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Book Review by Richard J. Beauchesne of *Un peuple messianique: L'Église sacrement du salut: Salut et libération*, by Yves Congar, O.P. *Cogitatio fidei* 85. Paris: Cerf, 1975. (Review, pp. 154-155)

UN PEUPLE MESSIANIQUE: L'ÉGLISE SACREMENT DU SALUT. SALUT ET LIBÉRATION. By Yves Congar, O.P. *Cogitatio fidei* 85. Paris: Cerf, 1975. Pp. 204. 36 fr.

I suggest that the clearest expression of the basic *problématique* of C.'s book is found on p. 182: whether or not there exist a religious function and a religious activity which, though exercised within the scope of global history (for there exists no other history), are specific and irreducible realities inherent to the texture of salvation history. If the answer is yes, full human liberation (or salvation) is not exclusively historical but also eschatological, and consequently the latter dimension of salvation *must* be dealt with. C. intends to do precisely that.

As Christians, we are promised Christian hope, which goes beyond the realization of human hopes (p. 169). Be it understood, however, that nothing should be taken away from the exigencies of human hopes, such as the triumph of justice over injustice, the elimination of hunger, of all sickness, of death itself (p. 155), not only on an individual level, but also on the social and political levels (p. 175). There is, nevertheless, a "beyondness" to human hopes, which reveals itself in a twofold way: first, as a gift which "the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard" (1 Cor 2:9): the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, the vision of God, a divinization, a "surpassing" of human finitude; secondly, as an evaluating principle with regard to our terrestrial endeavors which, in bringing about justice and liberation, always remain tendential and provisional. Furthermore, the salvation of Jesus Christ (a yet and a not yet) radicalizes (goes to the roots of) the goals of liberation, for liberators are themselves submitted to particular forms of slavery. They must often side up with Beelzebub in order to free people from Beelzebub. God's freedom alone, as a gift, leads not anew into slavery those whom it has set free (p. 170). Thus C. accepts a certain kind of dualism, not one that establishes a separation between the sacred and the profane, but one that points to a distinction of levels as well as to the specific reality of a religious dimension. As a man rooted in tradition, he concludes his book by vigorously stating: "Always (one must take into account) the Chalcedonian statute: without separation, without confusion" (p. 195).

Un peuple messianique contains two parts. The first deals with the Church as the sacrament of salvation. This is seen through an analysis of some of the Vatican I and II documents, Scripture and patristic writings,

the ancient Church and modern theology. The model of messianic people is then used to explain how the Church in its entirety is called to be the sacrament of salvation for the world. As such, the Church reveals to the world its final meaning.

Part 2 deals with the themes of salvation and liberation as seen through the eyes of both OT and NT witnesses. C. then makes a profound study of Jesus as Saviour. A chapter follows on the meaning of human liberation today. A last chapter approaches human liberation within the context of Christ's mission and salvation. The latter appears as the book's most controversial chapter. C. makes a distinction between the roles of the hierarchy and the laity with regard to each one's involvement in the realization of human liberation: in this respect, the hierarchy witnesses to that aspect of the Church considered as distinct from the temporal society in which and for which it exists; the laity, to the Church considered as messianic people involved with the world in the construction of the world itself in view of the kingdom of God. The hierarchy, through its prophetic teaching, raises the awareness of the laity (who in turn must inform the hierarchy) concerning issues dealing with human liberation. This teaching must then be translated into social and political militancy through the action of the laity.

C.'s praxis—the Church and its tradition—is very real; it is a reality he has received faithfully and lived to the utmost. For this reason the book is to be highly recommended for theology professors and students; for it is a terribly new and prophetic book insofar as one is assured of finding there, concisely and clearly put together (with abundant documentation, as always in C.'s works), what a man of authentic tradition has to say to us today about the Church of Christ which is meant to be the sacrament of humanity's full liberation.

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