

YVES CONGAR ECUMENICAL COLLOQUIUM

Topic: Resurrection, Eschatology, Hope, and Congar's Pneumatology
 Convenor: Jaroslav Z. Skira, Regis College, Toronto, Ontario
 Moderator: Michael S. Attridge, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto
 Presenter: John Markey, Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas
 Respondent: Thomas O'Meara, St. Thomas Aquinas Priory, River Forest, Illinois

This year's session was inspired by the conference's theme of "Resurrection of the Body." Both John Markey and Thomas O'Meara addressed different dimensions and periods in Congar's ecclesiology, specifically focusing on the role of the Spirit in history and in bringing about the eschatological Kingdom. Though never fully developed, underlying so much of Congar's work was a profound sense of the hope of an eschatological future that redeems and sanctifies all present activity on behalf of the reign of God—for Congar this is what "makes sense" of the present.

Markey began with a few underlying principles of Congar's ecclesiology prior to the second Vatican Council. For Congar, the Church forms a central part of God's plan of salvation for humanity and all of creation, a centrality which Markey expressed through Congar's description of the church as communion. Communion implies that the community, founded by Christ and animated by his Spirit, exists in both "vertical" (with God through Christ and in the Spirit) and "horizontal" (with all created reality, also in Christ through the Spirit) relationships. The defining characteristic of this law of communion is the Holy Spirit who resides at the very heart of this community. From this central position the Spirit genuinely unites one free person to another through a unique bond of love and coordinates or "orchestrates" the activity of building up of the Kingdom according to the plan of God. Markey described how, through Aquinas, Congar was drawn to see the Church as a complex communion of persons united in the Spirit, who literally "extend" the presence of Christ and his mission in history. As such, Congar felt confident in describing the Church analogically as a "sacrament" of Christ. By such "sacramentality" Congar meant an effective mediation of Christ in the world that empowers a genuine unity between God and human beings.

For Congar, the Church exists in the "space in-between" Christ's Incarnation and Pascha, and the final fulfillment of the new life in the eschaton. Christ dispenses his work over two periods: a time when it is present and active, but not to the full extent of its power; and a time of manifestation and establishment of the Kingdom in its fullness. Consequently, the Church exists always in two dimensions in relationship with the world: the historical and the eschatological. The Church and the world remain firmly grounded in the source and soul of the Kingdom, but both must wait together for its fulfillment.

O'Meara's response complemented Markey's by focusing on Congar's postconciliar writings on the Holy Spirit and history. After noting the limitations of Congar's trilogy on the Holy Spirit (*Je crois en l'Espirt Saint* [Paris: Cerf, 1979–1980]), O'Meara focused his response on a collection of twelve essays in *Le*

Concile de Vatican II: Son Église: Peuple de Dieu et corps du Christ (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984). Key for the discussion were Congar's essays on the People of God, and on the Christological and pneumatological implications of ecclesiology. According to O'Meara, a quarter of a century later the theologian can find in *Le Concile de Vatican II* valuable ecclesiological insights about: the events of Vatican II; its discovery of history; the theologies of the laity and institutional ministries (that is priests, bishops and the papacy). Throughout all these later essays the dialectic of Spirit and history pervades Congar's theology of the Church as Body of Christ and People of God. This book is still valuable today. These areas were at the root Congar's ecumenical vision, of the desire for the unity of all Christians, and his belief in the reality of grace operative in all peoples and cultures.

Those in attendance wholeheartedly thanked Mark Ginter (St. Meinrad School of Theology) for his many years of valuable work as convenor of this Group. In the business meeting, a steering committee was established to oversee the call for papers and plan the annual sessions.

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