

The Thomistic Underpinnings of *Ad Gentes*

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THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL has been credited with a host of achievements or “renewals.” Among them are renewed understandings of Revelation, liturgy, the episcopacy, and—not least—the Church’s missionary activity. Perhaps the most immediate and conspicuous manifestation of the Church’s renewed understanding of the Church’s missionary activity since Vatican II was the transformation of *De propaganda Fide*, whose new appellation, *Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione*, reflects a more collegial manner of missionary exercise. Less conspicuous, but no less appreciated is the theological foundation of the Church’s missionary activity that is expressed in the first chapter of *Ad Gentes*, entitled, “Doctrinal Principles,” according to which the unitary mission of the Church is rooted in the divine missions of the Son and Spirit, hence, making the Church by her very nature, missionary. As *Ad Gentes* teaches,

The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father. This decree, however, flows from the “fount-like love” or charity of God the Father who, being the ‘principle without principle’ from whom the Son is begotten and Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, freely creating us on account of His surpassing and merciful kindness and graciously calling us moreover to share with Him His life and His cry, has generously poured out, and does not cease to pour out still, His divine goodness. Thus He who created all things may at last be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28), bringing about at one and the same time His own glory and our

happiness. But it pleased God to call men to share His life, not just singly, apart from any mutual bond, but rather to mold them into a people in which His sons, once scattered abroad might be gathered together (cf. John 11:52).¹

For the contemporary theologian, the doctrinal principles expressed in *Ad Gentes*, §2 (i.e., that the Church's mission is rooted in the missions of the Spirit and Son, and that the end of this mission is God's glory and our happiness) are generally taken for granted. The same, however, could not be said for those of the Conciliar period, during which time the relationship between the Church's mission and the Holy Trinity was by no means self-evident. Yves Congar relates to us in his Council diary, for example, that according to the Dutch canonist and Jesuit Ludowijk Buijk of the Gregorian, "the missions do not have any connection with the Trinitarian Processions"² Such an attitude was representative of the limitations in the Church's missiological reflection. As the French theologian, A.M. Henry, O.P., noted, "The missionary manuals did not link 'mission' to that of the Father who sends the Son, and of the Son who sends the Spirit. Nor did the theology of the divine missions treat 'missionary activity'. They were two distinct worlds. The Council brought them together and the first chapters of *Ad Gentes* present this liaison."³ While this liaison has been commented upon extensively and appreciated as far as theological achievements can be, the Thomistic tradition's contribution to the achievement is oftentimes only cursorily acknowledged, if acknowledged at all.⁴ This contribution lies not only

¹ *Ad Gentes*, §2 (1965).

² Yves Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, 2 Volumes (Paris: Cerf, 2002), II, 354 (30 March, 1965). An English translation of Congar's Council diary has now been published as *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012). The reference, unless otherwise noted, will be to the original French edition.

³ A.M. Henry, O.P., "Mission—C. Le Grand Tournant de Vatican II," *Catholicisme hier, aujourd'hui, demain IX* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1982), col. 321.

⁴ For example, I seek to supplement what is an excellent study of the Conciliar text by Peter Hünermann, "Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche, *Ad gentes*," in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, 4 (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 219–336. Relevant but brief and unexplored references to Aquinas are made on 255–257, 263. There is a short start in James Anderson's *A Vatican II Pneumatology of the Paschal Mystery: The Historical-Doctrinal Genesis of Ad Gentes I, 2-5* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1988), 278ff. Bonaventure Koppenburg, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974) makes no mention of Aquinas in his commentary on "The Church 'from the Trinity'"

on the level of content, but also on the level of theological method, as another diary passage of Congar hints: Congar, after having witnessed his draft (of what would become the first Chapter of *Ad Gentes*) survive the attacks leveled against it in the *De Missionibus* Commission, wrote in his diary that “the movement of the Council will have consisted in passing from the purely juridical to a supernatural ontology.”⁵ Congar’s observation can be considered a short, dense, if even hyperbolic, summation of the achievement of the theological method that was employed in so many of the council texts drafted by Congar: namely, a method whereby all realities under examination are considered according to their relationship to the mystery of God, *sub ratione Dei*.⁶ In this article, I hope to demonstrate the accuracy of this observation, with particular reference to the case of *Ad Gentes* and the role which St. Thomas Aquinas’s theology played in this accomplishment. It should be stated from the outset, however, that I do not mean to suggest that recourse to Aquinas is necessary and sufficient to overcome the “juridicism” (as Congar puts

or its fourth chapter, “The Mission of the Church.” The same goes for the commentary on *Ad Gentes* in Adrian Hastings, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, vol. 1 (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1968) and Suso Brechter, “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity,” in *Commentary on the Documents of the Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (NY: Crossroads, 1989), 112–124. Cardinal George offers profound reflections on the Trinitarian foundations for mission in his commentary on *Ad Gentes*, but again, there is no mention of Aquinas. See Francis Cardinal George, “The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*,” in *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*, eds. Matthew Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 290–292. This note is an observation, not a criticism.

⁵ Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, II, 30. The exaggeration stemming from Congar’s use of the word “purely” is exemplary of the struggle undergone by Congar at the Council, as it is relayed through the medium of a diary entry. A cursory glance at his ecclesiology shows the importance with which Congar holds the institutional (structural), and hence, juridical dimension of the Church. Cf. Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, 2nd ed., Unam Sanctam 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1954), 46–79, 229–233. Congar is not opposed to the necessary juridical relationships that constitute the Church, and he is well aware that an ‘ontology of grace’ was never absent in ecclesiological reflections prior to Vatican II. His hyperbolic journal entry, however, is a rhetorical response to certain members of the *De Missionibus* commission: namely some Canon lawyers who approached everything with a juridical lens. Congar continues in the diary, saying of Saverio Paventi, professor of Canon Law of the Missions at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, “for him the ‘real’ (his expression) begins with the juridical definition. Otherwise it is about spirituality or poetry” (354).

⁶ *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 7.

it) that pervaded many theological sub-disciplines such as ecclesiology and missiology, nor that other influences such as the Church Fathers did not play significant roles in the Conciliar accomplishment.⁷ It is only to say that, as a matter of historical fact, in the twentieth-century theological development of mission, and at the Council itself, the work of St. Thomas, his theological method, and his disciples—particularly Yves Congar and Charles Journet—were key to the theological achievement of chapter 1 in *Ad Gentes*. For reasons known only to the redactors and commission members, the meager number of references to Aquinas is disproportional to the role his thought played in *Ad Gentes*'s theological foundation for mission. Generally speaking, the dearth of footnotes to Aquinas (relative to Church Fathers) reflects the contention in which an official (and undue, so it was thought) exultation of the Angelic Doctor was held.⁸

In this article, I suggest that an understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas's teaching on the "divine missions" is necessary for a theologically adequate understanding of the Conciliar text, most notably Ch.1, No. 2, despite the fact that this paragraph lacks any explicit reference to Aquinas.⁹ The fact that Congar's references to Aquinas were dropped from the promulgated version, coupled with the trajectory of twentieth-century ecclesiology and missiology, together constitute enough *historical* evidence that would legitimize using St. Thomas and his interpreters as a reading key. In short, I argue that the Thomistic tradition is not only theologically illuminating, but also historically necessary for a more thorough understanding of *Ad Gentes*, §2.

To this end, I will proceed in three steps: first I will briefly discuss the conciliar context in which Congar offered his first draft for what would become the first chapter of *Ad Gentes*. Second, I will offer an historical overview of the theological developments—both ecclesiological and

⁷ The first paragraph cited, for example, departs from traditional Thomist teaching in its use of the Eastern Patristic formula, "through the Son," and in its appropriation of charity to the Father, characteristic of St. Bonaventure, not St. Thomas. See, Yves Congar, "Principes doctrinaux (nos. 2 à 9)," in *L'Activité missionnaire de l'Église, Décret "Ad Gentes,"* ed. J. Schutte, Unam Sanctam 67 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 160.

⁸ Joseph Komonchak, "Thomism and the Second Vatican Council," in *Continuity and Plurality in Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Gerald A. McCool, S.J.*, ed. Anthony J. Cernera (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 1998), 53–73, 59 and 69.

⁹ Aquinas is cited twice in *Ad Gentes*, but never in the context of the Trinitarian processions and the divine missions.

missiologist—that set the stage for the Conciliar achievement. Finally, I will present a short theological reflection on *Ad Gentes* in light of St. Thomas’s thought on the divine missions.

The Need for a New Chapter 1 in *Ad Gentes*

At the beginning of the Council in 1962, the Franciscan missiologist Ronan Hoffman observed,

Operatio sequitur esse. Logically, one ought to have a clear conception of the *esse* and *finis* of an operation, in order to carry it out most correctly and perfectly. Yet, the historical fact is that we have engaged in missionary activity without inquiring into its precise nature and specific purpose.¹⁰

While Hoffman is clearly exaggerating in his claim about there not having been any inquiry into the nature and purpose of mission, the general gist of his statement is corroborated by the very different approaches to mission that manifested themselves at the Council. Many on the De Missionibus Commission had a highly juridical and territorial understanding of mission, and aimed at a reform of the canonical norms of the missions under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. A *theological* foundation for mission, or “the proposal that the missions be understood in the context of the Church’s single and general mission” was not on their immediate horizon.¹¹ Without jettisoning territorial elements, the theological foundation would ultimately assume a more personal—rather than geographical—framework for mission, thereby rendering the Decree relevant to *all* Christians today, not only to those involved in missionary activity in the technical sense of the word.¹²

Among the last of the documents, *Ad Gentes* would be formally

¹⁰ Ronan Hoffman, “The Development of Mission Theology in the Twentieth Century,” *Theological Studies* 23 (1962): 419–441, 421–422.

¹¹ *The History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, ET ed. Joseph Komonchak, 5 Volumes (Leuven: Peeters, 1995–2006), I, 1940. Congar would include in this group the following Conciliar actors: Gregory Agagianian (Prefect of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*); André Seumois, O.M.I. (Belgian Council peritus); Ludowijk Buijk, S.J. (Canon Lawyer at the Gregorian); Saverio Paventi (Secretary of the commission for the missions and peritus from diocese of Benevento, Italy).

¹² In other words, *Ad Gentes* is the foundational document not only for, say, the work of missionary institutes, but also for the New Evangelization.

promulgated by the Council with 2,394 “placet” votes, the largest amount of yes votes ever cast at the second Vatican Council.¹³ Despite the ultimate unanimity behind it, *Ad Gentes* had perhaps the most trouble getting off the ground. The Council Fathers desired both a full-fledged treatment of the missions and an articulated *theological* foundation for the Church’s missionary activity; but both of these were still wanting by the end of November 1964.¹⁴ At this point, the third conciliar session had closed and there was not even a draft yet of what would become *Ad Gentes*. At the beginning of the last inter-session, with time running, the Commission for the Missions was forced to revamp itself by coopting new periti. Not without some drama, Congar was finally accepted as one of them.¹⁵

If we return, however, to the third session, we see in the Assembly Interventions and written Animadversions substantial expressions of what the Fathers had in mind when it came to a *theological* foundation for mission. Here I will mention just two. The first is from an oral intervention by Rev. Xavier Geeraerts, Belgian missionary, titular bishop of Lagania, living in Antwerp, on behalf of seventy-five missionary bishops. He said,

A theology concerning mission is lacking in the present schema... the union of the mission of the Church with the missions of the Word and of the Holy Spirit remain rather implicit [in *De Ecclesia*]... although really it is the first foundation of the essentially missionary nature of the Church itself: I say the most deep foundation *because according to St. Thomas Aquinas, the temporal missions of the divine Persons have their origin in the eternal procession of these divine Persons*.¹⁶

¹³ Since Vatican II was the largest council in terms of its participants, this means that, by implication, *Ad Gentes* received the largest amount of ‘placet’ votes of any Ecumenical Council.

¹⁴ *The History of Vatican II*, II, 455–460. For a history of the schema, see Alberigo’s *History of Vatican II* and James B. Anderson, *A Vatican II Pneumatology*; Donal Lamont, O. Carm, “Ad Gentes: A Missionary Bishop Remembers,” in *Vatican II: By Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 274–282.

¹⁵ Congar relates the episode in his diary: “Aggians did not refuse but said that the new experts did not displace the old. ‘Why change?’ he said. ‘Why bring in others? Why Father Congar?’ Because one of the complaints about the *De Missionibus* is that it doesn’t have a theological basis. And Fr. Congar has been on the theological Commission, on the Commission for the *De Ecclesia*, and is trusted by Cardinal Ottaviani and by the Pope. In short, I have been accepted.” The other periti were Frs. Ratzinger, Neuner, Grasso, and X. Seumois (Anderson, *A Vatican II Pneumatology*, 86).

¹⁶ *Acta Synodalia III*, VI, 431–432, translation is Anderson’s in *A Vatican II Pneu-*

Here is a demand that the schema articulate the rootedness of the Church in the divine missions in a way more explicit than in *Lumen Gentium* §2–4.¹⁷ Moreover, Aquinas is used to legitimize the request. The second comment comes from a written animadversion by Archbishop Jean Baptiste Zoa of Cameroon, who would also serve on the sub-commission with Congar that would edit Congar’s own draft of what would become the first Chapter of *Ad Gentes*. Zoa wrote:

It is necessary to indicate clearly that missionary activity draws its first origin out of the mission of the Word and the Holy Spirit: this mission is continued in the Church and through the Church. . . . Mission is the unique movement which has its *origin from the Trinity and return to it* (the Trinity) after it has passed through the world and history.¹⁸

Here we also have a request for connecting the Church with the divine missions, but this time, appended to it is the connection that these missions have with the exitus-reditus scheme. This exitus-reditus scheme would appear in Congar’s original draft of chapter 1.¹⁹ In this draft, Congar wrote, “And thus the whole design of God is completed in some re-circulation by which creatures, which proceed from the goodness of God, return to it, in such a way that He who is the Creator of all things at last may become ‘all in all’” (Ref. to 1 Cor 15:28). It is at this point that Congar gives eight different references to Aquinas, which, together, refer the reader to the substance of what is presented in what would become *Ad Gentes*, §2.²⁰

Although Congar’s actual text was not drastically altered in the

matology, 69. (My emphasis.)

¹⁷ For the congruence between the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* and that of Journet, see Doyle, “Journet, Congar, and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology,” 468–469. Journet was on the preparatory Theological Commission that drafted the first *De Ecclesia* of the Council.

¹⁸ *Acta Synodalia* III, VI, 651, translation is Anderson’s in *A Vatican II Pneumatology*, 89. (My emphasis.)

¹⁹ The original draft of Congar’s was in a file, “*De Missionibus* Papers,” in the Saulchoir. It has been published in Anderson, *A Vatican II Pneumatology*, 216–233. This was, according to his diary, completed on the morning of 29 December 1964. See *Mon Journal* II, 295 (29 December 1964).

²⁰ Congar’s references to Aquinas are: *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 72; *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 16; q. 9, a. 9; *ST I*, q. 43, a. 7; q. 62, a. 2 ad 3; *I Sent.* Proem d. 14, q. 2, a. 2; *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 147.

promulgated version,²¹ all of his references to Aquinas in this paragraph were taken out.²² Hence, the substance of his text remains without the more proximate theological *auctoritas* underpinning it. It would seem, then, that the claim made by Congar after the Council can be substantiated: namely, that despite the fact that there was a greater willingness at the Council to cite the Fathers, ancient councils, and recent popes, “it could be shown that St. Thomas, the *Doctor communis*, furnished the writers of the dogmatic texts of Vatican II with the bases and the structure of their thought.”²³

Of the references that Congar gives, in my judgment the most crucial are those to (i) the *Summa Theologiae* (I, q. 43), (ii) Book I of the *Commentary on the Sentences* (the preamble and d. 14), and (iii) the *Compendium Theologiae* (c. 147). These *loci*, respectively, treat (i) the relationship between the eternal processions and the divine missions, both visible and invisible; (ii) the restoration of God’s works—or the creatures’ return to God—through the processions of the Son and Spirit; and (iii) the divine activity that moves the universe to its divine end.

It is not my purpose here to discuss each of these passages, but rather, with an eye towards their emergence in Congar’s draft, to highlight the

²¹ The text was not changed substantially (in terms of content). The most conspicuous change came with the deletion of the bit on “re-circulation,” or the explicit reference to *exitus-reditus*.

²² Because Congar’s draft is not identical, but prior to, the *Textus prior*—the draft which was distributed to the Council Fathers for the first time—there are no official animadversions or *modi* that would indicate why the references to Aquinas were taken out. Archival work would have to be done, researching the minutes of the meetings to see whether they were a topic of discussion. The deletion, however, may have been the simple result of an oral exchange between Congar and those on his own sub-commission for the first chapter (i.e. Mgrs. Lecuona, Riobé and Frs. Neuner and Grasso). The text was discussed by the entire commission on 12 January, 1965, and examined and corrected by the sub-commission 13–14 January. (See Congar, *Mon Journal* II, 298–301 [12–14 January, 1965].) The changes also could have occurred subsequently, unbeknownst to Congar, and brought to his attention only on 1 February (*Mon Journal* II, 309–310 [1 February 1965]). As for the reasoning behind it, one can only hypothesize: at a time when the status of Aquinas was a contentious issue, the general tendency was, when possible, to use the Church Fathers before moving to the Scholastics. For the arguments surrounding Aquinas at the Council, particularly among those working on *Optatum totius*, see Joseph Komonchak, “Thomism and the Second Vatican Council.” For a comparison of the drafts, one can consult Chapter VI, “The Redactional Evolution of *Ad Gentes* I, 2–5,” in Anderson, *A Vatican II Pneumatology*, 215–242.

²³ Congar, *Situation et taches présentes de la théologie* (Paris: Cerft, 1967), 53.

doctrinal principles of *Ad Gentes*, which, implicitly at least (and explicitly in Congar's draft), appeal to these texts. These doctrinal principles, I will show, had been fleshed out in the decades leading up to the Council. In the following section then, I will present some of the theological developments in ecclesiology and missiology that not only prepared the way for Congar's contribution to *Ad Gentes*, but also engendered the expectation among the Council Fathers that nothing less than a properly *theo*-logical foundation be given for the Church's missionary activity.

Twentieth-Century Theological Developments

This section will trace how theologians developed two crucial doctrinal principles that can be found in *Ad Gentes*, both of which are ultimately based on the fundamental Thomistic doctrine that the temporal processions or divine missions are the means by which God creates and restores creation to himself. The first principle is ecclesiological: the Church is missionary by her very nature; the second is missiological: missionary work is motivated by charity because its foundation is a Church that is animated by the Holy Spirit sent to inhabit Church.

The Church is Missionary

That the Church is missionary by her very nature is an ecclesiological thesis that stems from viewing the Church as a mystery and can be found in the works, most relevantly for us, of Humbert Clérissac, Yves Congar, and Charles Journet.

According to Georges Cottier, Journet's vocation as an ecclesiologist was inspired by, among others, Humbert Clérissac.²⁴ Clérissac's *Le mystère de l'Église* (1918) is referred to by both Congar and Journet and in it, we find a theological reflection on the Church as a mystery—a mystery understood not simply as something incomprehensible, but as a divine reality—like so many other mysteries of the faith.²⁵ In that

²⁴ See John Saward, "L'Église a ravi son cœur: Charles Journet and the Theologians of *Ressourcement* on the Personality of the Church," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 130. Saward refers to Georges M.-M. Cottier, "L'oeuvre de Charles Journet (1891–1975)," *Nova et vetera* 50 (1975): 242–258, 251.

²⁵ See Humbert Clérissac, O.P., *Le Mystère de l'Église* (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 1921), 11. This is the second edition. The first was published in 1918. Clérissac's work, on the Church as a "Church of Tradition" is lauded by Congar in *Tradition and Traditions* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 373. Already in 1937, Congar demonstrates his awareness of Clérissac's chapter on "La Mission et l'Esprit" in

work, we find Clérissac writing: “The Incarnation is a mission of the Son of God in the world, and this mission continues and diffuses itself throughout the multiplicity of ecclesiastical ministers for all times.”²⁶ He continues to say, however, that there exist also “extra-hierarchical” missions.²⁷ And these missions he extends to *all* Christians, in whatever state. The upshot, for Clérissac, is that, “She [the Church] is one vast and perpetual mission.”²⁸ In Clérissac’s work, then, we find articulated great principles about the Church and mission without extended theological analysis about the relationship between the divine missions and the Church’s mission. But a real link—albeit undeveloped—exists already in Clérissac between the missionary nature of the Church and the Son’s mission from the Father.

In the work of Congar, we find reflections on the Church as the continuation of the divine missions and, hence, as the vehicle of return to God. In his *Chrétiens désunis* of 1937, Congar begins his “Ecclesia de Trinitate” by stating: “The unity of the Church is a communication and extension of God’s unity itself. The life which is eternally within the Father, after being communicated in God himself in order to constitute there the divine communion [*société divine*], that of the Three Persons of the holy Trinity, is, by grace, communicated to spiritual creatures, first to angels, then to us.”²⁹ Later, in explaining that what makes the Church one is the common object (God) of the theological virtues with which her members are endowed, Congar refers to the Trinitarian processions and the divine missions whose principle they (the processions) are:

It is truly the life that God lives, within the Trinitarian communion [*société trinitaire*], which pours itself into humanity and, by that, extends to us the blessed trinitarian communion. It is this that Thomas Aquinas expresses with great strength and beauty when he makes the Trinitarian “processions” the principle of the “divine missions,” that is to say, the gift and the presence of God, specifically to grace. . . . Faith and charity, emanations of sanctifying grace . . . are the effects appropriable (respectively) to the double

Le Mystère de l’Église, arguing that the Church’s mission does not stifle the workings of the Spirit. See Yves Congar, *Chrétiens Désunis: Principes d’un ‘œcuménisme’ catholique*, Unam Sanctam 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1937), 98n.

²⁶ Clérissac, O.P., *Le Mystère de l’Église*, 163–164.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 165. [*Elle est une vaste et perpétuelle mission.*]

²⁹ Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, 59.

“procession” of knowledge and love of which the Father is the principle. The Church is like an extension or a manifestation of the Trinity, the mystery of God in humanity.³⁰

Here Congar expresses a *theology* of the Church in the sense that a relationship of extension and indwelling (efficient and formal causes) is established between God and the Church by recourse to St. Thomas’s teaching on the divine missions. Congar refers in his footnote here to *I Sent.* d. 14 and to *ST I*, q. 43, as well as to the last work by his confrere and mentor at the Saulchoir, Ambrose Gardeil, on the divine missions.³¹ The latter text, published five years earlier, highlighted the “oeuvre caractéristique” of the personal missions of the Son and Spirit, which is “le retour à Dieu.”³² In sum, Gardeil’s reflections on the divine missions reminds us of the missions’ final end: namely, to transform and elevate creatures in order to facilitate their journey to a life with God.

Two years later, in a 1939 conference paper later to be published in *The Thomist*, Congar reflects ecclesologically on the *reditus* that is effected by the divine missions. He writes that for St. Thomas, “the Church is the whole economy of the return towards God, *motus rationalis creaturae in Deum*,” and identifies the Church with the “*reditus creaturae rationalis in Deum*.”³³ The Trinitarian character of this return, furthermore, is included in Congar’s synthesis of Thomistic principled-inspired

³⁰ Ibid., 67–68: [Ainsi, dans la foi, dans la charité et dans la grâce sanctifiante qui est leur principe, c’est vraiment la vie DE DIEU qui nous est communiqué. C’est vraiment la vie dont vit Dieu, au sein de la société trinitaire, qui s’épanche dans l’humanité et, par là, étend jusqu’à nous la bienheureuse société trinitaire. C’est ce qu’exprime avec une grande force et une grande beauté saint Thomas d’Aquin lorsqu’il fait, des ‘processions’ trinitaires le principe des ‘missions divines’, c’est-à-dire du don et de la présence de Dieu propres à la grâce. . . . La foi et la charité, émanations de la grâce sanctifiante, par lesquelles nous avons comme objets de vie les objets de vie de Dieu lui-même, c’est-à-dire ceux de la vie trinitaire, sont des effets appropriables respectivement à la double ‘procession’ de connaissance et d’amour dont le Père est le principe. L’Église est comme une extension ou une manifestation de la Trinité, le mystère de Dieu dans l’humanité.]

³¹ Ambrose Gardeil, “L’expérience mystique pure dans le cadre des ‘Missions divines’,” *Supplément à la ‘Vie Spirituelle’* (Juillet–Août 1932), 138–142. Again, the relevant texts by Aquinas are mentioned: namely, *ST I*, q. 43 and *I Sent.* d. 14–18.

³² Gardeil, “L’expérience mystique pure,” 140.

³³ Yves Congar, “The Idea of the Church in St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 1 (1939): 331–359, 339–340.

ecclesiology:³⁴ For on the one hand, “Of this *motus* and return the Holy Ghost is the power and agent,” and on the other, “this return can only be accomplished actually *in Christo, qui, secundum quod homo, via est nobis tendendi in Deum.*”³⁵ One can note here, too, that Congar refers no less than four times to c.147 of Aquinas’s *Compendium*, especially as it concerns what is appropriated to the Spirit in the divine economy.

Subsequently, the thesis that the Church is missionary because she prolongs the missions of the Son and Spirit, appears consistently in the works of Congar. It appears, for example, repeatedly throughout the 1950s.³⁶ By 1962, Congar will, in *Tradition and Traditions*, mention the divine missions discussed in question 43 of the *Summa* and writes about them, that, “The Church, the People of God in the world, has its source in these ‘comings’ or ‘missions’ and appears as wholly dependent on the divine actions.” This comment by Congar, it should be said, is accompanied by numerous references to Charles Journet’s ecclesiological masterpiece.³⁷ A few decades later, Congar would give Journet credit for

³⁴ It is “inspired” by St. Thomas insofar as, while much of Aquinas’s writings contain explicit teachings about what the Church is, much of what Congar writes is only implied in, and coheres with, the theology of St. Thomas. Congar refers to the “‘treatise on the Church’ of St. Thomas, or rather the treatise which could be written with the guidance of his principles.” (See, “The Idea of the Church,” 115–116.) While Congar’s article is more constructive, Jean Bainvel’s approach is more textual, and hence, not as synthetic. Cf. J.-V. Bainvel, “L’idée de l’Église au moyen âge. L’enseignement théologique: Saint Thomas,” *La Science catholique* (1899): 975–988.

³⁵ Congar, “The Idea of the Church in St. Thomas Aquinas,” 339–340.

³⁶ See Congar, *The Mystery of the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960), 147–186, ET of “Le Saint-Esprit et le Corps apostolique, réalisateurs de l’œuvre du Christ,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 36 (1952): 613–625 and 37 (1953): 24–48; *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1967), 349–355, ET of *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (orig. 1953). For a survey on this in Congar, see Jean Rigal, “Trois approches de l’ecclésiologie de communion: Congar, Zizioulas, Moltmann,” *Nouvelle revue théologique* 120 (1998): 605–619, esp. 606–610.

³⁷ Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, ET, (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 262. References to Journet’s *L’Eglise*: 462–471, 481, 486–91, 500–508. On 240, Congar writes, “God’s plan, therefore, is one of mission and tradition. Both elements are determined by an identical content, which is preserved despite the constant replacing of one person by another. Mission is the entrusting of a task to another by one who has a responsibility to see that the task is completed. By tradition we mean the successive communication of one and the same object to others, a single possessor being the first term in the series.” See also Congar’s comment on Journet in *The Mystery of the Temple* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), 286.

developing a “remarkable ‘theo-logy’ of the Church.”³⁸

While the relationship between the Church and the divine missions was already surfacing in the Catholic theological consciousness, the integration of missiology and ecclesiology can be credited to the work of Charles Journet. The second volume of Journet’s *L’Église du verbe incarné* was published in 1951. By 1954, we have André Rétif saying, “It is no longer possible to engage in a theology of mission without having read Journet.”³⁹ And it is Eduard Loffeld’s assessment in 1956 that Journet’s *L’Église du Verbe incarné* is the first [work] “to incorporate most fully and most extensively the treatment of speculative missiology.”⁴⁰

Another figure indebted to the work of Journet is the Italian, Danilo Catarzi, S.X.—later to be ordained bishop of Uvira, Congo, and hence, a participant at the Council. In his 1958 two-volume work on missiology, he discusses the missions of the Word and the Spirit, and only *then* discusses the mission of the Church. In his work, no other figure is cited more than Aquinas.⁴¹ More specifically, Catarzi is heavily indebted to question 43 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa*, which treats of the divine missions.⁴² It is with Journet’s speculative gloss on Aquinas that Catarzi is able to show how mission and the Church are coextensive.⁴³

In his earlier writing, Journet has recourse to Clérissac on the latter’s insistence that the comings of the Spirit in the Church never contradict the juridical authority of the Church that the same Spirit assists.⁴⁴ Journet points out, however, that Clérissac is one typical theologian who all too often limits the divine missions to miraculous helps or simple providence. Journet, on the other hand, goes deeper. In addition to extraordinary helps in the Church’s life, the Holy Spirit, for Journet, is the personal

³⁸ Congar, *I Believe in Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000), II, 13n.15.

³⁹ André Rétif, “Trinité et missions,” *Eglise vivante* VI (1954):179–189, 179.

⁴⁰ Edouard Loffeld, *Le problème cardinal de la missiologie et des missions catholiques* (Rhenen: Spiritus, 1956), 31. [cet ouvrage de théologie générale est le premier à incorporer plus pleinement et plus largement le traité de missiologie spéculative.]

⁴¹ Hoffman, “The Development of Mission Theology,” 433. See Danilo Catarzi, *Teologia delle missioni estere: Aspetti specifici* and *Lineamenti di Domatica Missionaria: Parte Generale* (Parma: Istituto Saveriano Missioni Estere, 1958).

⁴² Catarzi references q. 43 in *Lineamenti* on 1, 4–5, 33, 35, 57, 61, 75, 79, 81, 148, 155, 177, 185.

⁴³ Catarzi, *Lineamenti*, 113–121. He appeals to Journet, among other places, quoting him at length at 58.

⁴⁴ Journet, “Le Saint-Esprit, principe de l’Église,” *Supplément à la ‘Vie Spirituelle’*, Juillet-Août (1934): 1–27, 7–9. Cf. Clérissac, *Le Mystère de l’Église*, 169 and his third chapter, “La personnalité de l’Église,” 55–73.

subject of the Church—not hypostatically, but efficiently⁴⁵—to whom all the Church’s activities of sanctification are appropriated. The Holy Spirit forms and establishes the Church at Pentacost, governs all her parts, unites her members in theological charity, ensures her infallible doctrine, guides in her future and homogeneous explication of it, enlightens the faithful in the power of the sacraments, and continues, upon the faithful’s reception of the sacraments, to “knock on the doors” of souls, to purify, illuminate, and fortify them.⁴⁶ The Spirit is united efficiently to the Church, as the Word is united to the person of Christ hypostatically, the Church’s head. So both the Word and the Son are sent by the Father into the world: one to unite God to human nature, the other to unite the Church.⁴⁷ In these reflections of Journet, he explicitly admits his reliance on Aquinas’s treatment of the divine missions: “Achevons ces réflexions sur l’Esprit, personnalité de l’Église, par une considération inspirée de l’enseignement de saint Thomas d’Aquin sur les ‘missions’ des divines Personnes.”⁴⁸

Journet develops this theme in more systematic form in the second volume of his *L’Église du verbe incarné*. There, Journet discusses the efficient cause of the Church (properly, the Holy Trinity, and by appropriation, the Holy Spirit) only *after* having discussed at length a theology of the divine missions.⁴⁹ According to Journet, the Church is completely established after the visible mission of the Son to unite substantially with human nature (pertaining to the Church’s head) and the four visible missions of the Holy Spirit to the Church’s body.⁵⁰ The *invisible* missions of the Word and Spirit, following upon the visible, prolong the effects of the visible ones: they effect grace and fill the soul with light (appropriated to the Word) and love (appropriated to the Spirit).

Hence, the relationship between the divine missions and the Church does not stop at the level of efficiency, but extends also to the formal level. That is, the missions do not only bring about the Church and keep

⁴⁵ Journet, “Le Saint-Esprit, principe de l’Église,” 18.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17–21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25–27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁹ Charles Journet, *L’Église du verbe incarné II: Sa structure interne et son unité catholique* (Paris: Desclée, 1951), 454–472.

⁵⁰ The visible mission of the Son is the hypostatic union with human nature in Christ (the Incarnation). The visible missions of the Holy Spirit are four: 1.) The Lord’s Baptism (a dove); 2) The Lord’s Transfiguration (a bright cloud); 3) Christ’s transmission of the power to forgive sins (breath); 4) Pentecost (tongues of fire).

it in existence, but the missions facilitate a divine inhabitation that makes the Church what it is: namely, a new Creation, the Body of Christ.⁵¹ The Church is by her very nature *missionary*. As we shall see, this will be crucial for how Journet understands the missionary impulse.

After having established the efficient cause of the Church as the divine missions of the Word and Spirit, and the Holy Spirit and charity as the uncreated and created souls of the Church, respectively, Journet is set to present a rather short but thorough missiology according to which the missionary impulse stems from the two great visible missions: the Incarnation terminating in Christ, the head, and Pentacost, terminating in the Church, which is the body.⁵² The existence of the Church (constituted and sustained by these missions), in turn, has for her end communion with God. Hence, we have Journet writing, “Grâce aux missions invisibles des divines personnes, la création, sortie de Dieu, fait constamment retour à Dieu. Une circulation s’établit.”⁵³ (In maintaining this, Journet has recourse to the same text [*I Sent.*, dist. 14, a. 2] that Congar would in his first draft for *Ad Gentes*.)

Journet believes that missionary activity can only be isolated in thought, and is only materially (not formally) distinguished from the Church’s other activities.⁵⁴ Essentially rooted in the Church’s catholicity, then, the intrinsic causes (material and formal) of missionary activity are the same as those of the Church herself. In other words, the efficient causes of the missions is the Holy Spirit, Christ and the apostolic charity of Pentacost; the final cause of the missions is to implant an indigenous hierarchy (proximate final cause) so as to open up to souls a free and stable way towards encountering the redemption of Christ (remote final cause). In terms of its intrinsic causes, missionary activity is essentially the expansionary movement of the Church (formal cause) by entering into places where the Church is still in potency (the material cause).⁵⁵ It should be noted that Journet’s four causes subtly but unmistakably appear in *Ad Gentes*, §5’s definition of mission, albeit in more pastoral language.⁵⁶

⁵¹ See Journet, *L’Eglise du verbe incarné II*, 511–530, esp. 522 ff.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1224.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 471, 1208–1209.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1207, 1224, 1251.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1250–1251.

⁵⁶ Congar does not mention Journet by name; he simply draws our attention to the existence of the definition of mission in *Ad Gentes*, §5 in terms of the four causes. See his document “Le Nouveau schéma ‘De Activitate Missionali Ecclesiae’,” *Études et documents* (1 June 1965): (unpaginated, but it is the third page in the document). N.B., *Études et documents* were a series of unpublished

Divine Charity Impels Missionary Work

Shortly after the council, a Saulchoir student, confrere, and friend of Congar's, Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, following Congar, observed that "In treatises on ecclesiology and in articles and popular works on the Church during the 19th and 20th centuries, the idea of mission was practically absent."⁵⁷ Previously, mission was understood as a one function of the Church (among others) based on Christ's injunction to "Go, teach the nations," which, in turn was understood as a practical mandate for the sake of the salvation of the non-evangelized. A conception of mission quite unlike this one, however, would be vindicated at the council. For example, Congar's operating assumption already in the 1950s is the same: the necessity and motive for the Church's mission is *not* that, without it, souls are lost.⁵⁸ (This is, of course, not the same as denying that missionary activity is instrumental in bringing individuals to salvation.) To understand the alternative vision of what mission is, recourse should be had to *la question du jour* among missiologists in the beginning and middle of the twentieth-century: namely, what is the primary motive of missionary activity? Is it charity, or some other virtue, such as obedience or "religion" (*religio*)?

One of the most influential missiologists of the twentieth century held that the primary motive for missionary activity was religion. The Belgian

documents written by theologians for the French episcopate during the Council to explain the redaction process of the council documents and to highlight the theological issues at stake.

⁵⁷ Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, "Mission as an Ecclesiological Theme," *Concilium* 13 (1966): 81–130, 81. Le Guillou is referring to Congar's *L'Ecclesologie au XIXe siècle*, Unam Sanctam 34 (Paris: Cerf, 1960), 77–114.

⁵⁸ Congar, *The Wide World My Parish: Salvation and its Problems* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 130–135. This is the ET of *Vaste Monde, ma Paroisse* (1959). Here, Congar's two reasons for missionary activity are (1) the glory of God and the salvation of men and (2) waging war against the Devil. In his reflections, Congar is trying to argue for mission's necessity despite our knowledge of the possibility of the non-Christian's salvation. See also Congar, "Non-Christian Religions and Christianity," *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development. Selected Papers of the International Theological Conference. Nagpur (India) 1971*, ed. Mariasurai Dhavamony, *Documenta Missionalia* 5 (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1972), 134, and Congar, "Les religions non bibliques sont-elles des médiations de salut?," *Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies, Tantur-Jerusalem Yearbook* (1972-1973), 295 : [*Finalement, comme l'a dit le décret Ad Gentes, la raison décisive de la mission n'est pas de procurer le salut des individus, car ils peuvent l'obtenir sans elle.*]

Jesuit, Fr. Pierre Charles, founder of the Louvain school of missiology,⁵⁹ is perhaps most well-known for his position, articulated in his *Dossiers de l'action missionnaire*, that the goal of mission is not so much *the conversio animarum* but rather the *plantatio ecclesiae*. Charles roots missionary activity in Christ's command to "Go, teach the nations, baptizing them. . . ." (Mt 28:19) and "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!" (Mk 16:15). As a result, "nous avons l'*obligation* d'accomplir ses [Christ's, whose power comes from the Father] *ordres*," albeit with "un élan d'*enthousiasme* incontestable."⁶⁰

Charles, in his desire to promote the uniqueness of mission, argues *against* the Münster school's conception of mission's *raison d'être*, namely, saving souls. There are souls everywhere to be saved, and one need not go to the ends of the earth to help them, so the argument goes. The primary and unique object of missionary activity is, rather, to implant the Church. But in order to make this move, however, Charles feels obligated to attack the notion that charity is the *primary* or *foundational* motive of missionary activity. This obligation, as Charles sees it, follows from the fact that he associates in missionary activity charity (as its motive) with "saving souls" (as its object). One who is motivated by charity (for God and neighbor) seeks to help the soul in distress, but for Charles, this is *not* the goal of mission. It is to implant the Church, and as such, charity cannot be its primary motive. Rather, missionary activity is an "act of religion" on behalf of the Church:

Therefore, missionary activity is not primarily or uniquely an act of obedience to a precept of Christ, nor is it, further, an act of charity towards the neighbor in distress; it is all these things because it is above all and essentially an *act of religion*.⁶¹

Writing contemporaneously with Charles (although with Charles's

⁵⁹ For a brief summary of missiological developments and the relation between the Louvain and Münster schools of missiology, see Hoffman, "The Development of Mission Theology," 419–441.

⁶⁰ Pierre Charles, *Les Dossiers de l'action missionnaire: Manuel de missiologie* (Louvain: Editions de L'Aucam, 1938), 21. All the emphases are Charles's. They are *bold* in his text.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 24: "Dès lors, l'activité missionnaire n'est pas d'abord ou uniquement un acte d'obéissance au précepte du Christ; ni davantage un acte de charité envers le prochain en détresse; elle est tout cela, parce qu'elle est avant tout et essentiellement un acte de religion à exercer par l'Eglise et pour l'Eglise."

Dossiers in hand)⁶² the Missionary Oblate Alberto Perbal, O.M.I., like Clérissac, roots missionary activity in Christ's having been sent by the Father, and his having sent the apostles.⁶³ Missionary activity is not simply following a divine mandate, but building up the Kingdom of God by establishing and expanding His Church, which continues the mission of Christ.⁶⁴ He also explicitly has recourse to Clérissac's *Le Mystère de l'Église* when he attaches a "personnalité" to the Church, consisting of human souls participating by grace in the divine nature.⁶⁵ It is puzzling, however, to notice that despite his ecclesiology according to which theological charity is the animating principle of the Church, Perbal argues later in the same work, following Charles, *against* the thesis that charity is the primary motive for missionary activity, and he spends more effort debunking the thesis, drawing more categorically than Charles, a dichotomy between "religion" and "charity."

For Perbal, religion, or the virtue of respect and submission to God—not charity—is the formal motive for the expansion of the Church and establishing the Kingdom of God.⁶⁶ As Pierre Jean de Menasce, O.P. observes, for Perbal, the Church is above all a society of worship or cult, and hence, its establishment and expansion remains on the moral, not the theological, level.⁶⁷ This can be partially explained by the way in which Perbal interprets the mission of Christ. Here, Perbal briefly notes Question 43 of the *prima pars* in order to distinguish between an eternal procession and a temporal mission, but his subsequent reflection utilizes, to my mind, an overly one-sided—that is, exclusive—use of the master-servant category of hierarchy to shed light on the Church's mission.⁶⁸ If the Church's mission continues that of Christ's, and Christ's

⁶² Perbal's book was published in 1937, while the publication date on Charles's *Dossiers* is 1938. Despite the dates given, Perbal is referring to them throughout his 1937 work.

⁶³ Albert Perbal, *Premières leçons de théologie missionnaire*, Bibliothèque de l'union missionnaire du clergé de France (Paris: L.-E. Dillen, 1937), 10, 13–14.

⁶⁴ Hoffman, "The Development of Mission Theology," 429. Again, following the Christological vein, the former Dean of Missiology at the Gregorian, Jesuit José Zameza, rooted missionary activity in the *totus Christus* or the Word incarnate united together with the Church, his mystical body.

⁶⁵ Perbal, *Premières leçons de théologie missionnaire*, 15.

⁶⁶ To substantiate this, Perbal has recourse to the second *objection* in *ST* II-II, q. 101, a. 4. See Perbal, 74–75, where he argues that the Church is a society of *religion* before charity.

⁶⁷ Pierre Jean de Menasce, "Missiologie," in *Divus Thomas* (Freiburg) 20 (1942): 199–202, 202.

⁶⁸ Specifically, he refers to *ST* I, q. 43, a. 2, ad 3. See Perbal, *Premières leçons de*

mission is understood as a servant sent by his master, then it is not so difficult to see how religion, and not charity, is embraced to explain the missionary motive.

Following Charles, Henri de Lubac conceives of the foundation for missions in essentially the same way, basing it on the mandate of Christ,⁶⁹ but with some alterations.⁷⁰ De Lubac asks, “So, what is the theological foundation of the missionary work of the Church? Or, more simply: Why the missions?” The first reason that he gives is that “The Church’s missions fulfill one of Christ’s orders.”⁷¹ Despite his seconding of the mandate as the foundation for the Church’s missionary activity, de Lubac seems to depart from Charles in his reflections on charity as the motive for missionary work, likening missionary zeal to “the fire of divine charity” that desires “to spread everywhere.”⁷² In the eyes of Journet, this focus on charity is a rectification of Charles’s and Perbal’s predilection for obedience and religion, rather than charity as the primary motive for mission.⁷³ Journet, however, would remain dissatisfied with de Lubac’s work because the latter nevertheless entertains the possibility of assigning missionary activity to the virtue of religion rather than charity. This, for Journet, is enough to convict de Lubac’s theology of mission as being “equivoque et decevante.”⁷⁴ For Journet, the virtue to which missionary activity is assigned must be unambiguously charity.⁷⁵ In his repudiation of Charles, Perbal, and to some extent, of de Lubac, Journet makes his

théologie missionnaire, 9: “En tant qu’envoyé, il procède de son maître...ceci est encore plus vrai dans l’ordre divin, on le comprend sans peine. La mission du Verbe est la source et produit le type de toutes les missions qui suivront dans l’ordre du salut des âmes...c’est que l’union hiérarchique sera leur caractère essentiel et premier. La première démarche d’un ambassadeur...” In other words, Perbal is using the ‘master-servant (envoy)’ conception of mission to the exclusion of the other examples given by St. Thomas, such as a tree sending forth fruit. (See *ST I*, q. 43, a. 1, resp.)

⁶⁹ See Mt 28:19 ff. and Mk 16:15ff.

⁷⁰ Henri de Lubac, “The Theological Foundation of the Missions,” in *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 367–427.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 368–369. Such priority to the mandate is confirmed in a summation of De Lubac’s: “Why the missions?...Because it is the will of Christ” (381).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 386.

⁷³ Although de Lubac engaged with the thesis of Charles sometime in the early 1940s, perhaps around the time Menasce published his own work, de Lubac’s essay was only published afterwards, in 1946.

⁷⁴ Journet, *L’Église du verbe incarné*, II, 1227.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1233: “Ce n’est pas la vertu de religion, c’est notre charité elle-même, qui . . . doit être sacramentelle et orientée . . .”

own the objections raised by Pierre Jean de Menasce.⁷⁶ For Journet, the role of charity as the formal motive for missionary activity is based on the auto-diffusive character of the charity that is God and is manifested to us in his sending his Son and Spirit for the forgiveness of our sins. Missionary work is essentially a continuation of this diffusion of charity.⁷⁷

Menasce argues for the insufficiency of the “religion first” thesis, and insists that the Church has for its foundation charity, not religion, and hence, reaches the theological level, thereby including but also surpassing the moral level. This is so because the Church is founded on the missions of Christ and the Apostles, and this mission, in turn, is for the sake of our *reditus* back to God. It is for the sake of “supernatural friendship [with God] to which we are elevated by grace.”⁷⁸

Menasce agrees with Charles main thesis that missionary work is properly speaking the plantation or establishment of the Church. He echoes Perbal in stating that the Church is sent as Christ is sent. And she sends her missionaries as Christ sent his Apostles for the sake of congregating humanity into one body united by supernatural charity, but he situates this end in the catholicity of the Church, or the “law of expansion of Christian charity.”⁷⁹ According to Menasce, “There is for all Christians enriched by grace a more or less explicit ordination to the missionary intention of the Church, which has the same extension as the salvific will of Christ.”⁸⁰ The upshot is that not only the French priest in China, but also the cloistered monk in France is missionary because the latter prays for the expanded catholicity of the Church. While Menasce admits with Charles and Perbal that the *specific* work of the missions is to plant the Church (something which the monk, the parish priest, or the Christian layman might not be doing immediately), there is no reason, argues Menasce, to attribute to this specific work a formally distinct motive (such as religion) from another motive that governs the activity of the entire Church: namely, charity.⁸¹ Menasce concludes, “In the last analysis, the mystery of the Church, of her catholicity, as of her unity, appears as a mystery of love and fecundity, as the reflection in time and

⁷⁶ Menasce (1902–1973) was born in Egypt and converted to Catholicism in 1926. He entered the Dominican order in 1930, contributed to oriental studies, and taught history of religions and missiology in Fribourg, Switzerland.

⁷⁷ Journet, *L’Église du verbe incarné*, II, 1226.

⁷⁸ P.-J. Menasce, “Catholicité de l’Église et ordre de la Charité,” *Annuaire missionnaire catholique de Suisse* 6 (1939), 15.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸¹ Menasce, “Missiologie,” in *Divus Thomas* (Freiburg) 20 (1942): 199–202, 201.

in space of Trinitarian mystery itself.”⁸² Homage and submission remain requisite because we are creatures, but the primacy of the theological over the moral due to the *new* law of charity and our ultimate supernatural end is, for Menasce, clear.

We can see how it is, then, that a certain ecclesiology and missiology hang together. A certain missiology whose preoccupation is to safeguard the *specificity* of the missions in the juridical sense of the word (as opposed to the broader use of the word that could apply to the parish priest, for example) relies on an ecclesiology whose reflections on the Church’s Trinitarian foundations are not fully unpacked. The response of a theologian such as Journet to this view of things manifests the outcome of deeper ecclesiological principles in action: namely, a theology of the Church according to which her very existence is established and continually sustained by the divine missions, whose *raison d’être* are facilitating the *reditus* of creation. And as humanity’s return to God is envisioned in terms of friendship, theological charity becomes the great uniter, and has its origins in the mission of the uncreated Spirit. When the Church’s ultimate source is the temporal missions whose fittingness is derived from the eternal Trinitarian processions, the theological move towards grounding missionary activity in the divine missions is executed with ease. Alternatively, where mission is one function of the Church among many based first and foremost on Christ’s mandate, and where the Church’s task is primarily facilitating our submission, cult, and sacrifice, the logic of making the connection between the divine missions and missionary activity is not as evident. Though not air-tightly, the components of each theological vision by and large hang together.

A Thomistic reading of *Ad Gentes*, Ch. 1

An awareness of the Thomistic underpinnings to the first chapter of *Ad Gentes* has the virtue, I suggest, of uncovering the depth and riches of an intensely Scriptural document by providing some context and precision.

In his commentary on the doctrinal principles of *Ad Gentes* (which is, in essence, a commentary on his own text), Congar explains that mission has a double meaning; in his explanation, Congar echoes the *respondeo* of question 43, a. 1 of the *Summa*. Mission, according to Congar, following St. Thomas, has a double aspect. It can refer to a *dependence of origin*, on the one hand, and a *new presence* according to the term to which one is sent, on the other.⁸³

⁸² Menasce, “Catholicité de l’Église et ordre de la Charité,” 14.

⁸³ Congar, “Principes doctrinaux,” 186. Cf. *ST I*, q. 43, a. 1, resp.

Let us first consider the second aspect. Mission can be a new presence of him who is sent, according to Aquinas, “either because in no way was he present before in the place whereto he is sent, or because he begins to be there *in some way in which he was not there hitherto*” (my emphasis). It is in the second sense that Aquinas interprets Christ’s mission, as Christ was always in the world (according to John 1:1), but taking on human nature, he became present in a new way. This insight of Aquinas’s sheds light on the Church’s mission as it is rooted in the divine missions, for *Ad Gentes* explains that the Church’s mission is an epiphany that “brings about the presence of Christ. . . . But whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret *presence of God*, He frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its maker.”⁸⁴ In the nineteenth century, even Henry Cardinal Manning pointed out that “the operations of the Holy Ghost have always pervaded the whole race of men from the beginning, and they are now in full activity even among those who are without the Church.”⁸⁵ Hence, the Church’s mission, following the divine missions as Aquinas understands them, is not so much about making God present where he has hitherto been absent, but rather facilitating a *full* life in communion with God or, in the words of St. Thomas, “a new way of existing in another,”⁸⁶ a way that has yet to be experienced in those who have no relationship with Christ. Aquinas’s teaching that mission can be understood as a “new way of existing” is a valuable help in retaining the urgency of mission without denying the presence of God *extra Ecclesiam*.

This “new way of existing” is expressed in *Ad Gentes*, §5, where we find the formulation: “that thus there may lie open before them a firm and free road to full participation in the mystery of Christ.” (We may point out here that this last quotation in *Ad Gentes* is almost a direct quotation from Journet’s work.)⁸⁷ The object of the Church’s missionary activity, then, is to increase the presence of God or—more accurately—to deepen the presence of God among people. This deepening, in turn, is commensurate with God’s own mission that culminates in an increased

⁸⁴ *Ad Gentes*, §9. (My emphasis.)

⁸⁵ Henry E. Manning, *The Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost* (London: Burns & Oates, 1875), viii.

⁸⁶ *ST I*, q. 43, a. 1, resp.

⁸⁷ Journet, *L’Eglise du verbe incarné*, II, 1251: “ouvrir aux âmes une voie libre et stable vers les profondeurs de la redemption du Christ.” Cf. *Ad Gentes*, §5: “ut eis via libera ac firma patefiat ad plene participandum mysterium Christi.” Congar acknowledges the influence of Journet in his commentary, “Principes doctrinaux,” 197.

presence. To clarify, Aquinas, as Congar teaches us in *The Mystery of the Temple*, distinguishes between three presences, each being more intimate than the preceding one: the first is God's immanent creative activity in (the existence of) his creatures; the second is the presence of God in creatures by grace, in which case creatures are turned towards God "so efficaciously that we can touch and possess him in knowledge and love."⁸⁸ Again, we find here the invisible missions (to which are appropriated knowledge and love) to be described in terms of an increased *presence*. The third level is the hypostatic presence of God in Christ, whose effects the invisible missions prolong. The entire history of the missionary Church, then, is one in which God is increasingly dwelling in his temple. Congar writes,

Behind the external history of the Church . . . another history is in the making, a specifically supernatural and sacred history which can only be written in heaven, the history of the invisible Missions through which God makes his Presence ever deeper in the members of the Body of Christ and builds this Body to be his everlasting spiritual temple.⁸⁹

The missionary activity of the Church, then, which is the extension of the divine Missions, is ultimately facilitating, cooperating with, or participating in, God's sanctifying presence to his creatures.

Turning now to the first aspect of mission, namely, dependence of origin, Aquinas writes,

Anyone being sent implies a certain kind of procession of the one sent from the sender: either according to command, as the master sends the servant; or according to counsel, as an adviser may be said to send the king to battle; or according to origin, as a tree sends forth its flowers.⁹⁰

Considering these three kinds of mission (by authority, by counsel, or by origin), the question naturally arises: what kind of mission is ours here and now? In the reply to the first objection in the article, Aquinas writes,

⁸⁸ Y. Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 239. In this discussion (238–239), Congar cites *I Sent.*, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2; *Commentary on Colossians*, c. 2, lect. 2; *ST III*, q. 43, a.1 and *ST I*, q. 43, a. 1. See also *The Mystery of the Temple*, 281.

⁸⁹ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 298.

⁹⁰ *ST I*, q. 43, a. 1, resp.

Mission implies inferiority in the one sent, when it means procession from the sender as principle, by command or counsel; forasmuch as the one commanding is the greater, and the counselor is the wiser. In God, however, it means only procession of origin, which is according to equality, as explained above.

As we are creatures, and not God, and because of the explicit mandate given by Christ, it would seem *prima facie*, that our mission is of the first type, by command. Many of the great missiologists discussed in this essay were of the opinion that obedience to the mandate, although not adequately or fully accounting for the missionary impulse, is nevertheless sufficient to efficaciously engage in it.⁹¹ On one level, this is the case, and *Ad Gentes* affirms it with its repetition of Christ's injunctions.⁹² But I would suggest that on another level, *Ad Gentes* affirms the thesis that we too are sent with a mission, not of command, but of origin. For, according to *Ad Gentes*, §2, the Church has her origin [*origo*] from the missions of the Son and Spirit. Though we, as creatures, are inferior to God, it is through God's gift of charity that we are able to love with a love that is God's, and it is for this reason that Aquinas believes friendship to be possible between God and humans.⁹³ "No longer do I call you servants. . . . I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15). It is, then, through supernatural charity that we humans can have a share in the life that is God's. So when we read in *Ad Gentes*, §5 that it is not only in virtue of the express command that we spread the faith but "also in virtue of that life which flows from Christ into His members," we can see in this the "supernatural ontology," to use Congar's expression, that supplements the divine command in grounding the Church's mission.⁹⁴

Hence, of the kinds of missions that Aquinas distinguishes in question 43, it would seem that our mission proceeds not only out of command, but out of origin, and hence, missionary work whose active principle is supernatural charity is truly theological;⁹⁵ the people who exercise it are

⁹¹ Perbal, *Premières leçons de théologie missionnaire*, 68–70.

⁹² *Ad Gentes* cites both mandates: Mt 28:19 and Mk 16:15.

⁹³ ST II-II, q. 23, a. 1; B. See also David Burrell, "Friendship with God in al-Ghazali and Aquinas," in *Friendship in the Classical World*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 43–56. See also David Schwarz, *Aquinas on Friendship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹⁴ Cf. Congar, "Principes doctrinaux," 196.

⁹⁵ "Theological" or *theologale* in French, is an adjective which modifies that which pertains to the divinized life, or the life of faith, hope, and charity. See Romanus

truly transformed in their very being—and are not simply obeying a command.⁹⁶ The importance of this theological grounding is, as Congar, states, that the activity of mission, “is founded on a more general reason, whose interest lies in the surpassing of a purely positive mandate, and achieving, rather, a supernatural ontology.”⁹⁷ The primary motive for missionary activity stems from what the Church *is* and who Christians *are*, not an injunction.⁹⁸ Although the two cannot be separated, if one reads the document with the eyes of St. Thomas, we can say that the missionary injunction follows from the ontology of the Christian life, not *visa versa*. We do not mission simply because God commands us, but rather God commands us because we are graced accordingly with charity. To use an image inspired by Perbal, Christ has not only commanded the clock to go, he has also wound it up.⁹⁹ Herein lies the difference between, for example, a servile obedience and a filial obedience. While the former is characteristic of a deontological ethics, the latter congrues with the primacy of the virtues as transformative *habitus*.¹⁰⁰ The achievement of *Ad Gentes*, then, situating missionary work as it does in terms more of charity than obedience to a precept, can be likened to the renewal of moral theology in the twentieth century and the overcoming of casuistry. It is charity that obliges, not the command. To use the images of Aquinas, then, the Church’s missionary activity is not only like a servant proceeding from his master, but also, and perhaps more so, like a flower proceeding from its tree.

Conclusion

I began this essay by mentioning Congar’s claim that the Council, in essence, was a movement away from juridicism towards a supernatural

Cessario, O.P., *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 1.

⁹⁶ Cf. Congar, “Principes doctrinaux,” 198. Another way of framing the issue is whether or not some thing belongs to another *morally* or *ontologically*. The same transition was made on the matter of poverty and how it pertains to the priesthood, for example. See Congar, *Mon Journal*, II, 189.

⁹⁷ Congar, “Principes doctrinaux,” 187.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Ad Gentes*, §7: “The members of the Church are impelled to carry on such missionary activity by reason of the love with which they love God.”

⁹⁹ Perbal, *Premières leçons de théologie missionnaire*, 69.

¹⁰⁰ See Craig Steven Titus, “Servais Pinckaers and the Renewal of Catholic Moral Theology,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 1 (2012): 43–68, 63.

ontology. By juridicism, Congar means a method of analysis that, in its explanation of some reality, tends to work exclusively with categories of power, order, and jurisdiction, and hence, impoverishes what would otherwise be a very rich subject of investigation.¹⁰¹ A juridical approach can be applied (exclusively) to just about any reality, including, as we have seen, to the Church's missions. It was the great achievement of *Ad Gentes* that it, without rejecting the necessary juridical dimensions of mission,¹⁰² instead approached the question of mission in terms of its origin, its nature, and its end, or what Congar calls, its supernatural ontology. Elsewhere, Congar describes this same movement away from juridicism towards a supernatural ontology as Vatican II having done "nothing more than undertake a deepening of ecclesiology based on a 'trinitarian *theo*-logy'."¹⁰³ Congar likes to italicize the *theo*¹⁰⁴ in 'theology', most likely, because of his insistence that theology is discourse, properly speaking, about God.¹⁰⁵ It is the mystery of God, the Trinity, that must be the overarching category to which everything under theological consideration must be traced back. Fergus Kerr has demonstrated how, in Congar's theological method—analyzing as he does everything *sub ratione dei*¹⁰⁶—Congar, throughout his career, aligned himself squarely within this Thomist tradition.

I have shown in this article, not only that mission is a reality that *can* be analyzed theologically, *sub ratione dei*, but also that it was *in fact* analyzed

¹⁰¹ Cf. Avery Dulles, "A Half Century of Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 50 (1959): 419–442, 420.

¹⁰² To be sure, the juridical nature of certain relationships between territories and their ordinaries, and Propaganda were not completely abrogated. Note should be taken of the "*-ism*" in Congar's dismissals of various categories. What is overcome is juridicism, not juridical relationships as such.

¹⁰³ From Congar, *Le Concil de Vatican II. Son Eglise peuple de Dieu et corps du Christ*, 82, quoted in the introduction of the ET, *My Journal of the Council*, xxviii.

¹⁰⁴ He does it in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, II, 13, when describing *Lumen Gentium* and Journet's theological work. He italicizes it in Yves Congar, "Regard chrétien sur l'échec," in *Les homes devant l'échec*, ed. Jean Lacroix (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 115–125, 122.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Congar, "Principes doctrinaux," *Unam Sanctam* 67 (1967), 185: "Elle est théologique par son contenu, au sens le plus fort d'un discours *sur Dieu*."

¹⁰⁶ See Fergus Kerr, "Yves Congar and Thomism," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 67–97. Congar criticizes certain figures (such as certain members of the Tübingen School) for departing from the Thomistic *sub ratione dei* in his article "théologie," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 15 (1942), 341–502, later to be translated and published as *A History of Theology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968).

in such a way, both before and during the Council. To this it might be objected that *Ad Gentes*, §2 is simply a reiteration of the missionary foundation of the Church already articulated in *Lumen Gentium*, §2–4 and 16–17. But this only shifts the question one step back and does not take into account the concrete evidence: namely, that pre-conciliar theology was already linking the Church to the Trinity and missionary work to the divine missions; that the conciliar interventions demanded a more detailed treatment of missions and invoked the *Doctor communis*; and that Congar's own draft was heavily noted with texts of St. Thomas. As a result, reading *Ad Gentes* with Aquinas—especially with question 43 of the *Summa*—in mind, is not only a fruitful exercise in sapiential theology, but it also gives us a more contextual, and therefore, historically accurate view of what the theological framework was of both the redactors and the Council Fathers.

