

YVES CONGAR ECUMENICAL COLLOQUIUM

Topic: Congar: Church, World, and Christian Peacemaking
Convenor: Jaroslav Z. Skira, Regis College, Toronto
Moderator: Darren Dias, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto
Presenter: Laurie Johnston, Boston College
Respondent: Mark E. Ginter, Saint Meinrad School of Theology

Laurie Johnston's paper examined the main facets of Congar's vision of the church's engagement in the world and expanded upon its relevance for Christian peacemaking. She referred to *Gaudium et spes* as calling for a new level of engagement with the world, and argued that the central significance of this pastoral constitution lay in the way that it presented the church's relationship to the world. Rather than focusing on traditional questions of church and society on the juridical and political planes, the document dealt with such questions within the realm of anthropology. While this approach was extremely fruitful, the document's relative lack of explicit theological foundations led some later interpreters to develop rather different visions of how the church should fulfill the constitution's call for greater engagement with the world. Since Congar was one of the theologians who laid the groundwork for *Gaudium et spes*, Johnston presented Congar's theology of church and world as a vital resource for understanding how to interpret the document and what engagement in the world means for the church today. She particularly focused on Congar's advocacy of peace and his optimism that peace could be achieved, and emphasized that Congar wanted to see Christians involved in the world in tangible ways. Building human relationships founded on love is certainly the most important way that the church could contribute to peace, yet love alone is not enough. For Congar, Catholic doctrine on peace has traditionally primarily focused on love in interpersonal relations as the locus of reflection, but it still needed to develop more a social ethic of peace. He did not offer much detail about what such an ethic might entail, but suggested a way forward: "There was, for example, a universally held doctrine that a starving and powerless person has the strict right to take what is necessary in order to not die of hunger. . . . We must, today, pose the question at the level of groups, or entire peoples. So we must move on to a new chapter, to a theology of social revolution and of the duty of well-off groups towards powerless groups, for a right of the one always implies a duty of the other" (*Le concile au jour le jour: IV-e session*, 57). Johnston pointed out that there have been some recent efforts to apply such concepts as forgiveness and reconciliation in political contexts which could be regarded as a response to Congar's suggestions, noting in particular the lay Catholic Community of Sant' Egidio and its advocacy of a "diplomacy of friendship." Ultimately, Congar said that the church must be engaged in the search for peace in the same way it must always be engaged in the world: by both preaching the Gospel and looking for earthly solutions. Johnston stated that these two emphases were hallmarks of Congar's church-world theology, and the marks of a good social ethic.

In response to Johnston, M. Ginter stated that Congar's pneumatology compliments Johnston's presentation on two main points. First, Congar's pneumatological anthropology contains a notion of a dynamic alliance between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the moral conscience of a follower of Jesus Christ. Thus a theological anthropological explanation for an engagement of the church with the world in the work of, for example, the St. Vincent De Paul Society, the Catholic Worker Movement, or the members of the Community of Sant' Egidio, can be expressed as the interior dynamism of the Holy Spirit active within their consciences. Second, the vacillation between the Pauline "already" and the "not yet" appears in Congar's writings as a shift from pneumatological anthropology to a pneumatological cosmism. Congar's pneumatological cosmism names the endeavour he believes Catholic theology should pursue in explaining the mission of the Holy Spirit in the created order in general.

Ginter also commented that Johnston's paper prompts further questions of research about Congar as a significant resource for moral theology; Sant'Egidio's "diplomacy of friendship" and Congar's personal support of this community; Christianity as "the very principle of peace;" and the roles of the church as prophet and/or politician, of dialogue in prophetic contestation, and love in the context of a social ethic of peace.

The Congar Colloquium will continue its work with a steering committee of Susan Brown, Ernest Falardeau, Mark Ginter, John Markey, and Jaroslav Skira, and will once again issue a call for papers via the CTSA website.

JAROSLAV Z. SKIRA
Regis College
Toronto, Ontario