

YVES CONGAR, O.P.: LEGACY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS—
INTEREST GROUP

Topic:	Identity and Reform
Convener:	Rose M. Beal, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Moderator:	Rose M. Beal, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Presenter:	Daniel Rober, Fordham University
Respondent:	Julia Brumbaugh, Regis University, Colorado

This first meeting of the Yves Congar Interest Group focused on the implications of reform for ecclesial identity. Daniel Rober began the conversation with his paper, "Identity and Reform: Reappropriating Congar's Conditions for Authentic Reform in Today's Ecclesial Context." Rober argued that the four conditions for ecclesial reform that Congar enumerated in *True and False Reform in the Church* can inform current debate regarding ecclesial reform and identity, which he identified as "the two priorities between which Catholic political currents have arguably oscillated in the past 50 years." In his summary of Congar's four conditions, Rober emphasized Congar's persistent commitment to unity, eschewing at all times any practice of reform that proposes division or duplication. Applying these four conditions to today's context, Rober noted the proliferation, since Vatican II, of institutions within the Catholic Church (for example, religious orders, universities, or para-church movements) established for the advancement of particular views or identities "that seek to instantiate a new vision of the church within the present." With regard to the primacy of charity, Rober noted Pope Francis' recent encouragement of charity towards those who hold different or opposing views, including within the church. With regard to preserving communion, Rober placed the "necessary tension between center and periphery" within the context of the Internet effect that allows both broader communication among members of a community and easier establishment of like-minded cliques within a community. With regard to patience with delays, Rober highlighted Congar's admonition that leaders, especially, not be too patient. Patience should not be confused with lassitude. Lastly, with regard to returning to tradition, Rober recalled Congar's insistence that reform must begin with the current situation. Return to tradition cannot become nostalgia or ecclesial anachronism if it is to foster authentic reform. Rober closed his paper with a review of Pope Francis' papacy thus far, noting several dimensions that appear (admittedly at short perspective) to correspond positively to Congar's four conditions for authentic reform without schism.

Julia Brumbaugh responded to Rober's paper with an exploration of "the relationship between identity and reform, which is intrinsic to Congar's understanding of reform." Congar, she noted, viewed ecclesial identity from his perspective as an ecclesialogist committed to ecumenism: "where there is true ecumenism or reform, identity has to be reimagined." Reform is the reimagination of identity that emerges from the practice of turning toward the other. Brumbaugh thus characterized Congar's principles of reform as "spiritual practices that make possible this turning toward the other, and for enabling the vulnerability involved when identities are in flux," elaborating her point with an example on the practice of patience. The possibility of ecclesial identity change was, she argued, the crux of

Congar's conflict with Roman authorities. Brumbaugh closed her response with a consideration of the role of the pope in reform. Looking to the example of Pope John XXIII, she noted that, while he is seen as a "reforming pope," his primary effect was in allowing "what was happening on the 'periphery' to influence the identity of what it meant to be Catholic." That renewed identity subsequently forged reform on many fronts.

The ensuing conversation addressed the central role of perspective for both identity and reform. Where a person stands can determine how they see the church's identity and the questions they raise concerning the identity and life of the church. In this sense, religious movements on the periphery provide an essential service to the church. Likewise, historical perspective influences the interpretation of past ecclesial identity, whether 50, 500, or 2,000 years ago, which can then be manipulated to reinforce or challenge contemporary identity—a tendency that theologians should work against through careful study of church history. Turning to Congar's principle of patience, the group discussed the tension between the action that reform necessitates and the patience that remaining in communion requires. The medieval understanding of patience in terms of endurance was offered as a useful reframing to avoid equating patience with passivity. Such endurance serves the urgency of the pastoral, which requires an active response in the present moment, while acknowledging that reformers can be wrong and that some acts, taken in the name of reform, may need correction in the future. The session closed with a brief discussion of the direction the Interest Group would like to take for next year's meeting.

ROSE M. BEAL
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Winona, Minnesota