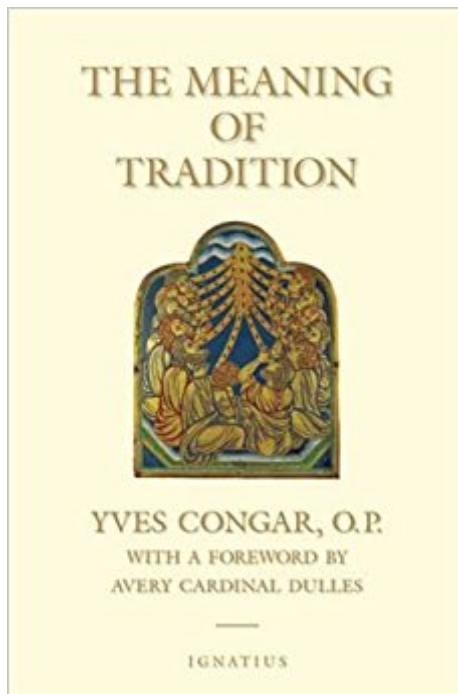


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# The Meaning Of Tradition



## **Synopsis**

Some Christians claim to reject Tradition in preference to a supposedly "Bible only" Christianity. Catholics, on the other hand, venerate Tradition, yet often without adequately understanding it. In this masterful book, the great theologian Yves Congar explains why Tradition is an inescapable aspect of a fully biblical Christian faith. He explores the various forms of Tradition and discusses the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, as well as the role of the Magisterium of the Church. The Meaning of Tradition clears up misconceptions held by many Evangelical Christians and even some Catholics on this important subject. Congar's study of Tradition greatly contributed to the teaching of Vatican II and to a deeper appreciation of the Church Fathers.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"For Congar, Tradition is a real, living self-communication of God. Its content is the whole Christian reality disclosed in Jesus Christ. It is transmitted not only by written and spoken words, but equally by prayer, sacramental worship and participation in the Church's life. When I have taught on Tradition to seminarians and graduate students I have regularly used this book. Congar is perhaps the greatest master of the theology of Tradition who has ever lived." -- Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J.

This book is an outstanding work on the historical, theological, and Biblical basis of tradition, including apostolic tradition, in the 2000-year-old Catholic Church. Highly encourage evangelical protestants and others with "Bible-only" beliefs to read it. The book is a condensed version of Fr. Congar's 2-volume treatise "Tradition and Traditions," which is even more comprehensive, but sadly

out of print. Based on his extensive research of the Fathers of the Church and early Christianity, Fr. Congar provides a list and discussion of many apostolic traditions (largely concerned with worship and religious practice) that are not explicitly articulated in the apostolic writings (the NT)... because handed on by the Apostles who were sent by God, both written and unwritten apostolic traditions are Spirit-filled, not just the ones written in the Bible. In his letters, St. Paul reminds us in many places that there are unwritten traditions (in addition to those contained in Scripture) that were handed on orally from either himself or the other Apostles - this book provides all of the evidence. But if you can get your hands on Congar's larger, 2-volume work, you will find an even fuller and more convincing explanation and justification for non-Biblical tradition and traditions that is second to none.

Congar is one of the pre-Vatican II geniuses whose thoughts were used to create its documents. The central Catholic idea of Tradition, how we understand what scripture is and how we interpret it is treated. The distinction between Sacred Tradition and traditional practices and prayers is clearly explained. College level, but understandable by a bright high school student.

This book is awesome. Yves Congar is brilliant... His thorough explanation of tradition is truly a gift to his readers.

A fascinating review of the early Church Fathers impact on the emerging Church.

Excellent

Chesterton, in "Orthodoxy", calls Tradition "the democracy of the dead", by which he means it saves us from a narrow life bounded by the last hundred years. Unfortunately, our last hundred years was dominated by the so-called Progressive movement which does act, in effect, as if that century is the only one which matters. If you think of this in terms of music, do you really want to say that disco is all that matters, since it came at a later decade, and the blues and rock matter not at all? My first confession is that I have not read this book, "The Meaning of Tradition". I am reading Yves Congar's "Tradition and Traditions", and am so impressed by it that I came here to review it. But I find that the edition I have, two volumes in one in a hardback published by Macmillan, 1967, is not available. What seems to be a very decent newer release of what I take to be this same edition (translated from French), is available but at a dear price. When I saw this paperback, I wondered why the title

was so close, and thought that Congar would not likely write another, smaller book on the same topic. It turns out that this smaller book is actually bits taken from the larger book. As an introduction, it's win/ win. But since I have the larger book, I will describe that one. The two volumes (Part One and Part Two) in my combined edition, are titled "An Historical Essay" and "A Theological Essay", respectively, and have different translators, Michael Naseby for the first, and Thomas Rainborough for the second. One might think to compare them as translators, which I will not attempt to do, as i don't know what is theirs in tone or phrasing, and what is Congar's. Others have written rather extensive reviews as to the contents of this book, I will merely make a few notes in passing. The first chapter, "The Existence of Tradition in the Old and New Testaments" is wonderful, and the smaller book would likely contain it in total. Chapter Two, "The Fathers and the Early Church", is equally so, and breaks out into small sections considering the Ante-Nicene Fathers (before the Council if Nicea), and Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, among other topics. Chapter Three is devoted to the Middle Ages, Chapter Four to "The Reformation Protest". Chapter Five, "The Council of Trent", and Chapter Six, from thence to 1950. The second part does not break out in such a neat way, so I will not list the contents. The first book, in it's French edition, appeared in 1960, and the second in 1963. I know someone will ask what good is it, if it doesn't take into account Vatican II? Didn't that change the idea of Tradition? The short answer is, no, it did not. But there have been a few advances, if you will. For one thing, we now have "The Catechism of the Catholic Church". "Catechesis" is simply Latin for "teaching", and in a looser sense, that word has been thrown around in Catholic circles for a long time. But the present Catechism is a new and different achievement. The other achievement, and this ought to surprise more people than it does, is Catholics now have the best Bible translation, in the RSV 2CE. Protestants who read the Bible often are also giving it high marks. It's always fascinating to read the introduction in the front of a Bible, since most translations are updates or upgrades of an earlier one. The ESV, the most welcome new translation among Protestants, is also based on the RSV (Revised Standard Version). If a good thing can be made better, they also have the best study Bible, at least for the New Testament (so far, with the rest on the way). That would be the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament RSV 2CE, with notes and introductions by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. Among its many wonders, Scott Hahn clears up the misunderstandings about "Tradition and Traditions" in the notes, bringing the insights of Congar's monumental study into an area where they are most needed. In closing, I ought to note that the place I heard of Congar's book was in the footnotes of David Rooney's extensive analysis of the writings of Ronald Knox, "The Wine of Certitude: A Literary Biography of Ronald Knox". Ronald Knox also made a Bible translation, usually known as the Knox

Bible. It's an English Bible upgrade of the Latin Vulgate (of which there had been a few before), although he also used Greek and other sources to create what he called, a "literary, not a literal translation". Readers who like to read different translations will find it makes for lively and enjoyable reading.

This brief little guide is a must read for every Christian wishing to understand the place of the ancient Tradition of the church. Protestants who have so long downplayed or misunderstood tradition will find understanding here. Catholics and Orthodox believers will find much common ground and more depth in their understanding of this key theological distinctive. Perhaps the most profound point Dr. Congar makes is the linking of imitation as a key component to tradition. Note, for instance, the subtle connection of imitation and tradition underlying the apostle Paul's words of II Thessalonians - 2:15 through 3:7. If you glean nothing else from this work, that alone will serve you well in meditating upon the church and the believer as a member of an interpretative community. It should be evident that Jesus did not intend to leave behind a church of individualist-thinking Christians. Not enough praise can be given to this pivotal work and the understanding it can bring. A great follow up to this great classic work would be Dr. Hahn's A Letter and Spirit: From Written Text to Living Word in the Liturgy.

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