

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN CULT

Heart of Congar's Theology of the Laity and Ministry

In this section we shall deal with a concept that is at the heart of Yves Congar's theology of the priesthood as related to both laity and ministry; namely the concept of Christian cult,¹ a concept which for Congar clarifies and integrates other theological concepts, such as that of sacrifice, of mission, and more specifically, that of the priesthood, and consequently of laity and ministry.

We shall deal first with the nature of cult, as Congar sees it both in the New and the Old Testament, as well as in the pagan world at the time of Jesus.

We shall also explain the relationship between the concept of Christian cult and the concepts of sacrifice and mission as related to the priesthood.

The Nature of the Christian Cult

Congar writes:

Nous sommes depuis longtemps persuadés que cette question [*du culte chrétien*] jamais abordée, est au fond de celles qu'on soulève sur le sacerdoce.²

For Congar the word *cult* means more than what seems to be understood usually by the word *worship* when it is restricted exclusively to adoration. It even means more than what is usually understood as the integral parts of the virtue of religion as explained by many

¹ Concerning the justification of Chapter III on *Christian Cult*, see p. 10 of this dissertation.

² Frisque et Congar, *LP*, p. 250.

commentators of St. Thomas.¹

For Congar, the Christian cult refers primarily to revelation and secondarily to response; it is first an acceptance of God's gift of Jesus Christ in loving faith; it is then the living out and the sharing of that gift in the day to day of one's life, again in loving faith.² The Christian cult is primarily the experience of being grasped by God, through Jesus; secondarily, a response in life. The context itself of the Christian cult is one of loving, faithful obedience to God, as He expresses his will in the everydayness of our existence. Perhaps the liturgical model expresses well how Congar sees the cult within the Christian context: our whole life must be a Liturgy of the Word (listening) and a Liturgy of the Eucharist (responding by doing). Congar writes:

Le culte est essentiellement un culte de la foi (vivante). Il l'est sous l'aspect du sacrifice spirituel et personnel qui n'est autre que la vie offerte: non une dime ou des prémices, encore moins des *choses* extérieures, mais mon existence, mon être-au-monde, et aux autres hommes. Il l'est sous son aspect sacramentel public et proprement liturgique parce que la première valeur, ici, est d'accueillir le don de Dieu, dans la foi, pour y joindre notre réponse: action de grâces, sacrifice spirituel de la vie, diaconie.³

We now present Congar's view of Christian cult in the New and Old Testament and in the pagan world. Jesus inaugurates a new cult. There are moments of his life that summarize this initiative. *First*, he takes for himself the prophetic program of the Old

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

² John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, (N.Y.: Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 74. Christian cult is a dialectical reality that could be understood in the context of John Macquarrie's observations on revelation. "The religious man, or the man of faith, speaks not so much of his quest as of the object of this quest meeting him; or, better still, that he becomes the object of a search directed toward him; that the initiative comes from beyond himself, and that faith, while indeed it has its roots within himself, is established only when he is grasped, as it were, by that for which he was dimly and ignorantly seeking."

³ Frisque et Congar, *LP*, pp. 255-256. In Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), p. 175 (English translation of *Exegetische Versuche and Besinnungen Zweiter Band* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1965) "Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus", there is an interesting parallel between Yves Congar's understanding of Christian cult and Käsemann's explanation of God's righteousness in Paul. "The same Lord who calls us to his service enables us for it and requires us to render it in such a way as to ensure that his gift is passed on."

Testament prophets, rather than promoting the Old Testament priestly cult program. *Secondly*, Jesus institutes new cultic signs, not only as forms of prayer, but as *sacraments*, and principally those referred to by Tradition as the *sacramenta potiora*; namely, Baptism and Eucharist, which make the Church in a fundamental and decisive way.¹

Let us see, first, how in Congar's view Jesus realizes the Old Testament prophetic program.² Congar explains that before the 8th century BC, priests and prophets existed with undifferentiated functions. A duality of functions appears during and after the exile: the cult was regulated by the law and the law was confined to priests who organized the people's life as a life set apart (consecrated) for God; conversely, the prophets preached the spirit of the cult, both *a religion in life*, consisting in the disposition of the soul....

Dieu veut que l'âme du culte soit présente dans son corps...³

and also *a religion in history*: Congar writes,

La parole prophétique est instigatrice et éducatrice de la foi dans le Dieu vivant qui agit dans l'histoire... et qui demande non seulement une réponse rituelle, mais une réponse de vie...au sein des événements du temps.⁴

¹ Frisque and Congar, *LP*, pp. 252-256.

² In Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, II (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 4-5, Eng. trans. of *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, II (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1960) pp. 18-19, we read: "We have also abandoned the whole idea of a *religion of the prophets* as a religion of the spirit diametrically opposed to the *cultic religion of the priests*. In this connexion, Biblical criticism is even today still busy demolishing an idea of prophecy which may be said to have reached its full growth in Duhm's *Israelis Propheten* (1916). However, the more criticism has moved away from the psychological, personal, and idealistic considerations involved in the classical picture of the prophets, the less certain has it become of what constitutes the original element in their message. The recognition of the deep debt which their teaching owes to tradition has in itself almost thrown criticism back upon the old question from which it started out. Criticism has now, in the light of its new focus, to try to redefine what is specifically *prophetic*. If the prophets' teaching can no longer be derived simply from their religious experience, the question of its origin has to be put in a different way — in what theological milieu was their unique independence and religious authority active?" At first sight, Von Rad seems to present a different understanding of prophecy by lessening the distinction between prophets and priests. Yet, we shall see, especially *infra*, p.115 note 2 and p.128, that Congar's thought and Von Rad's meet. See also Von Rad, *Die Botschaft der Propheten*, (München: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1967).

³ Congar, *SL*, p. 100 (Etr., p. 82).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100 (Etr., p. 82). In Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I pp. 278-279 (in *Theologie*, I,

The prophets called for a *dépassement*¹ of the separation and distinction between the profane and the sacred.

It is man's life itself (not set apart from the world, but lived in the world) which becomes the matter of the cult itself. Jesus accepts this view of the cult. With him, there is now but one reality: the sacred reality of his body which is at the same time temple, sacrifice and priest.² For a Christian, consequently, all is sacred, except what is *profanized* by sin. However, sacredness is not achieved by setting things aside. The Christian's cult is the sacrifice of his entire life, as lived in the non-sacral world which, if it is well lived, becomes a life of obedience in loving faith, a life made real in the daily events. Each Christian is constituted a priest, an indispensable priest of this spiritual-personal sacrificial cult.³ All of Romans 12 is a commentary of what real Christian cult is.⁴

pp. 277-278), we read: "'...new questions must always have been cropping up for the men who lived their lives on this boundary-line between the sacred and the secular, and fresh decisions must have had continually to be issued from the cultic centre in order to define the *status quo* for the time being (Lev. x.10f). The community was of course betrayed when the priests ceased to attend to their office, when they made no distinction between holy and secular, and gave no instruction about the difference between clean and unclean (Ezek. XXII, 26). The unclean was always pushing forward, with the result that men and things came into its power. Israel considered herself as lost in face of this power, had not Jahweh come to her aid. Healing and saving forces, however, emanated from the sanctuary and the cult, and these maintained life in a wholeness equilibrium between these poles. These, sanctuary and cult, no doubt did not extend so far as completely to extrude and abolish the unclean, of finally to incorporate the secular realm into the holy. This continuous struggle between the sacred and the secular, which runs right through the whole of Jahweh's creation (*vide* the list of unclean animals), is, however, regarded even by P as something temporary. P too knows a final condition of things where the holiness of Jahweh will attain its goal, since *all the earth will be full of the glory of God* (Num. XIV, 21). But this swallowing up of the secular in the holy, so complete that the most insignificant objects in everyday use, the pots in the houses and the bells on horses' harness, will be as holy as the vessels in the Temple, a prophet only looks for as coming with Jahweh's final act of salvation *in that day* (Zech. XIV, 21f)."

¹ Frisque et Congar, *LP*, pp. 252-253. Congar quotes here Is. 45, 1, 14-15, 56, 3-8, Wis. 3, 14-15, Mt. 21, 13 and par.

² Congar quotes Mt. 5, 33-37; Mc. 11, 15-19; Mt. 21, 12-14; Mt. 12, 1-7; Lc. 6, 1-5; Jn. 4, 21-24. Also in *LP*, pp. 252-253, note 64, Congar adds: "Jn 2, 13-22; He; notre *Mystère du Temple* et notre contribution, dans "La Liturgie après Vatican II," coll. *Unam Sanctam*, 66, (Paris, 1967), pp. 385-403."

³ Frisque et Congar, *LP*, p. 253.

⁴ *Infra*, p, 131, where the relationship between cult and mission is explained.

The second point that Congar makes is the following: Jesus institutes new cultic signs, especially those of Baptism and Eucharist.

Les sacrements ne sont que la mise en oeuvre du Sacrement de Dieu qu'est le Christ, ou du *mystère* au sens paulinien du mot.¹

In the same way that the first experience of the spiritual-personal cult consists in a *faithful* obedience to God, so the first experience of the sacramental aspect of the cult consists in receiving in faith God's gift in Jesus Christ.

Avant d'être latreutique, et pour l'être, le culte chrétien est théurgique et sotériologique; il ne consiste pas d'abord à offrir, à faire monter quelque chose de nous vers Dieu, mais à recevoir le don opérant de Dieu.²

Then Congar shows the relationship between the sacramental and sacrificial (offering) aspects of the Christian cult.

Le Chrétien ne doit pas seulement accueillir ce don de Dieu, il lui doit une réponse qui se produira en trois actes: joindre le don de soi-même au don de Dieu et son sacrifice à celui de Jésus-Christ; rendre à Dieu son don par l'action de grâces; le partager ou le communiquer par la concorde fraternelle et la diaconie au bénéfice des pauvres.³

Service (*diakonia*) is an essential part of the Christian cult.⁴ Whereas in the Mosaic cult a separation existed between the sacred and the profane, between priesthood and prophecy, in the Christian cult an integration exists between the two.

To further clarify the concept of Christian cult, Congar then compares the Christian cult with the pagan cult. The latter is a divinity cult; the former, a faith cult. Congar explains that in the cultural pagan world at the time of Jesus nature was considered to have a divine character and consequently it had to be rendered favorable by certain rites, which needed to be faithfully and meticulously executed if the desired end was to be

¹ Frisque et Congar, *LP*, p. 254.

² *Ibid.*, p. 254.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁴ *Infra*, p.131, the part on Mission. In the context, Congar quotes Ph. 4, 18; Heb. 13, 16; Mt. 25, 41-45; Mt. 7, 21-27.

attained. Congar shows that in the Christian cult, on the contrary, things and rites are replaced by gestures of faith.¹ In an impressive passage, Congar illustrates his point.

Hélas! Le paganisme n'est pas seulement une chose historiquement ou géographiquement localisée, extérieure au christianisme. Il existe en chaque homme né d'Adam, attaché précisément à ses instincts *religieux* naturels. Ce n'est pas seulement dans le monde gréco-romain du I^{er} siècle, ou dans les régions océaniques ou africaines de nos jours, que le christianisme le rencontre, c'est dans les coeurs et les esprits des chrétiens eux-mêmes. Tout comme les prophètes l'ont rencontré à l'intérieur des coeurs et des esprits juifs, Nous souffrons assez, précisément, nous, prêtres de Jésus-Christ, d'être pris sans cesse pour des *sorciers du ciel*, pour des intermédiaires rituels entre la vie terrestre et certaines forces mystérieuses. On nous amène le petit à baptiser parce que cela porte bonheur, ou les fiancés à marier parce que cela s'est toujours fait chez nous, ou une médaille à bénir; on attend de nous que nous conduisions la procession à la source, que nous bénissions les maisons le samedi saint, que sais-je? Bref, on nous traite en prêtres de Héra ou du soleil, de Cérès ou de Baal, non en prêtres de l'Évangile.²

Congar very appropriately quotes a certain archbishop of Chambéry, whom he does not specify by name:

I do not want to turn my students into clerics who have the spirit of the Levites, but priests who have the spirit of the prophets.³

The Relationship Between Christian Cult and Correlative Terms such as Priesthood, Sacrifice and Mission.

Le sacerdoce est une des réalités ou des notions dans lesquelles le "spécifique chrétien" apparaît avec le plus de force lorsqu'on étudie les textes du Nouveau Testament.⁴

¹ Congar, *SL* p. 106. For example Congar quotes a text in Augustine (which is in turn a quote from Varronius): "Theologia (i.e mythologia) est quod in urbibus cives, maxime sacerdotes, nosse atque administrare debent. In quo est quos deos publice colere (quae) sacra ac sacrificia facere quemque par sit" (page 104). Here it is clear that faith is not related to cult, for the latter consists in mere rites.

² Congar, *SL*, pp. 105-106 (ETr., p. 86)

³ Yves Congar, *Laity, Church and World*, (London: Chapman, 1960), p. 25 (henceforth cited as *LCW*).

⁴ Congar, *SL*, p. 91.

With regard to the concept of the priesthood, there is a noticeable evolution in Congar, during the early 1950's. In 1951,¹ we discover some helpful distinctions regarding the relationship between the priesthood and sacrifice. These distinctions, however, are expressed in a more rigid form than in *Jalons*, and other subsequent writings. For example, here are some of Congar's earlier thoughts on the matter of priesthood:

Le sacerdoce dans son sens le plus général est relatif au sacrifice. Nous le définissons pour notre part, la qualité qui permet de se présenter devant Dieu pour obtenir sa grâce, et dans sa communion, par l'offrande d'un sacrifice qui lui soit agréable.²

Congar shows that other definitions of the priesthood exist: for example, definitions in terms of mediation, consecration, functions of love and adoration. For Congar, however, the notion of mediation is of a more general nature than that of sacrifice, for this reason that some mediations, such as revelations, are not sacrificial. Furthermore, the notion of mediation limits that of the priesthood to public or liturgical functions. The notion of consecration emphasizes the sacerdotal activity, whereas that of apostolate describes the priestly ministerial function.

Congar explains that biblically the notion of sacrifice is related to that of the priesthood: the relationship is suggested by the quality of Christ's priesthood as referring to his status as victim. More explicitly, in Heb. 5, 1; 8, 3; 2, 17; 9, 11-14; 10 and 11, the priesthood is defined in terms of sacrificial activity.³

In its more extended nature, sacrifice refers primarily to the totality of our being, of our action and ownership, which become the matter and the soul of sacrifices. Referring to the concept of sacrifice Congar writes:

Leur âme, c'est l'acceptation libre et aimante de notre référence à Dieu, c'est-à-dire de la dépendance absolue où nous sommes de lui et de notre orientation vers lui par la conformité de notre volonté à la sienne. Bref,

¹ Yves Congar, "Structure du sacerdoce chrétien", *La Maison-Dieu* (avril 1951), pp. 51-85 (also available in *SE*, pp. 240-273).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52 (in *SE*, p. 240).

³ *Ibid.* We must note here that the notion of mediation as explained above, especially in relation to liturgical functions, reflects the Congar of the early 1950's.

c'est le mouvement spirituel de l'homme vers Dieu.¹

A certain aspect of the priesthood corresponds to the general understanding of sacrifice; namely, the offering of oneself, the priesthood of holy life. This sacrifice is also referred to by Congar, as the *natural* sacrifice. He adds: "Jésus l'a repris et assumé sur la croix valorisant tout ce qui, sans lui, eut été incapable d'atteindre jusqu'au Saint des saints."²

God himself has indicated the types of sacrifice he wants from mankind. These consist not in material offerings, but in the offering of man himself, the sacrifice fully realized in the offering of Jesus. Grounding his explanation in Scripture, on the Fathers of the Church and especially Augustine, Congar explicates:

Le contenu du sacrifice, c'est nous...nous tous formant un seul corps du Christ... De cela, l'Eucharistie est le sacrement, c'est-à-dire le signe expressif, dynamique et réalisateur.³

Contextually, Congar quotes Augustine: "Totum sacrificium — ipsi nos sumus; ...hoc est sacrificium christianorum: multi unum corpus in Christo... Ubi ei (i.e., Ecclesiae) demonstratur quod in ea re offert, ipsa offeratur."⁴

In the Christian economy, all must go through Christ. Consequently the sacrifice of one's life, *the natural sacrifice*, having found its full realization in the historical Jesus, now, becomes ours and, furthermore, perfects our own self offering, through the sacramental celebration of Eucharist.

Le rôle des sacrements est précisément, en reproduisant sous un mode d'être particulier, symbolico-réel, ce que Jésus a fait pour nous dans les jours de sa chair, de faire monter la racine vers ses fruits, de faire que le Christ *Alpha* produise en nous à travers le temps, la réalité développée qui formera le Christ *Omega*.⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54 (in *SE*, p. 242).

² *Ibid.*, p. 56 (in *SE*, p. 244).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 61 (in *SE*, pp. 248-249).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66 (in *SE*, p.).

There are, therefore, two sacrifices, that of Christ, and ours, the former, however, consummates and valorizes the latter. Christ's sacrifice, nevertheless, is distinct from, yet united to ours, through the Eucharistic celebration. To each one of these sacrifices, corresponds a different type of priesthood, respectively, the ministerial and the universal. The latter, however, is not to be defined in terms of public worship.

On ne voit nulle part dans le Nouveau Testament, une référence *expresse* du culte et du sacerdoce royal des fidèles à l'Eucharistie et au culte public ou proprement liturgique de l'Eglise.¹

Yet, Congar relates the twofold sacrifice and twofold priesthood to the community-structure of the Church.

Mais par le Baptême (et la Confirmation), tout fidèle est constitué le célébrant des mystères du Christ et singulièrement de son Eucharistie, pour s'y unir et en faire sa nourriture; par le sacrement de l'Ordre, c'est-à-dire, l'imposition apostolique des mains en vue du ministère, quelques uns parmi les fidèles sont ordonnés en vue de faire activement l'Eucharistie.²

There are not three priesthoods, but three modes of participation (baptism-confirmation, ministerial priesthood and episcopacy) in the unique priesthood of Christ; namely a priestly way (baptism-confirmation) related to one's life, interior and personal, according to the order of life; two other priestly ways (ministerial priesthood and episcopacy), both related to the exterior activity of liturgical celebrations. Concluding, Congar brings out the relationship between the various modes of sharing in the unique priesthood of Christ.

C'est tout le contenu du sacerdoce royal d'offrande personnelle de la vie qui s'achève dans la participation au sacrement que célèbre le sacerdoce hiérarchique et dont la consécration baptismale constitue les fidèles légitimes concélébrants. Dans cette offrande qui met ainsi en jeu, sous la souveraineté du Christ-Prêtre, les trois titres sacerdotaux existant dans son corps qui est l'Eglise, celle-ci adjoint son *agi* au *donné* de son Chef. Elle développe et actualise l'offrande que celui-ci a faite d'elle sur la croix; elle achève dans le corps ce qui a été fait dans le Chef; elle plénifie le Christ en elle, tout en recevant de lui cela même grâce à quoi elle le plénifie. Ainsi s'achève dans le corps la maturation ou la croissance de

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69 (in *SE*, p. 257).

² *Ibid.*, p. 85 (in *SE*, pp. 272-273).

celui qui après avoir tout fait et, tout contenu en soi, veut que nous le fassions avec lui. Ainsi le mystère de sa Pâque devient le mystère de la nôtre, ainsi se réalise l'identité de l'*Alpha* avec l'*Omega*, en même temps que le réel accroissement de celui-ci en celui-là.¹

We are now led to a further stage in Congar's understanding of the concept of priesthood. Following an exegetical study of the words *hiereus*, and *archiereus*, Congar concludes that during the New Testament period, the words apply either to Christ (especially in Hebrews) or to the faithful community (in Apocalypse 1, 6; 5, 10; 20,6), *Hiereus* is never applied to the hierarchical priesthood, except in the Clementine epistle (c. 95).²

One of Congar's most important conclusions is that the Apostles and the first Christians were dominated by the idea and the conviction of having received all from Jesus and in Jesus. For them all relationships between God and man -- rule of action, temple, priesthood, sacrifice -- consisted in Jesus Christ whose life became theirs through faith. In fact, Jesus is the unique priest (as well as unique temple and sacrifice). Although Jesus is the unique priest, however, he is not solitary in his priesthood. Christ is the firstborn among a great number of brethren, and he communicates to many what he has realized for all.³ Congar explains:

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 85. (In *SE*, pp. 272-273.)

² *SL*, pp. 91-92. (Also *JPTL*, pp. 175-181.) In "Un essai de théologie — Long Hasselmanns", *RSR*, pp. 288-289, this point is developed further by Congar in his critical remarks with regard to Hasselmanns: "Il est certain que ni les auteurs du N. T. ni les Pères apostoliques à l'exception de Clément, n'emploient les mots *hiereus* ou *archiereus* pour désigner les ministres hiérarchiques. *Hiereus* est employé exclusive-ment dans ces textes des origines, ou dans des citations de L'A. T., ou pour désigner les prêtres juifs ou païens, ou comme attribut de Jésus-Christ et, dans l'Apocalypse, des chrétiens: dans les écrits des Pères apostoliques, par contre, le mot n'est pas davantage appliqué aux fidèles qu'il ne l'est aux ministres hiérarchiques. *Archiereus* est employé exclusivement pour désigner le grand-prêtre juif, soit sous la forme de tel individu historique et concret, soit, dans l'épître aux Hébreux, comme type du Christ qui est vraiment notre (unique) grand-prêtre. Une seule exception, en plus de celle déjà signalée chez Clément: l'application de ce titre aux prophètes, dans la *Didachè*, mais il y a là, au fond, une allusion à l'A. T.

³ Congar has been highly influenced by Long-Hasselmanns' central thesis. See *JPTL*, p. 223. In "Un essai de théologie — Long-Hasselmanns" (*RSR*) p. 275, Hasselmanns describes his central thesis. "[1] Un prêtre, [2] tous prêtres, [3] quelques-uns prêtres. Il faut concilier [ces] trois propositions également certaines et traditionnelles: [1] Un seul est prêtre. [2] Tous sont prêtres. [3] Quelques-uns sont prêtres. Traduisons en latin et en grec: [1] *Unus sacerdos, eis hiereus*. [2] *Omnes sacerdos, pantes hiereus*. [3] *Aliqui presbyteri, tines presbuteroi*. Expliquons théologiquement: [1] Un seul est prêtre par sacre divin. [2] Tous les chrétiens sont incorporés au prêtre unique. [3] Quelques-uns sont adaptés au ministère du sacerdoce. Autre formule: [1] Jésus-

Il est temple, mais les fidèles sont temple avec lui; le seul temple des temps messianiques est son corps, son corps personnel, ressuscité, et son corps communional, la communauté des chrétiens. Il est prêtre et sacrifice, mais les fidèles sont prêtres et sacrifice avec lui: plus de quinze passages du N. T. le disent. Ils expriment avec précision en quoi consiste la qualité sacerdotale et les sacrifices du corps ecclésial: non dans l'offrande de choses matérielles, mais dans l'édification par la foi des fidèles, d'un temple spirituel où l'homme vivant s'offre en sacrifice spirituel.¹

We must note here that 1) Congar considers the priesthood to be the basic reality of Christian life: *le spécifique chrétien*; 2) he associates the reality of the priesthood primarily with the reality of sacrifice and not with that of mediation;² and 3) he defines sacrifice primarily, not in terms of *res oblata*, but in terms of *offering of self*, as St. Thomas does in an obscure commentary on Hebrews: "Dicit sacerdos, quia se obtulit Deo Patri".³ Consequently, the Christian is truly Christian when he *sacerdolizes*, that is, when he offers himself to God the Father through Jesus Christ, for Jesus is the only priest, though He is not alone in his priesthood.

At this point, Congar's concept of *spiritualization*⁴ must be dealt with. The priest of the N. T. offers a *spiritual* sacrifice. This concept is developed at length in his book, *Le Mystère du Temple*,⁵ where Congar shows, on the basis of the Scripture, that God will

Christ: sacerdoce substantiel et proprement dit. [2] Sacerdoce participé solidairement en groupe. [3] Prêtres ministériellement, mission officielle d'accomplir certains actes extérieurs du sacerdoce au nom de tous." In *JPTL*, p. 224, Congar qualifies Hasselmanns' synthesis. We read: "Un seul est prêtre, le Christ, qui est l'*Alpha*, l'*Omega*, la Voie.

Entre l'*Alpha* et l'*Omega*, son sacerdoce est participé sacramentellement, en vue de la célébration sacramentelle de son sacrifice: par tous, au baptême (confirmation), pour entrer dans cette célébration; par quelques-uns, de façon hiérarchique, dans l'ordination, pour accomplir cette célébration.

Tous sont prêtres, par leur vie spirituelle dans le Christ et, au ciel, n'exerceront que ce sacerdoce, qui est celui du terme et de la réalité."

¹ Congar, *SL*, p. 83 (Etr., p. 75).

² Congar, *JPTL*, pp. 197-226.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁴ *Infra*, p. 128, esp. note 2 .

⁵ Congar, *Le Mystère du Temple*, (Paris: Cerf, 1958).

always dwell with his people, but not always in a locally circumscribed area, such as in a material temple. The local presence of God gradually becomes personal in Jesus and an indwelling in Christians.

The New Testament temple is one made of people, not rocks and bricks.

Les prophètes avaient annoncé, réclamé, non certes la suppression du culte et du temple, mais leur réalisation *spirituelle* ...les prophètes ont été les premiers chrétiens, selon l'expression des Pères.¹

In a similar way, there will always be sacrifices. However, these sacrifices will not always consist of things exterior to man: the true sacrifice, the spiritualized sacrifice will be that of man's life itself, referred to God in faith and love through the filial adhesion of each man to His will.

Bref, c'est dans son essence et sa réalité intime elles-mêmes que l'*Ecclesia* serait temple, sacrifice et sacerdoce. C'est en se réalisant que le christianisme a, par lui-même, qualité sacerdotale.²

The Christian priesthood and sacrifice are *spiritual* realities. Congar explains, however, that the word *spiritual* does not take away any of the *realness*³ of the priestly

¹ Congar, *SL*, p. 93 (ETr., pp. 75-76).

² Congar, *SL*, p. 93.

³ Here again we see that there is no opposition between Congar and Von Rad. The emphasis on the *realness* of the *spiritual* sacrifice within the context of Congar's incarnational view makes this point clear. For example, compare the above with Von Rad, in *Old Testament Theology*, I, pp. 279-280 (in *Theologie I*, p. 278). Although Von Rad lessens the intensity of the prophetic spiritualization process: "These ideas of how salvation is deeply rooted in the material were never abandoned by Israel — even the prophets did not give them up. It would be a great mistake to regard the prophets as the spiritual antipodes opposed to the cultic world of the priests. A programmatic war of reformation waged against the priests would have taken a very different aspect. What we witness in the prophets is an attack on abuses. In this attack we occasionally come upon the spiritualizing of cultic concepts. But what is said — and it is always set within a specific polemic — remains *ad hoc*, and never widens out to deliberate opposition. Now and then such spiritualizations probably betoken some internal crises in Israel's cultic life. But it must be very emphatically stressed that they do not in the slightest imply any *evolution* in the direction of an increasingly intensive spiritualization. Our own theological outlook finds it all too easy to be suspicious of this ritual side of Jahwism, as un-spiritual and external. But how can it be made out that the people who submitted to purificatory rites were not touching the heart of the matter? As we said, the unclean is the most basic form of Israel's encounter with what was displeasing to Jahweh. Of course it is hard for us today to size up the experimental content of such observances. The Psalms certainly do give us some information: we can generally assume that in them we are

reality when it is applied to the entire people of God. The *spiritual* priesthood and sacrifice are not merely some *moral* types of realities. In the context of Christianity, not only is the interpretation of priesthood and sacrifice spiritual, but also the realities themselves are spiritual.

Le *spirituel* du culte chrétien n'est pas formellement, une idéalisation, une transposition *morale* du culte judaïque; il répond à la réalité que le culte judaïque annonçait: c'est pourquoi nous caractérisons le sacerdoce qui y fait face, par les mots *spirituel réel*.¹

In summary, the Christian cult consists 1) in letting oneself be grasped by God through Jesus Christ (i.e. the posture of humble reception from God in Faith, sacramentally expressed and publicly recognized by the rite of Baptism), 2) in responding in loving faith which consists a) in living in the awareness that our entire life is one lived in Christ, b) in rendering thanks to God through Jesus especially sacramentally in the Eucharist, and c) in living out in faith and love a life of communion and service *koinonia* and *diakonia* in relation to others.

At the risk of becoming overly schematic, I would dare say: for Congar the *Christian cult* includes all of the above; namely, 1) and 2) a) b) c). It includes a priestly or sacerdotal activity; namely, the actions or functions described above as 1) *letting...* 2) *responding...* a) *in living...* b) *in rendering thanks to God...* and c) *in living out....* To the priestly function corresponds the object of this function; namely, *the sacrifice* which consists in 1) the interior attitude of *surrender* which makes possible the sacerdotal function of receiving God's gift which consists in 2) a) the interior attitude of *prayer* and *contemplation* enabling one to perform the sacerdotal function of living in the awareness of one's union with and in Christ, 2)b) one's *own entire life* for which one exercises the sacerdotal function of giving thanks at all times, but celebrated as the Eucharistic meal at some times, and 2) c) *mission* or *apostolate* (in terms of *koinonia* and *diakonia*) which becomes the *horizontal* sacerdotal function giving visible credibility to all other

addressed by a piety which has not as yet started on *the great retreat into spirituality*. And in particular, it is precisely in this grasp of the material side of life by the cultic sphere that Jahweh's urgent will to be immanent comes to expression, a will which is wholly unsatisfied with Israel's spirituality."

¹ Congar, *JPTL*, pp. 177 ff. (ETr., p. 132).

sacerdotal functions described above. Congar expresses what is explained here succinctly in the following manner:

Une conclusion ressort de tout cela: le culte, les sacrifices des fidèles, et donc le sacerdoce qui y correspond en eux, sont essentiellement ceux de la vie sainte, religieuse, priante, consacrée, charitable, miséricordieuse, apostolique.¹

With regard to apostolate (or mission), Congar shows that the ministerial priesthood becomes a *facilitating* function,² which enables the people of God to exercise their priestly role integrally, and consequently "to offer their living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God," (Rom. 12, 1).

The following text appears to be a crucial one, for here, Congar links cult to

¹ Congar, *JPTL*, p. 177 (ETr., p. 136). In "Sacerdoce et laïcité dans l'Eglise", pp. 16-19, Congar was already pointing to a definition of the universal priesthood in terms of Christian life as service and worship: "Que tout le corps des chrétiens soit sacerdotal, qu'il y ait un sacerdoce des fidèles, appelé encore, sans grande précision, sacerdoce universel ou sacerdoce royal, c'est ce dont témoigne abondamment l'Écriture Sainte et toute la tradition chrétienne." At this point Congar quotes: Ex. xix, 5-6; I Pet., ii, 5 and 9; Apoc., i, 6; v, 10; xx, 6; xxii, 3-5.

The universal priesthood is linked to the order of life, "Au domaine propre du sacerdoce immanent et diffus appartient tout ce qui est de l'ordre de la vie, de l'application et de l'intériorisation personnelles de la vie reçue du Christ, des actes de cette vie en tant qu'ayant une valeur de culte, enfin de sa manifestation dans le témoignage en tant qu'un tel témoignage rend gloire à Dieu."

The interior cult, i.e. the theological and moral activity of the Christian inasmuch as such activities render glory to God, is the proper domain of the universal priesthood. Congar notes that the interior cult is the goal of the exterior cult of sacramental or liturgical actions.

The exterior cult consists of two aspects: the *sacrificium laudis*, the ascending sacrifice of praise from man to God, and the descending gift of grace, from God to man. Both aspects of cult are sacramental, i.e. in every sacramental action, there is a *sacrificium laudis* and the gift of grace.

Congar remarks: "L'insistance de la théologie catholique depuis la Réforme sur la réalité, d'abord, puis sur l'efficacité de l'*ex opere operato* des sacrements, a malheureusement fait prédominer le second aspect sur le premier, au point que l'idée de voir dans les sacrements d'abord un culte, une prière, un sacrifice de louange, a presque disparu de l'enseignement de la catéchèse."

The universal priesthood also includes the activities of the *sacrificium laudis* (the first aspect of the exterior cult, in fact, its primary aspect); the ministerial priesthood relates to the second aspect of the exterior cult, namely, the sacramental or liturgical, as bringing about God's gift to man. "Le sens du sacerdoce proprement ministériel (hiérarchique) et sacramentel, c'est d'apporter à l'Eglise ce qui n'est pas encore pleinement en elle: la vie et l'adoration de son Seigneur."

² *Infra*, pp. 132-133.

mission. Commenting on Rom. 12, 1, Congar observes:

Le culte du N. T. est un culte en esprit et en vérité. *Veri adoratores*. Il consiste dans l'offrande des hommes eux-mêmes. Les prêtres qui le célèbrent ne sont ni des sorciers païens, ni même des Lévites de la Loi mosaïque. Ce sont, ce doivent être, des prêtres-prophètes de la foi dans le Dieu vivant, des prêtres du sacrifice d'obéissance offert une fois pour toutes par Jésus-Christ (Héb. 10, 5-10) et dont il n'y a, ici-bas, de célébration sacramentelle que pour que ce sacrifice devienne pleinement le nôtre et celui de toute l'Eglise."¹

For Congar, the ministerial priesthood (or what Paul refers to as *ministry of the Gospel* in Congar's commentary of Rom. 15, 16 and Phil. 2, 17)² creates (*susciter*), nourishes and educates in the lives of the faithful, a faith which, when lived in all of life, constitutes the *spiritual sacrifice* of Christian life.

The facilitating function³ of the ministerial priest is especially exercised in the celebration of the Eucharist, where the Church becomes the Body of Christ, through the

¹ Congar, *SL*, pp. 106-107. Etr., p. 87. In *LP*, p. 253, note 65, Congar notes: "C'est toute la doctrine de Rm. 12, 1; 1, 9; 15, 16; Ph. 2, 17; He. 15-16; 1 P. 2, 5-10."

² Congar, *SL*, p. 116.

³ In a paper by Carl J. Armbruster, entitled "Progress Report of the Subcommittee on the Systematic Theology of the Priesthood" (April 27, 1971), we find an attempt at defining the ministerial priesthood, which may serve as an explanation to the facilitating function in relation to the said priesthood as described above: "Towards a Definition of Christian Priesthood:

—A priest is a Christian who, by the events of vocation and ordination, enters the presbyterate to continue Christ's mission of reconciliation by serving the Christian community and human society in the name of the Church.

—This service is rendered both symbolically by being a sign of unity and functionally by providing word and sacrament and the conditions necessary for their realization.

—This service should be characterized by an exterior life-style and an interior spirituality appropriate to the times, places and need of the People of God".

In the context of the above definition, Armbruster defines *priestly* work in the following way: "The question is unanswerable because it is wrongly posed. One does not objectively define *priest* work and thus define the priest, but rather the priest defines himself by his vocation and ordination and defines his work by imparting to it the mark of service. Whatever serves word or sacrament or their necessary conditions is *priestly* if it is so intended by the minister. For there is no other way to justify as *priestly* work the wide range of seemingly secular activities which bishops and priests are now undertaking, unless these works at least indirectly carry an orientation of service to one of the ministerial imperatives. This service orientation is ultimately rooted in the personality of the priest as a symbol of unity who expresses in down-to-earth work his theological character as a minister of reconciliation." This appears as a *cultic* definition of the ministerial priesthood in Congar's sense.

communion of the faithful with the body of Christ, who gives himself up for us so that in turn we may give ourselves up in service to the Church and the World, in missionary or apostolic activities.

Quoting A. M. Denis, Congar clarifies the role of the *sacerdotal minister of the Gospel*; namely, the ministerial priest. "Son rôle consiste à susciter dans les chrétiens ce qu'il y a de cultuel dans leur vie."¹ One must notice, however, that *ce qu'il y a de cultuel* touches all of man's life, his life as hearer and worshipper of God, and of servant to the world. The missionary activity of the believers, nevertheless, must be actualized by the Eucharist, of which the ministerial priest is an essential celebrant.²

Evaluation and Orientation

Two points related to the priesthood and developed by Congar should be emphasized: 1) the level on which the priesthood of all believers is exercised and 2) the function of the so-called hierarchical or ministerial priesthood.

Yves Congar is a man who is perpetually on the way, perpetually searching. On the one hand, in *Jalons*, concerning the priesthood of all believers, he wrote:

Ce culte, ces sacrifices, le sacerdoce qui y correspond n'est pas conçu au plan liturgique ou sacramentaire; du moins cet aspect des choses est-il tout au plus implicitement présent dans les textes [scripturaux]. Les hosties, le sacerdoce des fidèles sont spirituels...non purement (au sens) moral.... Mais il (i.e. le sacerdoce des fidèles) n'est pas de l'ordre de la

¹ Congar, *LP*, p. 253. By contrasting Congar's interpretation of Rom. 12, 1 and that of Ernst Käsemann, one can better understand the point made above regarding the role of the ministerial priesthood in the context of the Christian cult. Käsemann arrives at a different conclusion, although he begins with an explanation of *spiritual sacrifice* (Rom. 12, 1), which is similar to that of Congar. "...where the worship (cult) of Christians takes the form of their bodily obedience (in Rom. 12, 1) there is in principle an abandonment of the cultic sacred place which is characteristically a place of divine worship for the ancient world.... Sacred times and places are superseded by the eschatological public activity of those who at all times and in all places stand *before the face of Christ* and from this position before God make the everyday of so-called secular life into the arena of the unlimited and unceasing glorification of the divine will.... This shows conclusively that the total Christian community with all its members is the bearer of this worship and that not only sacred functions but also cultically privileged persons lose their right to exist." Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, p. 191.

² *Infra*. pp. 162-163, where the Pauline situation in relationship to the question of the possibility of non-ordained ministers with regard to the Eucharist is to be dealt with.

célébration du culte public ou sacramental de l'Eglise...le culte et le sacerdoce relèvent de l'ordre de la vie chrétienne et ne peuvent se définir comme des réalités proprement liturgiques.¹

Congar continues:

Dans la mesure où la question du sacerdoce des fidèles sera posée, dans la suite, en fonction du culte proprement sacramental et surtout de la célébration de l'Eucharistie, on sera amené, pour rester dans la vérité catholique, à marquer sa référence et même sa subordination organique au sacerdoce hiérarchique et proprement liturgique.²

On the other hand, as early as 1946, Congar refuses to define the universal priesthood in opposition to the ministerial priesthood.³ He writes:

Il ne convient d'ailleurs pas d'opposer d'une façon radicale le sacerdoce universel des baptisés et le sacerdoce ministériel et sacramental des prêtres. Le second consomme le premier.⁴

This last remark may appear to be out of context, if the universal priesthood's function is to serve as a means of fulfilling the cultic activities of the ministerial priesthood, the latter being the goal of the former. Congar, at this point, gives two reasons explaining why the ministerial priesthood is the consummation of the universal priesthood. 1) The ministerial priesthood, inasmuch as it leaves one with the sacramental character and powers, is a deepening of the baptismal character and cultic powers, for the baptismal character realizes but a first participation in the priesthood of Christ. 2) The ministerial priesthood enriches the *sacrificum laudis*, celebrated by the universal priesthood.⁵

We must remember, however, that Congar's definition of the universal priesthood

¹ Congar, *JPTL*, p. 177 (ETr., p).

² *Ibid.*

³ Congar, "Sacerdoce et laïcat dans l'Eglise".

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁵ *Ibid.* See also *supra*, p. 130, note 1 ff.

is positive and related to what he calls *l'ordre de la vie*".¹ There seems to be a hint here, to the effect that he does not wish to compare the priesthood of all believers with that of ordained ministers in order to elevate the latter detrimentally to the former; the two realities are similar for Congar (inasmuch as both are sacramental; however they seem to be altogether different in terms of their inner nature, in spite of the fact that both are commonly referred to as *priestly* or *sacerdotal*).

In the 1960's, Congar re-emphasizes the lack of opposition between the ministerial and universal priesthoods:

...une opposition, un distancement quelconque entre consécration et mission, culte sacramentel ou Eucharistie et Parole ou apostolat, n'a pas de sens. Il est impossible de parler valablement du sacerdoce ministériel sans parler du sacrifice spirituel que les chrétiens sont appelés à offrir et du don de Dieu en Jésus-Christ qui doit être communiqué aux fidèles. Il est impossible d'isoler le culte chrétien singulièrement l'Eucharistie, de la construction du Corps du Christ, qui est le but de tout le ministère (Ep. 4, 12-13). Bref, c'est l'apostolat qui accomplit le culte chrétien dans une Eglise en situation d'itinérance mais qui, par le Saint-Esprit, tient les arrhes de la Jérusalem eschatologique et, spirituellement, est déjà le Corps du Christ ressuscité.²

In the context of the relationship between the ministerial and universal priesthoods, we now refer to what Congar himself calls a synthesis of his basic belief in relation to the reality of the Christian sacerdotal quality; namely, the universal priesthood.

La réalité de la qualité sacerdotale du chrétien est pour moi absolument fondamentale. C'est la trame de ma spiritualité de religieux. Ce devrait être lié avec une synthèse comme celle que j'ai proposé en 1958 à une session d'étudiants, et dont vous avez un écho dans *Les voies du Dieu vivant*.³

His basic synthesis could be summarized as follows: the Christian experience consists in the awareness that there are no mediators between man and God, but the unique Priest, Jesus-Christ, and that each one in Christ is priest. This means that the

¹ *Ibid.*

² Frisque et Congar, *LP*, p. 256.

³ From a *personal letter of Congar*, dated October 17, 1971.

dailiness of our life of service is seen as a gift which is accepted by God himself, for in Christ we are in God and God is in us. The exclusive offerers of this gift are the Christians themselves through their daily *diakonia*. For all Christians, in Christ, the unique mediator, have direct access to God himself. In fact, in the world of faith, and more specifically in the world of Christian faith, Congar explains, there is no distinction between the profane and the sacred.¹ On the contrary, in the world of religion, the sacred is superimposed on the profane; the latter has to be rendered acceptable to God through cultic rituals of sacralization. Congar explains well the process as it evolved within Christianity:

Ce procédé a commencé d'être appliqué très tôt, à la faveur, surtout, de préoccupations d'ordre éthique ou déontologique. On en décèle des traces dans l'épître de Clément romain et un assez large usage chez saint Cyprien. Il s'affirmera après la paix constantinienne et, d'une façon générale, en toute situation de chrétienté sacrale, donc aussi à travers le Moyen Age. Nous espérons le montrer un jour en apportant des justifications documentaires. Dans un tel climat et de telles perspectives, le culte se développe en un culte de sacralisation, de séparation, dans une liturgie cérémonielle éventuellement assez pompeuse. L'imitation généralisée du cérémonial de la Cour impériale après la paix constantinienne a trouvé ici maints emplois. De plus il s'est passé dans le domaine des sacrements et du culte ce qui s'est passé dans l'ensemble de l'ecclésiologie: on a trop perdu de vue l'action actuelle du Dieu Très Haut et l'on a arrêté son attention sur les choses elles-mêmes et les médiations, sur la vertu mise dans les choses maniées par l'homme. La liturgie est trop souvent devenue un ordre de choses, quelque chose qu'un spécialiste du sacré accomplit avec pompe devant une assistance.²

Congar shows that religion takes God as the object of man's activities, whereas faith considers God as the source of man's life and service. In religion, my life becomes a kind of tithe paid to God in cultic activities. In faith, all of my life is cultic; it is

¹ In *VDV*, p. 394, Congar cautions his readers against the danger of spiritualism in relationship to the concept of spiritual sacrifice. He illustrates his point by taking an example from the field of politics. "...une illusion consiste à accorder certains problèmes politiques avec des attitudes qui sont au niveau du Corps Mystique, alors que la politique a ses données, ses exigences, et représente aussi un ordre voulu par Dieu.... Les problèmes de l'action ne peuvent être entièrement réglés au plan de la mystique.... Je suis convaincu que le secret de cette solution réside dans une notion vraie du rapport religieux...celui de la Foi - le Dieu vivant et l'homme."

² P. Winninger et Y. Congar, *Le diacre*, Unam Sanctam 59 (Paris: Cerf, 1966), "Le diaconat dans la théologie des ministres", pp. 139-140 (henceforth cited as *LD*).

constantly bathed in God's holy presence and gracious power. "Ainsi toute mon action a une certaine couleur théologique parce que j'y réalise Dieu, j'y rencontre Dieu, j'y trouve Dieu."¹

Furthermore, the Christian experience, as specifically priestly, is a paschal experience, the experience of a conversion from the world of magic, filled with multiplied mediations as means of reaching God, including *special priests*,² to a world of symbols, filled with the presence of God himself through Jesus, which serve as sacramental revelations of God himself, through us and our service to others. Congar writes:

Dieu est Père, mais pas paternaliste; notre liberté est donc immense. Si c'est du vrai amour que découle notre action et d'une vraie vue de la foi, elle ne sera pas cette espèce d'apologétique à court terme, d'apostolat pressé, mais elle sera vraiment une possession, un enthousiasme (au sens étymologique du mot: avoir Dieu en soi), par cette présence de Dieu, ce désir qu'il soit Dieu, et qu'il le soit pour moi, puisque je suis un relais de son rayonnement.³

The Christian experience of conversion is, in fact, a passage from religion to faith; a passage from a world dichotomized by a sacred and profane reality to a world in which the profane it-self is taken up in the one reality of God. Congar refers to this interior conversion in this manner:

La conversion consistera en ceci: avoir tous nos rapports, familiaux, sociaux, dans la cité, avoir tout cela sous la verticale de Dieu, au lieu d'avoir simplement une liaison horizontale avec les choses, en les considérant comme choses charnelles, choses du monde. C'est très difficile, et c'est à la limite de la sainteté. Les saints voient dans tout ce qu'ils rencontrent, dans tout ce qu'ils font, une occasion de rencontrer Dieu, de le faire rayonner; et nous devons tendre vers cela, non avec la tentation de "faire du bien", mais en dépassant cela par la fantastique liberté que donne Dieu quand on lui est consacré, liberté de faire confiance aux hommes et aux choses.⁴

¹ Congar, *VDV*, p. 407.

² *Supra*, pp. 118-119.

³ Congar, *VDV*, p. 410.

⁴ *Ibid.*

As priestly, the Christian experience is liberation, liberation from all human mediations that clutter the path between God and man. For God through Jesus accepts us directly. We believe that this is the meaning of Congar's very own statement:

Je serais ferme aujourd'hui pour dire: en régime chrétien il n'y a qu'un prêtre souverain, le Christ. Tous les chrétiens sont prêtres en lui et ont accès directement à Dieu. (J'ai toujours récuse la définition du sacerdoce par médiation.) Il n'y a pas de sacrement du sacerdoce (sauf le baptême), il y a un sacrement de l'ordre. Certains sont ordonnés dans la suite des apôtres et des ministres institués par eux, pour servir le Sacerdoce du Christ auprès des hommes, et d'abord de la communauté chrétienne. Ils sont les présidents sacramentellement ordonnés de son Eucharistie, les serviteurs de sa *logikè latreia*.¹

In *Les voies du Dieu vivant*,² Congar offers a brief exegetical study of Romans 12, 1. The verse is interpreted in terms of our whole Christian life conceived as a spiritual sacrifice, not in the sense of little burdensome sacrifices, for sacrifice in the New Testament means a reference to God. In this sense, all our life, as *referred* to God, is sacrificial. Burdensome sacrifices are related to what we do for God: it is religion, it is magic, it falls within the pattern of human mediations. It is the tithe that we must pay to God in order that God be favorable to us. Sacrifice, as one's reference to God, is faith, that is, the experience of a favorable relationship on the part of God toward us, thus permitting us, in turn, to experience God in a personal encounter that graces us and our service to others. Congar explicitly refers to Romans 12, 1: "I implore you, therefore, Brothers, through the mercy of God, to offer your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy (and) well-pleasing to God, your spiritual worship (*logikè latreia*)". What Paul is asking from all Christians, Congar explains, is that they offer their bodies, in the very existential, biblical sense:

...la Bible de Jérusalem traduit leur *personnes*; dans le texte grec il y a seulement *somata*, c'est-à-dire vos corps.... C'est une bonne explication du sens réel. Car pour un Sémite — saint Paul est un Sémite — il n'y a pas d'homme sans corps;.... Le corps, pour un Sémite, c'est l'homme en

¹ From a *personal letter of Congar*, dated October 17, 1971.

² Congar, *VDV*, pp. 413-415.

tant qu'il s'insère dans l'existence, dans la société, et qu'il s'y insère justement par son activité....¹

Following an existential explanation of *body*, Congar rightly describes the body as person, that is, as that by which man is inserted in society in the world:

C'est extrêmement moderne; je pourrais même encore traduire de façon plus moderne en faisant allusion au langage des existentialistes: "Offrez vos personnes en situation", en tant qu'elles sont en situation.²

Quoting Merleau-Ponty, he characterizes as follows man's situation: "Etre au monde à travers un corps". The full force of the existentialist expression *être au monde*, the intentionality is thus brought forth. For Congar, this is precisely the Pauline meaning of the expression *offer your bodies*: "Offrez vos corps, offrez vos personnes en tant que, à travers leurs corps, et par leurs corps, elles sont au monde, à Dieu, au prochain...."³

At this point, he emphasizes the fact that the offering of our persons is not made to man in general, but to the real people that we encounter in our daily life:

...l'homme qui habite telle rue, qui a telle santé, et qui aime tel sport... Il y a tout un congloméra de choses qui nous détermine, et finalement un homme s'insère dans un monde très précis où nul autre ne peut occuper sa place. Et c'est cela que saint Paul nous demande d'offrir en sacrifice spirituel, de référer à Dieu.⁴

This last point, made by Congar, is of extreme importance for what it says concerning the *spécifique chrétien*, the sacerdotal quality of which each Christian is the bearer. The offering of our persons in situation is pleasing to God, not because it is offered to him as sacrifices, but because our whole person in situation as already being

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.

² *Ibid.*, p. 414.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

referred to God, is *offered* to others in service. This is the sacrifice which is the spiritual worship, the *logikè latreia*. In this sense, Congar explains, each one is personally the priest of his own spiritual worship:

Le culte que *nous avons à rendre à Dieu* est celui de notre vie en situation, en tant qu'elle est référée Dieu, en tant qu'elle est vécue comme volonté du Père, comme obéissance de la foi par laquelle nous nous insérons dans le plan de Dieu.... Pour chacun selon son devoir d'état, selon les occasions qui lui sont présentées, il y a cette substance de la vie offerte à réaliser chaque jour.¹

Congar then refers to the prayer of the *Our Father*:

...comme sous Notre Père, j'ai mis tous les hommes, moi-même et Jésus-Christ, sous *notre pain quotidien*, je mets tous les hommes, moi-même et Jésus-Christ, et je demande le pain du Corps mystique, le pain du culte de Dieu, notre pain de la journée, qui me sera donné et que j'aurai à donner moi-même, mon sacrifice spirituel.²

This last quotation from Congar concretely synthesizes, in prayer form, the experience of prophetic *dépassement* that each Christian lives out in his daily life. As we have seen, the prophets called for a *dépassement* of the separation and distinction between the profane and the sacred. In this context, we have seen that man's life itself becomes the matter of the cult, not as set apart from the world, but as inserted in the world. We have seen furthermore, that Jesus accepts this view of the cult, that for him, now, there is only the sacred reality of his body. For a Christian, therefore, the spiritual worship or cult is the sacrifice of his entire life as offered to others — a sacrifice of which he is the priest, the indispensable priest.³ This is why, in his reference to the *Our Father* and to the *daily bread*, Congar can unite the many dimensions of reality, such as the bread of the Mystical Body, the bread of the cult of God, the daily bread itself as food and as daily life offering of one's self, under the one reality of the spiritual worship, or of all of the Christian's life as already directly related to God, in Christ, not as object

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Supra*, p. 116:

but as source.¹

In concluding, we would like to note, that throughout his evolution, Congar has remained faithful to his basic insight with regard to the relationship between the ministerial and universal priesthood. As recently as 1973, he writes:

Le sacerdoce est une des réalités ou des notions dans lesquelles le *spécifique chrétien* apparaît avec le plus de force lorsqu'on étudie les textes du Nouveau Testament.... Ce que je dis est à voir dans la ligne de ma conviction que le principe de solution de bien des questions aujourd'hui posées est à chercher dans une vraie perception de ce qu'est le culte chrétien non un ritualisme, mais un culte de la foi, englobant la vie. Il répond à la nature propre du sacerdoce chrétien, qui unit ce qui était séparé sous l'ancienne Disposition, à savoir le prophétisme et le sacerdoce, [d'une part] le service de Dieu dans la vie et l'histoire, [*sic*] et[,] [d'autre part] son service [i.e., le service de Dieu] dans un ordre liturgique particulier.²

¹ In *LD*, p. 140, Congar clarifies the relationship between cult and life: "Il est remarquable que le vocabulaire cultuel du Nouveau Testament, assez pauvre du reste, ne soit pas du tout cérémoniel. Il est à peine cultuel. Il assume plusieurs expressions appartenant au chapitre du sacrifice, mais dans un contexte de foi et de vie vécue à partir de la foi et dans l'Amour qui donne. De nouveau, l'anthropologie de l'homme vivant selon l'Esprit n'est pas séparée de la théologie ni de la doxologie."

² A *personal letter received from Congar*, dated Jan. 11, 1973. N.B. This Chapter III could be compared to similar concepts found in "Worship and Mission," *Planning for Mission* (New York: The U. S. Conference for the World Council of Churches, 1966): pp. 185-192. For example, on pp. 185-186, we read: "...mission and worship refer to a single totality. This same unity is to be observed in the Pauline epistles. Paul can describe mission by using cultic terms and can equally describe cultic acts in terms of mission. So in Rom 15: 16, he speaks of himself as 'a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.' In Phil. 2:17, he says: 'Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith I am glad and rejoice with you all.' Paul is also able to employ cultic terms of daily life and of ethical conduct, e.g., Rom. 12:1: 'I appeal to you therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.' Worship, therefore, is a term which is to be applied to the whole of life and is not to be restricted to specific cultic acts. Conversely, mission embraces not only daily life but also worship services. It is, therefore, possible to define worship and mission in identical terms."