

## THE SEARCH FOR A SOUND ECCLESIOLOGY: THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CONGAR'S PNEUMATOLOGY APPLIED IN HIS ECCLESIOLOGY

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**Abstract:** Yves Congar's pneumatology contains several basic principles. Two of them are as following: the Holy Spirit is revealed not directly in himself but through his work; and pneumatology has to be Christological. Furthermore, Congar also states that the Holy Spirit makes the Church one. Because Congar's thought is very organic and many of its interconnections are only implicit, the first aim of this article is to make more explicit these interconnections in order to show that the unity of the Church reflects the inner unity of the Trinity as well as the unity of the economy of salvation.

The second aim of this article is to show how Congar's pneumatology contributes to the understanding of the Church as a mystery in which the Christological and pneumatological aspects have an equal importance. This equilibrium leads to harmony between institution and charisms, and between the memory of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit. This Christological-pneumatological understanding of the Church is useful in ecumenical discussions between Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

**Keywords:** pneumatology, pneumatological Christology, ecclesiology, Church's unity, Church institutions, charisms, epiclesis, external mediations, faith, love, sacraments.

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his work<sup>2</sup>; and pneumatology has to be Christological.<sup>3</sup> First Congar asserts that there is no other way of knowing the Holy Spirit but through his work. In order to support this principle, Congar analyzes the Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, and he demonstrates that the Holy Spirit does not reveal his nature directly but only indirectly through his actions in the economy of salvation.

This analysis of the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation leads Congar to the second principle of his pneumatology: “There is no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology”. The Spirit comes and works fully in history only after and due to the resurrection of Christ. The Spirit’s main task is to lead people to Christ, to constitute him as Messiah and Lord, and to conform the Church to the resurrected Christ.

Furthermore, Congar also states that the Holy Spirit makes the Church one.<sup>4</sup> Because Congar’s thought is very organic and many of its interconnections are only implicit, the aim of this article is to make more explicit these interconnections in order to show that the unity of the Church reflects the inner unity of the Trinity as well as the unity of the economy of salvation, the end and the means of ecclesial unity respectively. The Father’s inheritance of our participation in the divine communion in Christ is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in history through created realities. Thus, the Church is one because God is Trinity and because the economy of salvation is one. The ecclesial realization of unity is the work of the Holy Spirit. This article will present the consistency of Congar’s ecclesiology with his pneumatology. Or, better said, it will discuss the interrelation of his pneumatological principles and the implications of these principles in his theology of the Church.

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<sup>2</sup> Yves M.-J. Congar, *Je crois en l’Esprit Saint*, vols. 1-3, (Paris: Cerf, 1979-1980), translated in English as *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith. 3 vols. in 1. (New York: Crossroad, 1999), vol. 1, viii. From now on *I Believe*.

<sup>3</sup> Yves Congar, *La Parole et le Souffle* (Paris: Desclée, 1984), translated in English as *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 1: “If I were to draw but one conclusion from the whole of my work on the Holy Spirit, I would express it in these words: no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology.”

<sup>4</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 15-23.

## 1. The First Principle: The Holy Spirit is Revealed Not Directly in Himself but Through His Work

The first basic principle that Congar recognizes as fundamental in theology is that of “faith seeking understanding.”<sup>5</sup> Theologians appeal to the sources of theology, namely Scripture and Tradition. In his pneumatological writings, Congar is not interested in discussing the relation between the history of revelation and the history of mankind, nor the relation between the “transcendental revelation” and “categorical revelation.”<sup>6</sup> The issue of the revelation of the Holy Spirit outside the Church is also not a point of discussion when he presents his methodological principles. He affirms that Catholic theologians recognize the Scriptures as the primary source of revelation. Therefore, revelation is normative in theological study.

This method is necessary in theology, since we can only affirm something about God if God has revealed it to us. Congar points out, however, some difficulties in the theology of the Holy Spirit. Theologians explain that Yahweh in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament revealed themselves by using the personal noun “I.”<sup>7</sup> Unlike the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit does not reveal himself directly. Congar, therefore, draws a first basic principle in pneumatology: “The Holy Spirit is revealed to us and known to us not in himself, or at least not directly in himself, but through what he brings about in us.”<sup>8</sup>

In the first volume of his pneumatological trilogy, Congar showed that the Holy Spirit does not reveal his nature directly in the revelation of the Old and New Testament and in the life of the Church. He always works through created mediations. Now, let us show how this pneumatological principle applies to the humanity of Christ and to the Church.

The Spirit’s work is known through his effects upon and through the humanity of Christ. When the Spirit acts upon Christ’s humanity, he exercises a constitutive role in that humanity by bringing something new into it. The first instance of the Holy Spirit acting upon the human nature of Christ is at the very moment of his conception. “It was by the Spirit that Mary conceived Jesus, whose quality

<sup>5</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 1, vii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>7</sup> Heribert Mühlen, *Mysterium Salutis* (Paris: Cerf, 1972) vol. 13, 182.

<sup>8</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 1, viii.

of ‘son of God’ is mentioned by Luke (1:35), in whose gospel it refers, not to Jesus’ pre-existence, but to his conception by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> While Congar agrees with Logos Christology which holds that Jesus was the Son of God from the very first moment of his conception, he also wants to emphasize the role played by the Holy Spirit in the human nature and the life of Christ. In this humanity, the development of his knowing and willing increases in time; Jesus “understood his mission by carrying it out.”<sup>10</sup> Due to the interventions of the Holy Spirit, these new *kairoi* were qualitative or constitutive moments in the economy of salvation which provided Christ’s humanity with something new once they had occurred.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus’ baptism, as it was shown in the first chapter, was a new *kairos* when he was consecrated to carry out his prophetic ministry. This consecration takes place through the anointing of the Spirit, which is the first unction of Jesus according to the New Testament. Many of the Fathers and St. Thomas attributed the empowerment of Jesus as Messiah to the Word in the moment of Incarnation. For Congar, Jesus was constituted as Messiah by the anointing of the Spirit at the moment of his baptism.

Glorification is another constitutive moment for Jesus’ humanity. Congar affirms that, after suffering death, Jesus is raised up in glory. His humanity is completed and transformed, becoming the source of the Spirit sent for the renewal of creation. In this sense, Congar speaks of Jesus as *the first born* of all creation (Heb 1:5-6). This is not merely a title but an expression which describes his humanity that receives the Spirit and is able now to communicate him to us. While Congar believes that Jesus is the Son of God from the moment of his conception (he was already *Monogenitus*), he also thinks that his quality of Son of God as related to us passed through his resurrection from *forma servi* to the status of Son of God in power (he became *Prototokos*).<sup>12</sup> This glorification is a constitutive moment effected by the Holy Spirit upon the humanity of Christ.

The Spirit works not only upon Christ but also through Christ and together with Christ for the redemption of the world. As it was shown, Jesus accomplished his ministry in the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. He defeats the tempter because he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1 ff). Due to the presence

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<sup>9</sup> Yves Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 16.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 87.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

of the Holy Spirit, Jesus proclaims the good news of liberation from evil (Lk 4: 18-19). The 'eternal spirit' strengthens Jesus to offer himself as an innocent sacrifice (Heb 9:14). The Spirit works also with the glorified Christ to build up the Church, as it will be shown in the second principle. The Holy Spirit is, indeed, the co-agent of Christ's redemptive work.

To summarize, the Holy Spirit acts constitutively upon Christ at his conception, baptism, and glorification, and with Christ in his ministry as the co-agent of his work and in correspondence with human nature. This explanation confirms the principle that the Holy Spirit reveals himself only through his work. It leads further to the understanding that the Spirit is transcendent, but he is also immanent in creation through his works. Although the Spirit is divine, he works through created and mediated realities. Being eternal, the Spirit intervenes repeatedly in the history of salvation.

Everything that is true of the Holy Spirit as acting upon Christ is also true of his role in the Church. Thus, the Christological pattern of the Spirit's action is repeated ecclesio-logically. The Spirit is transcendent and also operatively immanent in the Church. He works in the Church, upon the humanity of the Church through created realities such as faith, charity, and sacraments, which bring us to the full spiritual maturity of Christ.

Concerning the first of these, faith is a grace which establishes personal relationship with Christ and God. Since faith is a free gift, the initiative belongs always to God. He is the author and also the content of our faith. However, this faith is ours too, because we are also the subjects of our acts of faith. Congar attributes the grace of faith to the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> He works at the same time through human mediations in the communication of faith:

La foi est aussi *principe extérieur d'union* car elle comporte, dans l'économie présente, une certaine structure de médiations externes [...] prophètes, apôtres, rédacteurs des saintes Écritures, magistère d'Église institué. Tout cela constitue l'organisme de médiation pour la communication de l'objet de la foi.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Yves Congar, *L'Église: Une, sainte, catholique et apostolique* in *Mysterium Salutis: Dogmatique de l'Histoire du Salut*, no. 15 (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 25: The faith is also the external principle of unity because it implies, in the present economy, a certain structure of external mediations [...] prophets, apostles, redactors of the holy Scriptures, magisterium of the instituted Church. All this constitutes the organism of mediation for the communication of the object of faith.

Congar stresses the necessity of the means for communication of the faith, making clear that faith and its structure are mediated realities. Since the Holy Spirit is the transcendent principle of our faith, he remains unknown in himself and can only be known through the mediation of faith, a created reality only he can use.

A similar process may be seen in the case of charity. Following St. Thomas Aquinas, Congar states that charity is a participation in God's love through which he loves himself and us.<sup>15</sup> The essence of God is love, yet we cannot participate directly in the essence of God. We participate only through a created reality which is love as a grace. The transcendent principle of this love is the Holy Spirit, since "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rm 5: 5). Thus, the Holy Spirit dwells in the human soul. Using Thomas Aquinas' theology, Congar explains that in the beatific vision God's self-communication takes place in a non-mediated way. In our present condition, however, this indwelling is mediated by the supernatural gifts, which are faith, hope, and charity.<sup>16</sup> In this way, we are put in a personal relation with the divine Persons who become present in us as the principle and the object of our love and knowledge.<sup>17</sup> This relationship is qualified in different ways with all three Persons, according to the distinctiveness of each Person. So, for instance, our adoption is common to all the divine Persons, but it is "appropriated to the Father as its author, to the Son as its exemplar and to the Holy Spirit as the one who impresses in us the resemblance to that exemplar."<sup>18</sup>

To summarize, God is the object of our knowledge and love through the gifts of faith and charity which are given to us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts in us to shape us into images of the Son. The Spirit constitutes us children of God

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 39. The references to Thomas are in *ST*, II<sup>a</sup>, II<sup>ae</sup>, q. 23, a. 2, ad 1; a. 3, ad 3; q. 24, a. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 84.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III<sup>a</sup>, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3. Congar mentions that there are theologians who are not satisfied with the idea of appropriation, saying that the work of God in the economy of salvation is a common work of the entire Trinity. Congar points out that all these theologians still agree that even if the three Persons act together, they do so according to the special character of the hypostatic being of each Person (*I Believe*, vol. 2, 89). For further reference, see Karl Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace", in *Theological Investigations*, vol. I (London and Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), 319-46, especially 345-46.

by effecting in us divine filial relationship according to grace, which belongs by nature to the Incarnate Word of God. While remaining transcendent, the Spirit is also operatively immanent in the Church constituting us sons in the Son through the created realities of faith and charity. In this way, the first pneumatological principle of Congar is verified also in his ecclesiology: the Holy Spirit does not reveal himself directly but mediately through his created works in the Church.

What has been said above about faith and charity is not merely a restatement of the first pneumatological principle nor a repetition of how the Spirit makes the Church one through faith and love. It shows the connection between Congar's pneumatology and his ecclesiology. While the Spirit cannot be known in himself because he did not assume a human nature, he is known through his works in Christ and the Church. Pouring the same faith and the same love into the hearts of all Christians, the Spirit empowers them to participate in the same unique mystery of Christ and to share the same divine sonship of the Father by grace. In doing so, the Spirit not only builds up the Church but makes her one reality because she participates in Christ's unique mystery. Moreover, the Church is one not only because the object of her faith and love is one, namely God himself, but also because the agent of this unity is one, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives his graces according to each one's faith and needs, yet he remains the same, unchanged source of grace for all Christians.<sup>19</sup> The oneness of the Church is grounded not only in the unity of our faith and love but also in the unity of the unifying means given by the same Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit acts in the Church also through the sacraments. Congar has made this most clear through his emphasis on the importance of the Eucharistic epiclesis. The Spirit is known and active in the Eucharistic celebration through his works in the priest, in the sacramental elements, and in the community. Congar insists that the Holy Spirit is the co-agent in effecting the sacraments with the priest who is a representative of Christ.<sup>20</sup> He is the agent of consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, just as the Incarnation was brought about by his action. Furthermore, the Spirit acts now to unite Christians with the Spirit-filled flesh of Christ and to make them the Body of Christ. The

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, Cat. 16, On the Holy Ghost, 1, 12, available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310116.htm>; Internet; accessed September 21, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 3, 234.

double epiclesis, upon the gifts in order to be consecrated and upon the assembly in order to be sanctified, points to a double work or mediation of the Spirit. Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit consists in making the priest act *in persona Christi*, in consecrating the gifts, and in transforming the community into the Body of Christ which it receives. All these works of the Spirit have the same goal: to make the Church one. The unity of the Church is a consequence of the first pneumatological principle: the Holy Spirit works through created realities to build up the Church as Body of Christ, that is one and holy.

This principle described in the Eucharist is also true of all the sacraments: Christ works together with the Holy Spirit. Aidan Nichols shows that for Congar Christ determines the communication of the sacramental graces of confirmation, anointing of the sick, order and marriage. But the Holy Spirit gives them precise forms by acting in the Church.<sup>21</sup> Christ institutes the ministerial priesthood but its development into different degrees of the apostolic ministry – bishop, presbyter, and deacon – was the Spirit’s work. In this way, the Spirit gives life to what was instituted by Christ.

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the “co-institutor” of the Church. He works through sacraments and especially through Eucharist to build up the Church. He remains, however, transcendent but also operatively immanent in the Church; he is divine but his work is mediated by faith, charity and sacraments. The first pneumatological principle of Congar applies fully to Christ and to the Church: the Holy Spirit does not reveal directly in himself but through his work in Christ and the Church. Just as the Spirit worked in Christ constituting him Messiah and glorified Lord, so he works now in the Church through created realities in order to make the Church what she is: the Body of Christ and a communion of people with the Trinity. Thus, the work of the Spirit according to Congar’s first pneumatological principle points to a double form of ecclesial unity. First, there is a unity regarding the participative content of Church’s mystery: Church is one because she is a communion with the Trinity. Second, there is a unity of means in the economy of salvation, because all the external mediations are ordered to the inner communion of the Church and because all these means – faith, love, sacraments – are works of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>21</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Yves Congar*, Outstanding Christians Series, ed. Brian Davies OP (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), 155.



## **2. The Second Principle: Christology Has To Be Pneumatological And Pneumatology Has To Be Christological**

The first principle, the Holy Spirit is known through his works in Christ and the Church, leads necessary to the second: Christ and the Spirit work together, yet with distinctive roles, for the same goal: to build up the Church. The following section of this article will discuss: first, the relation between the first and second principle; second, how Christ and Holy Spirit work in reference to one another; and third, the implications of this principle for the Church.

First, the connection between the first and the second principle must be explained. The first pneumatological principle is that the Spirit can be known through his work in Jesus Christ constituting him as Messiah, empowering him to accomplish his redemptive mission, and glorifying him as Lord. Since Jesus is empowered by the Spirit, it follows that a true Christology must be pneumatological – this is the second pneumatological principle. Furthermore, the Spirit does not only work upon the humanity of Christ in the mission of the Incarnate Word but he is sent himself by the glorified Lord. If the sending of the Spirit is from the glorified Christ, it follows that a genuine pneumatology will be always Christological. In this way, one can understand how the first two pneumatological principles of Congar dovetail. The Holy Spirit does not reveal himself, but he operates through the created reality of Christ's humanity and the created reality of our humanity redeemed by Christ. He works upon and with the humanity of Christ; therefore, his mission and the mission of Christ are always related to each other.

Second, the Word and the Spirit work together in reference to each other. From the analysis of Jesus' conception, baptism, glorification, and ministry, it is clear that Christology must be pneumatological because Christ operates through his humanity which must be anointed in order to be the means of our own salvation. One cannot attribute the miracles wrought by Jesus and his status as Messiah and Lord only to the hypostatic union. The miracles of Jesus are related necessarily to the Holy Spirit. Reading Congar, one understands that the mystery of Christ does not end with his Resurrection. Or, to be more precise, the Resurrection has to be understood not merely as a return of Jesus to life but as a glorification through which the human nature of Jesus receives the Spirit and becomes the source of this Spirit for the Church. Therefore, one can say that the completion of Christ's mystery takes place at Pentecost and abides throughout the whole history of sal-

vation during which he continues to send his Spirit upon the Church.<sup>22</sup> That is, Christ's work is accomplished when he returns to the Father and is extended to us through Pentecost. The work of Christ is always related to the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the reciprocal assertion is also true and necessary: the work of the Holy Spirit is related to Christ. As it was shown previously, by giving us faith, the Holy Spirit incorporates us into Christ, and by pouring love in us, he dwells in us and makes us images of the Incarnate Word living for and loving the Father. Being present in the sacraments, the Spirit continues the work of Christ. Congar calls the Spirit "memory," because he makes the words and actions of Jesus present in the "sacramental era."<sup>23</sup> The Spirit comes in the Church to give life to the institutions founded by Christ. Congar says that even when the Spirit brings about new realities into the life of the Church, they are always related with Christ. Indeed, the content of the work of the Spirit is Christ or, as Congar says, there is no pneumatology without Christology.

Third, it can be deduced from what was said above that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together for the same goal and yet they have distinctive roles. This truth has implications for the Spirit's action in ecclesiology. The Church is built up by both the missions of the Word and of the Holy Spirit, or, as Irenaeus says, by the two hands of God.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, a sound ecclesiology cannot emphasize one aspect more than the other. As an example to the contrary, Congar points to the ecclesiology of Leonardo Boff, which stresses the pneumatological dimension of the Church and reduces the Christological aspect.<sup>25</sup> This per-

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<sup>22</sup> The fulfillment of Christ's mission and the outpouring of the Spirit coincide in the Gospel of John. "After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'It is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit" (Jn 19: 30). *The New Jerusalem Bible* comments that what is fulfilled is the work of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus and "the last breath of Jesus is the first moment of the outpouring of the Spirit" (*The New Jerusalem Bible*, Jn 19:30, note o).

<sup>23</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, in V, 6, 1 in *Ante-Nicene-Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1885; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2005), p. 531; *Sources Chrétiennes*, SC 153, p.73; quoted in Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Église en genèse. Les communautés de base réinventent l'Église* (Paris: Desclée, 1978) 79-80, quoted in Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 79: "The Church as an institution was not based, as is frequently claimed, on the Incarnation of the Word, but on faith in the power of the Apostles inspired by the Holy Spirit, who made them transfer

spective leads Boff to suggest that the Church should be open to new forms of ministry such as the possibility for lay people to celebrate the Eucharist or the possibility of ordaining women.<sup>26</sup> Congar says that Boff's approach threatens the ecclesiological equilibrium. Boff's vision is one sided precisely because he does not understand the role of the Holy Spirit as a continuation of the mission of the Incarnate Word. Congar also says, "My reaction to these suggestions [Boff's] is not entirely negative."<sup>27</sup> Congar probably wants to recognize that the role of the Holy Spirit is not merely a repetition of Christ's mission, but he brings to the Church new forms of ministry. They are, however, not independent from Christ's mystery but always in connection with it. This sound equilibrium that Congar holds is grounded on the principle that the Word and the Spirit build up the Church always in connection to each other.

Beside this example of Boff's ecclesiology criticized by Congar himself, one can find other circumstances where his principle regarding the close relationship between Christology and pneumatology is applied to an understanding of the Church. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued the Declaration "Dominus Iesus" on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church on August 6, 2000.<sup>28</sup> The Congregation warns against the hypothesis held by some theologians that an economy of the Holy Spirit has a more universal breadth than that of the Incarnate Word.<sup>29</sup> This would diminish the necessity of preaching the Gospel to other religions and cultures, since they would already have the gifts of the Spirit. The Congregation points out that the Spirit comes from the mystery of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, and "whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference

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eschatology to the time of the Church and teaching about the kingdom of God to teaching about the Church, an imperfect and temporal realization of the kingdom."

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 90-100; 100-140.

<sup>27</sup> Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 79.

<sup>28</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (Rome, August 6, 2000), in *Origins*, vol. 30, no. 14 (September 2000). Also available from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html); Internet; accessed September 21, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., #12; see also John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, in *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, ed. with introd. by J. Michael Miller (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), #29.2.

to Christ.”<sup>30</sup> A parallel revelation of the Holy Spirit in which he works separately from Christ also has to be denied. Furthermore, the International Theological Commission of the same Congregation states that “the Church is the privileged place for the action of the Spirit.”<sup>31</sup> There is a close relationship between the Holy Spirit, Christ, and the Church according to the Irenaeus formula: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the Church, and where the Church is, there is the Spirit of the Lord and all grace.”<sup>32</sup> It could be said that the Holy Spirit leads all people to Christ and in some mysterious way to the unity of the Church. Congar says, “ce qui existe de grâce dans le monde lui est rapporté par la finalité, sinon par l’efficience.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit through grace relates people to the Church. It can be said that Spirit’s work has always an ecclesial dimension, even though we cannot explain exactly the way in which he leads all the people to the unity of the Church. This conclusion is an application of the principle stated also by Congar that the Word and Spirit work together in reference to one another in constituting the Church.

Another implication of this principle is the assertion that there is no opposition between institution and charisms in the Church. This discussion is important for the dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. Congar explains that Catholic ecclesiology, especially after the Council of Trent, has understood the Church as a society structured hierarchically and founded by Christ.<sup>34</sup> “Protestants, on the other hand, have unconsciously read St. Paul in the light of the incident at Antioch, which has been interpreted as a struggle of the spirit against the institution, or of the prophet against the man of authority.”<sup>35</sup> Congar does

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., #12.

<sup>31</sup> International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), #56.

<sup>32</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III 24,1 (SC 211, 474), quoted in *Christianity and the World Religions*, #56.

<sup>33</sup> Yves Congar, “Hors de l’Église, pas de salut”, originally written in 1956 and published in 1959 in *Catholicisme* (Paris, Letouzey), republished in *Sainte Église: Etudes et approches ecclésiologiques*, Unam Sanctam 41 (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 415-32, at 432: “whatever grace exists in the world is related to her [the Church] by finality, if not by efficaciousness.”

<sup>34</sup> Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 59.

more than to deny any opposition between institution and charisms; he affirms that both institution and charisms build up the Church.<sup>36</sup>

Congar goes even further by saying that both the Word and the Spirit are present in the structure and the life of the Church.<sup>37</sup> If one analyzes the positions held by Catholics and Protestants after the Council of Trent, one would realize that there is a common understanding that the institution is related to the Incarnate Word while the charisms are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Congar affirms that the ordination of the priests takes place in the communion of the *ecclesia* and that “the process by which a minister – a deacon, priest or bishop – is ordained also takes place subject to the invocation of the Spirit.”<sup>38</sup> It follows that the institution in the Church does not come from Christ alone. Moreover, the charisms, as interventions of the Holy Spirit, are a new element in history and are always related to the work of Christ;<sup>39</sup> therefore, they are not the work of the Spirit alone. Both Word and Spirit build up the Church working together in every means (institution or charism).

Congar’s observation that the Word and the Spirit are both present and operative in the structure and life of the Church has important implications for pneumatology and ecclesiology. If, in the past, theologians attributed the ecclesial institution to the work of Christ and the charisms to the Holy Spirit, it was possible to neglect the role of the Spirit in the Church and set the institution and the charisms in opposition. The new perspective suggested by Congar makes

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Congar explains that Pauline writings regarding the charisms (Rm 12:1-11; 1 Cor 12-14) respond to questions asked by the communities to which these writings are addressed. St. Paul, therefore, presents his own view regarding the charisms to the communities that have leaders – see 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Cor 16:1-16; Phil 1:1. In other words, Paul, concerned with charisms, “is so little interested in organizational structures that it would be as fruitless to look in his letters for definitions of these structures as it would be to try to find signs of opposition to the instituted ministries” – *The Word and the Spirit*, 59-60, where Congar quotes Ulrich Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt. Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktionen* (Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag Brockhaus, 1972).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>38</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 3, 268.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 12.

clear that it is unwise to neglect the task of the Spirit<sup>40</sup> or to oppose the institution to charisms. Congar's position can help the ecumenical dialogue with Orthodox and Protestants. The second principle of Congar's pneumatology, there is no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology, has indeed important implications in ecclesiology.

This principle also has applications in the theology of sacraments. As it was said previously, the final form of the sacraments of confirmation, anointing of the sick, ordination, and marriage were attributed to the Church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Congar agrees with the scholastic theologians, who "thought that Christ had determined the communication of sacramental grace, but the form taken by sacramental signs was determined and even modified by the Church, subject to the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit."<sup>41</sup> This reply should answer Luther who was looking for scriptural evidences for these sacraments, Congar thinks. The sacraments are works of both Christ and the Spirit through which an anamnesis of the event of Christ takes place in the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. By making Christ and his work present in the community, the Holy Spirit builds up the Church, renews, and sanctifies her.

The inseparability of the Word and Spirit is also true regarding the consecration of the Eucharistic elements. Our understanding of the mystery of the Church should be neither simply Christological nor only pneumatological. The priest acts *in persona Christi*, but he is also empowered by the Spirit. Both the Word and the Spirit work together in the eucharistic celebration. Congar holds this equilibrium: "It is certainly true to say that the eucharistic prayer forms a single whole. What has to be accomplished in the believers through the action of the Holy Spirit comes from the sacrament-sacrifice, which is the commemoration of the actions and gifts of salvation."<sup>42</sup> The value of Congar's pneumatological principle and its implications in the theology of sacraments can be fruitful in the ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox, since both groups are content with these affirmations.

The place of the Scripture in the Church has also a kind of sacramental structure because it has an external form, a content of truth and a spiritual fruit or

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<sup>40</sup> Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican observers at the Second Vatican Council have criticized its texts for a lack of pneumatology. Congar considers that this criticism is right "to some extent" and the lack of pneumatology in the Catholic Church has been corrected (*The Word and the Spirit*, 117).

<sup>41</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 3, 230.

res in our souls.<sup>43</sup> It is necessary that the Holy Spirit, who inspired the authors of the sacred texts, enlighten believers and bishops in a special authoritative way in order to understand their spiritual sense. “The Holy Spirit is the principle of all right knowledge.”<sup>44</sup> Congar insists that the Holy Spirit helps the entire Christian community to understand the meaning of the word of God – a point of wide ecumenical agreement today.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, besides offering knowledge of salvific realities, the Word of God has the capacity to go “beyond a visible and tangible expression [...] to an insight into the Word of God himself in and through men’s minds, which can be assimilated to the *res* of the sacraments.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, the Word of God communicates the richness of the truth of Christ present in the word beyond its literal sense – this is the sacramental structure of the Word of God. This communication, however, takes place due to the work of the Spirit.

Finally, “the Church as a whole is sacramental in its nature.”<sup>47</sup> This sacramentality comes from Christ who is the primordial sacrament of the Father. The Church in her institution, her people and her means of grace comes from Christ but is oriented to the eschatological kingdom of God and eternal life in communion with God. Congar says that the sacramental structure of the Church contains “a memory of the event of foundation, a prophetic sign of the absolute future, and present grace coming from the first and preparing the way for the latter.”<sup>48</sup> The Holy Spirit ensures the unity of these three dimensions. The Holy Spirit is the memory of the Church because he makes the actions and the words of Christ into a present and penetrating reality.<sup>49</sup> Yet he is not only the principle of that presence of the past but also the principle of what the Church will be in the eschatological future. Making Christ present, the Spirit transforms the Church into the Body of Christ and guarantees that the Church may

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 270

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 270; IDEM, *L’Ecclesiologie du Haut Moyen Age: De Saint Grégoire le Grand à la désunion entre Byzance et Rome* (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 114.

<sup>45</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 29. He refers also to the Faith and Order Conference at Montreal in 1963, see The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, *The Report from Montreal 1963: Worship and the Oneness of Christ’s Church*, # 108, c, in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. by Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 508.

<sup>46</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 3, 270.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>49</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, vol. 2, 18.

keep this identity until she reaches the fullness of her mystery in the eschaton. In other words, the Spirit keeps the identity of the Church between the Alpha of Christ and of the apostles, and the Omega of the economy of salvation.<sup>50</sup> The Church is one because the Spirit keeps her identity as Body of Christ.

Because the Church is a present reality but also oriented to the eschatological future, Congar describes the nature of the Church as having a sacramental structure. The Holy Spirit works in the created reality that is the Church but this work is divine and deifying. The Church, however, has to pray to the Holy Spirit that her activity should be sanctifying. In this sense, Congar speaks about the life and activity of the Church as a continuous epiclesis or an invocation of the Spirit so that Church's life would be a constant presence of Christ oriented to the eternal life. Thus, the second principle of Congar's pneumatology is important in order to understand the sacramental nature of the Church and her unity, which is built by the memory of Christ effected by the invocation of the Spirit.

In conclusion, Congar's second pneumatological principle contributes to the understanding of the Church as a mystery in which the Christological and pneumatological aspects have an equal importance. This equilibrium leads to harmony between institution and charisms, and between the memory of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit. This Christological-pneumatological understanding of the Church is useful in ecumenical discussions with Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

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<sup>50</sup> For Congar, especially in his early writings, the Alpha moment of Christ is the incarnation, and not the beginning of creation (like in Rev 22:13, for instance). Congar considers the incarnation the moment when Christ founded the structure of the Church (hence, the beginning or the "Alpha"). In "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," the Alpha moment is the resurrection, after which the Spirit and the apostles work together. Congar maintained this terminology throughout his career, referring to the event of Christ's coming in history.



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