

INTRODUCTION

Definition of the Problem

In a response to Yves Congar's critique of *Die Kirche*,¹ the author, Hans Küng, offers the following evaluation of Congar:

Yves Congar est actuellement le meilleur spécialiste de l'ecclésiologie catholique; c'est ce que montrent *L'Ecclésiologie du haut moyen âge* (1968) et *L'Eglise de saint Augustin à l'époque moderne* (1970). Mais ce théologien d'une immense érudition, qui connaît à fond autant les travaux de langue allemande que ceux de langue française, est également l'un des pionniers qui, dans l'insécurité permanente, travaille à la compréhension œcuménique, *Chrétiens désunis* (1937), et au renouveau intérieur de l'Eglise, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise* (1950), *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (1953).²

Küng's words with regard to Congar well reflect the reasons why we have undertaken the study of Yves Congar's concept of the laity and ministry, its evolution, evaluation and ecumenical perspectives.

The exposition of Congar's concepts of laity and ministry is made more difficult because these concepts have clearly been in evolution and changing over the years. Although Congar affirms now: "J'ai toujours récusé la définition du sacerdoce par médiation,"³ in his earlier works⁴ he speaks of a "double instance de médiation" which should be understood as two forms of participating in the messianic energies; namely, that of the hierarchy and that of the entire body of the faithful: the former stands between Easter and God's People; the latter, between the world and Parousia. Both forms appear to be priestly in nature and function. Again in the early Sixties, Congar correlates 'priesthood and laity'⁵, whereas in a recent book the correlation is

¹ Hans Küng, *Die Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), henceforth cited as *Die Kirche*.

² Hans Küng, "L'Eglise selon l'Evangile, Réponse à Yves Congar," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* LV, 2 (avril 1971): p. 193, henceforth cited as *RSPT*. English translations are to be found in this thesis in Appendix, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.-Error! Bookmark not defined.**

³ From a *personal letter* from Yves Congar (henceforth cited as *A personal letter*), dated Oct. 17, 1971.

⁴ For example in *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, Unam Sanctam 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1954), p. 158, henceforth cited as *JPTL*.

⁵ *Ibid*, passim. See also *Sacerdoce et laïcat* (Paris: Cerf, 1962), henceforth cited as *SL*.

between 'ministries and community'.¹ Furthermore he now states: "Il n'y a pas de sacrement du sacerdoce, sauf le Baptême: il y a un sacrement de l'ordre."²

Yves Congar's thoughts concerning the laity and ministry crystalized in the 1950's and 1960's³. In *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, for example, rather than situate the treatise on the laity at the end of his ecclesiology, as a kind of appendix to the Church,⁴ he places it within the framework of what he calls a total ecclesiology. In 1953, he writes:

Une théologie du laïcat suppose en réalité une synthèse ecclésiologique.... Au fond, il n'y a qu'une théologie du laïcat valable: une ecclésiologie totale.⁵

Prior to 1950, popes and scholars within the Roman Church had already made serious attempts to view the laity's nature and role in terms of ecclesial rather than canonical definitions.⁶ Congar significantly added to these renewed theological endeavors by defining the laity, not in reference to canon law,⁷ but in reference to the Church itself considered both as structure and life.¹

¹ *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (Paris: Cerf, 1971) p. 17, henceforth cited as *MCE*.

² A personal letter, Oct. 17, 1971.

³ (Congar reviewed this thesis in its entirety. His critique is dated 13. 12. 74.) In the latter, Congar refers to articles he wrote in the 1940's (not the 1960's) where his views on the church and the baptismal priesthood had already begun to crystalize. He writes: "Il y a mes articles de 1965 [plutôt 1945] ([voir] bibliogr. Jossua n°188) et 1963 [plutôt 1948] (n° 213), dont je n'ai d'ailleurs pas gardé toutes les idées par la suite." (*Bibliogr. Jossua* refers to Jean-Pierre Jossua, O.P. [see above p.6, n. 1] in whose book (pp. 219-272) Pietro Quattrocchi compiled Congar's bibliography from 1924 to early 1967. N°s 188 and 213 referred to by Congar are two articles he wrote in 1946 and 1948 respectively (not 1963 and 1965): N° 188, "Sacerdoce et laïcat dans l'Eglise". VI, 14 (1946), 6-39 ; *Masses ouvrières* (Paris), 18 (1946), 19-56 ; rep. in *Problèmes du Clergé diocésain*, n° 2, 1947, Ed. du Vitrail, P, 7-38; and N° 213, "Pour une théologie du laïcat". *Etudes*, janv. 1948, 42-54, et fév. 1948, 194-218.

⁴ Yves Congar, *JPTL*, p.13 and p. 74. For a list of an English translation of Congar's works referred to in this dissertation, see above p **Error! Bookmark not defined.** of this dissertation; and for the English translation of the non English quotations throughout this dissertation, see below pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**-**Error! Bookmark not defined.** (henceforth cited as *ETr*).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13

⁶ For example, Pius XI, "Miserentissimus", *Acta Apostolicis Sedis* (June 1928): p. 132, henceforth cited as *AAS*, where the biblical title of royal priesthood is specifically attributed to the entire people of God; Pius XII, "Mediator Dei", *AAS* (Dec. 1947) p. 283; Paul Dabin, *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles* (Paris Bloud et Gay, 1941); Yves Congar, "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, 270-304.

⁷ Congar, *JPTL*, pp. 10-12 where Congar writes "Au vrai dire, ce n'est pas au Code qu'il faut demander une réponse adéquate aux questions du laïcat." *ETr.*, p. XIV.

In *Sacerdoce et laïcat* (1962), he sheds further light on the concept of the laity by discussing the priesthood as a Christian reality specific to all Christian life.

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.²

At this point, Congar sees the priestly quality of God's people basically as the capacity which Christians have to offer their whole selves to others; this offering then becomes the sacrifice which is pleasing to and found holy by God himself. As will be explained later, the understanding of the universal priesthood, as related to the *spiritual sacrifice* or self-offering, is highly biblical and reaches a clear formulation in Romans 12, 1. Yet in 1937, although he refers but discreetly to the priestly quality of the entire people of God,³ in our estimation, Congar has succeeded in creating the proper ecclesial context that eventually led him to amplified theological reflections concerning the basic characteristic of God's People: its sacerdotal quality.

Having shown how the entire Church is a priestly people, in 1968 Congar could situate the ministerial priesthood in the midst of the priestly people itself. He describes it as a facilitating ministry.

Le prêtre est ordonné pour être le ministre suscitant, éduquant le sacrifice spirituel que les chrétiens offrent de toute leur vie, par la foi et pour l'unir, dans la célébration eucharistique, ce sacrifice, à celui, unique et souverain, du Christ.⁴

Although Congar admits to having influenced the Second Vatican Council directly and possibly indirectly,⁵ his concept of the priesthood has now gone beyond that of Vatican II,¹ thus

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17 "...notre effort est de rattacher la vie à la structure." ETr., XVIII.

² Congar, *SL*, p. 91, ETr., p. 74.

³ In Yves Congar, *Chrétiens désunis*, Unam Sanctam 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1937), p. 106, henceforth cited as *CD*, we read: "Le Christ mystique et l'Eglise-société font vraiment 'une seule chair'. La même chose pour toute la vie de charité, d'intimité avec Dieu et d'entraide fraternelle qui porte l'unité. de l'Eglise à leur plus haut degré d'actualité. Nous ne reviendrons pas sur le rôle des sacrements dans notre vie de charité; *mais c'est toute l'action du sacerdoce chrétien qu'il faudrait ici évoquer....*" ETr., p. 85. [Italic are mine.]

⁴ Yves Congar, *Les prêtres*, Unam Sanctam 68 (Paris: Cerf, 1968), p. 250, henceforth cited as *LP*.

⁵ In a *personal letter*, dated Oct. 17, 1971, Congar writes: "Au concile [i.e., Vatican II] je n'ai travaillé ni dans le décret sur l'apostolat des laïcs, ni dans le Chap. IV de *Lumen gentium*. Mais c'est un fait que ces textes traduisent ma pensée. Est-ce que les rédacteurs, Un Mgr DeSmet par ex., ont reçu une influence de mes livres? Moi j'ai travaillé dans le Chap. II de *Lumen gentium* (les nos 9, 13, 16 et 17 sont de moi, et aussi quelque chose dans le no 28 et dans le Chap. I), dans le *Presbyterorum ordinis* (je suis un des principaux rédacteurs avec le P. Lecuyer), dans *Ad gentes* (le Chap. I est entièrement de moi), dans les

offering new hopes to ecumenical endeavors. It is a known fact that, among Roman Catholics, Congar has been a most energetic pioneer in the ecumenical field.² His recent book *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* testifies to the same ecumenical spirit. For example, his acceptance of the 'ministries-ecclesial communion' relationship (as the title of the book suggests) permits him to express his ecclesiology in terms of a World Council of Churches' schema.³

We might sketch the evolution of Congar's concept of the priesthood in the following way: from the *Church – Ministerial Priesthood – Universal Priesthood* sequence of his earlier days, Congar has moved on to the *Church – Universal Priesthood – Ministerial Priesthood* sequence.⁴

This dissertation will deal with Congar's ecclesiology inasmuch as it is seen as being related to his concepts of laity and ministry. In turn, the theology of laity and ministry will be considered both *in se* and in their interrelationships. In this respect, some of the unresolved problems will be pointed out.

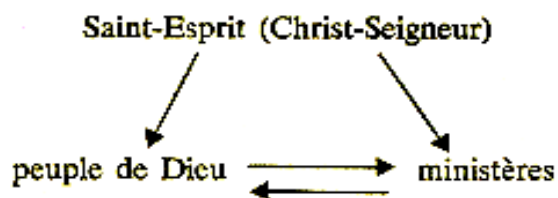
The ecumenical section will deal with points of *rapprochement* between the Protestant and the Catholic Traditions; namely, the Church viewed as sacrament, the dialogical nature of both hierarchy and laity, the maternal or generating function of the whole Church, the place of the ordained ministry within God's People, the sacramental nature of the ordained ministry, the role of the community with regard to the ordained ministry, the ordained ministry as one among ministries within the community, and finally, the role of the ordained ministry itself. Points of

divers textes du Secrétariat pour l'unité."

¹ See above pp. 1 and below pp. **Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Bookmark not defined.** - **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

² Prior to 1937, Congar wrote some 15 articles on ecumenism. See J. P. Jossua, *Le Père Congar: La théologie au service du peuple de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), pp. 219-225.

³ We are referring here to the following schema (in *MCE*, p. 38, note 12, R Gavalda, *Le Mouvement oecuménique* [Paris:1959] pp. 62-63). See WCC schema on the next page.



⁴ Here, in his critique of this thesis (see above p.2, n. 3, *italics*). Congar uses the following sequence formulation: "**Church – Communauté des baptisés** [*Community of the baptized* rather than *universal priesthood*] – **ministerial priesthood**".

éloignement will also be discussed; namely, the role of pneumatology in ecclesiology, the global and/or special mission of the Church, and the structuration of the Church itself with regard to ministry.

With regard to ecumenism, there remain in Congar some basic unresolved problems. However, as we shall mention later, it appears to us that Congar's ecclesiological context offers premises which, from an ecumenical standpoint, are more potentially productive than the conclusion that he draws.

Sources of Study

The sources of our study are indicated in the bibliography.¹ First and foremost, they consist in Congar's own works, consulted and referred to in the original French editions, and dealt with chronologically. The works used in the evaluative sections of this dissertation are enumerated and justified at the appropriate places.²

The Protestant studies consulted and referred to are the following: *Groupe des Dombes, Pour une réconciliation des ministères, éléments d'accord entre catholiques et protestants*,³ *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue: Eucharist and Ministry*,⁴ *The Canterbury Statement*,⁵ *Faith and Order – Louvain, 1971*,⁶ *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963*,⁷ *Planning for Mission*.⁸ The titles of the first two studies (*Groupe des Dombes* and *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*) clearly indicate the relevance these hold with regard to the evaluative section of Chapter IV of our dissertation (Evaluation and Ecumenical Perspectives).

¹ Selected Bibliography, see below, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**-**Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

² Re. Evaluation sections, see below, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.; pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.; p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.

³ "Groupe des Dombes, Pour une réconciliation des Ministères, éléments d'accord entre catholiques et protestants," *La Documentation catholique*, 16-25 (4 fév. 1973), pp. 133-137, henceforth cited as *Dombes*.

⁴ *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue: Eucharist and Ministry*, xv (Washington: U. S. Catholic Conference; New York: Lutheran World Federation, 1970), henceforth cited as *Lutherans*.

⁵ The "Canterbury Statement", *Origins*, National Catholic Documentary Service, Vol. II, # 26 (Dec. 20, 1973), pp. 401, 403-409, henceforth cited as *Anglican*.

⁶ *Faith and Order – Louvain, 1971* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971), henceforth cited as *Louvain*.

⁷ *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963* (New York: Association Press, 1963), henceforth cited as *Montreal*.

⁸ Thomas Wieser, Ed., *Planning for Mission* (New York: The U. S. Conference for the World Council of Churches, 1966), henceforth cited as *Planning*.

The Canterbury Statement is an agreed statement on ministry and ordination between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. *Faith and Order – Louvain, 1971* comprises chapters on: "The Ordained Ministry" (pp. 78-101), "Where Is the Spirit Leading?" (*Studies on Renewal and Order* [pp. 102-13] and "On the Way to Communion in the Sacrament", (*Studies on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* [pp. 35-1017]). *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963* deals with reports on "The Church and the Purpose of God" (pp. 41-49), and "The Redemptive Work of Christ and the Ministry of His Church" (pp. 61-69), "Worship and the oneness of Christ's Church" (pp. 69-80), and "'All in Each Place': the Process of Growing Together" (pp. 80-90). Finally, *Planning for Mission* includes chapters on "The Church in the World" (pp. 121-144) and "Missionary Presence" (pp. 145-218), with sections on "The Witness of the Layman in the Secular World" and "Ministry and Ministries."

Status of Research

The theology of the laity and ministry in Congar in the context of his ecclesiology has already been dealt with. Two major works on Congar are: *Le Père Congar: La théologie au service du peuple de Dieu*, by Jean-Pierre Jossua¹ and *Fin d'une église cléricale?*, by Paul Guilmot.² Both studies explore Congar's ecclesiology and theology of the laity and ministry in a synthetical way. Moreover, the latter especially emphasizes Congar's teachings inasmuch as they are reflected in the following works: *Vrai et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise*, *Chrétiens désunis*, *Esquisses du mystère de l'église*, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, and *Sacerdoce et laïcat*.

Several doctoral dissertations have been written about Congar's theology of the Church, of the laity and ministry. Our investigation in this regard included an inquiry to Congar who responded with, "...on a fait un peu partout des thèses sur moi." And then, he enumerated some of the works in question.³

¹ Jean-Pierre Jossua, *Le Père Congar: La théologie au service du peuple de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1967).

² Paul Guilmot, *Fin d'une église cléricale?* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), Chap. III, "Une synthèse théologique", pp. 159-250.

³ For example, A. Rudoni, "La théologie du laïcat", Rome, (1969); P.J.R. Ceschi, "L'Apostolat des laïcs", Rome, (1971); M. Cloet, "Laïcat et Ministère", Collegio Belga, Rome.

With regard to the latter, we have contacted David N. Power, professor at the Gregorian, in Rome. Power was able only to trace Cloet's¹ dissertation and sent us its outline which again reflects a synthetical approach to Congar's theology.

As far as we can ascertain at the present time, the precise aspect that we intend to develop (Congar's concept of the laity and ministry in the context of his ecclesiology, its evolution, evaluation and ecumenical perspectives) is an open field. Our study of the evolution of Congar's theology of the laity and ministry within the framework of his ecclesiology (including his works published prior to 1950 and those written after 1969), which we have consulted and referred to, complements the studies already done on Congar. To evaluate Congar by utilizing the model approach² still a fairly recent theological tool, and to situate his theology in the context of ecumenical Protestant studies³ strike us as being a new approach.

Congar himself has encouraged us to pursue our topic: "Bien sûr, on peut faire pour sa part un travail qu'un autre a fait autrement, vous pouvez donc garder votre sujet."⁴ Furthermore, Congar himself has read our *Prospectus* and has critically evaluated it. In reference to it, he wrote: "J'admire le soin avec lequel vous avez travaillé. Il me fait bien augurer de l'ensemble du travail."⁵

Methodology of the Dissertation

Our methodology throughout the dissertation will consist in letting Congar speak through his works, dealing first with the ecclesiological background and then, with the concepts of laity and ministry. We shall attempt to discover what he means as we study his works in their chronological sequence. At each phase of the evolution, we shall evaluate his theological conclusions with regard to the laity and ministry, again in the context of their ecclesiological relationship (Chapters I, II, and IV). This we shall do by adopting a recent theological tool referred to as the model approach.⁶ In Chapter III, we shall deal with what appears to be the heart

¹ See note 3 above.

² Re: Models, see below, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.; pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.

³ See above *Sources of Study*, pp.5-6

⁴ A *personal letter*, dated Oct.. 17., 1971.

⁵ A *personal letter*, dated Jan. 11, 1973.

⁶ See below, pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.; pp. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** ff.

of Congar's theology of the laity and ministry: the Christian cult.¹ Since the concept of Christian cult is found in Congar as being a teaching which is both basically unitive and yet evolutionary in certain aspects, while it is at the same time highly central to his theology, we have departed from our general methodology and devoted the entire chapter to this subject. Since Congar's thought process in regard to Christian cult began in the period described in Chapter II and continues to develop in the period studied in Chapter IV, we consider our departure from our general methodology advantageous to the clarity of our presentation. We might note that the matter itself covered in Chapter III is also approached chronologically.

In Chapter IV, returning to our general methodology, we shall study the more recent Congar and situate him within contemporary Protestant studies on the Church, the laity and ministry. Then in Chapter V, we shall conclude by describing what the dissertation has accomplished and by stating the evaluative conclusions to which we have arrived. Accordingly, our methodology will be chronological, descriptive, analytical, critical and synthetical.

Congar and the 1930's Ecclesiastical Situation

Before beginning our presentation of Yves Congar's concept of the laity and ministry, its evolution, evaluation and ecumenical perspectives, we believe it helpful to describe the Catholic ecclesiological world around 1930 in France especially, a world which set Congar on the road of an ecclesiological and ecumenical career.²

We let Congar himself speak:

Malgré d'intéressantes amorces de renouveau³... l'Eglise était présentée, vers 1930 (date de mon ordination presbytéral) comme une société organisée, se constituant par l'exercice de pouvoirs dont le pape, les évêques et les prêtres étaient investis. L'ecclésiologie consistait presque exclusivement dans un traité de droit public. J'ai

¹ This point is made clear by Congar in a *personal letter*, dated Jan. 11, 1973. He wrote: "[M]a conviction [est] 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 toute 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, le service de Dieu dans la vie et l'histoire, et son service dans un ordre liturgique particulier."

² Congar, *Chrétiens en dialogue*, Unam Sanctam 50 (Paris: Cerf, 1964) pp. IX-LXIV, henceforth cited as *CED*. ETr., pp. 1-51*.

³ Yves Congar, *Sainte Eglise*, Unam Sanctam 41 (Paris: Cerf, 1963), pp. 449-696, henceforth cited as *SE*, where an extensive bibliography regarding ecclesiological studies, dating from 1930, is to be found.

créé, pour la caractériser, le mot de "hiérarchologie", qui a été souvent repris depuis. Ce n'était pas cela qui pouvait attirer les hommes! Or la Tradition catholique, celle de l'Écriture, des Pères et de la liturgie, nous donnait de l'Église une idée autrement large, vivante et finalement religieuse. Mon intention, celle qui se traduit par la fondation de la collection *Unam Sanctam* (annoncée en septembre 1935), fut dès lors de récupérer pour l'ecclésiologie l'inspiration et les ressources d'une Tradition plus ancienne et plus profonde que les schémas juridiques et purement hiérarchologiques qui ont prévalu dans la polémique anticonciliaire, puis antiprotestante, enfin dans la restauration du temps de Grégoire XVI et de Pie IX, et dans les manuels apologetiques modernes. L'Église n'apparaîtra plus dès lors, comme une pure *societas perfecta, societas inaequalis, hierarchica*, mais comme le Corps du Christ, tout entier et intimement animé par sa vie.

Congar then refers to the numerous articles and books on the Church as Body of Christ, published between 1920 and 1935¹ as well as to some studies relating to the universal priesthood, and concludes on a less optimistic note with the definition of the layman as found in *Vehementer Nos* of Pius X:

Dans la hiérarchie seule résident le droit et l'autorité nécessaires pour pro-mouvoir et diriger les membres vers la fin de la société. Quant à la multitude, elle n'a d'autre droit que celui de se laisser conduire et, docilement de suivre ses pasteurs.²

Congar refers to the ever increasing interest in defining the laity's role, due to Catholic Action, a highly active laymen's movement in Belgium and France and, in which, Congar himself was involved during the years 1925-1939.³ This movement along with Congar's captivity during World War II offered him the opportunity to mingle with lay people – he labels the latter period as *fraternité de la misère* – and led him to his own theological studies on the laity and ministry in the Church.

¹ Congar, *MCE*, p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*