Scripture, Tradition, and *Ressourcement*: Toward an Anglican Fundamental Liturgical Theology

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This essay proposes a fundamental liturgical theology for Anglicans that begins from tradition. Yves Congar claimed that liturgy is "endowed with the genius of Tradition," but we might also say that tradition is endowed with the genius of liturgy. Beginning from tradition allows an Anglican liturgical theology to hold in balance the tension that liturgy is both historical (contextual) and a locus of revelation. Such a consideration restores a sense of dynamism to both the liturgy and tradition, especially in considering the two as (1) sacramental, (2) rooted in the paschal mystery, and (3) soteriological. This fundamental liturgical theology relies heavily upon the work of the ressourcement *theologians of the mid-twentieth century associated with* nouvelle théologie, *especially Yves Congar. Their method of returning to the sources is consonant within the Anglican theological tradition.*

The study of liturgy is often broken down into neat compartmentalized sub-disciplines and sub-sub-disciplines. On the most basic level, many studies, and many programs of study, are divided along the lines of history, theology, and ritual study. Certainly, liturgical studies is itself a category in the division of the broader study of theology, and all studies must have some parameters, so it is only natural to break liturgy down into manageable topics. However, as one of my teachers is fond of noting, "all categories leak"[1]; that is, there is no purely historical, theological, or ritual study of liturgy. This is most evident with the categories of history and theology.

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Liturgy cannot be divorced from its history. It is an element of the Christian life with a distinct past and contextualized meanings. The study of liturgy, historical or theological, "does not deal with the past, but with tradition, which is a *genetic vision of the present*, a present conditioned by its understanding of its roots. And the purpose of this history is not to recover the past (which is impossible), much less to imitate it (which would be fatuous), but to *understand liturgy* which, because it has a history, can only be understood in motion, just as the only way to understand a top is to spin it."[2] This "genetic vision of the present" is paramount to studying liturgy theologically *and* historically; it is a recognition that any theology of/from/about liturgy is historically conditioned. Liturgy is intimately bound up in tradition, that is, the transmission or handing-over (*traditio*) of the whole Christian faith.

This essay proposes that liturgy and tradition are to be understood as mutually dependent and that they exist in a dynamic relationship, or what might be called a liturgical understanding of tradition. The dynamism of this relationship is such that the faith is as alive and life-giving today as when it was the possession of the apostles, directly received from Jesus Christ and handed on from there.[3] The church gathered at the font and around the altar partakes in that vivifying apostolic tradition and goes out into the world to live that faith.

Preliminaries: Liturgia et Traditio

To recover a dynamic tradition, the liturgy, too, must exist as a dynamic reality. It cannot be conceived of as human action alone, but must also be a privileged place for an encounter with the living Triune God. Characteristic of this understanding is the work of Edward Kilmartin: "We know by faith that the liturgy of the Church is ultimately the work of the Triune God. A theology of liturgy merely attempts to show how Christian worship, in all its forms, should be understood as the self-communication of the Triune God."[4] The op-

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[2] Robert F. Taft, "The Structural Analysis of Liturgical Units: An Essay in Methodology," in Robert F. Taft, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, second revised edition (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 2001), 191–192.

[3] See Henri de Lubac, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Brother Richard Arnandez, FSC (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 1986).

[4] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, vol. 1, Systematic Theology of Liturgy (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 180. See also

erating concern, then, is to seek to understand what God is doing in the liturgy. The liturgy must be revelatory and present the full mystery of Christ; otherwise it is a vapid exercise in self-aggrandizement. Furthermore, the liturgy is salvific, as it carries on the work of salvation history (the *oikonomia*) in the present time.[5] It is the revelatory nature of liturgy, liturgy as the efficacious unfolding of the Christian mysteries, that this essay takes as the starting point.

I begin from an understanding of tradition as "the dynamic movement of God in history," for which liturgy is the principal means of transmission.[6] Of course, tradition is also the possession of the church, and lived out in the church, which can create competing visions of what tradition is or who is to interpret it. From the perspective of the church, tradition is the continued engagement and interpretation of scripture "in light of the church's worship, experience of the living God, and practice of the Christian life."[7]

The advantages to a liturgical understanding of tradition in the Anglican context(s) are twofold. The first is that Anglicans give priority to the role of tradition in theology alongside scripture and reason, and often experience. Anglican theologians have long made appeals to the church fathers and sought value in the historical development of the Christian faith.[8]

Secondly, liturgy has a special authority in Anglicanism, especially in the *Book of Common Prayer*, that is not present in other traditions. The churches of the Anglican Communion have no magisterium or confession. What we do have is the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP)

Michael B. Aune, "Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship. Part 2, A Different Starting Place," *Worship* 81, no. 2 (March 2007): 151–152; and Robert F. Taft, "Liturgy as Theology," in Taft, *Beyond East and West*, 234.

[5] As in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 2: "For the liturgy, 'making the work of our redemption a present actuality'. . . is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true church." In *The Liturgy Documents,* vol. 1, fourth edition (Chicago, Ill.: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004).

[6] Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 434.

[7] A. N. Williams, "Tradition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 363.

[8] See Henry Chadwick, "Tradition, Fathers and Councils," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight, revised edition (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998), 100–114.

as the document most expressive of Anglican theology and authority.[9] The Prayer Book tradition is one of the most enduring elements of Anglicanism, for there is a real identity forged through common prayer. Richard Hooker, in his magnum opus, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie,* devotes a great deal of time and energy to the defense of the liturgical practices of the Church of England. Book V, which focuses on a defense of church ceremonial, is longer than the preceding four books combined.

What follows is a propaedeutic for constructing an Anglican liturgical theology. The discussion of tradition begins with *nouvelle théologie* and the *ressourcement* theologians of the mid-twentieth century, particularly the work of Yves Congar. While these theologians might have reached different conclusions from an Anglican counterpart, they are nonetheless at home in an Anglican context given that their method was a return to the sources of scripture and the church fathers. I will then place Congar in dialogue with contemporary Anglican theologians on tradition. From here the paper will move to demonstrating how the foundation of tradition feeds and is fed by the liturgy, drawing on both Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians.

Ressourcement *and* Nouvelle Théologie

The theologians of the *ressourcement* and *nouvelle théologie* movement are best characterized by their return to the sources, especially to scripture and the writings of the church fathers. The work of this turn in theology, a turn which took history within theology seriously, helped give rise to many of the current liturgical patterns in the most recent revisions of the Prayer Book around the Anglican Communion. The twentieth-century liturgical movement and *ressourcement* had a mutual influence on one another.[10] Through their study of the church fathers, the *ressourcement* theologians came to realize the centrality of the liturgy in theological reflection. It should be noted that the moniker *nouvelle théologie* was never one that was claimed by these theologians, as it had been used first as a pejorative. The central figures of this loose movement certainly did not see themselves as

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[9] Chadwick, "Tradition, Fathers and Councils," 105; W. Taylor Stevenson, "Lex Orandi—Lex Credendi," in Sykes, *The Study of Anglicanism*, 188.

[10] For an account of the liturgical movement and *ressourcement* finding one another in Europe, see Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in* Sacrosanctum Concilium (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012), 22–58.

doing *new* theology; they were, in fact, doing *old* theology, returning to the sources and looking at the whole of Christian history.[11]

The characterization of the *nouvelle théologie* as a reaction against Thomism misses the broader themes of the movement. The reaction was against "a monolithic *neo*-Thomism which had become as remote from contemporary concerns and the needs of the twentieth-century church as it was arguably distant from the spirit of Thomas himself."[12] In attempting to shift the focus of theology from a total dependence upon the neo-Thomist tradition, *nouvelle théologie* looked to the Christian past and the whole of tradition with the mindset that it might have something to say to the present. While A. N. Williams points out that there is no unified method or system across the movement, it is united by a common "sensibility and vision."[13]

Hans Boersma also sees in *nouvelle théologie* a common sensibility and vision: a "sacramental ontology." In his extensive study of *nouvelle théologie*, Boersma argues that the principal theme that runs through the movement is this sacramental ontology, a term borrowed from Congar.[14] Boersma defines sacramental ontology as "the conviction that historical realities of the created order served as divinely ordained, sacramental means leading to eternal divine mysteries."[15] This shared sensibility across these varied theologians derives from a conviction that the Christian past must have something real to offer contemporary theology. There was a real concern among these theologians to consider seriously the entirety of the tradition and to restore balance and unity to theology.

Boersma turns to a 1946 essay of Jean Daniélou, "Les Orientations Présentes de la Pensée Religieuse,"[16] to articulate the program for *nouvelle théologie*. He maintains that Daniélou, like the other *nouvelle* theologians, found that there had been a rupture between theology and life. Daniélou argued that theology would need to meet three

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[11] A. N. Williams, "The Future of the Past: The Contemporary Significance of the *Nouvelle Théologie*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 4 (October 2005): 347–348.

[12] Williams, "The Future of the Past," 349.

[13] Williams, "The Future of the Past," 348–349.

[14] Hans Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 225; Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 259.

[15] Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 289.

[16] Jean Daniélou, "Les Orientations Présentes de la Pensée Religieuse," in *Études* 79, no. 249 (1946): 5–21.

criteria if it were to overcome this divide. First, theology would need to treat God as God, as the subject, not the object of theology. Second, theology would need to engage with contemporary philosophy; even if theology were ultimately critical, intellectual currents could not simply be dismissed. Third, there would need to be a reintegration of theology and spirituality; theology needed to be made more concrete, more *useful*.[17] The first of Daniélou's criteria is ultimately what becomes foundational for *nouvelle théologie* and is the most useful for our purposes, particularly in echoing that God must be the subject.

For *nouvelle théologie* the purpose of theology was not to overcome mystery, but to enter into it.[18] Because mystery was central, faith also had to be central. The *ressourcement* theologians, because of their emphasis on the sacramental nature of tradition, were unwilling to put all of their stock in natural reason. In appealing to divine revelation, natural reason would at a certain point be limited. Any hope of comprehending, or moving toward comprehension, of revealed truth was dependent upon faith.[19] The style of theological writing from the theologians associated with *nouvelle théologie* often embodies this mystical, sacramental mindset. "The *nouvelle théologie* reminds the modern theologian that the mode of theological discourse is confined neither to the technical, nor to the commonsensical . . . but must aspire also to the lyric if it is to speak truly of the mystery that transcends all others, and can therefore never be incapsulated, but only evoked."[20]

The method, explicitly named by Daniélou, for those associated with *nouvelle théologie* was a *ressourcement* of the whole tradition, especially in a return to the sources: scripture, church fathers, and liturgy. For Daniélou particularly, the liturgy was a major part of the *ressourcement* project.[21] As we will see, Congar also made the liturgy central to his method. The *ressourcement* of the liturgy was predominantly a rediscovery of the earlier forms of liturgy and early liturgical patterns. A *ressourcement* of the liturgy would allow the realities of the sacramental signs to be perceived and contemplated by necessitating a shift away from an emphasis on efficacy only. For Daniélou

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17 Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 2–4.
18 Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 5–6.
19 Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 220.
20 Williams, "The Future of the Past," 356.
21 Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 3.

and the others the liturgy first of all signified something, and attention should be given to what the liturgy signifies before turning to the efficacy of liturgy. Daniélou maintained that the liturgy "should more clearly take on the form of a human encounter with the mystery of God."[22] The principal concern for *nouvelle théologie* was not history for its own sake, but the appropriation of history for use in the present (tradition). *Ressourcement* does not serve history, but rather the present community.[23]

An Anglican Reading of Congar

Yves Congar introduces the first part of *Tradition and Traditions*, his historical essay, as a "mere outline" in comparison to other works on the topic.[24] Despite Congar's modest assessment of his own work, it remains a monument of theological reflection on the subject. John Webster's succinct appreciation is apt: "More than anything, it is a book animated by a sense that theology is rational worship in the church, and that the church is the realization in time of the self-communication of the triune God."[25] In the section that follows, I will highlight four aspects of Congar's work that have a particular bearing on the project at hand and place them in dialogue with contemporary Anglican theologians: (1) the origins of tradition; (2) the unity of scripture, tradition, and church; (3) the sacramental nature of tradition; and (4) the role of baptism and eucharist in tradition.

Before proceeding it will be helpful to have in mind Congar's distinction between traditions and tradition. Here, *traditions* "are determinations, normative in conditions . . . and not contained formally in the canon of Scripture. They may originate with Jesus, the apostles, or the Church . . . they may be permanent or temporary in character."[26] These are matters of discipline and custom, and traditions might be aspects of tradition; in fact, they are often the means of transmission, the language of tradition, but they are not the fullness of tradition.[27]

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[22] Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 3.

[23] See Williams, "The Future of the Past," 354.

[24] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, xix.

[25] J. B. Webster, "Purity and Plenitude: Evangelical Reflections on Congar's *Tradition and Traditions*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 4 (October 2005): 400.

[26] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 287.

[27] Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. A. N. Woodrow (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964), 144–145.

Tradition is the transmission of the whole gospel and the whole of the Christian mystery in scripture (the word, which necessarily includes preaching), liturgy, creeds, and sacraments. Tradition is more than these elements individually; it is more properly contained in their meaning and interpretation, which these "monuments" also express.

> A certain spirit or living understanding in the Christian community (*ecclesia*) may be recognized as the origin of such monuments, just as one argues that there exists a certain spirit behind the cultural manifestations of a people, or a certain ethos in a family. Tradition is thus that Catholic sense which the Church possesses as the supra-individual and living subject of a series of testimonies in which is expressed its interpretation of what it transmits and what it lives by.[28]

1. The origins of tradition. The source of tradition is ultimately Jesus Christ. He is the fullness and progenitor of all that the tradition transmits.[29] However, to seek the origins of tradition is not the same as to seek the source. Because tradition is a transmission, a movement through time, it must move beyond Christ, and there must be someone or something to pass it along. This is Christianity at its core: a transmission, a movement through history. For Congar, the apostles are the origin of tradition. Drawing on Irenaeus, Congar places the whole life of the church as derivative of the apostles.[30] They were the ones baptized with the Spirit at Pentecost and those who carried on Jesus' commands to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to baptize in the Trinitarian name. A secondary layer for Irenaeus and the other church fathers was the interpretation of scripture. Tradition and scripture exist in a dialogical relationship, with scripture preceding tradition.[31] Congar characterizes the relationship: "Any interest shown in the faith taken as a whole, summed up in the mystery of Christ, proves to be concerned with the content of *Tradition*, a content found whole and entire in Scripture as read in the Church and read according to a method of exegesis not reducible to the purely historical and philosophical method."[32]

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[28] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 288.
[29] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 279.
[30] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 24–25.
[31] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 32, 45.
[32] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 63.

For contemporary Anglican theologian David Brown, the origins of tradition are also apostolic. Going a step beyond Congar, Brown sees tradition at work in scripture, especially in the Gospels. For Brown, tradition is the "motor" of revelation in scripture and beyond.[33] The fact that there are four (canonical) Gospels points to an early appropriation of history to specific contexts, to contextualized revelation. While each of the Gospels gets to the same essential truths in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, each does it in a different manner. This is especially the case when the fourth gospel is compared to the synoptics. John's Gospel is a supplemental history.[34] Ultimately, "tradition can be seen as biblically constituted by the imaginative reappropriation of the past, and not its slavish copying."[35]

2. *The unity of scripture, tradition, and church.* Congar sought to recover what for the church fathers had been a unity of tradition, scripture, and church. Until the high Middle Ages, these three were inseparable. "Tradition is an interpretation of Scripture. . . . There are many sects which propose their own interpretations; tradition, however, is that interpretation of Scripture which is the interpretation of the *Church*. Its criterion is the apostolicity of that Church, guaranteed by the succession of hierarchical ministers."[36] Beginning with the Gregorian reforms of the twelfth century, in Congar's reading, there began a separation of these three, which reached its apogee in Reformation and post-Tridentine theology.[37] Both Roman Catholics and Protestants were guilty of opposing scripture to church, though in different ways. The reformers so emphasized the authority of scripture that ecclesial authority was rejected. The Roman Catholic reaction was to emphasize the authority of the church to such an extent that tradition and scripture were taken to be two independent sources of authority.[38]

Henry Chadwick affirms that there is no scripture without tradition, and like David Brown appeals to the formation of the New Testament canon as a product of the church. Even if scripture takes

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[33] David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

[34] Brown, *Tradition and Imagination*, 64–67.

[35] Brown, *Tradition and Imagination*, 65.

[36] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 38.

[37] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 135.

[38] Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 233–235; Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 138–155 (Reformation) and 156–176 (Trent).

the primary role in the scripture–tradition relationship, tradition helps to discern what is essential in history and scripture. The disruption of this balance has deleterious effects for theology, creating a rift between dogmatic and historical theology.[39] Further, scripture is separated from the community, its proper place. As a product of the community, and meant for liturgical worship, the proper place of scriptural interpretation is within that very community that spans time. The community (throughout time) contains more wisdom than any one individual possibly can have at any one time. Both the Reformation and the Council of Trent misplaced this authority.[40] The problem of Trent was that authority was given disproportionately to the Magisterium to discern tradition.[41] The problem of the Reformation was either that the authority of scriptural interpretation lay with those who possessed a facility in the ancient languages or that the individual was set against the community with his or her own interpretation. "God has given an infallibly inspired text, indeed the sole source of infallibility, but its interpretation is in no sense committed either to the community or to its pastors but is free for every believer to take in whatever way he feels to be right."[42] The patristic emphasis on scriptural interpretation within the community, of which the liturgical assembly is the fullest expression, prevents either extreme.

3. The sacramental nature of tradition. Pervasive throughout *Tradition and Traditions* is a sacramental understanding of tradition, a sacramental ontology, especially as Congar situates tradition within the total mystery of Christ throughout both essays. "Like the Church itself, tradition is simply the manifestation, *in the time of human history*, of the 'mystery' of salvation which, already announced, outlined and launched under the Old Dispensation, has now appeared and been given to us in its fullness in Jesus Christ."[43] In a real sense, the church is the continuation of Christ's presence in the world through the principle of the incarnation. For Congar, ecclesial time is sacramental, thus scripture and tradition must be treated as such; they are a realization of the presence of Christ.[44]

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39 Chadwick, "Tradition, Fathers and Councils," 102–103.
40 Chadwick, "Tradition, Fathers and Councils," 104.
41 Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 235.
42 Chadwick, "Tradition, Fathers and Councils," 103.
43 Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 42–43.
44 Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 192.

Ecclesial time, or sacred history, is key to Congar's understanding of tradition as sacramental. The very existence of the church is dependent upon this sacramental ontology. A simple history of the church cannot be done; as the church is both heavenly and earthly it participates in both cosmic time and the time of human history.[45] The sacred history of the church, the history of salvation, has a threefold presence. First, there are the saving acts, which took place once for all, but are still operative in the present. Second, there is an eschatological presence that looks to fulfillment, but also sees its fulfillment present now in seed form. Third, there is union with God, which *is* the fulfillment of tradition, but is also lived in the present. This is the "sacramental nature of the time of the Church."[46] More simply put, the sacramental nature of the church holds together past, present, and future, so that the acts of the past are present *now*.

> Sacramental time, the time of the Church, allows the sharing by men who follow each other through the centuries in an event which is historically unique and which took place at a distant time; this sharing is achieved not merely on the intellectual level, as I could commune with Plato's thought, or with the death of Socrates, but in the presence and action of the mystery of salvation.[47]

Congar's sacramental approach to tradition is critical to understanding liturgy as a privileged place of God's activity, which I will return to momentarily. I think the argument can be made that David Brown shares a sacramental ontology with Yves Congar,[48] with the notable difference that Brown proposes that revelation occurs even outside of the church, a step that Congar could not take. Brown casts tradition *as* revelation, as a dynamic process of God's continued action in the world.[49] In fact, tradition must be revelation if we are to take the incarnation seriously, since in the incarnation God took the human form seriously enough to be situated in it in a particular place

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[45] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 257; Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 224.

[46] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 259.

[47] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 260.

[48] While a sacramental ontology is implicit in *Tradition and Imagination*, it is made explicit in Brown's later work, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[49] Brown, *Tradition and Imagination*, 1, 5.

and time. Brown finds it untenable to postulate a God who is confined only to revelation in a particular period and assigns no role in the development of the church.[50] Congar and Brown would agree, however, on a *ressourcement* (though I doubt Brown would use the phrase) of the whole tradition that does not develop theology from one particular moment. Of theologies that seek to recover or promote one historical epoch at the expense of the whole tradition, Brown writes, "What this fails to take seriously is the value of tradition as a staged process, where the steps on the way might be of as intrinsic interest as the beginning or the end."[51]

4. Baptism and eucharist. Before arriving at the synthesis of tradition and liturgy, I must note these two liturgical acts that figure prominently in Congar's theology of tradition. Baptism, particularly, encapsulates the whole of tradition; the meaning of tradition is contained entirely within baptism. As noted previously, tradition is both transmission and interpretation, which is what baptism ritually communicates in the handing over of the rule of faith, scripture, and creed, to which the church fathers often made appeal. Baptism, moreover, is a *profession* of faith; specifically it is a profession of that faith that is given and received to newness of life.[52] For Congar the two great "acts" of the *traditio* are the handing over of the gospel and the creed and the profession of faith accompanied by the Trinitarian prayer in the baptism itself. These acts are "a communication of the unique source which is the Gospel, that is Christ. . . . *Traditio* came to its completion in *(re)generatio.* Its communication as knowledge and law was completed in a gift of life."[53]

The eucharist is a prime example for Congar that tradition antedates its monuments, and that the monuments are actual expressions of the tradition. The eucharist, like baptism, is also a transmission. It is the totality of the church passed on from the apostles who had received it from the Lord. This is not a vision of the eucharist as simple mimesis or repetition of the Last Supper as though it were the first

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[50] Brown, *Tradition and Imagination*, 5, also chapter 6, "Divine Accommodation," 275–321.

[51] Brown, *Tradition and Imagination*, 50. For a summary of Brown's arguments on these points, see William J. Abraham, "Scripture, Tradition, and Revelation: An Appreciative Critique of David Brown," in *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Taylor Worley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13–28.

[52] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 28–29, 243.

[53] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 279–280.

eucharist (how could it be?), but rather as an act of faith that those first followers of Christ continued as a perpetual memorial of Christ's *pascha*. Congar especially notes that if there had not been the controversy at the church in Corinth, we would know very little about the earliest celebrations of the eucharist beyond the Last Supper accounts in the Gospels.[54] In the celebration of the eucharist, tradition is first of all lived in faith. The celebration(s) of the eucharist only emerged over time, and only very gradually gave way to doctrine.[55]

As incorporation into the faith community, baptism is an essential element of tradition. It is where the *traditio* most clearly happens, and where the faith is most explicitly professed.[56] Baptism shows the faith to be corporate, a shared life in the tradition, in the full mystery of Christ, the source of tradition. The faith professed in baptism is that of the whole church "in continuity with the apostles."[57] The eucharist is the continued engagement with that faith and the whole tradition. "The Christian sacraments, above all the Eucharist, show the believer engaged with and challenged by the source event of faith, engaging in 'cross and resurrection', and so making the paradigm his or her own, making the life lived from that sacrament a reflection, a kind of translation of the paradigm."[58] In these liturgical acts is the entirety of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the gospel.

Living Tradition, Living Liturgy

Having outlined a few of the central themes in Congar's work on tradition, I will now turn to focus greater attention on liturgy. What I will demonstrate in this section is that liturgy and tradition cannot be divorced from one another. Geoffrey Wainwright has been so bold as to say, "Liturgy *is* the Tradition, and . . . the Tradition *is* liturgy."[59] I will propose three ways in this section in which liturgy and tradition

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[54] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 350, 415; Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology*, 239.

[55] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 351–353.

[56] See Louis Weil, "The Gospel in Anglicanism," in Sykes, *The Study of Anglicanism*, 58; Chadwick, "Tradition, Fathers and Councils," 100–101.

[57] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 249.

[58] Rowan Williams, "What is Catholic Orthodoxy?," in *Essays Catholic and Radical*, ed. Rowan Williams and Kenneth Leech (London: The Bowerdean Press, 1983), 21.

[59] Geoffrey Wainwright, "Tradition as a Liturgical Act," in *The Quadrilog: Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism, Essays in Honor of George H. Tavard,* ed. Kenneth Hagen (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 129.

are intimately bound: (1) tradition and liturgy share a sacramental nature; (2) both proclaim the paschal mystery; and (3) the two are soteriological.

1. Tradition and liturgy share a sacramental nature. A major achievement of Congar's theology of tradition was to present the "sacramental time of the Church." The sacramental nature of tradition means that the past, present, and future are held together as one reality. This sacramental reality is the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of the church. The past has a continuing presence in the present, thus making history a present actuality. The Spirit carries the tradition established by Christ in the principle of the Incarnation throughout time to its eschatological fulfillment.[60] This is the living tradition that continues to grow by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in its understanding of the mystery of Christ. This sacramental nature of tradition might be simply characterized as the living of the Christian faith throughout the generations. "The tradition received by each one of us is not the quintessence of primitive Christianity, but the totality of what has been revealed about Christ over long ages."[61]

Tradition, in its genetic vision, contains more than can be comprehended at any one time. This is inherent in a sacramental ontology. The reality to which any symbol points and in which it participates is beyond comprehension.[62] This is true also of liturgy, particularly in bringing together past and future in the present. It is for this very reason that Congar claims the liturgy as the chief "custodian" of tradition. "It [liturgy] is, indeed, the active celebration of the Christian mystery, and as it celebrates and contains the mystery in its fullness, it transmits all the essential elements of this mystery."[63] That is, the elements are transmitted in their wholeness, for the mysteries to be entered into over time.

Andrew Cameron-Mowat calls attention to what it is that Congar intends when he says that the liturgy is the vehicle of tradition, gathering up past and future in the present:

> Note here what Congar is *not* saying. It is not Tradition *as interpreted* that does this work, but Tradition *as the continuing*

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60 Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 264–265.
61 Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 267–268.
62 Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 356.
63 Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 354.

> *sign and activity of the Holy Spirit*; it is not traditions, including interpretations bound by history according to such time-bound historical entities as the Magisterium, which fully and completely mediate the wishes of the Holy Spirit, but the continuing actions of liturgical prayer as prayer, forming as they do the response of the Church through the ages to the command to "pray at all times," which transmit and express *for all time* the presence of Christ, the unity of the assembly in Christ's Body and the activity of the Holy Spirit.[64]

Here we can realize Wainwright's assertion that "liturgy *is* Tradition" and vice versa.

Robert Taft reminds us that while the events the liturgy celebrates have an historical past, the liturgy celebrates these events in their "permanent present reality."[65] The historical events of the past are the once-for-all epiphany, the first manifestation. But these events are only historical, in the past, in human history. Jesus, the eternal word of God (John 1), is a present person. In the cosmic history of the church, the efficacy of Christ's saving events are ever present, and they are ever present in the privileged place of the church's liturgy. Ultimately, the historical events are only historical to us and not to God.[66] As Episcopalians and so many Christians proclaim at the center of the anaphora: "Christ has died. Christ *is* risen. Christ will come again."[67]

2. Tradition and liturgy both proclaim the paschal mystery. The paschal mystery is the root metaphor of liturgy, and is always at the heart of the church's liturgical celebrations.

> In short, Christian liturgy is an enactment of the paschal mystery of Jesus as the disclosure of God and his plan for us. . . . Christian liturgy has celebrated this root metaphor in Word and Sacrament, principally and most primitively in baptism, Eucharist, Sunday,

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[64] Andrew Cameron-Mowat, "Yves Congar as Liturgical Theologian: The Significance of his Writings for Christian Liturgy," unpublished PhD dissertation (Berkeley, Calif.: Graduate Theological Union, 1998), 117.

[65] Robert F. Taft, "What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses," in Taft, *Beyond East and West*, 244.

[66] Taft, "What Does Liturgy Do?," 244–246.

[67] Eucharistic Prayer A, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal, 1979), 363; emphasis added.

> and Easter, but also in matins and vespers and funerals and feasts and, indeed, whenever Christians have gathered in Jesus' name.[68]

This has long been a principal aspect of the Anglican liturgical tradition. Louis Weil demonstrates this with the Easter Anthem appointed by Thomas Cranmer for use on Easter in the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*. Cranmer's use of the text from Romans 6 ("Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more") demonstrates both his liturgical intuition (the early Holy Week and Easter liturgies were not at his disposal) and the rich connection between *lived faith and the paschal mystery* as celebrated in the liturgy. This is the heart of the gospel that is also at the heart of the liturgy.[69]

The two dominical sacraments—the two sacraments that Congar placed at the heart of tradition—baptism and eucharist, are themselves the primary celebrations of the paschal mystery. Baptism, in the Pauline (Romans 6) interpretation, is incorporation into Christ's death and resurrection. The eucharist is the proclamation of the Lord's death and resurrection until he comes again. These two sacraments proclaim the gospel fully. Liturgy has, "in a more concentrated way than Scripture, the truth of the divine-human covenant relationship, finally confirmed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the unique meeting point between God and man."[70] Elsewhere, Congar affirms that liturgy acts as an "interpretation of the Holy Scriptures that brings home their meaning,"[71] and this proves true in encountering the mystery of Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. Through the liturgy we are thrust directly into those mysteries.

This is no less true of tradition, which centers on the paschal mystery. The source of all tradition *is* Jesus Christ. Tradition, through liturgy, serves to keep us in contact with its source. Tradition is real access to the paschal mystery, the source of the Christian community, through a dynamic engagement with the past as it has come down through the generations.[72] Rowan Williams characterizes orthodoxy (read tradition) as the realization of the Easter proclamation, the paschal mystery, in each generation anew: "The community gathers for

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[68] Taft, "What Does Liturgy Do?," 243.

[69] Weil, "The Gospel in Anglicanism,"in Sykes, *The Study of Anglicanism*, 57–58.

[70] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 430.

[71] Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 130, and 125–132.

[72] Williams, "What is Catholic Orthodoxy?," 14. See also Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 132.

those acts which put it in the presence of its source, gathers to recover Easter; it comes to be both fed and judged by the source event."[73]

3. Liturgy and tradition are soteriological. It is the sacramental nature of the church that permits tradition to be salvific, and to make present and efficacious the saving events which Christ did complete once-for-all. Tradition is the manifestation of the mystery of salvation in human history; it has an active role in salvation history.[74] Baptism is, of course, the most visible sign of this manifestation, as it is the chief operator in transmitting and handing over the faith. The *traditio* and *redditio* of baptism are the liturgical professions of faith, and not simply rational assents to a set of intellectual propositions. "Tradition is not only noetic, but real. It is a handing over of salvation, of the Christian life, of the reality of the covenant."[75]

As the case of baptism demonstrates, liturgy and the sacraments are a place of the revelation of God's saving plan. The liturgy contains the whole of the church's faith and the whole of the gospel kerygma. The liturgy passes on the whole of the mystery of salvation and is a place of encounter with that saving mystery.[76] Taft powerfully states in his essay on a liturgical soteriology that if the Bible contains the saving words of God through humanity, the liturgy is God's saving deeds through the actions of those who abide in him. It is worth quoting at length:

> [Liturgy's] purpose, to complete once again our circle and return to the Pauline theology of liturgy with which we began, is to turn you and me into the same reality. The purpose of baptism is to make us cleansing waters and healing and strengthening oil; the purpose of Eucharist is not to change bread and wine, but to change you and me. Through baptism and Eucharist it is we who are to become Christ for one another, and a sign to the world that is yet to hear his name. That is what Christian liturgy is all about because that is what Christianity is all about.[77]

In the Anglican liturgical tradition, as Louis Weil understands it, salvation entails sanctification, the call to a holy life. This justification

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[73] Williams, "What is Catholic Orthodoxy?," 19–21.
[74] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 42–43.
[75] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 280.
[76] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 355–58; Taft, "What Does Liturgy Do?," 242.
[77] Taft, "What Does Liturgy Do?," 247.

is dependent upon the liturgical community, since through baptism one is placed into the context of the whole church in the symbol of the eucharistic community. In liturgy, the saving deeds of Christ are proclaimed, preached, ritually enacted, and generally celebrated. The liturgy is a place of sanctification; in it God works in the human condition and we have the sure signs of God's grace, in both word and sacrament.[78]

Congar claimed that the liturgy is "endowed with the genius of Tradition."[79] With a liturgical approach to tradition, the converse is also true: tradition is endowed with the genius of liturgy. Liturgy cannot be fully understood without tradition, and likewise, tradition needs liturgy. While tradition does have other monuments, it is the liturgy that is the real motor. I might even go so far as to say that there is no tradition without liturgy, or at the very least, liturgy keeps the tradition dynamic. A sacramental ontology is integral to this relationship. The *nouvelle théologie*'s sacramental sensibility and *ressourcement* of the tradition provided the resources necessary to see this relationship in action, to see the dynamism present, and to maintain the necessarily "dialogical" nature of liturgy and tradition,[80] allowing the two to be mutually critical. From an Anglican perspective, it gives dynamism and richness to our understanding of theology; it keeps us in contact with tradition while giving liturgy a defining role in our quest to articulate identity and authority. Most importantly, this *ressourcement* has put God back at the center of liturgy and allowed God to be an active participant in the liturgy in the mystery of Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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78 Weil, "The Gospel in Anglicanism," in Sykes, *The Study of Anglicanism*, 69.

79 Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 435.

80 Williams, "Tradition," 376.