to the past and to the future.

Dominican Studies looks to the past. By its very existence, it recalls eight hundred years of Dominican history and Dominican contributions to our Church and to our world. It is most appropriate that, as we celebrate this great milestone in Dominican and Church history, this scholarly journal makes its appearance, to call our attention to that rich past.

Dominican Studies looks to the future. It promises yet another avenue for that pursuit of truth and that sharing of truth with others which lies at the heart of the Dominican charism.

I congratulate all who contributed in any way to this first issue of ***Dominican Studies***. I look forward confidently to the contribution that this scholarly journal will make to reflection on the truth and to the sharing of the fruit of that reflection with others.



The Most Rev. James A. Griffin, J.C.L., J.D.
Interim President
Ohio Dominican University

“In promoting this integration of knowledge, a specific part of a Catholic University’s task is to promote dialogue between faith and reason, so that it can be seen more profoundly how faith and reason bear harmonious witness to the unity of all truth.”

~ John Paul II: *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* ~

Dear Readers,

I am proud to present the inaugural issue of ***Dominican Studies***, a scholarly journal published by Ohio Dominican University’s Center for Dominican Studies. The launching of this project coincides with the 800th Anniversary celebration of the founding of the first Dominican monastery in Prouilhe, France, by Saint Dominic. This first monastery, established in 1206, is the cornerstone of the Dominican Order and the Dominican Family. From 1206-1216, Dominicans worldwide will be celebrating this anniversary.

Featured in this edition are three commissioned articles written by Dominican scholars Richard Schenk, OP, Carol Dempsey, OP, Ph.D., and Thomas O’Meara, OP, Ph.D. In his article ***Creative Fidelity: Remembrance and Forgetting, Renewal and Accommodation on the 800th Anniversary of the Foundation of Prouille***, Richard Schenk, provides the reader with an historical, challenging and inspirational view of the rich heritage and call to fidelity bequeathed to the Order by Dominic de Guzman. Carol Dempsey’s article, ***Isaiah: God’s Poet of Light*** reminds us of the richness and relevance of Isaiah’s message for the contemporary preacher who is challenged to both listen to the Word and act upon it with intelligence and passion for the truth. Thomas O’Meara’s article, ***Power and Display in the Church: Yves Congar’s Critique*** takes a critical look, at Yves Congar’s 1963 text *Pour une Eglise servante et pauvre (Power and Poverty in the Church)*. In O’Meara’s words, “To read Congar today is to be struck by his passion for the future.”

We are grateful for the scholarly works included in this initial journal. It is our hope, that in keeping with the Dominican tradition of sharing the fruits of one’s study and contemplation, this issue will be another valuable venue for sharing “the holy preaching.”



Catherine Colby, OP, Ed.D.

Director

The Center for Dominican Studies at Ohio Dominican University

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Creative Fidelity: Remembrance and Forgetting, Renewal and Accommodation on the 800th Anniversary of the Foundation at Prouille

by Richard Schenk, OP

I. The (still) Post-Conciliar Situation of our Remembrance?

In a letter from Prouille dated on the feast of St. Catherine of Siena 2006, Fr. Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa invited the entire Dominican family to mark the year 2007 (with a few days added to each end) as the Jubilee Year of the 800th anniversary of St. Dominic's first foundation of contemplative nuns in 1206/1207. Referencing (and softening) Rev 2: 4, the Master General of the Order of Preachers grouped his thoughts under the title, "Let us walk, faithful to the love we had at first". (1) The implication seems clear. Our recollection of the Prouille foundation is to help us both to renew the love (the "prima caritas" of Rev 2:4) expressed in what became the first "Dominican" foundation and also to move ("to walk") towards a future vitality of the Dominican charism. This initial jubilee of some 13 months is inscribed into a decade of preparation for the commemoration of the official recognition of the Order of Preachers by Pope Honorius III with his bull, "Religiosam vitam eligentibus", issued on December 22, 1216. What we are trying to remember about the foundation of the Order will be defined in large part by the implied goal of this remembrance, what might well be called the task of renewal through "creative fidelity". (2) While awaiting the fruit of the difficult task facing the historians of the Order's beginnings in the early 13th century, the following reflections are meant to ask what we are looking for when we seek out the history of these beginnings.

The dynamic of remembrance for the sake of renewal is itself reminiscent of the twin concepts familiar from the Second Vatican Council, *ressourcement* - *aggiornamento*. This programmatic feature of the entire Council applied in a special way to the task of renewing religious life in a way fitting to our times. The *renovatio accommodata* of the various forms of consecrated life in light of the exigencies of our times was to be prepared by what came to be called "productive non-contemporaneity", (3) a fruitful awareness of being related at once to quite different mental and historical times, here with the hope that the institutes of consecrated life might "...grow and flourish according to the spirit of the founders" (LG 43). *Perfectae caritatis* (PC), the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, articulated this dual program of renewal through memory of the past and adaptation to the present:

2. The adaptation-and-renewal (*accommodata renovatio*) of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. This renewal, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church, must be advanced according to the following principles:

a) Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, let this be held by all institutes as the highest rule.

b) It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions - all of which make up the patrimony of each institute - be faithfully held in honor.

Unlike the Council itself or the earliest post-Conciliar years, the context for today's search for a longer memory is provided by the shorter memory of the ongoing attempts since the Council to come to accommodated renewal. Reaching back faithfully over 800 years looks through the eyes of our more immediate memories of the last forty-some

years; we think back from the more to the less proximate memories. Admittedly, these recent years have not always been kind to religious life, which has seen not only the sought-after renewal but also much unintended loss: in the Dominican family, not only, but most acutely, among the women's congregations and in what had once been some of the most illustrious provinces of friars. The numbers here speak of more than accidental matters of quantity; they point to the substantial losses already sustained and others that now seem imminent. While ours is not the first period in history to witness a (temporary?) decline of Dominican life, (4) they make us ask if jubilant hope for the renewal of religious life must be naïve, or callous; or whether it is not rather the case, that the more difficult of these recent memories are the ones most able to uncover for us the context in which both the recollection and the accommodation of Dominic's option for Prouille make most sense. Surely, the recent but difficult memories would be "badly used", if they were to be "badly forgotten": for example, if they were merely to be repressed, piously declared to be God's absolute and unconditioned will, or shrugged off with an easy or sovereign optimism. Arguably, it is precisely these difficult memories that, if taken seriously, can provide the key to understanding the more distant memories as well, unlocking the situation and significance of the foundation at Prouille; and recalling "the ultimate norm of the religious life, ... the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels" (PC 2).

Already in 1971, less than six years after the end of the Council, Pope Paul VI, worried by unintended developments detrimental to renewal, composed the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica testificatio*, to recall that there was still a deeper profile and far greater potential in the Council's call for an *accommodata renovatio* than what had as yet been received:

Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within His Church. Thus the Council rightly insists on the obligation of religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity. In this it finds one of the principles for the present renewal and one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake. In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood, or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church.(5)

One question of the 800th anniversary must be: What can these twin memories - 800 years, 40 years - teach us about the twin sources of renewal, recalling our origins as we face the challenging needs of our times?

II. The Council and Consecrated Life

The fortieth anniversary of the close of the II Vatican Council (1965 - 2005) occasioned a number of collaborative publications that document in detail the genesis of the Council and its documents. It may well be the last major anniversary to be in a position to draw upon a large body of eye-witnesses for their detailed recollections; such documentation is therefore certain to remain of lasting value. (6) The fiftieth anniversary is unlikely to add substantially to the wealth of such detail, but it might well be freer in its interpretation and better able to avoid being forced into the all too hardened ruts of a post-Conciliar reading. Mirroring and replicating all too directly the real political struggles at the Council, the standard interpretations still prevalent today typically continue to pit majority against minority positions, unable to step back and to read them together with the two eyes that are needed in order to see sharply, with stereoscopic resolution and depth, the full vision and potential wisdom of the Conciliar texts. Standard interpretations have long been more attentive to past antitheses than to their still future synthesis. Such a truncated hermeneutic, while understandable as a kind of realistic reporting of once pressing political choices, can easily cover the potential legacy of the Council with the undeserved aura of the obsolete, as if the Conciliar texts were more a museum full of 1960's worries and optimisms rather than a map to navigate 21st century challenges.(7)

The ability not just to identify but to synthesize both strands in the Conciliar texts in light of today's world is especially important when reading what are arguably the weaker, seemingly less inspired texts. Even among those most aware of the great gift which the Council was and remains, *Perfectae caritatis* is usually numbered among the less accomplished documents, whose potential can be realized only by the most capable vision. The reasons for this are well documented in the recent Conciliar histories. One-dimensional interpretations cannot lend this text more than a semblance of lasting importance. The need to muster meaning from both lines of argument is all the more evident, as neither the majority nor the minority positions had found in the text their best expression. The reservations expressed in the critical responses to the drafts (8) and the mixed votes leading up to the establishment of the final text (9) document the lack of enthusiasm that was felt on all sides, even if these expressions of dissatisfaction, were missing in the final vote itself. The Council was aware of the need to move on to what it perceived as the more important matters. (10) While not alone in this, the topic of consecrated life had, as a target of the never implemented "Doepfner plan" of late 1963, nearly been reduced to a *decretum brevissimum* or merely a message of the Council in order to allow the Council to conclude its more essential work. A text with 18 propositions grouped in three paragraphs was offered in early 1964, only to be reduced further to 10 propositions. Only gradually did the move to a longer document find acceptance. The decision to make due with the theological reflections of Chapter VI of *Lumen gentium* (43-47) and to restrict the text on consecrated life largely to practical considerations had been made even prior to the growing sense of pressure in the final months of the Council. The decision to separate *disciplina* and *doctrina* into two documents was criticized but not reversed; it certainly made it harder to unite the reflections on accommodation and renewal. All of this was, however, symptomatic of where religious life was thought to rank on the scale of urgent topics; given their growth after World War II, the continued existence of religious orders did not yet seem to all especially in peril: a time and context different than our own. (11) For some participants at the Council it seemed more a bow to the vanity of religious that they, too, should find some mention in the Council's documents; for such participants, it seemed to be of little matter to the wider Church itself. (12) As the final text was woven, the majority managed to articulate above all several abidingly important insights into what religious life should *not* be: not independent of the apostolic service of the Church or its episcopal structures and authority or (in the case of the male teaching orders) to its parochial needs. Unfortunately, those bishops who looked upon male religious orders primarily as a resource to compensate for the patent disinterest in the diocesan priesthood were left unprepared to ascribe any value to the institutes of women religious. (13) Religious orders were admonished further not to be elitist or prone to consider the call to holiness proper to themselves, nor to consider personal holiness the primary goal of consecrated life at all. The established religious orders should not consider *vita consecrata* their own domain, but as something shared with secular institutes and new religious movements. Religious life was not to block emotional development or the civic virtues and economic skills of the good citizen.

While these negations, understood in their best sense, remain important for any accommodation of consecrated life to our times, the text of *Perfectae caritatis* managed less successfully to say positively why it was important to the Church that religious orders continue at all. It is not a grammatical issue; the negatives could easily be re-phrased as affirmatives. But they all address more the accommodation than the renewal of religious life, of which they are at best necessary but insufficient conditions; the heart, source, and goal of renewal remain unnamed by them. The quote from *Lumen gentium* which begins *Perfectae caritatis* and gives it its title reflected the remnants of a failed attempt to make due with a direct importation of Thomistic terminology, by which the thought of many of the religious most involved in drafting the document was structured. "The pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels", that sense of consecrated life as an imperfectly realized correspondence to the *status perfectionis*, was suited to seeing the particular strengths but not the newer ecclesiastical contexts of religious life; in the course of the discussions, this way of viewing consecrated life was reduced to a minority position. (14)

Arguably, no comprehensive vision was found to replace it that could account for the special calling and challenge of religious life. The path to some select points of accommodation was more clearly named than the features that could

combine accommodation with renewal. The “thesis” of the special place and value of religious life, something worked out in the preparatory drafts largely in Thomistic terms that had once been developed to articulate a mendicant self-understanding, (15) was checked by the “antithesis” of the necessary subordination to a larger Church and society. But the “synthesis” remained all too implicit that would have shown that the *munera Christi*, entrusted especially to the local churches, were ministries which the Episcopal and parochial resources need specialized help to fulfill. The call to the ministries of proclamation, prayer and charitable service ask of local churches more than they are able to supply to the best of their abilities without specialized co-workers. There is a clear statement in several of the Conciliar documents of the need of religious men and women for bishops, but not an equally clear vision of the need of bishops and parochial pastors for religious, gifted with their own proper modes of Christian life, ministry and subsidiary integrity. (16) In part because of the disjunction of doctrine and discipline, there is in the discussion of the vows in PC 12-14 little overt linkage of the vows to the mission of the Church that could have provided a basis for the synthesis of the common and the special, of accommodation and renewal, or of service and spirituality. The crisis of the religious orders that would follow in the forty-some years after the Council did not stem chiefly from the Council, but the Council’s explicit reflections on religious life did too little to strengthen them. The following crisis was and remains *also* a crisis of theological, spiritual and apostolic imagination. Not in being wrong, but in not being more disclosive, the decree seemed already to the Conciliar participants to share less in the *grandeur* than in the *misère* of the Council. The Council’s greatest contributions to the accommodation and renewal of consecrated life were indirect; they would come chiefly from documents other than *Perfectae caritatis*.

To illustrate this, just one example: One of the most imaginative attempts to map out the synthesis of a *renovatio accommodata* of religious life that *Perfectae caritatis* seemed to be implying was J.B. Metz’ 1976 address in Wuerzburg to the conference of major superiors of religious orders in Germany. The talk was meant as a corollary to the national synod’s attempts between 1971 and 1975 to appropriate and apply the II Vatican Council for the German church as a whole, a task in which Metz had been actively involved. Without the dynamic of the Council, Metz’ reflections on religious life are inconceivable. In this address, as in a second one before the same organization in 1990, Metz inscribed the ideal (if not the realized) vocation of religious orders into the larger ecclesiastical and political vocation of that “hour of discipleship” which characterized the situation of the post-Conciliar Church. This contextualization of consecrated life within the larger Church and society did not prevent Metz from setting high standards for the “functions” of the orders within the Church and for the benefits for the wider church and society that should be expected of the orders from their proper pursuit of a common discipleship and from their special exercise of the wider Church’s calling. He locates the crisis of religious orders in a crisis of a genuine and challenging sense of their proper function. What is telling, however, is that, despite the immediately Conciliar context especially of the earlier talk, neither address on religious orders found it necessary to cite *Perfectae caritatis* even a single time. It drew upon a wider sense of the council’s intentions.

Metz warned that the “flattening out” of the orders to force them into the mold of the Church in general would not serve the interests of the Church in her entirety. (17) To the degree that just such an “Einebnung” has occurred, the developments of the last four decades show that the crisis of the religious orders becomes in turn a crisis of the Church as a whole. The temptation to stress only the parochially articulated local churches is detrimental to those local churches as well, magnifying their shortcomings in fulfilling the ecclesial *munera* of proclamation, prayer and charities. The task of remembering the 800th anniversary of the Prouille foundation is therefore also a quest for the *renovatio accommodata* of the Conciliar documents themselves, a quest for a late post-Conciliar vision in which the importance of religious life *and* its genuine ecclesiological and societal *locus* can be brought into a synthesis.

III. Prouille at 800: J.H. Newman’s Seven Notes

Seven Questions about the *renovatio accommodata* of Dominican Life

One of the acknowledged master theoreticians of the narratives of memory, Paul Ricoeur († 2005) wrote much especially in his later works on the necessity and the dangers of recollective narrative, (18) the use and misuse of memory. (19) Especially when striving for hope and meaning, we are not innocent story-tellers; thus, we have a need for (inevitably fallible and yet rational) strategies of self-examination as part of the otherwise more easily misguided *ars memoriae*. Ricoeur showed, for example, how I. Kant's categorical imperative is meant to serve this function, asking if the maxims by which we choose for ourselves are also the maxims we would want to guide others in their choices. (20) And since a certain kind of forgetting is necessary for there to be genuine recollection, (21) forgetting, too, needs direction and self-examination. Corresponding to the abuses of memory that Ricoeur explored in a merely repetitive *ars memoriae* and especially in blocked, manipulated and abusively controlled memory, he also identified their parallel dysfunctions of forgetting, before he then said positively what would be required of a successful *ars oblivionis*, "projected as a double of *ars memoriae*, in the sense of a figure of happy or flourishing memory." (22) The task of creative fidelity demands that we ask what aspects of the foundation in Prouille we need to forget in order to renew Dominic's ideal for our day. That same ideal of creative fidelity demands that we also ask what failed accommodations and which non-renovating habits of religious life we need to forget in order to accommodate more fruitfully and creatively the needs of our own age.

The seven notes of genuine development that J.H. Newman worked out in his well known *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (23) provide debatable and yet rational tools for self-examination. As measures of genuine development, these notes are characteristic of Newman's preference for rational strategies that claim less force than syllogistic necessity and yet establish a greater cogency than do merely positive or de facto assertions. Like Newman's development of the "illative sense" in *A Grammar of Assent*, the seven notes of genuine development provide for a fallible and yet rational strategy of plausibility, exemplifying what can well be described as a coherence model of truth. The plausibility established by the notes is narrow enough to frame our question and yet broad enough to leave open its discussion. Designed to assist in the assessment and self-examination of developments, in the discretion of genuine from corruptive changes, the notes usually mark a mean between too much and too little development. These seven notes could provide seven double questions for our anniversary commemorations. They would allow us to ask if we are remembering and forgetting well as we recall the foundation at Prouille. The following remarks will articulate only the first of these questions in any detail, in order then merely to suggest what the others would imply.

1. Preservation of Type

The first note of a genuine development is foundational for the following six, but it is arguably also the most subtle and difficult to negotiate: the preservation of type. Newman devotes the longest chapter of his essay to characterize the type of the Church as it gradually unfolded in the first six centuries of its history. (24) Despite the often underground nature of this persecuted community, the characteristics did not remain hidden from its critics, who correctly perceived the unity of the Church and its chief activities of worship, teaching, and charity. Newman uses their perceptions to describe the "type" of Christianity.

The unity of "type" is opposed by Newman to variable, concrete forms of appearance. As in all his examples of change, the first analogy is to organic growth, particularly in animals, whose transformation from one concrete form of appearance to another (say, from the new-born to the adult) is the expression, result and condition of their preserving unity of type. For this reason,

...unity of type, characteristic as it is of faithful developments, must not be pressed to the extent of denying all variation, nay, considerable alteration of proportion and relation, as time goes on, in the parts or aspects of an idea. Great changes in outward appearance and internal harmony occur in the instance of the animal creation itself... More subtle still and mysterious are the variations which are consistent or not inconsistent with identity in political and religious developments. (25)

Citing as an example the exclusion of the Samaritans from the experiences of the exile and the altered forms of early Judaism, Newman underscores that “one cause of corruption in religion is the refusal to follow the course of doctrine as it moves on, and obstinacy in the notions of the past”. (26) As illustrated by the replacement of the Roman republic through the Empire, the preservation of external forms can mask the loss of type; for “real perversions and corruptions are often not so unlike externally to the doctrine from which they come, as are changes which are consistent with it and true developments.” (27) But just as easily, a variation in the external form can be symptomatic for the loss of type as well.

The commemoration of the foundation at Prouille thus poses the questions as to what type of movement Dominic began, what are its most essential features, which concretizations must be recalled, and which concretizations may or must be “forgotten” or set aside in order to maintain or renew that deeper identity in our times. The answers to these questions might well differ according to the various circumstances of time and place; even in any one situation it will likely be the topic of debate. But this is the first and foremost question which the debate should be about. It is a question not limited to establishing historical facts about the initial concretizations of what would become the Dominican Order, but it is a debate made more difficult by the limited sources and only gradual clarification of the historical past. (28)

Several features of the “type” of the movement that was concretized at the foundation of Prouille stand out and could possibly provide the common ground within which further debate about concrete forms could best be conducted. The participants in the various activities begun at the foundation of Prouille were united first of all by a spirituality concerned about the Catholic faith in that time and place. Whether we speak of the bishop or priests of the Holy Preaching, the *conversae* and other women at Prouille whose center and future monastery was a part of that *praedicatio*, or the lay persons such as Ermengarde Godoline and her husband, who much like oblates, devoted their goods and themselves to St. Mary’s of Prouille: their pursuit of faith was qualified by the crisis of the times. This localization or *accommodatio* was anything but “accommodationalist”. Even prior to the outbreak of the war, it involved for all a sense of the importance of the Catholic faith as distinct from other spiritual and societal options. As a response to the societal crisis of its time, the foundation sought to involve in its own response several segments of the wider community. For this it both embraced traditional structures and improvised many of its own. But it seems to belong to the very type of this foundation that as a movement it should involve men and women, clergy and laity, united less institutionally and juridical than by a convivial sense of urgency about embracing, living and witnessing the Catholic faith. This shared sense of urgency marked the entire movement and its chief activities with a proclamational character, a comprehensively lived and dangerous witness.

What needs to be “forgotten” or set aside is the sense that evangelization involves only the proclamation aimed at conversion to the Catholic faith, rather than also pursuing alongside such proclamation a wider sense of dialogue and acknowledgement that qualifies but does not eliminate the urgency to share the faith. With that is also set aside the attempt to propagate the faith at all costs, something that - whatever might have been the attitude of Dominic and his companions at Prouille towards the religious war - would certainly taint the later Dominican presence in the Midi. The mode of “forgetting” this misplaced sense of urgency as a future possibility requires what another jubilee called the “purification of memory”, the exercise of regret and the request for forgiveness that alone keeps remembrance from degenerating into blocked, manipulated or abusively controlled memory. (29)

A second feature of the “type” of the Prouille foundation is that it was a community of prayer. We hear of Dominic reconciling Arnaude de Frémiac, who had been given the habit of the sect at an early age, which had taken from her the option of marriage and bound her to an ascetic life. Once reconciled to the Church after a year as a penitent, she could and did exercise the option to marry. The *conversae* who chose to join the community at Prouille had in principle that same option but chose rather to continue their religious lives. The continuous

recitation of the Lord's Prayer that had been their goal as Cathar Perfect was now replaced with a broader liturgy, including Eucharist and psalms, but their renewed dedication to live in a community of ongoing prayer was intentional. Dominic's release from the diocese of Osma and his return to Prouille after the start of the war, his continuing to keep his priestly co-workers at Prouille for several years rather than move them into the houses at Fanjeaux formerly occupied by some of the women of the Prouille foundation, his attempts to establish a similar *domus conversarum* in Toulouse, the eventual adaptation of the Augustinian rule: all of this together points to a life of prayer as a constituent of the "type" of the Prouille foundation. It included all the participants: no doubt in various ways but with a common quality. Given the intense sense of the crisis in which life at and near Prouille was being lived, a "timeless" or merely private pursuit of spiritual goods seems further from the type of this foundation than from other variations of Christian spirituality. In the accounts of St. Dominic at prayer, who is nearly always shown as seeking God out of compassion at the inability of so many to share this faith, the motivation of mercy is evident that seems to be constitutive for this type of movement. The concrete forms of prayer will be a matter for further deliberation, but the unity of type will demand that apostolate and spirituality be intertwined.

Remembrance of this aspect of the "type" of that foundation that Dominic helped found suggest that we "forget" or set aside those failed attempts at accommodation that would make the Dominican community into just another residence for overworked boarders. In his apostolic letter, *Evangelica testificatio* of 1971, Paul VI recalled an often overlooked "minority" text of *Perfectae caritatis* (Nr. 5), in order to urge a more renewing form of accommodation that would affirm both contemplation and the apostolate.

"10. When your vocation destines you for other tasks in the service of men—pastoral life, missions, teaching, works of charity and so on—is it not above all the intensity of your union with the Lord that will make them fruitful, in proportion to that union "in secret"? In order to be faithful to the teaching of the Council, must not *"the members of each community who are seeking God before all else combine contemplation with apostolic love? By the former they cling to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God."*(30)

That sense of the crisis and importance of the Catholic faith which characterized the "type" of proclamation and prayer in Prouille put its stamp on a third feature of the foundation as well: in the cooperation of the participants among themselves and with the episcopate. Part of the grace of the moment was the realization by bishops such as Diego (outside his diocese), Fulk, and Bérenger that there was need for the ecclesial exercise of the *munera Christi* that could not be fulfilled by the diocesan structures. Another part of the grace of the moment was the realization by Diego and Dominic of their need to seek, where possible, authorization and forms from the larger ecclesiastical structures, including the papal *praedicatio* entrusted at first to the Cistercians, the formation of a religious order with the support if not at the instigation of Innocent III to care for the *praedicatio*, and the transformation of the *domus conversarum* into a formal monastery. The use of the foundation at Prouille as a center and station of the *praedicatio* or the presence of a male community there under priors such as William Claret did not prevent the women from having their own prioress. The governmental "type" included cooperation and subsidiary that allowed it to survive the loss of its episcopal founder, the absence of his socius, and the collapse of the Cistercian-led *praedicatio*. The questions as to the precise forms that such collegial and subsidiary government should take today are not thereby solved, but they can be best sought for by recollection of the type of shepherding based on the need for a wider exercise of the *munera Christi* in the Church and society of our day. This memory will seek to "forget" and set aside the temptation to pattern the ecclesiastical offices after the managerial models of secular corporate business.

2. Continuity of principles.

These other six notes follow from the initial one. They and the questions they raise about our commemoration can be summarized more briefly. The second note that Newman proposes to discern genuine development from corruption is the continuity of principles. As “type” was contrasted to visible shapes and forms, so “principles” are opposed here to concrete doctrines: Doctrines will change in order to ensure the principles they seek to express. Newman mentions as examples of principles dogma (as opposed to religion as a collection of private spiritualities and views), faith (as opposed both to self-evidence and mere conjecture), theology or the intelligibility of faith (as opposed to a sense of faith as a merely symbolic or arbitrary choice), sacramental mediation, grace (as opposed to self-sufficient action), ascetic practice (as opposed to a fatalistic resignation in regards to spiritual growth), a sense of sin and personal responsibility, and the manifold senses of Scripture. Several of these principles were issues and intentional principles of the foundation at Prouille.

The remembrance of the foundation at Prouille shows clearly the principle that it is important what people believe. Even if several concrete doctrines about why that is important might well need to be set aside today, sharing this principle is vital for a *renovatio accommodata* of the religious family first formed at Prouille.

3. Power of Assimilation

The ability to assimilate without being assimilated by the dominant culture is another mark of genuine development and a feature obvious in the Prouille foundation. The forms of apostolic and mendicant preaching, the involvement of women in the exercise of religion, and the establishment of centers serving as a residence, a center, a depot, and a station for preaching owed much to the heretical movements which were to be resisted. The question as to the proper mix of renovation and accommodation, which did not always receive a successful answer in the last 40 years, will want to take as its standard this skill for non-assimilated assimilation.

4. and 5. Logical Sequence, and Anticipation of the Future

Unidirectional movement in the chronology of genuine development is Newman’s fourth note. The engagement of heresy through preaching at the *praedicatio* of Prouille would not only come to exclude even the complementary use of force but, well prior to that, would soon begin to integrate university studies as part of a larger strategy of what would eventually grow into the ideal of dialogue. The reversal of this development into a less dialogical or less studied form of evangelization would constitute not a development but a corruption of what we are commemorating.

Similarly, the involvement of consecrated women in the *praedicatio* was an example of successful assimilation (note 3) and an anticipation of future development (see the next note). Increasingly throughout the thirteenth century and afterwards, the two first mendicant orders would come to play a key role in the development of the active ministry of religious sisters. Newman himself refers to the development of religious life to illustrate the meaning of logical sequence. While the exercise of ministry is not limited to religious life, women religious offer a proper exercise of the *munera Christi* which is irreplaceable. The drastic decline of communities of women religious must be viewed as one of the least intended aftermaths of the Council, a corruption rather than a development, a painful moment in a still unpredictable transition. The return to a Church completely without communities of religious women would fail the test of logical sequence; it is hard to conceive of the current trend as being the final word - much less the absolute will of God - on this unique expression of Christian existence. Surely, the questions as to the best forms and appropriate popularity of consecrated life and ecclesial ministry for women will continue, there will no doubt be much debate and unforeseeable transformations, but to accept happily a quality of presence less than that of the pre-Conciliar Church would be a regression inconsistent with the commemoration of Prouille.

This anticipation by what would become the monastery of Prouille of the increasing participation of women in carrying on the *munera Christi* can be seen, together with the less obvious involvement of “oblato-like” laity at Prouille, as an

anticipation not just of the present state of the “Dominican family” but, yet to come, of an intensified Catholic lay participation in exercising these central actions of Christian existence.

6. and 7. Conservative Action upon Its Past, and Chronic Vigour

The dialectical character of each note and the constant balancing in Newman’s entire analysis between loyalty to history and the courage for those innovations necessary to retrieve or sustain it is summed up in the sixth note of genuine development. “Conservative action upon its past” avoids slavery both to the fashions of novelty and to the romantic appearance of seeming to repeat or continue on the past. The spiritual and ecclesial innovations of Prouille were developed in the service of maintaining the ancient faith as a real option in the Midi of its time. Accommodation and renovation, properly understood, belong together. The pace of such innovation is described by Newman in his final note, looking for an alternative both to activism and lethargy. Continuous innovative energy, the “chronic vigour” that sets aside both the sudden violence of the revolutionary and the slow violence of suicidal passivity, is again a standard that enables and focuses rather than ends debate. But it also suggests why it would be more of a corruption than a development to neglect this 800th anniversary.

IV. Creative Fidelity

The dialectic of that kind of *renovatio accommodata* called for at this anniversary was identified by Pope John Paul II in *Vita consecrata* as “creative fidelity”. (31) That is admittedly a term with a certain elasticity of possible meaning. (32) One of its best understandings, however, is to be found at the center of the thought of Gabriel Marcel. (33) “Ontological *exigence*, mystery, second reflection, presence and *disponibilité* all build toward the discussion of creative fidelity, which in turn attempts to illustrate how we can experience these mysterious realities in more or less concrete terms”. (34) Marcel is concerned with the tensions faced in diverse situations (paradigmatically, in the context of marriage vows) by persons bound to change in the future but also bound by commitments made now or in a past, when the likelihood of significant personality fluctuations in both partners is/was already foreseeable. How is trust possible, even the basic trust needed to live one’s life at all, given this constitutive inconstancy of fallible persons? (35) “The problem posed by fidelity is that of constancy.” (36) The same problem seems to recur in the context of religious life. Marcel’s answer to the problem is to inscribe the fidelity between fallible beings into a still deeper trust in the transcendent, shifting it into the context of a new hope, “albeit a hope in a broken world”, a hope which in turn elicits and carries the willingness to be at the service of and present to other human beings, faithful and - still - loving in the very midst of change. It is creativity that, far from detracting from or being a trade-off with fidelity, first makes fidelity a serious possibility. It allows us to face the fallibility of ourselves, our religious orders, our prelates, and our society squarely, “without falling into Manicheanism”. (37) Applied on the occasion of our commemoration, creative fidelity of this kind finds its parallel in what *Perfectae caritatis* called the ultimate norm of the religious life and the highest rule for negotiating the call of renovation and accommodation: the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels. This is also the foremost memory of what Prouille was mostly about. The following of Christ is that “transcendent” moment which transforms fidelity into what Marcel says “should in fact be called consecration”. (38).

FOOTNOTES - Schenk

- 1 Cf. Rev 2, 4: “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”
- 2 Cf. the post-synodal Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II, *Vita consecrata* (1996) Nr. 37 and 71.
- 3 Cf. J.B. Metz, Produktive Ungleichzeitigkeit, in: J. Habermas (ed.), *Stichworte zur ‚Geistigen Situation der Zeit‘*, Frankfurt/M. 1979, Vol. 2, 529-538, translated by Andrew Buchwalter as Productive Noncontemporaneity, in: J. Habermas (ed.), *Observations on ‘The Spiritual Situation of the Age’* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press 1985) 169-177.
- 4 Cf. Klaus-Bernward Sprenger, Die Dominikaner (OP), in: Friedhelm Jürgensmeier and Regina Elisabeth Schwerdtfeger (ed.), *Orden und Klöster im Zeitalter von Reformation und katholischer Reform, 1500-1700*, Vol. 2 (Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, 66) Münster, Aschendorff 2006, 9-48. In the original land of the Reformation it was not just a matter of the loss of numbers or whole provinces, like the Saxonia or the Swiss sections of the Empire, but a loss of the quality of “presence”, e.g. in the universities as students and teachers or in the realm of church architecture.
- 5 Cf. the Apostolic Exhortation of 1971 by Pope Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio. On the Renewal of the Religious Life according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council*, especially Nr. 11, “The charisms of founders”.
- 6 Cf. the five volume series by Giuseppe Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II* (English version edited by Joseph A. Komonchak) Maryknoll, Orbis, 1996 sqq; and Bernd Jochen Hilberath and Peter Hünemann (ed.), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Freiburg, Herder 2004/5). 1 On the question of the developing hermeneutics of the Pastoral Constitution cf. R. Schenk, *Officium signa temporum perscrutandi*. New Encounters of Gospel and Culture in the Context of the New Evangelisation, in: *Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times and Interpreting them in Light of the Gospel* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium), Leuven, University Press & Peeters 2007.
- 7 In February of 1965 the commission had to sort through 14 000 suggested changes; cf. Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar*, op. cit., 508; Mauro Velati, in G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II*, op. cit., vol. V, cap. III 1.
8. In November of 1964, only 1155 of 2042 Council fathers had endorsed the draft with a yes vote; cf. Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar*, ibid.
- 9 Cf. Joachim Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret ueber die zeitgemaesse Erneuerung des Ordenslebens Perfectae caritatis*, in: Hilberath/Hünemann, op. cit., vol. III
- 10 (2005) 491-555, drawing on the far greater detail provided by his *Habilitationsschrift*, J. Schmiedl, *Das Konzil und die Orden. Krise und Erneuerung des gottgeweihten Lebens* (Vallendar-Schönstatt, Patris 1999). A priest of the Schönstatt movement, the author is concerned above all with the Council’s role in extending the ideals of the older religious orders to new religious movements and secular institutes. Despite its great merits, this longer work takes a relatively sanguine stance toward post-Conciliar realities (cf. especially 479-552), an easiness shared by the review of Reimund Haas, *Das II. Vatikanum als Wendepunkt der Ordensgeschichte*, in:

- 11 On L. Suenens' attempts to call attention to what his book of 1961 called *The Crisis and the Renewal of the Orders of Women Religious* cf. Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar*, op. cit. 503.
- 12 Cf. Norbert Tanner's description of the decree as a mere "matter of honor" for the participants from religious orders, in G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II*, op. cit., vol. IV, cap. V 4.
- 13 On the discussion of religious within the Council's deliberations about the decree on bishops cf. Schmiedl, *Das Konzil und die Orden*, op. cit., 383-401. The concerns of a Bishop Wittler (Osnabrueck) for greater episcopal authority in the life and ministry of institutes of women religious were not as widely thematized as the parallel discussions around the institutes of male religious. 1 Representative for the programmatic critique of mendicant paradigms and Thomistic interpretations, such as those that were being offered by P. Philippe, vice-secretary of the commission on religious, is the influential *Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche* commentary by the active participant, Friedrich Wulf, Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, in: H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. II (New York, Herder and Herder 1968) 301-370.
- 14 Cf. also the critique of J. Doepfner, summarized by cf. Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar*, op. cit., 503.
- 15 Cf. Schmiedl, *Das Konzil und die Orden*, op. cit., for a detailed description of the reforms of Pius XII (93-150), the preparations for the Council's reflections (151-328) and the somewhat arrested development of the treatment of consecrated life at the Council itself (329-478).
- 16 Cf. Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar*, op. cit., 501, referring to the answers to questionnaires sent out prior to the Council: „The chief concern of the bishops was an appropriate organization of the relation of the orders to the dioceses, this in the sense of an inclusion of the orders into the pastoral structures controlled by the bishops”; cf. CD 33-35, which repeatedly recalls the subsidiary autonomy of the religious institutes, but does not express that their greatest potential contribution to the apostolate is precisely the fruit of their proper life and rule. Schmiedl, *Das Konzil und die Orden*, op. cit., 401, documents how the missionary bishops, who looked perhaps most to the participation of religious in the ministry of their dioceses and regions, were, tellingly, among the least interested in a restriction of exemption.
- 17 Doch die grosskirchliche Einebnung der Orden kann nicht im gesamtkirchlichen Interesse sein”: J.B Metz, *Zeit der Orden? Zur Mystik und Politik der Orden* (Freiburg i. Br. et al., Herder 1977), 18. translated by Thomas Linton as *Followers of Christ: The Religious Life and the Church* (London, Burns and Oates resp. New York, Paulist 1978). Along with the numerous, if scattered, yet rhetorically well formulated insights, the reader is left with the overall question of whether that „unfashionable and unconventional hope”, of which the religious orders are to be the leaven, is well situated in the vision of highly accommodated hope articulated at the German Synod that provided the context of these initial reflections in 1976. The liberation from this earlier context makes for the more consistent reading of 1990 in J.B. Metz and Tiemo Peters, *Gottespassion. Zur Ordensexistenz heute* (Freiburg i. Br. et al., Herder 1991), translated by J. Matthew Ashley as: *A Passion for God: Religious Orders Today*, in: J.B. Metz, *A Passion for God* (New York et al., Paulist 1998) 150-204. The later work no longer treats of the institutional “*ars moriendi*” that had been discussed in the first address (*Zeit*, op. cit. 18-22).

- 18 Cf. Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press 1990), particularly within the Eighth Study, 207 sqq.1.
- 19 Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press 2004), especially Part 1.
- 20 *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., 208 sq.
- 21 Ricœur cited here (42 and 593 sq.) M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927, § 68 a), that, given the many ways in which our existence is enmeshed in its histories, “remembering is possible only on the basis of forgetting...”. Ricœur, who expressed his surprise that this positive potentiality of forgetting is not more programmatic in Heidegger’s *magnum opus*, might well have also cited H.G. Gadamer: “In ways that are largely overlooked, forgetting belongs to the relation between retaining and remembering. Forgetting means not merely loss and privation, but, as F. Nietzsche stressed, it is a necessary condition for the life of our mind. It is only by forgetting that our mind receives the possibility of a thorough-going renewal, the ability to see things anew with a fresh look, so that what was old and familiar now blends with what is newly seen into a multidimensional unity” (*Wahrheit und Methode*, Tuebingen, Mohr 1960, here according to 4th edition, 1975, pg. 13, with reference to the same source that would be recalled by Ricœur as well: F. Nietzsche’s 1874 *Unzeitgemasse Betrachtungen* and their second section, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”). “
- 22 *Memory, History, Forgetting*, op, cit., 412, with reference to Harald Weinrich. Ricœur also devotes a good deal of space to unhappy notions of art and the artificial in reference to memory and forgetting.
- 23 Cited in the following the edition by Ian Ker, Notre Dame University Press 1989.
- 24 Part II, Chapter vi (ed. Ker 207-323); cf. II v 1 (171-178).
- 25 1 II v 4 (ed. Ker 173).
- 26 2 II v 8 (ed. Ker 177).
- 27 II v 8 (ed. Ker 176).
- 28 Cf. above all the painstaking research by Simon Tugwell, Notes on the Life of St. Dominic, in *AFP* 65 (1995) 5-169; 66 (1996) 5-200; 67 (1997) 27-59; 68 (1998), 5-116; and 73 (2003) 5-141; as well as id., For Whom was Prouille Founded? In: *AFP* (LXXIV 2004) 5-125.
- 29 Cf. *Novo millennio inuente*, Nr. 6. Important preparations have been made under the leadership of the Dominican Historical Institute; cf. Wolfgang Hoyer (ed.), *Prædicatores, Inquisitores, I: The Dominicans and the Mediæval Inquisition. Acts of the 1st International Seminar on the Dominicans and the Inquisition, Roma, 23-25 February 2002* (Dissertationes Historicae XXIX) Rome, Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2004; Arturo Bernal Palacios (ed.), *Praedicatores, inquisitores II: la orden dominicana y la inquisición en el mundo ibérico e hispanoamericano: actas del 2º seminario internacional sobre los Dominicos y la inquisición, 3 - 6 de Marzo de 2004, Sevilla, España* (Dissertationes Historicae XXXII) Rome, Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2006; and Carlo Longo (ed.), *Prædicatores, Inquisitores, III: I domenicani e l’inquisizione romana, Atti del III seminario*

internazionale sui domenicani e l'inquisizione, 15-18 febbraio 2006 (Dissertationes Historicae XXXIII) Rome, Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2007 (forthcoming).

- 30 The commentaries stress the important position of the Conciliar text within the whole of PC, qualifying all forms of consecrated life just prior to their particular articulation. Contrast Paul VI's positive retrieval of PC 5 with the critique by F. Wolf of what he sees as its negative view of the world, its misleading theocentric, its misplaced stress on individual holiness, its exegetically and theologically untenable primacy of „Mary” before „Martha” and its individualistic salvific sense of the ancient monastic ideal of contemplation, op. cit., 276 sqq.; and likewise with the view of Schmiedl, *Theologischer Kommentar*, op. cit., 520, who appropriates Wulf's complaint about the allegedly individualistic salvific bias, before adding: „Even though in the final sentence mention is made of apostolic love and the engagement for the work of salvation as the goal of the relation to God, such statements remain a mere appendage, since the entire intention of the article is directed toward the personal holiness of the consecrated. It is at places in the texts like this that the incongruity of these Conciliar statements becomes clearly visible, which are incapable of bringing together in harmony the traditional theological strongpoints with the Church's new mission to the world.”
- 31 Cf. above, note 2.
- 32 For some of the varied uses of the term cf. R. Scott Appleby et al. (ed.), *Creative Fidelity. American Catholic Intellectual Traditions* (Maryknoll, Orbis 2004); and Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity. Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York et al. Paulist 1996). Neither work refers to Marcel.
- 33 I am grateful to my confrater, Michael Sweeney OP, for the reference to Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1964, especially 147-174), Robert Rosthal's translation of Marcel's *Du refus à l'invocation* (Paris, Gallimard, 1940), especially chapter VIII (“La fidélité créatrice”), from which the translator took his title for the whole work. The year before Rosthal's translation, a German version was published by Schoenigh under the title, *Schoepferische Treue*.
- 34 Brian Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity. Levinas, Marcel and the Contemporary Debate* (New York, Fordham 2006), 81.
- 35 Cf. Vincent Berning: *Das Wagnis der Treue. Gabriel Marcells Weg zu einer konkreten Philosophie des Schöpferischen* (Freiburg i. Br., Alber 1973). For an interdisciplinary discussion of the diverse features of this structural tension between promise and variability, constitutive of historical persons as “the animals who may promise” (Nietzsche), cf. R. Schenk (ed.), *Kontinuität der Person. Zum Versprechen und Vertrauen* (Collegium Philosophicum, vol. 2) Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt (Frommann-Holzboog) 1998.
- 36 Treanor, *Aspects*, ibid. For the tension between fidelity and inconstancy cf. Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, op. cit., 153.
- 37 G. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*. Vol. II: *Faith and Reality*, 145, in the context of „testimony”.
- 38 Cf. *Creative Fidelity*, op. cit., 167.

Isaiah: God's Poet of Light and The Dominican Vocation to Be "Light"

by Carol J. Dempsey, OP, PhD

Listen to me, my people,
and give heed to me, my nation;
for a teaching will go out from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.
I will bring near my deliverance swiftly,
my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the peoples;
the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.
Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like gnats;
but my salvation will be forever,
and my deliverance will never be ended. (Isa 51:4-6)

Introduction

What good news a poet called "Isaiah" has proclaimed to a people devastated by civil strife and injustice, loss of land, exile, and the fear that their God has forsaken them. Central to this passage is the theme of divine justice which will be a light to the peoples. This justice—this light—will be salvation and deliverance not only for Israel but also for all nations (cf Isaiah 2). The God of Israel is the God of the nations; the one who will redeem and restore the Israelites is the one who will redeem and restore all people. In the end, when all has passed away—when the heavens vanish like smoke and the earth has worn out like a garment, and all life on the planet has ceased to exist (v 6), one thing, one act will continue on—God's deliverance, God's salvation—a sign of God's enduring and everlasting love.

Thus, Isa 51:4-6 sets the stage for understanding the mission of Isaiah, God's poet of light, and becomes a lens through which Dominicans who are called to be "light" can view their mission of evangelization for this twenty-first century. As God's poet of light, Isaiah becomes a mirror for Dominicans by which they can see and hear themselves as preachers, formed and shaped by that same Spirit of God who has raised up prophets down through the ages, and who calls Dominicans to be prophetic today. God's poet of light offers all of us a word of hope and a vision of new heavens and a new earth that we have yet to understand. This article examines selected Isaian texts that speak of light, and how Isaiah functions as a prophetic poet. The article also considers how certain Isaian texts shaped the Gospel writers' portrait of Jesus. Finally, the article draws out implications for what needs to be preached and lived out today, especially for Dominicans, if we are not only to be "light of the Church" but also "light of the world" (Matt 5:14). Before delving into specific Isaian passages and their connections to life today, we need to appreciate the book of Isaiah in its historical and literary contexts.

The Historical Background to the Book of Isaiah

The book of Isaiah opens with a superscription (Isa 1:1) that attributes the entire book to the vision of an eighth century prophet, Isaiah Ben Amoz. The superscription tells us that Isaiah lived during the reigns of the Judean kings

Uzziah (783-742 BCE), Jotham (742-735 BCE), and Ahaz (735-715 BCE). The major historical events that would have occurred during his lifetime would have been four: (1) the Syro-Ephraimite War (735-734 BCE) at which time Israel and Aram had formed an anti-Assyrian coalition that attacked the southern province Judah. The hope was that Judah would have joined their alliance, but Judah did not; (2) the first Assyrian invasions of Israel and Aram (734-732 BCE) by Tiglath-Pileser III, the Assyrian monarch. The Assyrian invasion had three effects: the destruction of Damascus, Assyria's annexation of Israel's territory in the Transjordan, Galilee, and the coastal plain, and the Southern Kingdom Judah's subjugation to Assyria; (3) the failed revolt against Assyria by Israel (724-722/721 BCE). Assyria overpowered Israel, destroyed Samaria—the capital city of the Northern Kingdom which, in turn, caused the kingdom to collapse and the Israelite survivors of the invasion to be deported to Assyria where they lived under the Assyrian monarchies of Shalmaneser V and Sargon II; and (4) the Assyrian invasion of Judah in 701 BCE by Sennacherib who succeeded Sargon II and reigned from 705-681 BCE. The campaign against Judah ended when Judah's king Hezekiah bought off the invaders (cf 2 Kgs 18:13–19:37). All of these events form the backdrop to Isaiah 1-39. The book of Isaiah also reflects events that occurred beyond the lifespan of the poet Isaiah: the assassination of Sennacherib in 681 BCE, the downfall and collapse of the Assyrian empire in the last half of the seventh century BCE, the rise of the Babylonian empire, the Babylonians' invasion into Judah which destroyed the temple and Jerusalem, both of which led to the collapse of the Southern Kingdom and the exile of many Judahites to Babylon and Egypt in the sixth century BCE, the fall of Babylon to King Cyrus of Persia in 538 BCE, and the restoration of Jerusalem from the late sixth-fifth centuries BCE onward. King Cyrus freed the Judahites from exile and was instrumental in their resettlement in their own homeland. All of these events are reflected in Isaiah 40-66. Thus, we can see that the poetry of the book of Isaiah as a whole reflects a world fraught with violence, pain, and suffering but not without hope, promise, and redemption. The world in which we find ourselves today is similar after all these hundreds of years. (1)

The Literary Fabric of the Book of Isaiah

Typically, the book of Isaiah has been divided into three parts: Isaiah 1-39 (First Isaiah); Isaiah 40-55 (Second Isaiah); and Isaiah 56-66 (Third Isaiah). While much of Isaiah 1-39 is attributed to the poet Isaiah, the authorship of Isaiah 40-55 and 56-66 remains unknown, with a definite amount of certainty that whoever wrote Isaiah 40-55 was not the same person or persons who penned Isaiah 56-66. Of late, a more nuanced study of Isaiah allows for a two-part division of the book: Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66, with evidence that Isaiah 56-66 drew heavily upon Isaiah 40-55.

Many themes emerge from the book of Isaiah which include a vision of God as “the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 6), who is the Lord of history, the God of all nations (Isaiah 2), and the creator and redeemer of all. This God is a God of compassionate love for all time and all people. Other themes present us with a portrait of the “new exodus” and the ideal servant (see, especially Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13–53:12). What makes Isaiah a poet distinct among other prophets and prophetic books of the Old Testament is his focus on “light.” Isaiah not only depicts the glory of God as “light” but also calls God's people to be “light.”

“Light” has a long tradition in the Old Testament, beginning with its creation on the first day. “Light” is differentiated from the sun which was created on the fourth day. In Wisdom Literature, light is an image of God that leads the people to safety (Ps 43:3). God's torah is light (Ps 119:105). God's presence and intervention were also seen as light. Thus, Isaiah's use of light is not a new theme, but the way he develops the theme is new.

Texts in Isaiah That Refer to Light

A. Isaiah 2:1-22

The first passage that speaks of light in the book of Isaiah is Isa 2:1-22. The entire passage is a vision. In vv 1-4, the poet weaves together a beautiful picture of God and God's reign. In vv 6-22, the poet juxtaposes this picture with a portrait of what is going to happen to those people who refuse to change their perverse ways. Verse 5 forms a hinge

that joins together vv 1-4 with vv 5-22. Verse 5 is the first of four pleas that the poet makes to his people (vv 5, 10, 19, 22). Each of the four pleas begins with an imperative: “come” (v 5); “enter,” “hide” (v 10); “turn away” (v 22). In vv 1-4, the poet crafts a marvelous picture of peace to be accomplished through non-violence. The phrase, “in days to come,” signals an anticipatory tone. The vision has been given to the poet that he delivers, but the realization of the vision is something that will have to evolve over time. The vision speaks of all nations coming to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. Implicit in the vision is the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. Explicit is the fact that all nations will stream to God’s mountain—to the holy city, to the temple which will offer hospitality to all. The poet’s vision describes God judging between nations (v 4a). Will God separate one nation from another? In v 4b the poet tells us how God will judge between nations: God will arbitrate for many peoples. In v 4a, the two lines of poetry that comprise the verse are meant to be read as parallel lines in Hebrew. God will work with the nations at odds with one another to the point that they will eventually beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, never to lift up sword against each other, nor learn war anymore (v 4b and c).

Having proclaimed this vision to his people, the poet then pleads with them:

O house of Jacob
Come let us walk in the light of the Lord! (v 5)

Why? Verses 6-22 provide the reason. Here the poet, in graphic detail, describes the perversity of his people: they are arrogant, proud, haughty, and guilty of idolatry. In essence, they have forsaken God and abandoned God’s ways of justice, righteousness, and loving-kindness. In vv 6-22, the poet announces a day of divine wrath. Here he envisions the demise of the house of Jacob/Israel and eclipses the fall of the Northern Kingdom which will happen through the military invasion of Assyria. The poet foresees the inevitable for his people, and attributes the Assyrian invasion to the ways of God and God’s justice. Such a vision of God is the result of several possibilities: 1 - the vision reflects a perception of God colored by the deuteronomic theology of retribution (see Deuteronomy 28)—a theological construct that may have helped to shape the poet’s own theology of God; 2 - the vision reflects the culture of the day—a warring peoples among themselves and with others. This culture needed a warrior God, the Lord of hosts, to intervene, chastise them, and “teach them a lesson; or 3 - the vision is an imaginative picture that the poet creates poetically to threaten and scare a hard-hearted and proud people into change. This second part of his poem is directed toward the proud, the haughty, and the arrogant. All three possibilities seem to reflect the thought and hand of a poet who shows us prophetically that no lasting peace can be established through violence, either on the part of a strong nation or a wrathful God who reflects more of a people in need of transformation (vv 6-22) than the true nature of God whose consistent efforts are eventually transformative (vv 1-4).

For Isaiah’s audience, the vision he proclaims in vv 1-4 is “light” for his people with respect to God’s love for all peoples, the sense of unity that is possible, and the godly way by which this unity—this peace among all—can be achieved. This vision is “the light of the Lord,” and the poet pleads passionately with his people to walk according to this vision, and not according to their own self-destructive ways. By means of a well crafted vision that the poet creates, and not one that he receives, Isaiah reveals to his people their own corruption. Isaiah, God’s poet of light, has shed light on God and God’s vision, and has given us a vision of the sordidness of the human condition and its related perception of God. The sordidness of the human condition and the resultant perception of God can be transformed as people begin to change their hearts and ways, and let go of theological constructs in order to let go to God.

B. Isaiah 9:1-9

The theme of “light” continues in Isa 9:1-9. Cast in the context of Isaiah 1-39, the passage is messianic. Like Isa 2:1-22, this poem is also a vision meant to offer hope to a people who will be devastated and exiled, if only they can remember and hold on to the vision. The poet speaks of an end to exile, an end to war (vv 2b-5), and paints a portrait

of a “son of God,” a holy one being born who will embody who God is, and who will establish God’s reign. (2) This “son of God” will be a great light that will shine on God’s people (v 2b). This “light,” this “son of God” and his godly governance will create a new world order that will bring about endless peace. Perhaps the most important line in this poem is the last one: “the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (v 7d). The poet makes clear to people then and now that God is at work in the midst of the human condition, and through God’s enduring love, all will be transformed with humanity’s participation in the efforts. Isaiah’s vision remains an enduring sign of hope.

C. Isaiah 42:1-9 and 49:1-6

The poet’s most compelling uses of “light” are found in Isa 42:1-4 [5-9] (3) and Isa 49:1-6, two of the four so-called “servant songs.” In some ways, the servant in Isa 42:1-4 resembles the child—the son—of Isa 9:6-7, but in Isa 42:1-4 the servant is a matured figure. Set in the context of Isaiah 40-55 [40-66], Isa 42:1-9 reflects the time of the Exile and offers a word of hope and consolation to those who have lost their land, their temple, their holy city, and the love and care of their God, the latter of which is the exiled people’s perception of God in light of their lived historical experience. Isaiah 42:1-9 is messianic and looks forward to the time when, under the Persian King Cyrus, the exiled people would be freed from Babylon and Egypt, to return to their homeland and resettle on it (cf Isa 45:1-7).

The opening lines of Isa 42:1-4 [5-9] describe God’s servant. This person is not only sustained and chosen by God but also God’s delight. Imbued with God’s Spirit, the servant has a mission of justice which is to be proclaimed and lived out non-violently among bruised reeds and smoldering wicks alike—among both victims of injustice and perpetrators of injustice, the latter of whom may have been victims of injustice or oppression themselves. The servant will be persistent and tireless in working toward justice. Here, justice would be understood as the full flourishing of God’s reign made manifest by peace and the opportunity for all to share in the fullness of life. The mission of the servant will be global (v 4). Called by God and grasped by God’s hand, this servant will be a covenant—a sign of God’s promise—to the people, and a light to the nations that will free them from their prisons and dungeons, whether those prisons are the lands of exile, or exile from one’s own heart (Isa 42:5-8). As a light, the servant will expose the injustices being done by all peoples, inclusive of Israel to its own, and by repeated proclamations, the servant will hope to stir these peoples’ hearts to change. To Jews and non-Jews alike, the servant will proclaim that Israel’s God is the God of all nations whose redeeming and transformative love is for all peoples, and not just for the Israelites. Finally, the servant is gifted with vision divinely bestowed (Isa 42:9).

The second servant song, Isa 49:1-6, develops Isa 42:1-4 [5-9] further. In the first servant song, the poet portrays God speaking through the prophet. In this second song, the servant speaks, here the poet features the servant addressing the coastlands that have been waiting for his teaching (v 1; cf Isa 42:4). Here the servant is named: Israel (v 3). In vv 3-4 the poet describes an exchange that took place between God and the servant, notes the commissioning that is to take place (vv 4-6), and marks the effects that the servant’s mission and ministry will have upon leaders (v 7).

In sum, the poet of the book of Isaiah shows us that to be a servant is not to be subservient. Being a servant means full participation in God’s mission and ministry (cf Isa 6: 1-8), and this participation means being a light, a leader (cf Isa 61:1-4).

D. Isaiah 58:1-14

Echoes of the servant’s mission and ministry are heard in Isa 58:1-14. Here the poet uses the theme of “light” in relation to religious practice and praxis. In vv 1-5, the poet portrays God rejecting pious rituals and religious practices that are mere outward expressions of faith devoid of praxis. Here the poet exposes the religious hypocrisy of God’s people. In vv 6-14 the poet outlines the kind of fast that God desires. This fast involves the loosening the bonds of injustice, the undoing of the throngs of the yoke, the setting free of the oppressed, the breaking of every yoke (v 6), the clothing of the naked, the offering of hospitality to one’s kin (v 7), the cessation of judgmental actions and

malicious speech (v 9), and the honoring of the Sabbath (v 13). The kind of fast that God desires is not expressions of physical asceticism, but rather the lived expression of Torah which calls people to embody and live out a life of love (see Deut 6:1-8; 7:7-11; 10:12-22). According to the message put forth by the poet, when members of the community respond to one another with justice, righteousness, and loving kindness, then God will, in turn, respond to the community in a similar way (vv 9-14). The community will then become a “light” that rises in the darkness (v 10; cf Isa 60:1-18). (4)

For the poet Isaiah, worship must exceed faithfulness to external practices and rituals. Worship is to be the lived experience of being in right relationship with one another and with God, demonstrated through ethical practice rooted in and flowing from love (Deut 6:1-8). In sum, the poet has shown us that “light” is associated with promise, leadership, right relationship, and ethical practice.

Isaiah As God’s Poet of Light

In addition to speaking about light, Isaiah also functions as God’s poet of light. The vocation and office of the prophet involves shedding light on injustice and its root causes so that both the victim and perpetrator of injustice can be freed from oppression. (5) One example of this aspect of the prophet’s vocation can be heard in Isa 5:8-23. Another aspect of the prophetic vocation and office is to shed light on who God is. As a whole, the book of Isaiah provides us with a rich and multi-layered, multi-faceted picture of God who is ultimately compassionate and faithful to covenant and to all people (cf Isa 54:7-8; 56:1-8). As God’s poet of light, Isaiah also reveals God’s vision for all nations. Strains of this vision are heard in Isa 2:1-4 and also in Isa 56:7 where the poet speaks of God’s house as a house of prayer for all peoples. The poem about new heavens and a new earth in Isa 65:17-25 captures the fullness of God’s vision for all creation. This vision is timeless, and we find a re-reading of it in Rev 21:1-5.

As God’s poet of light, Isaiah sometimes preached a harsh word to expose the people’s waywardness and to reveal to his listeners the effects that injustice had on others. By confronting those guilty of breeching right relationship, the poet tried, as a “servant” of God, to open the eyes of the blind. By instilling in them a sense of “holy fear,” he hoped that they would turn back to God and thus be redeemed from their own sinful ways as they are transformed more deeply into God by God. By preaching a comforting word, the poet reminded people of God’s steadfast love and fidelity. By proclaiming God’s magnificent vision for all creation, characterized by peace and unity among all that exists, the poet offered his audience unending hope. This prophetic vision of the prophet that speaks of God’s creative work of bringing forth new heavens and a new earth is re-read by New Testament writers, and today we see this vision of God trying to evolve and unfold in our midst. Thus, through his life and fidelity to his office and vocation as a prophet and a poet, Isaiah was a “light”—a servant, a leader, madly in love with God and with God’s people. Isaiah remained faithful to his God, faithful to his people, and faithful to his preaching mission as he tried to lead his people from light to Light.

Isaiah’s Poetry in the New Testament

The writers of the Gospels drew on many sources for their work. The poetry of Isaiah and various Isaian themes have been woven into the evangelists’ stories. The use of such material give rises to an understanding of how the biblical tradition evolved and how it continues to evolve today. Such material also highlights the dialect that exists between the Old and New Testaments and their various traditions that inform our reading of both canons. In the Gospels, the evangelists are not applying Isaiah’s writings to the life and work of Jesus; nor are they inserting Isaian texts into their Gospels to develop primarily a theme of prophecy-fulfillment, or to assert that the New Testament supersedes the Old Testament. Rather, I would suggest that the evangelists are re-reading various texts from Isaiah in light of the community’s experience and memory of Jesus, and in light of the needs of the evangelists’ respective communities to whom they are preaching. (6) I venture to say further that Jesus, being schooled in Torah and having the writings of the prophets and wisdom texts available to him, may have even re-read these ancient scrolls in relation to his own life

and times. This re-reading of texts, coupled with and informed by his experience of God, would have helped him to understand himself in light of the Jewish tradition, and would have helped to shape his understanding of his mission and ministry.

Matthew 12:15-21 is a re-reading of the Isa 42:1-4 servant song. The “nations” in the Isaiah text become the “Gentiles” in the Matthean text. In Greek, the word for “nations” and “Gentiles” is the same. The justice that Jesus would have preached by word and deed to the Gentiles was that they too, like the Jews, were heirs of the kingdom and included in God’s vision of the redemption and salvation of all creation (cf Isa 2:1-4; cf Mic 4:1-5). For the Gentiles, such preaching and wonderful deeds worked by Jesus among them would have indeed been “good news” because they were not part of the Mosaic covenant nor were they circumcised.⁽⁷⁾ Through his ministry to non-Jews—without first having these people confess belief in Israel’s God, Jesus bore witness to God’s inclusive and unconditional love for all humanity. Interestingly enough, Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus recognizes Jesus as son of David (Jacob/Israel) and son of Abraham (the nations/Gentiles) (see Matt 1:1). Matthew’s genealogy makes clear for us that Jesus was related to both Isaac and Ishmael, brothers to one another and sons of Abraham from whom Israel and the nations descended. Is it no wonder, then, that Jesus’ mission and ministry as reflected by the Gospel writers included both Jews and Gentiles (cf John 4:1-42; 10: 1-21, especially v 16; and John 8:39-59)?

The Matthean image of the disciples being called “the light of the world” (8) and “a city built on a hill cannot be hid” (Matt 5:14) seems to reflect Isaiah 2:1-4, and most especially Isaiah 60. The Markan story about Jesus’ cleansing the temple where Jesus refers to the temple as being a house of prayer for all nations (Mk 11:15-19, especially v 17) is a re-reading of Isa 56:7. The reference to the “house” is not only to the temple in the New Testament but also to the dwelling place of God on the mountain in the new world order (see Isa 2:1-2; cf Rev 21: 22-26). Finally, Luke 4:16-30, particularly vv 18-19—the story that recounts Jesus reading from the scroll in the synagogue before all the elders of his day is a re-reading of Isa 61:1-2. Luke makes one exception. He omits one line from the Isaian text: “and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa 61:2). For Luke (and probably for Jesus), the mission and ministry of Jesus was the proclamation of God’s saving love, with all debts—including the debt of sin—cancelled (see Leviticus 25 and Mic 7:7-18). The year of the Lord’s favor was the jubilee year that was now to be celebrated all the time, and especially after the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus. The Gospel writers show us that Jesus spent his whole life living out “jubilee” and Isaiah’s vision (see Isa 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 11:1-9; 42:1-9; 44:1-5; 49:1-7; 52:13–53:12; 56:1-8; 61:1-4; 65:17-25). Jesus was God’s poet of light *par excellence*.

What Jesus began in his day, Paul continued in his time—the ministry of justice to the Gentiles—the preaching of the good news of God’s love and vision of salvation for all (see Romans 11; cf Rom 2:17-29; 2 Cor 5:11-21). Finally, Revelation 21 draws on images found in Isa 65:17-25 and Isaiah 60. Together, these passages from the book of Isaiah and the book of Revelation speak of the complete transformation of humankind by God into the fullness of God (cf Eph 3:19). This transformation will happen not through the fire of condemnation or judgment but through the fire of love—the same love that enflamed the mission and ministry of the prophets and the mission and ministry of Jesus. And here I am reminded of the words of Teilhard de Chardin:

The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire. (9)

Is it no wonder, then, that we hear Luke proclaiming that Jesus came to bring fire to the earth (Lk 12:49-53; cf Matt 3:11-12). The question becomes, “How do we understand ‘fire’” in light of Jesus’ great love for sinners, his death on the cross, and the reconciling of God’s self to all in heaven and on earth through Jesus’ life and his death on the cross? (cf Col 1:15-21).

Connections: Dominicans as God's Poets of Light

The vision of Isaiah, the Gospels, and Paul's Letters are good news indeed. The Gospels situate Jesus in the prophetic tradition, and the re-reading of certain Isaian texts helps to form the backbone of the four Gospel evangelists' mission of evangelization. For 800 years, Dominicans have preached the Gospel, have engaged in the mission of evangelization. Dominic himself was known to have carried with him the Gospel of Matthew and the Letters of Paul. Having unpacked some of the connections between Isaiah, Matthew, and Paul, is it no wonder that Dominic would have traveled with Matthew's Gospel and Paul's Letters? Is it no wonder that, like Jesus, he sent his followers out to all nations (cf Matt 28:19)? Is it no wonder that just as Jesus' disciples were called light of the world, Dominic was called "Light of the Church," a vocation and a charism handed down to us from Dominic as part of our heritage as Dominicans?

The question now arises: "How can we Dominicans today be poets of light like Isaiah, like Jesus, like Dominic?" First and foremost, I think that we Dominicans need to continue to embrace and live out our prophetic vocation that is central to our charism. This prophetic vocation has been given to us at the time of our creation, is affirmed through our baptismal anointing, and made visible through our commitment to the Order's charism and the lives we live accordingly. This prophetic vocation calls us to be apostolic, deeply rooted in contemplation as our energizing force and the lens through which we view our world and the mysteries of the universe. Our prophetic vocation calls us to leadership—to run with Isaiah's and Jesus' vision that pertains to the new heavens and the new earth—to be compassionate lovers of all God's people, working for justice that flows from divine unconditional love, thus giving witness to the immense hospitality of God's heart and enduring love for all. This prophetic vocation calls us to be mystical—to become ever more deeply wedded to God so as to become the living embodiment of God's presence—God's light and love—that can illumine, warm, and transform our world. Our prophetic vocation calls us to be in union with the Sacred Presence that will lure us passionately and compassionately into communion with all. Dwelling at our center and in the center of all, we will discover with wonder and surprise the Sacred Presence dwelling and breathing and living in the midst of all. We will then have come to understand the unity of God, and our unity in God.

Second, Dominican preaching should continue to be centered on evangelization—preaching the good news of God's saving grace and love for all creation. The God of the prophets was not only the God of Israel but also the God of the nations. This God was the God of Jesus as well. The preaching of Isaiah, Jesus, the Gospel writers, and Paul was focused on evangelization and not focused on proselytizing. We Dominicans today must be engaged in active dialogue with world religions other than our own, so that we can be lights of the Church—informing other traditions by means of our tradition, while allowing other traditions to inform our own tradition as well. Together with the people of many faiths, we need to search for Truth together, recognizing our differences, while discovering and celebrating what we hold in common, especially with respect to our understanding of God, life, and the cosmos. In our common search for Truth, we must recognize, celebrate and integrate the learning we have received from ecology and environmental studies, as well as new learning we are receiving from science. And together, we must affirm that we are part of the web of life—not its center and not its place of origin. What a gift it would be to our world if we Dominicans could widen, broaden, and deepen our understanding of common life and offer that vision to our world, welcoming God's entire community of life to our tables and into our hearts, and teaching and inviting others to do the same. What a gift to our Church if we could re-awaken an ecumenical, interfaith spirit, vision, and conversation that would span the globe. We must be mindful, however, that like Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., and Jesus, prophets are not accepted in their own homelands. Dare we embrace the fullness of our prophetic vocation?

Third, as Isaiah, Jesus, and Dominic tried to make God known, we Dominicans need to carry on this important mission. The dialogue between Science and Religion needs to be a part of all Dominican study. This dialogue will inform our contemplation and understanding of God, deepen our theology and spirituality, and stoke the flame of our preaching.

No longer can we view God only from an earth-centered and anthropocentric perspective. The God who created the Pleiades and Orion (Amos 5:8)—who created the entire universe—must be pondered and contemplated from a cosmological perspective. Our starting place for wondering about God needs to shift to beyond our selves, as we open ever more widely and gently our eyes, hearts, and minds to the unfathomable mystery of the Sacred Presence.

Fourth, we Dominicans need to continue to free and develop our artistic gifts so that we can capture and communicate well the experience of that sacred Presence and energy that permeates and pulsates through all that exists. Our Church and our world need new metaphors for, new impressions of, new stories and poems about the Holy. Karl Rahner once said, “If we are not mystical, then what shall we be?” The Dominican charism calls us to share the fruits of our contemplation. We must do this. The coastlands are waiting for our teaching. We must find ways of disseminating our fruits widely, and scattering our seeds broadly. And we must not be shy. We are called to be God’s poets of light.

Finally, Dominicans need to be, as they have always been for the past 800 years, teachers of truth, preachers of grace who live a life of love, uniting all to the Blessed. It’s our mission; it’s our charism; it’s our heritage; it’s our “gospel.”



FOOTNOTES - Dempsey

- 1 For further reading on the life and times of Isaiah see John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4th ed. (Louisville: John Knox Westminster, 2000), pp. 229-372; see also Victor H. Matthews, *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), pp. 81-98; 144-67.
- 2 For a comprehensive yet succinct study on the term “S/son of God,” see Terrance Callan, “Son of God” in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*; ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), pp. 933-35.
- 3 The servant song has been identified as Isa 42:1-4; vv 5-9 are part of the Isaian periscope about the servant but are not designated as part of the song itself.
- 4 Isaiah 60:1-18 is another passage that features light imagery. A detailed literary and theological analysis of this passage and its implications for Christianity and hearers of the text today is forthcoming in my commentary on Isaiah (Chalice Press, 2008).
- 5 In my book *Jeremiah: Preacher of Grace, Poet of Truth* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), I argue that the prophetic word proclaimed, whether that word is harsh or comforting, is always the graced word, offering both opportunity and hope for those guilty of sin, oppression, and injustice and those sinned against by those who oppress and act unjustly.
- 6 An excellent discussion on the methodology of re-reading biblical texts in new contexts can be found in “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” written by the Pontifical Biblical Commission and appearing in *Origins*, Vol. 23: No. 29 (January 6, 1994), pp. 513-15
- 7 See Isaiah 56 and Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:17-29; and 15:7-13 for the development of the understanding of covenant and circumcision in relation to Jewish law, the prophetic tradition, and both the Gospel writers’ and Paul’s understanding of these two terms in light of who Jesus was and what he did in his day.
- 8 Cf Isa 60: 1, 3, 19, 20; John 1:1-9; 9:5; 12:44-50; 1 Jn 1:5.
- 9 As quoted in *The Hand of God: Thoughts and Images Reflecting the Spirit of the Universe*; ed. Michael Reagan (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 1999), p. 50.

Power and Display in the Church: Yves Congar's Critique

by Thomas F. O'Meara, OP

In 1963, as the uncertain first session of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II was unfolding, Yves Congar published *Pour une Eglise servante et pauvre*.⁽¹⁾ That book of one hundred and forty pages soon appeared in 1964 in an English translation under the title, *Power and Poverty in the Church*. The brief book, composed partly of previously published material, is a critique of church hierarchy as power and display. One might call it a phenomenology of the modalities of church authority or a historical summary of public symbols and names of religious power.

I.

The book's theme was the reality – partly existing in unhealthy forms – of power in church authority and the tension between evangelical poverty and church trappings. *Power and Poverty in the Church* has two parts: they are followed by a conclusion which is a theological program for leadership in Christian church authority and by a selection of texts on authority from bishops and theologians in the 1950s. The first section on “hierarchy as service” looks at authority in the New Testament, at the development of authority through two millennia (developed not infrequently in negative ways), and at a Christian theology of leadership as service. The second part states its theme to be “titles and honors in the church” and considers them under the aspect of their historical origins and contexts. The exaggeration of authority and its display in symbolic objects go together, for ideologies of authority increasingly find social support in clothes, symbols, and titles.

Congar had written a long essay on the hierarchy as service according to the New Testament and the documents of tradition for the collection *L'Episcopat et l'Eglise Universelle* (2) and this became part of *Pour une Eglise servante et pauvre*. The latter book was composed in Strasbourg at a time, as the Dominican put it, when “the whole church is studying herself in the mirror of the Gospel and taking stock of her adaptability to the needs of the world” (PESP 12; PPC 14). Congar had been subjected to serious censorship from the Vatican: a second printing of his important books was not permitted. When he was removed from any teaching position in February, 1954 (3), Congar had been offered ecclesiastical refuge by Bishop Weber of Strasbourg, a theological and pastoral leader of the church in France. Assigned to the Dominican priory (the Dominican community elected him their prior), Congar led an active life, giving courses, retreats, and conferences but without being drawn in any way into the faculty of theology at the university. In those years he was writing collections of essays, books like *Sacerdoce et laïcat*, *Chrétiens en dialogue*, and the two volumes of *La Tradition et les Traditions*. The book on authority in the church was completed in Strasbourg during 1963.

Congar's journal for the years of Vatican II mentions that in Rome on May 14, 1963, he visited Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, Archbishop of Bologna, and his eminence agreed to have the book about to be published as *L'Eglise au service des hommes* dedicated to him. “He wants to reintroduce his idea of the church of the poor at the second session but he is waiting for the right moment.” (4) Six months later, on October 14, 1963, the Dominican could present the Cardinal whom he described as “an advocate of the church of the poor” with a copy bearing a new title, *Pour une Eglise servante et pauvre*. The title of Congar's book in its English translation has a certain directness to it, but the French title suggests that the book is a prophetic project rather than an exposition of ecclesial sociology.

II.

Curiously, the book is not treated much by studies on Congar. Jean-Pierre Jossua's biography gives it a mention with nothing further appearing in *Écrits Réformateurs*.⁽⁵⁾ Reviewers in the 1960s saw beneath the Scripture and history rather radical themes and conclusions. René Marlé in the Jesuit *Études* spoke of the value of a historical study of

ecclesiastical display because the contemporary world is not impressed with ecclesiastical splendors. (6) Cecily Hastings wrote that Congar needed courage to point out the church's wrong directions and un-Christian forms. Oddly, as he said, the church, even if it is without much money, presents in its clothes and vessels rich display. (7) The *Critic* asked the Jesuit biblical scholar John L. McKenzie for a review. (8) He pointed out the need for a longer book - hopefully by the Dominican historian - on these topics. It is important to see that the clothes and symbols of bishops have a historical, political origin. The problem of authority and power in the church is far from exhausted by its relationships to the issues of poverty. Some of this paraphernalia we take for granted because we overlook their theological import and some of these things are beginning to look ridiculous. Vatican II has created an atmosphere for these consideration: the discussion, McKenzie concluded, must continue if Catholic faith is to be responsible. (9)

III.

Congar's motivation for writing the book came from years of historical research into church forms, and yet proximately it came from a personal vision of the need for church renewal replacing the ossification of Tridentine Catholicism. He had been influenced by the synthesis of German romantic idealism and patristic theology drawn together by Johann Adam Möhler whose theology of the church, written in the 1820s, was becoming known anew in the 1930s. "Möhler restored: 1 - a pneumatological consideration of the mystical body beyond a Christological one...; 2 - an anthropology, a consideration of the perspective of the mystical body moving outwards to constitute the Christian living in communion with brothers and sisters...; 3 - the activity of the ecclesial body animated by the Spirit of Christ." (10) Forces, however, were lined up against this ecclesiology (one that was both new and old): neo-scholasticism (which was not the thought of Aquinas), canon law, Vatican bureaucracy, and a nominalism of church actions and dispensations.

"[There are today at work] two completely different levels in intellectual and spiritual life. For Rome, a knowledge of the Gospel is essentially foreign; for us that is the main concern of the faithful and gives rise to their protests. Rome is locked into its law with a canonistic sophistry, its self-conviction of unchangeable legal pronouncements, and its self-justification. It is capable only of seeing the contemporary attitude of the laity as something bad, naming it insubordination. It is not capable, however, of asking itself whether its positions are correct from a Christian point of view." (11)

Fifteen years earlier Congar fashioned the term "hierarchology" to designate a view of authority as it emerged from the patristic period to be further nourished by medieval and Baroque ages. (12) Hierarchology was an ecclesiology; it was a view of church in which the hierarchy alone seemed to be the church in being and action, in significance and visibility. Such a theology is ordered to the papacy and ignores the Pauline theology of the full body of Christ. In 1950 Congar had analyzed what the French call "*intégrisme*," the mindset of every fundamentalism, including one within Catholicism. Fundamentalism finds its origins in a hostility to the world, a link with the political right, and an aversion to history. An authoritarianism joins to a rather Jansenist emphasis on human sin and to a rejection of life and experience. There is a lack of confidence in what is true and a weakness in recognizing and honoring truth in its relative realizations. He ended by citing Newman, "They erect a church within the church." (13) *Power and Poverty in the Church* was begun in the pontificate of Pius XII as papal authority reached a zenith, becoming a solitary directorate seeking to eliminate authority from every other Catholic. In the pastoral renewals after the two world wars the authority structure of the church had become separated from ministry and had ended up hostile to both the people of God and society. Joseph Famerée speaks of Congar's "ecclesial awakening." Congar drew into a synthesis the thought of Aquinas, an interest in other traditions, the history of the church and history as a biblical and patristic theme, and the thought of Johann Adam Möhler. Some further aspects of his theology "were not very common in his youth: a positive dialogue with other Christians, attention to the life and the mystery of the church, study of biblical, patristic and medieval theologies, a Thomism of a historical kind." (14) After the 1930s his theology moved from approaches drawn from a metaphysics of causes to an incarnational theology. While it researches the vagaries or deformities of the history of church forms, it is more concerned with pastoral renewal. Development amid the old and new, an

evolution that is real and constant, pervades the ecclesiology of Congar showing him to be intelligent, courageous, and loyal. Famerée concludes: “The originality of Congar’s ecclesiology, in its totality, is linked to the individuality of a quite personal journey in terms of three aspects: an individual awakening to the church and to ecclesiology; a new methodology integrating all ecclesial life; a doctrine solidly located in sources but pioneering new ecclesiological issues. If one must describe in a few words this intellectual journey I would chose the words “history” and “church.” (15)

Today Congar’s book assumes again some relevance; its critical voice is contemporary. Books are pointing out the appearance again of isolation and hostility in the Vatican and among the bishops toward the ordinary life of the church. Robert Blair Kaiser’s *A Church in Search of Itself* has as an underlying theme power in the high church circles. He profiles and interviews representative cardinals: for them the Vatican is the sole source of authority; theology is neglected; arbitrary and insignificant devotions can be normative, while pastoral responsibility and creativity are avoided. The cardinals have withdrawn again behind clothes and symbols of power to enjoy solitary power. (16) One might read Kaiser’s book to gain a conviction of the relevance of Congar’s little book for today.

IV.

The introduction to *Power and Poverty in the Church* opens eloquently with history. “History is a great teacher of truth” (PEPS 11; PPC 13). History is not dates and erudition but a knowledge of that “historical dimension which affects everything existing in this world” (PEPS 11; PPC 13). It is a mistake to see papacy and priesthood as supratemporal. What is above time is outside of time, without time. This book looks at the church influencing history and being influenced by history. The ministry of bishop has an origin from the Spirit but “historically it has taken on more than one form and has been lived out in very different styles” (PEPS 11f.; PPC 14). An awareness of the historical forms for church institutions helps Christians distinguish between what is of divine origin and what is of human custom.

The title of the first essay presents the overriding theme of the book: *hierarchy as service*, hierarchy becoming service. Forming descending power into a form of service has its difficulties. The challenge is not for church leadership in 1965 to do some service. The title requires a metamorphosis: from neo-Platonic hierarchy to biblical service. The first essay treats the dialectic of authority and service through six topics; or better, through three couplets each of which holds an aspect of biblical theology.

The first couplet treats the discussion among the disciples of precedence, and Jesus’ strong correction of them. His disciples should not seek prominence but service. Service comes from enabling divine grace and leads to modest ministerial actions. The second, corresponding theme is that of glory seemingly distant from service. Jesus has a glory, a special glory, but it stands in marked contrast to human ambition. The glory which Jesus has from the Father is remarkable and unique; only Jesus as the Son of God possesses such an authority of teaching and acting. Yet this prominent authority of the Word Incarnate has, nonetheless, a reference to another, to the Father. That kind of glory does not exclude listening, obeying, and service.

The second couplet remains with the question of the disciples’ place. Jesus uses “terms of great decisiveness” (PEPS 22; PPC 25) as an alternative to the language of dominance. The early church of the New Testament learns from him. There is the ordinariness of the table-waiter, the deacon. There is also the frequently used word *doulos*, “slave,” a term losing some of its force when it is translated as “servant” rather than as “slave.” Jesus makes an attitude of service (not of power) into an ethical dynamic for his disciples. The disciple is not merely a pupil under instruction; he imitates the master and shares his life. If Jesus lived his mission and defined it in terms of the Servant of Isaiah, this too has its counterpart in the unusual glory of the Word. The hymn in the *Letter to the Philippians* (2: 5-11) tells how the Word in Jesus, although in the form of God, emptied himself all the way down to a redemptive death for us, to a death which includes resurrection. Jesus’ counterpart to authority and glory is his condition of service.

The third couplet takes up the pattern of ministry and teaching in the incarnation. Although the sublime Father is in Jesus, the Son, Jesus shows the being of God precisely by manifesting the divine being in love and kindness towards us. His message and salvation are a gift to us from love, while “the spirit of possessiveness destroys that love poured into us by the Holy Spirit” (PEPS 27; PPC 30). The counterpart to sublime theory and reality of the Trinity is communal and ecclesial: the washing of the feet. So the *Gospel according to John* is highly speculative and eminently practical. Jesus washing the feet of the Apostles grounds a theology of authority in the New Testament. Here an activity and a style that belongs to a servant, a slave, are affirmed as divine personal love. Life in the community is Spirit-directed and ordinary. Paul does not offer a magisterial list of ministries but an ecclesiology.

To bring these reflections from the New Testament to a climax, the Dominican theologian surveys important New Testament words and expressions (in Greek) which are used for authority: power, order, apostle, overseer, deacon. Paul and his churches are prominent here; his theology of the church and ministry is based upon his Christology, and both are centered on service. Authority and ministry in the church belong in a dynamic context vivified by divine grace. Love and service are human actions sustained by the divine and are not a machinery of self and power. “Fundamentally, to have appealed to rights or authority, even though these were received from the Lord, would have brought in an element of *self*. Paul’s desire was to be entirely and always in the stream of grace” (PEPS 30; PPC 35). Congar, to conclude this section, speaks of two missions: the mission of God to serve humanity and the mission of men and women to help each other. Any presence of authority and hierarchy, any superiority of power must always exist within the milieu of the Spirit and church, for the Spirit is the life of the church. Authority serves God’s grace active for all and through all (PEPS 91f.; PCC 99).

V.

The second part of the book, “Titles and Honors in the Church. A Short Historical Study,” is specific, and as it looks at clothes and crosiers, shoes and gloves employed by bishops and others it is more critical. Already in the 1940s, Congar had questions about ecclesiastical dress and had translated an article from a German Benedictine journal on the topic. (17) Clothes and insignia emerging over fifteen centuries form for some people too much of the image of church structure. Colorful clothes – “insignia,” “titles,” “privileges,” “vestiges of feudalism,” – accompany the emergence of legalism sustained by a tight system of authority. The organization of the church along the lines of the Roman Empire and its later continuance in feudalism bestowed on church authority titles and insignia. “We see living spiritual reality, inner quality and personal involvement degraded into *things*” (PEPS 103; PPC 108).

Authority always exists in the church, but in the church of the first centuries it was different. “When in 1950 to 1952 I was preparing my book on the laity, I examined not only the texts but the facts of the early history of the church. I discovered everywhere in each generation and in the four areas of faith, worship, the apostolate and the church’s social life a union between hierarchical structure and the exercise of all the church’s activities in community” (PEPS 41; PPC 43). In the early church, those with authority knew that they lived and worked in a community variously graced, vivified in all its members by the Spirit. “They knew that the Spirit lives within the Christian community and in the exercise of authority they remained closely linked to this view” (PEPS 43; PPC 46). Congar noted the importance of charismatic figures, of martyrs and preachers, while leaders saw themselves as voices and initiators of ministry in the church. Authority enabled the graced ministries of the baptized through the Holy Spirit of the Risen Christ and had little to do with life outside the society of grace. The bishop-theologians of the fourth century brought together teaching, preaching, and central administration. The bishop as preacher and spiritual leader existed within his local church to which he was, symbolically, wed. Up to the end of the first millennia, the primal and decisive reality was the *ecclesia* itself, that is, the totality, the community. The many ministries within the entire church include a particular ministry of leadership, a ministry that is only one ministry among many within the entire church. The church existed first and essentially not as the authority of a few men set apart but as the life of the entire church in the Spirit.

That picture of church leadership changed in the Byzantine and Western Medieval periods. The Middle Ages gave to the bishop and abbot secular prerogatives, possessions, titles, and insignia. In the second millennium of church history there is a veritable ‘invasion of legalism’ (PEPS 59; PPC103). Legalism as the reduction of theology and ecclesiology, life and mission to only what is dictated by recently established laws flows from and results in a theology of the church cut off from charism and baptism. Expressed in organizational, canonical, and metaphysical systems, the spiritual was relegated to symbols, rituals, and things. Historical study reveals how and why church leaders acquired insignia, special clothes, and titles in history. Three ages contribute to the prominence of externals in pointing to church authorities: the offices of the late Roman Empire, the structure of feudalism, and the Baroque love of theater. Congar pays attention mainly to the medieval period.

In the Catholic Church the Roman and the feudal endure. During the centuries after 1600, the modern world sought to build its life on the basis of the self-determining person and the participative community. During that modern era of self and democracy, however, the Catholic Church cultivated “a real ‘mystique’ of authority” (PEPS 62; PPC 71). What does Congar mean by this phrase? A growing and dominant ethos, one sole atmosphere controlling everything, and a drive towards authority alters the church of grace. Unfortunately that cultivation of authority in the church was accompanied up through the twentieth century by a rejection of people. There was a mistrust of humanity itself as church leadership became more and more authoritarian and monopolistic, overlooking human limitations and claiming an easy divine presence. What is needed today is an ecclesiology which is not monophysite: that is, not exaggeratedly divine. (18)

“The realities of the activities (functions) of ministry – are they not compromised by being viewed as *hierarchical powers*?” (PEPS 88; PPC 95). Inspired by Scripture and history, Congar offered a theology of authority. It begins with the words of Jesus and ends with the description of ministries in the New Testament. The church is not a static archduchy or a tight organization but a movement, a journey, a pilgrim church on earth. The church is not a temple priesthood or a hierarchy where God touches a few select people. God is in all people and in them in various ways. God is the source of all authority in the church. The only Lord of the church is Jesus. Leadership and authority always proceed from mission: the mission of the Word in Jesus; the mission of those in the ministries of the church sent by the Spirit. Every ecclesiastical role should be linked with the person of Jesus and with a mission received from him; every dignity is given as a service. This way of living and acting in the church is a call to service empowered by an authority proceeding from love.

To conclude his book, the Dominican wrote of his theme and title as “a very holy cause” (PEPS 131; PPC 135). Prestige exercising an authority whose superiority in political structure may have been acceptable and indeed required in the past is long gone. “Nowadays the church is called upon to find a new style for its presence in the world.” (PEPS 131; PPC 136). The church is summoned to be the church, to bear witness to the Gospel. “For the church, as for every one of us, health consists not only in being itself but in working out in its life the truth of relationships with others. A church open to free discussion will also be a church of poverty and service. That church can aim at and succeed in giving the word of the Gospel to people” (PEPS 131; PPC 140). Beneath his moving eloquence, however, Congar’s tone indicates that such a renewal of the church – historical in purification, biblical in reality – would not be easy.

VI.

Power and Poverty in the Church proceeds on several levels. It is a biblical theology, a historical study, and an ecclesiastical critique; it is also a prophetic program and a contribution to pastoral theology.

A. History. Congar’s historical understanding ends not in antiquarian research but in disclosing the dynamics of an age with its cultural forms influencing the church’s life. Unfolding those historical forms has the goal of pastoral

improvement, now and in the future. “The church’s potentialities are brought out by being actualized, and it is brought to self-understanding by events. That, after all, is the law of all living things.” (19) Congar summed up his life’s work and its climax at Vatican II in this way: “The vision of the Council - for instance, 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 preceding thirty years. It has been a pastoral council with a doctrinal certainty but with one illumined by a pastoral vision and directed by pastors.” (20) In Congar historical research became pastoral theology, the approach cultivated by the ethos and texts of Vatican II. Monika-Maria Wolff wrote that Congar belonged “to those theologians whose work has so entered into the theology of Vatican II that the historical origins of the Council are nourished by his power and originality...Congar is personally co-responsible for the history of Catholic theology in recent times.” (21)

B. Critique. *Power and Poverty in the Church* is a critique of the forms of the church from 1870 to 1960, fashioned and intensified by imperial, feudal, and Baroque periods. This history, beginning in 1070 or 1870, has ended in an authority that is unlimited and oppressive. The isolation of authority emerged from not only feudalism but from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from a time in culture and church that the Dominicans at Le Saulchoir called “Baroque.” The nineteenth and twentieth centuries offered its variations on the Baroque and Rococo. Drawing on a timeless Aristotelian metaphysics, that ecclesiology was anti-Protestant in an apologetic stance, anti-liberal in terms of the period after the French Revolution, neo-scholastic, and papalist. “[Vatican II] has taken mainly the form of a departure from Tridentinism....That was a system which took in absolutely everything: theology, ethics, Christian behavior, religious practices, liturgy, organization, Roman centralization, the perpetual intervention of Roman congregations in the life of the church, and so on.” (22) The descending mysticism of Pseudo-Denys met late Renaissance organization. “The ‘theology of the Baroque’ ...in ecclesiology insists very much on the aspect of hierarchy. It situates the pope at the top of a pyramidal vision, in a spirit that is a little militaristic.” (23) Dogmatic and moral theology make little progress, for theology from 1650 to 1950 consists largely in arranging logical propositions held as true. (24) The Baroque spotlighted dramatic but devotional rituals in worship and art. “We can note how the ecclesiological aspect of Roman centralization was linked to a further important aspect. Trent had affirmed in the face of Protestantism that Christ is not solely a redeemer but that he is also a law-giver. In this line...church leadership favored the construction of a hierarchical order: not one arranged around the Eucharist but one where the ‘regime’ of Rome occupies the center and summit.” (25)

Surely it was necessary to pass beyond a form of authority that was a hierarchology. (26) Could a primal theology from the early church affect that static ecclesiastical milieu of in the 1950s and 1960s? “In leaving the Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation we are leaving a legalism which has surrounded our ways of thinking since the end of the twelfth century. The consciousness of the church as it unfolds from the Council gives a primacy to the ontology of grace over the structures of administration. After all, those structures are in place only as ministers at the service of a supernatural reality which is basically sacramental.” (27) The model of church as a political power over against a temporal power has come to an end as has the relegation of the priest to the sanctuary and the layperson to the bank. The church is sacrament and leaven within the rest of the world, a world which is not purely temporal or secular. The church is active spiritually and prophetically and not just juridically. (28) The magisterium is broader than the papacy, and living tradition is richer than published texts. History will not let the church remain feudal and Baroque.

“The Spirit creates from within the unity of the community and creates too the organs or expressions of its special genius, i.e., its tradition. The heart of these theological perspectives is the identity of the principle which acts throughout the church’s temporal duration and is at work in the activities by which it builds itself up....What makes these different subjects [prophets, Jesus Christ, the apostles, the church made up of the faithful and their pastors] a unity is, exteriorly, the mission and, interiorly, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not simply a principle but a person and by that fact becomes in a quite special sense a subject of Tradition..., indeed, the transcendent subject of Tradition.” (29)

Tradition is revelation in history expressed in the church through a communion of ministries and voices. “This tradition is living because it is not a thing exterior to living souls vivified by the Spirit.” (30)

C. The Prophetic Congar’s history was critique. It is a mistake to see Congar only as a historian or an ecumenist. (31) The goal and content of *Power and Poverty in the Church* is not just history but critique as leading to a better future. Some of what the past has fashioned will be set aside like casual theological presuppositions that the pope is the bishop of each Catholic or that Jesus is active all the time in every religious superior. Forms which may appear new are closer to the revelation of God in the Spirit. History flows through faith and grace. People are always being determined anew in the concrete as they judge what the past has become. “We can hardly doubt that a new humanity will be born of the inventions and discoveries of today. Wide horizons open before modern men and women. For them the attraction of the Church will lie not in miraculous hagiography or a ceremonial splendor but far more in the truth they find in the church of the spiritual relationship with others - a relationship founded on the genuine and exacting Gospel attitude of living faith, inward obedience, true prayer, love and service” (PEPS; PPC 130f.). Prophecy is not a guess at the future but the critique of history addressing what will soon arrive. The church is always obedient to a call which lies ahead of it. The truth of a reality as historical is always eschatological. Ten years after Vatican II the Dominican summed up: “It’s undeniable. There is a general disaffection for that which is the institution. People like the church to be prophetic, to have a message, to fight injustice. The institution of the church, to the extent that it is a sacerdotal structure exploiting a religious reservoir is just not very interesting.” (32)

The church must be simultaneously doctrine and prophecy. A dominating system of authority looks inward on itself and is not directed towards the service of others. Static authority and meaningless trappings block renewal and life. An ecclesiology of historical critique exists for the sake of renewal. Through history and faith what is essential in the past becomes contemporary, prophetic in that it is full of renewal for the future. *Power and Poverty in the Church* is about history and the reality that is called authority and service. “Something happened at the Council, and the dominant values in our way of looking at the church were changed by the Council....As every historian knows, everything is always changing and at the same time there is in many ways a deep continuity. There is also a tension between the ideas then dominant in Rome and the movement of ideas in other cultural environments.” (33) Apparently ideas and forms in the church are in motion, pregnant and seminal. “All the work of the Council is a half-way station.” (34)

D. Pastoral. At Vatican II the prophetic became the practical. “The years after the Council are a global phenomenon with world-wide dimensions. A crisis would have come anyway. The Council assisted its entry into the church by ending the isolation of the church and by giving a wider audience to the church; this implied the end of a monolithic institution protected by fictions. The present time is linked to the gigantic changes which touch culture, the ways of life in society, and the reality of the human family around the world.” (35) A renewal of the church for service is not basically the result of church problems but the consequences of seeing people and Scripture in an open and positive way. In 1970 Congar asked: “Are we really seeing a religious crisis? Perhaps. But a clear cause of this is the media where the extraordinary, the new, the shocking is of interest more than when people pray, go to Mass, study theology....I believe that in fact the church is challenged by quite new questions, questions much more radical, much more universal than before. In fact, the church has always been challenged by such questions. To know history well is to see that there have been in the past quite serious crises like St. Paul and the Judaeo-Christians, Gnosticism in the second century or the Renaissance.” (36) Thus in a scholar of history, the prophetic and pastoral meet. “It is by the outward signs of the Church, by what it is seen to be that people know it and through the church are (or should be) brought to the Gospel, led to God” (PEPS 106; PPC 111). In their public image, leaders of the church should be visible words of the church, should be a parable of the kingdom of God, a sacrament of the Gospel” (PEPS 107; PPC 112). As history is critique so the prophetic becomes the pastoral. “People often ask me how I see the future of the Church? It is still necessary to enlarge our perspectives: let us discern how the church is called to become in a new way a church of all peoples and to recognize in a new and more profound way its genius for expressing itself in great cultures.”(37)

Ten years after Vatican II, Congar saw the church of the future to be one that was more diverse, more active than a solitary hierarchical authority.

V.

What is the value of this book today? The teachings of Jesus and Paul point to the style of leadership which should exist in the church. History shows a diversity in ministry in the first centuries and then later its reduction into, almost absorption by legalism, clergy, and power. In the twentieth century the study of history liberates the Gospel and ministry so as to attract the modern person.

In the last twenty years isolated power supported by titles and ecclesiastical dress have surfaced again in the church: in short, the system of neo-Platonism and feudalism which Congar named “hierarchology.” Struggles to control along with a substitution of old devotions for liturgy and theology bring a fear of wider ministry, and a marginalization of the baptized. One can hardly say that church leadership today highlights the motifs of the New Testament as sketched by Congar who wrote twenty years ago: “What is the situation since Vatican II with regard to the almost obsessive dominance of the Roman pontiff in classical ecclesiology? Neither the Council nor the work done after the Council has succeeded in reducing the authority of the pope. The crisis in his *magisterium* has come from other sources, including the partial non-acceptance of *Humanae Vitae*.” (38)

If one reads Robert Blair Kaiser’s interviews with cardinals before looking at Congar, one might read afterwards Eugene Kennedy’s detailed essay on why the hierarchy moves from mistake to mistake. “[The bishops] deepen their plight every time they act hierarchically in a fundamentally collegial world, as in imposing decisions from the top down in closing parishes, providing substitutes for the sacrament of the Eucharist, refusing to open up diocesan finances; imposing authoritarian regulations on their priests; and treating members of such groups as Voice of the Faithful as if they were nailing rebellious theses on their cathedral doors instead of helping to keep them open.” (39) Kennedy’s insightful essay is on hierarchy: this is not leadership but an ideology and a style that is pastorally destructive. His essay like Congar’s book begins and ends with a critique of “hierarchology.”

To read Congar today is to be struck by his passion for the future. He wrote many pages, many essays about “*l’avenir*.” Like his research his faith is eschatological. His courage to pass through years of persecution was empowered by the study of history; it was borne forward by an understanding of the good and bad sides of the church’s self-determination. A future-directed history keeps the church alive even as it sweeps some of its forms away. Hope motivates an expectation that the future will bring a church more faithful to the early church and more at the service of the modern world. Yves Congar’s theology of church and tradition and ministry is not about the end of anything but about beginnings, beginnings of the Spirit and of the educated and participative society, beginnings both Biblical and contemporary.



FOOTNOTES - O'Meara

- 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1963). Texts are cited from the original book and have been translated anew; the first reference is to the French original and the second is to the English translation: *Power and Poverty in the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964). Translations in Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, and German appeared.
- 2 Congar, "La hiérarchie comme service, selon le Nouveau Testament et les documents de la Tradition," in Y. Congar and B.-D. Dupuy eds., *L'Épiscopat et l'Église universelle [Unam Sanctam #39]* (Paris: Cerf, 1962): 67 - 100.
- 3 See O'Meara, "Raid on the Dominicans: The Repression of 1954." *America* 170 (1994): 8-16
- 4 Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile I* (Paris: Cerf, 2002) 362, 468; on Lercaro at Vatican II see G. Alberigo, *History of Vatican II II* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997) 508-12. *Power and Poverty in the Church* as well as Congar's diaries give existential access to the sessions of Vatican II debating so many issues in ecclesiology; on these discussions see the volumes of Alberigo's history or Peter Hünemann's commentary on *Lumen Gentium* in *Herders Theologische Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil 2* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004)
- 5 Jossua, Yves Congar, *Theologian in the Service of God's People* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1968) 119.
- 6 "Revue des livres," *Études* 320 (January, 1964): 124.
- 7 "Notices," *New Blackfriars* 46 (1964: November): 122; the motifs of history, style and church renewal are selected by Val A. McInnes in a review for *Cross and Crown* 17 (March, 1965): 116f.
- 8 *Critic* 23 (February-March, 1965): 75f.
- 9 Recently a professor at the Orthodox theological school of Saint Sergius in Paris cited the book. "The church can forget itself. To discern well the mystery of the church I like to recall the phrase of Fr. Congar at Vatican II, 'the church as serving and poor.' Modeled after its Leader it bears the Spirit and is the source of living water. The church does not seek to define itself or to set itself up like an organization; it does not play with titles. The church must be transparent to both God and the world" (Boris Bobrisky, "Le Message de l'Orthodoxie en Cette Fin de Millenaire," *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, no. 207 [Avril 1996]: 32).
- 10 Congar, "Lumen Gentium No 7..." *Le Concile de Vatican II* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984) 148f.
- 11 Congar, *Journal d'un théologien* (Paris: Cerf, 2001) 251.
- 12 The term 'hierarchology' which I introduced in 1947 has since then been taken up rather widely" (Congar, *Le Concile de Vatican II* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984) 13); see Thomas F. O'Meara, "Beyond 'Hierarchology'. Johann Adam Möhler and Yves Congar," in D. Dietrich and M. Himes, eds., *The Legacy of the Tübingen School. The Relevance of 19th Century Theology for the 21st Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 173-91.
- 13 Congar, "Mentalité 'de droite' et intégrisme," *La Vie intellectuelle*, 67 (June, 1950): 644-66.
- 14 Famerée, "Originalité de l'ecclésiologie du Père Congar," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 106 (2005): 93.
- 15 Famerée, "Originalité...", 111; see too Famerée, "L'apport du Père Congar à la théologie du XXe siècle," *Gregorianum* 83 (2002): 506-516.

- 16 Kaiser, *A Church in Search of Itself. Benedict XVI and the Battle for the Future* (New York: Knopf, 2006).
- 17 E. Peterson, *Pour une théologie du vêtement*, trans by Y. Congar (Lyon: Éditions de l'Abeille, 1943) (originally "Theologie des Kleides," *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* 16 [1934]: 347-56).
- 18 Tradition and Traditions 344. A healthy ecclesiology avoids "ecclesiological monophysitism every bit as much as nestorianism" (Ibid.).
- 19 "The Life of the Church and Awareness of Its Catholicity," *The Mystery of the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965) 100.
- 20 Congar, *Le Concile de Vatican II* 27.
- 21 Monika-Maria Wolff, *Gott und Mensch. Ein Beitrag Yves Congars zum ökumenischen Dialog* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1990) 13.
- 22 *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology* 3f.
- 23 Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar. "Une vie pour la vérité" (Paris: Centurion, 1975) 47.
- 24 Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar, 47.
- 25 Congar, *L'Église de Saint Augustin* 368. "An era of legalism began and replaced a somewhat theoretical ecclesiology. An orthodoxy not only of faith but of theology is fixed by a kind of canonization of the conceptual and verbal system come down from scholasticism which from then to our own times has incorporate itself into Catholicism" (Ibid).
- 26 *Jalons pour une théologie du laicat* (Paris: Cerf, 1953) 68f.
- 27 "L'Avenir de l'église" (1964) in *Écrits Réformateurs* (Paris: Cerf, 1995) 367.
- 28 See Congar, "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church," in Alberic Stacpoole, *Vatican II Revisits by Those Who Were There* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1986) 146; *Mon Journal du Concile II* (Paris: Cerf, 2002) 510f.
- 29 Tradition and Traditions, 340, 337.
- 30 Tradition and Traditions 193 .
- 31 A few have tried to reduce or ignore the mature and creative Congar of the years after 1962. Around 1990 a few English-speaking writers began to emphasize "ressourcement." In 1950 that word meant giving attention to biblical and patristic sources of faith in order get beyond the largely philosophical neo-scholastic monopoly. The word was not particularly prominent at the Council or in the post-conciliar era. The rapid changes in Catholic life at that time did have sources in the theology of John or Irenaeus but they were not a repristination of the past. Toward 1990, in the writings of restorationists the word is used to play down changes in Catholic life initiated by Vatican II and the consequent on-going pastoral and ecclesial themes and issues and to pretend that the event and era of Vatican II was mainly about finding venerable texts. Congar refers to "ressourcement" as a "rediscovery of realities" (PEPS 67; PPC 78).

- 32 Le Dossier: Dialogue entre les Pères Congar et Girardi - 1960-1970: Dix années décisives pour l'Église et pour le monde," Information Catholique Internationale. Le Dossier #351 (January, 1970): 31.
- 33 Congar, "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church," 129.
- 34 Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar 149.
- 35 Congar. Une Passion: L'unité. Reflexions et souvenirs, 1929 - 1973 (Paris: Foi Vivante, 1974) 109.
- 36 "Le Dossier: Dialogue entre les Pères Congar et Girardi - 1960-1970... 36.
- 37 Une Passion. L'Unité., 112.
- 38 Congar, "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church," 141.
- 39 "Kennedy, "Bishops and the Beached Whale." National Catholic Reporter (October 21, 2005) 11.

NOTES & PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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- Commitment to scholarship and reflection.
- Commitment to the arts and the aesthetic dimension of human life.
- Commitment to peace and justice for all humankind.
- Commitment to collaboration among the members of the Dominican Family and various cultures within the global community.

For more information regarding programs contact:

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About Ohio Dominican University

Ohio Dominican University is a private Catholic liberal arts university, guided in its educational mission by the Dominican motto, **“To contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation.”**

Founded in 1911 as the College of Saint Mary of the Springs, Ohio Dominican offers a fully accredited, high quality, career-oriented education in a distinctive setting. The University spans 65 beautifully wooded acres. It is a place where diversity is embraced and individualism is celebrated. The Ohio Dominican University liberal arts curriculum teaches skills valuable in every career and life - the ability to think critically, write proficiently, and communicate clearly. The University’s nationally acclaimed Humanities program is at the core of every student’s academic study at Ohio Dominican.

We forge a new vision for Ohio Dominican based on the foundation of our enduring values.



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