

CHAPTER I

CONGAR PRIOR TO 1941

An Ecclesiological Foundation for a Theology of the Laity and Ministry

From the beginning of his theological career Congar has always considered both the clergy (ministerial priesthood) and the laity (universal priesthood) as integral parts of the one Church of Jesus Christ.¹ Furthermore, Congar seems always to have considered the universal priesthood to be the basic reality of the Church,² although at the beginning, his reference to this is merely pointed at.³

For the above mentioned reasons, we see a need to deal first with the ecclesiological background to Congar's theology of the laity and ministry. We shall see that his understanding of the Church, even in his earlier writings, permitted him to integrate the laity's life with that of the Church, and to relate the laity to the clergy in a way which placed the ordained priesthood at the service of the universal priesthood, thus giving to the former its whole reason for existing.

Ecclesiology

We begin by referring to the eclesial context set by Congar when he describes the Church as one, but as existing on a twofold plane: namely, that of the Church *from above* and that of the Church *from below*. The former consists of the simple divine unity and communion revealing itself in the latter which, in turn, consists of the unity and of the society visible in the structure.⁴

¹ In his critique (see above p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, n. 3, *italics*) he writes: "Je me suis toujours intéressé à la question [i.e., the priestly/sacerdotal quality of the entire people of God]: voir mes Bulletins de la RSPT reproduits partiellement dans *Sainte Eglise [études et approches ecclésiologiques* (Paris : Cerf, 1964)]. C'est moi qui ai demandé à L. Cerfaux l'article *Regale Sacerdotium* paru dans *RSPT* 28 (1939) 5-37 [39?] si souvent cité depuis. J'ai été directeur de la *RSPT* de 1935 à 1960 et de 1967 à 1954 [*sic* / plutôt 1967 à 1974?].

² In *JPTL*, pp. 9-10 and note 4 (ETr., XIII, note 1), Congar quotes U. Stutz, the German Protestant specialist, as saying that the Roman Canon Law is almost exclusively a Code for Clerics. Congar also observes that in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, "il n'y a même pas de rubrique 'Laïc'." Congar also refers to R. Müller's observation in "Der Laie in der Kirche" (*Theol. Quartalsch.*, 130 [1950] pp. 184-196) that in *Wetzer und Welte, Kirchenlexikon* (1891), one reads at the word *Laien*: *Siehe Clerus*.

³ See above p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** note 1.

⁴ Congar, *CD*, pp. 110-11. Congar explains: " Nous avons contemplé l'Eglise de haut en bas...où tout procède du ciel, d'auprès de Dieu: ainsi tout est éclairé, tout est lumineux... à prendre les choses de bas en haut, telles que concrètement et effectivement elles se présentent et adviennent, nous rencontrons d'abord

Almost prophetically, in 1938, Congar refers to the Twentieth Century as the century of the Church.⁵ There is little doubt that he has been proven right, having himself set the pace to ecclesiological research. Congar insightfully explains that the real century of the Church is the first, the century of its foundation.

Et, bien sûr, du point de vue de "Eglise elle-même le véritable 'siècle de Eglise restera le 1^{er} siècle, celui de sa fondation."⁶

Faithful to this premise, he discovers in the New Testament the principle of the oneness of the Church. This principle is none other than the Holy Spirit himself. The Church is a creation of the Spirit. The Church is alive because of the Spirit.

Ce principe, c'est le Saint-Esprit. L'Église est une création du Saint-Esprit, et sa vie lui vient de l'animation qu'elle reçoit de lui....⁷

It is this principle of the Spirit that essentially constitutes life in the Church as life in loving communion.

...la loi essentielle du catholicisme est la vie dans l'Eglise, qui est pour autant une vie dans la communion de l'amour.⁸

Borrowing from Möhler, Congar then shows how the Church follows the law of the Incarnations namely, that the visible aspect of the Church (such as the cult, dogma and hierarchical organization), is an exterior expression of the communion of love inspired and realized in us by the Spirit.⁹ As the body manifests the soul, so the cult, dogma and ecclesiastical structures reveal the Spirit of love, who grounds in the heart of the faithful the Spirit and the meaning of what Christ is all a-bout, "l'esprit et le sens du Christ."¹⁰

l'Eglise société visible de forme humaine, puis la communauté intérieure de vie divine..." (ETr., pp. 89-90).

⁵ Yves Congar, "Je crois en la Sainte Eglise," *Revue des jeunes* (janv. 1938), pp. 85-92 (available to me in Congar *SE*, p. 9). Here, Congar writes: "On a dit que le xx^e siècle serait 'le siècle de l'Eglise.' Et en effet, on en parle partout."

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14. The visible in the Church is described by Congar as "...un organe de la communion d'amour inspirée et réalisée en nous par le Saint-Esprit."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14. In "Protestantisme français," *La vie intellectuelle* (10 février 1935), p. 358 (henceforth cited as "Protestantisme français"), also available in *CED*, "Les Protestants et nous," p. 358, Congar refers to the profound level of the reality of the Church, as the level on which obedience to the Lord appears as the

In 1937, Congar described systematically the principle of the oneness of the Church, using, what we could term, his first model of the Church: the *De Trinitate, In Christo, Ex Hominibus* model. Congar conceives the unity of the Church as an extension and a communication of God's very unity.

La vie qui est éternellement dans le sein du Père, après s'être communiquée en Dieu lui-même pour y constituer la société divine, celle des Trois Personnes de la sainte Trinité, est, par grâce, communiquée...à nous. *C'est cela l'Eglise: l'extension de la vie divine à une multitude de créatures.*¹¹

The statement "*c'est cela l'Eglise: l'extension de la vie divine à une multitude de créatures*" appears as a strong affirmation of the basic reality of the Church. This reality consists in life, a life which is one because of its origin in the one God and of our own sharing in this one life.¹²

ultimate value that constitutes the basic ecclesia as community. "Nous ne pourrions nous arrêter que quand, l'unité restaurée -- par leur conversion (i.e., les Protestants) à la vérité et notre commune conversion, eux et nous, à une plus grande pureté de la divine charité --, la suprême volonté du Seigneur sera accomplie.

In "En marge de quelques études sur l'Eglise", *La vie intellectuelle* (10 avril 1932) p. 20, also available in *SE*, pp. 449-463, Congar refers to the fact that the Church appears exteriorly as a big and powerful organization, a permanent mobilization of human forces through the agency of a hierarchical priesthood. He insists that the Church is not only such a reality. In fact its true reality has primarily to do with its supernatural and mystical elements. However Congar notes: "...depuis le XVI siècle surtout, cette évolution (i.e., of the Church) s'est faite pour une très grande part en faveur des éléments juridiques, dans le sens d'une concentration administrative puissante et d'une affirmation de plus en plus étendue et détaillée de la 'monarchie pontificale'...."

On p. 23, in the same article, Congar defines the program of the modern theologians with regard to the Church, a pro-gram which reveals his own: "...c'est vers la remise en valeur de l'âme la plus profonde, la plus mystique, la plus divine de l'Eglise, que s'orientent les théologiens modernes. L'Eglise n'est pas pour eux d'abord une administration centralisée dont on justifie tant bien que mal, de l'extérieur, les exigences, les intransigences et...les faiblesses; c'est un mystère de foi, le mystère de la vie divine communiquée à l'homme par l'Incarnation du Verbe et par sa Rédemption continuée jusqu'à nous par l'Eglise."

¹¹ Congar, *CD*, p. 59 (ETr., p. 48). In "La déification dans la tradition orientale", *Supplément de la vie spirituelle* 43 (avril-juin 1935), pp. 106-107 (also available in *CED*, pp. 269-270), we find that Congar's interest in Orthodoxy also indicates his theological intents: namely, to emphasize the inner reality of the Church. He explains that the Eastern Church sees the Church as the milieu of deifying operation. This happens through the sacraments and the cult through which the invisible penetrates the visible, the eternal the temporal, the uncreated the created. For the Western Church, however, the Church is more the milieu of moral action in quest of the Beatitude. Reflecting on the oriental way of theologizing, Congar concludes: "...trop de concepts théologiques se sont appauvris et sclérosés au sein des disputes 'scolastiques,' puis dans le désert trois fois séculaire, traversé seulement par la maigre caravane des Manuels, d'un enseignement théologique figé et paresseux. Nous pouvons attendre, d'un contact rafraîchi avec la grande tradition catholique de l'Orient, un regain de jeunesse et de fécondité dans l'étude de la sainte théologie" (ETr., pp. 228-229).•

¹² Congar, *CD*, p. 63 (ETr., pp. 51-52).

The Church is one also because of the way in which this extension of God's life -- which is the Church -- is communicated; namely, the *in Christo* reality of the Church. The oneness of the community of life in God comes to us through the one mediator, Jesus Christ.¹³ In this context, the sacramental life of the Church reaches a supreme degree of importance, since the sacraments are the actions of Christ in the Church, or the means of contact with Him, the mediator. The sacraments are a presence of the redemptive mystery of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

At this point, 1937, Congar defines the Church as the *Family of God*, receiving life from Him *in Jesus Christ*. He writes:

Nous tenons donc que l'Eglise est la famille de Dieu, recevant de Jésus-Christ la vie qui procède du Père, par les sacrements, singulièrement par le baptême et l'eucharistie, qui associent le fidèle à la vie du Sauveur et le font vivre de cette vie comme membre de la vie du corps, par une foi vive et une charité sacramentelles.¹⁵

¹³ Congar, *CD*, p. 73.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. We should note, here, that, in Congar, the sacraments have no quasi magical powers. "Les sacrements ne sont pas à proprement parler des actes nouveaux mais, sous le mode d'être spirituel d'une célébration symbolico-réelle, la présence en sa substance (eucharistie) ou du moins en sa vertu sanctifiante (baptême) du mystère rédempteur de Jésus-Christ" (ETr., p. 62).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78 (ETr., p. 63). (This translation is significantly different from the French.) In "Protestantisme français, pp. 357-366 (also in *CED*, pp. 358-364), we discover that two years earlier, this definition of the Church as the Family of God was alluded to by Congar in reference to Protestants as "nos frères en Jésus-Christ," or again as "nos frères protestants" (ETr., pp 289-295). Such a way of referring to Protestants in 1935 by Roman Catholics was not common. See for example in Robert McAfee Brown, *The Ecumenical Revolution* (N. Y.: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 51-52. This same understanding of the Church as life from God in Christ comes through in Congar's view on ecumenism itself. In "Les Protestants et nous", p. 366, when declaring his ecumenical intention, Congar writes: "Nous voulons seulement...affirmer une fois de plus ce qui présentement nous unit et ce qui, un jour, nous unira pleinement: la vie dans le Christ."

In the same paragraph, Congar explains that the Christ reality is the one toward which both Catholics and Protestants must return: another indication of the essentiality of the *in Christo* element, as reflecting the oneness of the Church. Congar writes: "Et de quoi s'agit-il donc pour les protestants et pour nous, sinon de faire retour au Christ et, par le Christ, à Dieu, par la totalité des moyens avec lesquels il est venu de Dieu vers nous et qu'il nous a laissés comme un héritage sacré qu'il n'est pas permis ni de diviser ni d'altérer?" (ETr., p. 295.) Notice how close is Congar's view on ecumenism to Fr. Couturier's Prayer for Unity (in Maurice Villain, *Introduction à l'œcuménisme* [Paris: Casterman, 1961], pp. 161-162). In *Esquisses du mystère de l'Eglise*, Unam Sanctam 8 (Paris: Cerf, 1953,) "L'Eglise et son unité," pp. 11-58 (henceforth cited as *EME*). The latter was first prepared in May 1937 for the Oxford Conferences (July 1937), then published in *Die Kirche Christi* (Einsiedeln und Köln: Benziger, 1941). In *EME* Congar again emphasizes the family of God aspect of the Church. On p. 111, he writes: "L'Eglise est la réalité de la Nouvelle Alliance, le rassemblement des hommes qui, réconciliés avec Dieu dans le Christ mort et ressuscité pour nous, sont appelés à vivre avec Dieu une vie de fils, de citoyens de la cité céleste, et à entrer en part des biens patrimoniaux de Dieu". (Notice: "biens patrimoniaux de Dieu", i.e., the

One soon discovers, however, that the above definition is a partial one. For the Church, in addition to being *de Trinitate* and *in Christo* is also *ex hominibus*. God's life comes to men *in Christo*, not under its heavenly condition, but in a mode adapted to the condition of sinful men. God saves man while respecting who man is.¹⁶

Mais la vie divine ne nous est pas donnée sous son mode homogène et connaturel, et dans des conditions conformes à celles du monde céleste. Elle nous est donnée sous mode humain, adaptée aux conditions de l'homme.¹⁷

Again, for Congar this divine adaptation remains very much with-in the rules of the divine economy. Something similar has happened to the Son of God made man. Here too, one finds an adaptation:

...les prérogatives glorieuses sont tenues en échec, ou du moins mises entre parenthèses par sa vocation de sauveur venu pour des pécheurs: il prend notre condition à nous, s'astreint à tout le conditionnement physique et sociologique d'un homme.¹⁸

The Church *de Trinitate, in Christo* is specifically *ex hominibus*, This means that the family or society of the Trinity extended to us through Christ (inasmuch as it is a life adapted to our human condition) will appear and be revealed in human social forms, incarnated in visible realities; the Church will show itself in human and social forms, as those of any community of men bound together in pursuit of a common goal except that, in this case, the common goal is "*l'accomplissement du Christ qui est notre Paix*".¹⁹ Congar refers to this process as "*la logique de l'Incarnation*",²⁰ which means that the Church is "*sensible et humaine d'un bout à l'autre, et divine d'un bout à l'autre, théandrique comme le Christ*".²¹ Even as *ex hominibus*, the Church is

inheritance of God's family — ETr., p. 15).

¹⁶ In *CD*, Congar explains the societal nature of the Church, i.e. that the Church has the exigencies and the form of a society (p. 43). He shows that human realities (such as geographical, cultural and historical) have soon imposed their own imprint on ecclesiastical life in terms of modifications, development and adaptation (p. 45). However, he insists the *vita in Christo* remains the basic reality that gives heart and soul to the ecclesial community (p. 47 — ETr., p. 41 & pp. 43-44).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80 (ETr., p. 64).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (ETr., p. 65.)

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (ETr., p. 68.)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86 (ETr., p. 69).

²¹ *Ibid.*

one: the unity is analogous to the unity of a city whose goal is one, except that in the Church, the goal is given to us by God; namely, the harmonious peaceful loving oneness of God's life itself.²²

L'Eglise comme société, est la forme humaine de l'unité intérieure toute divine de l'Eglise comme Corps mystique.²³

We now turn to the relationship between the Church *from above* (*ex Trinitate, in Christo*) and the Church *from below* (*ex hominibus*). After studying the supernatural sub-stance of the church, its unity as well as the human mode through which this unity is realized and expressed, Congar shows the relationship between the substance of the Church and its human mode of realization and expression. Although there is only one Church, there are two realities, both of which (with regard to the unity of the Church itself) have their own manifestations, their own exigencies and logic. As regards the unity of the Church, consequently, there is a twofold plane and a twofold logic, and yet the organic reality of the Church (which is one) is unique²⁴ Just as in Jesus Christ there were realities belonging to his divine nature and others belonging to his human nature while, at the same time, Christ was the one and the other (i.e. divine and human), so is it in the Church. In the Church we find, on the one hand, realities that belong to it because it is already the family of God and the community of those sharing divine life (or the Church *from above*); on the other hand, we find realities that belong to it because the Church is in this world and, as such, is humanly conditioned and militant (or the Church *from below*). For Congar, militant refers not to a fighting quality of the Church but to its pilgrim status.²⁵ The first plane relates to the divine unity (which is communicated to the Church) as the life of the soul is communicated to the body; this constitutes an organism (*un fait d'organisme*): one living body of

²² *Ibid.*, p. 87 (ETr., pp. 69-70).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 94. In *EME*, "L'Eglise et son unité," p. 47, Congar explains that there will always remain one church which is at the same time spiritually and visibly one, the place of the personal union of the souls with God and of the life in Christ socially realized: a body in which is organized the communion of Christ, "*in ea* (i.e., the Church) *disposita est communicatio Christi*" (Irenaeus, *Haer*, III, 24, 1 — ETr., p. 44).

²⁴ Congar. *CD*, p.87. In "Ordre et juridiction dans l'Eglise," *Irénikon* (oct 1933), p. 22, (henceforth cited as "Ordre et juridiction", also available in *SE*, pp 202-204), we notice that Congar had dealt with the *ex hominibus* aspect of the Church, without referring to it as such. He uses the image of the dowry handed over to the spouse, in order to illustrate the relation between Jesus and the threefold power of order, jurisdiction and magisterium, the latter three corresponding to Christ's threefold prerogative of priest, king and teacher or of life, way, and truth. He writes: "C'est pourquoi Jésus-Christ a remis à son épouse comme une dot le pouvoir qu'il possédait de s'unir les hommes pour les unir au Père et les réunir en un seul corps humano-divin" (ETr., p. 70).

²⁵ Congar, *CD*, p. 100 (ETr., p. 79).

members who believe and love, one hierarchy which is one of holiness and virtue in proportion to the degree of faith that the members have. The proper value of each member of the Church is of a personal, interior, and inherent nature (*il vaut selon qu'il est*).²⁶ What counts here is the degree of unity that one has with Christ.

Within the first order (i.e. the interior and moral order), a pope can be further away from Christ than a humble and simple ignorant person is, for what is of primary importance is the Spirit. Furthermore, within the first order, Christ is the only leader (*chef*), and He gives of himself as he wishes to whoever responds to Him in faith, Christ remaining the principal cause (the principle initiator) of the divine life found in the believer. Again, in this first order, the Church is indivisible, for as such it is a living organism. It is found fully and simply realized wherever one finds men united to God; as such, the Church is the mystical Christ. In this first order, again, the Church is a living body, that is a visible reality animated by an interior principle of life, which is none other than the Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ. Lastly, as such, the Church is and will last eternally, for the life received is of an eternal nature.²⁷ Inspired by the mentality of the Fathers of the Church, Congar writes in a note:

Au ciel, l'Eglise ne sera plus 'pétrine', mais seule-ment 'johannine', c'est-à-dire non plus militante, mais seulement contemplative et aimante.²⁸

All members relating to God *in Christo* belong to the first plane.²⁹ On the second plane, however, the Hierarchy³⁰ belongs as sanctifier, teacher and governor; the laity as sanctified,

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96 (ETr., p. 76).

²⁷ Congar, *CD* (ETr., pp. 75-80).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99, note 2 (ETr., p. 79, note 2). In "Ordre et juridiction", p. 22, (also in *SE*, p. 203), Congar had written with regard to this question of the earthly Church: "Mais tant que cette Eglise est en construction ou, si l'on préfère, tant que dure le recrutement des élus, il faut que le Christ agisse dans l'Eglise." At the end, however, when God will be all in all, when Christ will hand over his Kingdom to the Father, this action of Christ will cease, for the Church, then will be fully realized in the communion of the Father and the Son.

²⁹ In "Un essai de théologie sur le sacerdoce catholique, la thèse de l'Abbé Long-Hasselmanns, texte et remarques critiques", *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 25 (1951), pp. 188-199 and pp. 270-304, Congar publishes, analyses and criticizes Long-Hasselmanns' thesis on the Catholic priesthood (already published in *Bulletin national des Instituteurs et des Institutrices*, [octobre 1930, pp. 30-36] and [novembre 1930, pp. 79-64], given by Long-Hasselmanns in 1930 as a conference, and discovered by Congar in 1935; therefore known to Congar during this period that we are considering). We find on p. 189 and pp. 275-276 the distinction referred to above between the laity and the hierarchy; namely, that according to charity (first plane) and that according to the ordination (second plane). We read in Long-Hasselmanns' thesis: "Dans le Corps mystique du Seigneur resplendent à la fois l'unité et la diversité. Cette unité et cette

diversité résultent de la conjonction de tous, mais à des degrés variés, avec leur chef. La participation des membres au sacerdoce du Christ se diversifie doublement, selon la charité et selon l'ordre.

Selon la charité, les fidèles sont d'autant plus sacerdotaux qu'ils sont plus unis par l'amour avec le Christ.

Selon l'ordre, c'est-à-dire selon la disposition de l'Eglise, les clercs sont députés à remplir des fonctions plus ou moins importantes du ministère sacerdotal.

Ainsi, nous n'avons qu'un seul et même sacerdoce participé à des degrés divers selon la charité et exercé selon les modes divers d'après l'ordination ecclésiastique. La distinction ecclésiastique est solidement établie, cependant que tombe toute barrière spirituelle qui séparerait les laïcs des clercs pour les rejeter loin du Christ. Il résulte en effet de nos études qu'évêques, prêtres (presbyteri) et diacres ne participent pas plus au sacerdoce du Christ que les laïcs, quoiqu'ils aient seuls qualité pour en diriger l'exercice et en remplir certaines fonctions... De même que l'oeil n'est pas le sujet de la vision (c'est la personne), mais l'organe... Le Christ est essentiellement prêtre, le chrétien est essentiellement Christ, et l'on réserverait au très petit nombre le caractère sacerdotal authentiques...

Il n'y a qu'un seul et même sacerdoce des prêtres et des laïques participé à des degrés divers selon le degré d'union spirituelle avec le Christ-sacerdos, c'est-à-dire selon la charité, et exercé à des modes divers selon la disposition de l'Eglise, c'est-à-dire, selon l'ordre.

Selon la charité, plus ou moins.

Selon l'ordre, autrement (*bonum opus desiderat*).

Congar is not ready at this point to accept Hasselmans' thesis. Congar's criticism on p. 293, evidently shows the point of his disagreement, although he accepts the basic distinction. "L'erreur -- qui n'irait pas seulement contre le sens du concile de Trente (*Denz. 963 - Mediator Dei*, n. 79), mais, nous allons le montrer, contre une bonne interprétation du développement historique -- consisterait à penser que les ordinations ne sont pas un titre propre, original, en même temps que supérieurement réel, de participer au sacerdoce du Christ. C'est ce qui arriverait si l'on tenait que le baptême est l'origine unique du sacerdoce et qu'il n'y a, après lui, de degrés dans le sacerdoce que par la charité, l'ordination aux différents ministères ne faisant qu'habiliter ou adapter à l'exercice public, social, de l'unique sacerdoce baptismal. Il en serait ainsi si cette ordination était seulement un acte de l'Eglise, même animée et guidée par le Saint-Esprit. Mais si l'ordination sacerdotale vient du Christ, si elle représente un sacrement communiquant, à un titre propre (ne se réduisant pas au Baptême, bien qu'il le suppose), quelque chose du sacerdoce du Christ, alors il existe dans l'Eglise deux modes différents, deux titres propres, bien que complémentaires, de participation au sacerdoce du Christ." Henceforth, this article will be cited as "Un essai de théologie-Long-Hasselmans," *RSR*.

Interestingly, in a note on p. 273, Congar shows some hesitation as to whether Long-Hasselmans is in error, here, with regard to the Council of Trent. We read: "Je dis bien: le sens du concile de Trente car la position de l'abbé Long est trop bien équilibrée, trop nuancée, elle assume trop de données traditionnelles pour heurter de front la lettre du concile. Voir cependant Sess. XXIII, can, 3 (*Denz. 963*) et également l'encycl. *Mediator Dei* (ed. Roguet, no 79):" In *JPTL*, Congar refers to Long-Hasselmans and makes ample critical use of his thesis; for example, see p. 173, note 40, p. 188, note 88.

In his 1974 critique (see above p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, n. 3, *italics*), his final comment is the following: "Une remarque générale enfin = les notes de Long-Hasselmans on été pour moi une expression (intéressante et vigoureuse, mais imparfaite) de ce que je cherchais. Vous majorez, je crois, l'influence qu'elles ont eu sur moi. Mais je n'écrirais plus ma critique de 1951, telle qu'elle est. "Mon cheminement" de MCE *Ministères et communion ecclésiale*] indique le sens des changements de perspectives : cf. Schéma triangulaire [in *MCE*, pp. 19 & 38]". [In this thesis, see above p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**, n. 3; and below, p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**, top of the page.]

taught and governed.³¹ We discover here the Church as a societal unity, a complex reality which is to be constituted from a multiplicity through *concensus* and through an organized collaboration in view of the common good. Here we find a unity of order similar to the kind of unity found in a people or a nation: the reality of the organization. In the Church, consequently, we find both authority and subjects, both commands and obedience. We find a hierarchy which is specifically social: not a hierarchy related to personal life, but one which is related to the function, the powers that have been received and the specific competencies. Members have worth, not according to their personal worth, but according to their representative functions with regard to the common good. The order in question, on this plane is objective, juridical and social.... In this context, one speaks of validity and competency rather than of value and worth. For example, in sacramental matters what is performed by a legitimate minister is validly realized. Quoting Augustine, Congar writes:

Pierre baptise, c'est le Christ qui baptise; Paul baptise, c'est le Christ lui baptise;
Judas baptise, c'est le Christ qui baptise.³²

In this sense, the clergy is superior (plus élevé) in the objective, legal and social order. Quoting Thomas, Congar defines the Church in this last sense; namely, as body in the sociological and juridical order, "...une multitude organisée en unité par le concours d'activités et de fonctions diverses".³³ The Church as such is temporary, that is:

pour le temps du rassemblement et de la formation des membres du Christ. Elle est nécessaire tant que le Christ n'est pas pleinement advenu en nous, c'est-à-dire pour la durée de notre voyage loin de lui.³⁴

Only then will this earthly Church cease to exist, since prophecy and faith will give way to vision, as John the Baptist gave way to Jesus Christ. In heaven, the holy Jerusalem is in no need

³⁰ Congar, *CD*, pp. 96-101 (ETr., pp. 75-80).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 97 (ETr., p. 77).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 99 (ETr., p. 79).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99-100 (ETr., p. 79). In "Protestantisme français," p. 359 (also in *CED*, p. 359) the perfectibility of this phase of the Church is also explained by Congar. He speaks of the 'return' of the separated brethren. He writes: "Que ce retour, d'ailleurs, suppose, de notre part, des préparations, des rectifications, nous en sommes convaincus.... nous pensons même que si nos frères séparés ont couru un long chemin loin de la vérité, nous avons nous-mêmes souffert de leur sécession et perdu à ne plus prier avec eux d'un coeur unanime."

of human guidance, for God himself will be its temple.³⁵ Again, we must insist: for Congar, the twofold plane just described, does not mean that there are two Churches. He emphatically writes:

Il n'y a pas deux Eglises. Il n'y a pas, d'un côté, une sorte de pur Corps mystique, communauté spirituelle des âmes, sans corps (précisément parce que les âmes ne sont pas sans corps) et, d'un autre côté, une sorte de cadavre d'organisation ecclésiastique.³⁶

Then in a most impressive statement Congar explains:

...Ce qui est organisé, c'est la communauté humaine des amis de Dieu et, ce qui est Corp mystique, c'est la société ecclésiastique elle-même.³⁷

As will be explained in a later chapter,³⁸ we believe that, were he writing today, Congar would reformulate³⁹ the latter part of his statement to read: "Ce qui est Corps mystique, c'est la

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-100 (ETr., pp. 75-80).

³⁶ Congar, *CD*, p. 10 (ETr., p. 80).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, We must note here, that Congar is not erecting two Churches, a visible and an invisible one as for example Emil Brunner seems to do. Brunner distinguishes between the *ekklesia* and the Church, the latter being the formal authority over against the spiritual-charismatic community of the early Church; or the transformation of a spiritual brotherly community in which the entire people is priestly (or priestly people) to a priestly and sacramental Church in which only some are priests to administer sacrament to the rest. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation Dogmatics: Vol. III* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 66-67. The *ekklesia* for Brunner appears to be the invisible reality of the Spirit which imperfectly receives visibility in the various churches as we find them in history. On the other hand, for Congar, the whole Church is one: "Le Christ mystique et l'Eglise société font vraiment 'une seule chair'". *CD*, p. 106 (ETr., p. 85).

³⁸ See below, Chapter IV: Congar in the 1960's and early 1970's: Ecclesiology and Ministries (pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.-Error! Bookmark not defined.****Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Reference source not found.**

³⁹ Here, in his critique (see above p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**, n. 3, *italics*), Congar explains in which sense he would reformulate today his 1937 statement in *CD* ("Ce qui est Corps mystique, c'est la communauté ecclésiale elle-même").referred to above in the text. Hewrites : "Oui, dans le sens de Vatican II, chap I".... [*Vatican II, Chap. I = Lumen gentium* N° 8, esp. the following text: "Cette Eglise [i.e. l'unique Eglise du Christ], constituée et organisée en ce monde comme une communauté, *subsiste dans l'Eglise catholique*, gouvernée par le successeur de Pierre et les évêques en communion avec lui, encore que, hors de cet ensemble, on trouve plusieurs éléments de sanctification et de vérité qui, en tant que dons propres à l'Eglise du Christ, invitent à l'unité catholique".See also: *Lumen gentium, Chap. II, N°14.) Les fidèles catholiques (§2 = Contribution Congar = "Sont pleinement incorporés à la communauté ecclésiale ceux qui, possédant l'Esprit du Christ, acceptent toute son économie et tous les moyens de salut établis en elle et sont, par les liens de la profession de foi, des sacrements, de la direction et de la communion ecclésiastiques, unis dans ce même ensemble visible de l'Eglise, avec le Christ qui la régit par le souverain Pontife et les évêques. D'autre part, n'est pas sauvé, même s'il est incorporé à l'Eglise, celui qui, faute de persévérer dans la charité, demeure dans le sein de l'Eglise "de corps ". mais non pas " de coeur". Au surplus, tous les fils de l'Eglise se rappelleront qu'ils ne doivent pas attribuer leur condition privilégiée*

communauté ecclésiale elle-même.⁴⁰

The relationship of the organization to the human community of God's friends, of the ecclesiastical society to the Mystical Body is seen by Congar through an analogy with the relationship of the body to the soul, as well as with the relationship of the divine to the human in Christ.

Il y a entre les deux, une jonction organique du genre de celle qui existe entre l'âme et le corps: ou plutôt -- car nous tenons ici le véritable et propre exemplaire de l'Eglise -- du genre de celle qui existe dans le Christ, entre la nature divine et la nature humaine. Nier celle-ci serait monophysisme; nier celle-là,

à leurs propres mérites, mais à une grâce spéciale du Christ; et que, s'ils n'y correspondent pas dans leurs pensées, leurs paroles et leurs actes, bien loin d'être sauvés, ils seront jugés plus sévèrement. Les catéchumènes qui, sous la motion de Esprit-Saint, veulent expressément être incorporés à l'Eglise, lui sont unis par ce désir même, et la Mère Eglise les entoure déjà de son amour et de ses soins."

Voir aussi *Lumen gentium*, Chap. II, N°15: *Les liens de l'Eglise avec les chrétiens non catholiques*: "Avec ceux qui, baptisés, s'honorent du nom de chrétiens, mais ne professent pas intégralement la foi ou ne conservent pas l'unité de la communion avec le successeur de Pierre, l'Eglise se sait unie par de multiples rapports. Beaucoup, en effet, vénèrent la sainte Ecriture comme norme de foi et de vie; ils manifestent aussi un authentique zèle religieux, croient avec amour en Dieu le Père tout-puissant et dans le Christ, Fils de Dieu Sauveur, sont marqués par le baptême, qui les unit au Christ et, en outre, reconnaissent et acceptent d'autres sacrements dans leurs propres Eglises ou communautés. Plusieurs parmi eux ont aussi l'épiscopat, célèbrent la sainte Eucharistie et cultivent la dévotion envers la Vierge Mère de Dieu. A cela s'ajoute la communion par la prière et d'autres bienfaits spirituels; et même une union réelle dans l'Esprit-Saint, car l'Esprit agit également en eux par ses dons et ses grâces, avec sa puissance sanctificatrice; et il a donné à certains d'entre eux une vertu qui les a fortifiés jusqu'à l'effusion de leur sang. Ainsi l'Esprit éveille-t-il en tous les disciples du Christ le désir et oriente-t-il leur activité afin que tous s'unissent pacifiquement, de la manière que le Christ a fixée, en un seul troupeau et sous un seul Pasteur. Et pour obtenir cette unité la Mère Eglise ne cesse de prier, d'espérer et d'agir. Elle exhorte ses fils à se purifier et à se renouveler, afin que l'image du Christ resplendisse, plus nette, sur le visage de l'Eglise.

(Regarding p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** above, n. 4 and its related context), Congar's critique of this thesis continues as follows: "Voir [aussi] ma contribution aux *Mélanges Charue*". (Regarding the latter, see: Congar, *Au service de la parole de Dieu. Mélanges offerts à Monseigneur André-Marie Charue, Evêque de Namur*. [Gembloux, Duculot, 1969]. Voir contribution Congar.)

⁴⁰ For example, in *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (Paris: Cerf, 1971) p. 48, Congar writes: "Ce qui structure l'Eglise, ce sont tous ces services et ministères que Dieu suscite pour qu'elle remplisse, en un lieu ou dans le monde l'oeuvre de l'Envoyé et du Serviteur: Annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle et procurer la libération aux pauvres: être la Diaconie du Dieu qui aime les hommes." In the English translation of *Si vous êtes mes témoins* (Paris: Cerf, 1959), *Laity, Church and World* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960) p. 66, in the note, we read: "The adjective ecclésial has been coined in France to signify being of or pertinent to the Church, the word 'ecclesiastical' (in French as in English) having acquired an almost purely clerical connotation. See Congar *Lay People in the Church*, (London: Chapman, 1960) pp 50-51, [translator]." In *JPTL*, pp. 79-84.

nestorianisme. Notre Eglise est celle d'Ephèse, et de Chalcédoine, de saint Cyrille et de saint Léon.⁴¹

The body-soul analogy is then explicitated. The soul is that by which the body lives, and by which the living body is what it is. The soul is perceptible only by means of the body. The body localizes the soul; it is also the instrument of the life of the soul, and expresses it externally. By the same token, the one life of God *ex Trinitate in Christo* is that by which the Church lives and, by which, this same Church is what it is. This life of God is perceptible by means of the Church, and thus, by means of the Church, this life is localized. The institutional Church, on the other hand, is the instrument of the life of God, that is, it expresses this life externally.⁴² Congar explains:

L'Eglise-institution est l'instrument organiquement associé de l'Eglise-Corps mystique, les deux étant une seule réalité qui est purement et simplement, l'Eglise du Christ.⁴³ ... Ce n'est pas sans raison que l'Eucharistie et l'Eglise sont toutes deux la réalité, et portent toutes deux le nom de 'Corps du Christ'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Congar, *CD*, pp. 100-101 (ETr., p. 80). In *EME* "L'Eglise et son unité," pp. 11-57, prepared in 1937, Congar approaches the relationship between the ecclesiastical structure and the Christian community with the following ecclesiological model: the Church is both GIFT of LIFE and TASK of LIFE. The Church as gift of life is the Church making its members (*l'Eglise faisant*); the Church as task of life is the fellowship of the Church, or the Church made (*l'Eglise faite*): the former is the divine element; the latter, the human; the former is the "*donné*", the given, the latter, the "*agi*", the operating. Both aspects of the Church operate dialectically. Congar concludes: "[l'Eglise est] selon la dialectique du *donné* et de *l'agi*, à la fois don de Dieu venu d'en haut et collaboration des hommes, réalité acquise et réalisation active, Corps mystique et société" (pp. 29-30 — ETr., p. 30). Again in *EME*, Congar explains the dialectics of the *donné* and the *agi*. "Tout est déjà accompli dans le Christ: l'Eglise est seulement la manifestation de ce qui est en lui, la réalité animée par son Esprit. Et, cependant, il nous faut encore réaliser le Christ et construire son Corps; double vérité que nous appellerions volontiers dialectique du *donné* et de *l'agi*, qui touche de très près la réalité théandrique de l'Eglise..." (p. 26 — p. 27).

⁴² *CD*, pp. 100-103 (ETr., pp. 81-82). In *EME*, pp. 11-57, using the GIFT-TASK model of the Church, Congar explains that the Church is strongly organized for action, and as a constituted body, it is from the inside, a community living mystically with Christ who died, is risen and is gloriously alive now. All the exterior aspect of the Church and its visible activity [the TASK] exists merely to realize that which is its intimate substance, the *vita in Christo* [the GIFT] (pp. 56-57 [ETr., p. 52]). It is important to note here the TASK aspect of the Church, that is, its apostolic, missionary aspect. To the profound process by which the divine plenitude is in Christ, and by which the plenitude of Christ is in the Church, corresponds, for Congar, a process of visible mission formulated by John, Clement and Tertullian in this way: The Father sent the Son and the Son sends the Apostles. The sacramental constitution of the Church as Mystical Body is essentially apostolic. In fact, the apostolic ministry (in its triple function of doctrine, ministry and pastorate), is not an order which is found in any society, but an order which is found only in the Church: it is the order by which the Mystical Body itself is realized and built (pp. 37-43 — ETr., pp. 35-41).

⁴³ Congar, *CD*, p. 103 (ETr., p. 82).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104 (ETr., p. 83).

The sacraments form the meeting place where the two planes (divine and human) meet. As such, the sacraments are the effective signs and channels which, here and now, directly transmit to us the gift of life made to us in Christ, who dies and rises for us. The Church-society itself is a sacrament in the large sense of the word (i.e. in contra-distinction to the more narrow sense of the seven sacraments recognized by the Roman Catholic Church).⁴⁵

He writes:

En son être terrestre, l'Eglise est comme un grand sacrement où tout signifie sensiblement et procure une réalité intérieure de grâce.⁴⁶

Theology of the Laity and Ministry

It seems to us that constantly, in the early Congar, communion in grace -- the life of the Spirit in the hearts of men -- has priority qualitatively over the institutional. Accordingly, as early as 1938, Congar recognized that being a Christian does not consist primarily in belonging to the external structure of the Roman Catholic Church. He speaks rather of the *true catholic Christian*:

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-106 (ETr., pp. 82-85). On pp. 108-109, we read: "au total, l'unité de l'Église une, sainte, catholique et apostolique, est celle d'une réalité très spéciale faite d'hommes unis par une vie surnaturelle procédant de Dieu et du Christ, en une forme de vie sociétaire par laquelle est procurée et promue cette vie surnaturelle elle-même. En son être terrestre, l'Eglise est comme un grand sacrement où tout signifie sensiblement et procure une unité intérieure de grâce. Mais cet être terrestre n'existe que pour sa substance céleste, de même que celle-ci n'existe dans son incorporation humaine. Il n'y a pas deux Eglises:... mais l'unique Eglise qui est le Corps de Jésus-Christ, est à la fois céleste et humaine, substantiellement divine, mais en des hommes et par des moyens de forme humaine; elle est ensemble droit et amour, société et communauté de vie; elle est à la fois, et sans séparation, Societas fidei et Spiritus Sancti in cordibus, et Societas externorum rerum ac rituum: une unité à la fois incarnée et pneumatique" (ETr., pp. 87-88). On p. 105, Congar had already explained the nature of the Church's sacramentality: "quant à l'appareil de l'Eglise-société, sans être sacrement au sens propre et rigoureux du mot, il l'est dans un sens élargi: il est, d'un bout à l'autre, un ministre, un service, un organe dont toute la raison d'être revient à exprimer et à procurer la vie intérieure et cachée de la foi, de charité sacramentelle et d'entraide fraternelle que les chrétiens mènent, avec le Christ, en Dieu" (ETr., p. 84).

⁴⁶ Congar, *CD*, p. 108 (ETr., p. 87). In "Ordre et juridiction", pp. 27-28, also in *SE*, p. 208, Congar has explained that the Church as grand sacrament is different from other societies whose functions are exclusively related to government and education, functions that correspond to the power of jurisdiction and magisterium in the Church. In addition to the functions of other societies, the Church has a maternal function, one of generation. (Variants in *SE* are indicated between parentheses.) "...l'Eglise, elle, a une fonction maternelle de génération. C'est que la société civile n'a pas à constituer ses sujets.... La société surnaturelle, au contraire, doit d'abord donner l'être [et?] le pouvoir d'agir aux fils (*SE*: fidèles) qu'elle engendre à Dieu et à la vie selon Dieu... elle doit leur donner le jour, par cette nouvelle naissance de l'eau et de l'Esprit (*SE*: dans l'eau et l'Esprit) dont le mystère et le sacrement résident en elle."

Le Chrétien véritablement catholique est donc d'abord celui qui, par le dedans, vit assez de foi et de charité, se sent assez, par la grâce de la famille du Père, fait assez rayonner en lui l'image de Dieu, pour se reconnaître l'associé, le frère, le membre, l'incorporé de tous ceux qui sont aussi de la famille de Dieu et portent l'image du Christ, reflet de celle du Père. Celui chez qui domine assez le sens de l'unité pour respecter chez les autres, sous la variété de tempéraments, d'expériences et d'expressions, la même vie de Jésus-Christ, en qui nous sommes tous catholiquement frères. Celui-là, plus il est authentiquement à Dieu, plus il est vraiment de la famille de Dieu, plus aussi il est vraiment le frère de tous. Il gagne en possibilité de communion ce qu'il acquiert en profondeur de foi et de charité. Le modèle est saint François, que la perfection de l'esprit filial a fait le frère de toute créature, dans une acceptation littérale, tout ensemble, de l'Evangile et de la création, et à qui la liturgie décerne le titre magnifique de *vir catholicus*.⁴⁷

The Christian defined here is the authentic catholic Christian,⁴⁸ not necessarily the Catholic Christian. Congar appears to be defining the Christian whose heart and mind are modeled on the all embracing heart and mind of Christ himself, that is, the one who, "par le dedans," from within lives, feels and acts "vit, se sent, fait rayonner" *in Christo*, one who can be a brother to all who live *in Christo*, even within a pluralistic framework, "celui chez qui domine assez le sens de l'unité pour respecter chez les autres, sous la variété, etc...." Thus already in 1937 (in *CD*), Congar's understanding of 'christian' – as including also 'non-Roman Catholic christians' – approximates that of Vatican II.⁴⁹

The more the *inner life* of faith and love is active, the more communion with all is possible ("il gagne en possibilité de communion ce qu'il acquiert en profondeur de foi et de charité"). The *vir catholicus* par excellence, proclaimed as such by the Liturgy, is Saint Francis, whose faith and love were so profound, that his communion extended to all of creation. In faith, he was so much God's son, that he was, by the same token, the brother of all ("la perfection de l'esprit filial l'a fait le frère de toute créature".) There is an affinity between *inner life*, faith, love and unity. There is a level, *the catholicus-level*, where the vertical is at one with the horizontal, where

⁴⁷ Congar, *CD*, pp. 146-147. (Italics are mine — ETr., pp. 113-114.)

⁴⁸ Here, in his critique (see above p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, n. 3, *italics*), Congar writes: "voir *Lumen gentium* n° 14, début du § 2 (qui est de moi)". [See above **Contribution Congar**, p.10, within n. 5.]

⁴⁹ See above p. 11, note.

sonship means universal brotherhood, where the experience of the "wholly Other" *in Christo* is an experience of fraternal communion.⁵⁰

The following is presented as a commentary on Congar's definition of a true catholic Christian. The priority of interior life, of that which is vital, permeates Congar's early writings. Truth and life are his main intent. :

Et, pourtant, c'est si bon au coeur d'être vrai! quel allègement, quelle libération, quelle simplification de tous les problèmes insolubles!⁵¹

Each man has within him an echo of God's Word.

... On se demande si les hommes prêtent encore l'oreille A cette voix que Dieu a mise en eux comme un écho de son Verbe, "le Véridique," et qui, à travers ce qu'il y a en eux d'égoïste et d'impur, leur adresse un imprescriptible appel à la loyauté: "Si ton oeil est pur, tout ton corps sera dans la lumière". "Que votre parole soit: oui, oui; non, non."⁵²

The ultimate judgment before which man stands is not the Roman Church, but God Himself in Jesus. The ultimate conversion to Truth is situated at the junction where man stands before God. Concerning the discovery of being in truth (d'être vrai), Congar writes:

Chacun doit faire cette découverte pour son propre compte et envisager sérieusement une conversion quotidiennement recommencée et approfondie à un absolu de loyauté: ne plus rien 'dire que de vrai, se débarrasser de ces faussetés, de ces préjugés, de ces truquages, de ces mille gauchissements ou mensonges qui, devant le regard de Jésus-Christ, s'évanouiraient en commençant par les plus anciens, les plus invétérés, comme les accusateurs de la femme naguère surprise en son péché devant le Maître.⁵³

Congar's attitude with regard to his basic preoccupation of going beyond "Roman Catholicism" for the quest of Truth is reflected in an article he wrote in 1935, under the pseudonym of "Christianus". He writes:

C'est banal à dire, mais ce n'est pas si banal à pratiquer. Qu'il s'agisse de protestants, d'orthodoxes ou, tout aussi bien, de communistes, bref de cette immense foule qui ne pense pas comme nous, quelle est le plus souvent notre attitude spontanée? C'est de nous enfermer dans la tour du dogme et dans la

⁵⁰ Here, comes to mind, D. Bonhoeffer's definition of transcendence or the "nearest thou at hand." See John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), p. 76.

⁵¹ Yves Congar, "Loyauté et correction fraternelle," *La vie intellectuelle* (25 novembre 1937): p. 10, also available in *CED*, p. 370 (ETr., pp. 299-300).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Congar, *CED*, p. 370 (ETr., p. 300).

forteresse de nos 'positions", tous ponts relevés, et de n'envisager notre partenaire qu'à travers les catégories définies et cataloguées des erreurs de sa secte... On peut, à ce compte, donner à tous les problèmes une solution irréprochable... Apprenons à respecter en toute chose vivante la vie et ce qu'elle a d'infini, à connaître dans tout homme le mystère d'une personne vivante fait non de principes seulement, mais de sang, de chair, de tout un passé, de tout un monde d'interférences et de connexions, et finalement d'un reflet du regard de Dieu et d'un vouloir particulier de son adorable Sagesse.⁵⁴

In 1938, again with regard to the priority of the communion in grace, the inner life over the exterior, the structure, and more specifically with regard to man's religious sensibility, Congar admits a certain kind of pluralism, always within the unity of the one Church. There can exist many ways of assimilating and living the dynamic reality of the Church. No single way can exhaust this living reality of the Church, for only Christ is perfect. He writes:

...les hommes sont les membres de son Corps, "chacun pour sa part", réalisant diversement, selon leurs dons et leur appel, les divers aspects d'une grâce qui est en plénitude dans le Chef seul. C'est pourquoi... il est nécessaire qu'il y ait, 'in Christo et in Ecclesia', une grande variété de tempéraments religieux, de 'spiritualités' particulières, d'expressions humaines de la vie chrétienne... Toutes ces valeurs de sérieux, de sens biblique, d'attente prophétique, de regard vers Dieu au-delà de toute possibilité humaine, de dépouillement dans la foi, d'intériorité et de loyauté, qui sont sans doute le meilleur de l'héritage chrétien de la Réforme, ce sont pour nous des choses fraternelles que nous aimons et que, pour elles-mêmes, pour nous, pour notre Christ, nous désirons tenir dans la communion de l'unité.⁵⁵

Already, in this chapter, we have dealt with the role and function of the hierarchy⁵⁶ in relationship to the community. Although at this point, the ministerial priesthood is defined in terms of a power over the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, and over the Body of Christ, the Church, Congar emphasizes the functional aspect of the said priesthood.⁵⁷ The ministerial priesthood is referred to as having an instrumental value in the Church, as the humanity of Christ

⁵⁴ Christianus (Congar's pseudonym), "D'abord comprendre", *La vie intellectuelle* (10 oct. 1935). 6-7, also available in *CED*, pp. 365-08 (ETr., pp.296-297).

⁵⁵ Yves Congar, "Pour une étude de la sensibilité protestante," *La vie intellectuelle* (10 mars 1938): pp. 171-172, also available in *CED*, pp. 381-382 (ETr., pp. 310-311).

⁵⁶ *Supra*, pp. 30-3 See above *role and function of the hierarchy*, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.- Error! Bookmark not defined.**

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, "We find a hierarchy which is specifically social; not a hierarchy related to personal life but one which is related to the function...with regard to the common good."

was the instrument of God's salvation.⁵⁸ However, the power of sanctification does not reside substantially in the Church as it does in Christ's humanity. In the Church this power resides by mode of ministry. Congar writes:

Le "pouvoir" de justifier appartient à Dieu seul et au Christ comme à son principe et à sa source. L'Eglise n'en a que le "ministère:" elle n'est pas la source, mais le canal; l'eau vive qui jaillit jusqu'en la vie éternelle a pour source le Saint-Esprit....⁵⁹

This ministerial role, however, remains as such in the Church.

De même la grâce ne fait que passer par le pouvoir sanctifiant de l'Eglise, mais la faculté d'en être le canal demeure; le pouvoir d'ordre qui ne peut, au regard de la sanctification des âmes, être qu'un instrument, est un instrument qui demeure dans l'Eglise.⁶⁰

In passing we must note that for Congar the ministerial priesthood is sacramental, that is, as ministry it is also the capacity to represent Christ, to render Him sacramentally present in the Church:

Le Christ est présent dans l'Eglise, il y agit sans cesse; mais, voulant demeurer avec nous jusqu'à ce qu'il revienne, même sous une forme accessible aux sens, il a voulu rester présent et agir dans son Eglise par le ministère d'une hiérarchie visible, donnant à celle-ci mission et pouvoir et l'assurant, en la personne des Apôtres, qu'il serait avec elle jusqu'à la consommation des siècles.... Le pouvoir d'ordre ou caractère, dit saint Thomas, est une réalité sacramentelle qui, participant au sacerdoce du Christ, le signifie et le rend présent parmi nous; il est à la fois accessible aux sens, élément de l'Eglise prise comme organisme visible, et tout relatif à la substance invisible du sacerdoce du Christ, signe représentatif de son souverain pouvoir.⁶¹

Evaluation and Orientation

To deepen their understanding of the mystery of the Church, contemporary ecclesiologists have had recourse to the concepts of models.⁶² Distinctions are made between models and

⁵⁸ Congar, "Ordre et juridiction", pp. 98-99, also in *SE*, p. 213.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100 (*SE*, p. 214). There is a difference between the power of order, instrumentally and ministerially present in the Church, and the power of jurisdiction which resides in a proper way in the Church.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103. *SE*, pp. 216-217.

⁶² Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday 1974), henceforth cited as *Models*, where the author approaches the mystery of the Church, using the models of Institution, Mystical Communion,

definitions.⁶³ It seems to us that the model approach could be very helpful in evaluating Congar, for models play the humble function of discreetly offering insights into a reality which refuses to let itself be encapsulated.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Congar himself has paved the way for the use of models.⁶⁵

Using the model approach, therefore, we shall evaluate Congar's theology of the Church as well as his theology of the laity and of the ministerial priesthood, in the context of the former.

Congar's attempts at formulating a *total ecclesiology*⁶⁶ must be seen within the context of his ecumenical positions as related to the differences between Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism and Catholicism. The early Congar approaches one of the fundamental

Sacrament, Herald, and Servant. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Church in the New Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), original edition, *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament* (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), where the author deals with the fundamental characteristics of the origin and life of the Church by referring to the following models: living communities, order and constitution, proclamation of the Word, worship and sacraments. Cf. also Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960); Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) pp. 284-285.

⁶³ Dulles, *Models*, p. 13. Here the author writes: "When we ask what something is we are normally seeking a definition. The classical way to define a thing is to put it into a category of familiar objects and then to list the distinguishing characteristics that differentiate it from other members of the same category" (p. 13). Further, the author adds: "When an image is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one's theoretical understanding of a reality, it becomes what is today called a 'model'. Some models are also images - that is, those that can be readily imagined. Other models are of a more abstract nature, and are not precisely images. In the former class one might put temple, vine and flock; in the later, institution, society, community". (p. 21). Also Ian T. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963, first pub. 1957); *Idem*, *Models and Mystery*, (London: Oxford Press, 1964); *Idem*, *Christian Discourses: Some Logical Explorations*, (New York: no publisher indicated. 1965) Chapter 3, "Talking about God". Here the author explains that we cannot speak about God; we can only speak towards God. He makes clear that transcendence cannot be objectified but can only be signposted; that is, the mind is oriented and impelled towards it in a way which is wholly different from our human experience. The existential aspect of our human experience opens us to new insights about the whole of reality. These are referred to by the author as disclosure models. Such models have a more and a further dimension to them. Here, the reality which is modeled, comes alive and takes on new depths. When these disclosure models involve the totality of existence, they reveal a fullness of meaning which is called cosmic disclosure.

⁶⁴ Dulles, *Models*, pp. 15-16 and pp. 29-30. The author explains that the Church is a mystery, that is, "the Church is not fully intelligible to the finite mind of man, and, that the reason for this lack of intelligibility, is not the poverty but the richness of the Church itself" (p. 15). Consequently, the author explains, that because models or images "are derived from the finite realities of experience, they are never adequate to represent the mystery of grace" (p. 29).

⁶⁵ Notice the titles of some of Congar's most significant books: *Esquisses du mystère*, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, *Pour une église servante et pauvre*, *Mystère du temple*, *Ministères et communion ecclésiale*.

⁶⁶ See above *total or integral ecclesiology*, p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

ecclesiological issues by describing what for him appears to be, at this point of his theological understanding, the Protestant and Orthodox's ecclesiological faith in the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Stated differently, this means: from an ecclesiological standpoint, how seriously do Protestants and Orthodox take their belief in the Incarnation.

Congar concludes that, on the one hand, although they say *yes* to the Mystery of the Incarnation, on the other, Protestants seem to be saying *no* to its implications for the Church. In this respect, he writes:

Ne voir dans les sacrements que des signes de notre foi en la promesse comme les protestants semblent parfois tentés de le faire, c'est en rester à l'Ancien Testament, à l'annonce prophétique que le Seigneur vient. Alors qu'il est venu, et que nous n'en sommes plus au baptême de Jean-Baptiste en vue de la repentance, mais avons reçu le baptême d'eau et d'Esprit où se joignent l'acte humain, sensible et social, et le don de Dieu, la communication de la plénitude qui, du sein du Père, s'épanche dans le Christ et du Christ dans l'Eglise, habitant ici et là, corporellement.⁶⁷

Further, Congar elaborates:

Les protestants ne croient pas au don réel, actuellement réel, de la vie à la nature humaine; cette vie est seulement promise, réellement promise d'ailleurs, et eschatologiquement présente. Dans cette perspective, les biens de l'Alliance ne sont pas vraiment déjà présents dans l'Eglise sous une forme homogène à la nature humaine; la part de la nature comme telle est nulle. Aussi l'Eglise dans sa réalité terrestre, sensible et sociale, peut bien annoncer et promettre, être, comme Jean-Baptiste, l'appel qui retentit et le doigt qui montre l'Agneau de Dieu; elle n'est pas cette incarnation de la vertu de Dieu, qui, sous des formes homogènes à l'homme, exprime et procure, du moins en leur commencement, la réalité des biens de la Nouvelle Alliance, qui sont les biens patrimoniaux de Dieu. Logiquement l'Eglise-institution n'a pas d'existence chrétienne: il n'y a que la communauté de ceux qui ont entendu la promesse.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Congar, *CD*, pp. 104-105.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112. In *CED*, p. 430 Congar develops further this idea: "Oui, c'est cela. Pour nous, l'Eglise est une suite historique de l'Incarnation. qu'on exprime ou qu'on exprime pas le fait en termes d'institution de droit divin positif, la puissance de Dieu agissant dans le Christ et, à quelque degré - pas entièrement! C'est pourquoi il reste une différence et une tension entre l'Eglise d'ici-bas et le Royaume eschatologique - communiquée à l'Eglise et au ministère. Faut-il dire que, pour la Réforme, la transcendance du Christ glorifié semble exclure sa permanence, au moins permanence de type historique, dans l'Eglise (critique de l'idée de l'Incarnation continuée); Chez Barth, même, la transcendance du Christ paraît exclure son immanence. Toute la causalité salutaire reste dans le Christ céleste qui opère, dans notre foi, le fruit de sa croix. Pour la Réforme, Jésus-Christ est seul le surnaturel; apparu sur la terre dans la chair, il est désormais dans les cieux. Dans ces conditions, et même après le remarquable travail d'O. Cullmann, le temps de l'Eglise, la durée ecclésiale, ne peuvent être appréciés de façon aussi positive que dans la perspective catholique. Pour nous, l'Eglise porte et développe quelque chose du Christ depuis l'Alpha de

According to Congar, the Orthodox, on the other hand, not only say yes to the Incarnation of the Son of God, and to its fulfillment in the Resurrection, but also extend the latter in an unqualified manner to the Church as visibly expressed in the Christian community. Congar explains:

D'un mot, on considère ici la vie divine comme tellement donnée, et le ciel comme tellement descendu sur la terre, qu'ils sont presque comme considérés comme existant ici-bas à leur état connaturel qui est la gloire, la pleine possession et la jouissance, et non selon le mode humain, proprement social, tendanciel et militant, que nous avons dit. Si l'on veut, moins la logique de Noël, du Jeudi-Saint et de la Pentecôte, que celle du jour de Pâques et de la Transfiguration au Thabor.⁶⁹

As for the Anglican position of the *via media*, Congar finds it untenable.⁷⁰

Remaining with Congar, in regard to his explanation of both the Protestant and Orthodox positions and to his elimination of the Anglican position, we would like to suggest the following terminology: we suggest that, at this point, Congar sees the Protestant ecclesiology as being utterly non-sacramental, whereas, he sees the Orthodox ecclesiology as being overly sacramental, even to the point of fostering an unlimited sacramental realism.⁷¹

son Incarnation rédemptrice jusqu'à l'Omega de sa Parousie: théologie de la Messe, de la Tradition et du développement dogmatique, de l'Apostolicité, tout cela basé sur une théologie très positive du Corps mystique. Autant de sujets dont l'abordage différent dépend, ici et là, des grands présupposés généraux que nous essayons, bien imparfaitement et schématiquement, d'évoquer."

⁶⁹ Congar, *CD*, p. 118.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 212-227. Here Congar explains the Anglican understanding of unity of the Church, pp. 227-247, and he criticizes this position.

⁷¹ This terminology* reflects the influence of Ernst Käsemann, in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, Zweiter Band* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1965.), "Zum Thema der christlichen Apokalyptik;" Eng. trans., *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), "Primitive Christian Apocalyptic", p. 126, where Käsemann explains the causes of the division at Corinth: "A sacramental realism which sees complete redemption to have been already effectuated.... This is the root of all that has gone wrong in Corinth; the contempt for discipline and decency, the want of consideration for the weaker brother at the Lord's Supper and in daily life.... Those who are endowed with the pneuma are exempt from the laws of those who have nothing but psyche." (N.B. In his remarks on this thesis, Father Hervé Legrand, O.P., wrote regarding the terminology* at the beginning of this note 3: "*This terminology*,* il vaudrait sans doute mieux écrire *Our [i.e. My] terminology*, car Congar ne me semble jamais citer Käsemann sur ce point. Si c'était le cas, il faudrait en donner la référence".* [*Legrand's remarks* were enclosed in a personal letter I received from Father Joseph Pouts {Editions du Chalet-Lyons/Paris} dated 7-7-75]. At the end of his remarks on this thesis, Fr. Legrand writes: "Je tiens à féliciter chaleureusement l'Auteur qui entre réellement dans la pensée de Congar, avec bienveillance mais justesse critique aussi). [*I have not found any Congar references to Käsemann.]

It is clear, however, that Paul, in I Cor. 11, 23-26, is not refuting a limited sacramental realism which

We further suggest that the early Congar's intention with regard to ecclesiology is to offer a Catholic *via media* which we describe as a limited sacramental realism. This means that the Catholic ecclesiology does say *yes* to the Incarnation but at the same time attempts to distinguish between the glorified Christ and the Church, in this sense that it sees the latter as not yet fully risen with its Lord.

More specifically in relation to the evaluation of this chapter, we shall develop the following outline: 1) we shall evaluate the early Congar's ecclesiology in terms of a) the sacramental mode, b) which reflects a limited sacramental realism, c) of a still significantly undifferentiated nature; 2) we then shall evaluate Congar's theology of the laity and of ministry in relationship to his ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology

We believe that Conger's ecclesiological model at this early stage is basically sacramental,⁷² inasmuch as he attempts at realizing a synthesis between the institution and communion models which appear to him as being complementary in their earthly condition.⁷³

depends on the Risen Christ who alone is speaking and acting through His Church which has not yet fully risen with Him.

⁷² We believe that this basic sacramental model finds its clearest expression in this chapter, *supra*, p. 37, where Congar explains: "En son être terrestre, l'Eglise est comme un grand sacrement où tout signifie sensiblement et procure une unité intérieure de grâce." (CD, p. 108) It is here that Congar expresses himself in the sacramental terminology of Augustine, in note 1: the *sacramentum tantum* ("la seule institution ecclésiastique"), the *sacramentum et res* ("la valeur de cette institution pour procurer la réalité spirituelle qu'elle signifie"), and the *res tantum*, ("la pure réalité intérieure de l'Eglise, le corps mystique"). In note 2, Congar refers to the *Rechtsskirche und Liebeskirche* of Luther, as well as to the *Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft*. (N.B. In his remarks on my thesis, Father Hervé Legrand, O.P., wrote: "*Rechtsskirche, Liebeskirche* n'est pas le vocabulaire de Luther mais de R. Sohm". [See *Legrand's remarks* above, p. 20, end of note 3].)

⁷³ Dulles, *Models*, p. 58. The author writes: "In order to bring together the external and internal aspects (of the Church) into some intelligible synthesis, many twentieth Century catholic theologians have appealed to the concept of Church as sacrament. Anticipated by Cyprian, Augustine, Aquinas, and Scheeben, this type of ecclesiology emerged in full clarity in our country." The author refers to the following references: P. Smulders, *L'Eglise de Vatican II, Vol 2* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), pp. 313-138, "L'Eglise sacrement de salut", where one will find ample references to the ancient and modern theologians who use the sacramental model; Yves Congar, *Oeuvres de St Augustin, Introduction générale, Vol 28* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), "Traité Anti-Donatistes", pp. 86-115; *Le mystère du Temple*, (Paris: Cerf, 1968), Chap. 3, for Aquinas' understanding of the Church as sacrament; Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, (Baltimore: Helicon, 1936), "Membership of the Church", pp. 1-88, *Inquiries* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), pp. 191-257; O Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament*, (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1953); Eduard Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963), Chap. 2, "The Church, Sacrament of the Risen Christ", pp. 47-89 and throughout the book; J.

The sacramental model does precisely that: it brings together the inward and outward realities of the Church in such a way that the former are symbolized,⁷⁴ revealed, visibilized and re-enforced⁷⁵ by the latter. We have already considered the analogies employed by Congar to illustrate both the nature of and the relationship between the institution and communion models; namely, the analogies of the soul and the body,⁷⁶ and of the divine and human natures in Christ.⁷⁷

Groot, "The Church as Sacrament of the World", *Concilium*, Vol.31 (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), pp. 51-66; G. Martelet, "De la sacramentalité propre à l'Eglise", *Nouvelle revue théologique* 95 (1973) pp. 25-42.

⁷⁴ Dulles, *Models*, p. 65. Here Dulles explains: "In summary, the Church is not just a sign but a sacrament. Considered as a bare institution, the Church might be characterized as just an empty sign. It could be going through formalities and be a hollow shell rather than a living community of grace. But where the Church as sacrament is present, the grace of Christ will not be absent. That grace, seeking its appropriate form of expression - as grace inevitably does - will impel men to prayer, confession, worship, and other acts whereby the Church externally realizes its essence... the Church becomes an event of grace as the lives of its members are transformed in hope, in joy, in self-forgetful love, in peace, in patience, and in all other Christ-like virtues."

⁷⁵ Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind, The Renewal of God-Language* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1969), pp. 417-423. The author here explains the function of symbolic forms. The explanation also applies to symbolic signs. Referring to experiences of the sacred in man, the author writes: "First of all, it must be admitted that the reception of such a manifestation of the sacred... partakes of two different levels of apprehension which generally accompany and supplement one another. From the vantage point of Christian faith, one may say that these experiences are known in the Word for that they really are i.e. as the work of God,... On this first level, the sacred seems to speak silently within us, to illumine unheralded and uncommented upon, our being in the world with courage, vitality, meaning, and authenticity.... In order, therefore, that such silent apprehensions of being originate or that in the long run they be maintained in a cultures life, there must be a second level, namely, one of symbolic thematization. Just as theological symbols are empty without existential apprehension, so no meaning is or can be apprehended within experience as a whole without symbolic forms through which that totality and our place in it is structured and thematized. Symbolic forms expressive of those silent, deep, existential apprehensions of our being in the world are thus essential.... The mythical language of a community discloses to us the structures of ultimacy in which our community lives, and through these symbols the face of ultimacy manifests itself to us.... Symbols illumine, structure, bring to light and reveal to us the tonal characteristics of our felt being in the world. In the long run, there are no existential answers that do not include some symbolic expression which in turn had its origin in a definite, historical apprehension of the ultimate character of things. In the experience, then, there is both the level of silent, re-creating illumination of ourselves, our world, and of the symbolic horizon of our being, and there is the level of symbolic conceptualization and expression which makes this apprehension possible, communal, and permanent, and gives the possibility of reflection and so of rational ordering and inquiry to the important issues of existence. (pp. 417-420). See also Marcia Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Meridian Books, (1963), pp. 446-447. Eliade writes: "The important part played by symbolism...is not due to the convertibility of hydrophanes into symbols. It is not only because it continues a hierophant or takes its place that the symbol is important; it is primarily because it is able to carry on the process of hierophanization, and particularly because, on occasion it is itself a hierophany - it itself reveals a sacred or cosmological reality which no other manifestation is capable of revealing."

⁷⁶ *Supra*, pp. 21, 29-30.

Moreover we believe that the sacramental model of the Church is basic to an understanding of the organic, living relationship between the *De Trinitates, in Christo* reality of the Church and its *ex Hominibus* reality, or again, the *from above* and *from below* realities of the Church.

In his earliest model of the Church Congar sees the ecclesial movement directed from the inside to the outside, from the soul to the body, from the invisible to the visible, from the heart to the structure, from the Spirit to the cult, dogma and ecclesiastical organization. In this respect, we have seen Congar's distinction of the twofold plane of the Church.⁷⁸

Such a distinction will eventually permit him to delineate within the one Church, the realm which is susceptible to reformation and to perfectibility from that which is not; the realm of the relative from that of the absolute; the realm of the human from that of the divine.⁷⁹ These observations bring us to the following point: that Congar approaches the Church in terms of a

⁷⁷ See supra Chap. I, p.18 "As the body manifests the soul, so the cult, dogma, and ecclesiastical structures reveal the Spirit of love...." Again, p.20, "C'est cela l'Eglise: l'extension de la vie divine a une multitude de creatures". Also, pp. 36-37 where Congar specifically refers to the seven sacraments: yet, these are seen as actions of God through Christ in the Church. In Joseph M. Powers, *Eucharistic Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), pp. 78-90, the theology of symbol-sacrament is explained. The author writes with regard to the existentialist view of man that man is in a symbolic situation. "In order to be a person, man must express him-self, his own personal reality to his world. This means that man's interior reality must be incarnated in bodily signs, speech and gesture. And through the bodily dimension of his existence, man assumes the material world into the function and growth of his very personal reality. And in this assumption, the material world is itself transformed into the personal reality which it comes to express." The author further explains that "Karl Rainer points out, however, that the symbolic function of the body is not to be viewed dualistically even in the authentic definition of Thomism. For if the soul is seen as the substantial form of the body, this means that the soul is the very actuality of the body, and the body, in turn, is the very self expression of the soul, but which, at the same time is existentially one with the soul, an expression which takes place in that which is other than the soul, but which, at the same time, is existentially one with the soul." E. Schillebeeckx, *Christus, Sacrament van de Godsontmōting* (Bilthoven: H. Nelissen, 1960), p. 79; Eng. Trans. *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1963), p. 79. According to Powers, the English translation omits the expression pregnant alienation. However a translation of the following sentence on p. 76 would read: "In its human reality, of course, the symbol-act of the Church is a reality which clearly is genuinely 'separate' from Christ, which at the same time is sacramentally identified (and in this case, therefore, in pregnant alienation (*vervreemding*) with the active heavenly body of Christ." The expression pregnant alienation refers to the process by which a material object becomes deprived of its physical individuality as it is taken up into man's sign-acts and filled with man's personal reality.

See also Dulles, *Models*, p. 60.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, supra. pp. 18-19, note 4; p. 20, note 1; pp. 21-22, note 3, p. 23; p. 27, pp. 28-29; pp 30-31, esp. note 3; p. 34, esp. note 1; p. 40, note 2; p. 41, note 1; also Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise*, *Unam Sanctam* 20 (Paris: Cerf, 1960), henceforth cited as *VFR* where this delineation is dealt with extensively.

limited sacramental realism. In the early Congar, we do not seem to find a total, naive canonization of the ecclesiastical structures which would have the latter declared holy as an expression of all the interior workings of the Spirit. We saw for example, that the Church is reformable,⁸⁰ that the Church is very much *on the way*.⁸¹ Furthermore, the Spirit is not limited to expressing himself exclusively through the structures, for he dwells in the heart of each and every faithful. Already, in the early 1930's what is primarily essential to Congar's ecclesiology, is the Spirit himself "qui met dans le coeur des fidèles l'esprit et le sens du Christ."⁸²

Quoting Möhler, he writes:

La grande pensée qui sert de fondement...c'est que le christianisme n'est point une simple idée, mais une chose qui s'empare de tout l'homme, qui s'enracine dans sa vie, et qui n'est compréhensible qu'en étant vécue.⁸³

Congar's limited sacramentalism, however, is still significantly undifferentiated.⁸⁴ We believe that one of the main handicaps of the sacramental model is an unhealthy pre-occupation which consists in constantly defending the structural aspect of the Church. If, in an undifferentiated way, the outward reality of the structure is supposed to reveal the inner reality of the communion of grace in Christ, how does one explain the impersonal, sophisticated,

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* See note 2 on p 55, in its entirety.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.* In *CD*, p. 280 Congar writes: "Que la désunion des chrétiens, en écartelant le Christ continue sa passion, c'est certain. Mais elle, contribue aussi, avec la masse des hommes sauvés de qui, pourtant, le Christ n'est pas encore connu, à témoigner qu'il est un sauveur-victime et qu'il a été envoyé à notre monde plus pour le sauver que pour y régner. C'est pour cela, nous semble-t-il, que son action réelle de sauveur déborde l'oeuvre visible de salut, l'unique arche sur les eaux mortelles, qu'est son Eglise catholique; que la réalité de son action miséricordieuse de sauveur, dépasse son royaume visible et que l'Eglise, elle aussi, sauve plus de membres qu'elle ne triomphe et s'incorpore secrètement plus de membres qu'elle ne peut dénombrer de sujets. D'un bout à l'autre, le travail de Dieu pour sauver les hommes suit cette même logique. Il a au cours de l'histoire accepté de s'humilier et, pour ainsi dire, de se compromettre étrangement. Il reviendra, un jour, comme triomphateur constituer parfaitement son royaume; il vient ici-bas surtout comme sauveur et connaît comme siennes plus d'âmes que n'en peuvent recenser officiellement les chefs de son peuple."

⁸³ Congar, "Je crois en la Sainte Eglise", *Revue des jeunes* (jan. 1939), pp. 85-92, available to me in *SE*, p. 13.

⁸⁴ In Dulles, *Models*, p. 63, we find, it appears to us, a similar type of sacramental undifferentiation. The institutional aspect of the Church is equated with the outward reality; the communal, with the inward reality. There we read: "As a sacrament, the Church has both an outer and an inner aspect. The institutional or structural aspect of the Church - its external reality is essential, since without it the Church would not be visible. Visible unity among all Christians is demanded, for without this the sign or communion that the Church is would be fragmented into a multitude of disconnected signs."

institutionalized and bureaucratic outward reality of the Church as often-time perpetuated in a Vatican Curia? Is this really an authentically sacramental expression of an interior communion of grace? Of course, Congar is aware of the situation.⁸⁵ In this respect, the sacramental model at times leads Congar to make exclusive, unsubstantiated and absolute statements concerning the visible structure of the Roman Catholic Church.⁸⁶

Theology of the Laity and Ministry

The early Congar deals with basic elements of the theology of the laity, which eventually was developed by him as a theology of the universal priesthood. Congar's sacramental ecclesiology includes a theology of the laity, as elaborated upon in this chapter, especially in the part dealing with the one Church existing on a twofold plane and that dealing with the definition of a *catholic Christian*.⁸⁷ We believe that one can detect, here, the emergence of a theology of the universal priesthood, a theology that considers every Christian a priest; namely, one who can

⁸⁵ Supra, Chap, 1, p.18"...that the visible aspect of the Church (such as the cult, dogma, and the hierarchical organization) is an exterior expression of the communion of love inspired and realized in us by the Spirit. As the body manifests the soul, so the cult, dogma and ecclesiastical reveal the Spirit of love...." Yet there is an ambivalence in Congar. See, for example, supra, p. 14, where Congar refers to the fact that the Church appears exteriorly as a big and powerful organization, a permanent mobilization of human forces through the agency of a hierarchical priesthood. See also the rest of the note. Again, in *CD*, pp. 110-111, Congar writes: "Nous avons contemplé l'Eglise de haut en bas...ainsi tout est éclairé, tout est lumineux. Mais il suffirait de reprendre maintenant toutes ces choses de bas en haut pour retrouver l'Eglise telle que nous la connaissons réellement et pour situer sans peine toutes les faiblesses, toutes les ombres venant de ce qu'elle est humaine, toutes les insuffisances, tous les retards de son adaptation terrestre."

⁸⁶ Compare the following text in *CD*, pp.169-170 with note 3 pp.21-22 where Congar explains why the Catholic Church had no reason to participate in the Faith and Order Conference, at Lausanne, in 1927. "C'est que la conférence Faith and Order reposait nécessairement sur ce présupposé que l'Eglise du Christ n'est pas actuellement réalisée et donnée mais que tous les corps chrétiens ont un minimum de substance ecclésiastique et doctrinale traditionnelle sont en quelque chose, et toujours imparfaitement, l'Eglise du Christ, que, en conséquence parmi les Eglises existantes, il n'y en a pas qui soit purement et simplement l'Eglise du Christ, dont la dogmatique soit vraie telle quelle, simplement et totalement, mais qu'un certain nombre d'articles fondamentaux s'imposent et doivent être tenus, les autres articles étant des croyances respectables mais variables et facultatives. Or c'est cela que l'Eglise catholique ne peut accepter: elle est l'Eglise une, elle est l'épouse unique et fidèle du Christ; elle croit l'efficacité de la prière et du vouloir de Son Seigneur; elle est assurée que Son Eglise a existé, indéfectiblement, par Sa grâce. Ce n'est pas que l'Eglise catholique soit opposée à des discussions de théologiens; mais elle estime que sa place n'est pas, que la place de ses théologiens n'est pas dans une conférence dont le statut du principe est celui que nous avons dit."

⁸⁷ Supra, pp. 36-37, also p. 20, note 1 and pp. 50-58.

stand before God to offer the *spiritual sacrifice*. In fact, there seems to appear in Congar's early writings a pneumatic theology which endows the Christian with the Spirit of God, in Jesus, and which permits him to stand before the God who makes him right, the God who graces him, and consequently, a God who finds man's sacrifice acceptable and holy. For Congar the Church is primarily life, communion, a creation of the Spirit, an extension of the life of the Trinity.⁸⁸ Every Christian stands before God revealed in Jesus Christ through the Spirit.⁸⁹

With regard to the ministerial priesthood, we could say that the early Congar furnishes us with some glimpses into a theology of ministries which emphasizes a relationship to the community as service rather than as mediation, as ministry rather than "power". For example, we have seen the functional aspect of the ministerial priesthood.⁹⁰ The ministerial priesthood is placed within the category of instrument residing in the Church by mode of ministry.⁹¹

Interestingly, Congar hesitates to apply Hebrews 13, 20 to the ministerial priesthood. He writes:

⁸⁸ See in this chapter: "L'Eglise est une création du Saint-Esprit"; see p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, "C'est l'Esprit qui met dans le coeur des fidèles l'esprit et le sens du Christ"; see p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** "L'Eglise c'est l'extension de la vie divine à une multitude de créatures."; see p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, "L'Eglise c'est la famille de Dieu, recevant de Jésus-Christ la vie qui procède du Père."; see p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** "Et de quoi s'agit-il pour les protestants et pour nous, sinon de faire retour au Christ." , see p. 4, note 3, 2nd par.

⁸⁹ See below, Chapter III, "Christian Cult: Heart of Congar's theology of the Laity and Ministry" (pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**-**Error! Bookmark not defined.**).

It would seem that Käsemann's understanding of "spiritual worship" in Romans 12, is appropriate here. For him Romans 12, 1 f. "embraces the total action both of the individual Christian and of the Christian Community and sets the parenthesis (v. 9f) within a firm theological framework; the theme of spiritual worship through the offering-up of the bodies of the Christians describes what it means to stand under the righteousness of God. Man endowed with pneuma is in a position to offer spiritual worship." Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, "Worship in Everyday Life, a Note on Romans 12" (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 189-190, English translation of *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, Zweiter Band*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1968).

⁹⁰ Dulles, *Models*, p. 152-153. Here the author explains: "In the institutional model, priesthood is viewed primarily in terms of power. The threefold power of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling is concentrated at the top in the Pope and Bishops. The Bishop is given the fullness of hierarchical power, and the presbyterate is seen as a participation in the priesthood of the episcopacy. All the functions of the bishop or priest are juridicized." p. 153. We will see (supra, pp. 173, ff. *CED* pp. 184-213) that Congar himself points out that the modern idea of ordination as the conferral of a permanent power by ritual consecration is something that first appeared in the twelfth century. The earlier understanding of ordination (order) specifically refers to the order into which one is set, that is, the certain place or function that one has within the community he serves.

⁹¹ Supra, pp 41-42.

L'Épître aux Hébreux ne nous suggère-t-elle pas qu'il en est *un peu* de même chez le Christ-Jésus? Toutes ses prérogatives et ses fonctions à notre égard lui viennent de sa qualité de Médiateur de la nouvelle Alliance par l'effusion de son sang: et s'il est "l'évêque de nos âmes," c'est qu'il est "devenu par le sang du Testament éternel, le grand pasteur des brebis."⁹²

However, Congar seems to only apply the term "mediator" to Christ not to the ministerial priest. Although the ministerial priest shares in Christ's power of sanctification, he has a direct relationship to the faithful, which is, to make the faithful "de meilleurs adorateurs de Dieu et de meilleurs communians au Corps du Seigneur."⁹³

In concluding, we add that Congar's sacramental ecclesiology is in a way highly biblical, not so much in terms of its direct reference to Scripture,⁹⁴ but in terms of the "logique de l'Incarnation".⁹⁵

⁹² Congar, *SE* p. 210.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁹⁴ Dulles, *Models*, p. 69. "Some authors have found certain deficiencies in this sacramental type of ecclesiology. One might object that it has little warrant in Scripture and in the early tradition of the Church, but this objection is certainly not fatal. When Paul [sic] speaks of marriage as mystery or sacrament 'in Christ and the Church' (Eph 5:32) he seems to imply that the Church, like marriage, only more fundamentally, is a sign of loving unity in Christ."

⁹⁵ *Supra*, See in this chapter, p. 14.