

April 25, 1975

Dr. Ganse Little, Jr.
Department of Religion
Williams College
Williamstown, MA 01267

Dear Dr. Little:

This letter concerns the recently completed Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Laity and Ministry in Congar" by one of our most exceptional and mature candidates, Richard J. Beauchesne. He has been encouraged by your letter to him with respect to possible publication by the AAR, even though he appreciates, as do I, the high degree of competition for such privilege.

In my objective judgment this is a truly superior dissertation and one which the community of religious scholars should have access to. Let me set down several points in its favor.

1. It deals with an issue of widespread interest and urgency today: the ministry of laity. There has been much superficial discussion of this; but Congar's thought has been seminal and serious.
2. Beauchesne's treatment of Congar's vast corpus of writing has been prodigious and wholly responsible. For the most part he used the French originals, but provides exacting, readable translations.
3. The enclosed letter from Congar testifies that in his own estimation Beauchesne's work is the best done so far.
4. The work provides important background material for a better understanding of the theological trend during the Second Vatican Council, due in large measure to the influence of Congar.
5. Because Congar is without challenger as Catholicism's foremost ecumenical theological writer, this dissertation is of much value to non-Catholics.
6. The writing style is rather academic but not pedantic. The text is clear and unambiguous, if at times repetitive. There is no evidence of academic pretention or spurious scholarship.

I honestly believe that, if the author were unknown to me and I were asked to judge the dissertation, I would say that it really ought to be published somehow. It is my strong hope that you and your colleagues will decide in its favor.

Sincerely yours,

J. Robert Nelson
Professor of Systematic
Theology

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