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# On the Authority in the Church: Yves Congar's Vision of Collegiality in Evangelizing Secularity

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ON THE AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH:  
YVES CONGAR'S VISION OF COLLEGIALITY IN EVANGELIZING  
SECULARITY

A thesis by

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The Faculty of the

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To my parents, Sok-Hoe Joseph and Sang-Woo Gina Youn  
from whom I received the Catholic faith

and

to Fr. John P. McGuire, O.P.  
who saved my faith in college

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## ABSTRACT

In the public sphere of contemporary Western society, its post-Enlightenment culture is secular at large. Encouraged by the principle of equality upon which the United States of America was founded, the current culture promotes a subjective and individual mindset, which demands that everyone, regardless of gender, race, or class, possess equal representation in all fields of duty. Against this individualistic egalitarianism, the Church can seem to lag behind the times because she operates from a different model than that of modern society. While most societies in the West espouse a democratic culture and representative participation at every level of governance, the Church seems to continue the hierarchical model of the past in its operation. Yet, is it true to state that the Church is “hierarchical?” If so, what does that entail? With an ongoing tension between the Church and secularity, a genuine discussion is necessary to mend the challenges and misunderstandings.

While the secular society, at times, promotes ideologies that contradict church teachings, there also is a secular dimension to the Church. In this sense, church and society are not against each another; rather, she is found *within* society carrying out her tasks in the temporal order. As such, the lay people who share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices by the virtue of their baptism have a particular vocation to evangelize secularity. More precisely, they are *secular* and they encounter secularity in their daily life. With the authority that they hold in the Church, they bring Christ to those who they encounter daily. The Church, in this light, is *within* the culture at large.

The secular dimension of the Church can flourish if the authorities within the Church work in a collegial manner. In other words, the lay people must have a genuine dialogue with the magisterium and theologians so that the truths of the faith will influence secularity. Collegiality, however, should not be mistaken for democracy. While it is understandable that Americans, who are used to democratic structures, may push for more participation by disregarding her teachings, the nature of the Church is more complex than a mere political system. This thesis acknowledges the proper authority which is given to each group within the Church, both in the sacraments and in jurisdiction.

The ongoing conversation in the thesis treats the nature, leadership, and authority of the Church that is scriptural and traditional. The ideas contained in the works of Yves Congar will ultimately help in resolving the challenges that the Church face today. By speaking about his perception of authority that is given to every individual in the Church, this thesis clarifies for the readers the proper function of priests, bishops, and laity, functions which, in the past, have been overly confused and even abused. As a result, the resolution of current challenges will encourage the entire People of God to live out pastorally the sacramental and juridical functions that they hold.

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I would like to first thank Anh Tran, S.J. for helping me throughout the STL program. Writing the thesis before the priestly ordination can be somewhat agonizing due to the mind floating around in various places, yet he disciplined me well in finishing the task diligently and without anxiety.

I would also like to thank Hilary Martin, O.P. and Michael Sweeney, O.P., the readers of the thesis. Intellectual conversations about the Church at St. Albert's Priory in Oakland, especially during recreation, helped me tremendously in understanding the prevalent thoughts of the contemporary culture and of the history of the Church. By speaking to them, I learned how to do theology in consideration of the contemporary secular culture.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
AL	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i>
AP	<i>Aeterni Patris</i>
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	<i>Corpus iuris canonici</i> (1983 Code of Canon Law)
CL	<i>Christifideles Laici</i>
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
II	<i>Inter Insigniores</i>
Jn	John
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
LS	<i>Laudato Si</i>
Lk	Luke
MD	<i>Mediator Dei</i>
Mt	Matthew
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>
PT	<i>Pacem et Terris</i>
RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
ST	<i>Summa Theologica</i>
Thess	Thessalonians



## Introduction

Yves Congar (1904-1995), a French Dominican, ecclesialogist and ministerial priest, understood the “signs of the times” in which he was writing. During his lifetime, he influenced the Church by writing about an ecclesial structure that is collegial, that is reformed in such a way as to promote a healthy balance of authority, and that allows the laity to exercise their authority in the Church. He was highly aware of the fact that secular Western culture seeks a democratic mindset which encourages authentic criticism of institutions. As a churchman and as a theologian, how did he resolve the difference between the values of the post-Enlightenment West, especially with its radical approach to individualism, and of the Church?

With regard to sacraments, jurisdiction, and morality, there are various functions of authority in the Church. For instance, the Constitution of Vatican II on sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, describes the authority that is particular to liturgy. It states that “in liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy” (SC 28). This statement highlights that liturgical authority is given to individual members according to their proper function as specified by the Church. In the case of the ministerial priesthood, for instance, by the virtue of ordination, the priest holds the office which enables him to confect the Eucharist.

The constitution iterates that every member in the Church has a function to live out. It speaks about the essence of the Church in her diversity of ministry. Such ecclesial structure in functional diversity can best be described through the *Greek* metaphysical

mindset which notes that a creature is unequal in status before the Creator. A creature is unworthy before God who holds power and dominion over all, and under God and under the mediation of the Church, each member partakes in a distinct function that is particular to him or her. As such, the Christian religion believes that each member is called to a vocation. Congar repeats the ideas of the early Church Fathers when he describes “the totalitarianism of the faith”<sup>1</sup> in order to argue that “the Church claims the duty and the right to form the whole man, to determine and fashion his whole personality.”<sup>2</sup> From the *power* granted to the ministerial priesthood to the *authority* given to common priesthood, each member receives from God a unique call to serve.

With these distinctions made, Congar writes to resolve the tension between the *Greek* mindset described above and the post-Enlightenment mindset that promotes personal equality. He does not dismiss the concerns of the modern person who is oriented toward the idea of personal equality. Rather, he recognizes that there is sometimes a legitimate tension between the magisterium and the people of God. In his view, “The faith does indeed aim at fashioning the whole personality, but only on the basis of the free adherence of the person, a step in which that person realizes itself in the most radical and decisive way.”<sup>3</sup> How can we expand on this quotation? What do we do when our conscience does not agree with that of the magisterium? What is the authority that pertains to the magisterium and people of God?

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<sup>1</sup> Yves Congar, *Christians Active in the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 154.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Congar understands the sociological *milieu* in which the Church grounds her mission. As Norman Tanner notes, the general consensus of the Second Vatican Council agrees “that the church was no longer in control of culture, as it has been in times past, at least in Western Europe.”<sup>4</sup> If such historical analysis that Tanner posits is true, the secularity of today is left on its own to make decisions without consulting ecclesial authority. Congar is keenly aware that a society without the church’s moral authority can create political systems that are not influenced by religious values. He understands that political ideologies like Marxism, Communism, Fascism, etc. have a tendency to deny the underlying truths of the faith in regard to the human person, freedom, God, etc. As seen through his writings, he clarifies that a strict separation between church and state would only encourage “the rise of the totalitarian regimes and their survival, with many other affirmations and negations too, in atheistic communism.”<sup>5</sup>

The many documents of the Second Vatican Council that Congar influenced explain how the Church deals with the current condition of society. For instance, *Gaudium et Spes* in particular describes his pastoral outlook on the contemporary challenges of the Church. The document states, “By riches coming from above, it [the Church] makes fruitful, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and traditions of every people of every age” (GS 58). The tone of the document describes the nature of the Church that is inclusive and pastoral. As shown through the document, Congar believes that the role of the Church is to inform people’s consciences through quality teaching and pastoring.

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<sup>4</sup> Norman P. Tanner, *Rediscovering Vatican II: The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Congar, *Christians Active in the World*, 140.

Then, how does secularity, without an influence of the Church, live by religious values? Congar provides solutions by positing that the Church possesses a dimension in all modes of secularity: workplaces, schools, convalescent homes, families, non-profit organization, etc. The lay people, in this manner, possess a particular authority over the temporal order. They have a secular authority in the Church through which affects the secular society at large.

The pastoral approach of Congar in evangelizing secularity is not defensive and insular. Different from the apologetic approach of Pius IX who showed “[a] concern to defend the Church against the violent challenge of the modern revolution,”<sup>6</sup> Congar believes that the People of God, ministerial and common priesthood alike, must critique themselves in order to renew and reform the Church. Such a method is sacrificial in nature, because it emulates the sacrifice of Christ in order to purify the Church and make it more authentic. As such, “the Church finds her interest when she is purely Church, more purely limited and devoted to her spiritual task of apostolate and her strictly sacred activities.”<sup>7</sup> Congar, in this manner, understands that an authentic Church does not change the culture by juridical powers but by teaching, pastoring, and witnessing to the faith.

An authentic reform in the Church is necessary to grasp the current circumstances of culture and to transmit the faith credibly. A genuine dialogue between fallible members, members of both the peripheral and central authority, will enhance the possibility that the “church” is being constantly renewed in order to be *the* “Church,” which is perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48). Through an ecclesial

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<sup>6</sup> Yves Congar, *The Gospel Priesthood* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 218.

<sup>7</sup> Congar, *Christians Active in the World*, 137.

structure of collegiality by *sentire cum Ecclesia* (thinking with the Church), the ecclesial and secular dimensions of the Church will be cleansed and purified. An authentic Church preaches and teaches freely the love of Christ by witness and truth. In such a vision, Congar is immensely hopeful in his outlook on the evangelization of the secular culture.

As noted, the overall contents of the thesis will clarify for the readers the proper function of the common and ministerial priesthood, and the balance of authority between magisterium, theologians, and the whole people of God. By the method of collegiality, misunderstandings between society and church can be mended, encouraging all the members of the Church to live out pastorally their proper functions.

## Methodology

The dominant research of this thesis was done in order to follow the ecclesiology of Yves Congar. The primary sources will be: *Lay People in the Church, Tradition and Traditions*, and *True and False Reform in the Church*. References will also be made, to a lesser extent, to his other writings. These works influenced the Church during the Second Vatican Council, and it is hoped that they be fruitful for the people who read the thesis.

I will also consider many secondary sources that strengthen the positions of Congar. These include works that have been written after his books were published. Different authors such as Joseph Ratzinger, Francis Sullivan, Gabriel Flynn, Susan Wood, Richard Gaillardetz, etc., as well as the documents and encyclicals from the Second Vatican Council, especially the ones that Congar partially wrote, such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, etc., will be utilized. In addition,

numerous other sources will help to strengthen the arguments either in real writing or in footnotes.

In trying to situate my study in the larger context of the Church, I will also use writings from other historical authors and church documents from different periods. For instance, passages from the scripture and the Church Fathers will help explain the nature of the Church from the beginning of Christianity. As standard resources, biblical citations, church documents, and the excerpts from the writings of Thomas Aquinas and the early Church Fathers, will not be included in the bibliography but listed here. Most of the excerpts from the early Church Fathers are taken from *The Teaching of the Church Fathers* by John R. Willis. Also, works by Thomas Aquinas which are taken from <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/> will clarify and rejuvenate the thoughts of Congar who studied him endlessly. Lastly, many works of contemporary theologians will help us to know the ecclesiology and culture of today, moving the contents of the thesis to a greater conclusion. All of the church documents are taken from [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), and all of the scriptural verses follow the New American Bible.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Evangelization of Secularity by Diversity of Ministry**

Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation on the mission and vocation of the faithful in the Church and the world, *Christifideles Laici* (1988), explains that everyone in society possesses authority. It posits that every person has "the right to a house and to work, the right to a family and responsible parenthood, the right to participation in public and political life, the right to freedom of conscience and the practice of religion" (CL 5). These exhortations are reiterated in the canon law stating that through these rights, every member of the Church is equal in dignity (CIC 208). Nevertheless, the Church recognizes the diversity of vocations and duties among her members (LG 13). This chapter will explore the cultural tension between the Greco-Roman and Enlightenment periods in order to explain how our contemporary culture became secular in character. Next, I will discuss the authority and task of lay people in the secular dimension of the Church.

### **Tension between Greco-Roman and Enlightenment Cultures**

#### **Greco-Roman Influence on Christianity**

The Greco-Roman culture was the cultural *milieu* in which the Christian religion was built. While distinct thinkers possessed unique as well as pluralistic ways of thinking about religion and society, the underlying theme of their epistemology was the

same: they were concerned about *truth*<sup>8</sup> which is the conformity between the intellect and the object (*ST I, Q.16, A.1, co*). They made sense of the world in which they were living by meditating on metaphysical principles and understanding the cosmos. This led them to understand that there was a world beyond them and a Creator who brought them into being.

While the *gravitas* of Greek philosophy is lessened today in comparison to the way in which it was treated in the Middle Ages, Richard Tarnas explains that the general view of the Western mind finds its root in Greek philosophy and culture. Its metaphysical and historical foundations have profoundly influenced Western civilization. He writes that:

The Greeks were perhaps the first to see the world as a question to be answered. They were peculiarly gripped by the passion to understand, to penetrate the uncertain flux of phenomena and grasp a deeper truth. And they established a dynamic tradition of critical thought to pursue that quest. With the birth of that tradition and that quest came the birth of the Western mind.<sup>9</sup>

The writings of Thomas Aquinas who was not “Greek” by ethnicity exemplify the Greek mindset, especially in his classical approach to theism. Although he lived during the Middle Ages, he studied the Church Fathers and adopted the metaphysical foundation

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas has an entire section on the definition of truth. To learn more about this definition, see Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), Q. 1, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdeVer1.htm>. (accessed December 13, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 69.



which they used to explain who God is.<sup>10</sup> Robin Ryan notes that “Aquinas is certain that there is one, who is the First Truth (*Veritas Prima*).<sup>11</sup> This God is the source of all truth discovered by human beings.”<sup>12</sup> Like the Greeks who defined their essence and their thoughts in light of the Creator, Aquinas firmly and similarly held that God possessed the utmost authority over creation. He defined God as Incomprehensible Mystery, noting that God was transcendent from creatures to the point that they could hardly know much about him. For this reason, Aquinas believed that in using our natural reason alone, “we must find human ideas, images, and languages for the divine”<sup>13</sup> when speaking about God. As Thomas O’Meara observes, “Aquinas’ theory of speaking about God permits

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, as a theologian, explains the difference between ‘Greek’ that is ethnic and ‘Greek’ that is metaphysical. He sees the importance of the metaphysical notion that allows for self-transcendence of the ethnicity. A person can be Korean by ethnicity while possessing a metaphysical ‘Greek’ mind. To read more on this topic, please read Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 201. “The Fathers did not just mix into the gospel a static and self-contained Greek culture. They could take up a dialogue with Greek philosophy and could make it an instrument of the gospel, wherever in the Hellenistic world the search for God had brought into being a self-criticism of that world’s own culture and its own thought. Faith links the various people—beginning with the Germans and the Slavs, who came into contact with the Christian message in the era of tribal migrations, and right up to the people of Asia, Africa, and America—not with Hellenistic culture as such, but with Hellenistic culture in the form in which it transcended itself, which was the true point of contact for the interpretation of the Christian message. From that starting point, faith drew these peoples into the process of self-transcendence. This basic model likewise determines the encounter of the Christian message with Greek culture—which, of course, did not begin with the Christian mission but had already developed within the writings of the Old Testament, especially through its translation into Greek, and on the basis of that within early Judaism. This encounter was made possible because within the Greek world a similar process of self-transcendence had started to get underway.”

<sup>11</sup> Who or What is the first Truth? As cold as it may sound to a contemporary mind, Aquinas holds that this first Truth does not seek His creatures for affirmation and care in the way that human beings seek others because there is no deficiency or need in God. Aquinas’ view of the Creator is immensely beyond the natural comprehension of human beings. Since nothing in this world can accurately describe the characteristics of God, he can be described by what he is *not*. For instance, it would be accurate to use negative theology by stating that God is not a policeman who chases after a robber for his or her wrongdoings.

<sup>12</sup> Robin Ryan, *God and the Mystery of Human Suffering: A Theological Conversation Across the Ages* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 116.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas O’Meara, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 93.

and encourages discussing God while at the same time affirming mystery and transcendence.”<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, it was through the Roman system of polity and culture that popularized the Greek *milieu* which influenced the mind of Thomas Aquinas and others in Europe who lived in the Middle Ages. Tarnas writes that “With political shrewdness and steadfast patriotism, and fortified by belief in their guiding deities, the Roman succeeded not only conquering... a large part of Europe, but also in fulfilling their perceived mission of extending their civilization.”<sup>15</sup> As explained, the Romans were geniuses in political and territorial expansion, which helped to market the intermingling of the Greek and Roman cultures to the rest of Western Europe.

Due to the influence of the Greek mindset within the Roman sphere of expansion, the West inherited the intellectual desire “to analyze our experience so as to come to know our own human nature,”<sup>16</sup> and “principles of contract law and property ownership crucial for the West’s later development.”<sup>17</sup> The Greco-Roman culture, in these ways, also influenced the doctrine and government of the Catholic Church. It was evident that when the Jewish Messiah entered history during this crucial period, Divine providence allowed these cultures and ideas to come together, ultimately influencing the theology and laws of the Church from its earliest period to our present day.

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<sup>14</sup> O’Meara, *Thomas Aquinas*, 93.

<sup>15</sup> Tarnas, *The Passion*, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 41.

<sup>17</sup> Tarnas, *The Passion*, 87.

## Transformation of Thought in the Enlightenment

While the sociological and epistemological thinking of the Greco-Roman culture defined one's identity in the light of a larger periphery, whether it be as a part of a family unit, a community as a whole, or the cosmos, the Enlightenment period generally changed this classical way of thought. Richard Tarnas explains the shift in thought process from the Greco-Roman period to the Enlightenment period in the following words: "What once pervaded the world as the *anima mundi* is now seen as the exclusive property of human consciousness. The modern human self has essentially absorbed all meaning and purpose into its own interior being, emptying the primal cosmos of what once constituted its essential nature."<sup>18</sup>

We can note distinctly the two movements within the Enlightenment period. The first was the scientific revolution which allowed the thinkers like Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton to explore the world through logical reasoning and empiricist observation. Due to such exploration, people discovered how tiny they were in comparison to the entire universe. This kind of new scientific insights, in variant ways, redefined personal identity in relation to the new discoveries. The second movement was regarding the change of philosophical method which was presented by René Descartes. By the doubt of first principles, he separated science and faith, noting that faith was not intelligible.

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View* (New York: Plume Printing, 2006), 22.

This shift in philosophical discourse affected people and the overall culture to become more subject-oriented.<sup>19</sup>

Ashley summarizes the situation of transformation in such culture: “Modernity, climax of the Enlightenment, admires the classical ideal of living by reason, but it has long since abandoned the ideal of living according to nature because to ground reason in nature restricts individual freedom.”<sup>20</sup> He points to the selfish motive of reason which is no longer curious about those goods outside the person. Rather, this reason, disconnected from nature, strives to find meaning and purpose which can negate God, the cosmos, and others. In this way of thinking, we find the *end* of the metaphysical mindset that the Greeks explored.

Anthony Kenny agrees that the emergence of the Enlightenment limited metaphysical intelligence. Because it changed the classical meaning of “truth” which is the conformity between the mind and the object, one found himself or herself in total alienation from material and immaterial objects, unable to find *being* within nature. In the view of Kenny, the general consensus of the intellectuals of the Enlightenment period wanted to break free from autocracy and a subjective definition of truth yet did not succeed in doing so. Kenny writes that “freedom of expression was the freedom they most treasured, and they had no objection in principle to autocracy, although each of them was to find that their chosen despots were less enlightened than they had hoped.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> To read more on the emergence of new ideas such as subjective idealism, empiricism, and skepticism, see Thomas Vernor Smith, *Philosophers Speak for Themselves: Berkeley, Hume, and Kant* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy, Volume III, The Rise of Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). 93.

He reveals a pessimistic position on the “pagan” thinkers of this era who wanted to reform certain philosophical dispositions and to free themselves from Christian heritage.

Peter Gay, in addition, furthers the view of Kenny. Gay notes that, “Whatever the universal, unchanging component of man’s nature, that nature defined itself for its time and its culture through its particular activity.”<sup>22</sup> The quotation emphasizes a shift from what is universal to what is particular. As a consequence, the philosophy of the Enlightenment betrays a metaphysical way of defining the human person by his or her *being*. Rather, “man is what he does, and comes to know what he is by discovering himself in action.”<sup>23</sup>

We must question, at this point, whether the Enlightenment period was a necessary movement in history. While Tarnas and Gay note that it was responsible for the separation of faith and reason, of metaphysics and physics, of object and subject, and of universals and particulars, there must have been positive outcomes from such changes. After all, is the philosophy of the Enlightenment the cause of isolation and anxiety, which disconnects oneself from community, institution, faith, family, revelation, Tradition, etc.?

### *Mainstream and Radical Enlightenment*

Jonathan Israel makes a distinction between mainstream and radical Enlightenment. The thinkers such as Kant and Locke, belong to the mainstream view which strived for an authentic unity between faith and reason. On the other hand, the

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, the Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), 185.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

radical thinkers like Diderot, Condorcet, and Spinoza advocated for radical equality.<sup>24</sup> The worthwhile distinction of Israel notifies the general pessimistic view of Gay who criticizes the “radical” Enlightenment rather than the “mainstream” Enlightenment. In this manner, there is a positive component that the mainstream position teaches.

Similarly, Ernst Cassirer notes that the Enlightenment gave people a method to think critically which helped them to arrive at a genuine view of the self, society, and the Church. In this light, he sees the period as that which reconstructs rather than that which destructs. He writes that the Enlightenment:

opposes the power of convention, tradition, and authority in all the fields of knowledge. But it does not consider this opposition as merely a work of negation and destruction; it considers rather that it is removing the rubble of the ages in order to make visible the solid foundations of the structure of knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

When we think about the period in this way, not only was the transformation of society necessary, this transformation allowed people the freedom to choose what they understood to be good for them.

James C. Livingston also reiterates the position of Cassirer regarding “reconstruction” by explaining the relationship between church and culture. Livingstone posits that “the Enlightenment represents the loosening of the state and society from ecclesiastical control and the emergence of a culture increasingly secular in character.”<sup>26</sup> For him, the movement was worthwhile, because it helped people, church, and society to

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<sup>24</sup> On the distinction between mainstream and radical Enlightenment, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz Koelln and James Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 234.

<sup>26</sup> James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, v.2 (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 6.

be more authentic. Breaking down the institutional model of religion and promoting a democratic voice in society, in a way, allowed for an individual person to critically think about one's life, faith, culture, etc. While the tone of Cassirer and Livingston, as stated, is hopeful in defining the Enlightenment as a tool for reconstruction of society, do they undermine the ways in which the movement encouraged a selfish mindset of individuals?

Unlike Cassirer and Livingston, Peter Berger is more pessimistic towards the Enlightenment movement as a whole. More precisely, he is pessimistic towards a secular culture of the United States that is controlled by "secular elites." He notes that "there exists an international subculture composed of people with Western-type higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences, that is indeed secular. This subculture is the principal 'carrier of progressive, Enlightened beliefs and values.'"<sup>27</sup> Berger also posits that the culture war of America stems from a "protest and resistance *against* a secular elite."<sup>28</sup> In his view, the educated elites, ultimately, control the condition of culture that is against the promulgation of church laws. At this point, if the position of Berger is true, how can the society of today, in the midst of secularity and cultural tension, grasp the truths of the Christian faith? How can the people in the secular American context live out their Christian life to the fullest?

### **Secular Dimension to the Church**

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter Berger (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

While the position of Berger is fairly pessimistic towards secularity especially regards to secular elites, Marie-Dominique Chenu provides a positive outlook to secularization. For Chenu, secularization is not an opponent of Christianity. Within the secularized state, Christ can be made known. He even extends this discussion to state the lack of active and evangelical initiatives on the part of the Church in the past. He writes that “the first and basic mistake was a failure to understand the humanness and Christian truth of the industrial ‘revolution.’”<sup>29</sup> In this manner, he is not defensive about the emergence of secular culture. By contrast, he is optimistic about *baptizing* secularity and finding the *good* within the society as a whole. The Church, in this way, never stands against culture. Instead, the Church is an instrument in which Christ is revealed. He writes that:

Secularization is a menace, even a defiance. But it is not to be met by a frightened self-defense that is content to denounce the sinister failures of the secularized world: two world wars and a profound economic depression within a single generation. It must be met by a loving confidence in this new man, whose undertakings are a conscious expansion of creation, an advance of history, and a wealth of material for the Man-God to make into a ‘new creation.’<sup>30</sup>

The content that Chenu provides in the quotation reveals that church and society are not separate entities. Rather, the Church by her essence meets the needs of secularity in welcoming hearts without strong self-defense. More precisely, there is a *secular* dimension to the Church that belongs to the laity, the people of God. They have the authority to encounter *secular* issues in a *secular* manner by taking initiative and

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<sup>29</sup> Marie Dominique Chenu, “The Need for a Theology of the World,” *The Great Ideas Today, 1967: Featuring a Symposium: Should Christianity Be Secularized*, ed. Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1967), 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



engaging in current culture. The new evangelization, therefore, *is* the mission and *activity* of the laity (*RM* 71).

Nevertheless, the laity by their common priesthood must work alongside the ministerial priesthood. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* explains the ecclesial structure which is united in communion yet diverse in personal vocation. It states that “in the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission” (*AA* 2).<sup>31</sup> Every member in the Church, then, is equal in dignity by his or her distinct vocation within the life of the Church.

### Evangelization of Secularity

The entire People of God by their distinct functions renews the Church and evangelizes secularity. The Word which manifests itself onto the Church makes possible for every person in the world to partake in Christ’s humanity. Because He lived, suffered, and died, becoming a victim and sacrifice, and then resurrected from the dead, He reveals that He is God and has authority over creation. By participating in the authority of Christ, then, the members have authority over creation and the overall culture. As Coleman O’Neill notes, “Christ’s humanity may be said to be the sacrament of the God who saves us.”<sup>32</sup> By participating in Christ’s humanity, the Church continually brings her members to the love bond that Christ offers.

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<sup>31</sup> Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world (*AA* 2).

<sup>32</sup> Colman E. O’Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments* (New York: Alba House, 1991), 77.

Christ pours out his Spirit onto the Church which means that the character of the Church is the manifestation of Christ's essence which he revealed during Pentecost to his disciples. In the Gospel of John, when the disciples are in the upper room hiding from fear of the Jews, Christ comes to them stating a simple phrase, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:21). In the next phrase which he conveys to them, we find the origin of the Church. He exclaims in joy, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). By breathing into them His essence, every one of his disciples receives the authority which is given to them through the Spirit. They become the People of God, a Church dedicated to following the life of Christ. Likewise, the breathing of the Holy Spirit signifies "the breathing forth of the Spirit from the body of Christ into the earthly fullness of the body."<sup>33</sup>

To reform the Church and to evangelize secular culture are not easy tasks, yet Christ promised that he will reside with his Church until the end of time (Mt 20:28). By handing on his authority to his followers—bishops, priests, theologians and lay people—he is made known. Therefore, the interplay between authorities in the Church, in its diversity of ministry, will bring forth the manifestation of Christ in the temporal order.

### **Chapter Summary**

To sum up, a culture that is based on the Enlightenment principles calls for a "deconstruction, decentering, disappearance, dissemination, demystification..."<sup>34</sup> of institutions and of authority figures. These descriptions represent what Israel notes as the radical Enlightenment, because it calls for strict representation of every person by

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<sup>33</sup> O'Neill, *Meeting Christ*, 86.

<sup>34</sup> Tarnas, *The Passion*, 401.

stressing an extensive subjectivism without the consideration of the common good. Yet, despite the current Western culture that is secular in character, the Church encounters it with her own secular dimension.

In addition, the comparison between Greco-Roman and the Enlightenment periods helps us to understand the underlying conflicts between feudalism and democracy in the governance of church and society. Due to the mentioned transformation, many people do not find church doctrines to be appealing, especially on the teachings that speak about a due obedience to the authority in the Church. If such is the case, how can the Church respond to this conflict?

In the next chapter, we will discuss the authority that is given to each member who possesses a priestly function. By understanding how the authority of Christ is delegated to the People of God, we will have a better grasp on the subject of authority which is so important in both culture and church. By describing in details the ecclesial structure between the common and ministerial priesthood that Yves Congar stresses, I will clarify the proper balance of distinct authority and power that belong to the clergy and laity.

## Chapter 2

### AUTHORITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE CHURCH

The authority of Christ is delegated to the People of God in the three distinct functions of priest, prophet, and king. The ecclesiology of Yves Congar explains how the common and ministerial priesthood both partake in these functions. An understanding of Congar's description of the collegial nature of the Church can further the discussion about the proper relationship between clergy and laity regarding authority, power, and jurisdiction. I will explain how all members of the Church participate in the priestly authority of Christ by self-sacrifice. Then, by positing further distinction between *in persona Christi*, *in persona Christi Capitis*, and *in persona Ecclesiae*, I will clarify the nature of the common and ministerial priesthood. Finally, I will explain the need for a lay office in the Church as a possible gateway into evangelizing secularity.

#### Inward Sacrificial Priesthood of the People of God

By the virtue of baptism, the faithful are called into a new People of God, which is “a consecrated people, a religious people, a praising and worshipping people.”<sup>35</sup>

Christ delegates his authority to the People to live a life of service through the three distinct offices of priest, prophet, and king which form one function (Mt 28:19-20). The

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<sup>35</sup> We will make a comparison between the Old People and the New People. While the New is the Old in many ways, how do they differ? With faith in Christ's New Covenant, the priests of the new law no longer participate in the shedding of the blood of animals, because Christ as God-man has been sacrificed, taking on the headship of priesthood and victimhood. While the Old was waiting for a Messiah, the New People of God sees no point in waiting for one, because they know Christ to be the true God. See Yves Congar. *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1965), 123.

priesthood of believers enables the entire People to participate in the Christ-centered function by their inward offering of spiritual sacrifices and by a virtuous living shaped by faith, hope, and charity in imitation of Christ's way, truth, and life.<sup>36</sup> Their relationship to Christ gradually develops through prayer, and Congar believes that each member grows in holiness as a result of turning inwardly toward virtue.

The sacrament of Baptism, the first initiation process of the Church, explains the entrance stage of the People of God. When one is plunged into water, he or she dies with Christ and then resurrects with him as a new person. During the Latin rite, a minister or a capable lay person utilizes the *form*, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The *matter* of this sacrament is water. While water symbolizes purity, it possesses other significations by its very nature.<sup>37</sup> Timothy Radcliffe explains that the water in baptism does not make us perfect in purity, but it helps us to be freshly child-like in Spirit. He writes that, "Our hearts are strengthened by the Holy Spirit, shaped by God's love and wisdom and made pure. This does not mean

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<sup>36</sup> Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole creatively uses the phrase "I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6) from the Gospel of John in order to explain the threefold office of the People of God. To learn more about the systematic theology behind the phrase, People of God, see Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole, *Introduction to the Mystery of the Church*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014). "'the way' expresses the fact that Jesus guides the faithful toward the Father's house; he is the one who walks ahead of his followers in his capacity as leader or king. 'The truth' signifies that Jesus preaches in all truth because he himself is the Word of God, the Logos, the perfection of prophecy. Finally 'the life' refers to the Paschal mystery through and in which Jesus gives his life in a sacrificial act of which he is simultaneously priest and victim" (214).

<sup>37</sup> In various parts of the Roman Missal, water is portrayed in different images. For instance, in the Easter Vigil section 42, water predictably symbolizes grace and the Holy Spirit. In other parts of the rite, the texts point to events in the Old Testament, such as the great flood and Noah's ark, the parting of the Red Sea and the liberation of the Jewish people. These salvific historical passages remind us that the God of Israel was present throughout the Old Testament story.

In the New Testament, the theme of Baptism is always compared to the theme of light. The Apostle Paul says that "all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness" (1 Thess 5:5). In this passage, light signifies a purity of heart while darkness represents the sin of drunkenness. The role of Baptism is to cleanse or forgive sins and thereby bring people to peace and security, light and safety. Furthermore, in the Gospel of John, Christ is seen as the light of the world. It states that "He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him" (Jn 1:7). To be baptized in the Church would signify a reception of Christ himself who is the light.

that we shall never again have ‘impure thoughts.’”<sup>38</sup> The honest quotation by Radcliffe reveals the true baptismal character that one partakes in, in which grace continues to perfect human nature. The Holy Spirit, in this sense, will guide every member to find his or her place in the Church.

Yves Congar states that the meaning of the priesthood is that of a sacrificial nature: “True sacrifice is every work done with the aim of uniting us with God in a holy fellowship, that is to say, every work that is referred as its end to the good which can make us truly blessed.”<sup>39</sup> He takes the definition of St. Augustine by noting that, “Priesthood is the sacrificial office: every work done with the aim of uniting us with God in a holy fellowship.”<sup>40</sup> In this sense, every moral act which is of a temporal or spiritual kind, such as prayer, sports, hobbies, etc., can lead one to be holy, virtuous, pious, etc. By such growth, one becomes more like Christ, which is the goal of every Christian.

### Ecclesial Function

The description of Congar and Radcliffe on the priestly office of the People of God is based on the “pneuma” or “charismata” that the Holy Spirit provides for all the faithful in the Church at baptism. The reception of such gifts that derive from the Holy

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<sup>38</sup> Timothy Radcliffe, *Take the Plunge: Living Baptism and Confirmation* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 93.

<sup>39</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 127.

<sup>40</sup> The reference that Congar uses comes directly from *the City of God* by Augustine. In Book Ten, Augustine states the New Covenant of Christ that no longer asks for slaughtered beasts but a sacrifice of a contrite heart. For more on sacrificial nature of priesthood, see Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017). “Accordingly, when the apostle had exhorted us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, and not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our mind, that we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, that is to say, the true sacrifice of ourselves...” (277-8).

Spirit provides a distinct talent or quality which empowers the individual for the apostolate. As such, a vocation is not completely about one's freedom to choose, but it requires a process of listening to the inward yearning that encourages one to realize his or her full potential in the specific function. Seen this way, we define the baptismal priesthood and the ministerial priesthood as distinct ecclesial functions that express the priesthood of Jesus Christ. For instance, a mother who dedicates her time and effort to her child partakes in her common priesthood by receiving a specific gift of the Holy Spirit. By her care, love and affection, "cells in the Church"<sup>41</sup> expand physically and spiritually. Likewise, the ministerial priesthood in the Church is also a gift, a vocation that is mediated by the Church, for the service of her people.

Congar's treatment of the priestly function, a function that derives from the authority of Christ, will explain the balance between the common and the ministerial priesthood. He writes about this distinction between the baptized and ordained by quoting Aquinas:

As St. Thomas says, some members are active in order to receive, others in order to give; or again, the members are active either to perfect themselves or to perfect others. There are then two degrees, one linked with consecration by baptism (and confirmation), the other with consecration by holy orders, in the priestly quality through which the fellowship-body—and temple—of Christ celebrates on earth, with its head, the worship of the New Covenant.<sup>42</sup>

This quotation explains clearly that the entire People of God *actively* participate in the functions of the Church by their particular roles. The distinction that Aquinas makes

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<sup>41</sup> Congar uses the word "cells" in order to explain the signification of the material and spiritual components of the Mystical Body of Christ. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 202.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

between the ministerial and common priesthood teaches that both groups partake in a give-take relationship. No one in particular possesses a *passive* role.

### **Distinction between Common and Ministerial Priesthood**

Explaining the ecclesial structure that Congar posits ultimately resolves the unitive and dual functions between the ministerial and common priesthood. First, *Lumen Gentium*, one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council which Congar strongly influenced, states that “the distinction that the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need” (LG 32). The language utilized here asserts that all the People, as a community in Christ, must function together as a whole and that the ministerial *and* common priesthood must work side by side, exerting proper authority delegated to them by Christ and the Holy Spirit. In addition, another document from the council, *Dei Verbum*, “teaches that all the faithful participate in the development of tradition,”<sup>43</sup> including both clergy and laity. Influenced by Congar’s theology as well, this document notes that the Word of God is preserved since the time of Jesus through “the entire holy people united with their shepherds in the teachings of the apostles” (DV 10).

### **Common Priesthood and Authority**

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<sup>43</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 494.



The common priesthood often refers to all who are baptized in the Church, including both the laity and the clergy. As Aquinas notes, “Each of the faithful is deputed to receive, or bestow upon others, things pertaining to the worship of God. It is clear that the sacramental character is the character of Christ” (*ST IIa-IIae*, 63, 3).<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Congar makes a direct link between the common priesthood of the laity and gives them a “secular character” which is quite distinct from that of the clergy. He describes the unique vocation of the laity, as distinct from that of the ministerial priesthood, by stating that the laity are, “Christians who, without prejudice to service of God *in himself*, have their *own proper* calling to serve him and to fulfill the Church’s mission, in and through engagement in temporal tasks.”<sup>45</sup> They have a distinct and privileged function to reach out to the secular society that the clergy cannot attend to.

There is a common misconception which places the laity in a passive role below the clergy. Congar tackles this issue on how the function of the laity is often misunderstood. This kind of hierarchical structure emerged in the period following the Reformation which saw a strengthening of clericalism. Priests and bishops, sensing a lack of control over the Protestants, tightened the ecclesial structure and made it more hierarchical and institutional. Congar makes reference to this history when commenting about “those who, combatting certain marginal exaggerations, went so far as to define the priesthood of the faithful by its relationship and subordination to the hierarchical

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<sup>44</sup> Aquinas continues to state that the character received at baptism and confirmation is not removed by sinful acts. He writes that, “however much the will be moved in the contrary direction, the character is not removed, by reason of the immobility of the principal mover” (*ST IIa-IIae*, 63, 4, ad 1).

<sup>45</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 390.

priesthood.”<sup>46</sup> His tone of writing is critical of institutional movements which centralize hierarchical authority and marginalize the laity.

Congar’s ecclesial and liturgical theology, in this sense, is based on a collegial or conciliar structure which allows for the participation of the entire People. In regards to liturgy, the complementarity role is still preserved. On the one hand, the ministerial priest receives an “active power to celebrate or consecrate”<sup>47</sup> and on the other hand, the laity possesses an “active power to participate” by their “charismata.”<sup>48</sup> The language that Congar uses here is derived from a conciliar model of the Church, where all participate together in worship. The word “active” as opposed to “passive” in describing the common priesthood of the laity, however, should be interpreted carefully. While the change in wording points to their ‘equal’ function in the liturgy in its very complementary roles, this does not imply that the laity can partake in the proper roles pertaining to the ministerial priesthood. It is in this sense that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* iterates Congar’s point by stating that, “Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity’” (SC 26).

### Ministerial Priesthood and Power

While Congar expresses the necessary conciliar function that is united in the liturgy, not all believers ‘equally’ participate in the priestly office of Jesus Christ. The

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<sup>46</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 136.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>48</sup> There is a change of tone in the language that Congar and the document from the Second Vatican Council use. In the thirteenth century when Aquinas wrote on the sacramental relationship between ministerial and common priesthood, he noted that the “sacramental character” of the laity is on the “passive power.” While this language is still applicable in regards to liturgy and the sacraments, the “active” notion of the laity is emphasized in their dealings with the temporal order and secular culture. *Ibid.*

role of the ministerial priesthood, which is set apart to carry out the exterior or liturgical signs of the Church, is mentioned throughout the New Testament. Romans 15:16 describes Paul who receives a call to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He offers his priestly function to be the minister of the Word and sacrament so that they will be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In addition, Philippians 2:17 defines the nature of the ministerial priesthood. In this letter, Paul sees himself as a servant who rejoices with the Philippians even in the midst of the possibility of his death. He warns the people that he may face martyrdom, yet he nevertheless abides in joy because of the fact that his assembly has encountered the love of Christ. Paul's words in both the Romans and the Philippians speak about the ministerial power which is received through the ordination rite and allows for the giving of oneself to the People.

#### *Power from Above or Below?*

Congar affirms that the *power* of the ministerial priesthood “does not come from below, from the community, but from above, from Christ as the Church's Lord who has authority *over* her.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, not anyone or any community can choose someone to be a priest. Rather, this selection must be condoned by Christ through the mediation of the Church.

Other writers, however, do not make the distinction between common and ministerial priesthood as Congar does. Abbé Long-Hasselmanns<sup>50</sup> notes that the Anglican

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<sup>49</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 171. “Christ is our priest and in a sense our representative, but he is not our delegate. The ministerial priesthood's significance lies just here—visibly, sacramentally, to bring Christ's action to bear on us... and on any showing the hierarchical priests are priests in and for a community. In that sense the minister is priest of a community, but his priesthood does not derive from it.”

position is quite different in that it “sees the ‘ordination’ of presbyters simply as the provision of a qualified organ made in an entirely priestly body for the right exercise of priesthood in that body.”<sup>51</sup> The ministers in the Anglican Church are representations of the community, acting *only in persona Ecclesiae* and not acting *in persona Christi*.

According to Congar, such a position arises because Protestants believe that

One alone is priest, Christ, who is Alpha, Omega and the Way. Between Alpha and Omega, his priesthood is shared in sacramentally, with a view to the sacramental celebration of his sacrifice, (a) by all at baptism (confirmation), in order to join in that celebration; (b) by some, hierarchically, at ordination, in order to carry out that celebration. All are priests through their spiritual life in Christ, and in Heaven they will exercise only this priesthood, which is the priesthood of the last and final reality.<sup>52</sup>

Edward Schillebeeckx also emphasizes *in persona Ecclesiae*, stating that

“Nowhere in the New Testament is the explicit connection made between the ministry of the church and presiding at the eucharist.”<sup>53</sup> What is essential for Schillebeeckx is that the minister is chosen by the community, and the community allows the minister to preside at the Eucharist. The ministerial power received during the laying on of hands during the ordination rite is seen as a secondary act that follows from the community’s choosing of the minister.

David N. Power agrees with the idea that the minister of a community and the celebrant of the Sacrament of the Eucharist should be elected by the community. In addition, however, Powers uses the idea to justify the possibility of women’s ordination,

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<sup>50</sup> Church of England, *Doctrine in the Church of England (1938): The Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York* (London: SPCK, 1938), 156-9, quoted in Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 172-3.

<sup>51</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 173.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 119.

a topic that is sometimes discussed in the Church.<sup>54</sup> He writes that “It is doubtful that prevailing importance needs to be given to the sexual side of this imagery in configuring the Christ-Church or Christ-humanity relationship.”<sup>55</sup> He thus expresses his position that Christ’s banquet is free for all without gender exclusivity.

Why is this concept of receiving powers from the community invalid in the position of Congar? After all, if the community selects its minister, the faithful will be happy with their elected leader and the bishops will be anxiety-free for not having to re-appoint unwanted priests in their dioceses. However, Congar criticizes the Anglican view because “in consequence it fails to see clearly enough how two participations in Christ’s priesthood correspond to these two aspects, or how the Church as sacrament logically precedes the Church as fellowship”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, according to Congar the *in persona Ecclesiae* model fails because it “takes insufficient account of how the ministerial priesthood is, on the one hand, cause and begetter for the body... and on the other hand is simply the advancement and expression of the body’s immanent generalized priesthood.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> In *Inter Insigniores*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith is clear that the male role in the ministerial priesthood stems from the tradition of the Church that not even the pope can change. The tone of the document, however, is pastoral, giving a good grounding of the authority that women have had and continues to have in the Church. The document is certainly aware of gender tensions in contemporary society, yet it remains faithful to the teaching of Christ that ministerial priesthood is not about possessing individual rights. “But it must not be forgotten that the priesthood does not form part of the rights of the individual, but stems from the economy of the mystery of Christ and the Church.” To read more on this topic, see Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Inter Insigniores* (15 October 1976), at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19761015\\_inter-insigniores\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html).

<sup>55</sup> David N. Power, “Representing Christ in Community and Sacrament,” *Being a Priest Today*, ed. Donald Goergen (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 120.

<sup>56</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

Congar acknowledges proper context for *in persona Ecclesiae*, because “hierarchical priests are priests *in and for* a community.”<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, while he notes that a hierarchical priest is a ministerial priest *of* the community, he emphasizes that “his priesthood does not derive from it.”<sup>59</sup> In this sense, clerical ordination belongs to the Church’s “sacramental being” in which “it represents a mystery given to her from above.”<sup>60</sup> Just like the Apostles “who were appointed to preach the gospel and minister the sacraments before there was any community of faithful,”<sup>61</sup> it is “the sacrament of holy orders” which “sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful” in participation with a bishop who possesses in his office the fullness of priesthood (*MD 43, PO 7*).

#### *In Persona Christi Capitis*

The explanations of dogmatic constitutions of Vatican II and post-synodal apostolic exhortation further our understanding of the office of the ministerial priesthood through which Christ the High Priest acts. When the clergy recite the very words of Christ in the Mass and other sacraments, they possess a distinct power that correlates directly *in persona Christi Capitis* (*CL 22*). Their duty is to be an instrument of “Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men” and to help others partake in their priestly authority in Christ (*LG 10*). By these powers given to the clergy, in this case, priests and bishops have the responsibility to preach Jesus Christ in the public forms of sacramental and liturgical worship. Therefore, it is fitting to note that everyone participates in the

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<sup>58</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 171.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

liturgy, “according to their differing rank, office, and actual participation” (SC 26). In this way, *in persona Christi* can apply to the entire People of God in their function as priest, prophet, and king while *in persona Christi Capitis*, which is made possible by the laying on of hands by a bishop, is only participated by the ministerial priesthood.

To act as an *instrument* of Christ the High Priest is a serious and difficult task. The office requires a handing on of the faith that is strictly of Christ and the Church. This office is distinct from action *in persona Christi* of the laity that is flexible and creative in evangelizing the temporal order. Pope Benedict XVI describes this difficult task of partaking in the ministerial office:

Therefore the priest does not teach his own ideas, a philosophy that he himself has invented, that he has discovered or likes; the priest does not speak of himself, he does not speak for himself, to attract admirers, perhaps, or create a party of his own; he does not say his own thing, his own inventions but, in the medley of all the philosophies, the priest teaches in the name of Christ present, he proposes the truth that is Christ himself, his word and his way of living and of moving ahead. What Christ said of himself applies to the priest: ‘My teaching is not mine’ (Jn 7:16).<sup>62</sup>

While the quotation that the pope provides is a challenge for ministerial priests, Christ himself in the scripture appoints the apostles who are weak and fragile. After all, Peter denies him three times before the cock crows and Judas betrays him completely in exchange for money (Jn 18:5, 13-27). Yet, Christ still “communicated to them by the authority he gave them to consecrate the eucharist.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, “the ministerial priesthood is a sharing in the priesthood of the Apostles, itself an extension of the

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<sup>62</sup> Benedict XVI, General Audience: Saint Peter’s Square (14 April 2010), at the Holy See, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20100414.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100414.html).

<sup>63</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 179.

priesthood of Christ.”<sup>64</sup> In this manner, a ministerial priest is a sinful person unworthy of his office, yet Christ nevertheless speaks through them.

### *Lay Aspect of Ministerial Priesthood*

The lay aspect of the ministerial priesthood should not be dismissed though. In the words of Congar, “a priest, a bishop, a pope is, first of all, a layman.”<sup>65</sup> There is an aspect to the life of a ministerial priest that requires a self-sacrifice that all the People of God are called to. In this sense, Congar argues that “it is impossible to separate his personal religious life, that of layman, and the religious life of his office, that of priest or of bishop: the two are united in one single destiny, the destiny of one single person.”<sup>66</sup>

Considering the sinfulness of the ministerial priest, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes that the validity of the sacraments does not depend on the holiness of the priest. It states that “from the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister” (CCC 1128). Congar, however, still argues that the ministerial priest should still strive to be holy. It is by prayer and contemplation that he can strive not to fall into hypocrisy. While the validity of the sacrament will not be affected even by the sinfulness of the priest, his misdeeds can lead the faithful away from Christ.

In this manner, despite the challenging task that is given to the ministerial priesthood, we can be assured that its office by sacred ordination is called to serve the

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<sup>64</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 178.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*



common priesthood by exercising the “service for the People of God by teaching, divine worship, and pastoral governance”<sup>67</sup> As the Catechism explains, “The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful” (CCC 1592). Then, how do we make sense of the statement that the laity are co-sharers in the three distinct offices as prophet, priest, and king (CL 9)?

### **Lay Ecclesial Office**

For Congar, the laity “exercise a mediation of life between the Body of Christ and the world.”<sup>68</sup> This is mainly a secular office given to the lay character in the Church. The secular dimension of church and society, therefore, “is drawn to Christ in and through the faithful.”<sup>69</sup> Congar understands that “for the first time, the Church is really confronted by a secular world” and that the world of work is “a part of one single Christian life in which the faithful have to sanctify themselves and give glory to God.”<sup>70</sup> It is by approaching secularity by their charismatic and baptismal character that are to make Christ known in the entities within society such as non-profit organization, corporation, family, hospitals, gymnastics, etc.

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<sup>67</sup> The particular office given to the ministerial priesthood is, in fact, for the sacraments, specifically, *in* the Church. Since the office pertains to the very words and deeds of Christ, it is granted purely from *above* through the mediation of a bishop. While it is the case that the Church offers this office for the ministerial priesthood, she does not provide this type of office as such for the laity, even though many of them are involved in the sacramental life of the Church. Is it a possibility for the laity to partake in an ecclesial office that is distinctly for them. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 181.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

Ratzinger uses a phrase, “ecclesial world-office of the laity,” in order to “clarify the place of lay people in the church and their consecration and mission for their secular tasks.”<sup>71</sup> Ratzinger explains that “the documents of Vatican II do not speak about a ‘ministry [*ministerium*],’ of lay people, but only of their ‘task [*munus*].’”<sup>72</sup> Critical of such definition, he advocates for an “office even in the economic and cultural sphere”<sup>73</sup> that challenges and moves secularity towards Christ. The laity, then, participates in the offices of priest, prophet, and king by engaging in the secular society “through baptism (deepened by the other sacraments—confirmation, reconciliation, Eucharist, and matrimony).”<sup>74</sup> As stated, Ratzinger does not see the office of the laity as an additional sacrament. Rather, it is made possible by strengthening of the mentioned sacraments that allow them to exercise the office which directs them towards the sanctification of the world.

#### Example of Lay Ecclesial Office: Parenthood

At this point, it is fitting to give an example of this office as it pertains to real life situations. One of the ways that lay office is witnessed, for instance, is through parenthood. While matrimony itself is a sacrament, parenthood is an office that is

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<sup>71</sup> Like Congar, Ratzinger makes a distinction between ministerial and common priesthood. He writes that, “Through ordination and mission, the servant of Christ in the hierarchical office is given the task and responsibility of God’s way toward the world. The lay person, on the other hand, has been given responsibility for the world and stands thus in the midst of the world” (342). Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Johann Auer, *The Church: The Universal Sacrament of Salvation*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 344.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

sacrificial in nature which correlates to the role of the common priesthood. Christian parenting, therefore, is a fundamental evangelical method to make Christ known in the world.<sup>75</sup> Congar explains that “Families are actually and literally cells of the Church,”<sup>76</sup> since there is an increase in biological aptitude within the Body itself. He states that “it is through Christian parents that the substance of the human world, in the very act of its increase, turns into the Body of Christ and into Church.”<sup>77</sup> In fact, the lay office of parenting requires the sacrificial act of responsibility, love, and fidelity, bringing children up in loving care and providing for proper intellectual and moral education.

### *Secularity and Parenthood*

The sacrificial nature of parenthood, however, is misunderstood in the secular culture. Given the problems that concern marriages like financial issues, infidelity,

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<sup>75</sup> The true nature of marriage is often misunderstood in our popular culture. It often takes on a different meaning in the secular realm. The Church believes that it is important to maintain respect for the sanctity of marriage. With the homosexual and transgender movements, skyrocketing divorce rates, and the increase in the hookup culture, the Church faces difficult challenges. A person growing up in the millennial era will likely question whether there is value and good in the sacrament of Matrimony.

<sup>76</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 202.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

gender ideology,<sup>78</sup> birth control, and technology, the sacrament of matrimony and the lay office of parenthood may be burdensome to spouses.<sup>79</sup> There is a definite lack of marriage formation as well as a general sense of Christian lifestyle in secularity. Is the Church doing poorly on promoting a positive message on the institution of marriage and office of parenting in parishes, workplaces, homes, and schools? Is there a good understanding of the intentions of Christ regarding the reality of love, sex, sacrifice, procreation, and the upbringing of children in the Catholic faith?

Despite the challenges that the secular dimension of the Church faces, a lay initiative is present in the Church today. Reading *Project Holiness* by Julie Massey and Bridget Ravissa certainly encourages every faithful in all walks of life that a “suffering’s call is perhaps less about doing than receiving, opening up, risking vulnerability, and allowing for our spouse and others to offer care and support.”<sup>80</sup> The two writers exercise

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<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, in the recent years, some cultural and psychological studies have influenced the ways in which people think about gender. These teachings are often contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church that a man and a woman have complementary roles to fulfill. While it is true that our culture partly shapes the way we think, make decisions, and feel, we cannot negate the innate nature, psyche, being, body, and etc. that are essential components of the human person. Carl Jung’s psychoanalytic theory on *anima* and *animus* explains that each gender possesses a contrasexual component. He writes that “The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. No less naturally, the imago of woman (the soul-image) becomes a receptacle for these demands, which is why a man, in his love-choice, is strongly tempted to win the woman who best corresponds to his own unconscious femininity—a woman, in short, who can unhesitatingly receive the projection of his soul.” Carl Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Bollingen Foundation, Inc., 1953), 199. For more information on the complementary role of sexes, see Ann Belford Ulanov, *Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); and Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening Aliveness/Deadness in the Self* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007). To read more on Jungian psychology in light of Thomism, see Carl Jung and Victor White, *The Jung-White Letters*, ed. Ann Conrad Lammers and Adrian Cunningham (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>79</sup> The pew results from “Soul Mates,” reveals the general consensus of infidelity in marriages. For instance, the authors of *Soul Mates* state that 18 percent of black men and 16 percent of Latino men, and 29 percent of black women and 22 percent of Latina women reported having committed infidelity. This case study shows us that the reality of marriage is muddy. To see more charts and statistics on the muddiness of marriage, see Bradford W. Wilcox and Nicholas H. Wolfinger. *Soul Mates: Religion, Sex and Love among African Americans and Latinos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

their office by teaching a lesson in promoting the goods of spousal relationship and parenting. What about someone like Ann M. Michaud who witnesses that, “Marriage is a pivotal element in the life of the laity of the church, and therefore, in the life of the church?”<sup>81</sup> The very act of making Christ known in secularity, in this way, is the mission of the lay office.

Therefore, in order for the true teaching on the sacrament of matrimony to be reformed in secularity, a lay office especially that of parenthood must be visible to reshape this subsidiary. As encouraged by Congar and Ratzinger, the ecclesial office of the laity that is supported by the office of the hierarchical priesthood will transform secular culture and make Christ known.<sup>82</sup> The image of Christ Who takes the Church as His bride is an analogy for the bond or covenant which is made between a man and a woman in the sacrament of marriage. While many societies in recent years have liberally changed their attitudes and laws regarding civil unions, the Church has always taught that “Unity, indissolubility, and openness to fertility are essential to marriage” (CCC 1664).

### Example of Lay Office: Catholic Action

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<sup>80</sup> Julie Donovan Massey and Bridget Burke Ravizza, *Project Holiness: Marriage as a Workshop for Everyday Saints* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 100.

<sup>81</sup> Ann M. Michaud, “Sex and Love as a Pathway to God,” *Catholic Identity and the Laity: College Theology Society Annual Volume 54*, ed. Tim Muldoon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 90.

<sup>82</sup> The writings of Pope Francis serve as good examples of a hierarchical support. Having had many years of pastoral experiences, Pope Francis understands the lack of formation for married couples. He begins his preaching by first speaking about the gray areas of marriage and by describing the importance of seeing the concrete or practical realities as opposed to an ideal view of the sacrament. In *Amoris Laetitia*, he writes about accepting “one’s own vulnerability and needs, and to welcome with sincere and joyful gratitude the physical expressions of love found in a caress, an embrace, a kiss and sexual union” (AL 157).

Another example of ecclesial lay office is the Catholic Action movements which include all the faithful in different walks of life. While Congar does not use the explicit word, “office” as Ratzinger does, he uses “Catholic Action” to describe such an office. Catholic Action, for Congar, is “not a uniform, monolithic, unchangeable construction; it is a whole made up of varied, adaptable and alterable organizations in which the apostleship of the laity and of Christian activity are in part exerted.”<sup>83</sup> From Young Christian Workers to Catholic Worker Movement; from Crucillo to Focolare Movement; from Opus Dei to Communion and Liberation; the list goes on to describe the possibility of lay initiatives in secularity. In this manner, the ecclesial lay office or Catholic Action is an ongoing mission to invoke various events of today. While this topic needs more discussion in the frontiers of the Church, as Juliana Casey states, “Lay ministry involves the whole person and calls for attention to spirit and to heart as well as to knowledge and skills”<sup>84</sup> Shall we, then, posit that the laity possesses an authority over secularity by their office?

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explained the distinction between common and ministerial priesthood. On the one hand, the ordained *power* invested to the ministerial priests allow them to celebrate the sacraments *in persona Christi Capitis* in service of the common

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<sup>83</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 377.

<sup>84</sup> Juliana Casey, I.H.M. “Formation for Lay Ministry: Learnings from Religious Life,” *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2010), 148. In her book, Casey provides the ways in which the laity can be educated in the different pillars of life.

priesthood. In addition, as put forth by Ratzinger and Congar, the lay people by virtue of their common priesthood possess ecclesial lay office which directly affects secularity.

Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* sees the need to make a clear distinction between the two groups. He writes that the task of the lay people “is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community- this is the specific role of the pastor- but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world” (*EN 70*). In this manner, it is essential that the members of the Church live according to the function is proper to him or her.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the relationship between the magisterium, theologians, and the people of God in order to expand the discussion on authority. The distinct authority of each group is crucial in handing on the church teachings which are found in scripture and tradition. By noting the relationship between conscience and magisterium in the light of a thorough explanation on the collegiality of all church members, I will discuss the topic of authority in greater detail.

## **Chapter 3**

### **ECCLESIAL EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY**

In the previous chapter, I explained about the authority that pertains to both common and ministerial priesthood. Given the function of the ministerial priesthood that acts in *persona Christi Capitis*, I stated the need for a lay ecclesial office that directly evangelizes secular society. In addition to this need, a dialogue between common and ministerial priesthood; between the magisterium, theologians, and the people of God is necessary in order to impact secularity. A genuine relationship between her members makes possible for transmission of orthodox teachings and righteous jurisdiction. In this chapter, I will discuss the ecclesial exercise of authority in the life of the Church by first explaining the authority of scripture and tradition that has been handed on since the time of Christ. Second, I will discuss the nature of the magisterium that possesses the authority to hand on the truths of the faith. Finally, I will explain the proper relationship between authorities in the Church, mainly, those of the magisterium, theologians, and the people of God.

#### **Transmission of Faith**

There is no evidence that Jesus left any piece of writing. Those who never encountered Christ in history, therefore, know about him by the transmission of faith in the oral tradition of the apostles and the written and inspired words of the Gospel writers. In the letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, he teaches the assembly to “stand firm and



hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours” (2 Thess 2:15). He already makes the distinction between oral and written tradition and explains the process of transmitting the faith that Christ had entrusted to his followers. The statement of Paul is reiterated in the document of the Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, which states that “Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church” (*DV* 10). While tradition and scripture both possess essential authority in the transmission of faith, it is difficult to pinpoint how they complement each other.

### Sacred Tradition

Tradition in its very essence is the deposit of faith given by Jesus Christ to the apostles and passed on in the Church from one generation to the next.<sup>85</sup> Together with Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition formed one deposit of faith (*DV* 10). The revelation of God, in both written and oral forms, is entrusted to the office of teaching in the Church. Since what is written in the inspired books of Scripture is the Word of God, these words must be carefully examined and interpreted for proper understanding.

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<sup>85</sup> Unlike “Tradition” (with an upper-case “T”), Congar states that ‘traditions’ (with a lower-case “t”) are often changed and reformed. Since their contents are not formally in scripture, “traditions” regarding discipline, worship, and sacramentals are not permanent in any way. For Congar, “traditions can be *universal or particular and local.*” To know more on the distinction between Tradition and traditions, please read Yves Congar, *Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 46.

A good example of reformable tradition is the Church’s liturgy. Due to the need to meet the interest of a particular group, different forms can be celebrated in different places. John O’Malley explains the liturgical reform that took place during the Second Vatican Council, noting that “local adaptation, especially in mission territories, was encouraged. Greater autonomy was to be granted to bishops in making adaptations appropriate to their cultures, which was a clear call for some decentralization” (132). This kind of implementation shows that hymns, observances, rubrics, language, etc. are prone to change depending on circumstances and contexts. To read more on the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, read John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2008); Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

Congar expands on this notion: “With regard to Scripture, Tradition is a certain way of using and interpreting it... according to an interpretation that is equally centered on Christ, the Church and eschatology, and makes use of the analogy of faith.”<sup>86</sup> Without using and interpreting Scripture in these ways, the faithful can be led into error and away from sound doctrine.

Congar derives his notion of tradition from the patristic writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian. For Irenaeus, tradition “consists in reading the Word of God without falsification, and a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures, both without danger and without blasphemy” (*Against Heresies*, Bk. 4, Chap. 33). Against the heretics of his time, Irenaeus stresses the importance that the teachings of Christ must be preserved in truth and harmony. Likewise, Tertullian also offers a similar definition to that of Irenaeus but writes that the true meaning of scripture is revealed through “the true Christian rule and Faith” (*Against Praxeas*, Chap. 2). The *rule* that Tertullian speaks of is somewhat ambiguous and needs more explanation.

### The Rule of Faith

Congar defines the rule of faith, “as the faith of the Church, that is, in the first place, the faith that is received in the course of baptismal instruction and professed in baptism.”<sup>87</sup> In other words, it is “the Scriptures and the creed.”<sup>88</sup> The catechism reiterates this definition but uses a different term, “symbol of faith,” which is first and

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<sup>86</sup> Congar, *Meaning of Tradition*, 127.

<sup>87</sup> Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 29.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

foremost the baptismal creed. From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on the faith in brief formulae for all (CCC 189, 186). Due to the permanent authority that it holds, Gaillardetz describes that it is “proposed with the charism of infallibility.”<sup>89</sup>

Irenaeus was the first one to mention the rule of faith which he defines as “the rule of salvation.” It is the teaching “received from the Apostles and their disciples this faith” (*Against Heresies*, Chap. 1). The definition of Irenaeus is also revealed in the writings of Origen who systematically lays it out as a teaching of the Church: “First, there is one God, Who created and arranged all things... Jesus Christ was born of the Father before all creatures...” (*On First Principles*, Bk. I, Preface, 4). In this sense, the rule of the faith is the essential or dogmatic teachings of the Church.

Tertullian furthers the discussion on the nature of the rule of faith. He makes a strict separation between the rule of faith and heresy.<sup>90</sup> The rule of faith, for Tertullian, “has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel, much more before Praxeas... from the lateness of date which marks all heresies” (*Against Praxeas*, Chap. 2). The rule

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Gaillardetz goes on to describe the gradations of truth. Next to Dogma, he writes, in order, definitive doctrine, authoritative doctrine, and prudential admonitions and church discipline. Richard Gaillardetz, *By What Authority: A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 94. “Over the course of almost two thousand years, the Christian community has found it necessary to make formal doctrinal pronouncements against perceived threats to the integrity of the faith. There has gradually emerged within the Roman Catholic communion a set of distinctions regarding church teaching that can help us in making these determinations” (94).

<sup>90</sup> To give an example, Roch Kereszty explains in his book the challenges of preserving the rule of faith in the early Church, especially on defining the nature of Christ. See Roch A. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology* (New York: Society of St. Paul, 2011). “Towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, confronted with various errors, the Church clarified the full humanity (true body, true human suffering, rational soul or mind) and full divinity of Christ (identical in nature with the Father rather than an intermediate being between God and the rest of creation),” (238).

of faith throughout church history regulated forms of heretical spiritual movements<sup>91</sup> by encouraging her members to rise above the hindrance of ignorance and falsity of judgment. In this manner, it was a unifying factor between all Christians against false teachings. At this point, while we discussed the infallible authority that the rule holds, it is unclear to whom the authority is given to in preserving it. After all, is every follower of Christ given this authority?

### **The Office of Bishops**

The Pauline corpus gives us answers in this regard. When Paul asks Timothy to “guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us,” (2 Tim 1:14) he means the rule of faith is preserved and handed on. Irenaeus is clear that it is the function of the episcopacy that preserves the Christian teaching when he writes that the rule of faith was “guarded by the successions of Presbyters in the Churches.” (*Against Heresies*, Bk. III, Chap. 3). Through the rule which was preserved and transmitted by bishops, the Church came together in communion.

The Christian writers of the second and third-century wrote extensively on the function of the hierarchical authority of bishops. For instance, Ignatius of Antioch writes that “when you are obedient to the bishop as you would be to Jesus Christ, you are living, not in a human way, but according to Jesus Christ” (*Letter to the Trallians*, Chap. 2).

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<sup>91</sup> David Christie-Murray proposes that “heresy” describes a matter of fact rather than a matter of blame that connotes various forms of ideology. To read more on different forms of heresy, see David Christie-Murray, *A History of Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). “The Gnostic contempt for the moral law, as of no relevance or importance to the truly spiritual, led either to extreme asceticism or extreme license, for, since the body was evil, it did not matter if it was mortified or indulged. Christians might sympathize with the asceticism, which some of them practiced themselves; but even this was a calling only for some, and common sense, recognizing the world as it is, saw that society needed a moral code if it was to continue to exist at all, and that for the ordinary man self-discipline and moderation in all things are kindred qualities” (32).

Judging from his writing, relying on a bishop meant that one was relying on the authority of Christ. A bishop, therefore, possessed the hierarchical *power* to unite the entire People of God together by the rule of faith.

Cyprian of Carthage writes more descriptively about the authority of a bishop. For him, a bishop always considers the voice of the people of God. He posits that “I decided to do nothing of my own opinion privately without your advice and the consent of the people” (*Epistle 14*, 4). The office of a bishop, then, is to serve the community on behalf of Christ over the flock by considering the general consensus of the people (*LG* 20). Gaillardetz furthers the discussion by providing three characteristics of a bishop in the early Church. He writes that:

(1) the bishop was the apostolic leader of the local church; (2) that communion with him was a visible sign of communion in the Church; (3) the bishop was not above the local church but bound to it as its pastoral leader.<sup>92</sup>

### Magisterium

Magisterium as a teaching function of the bishops undergoes a long history as presented in the historical analysis by Congar who explains that “from the fourth century onward, theologians are most often bishops and important bishops are theologians.”<sup>93</sup> These bishops were thus considered holding a *cathedra*, a term which signified the continuation or succession of the teachings of the apostles. According to Congar,

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<sup>92</sup> Gaillardetz, *By What Authority*, 63.

<sup>93</sup> Yves Congar, “A Brief History of the Forms of the Magisterium and its Relations with Scholars,” in *Readings in Moral Theology No. 3: The Magisterium and Morals*, ed. Charles Curran and Richard McCormick (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 317.

*cathedra*, which in this sense eventually took on the term *magisterium*, was “considered not as a juridical authority possessing as such a power to compel, but as a function through which the Church receives the faith inherited from the apostles.”<sup>94</sup> In the quotation, Congar denotes a juridical side of the magisterium. At this point, we may wonder whether the essential function of the magisterium can be without a juridical notion.

Vatican II’s document *Dei Verbum* which does not utilize the word, “jurisdiction” or “magisterium” as such, describes that the function of “this teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on” (*DV* 10). Francis Sullivan interprets this passage of the document as a recent development, “that the term magisterium has come to mean not only the teaching function of the hierarchy, but also the hierarchy itself as the bearer of this office.”<sup>95</sup> In this way, defining a magisterial function as that of a bishop is a modern Catholic interpretation. If such is the case, has there been different ways to define the function of the magisterium?

### Magisterium of Pastor and Theologian

The distinction that Thomas Aquinas makes regarding the magisterium is helpful. He mentions that *magisterium cathedrae magistralis*, those who engage in university

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<sup>94</sup> In the second century, the term *orthodoxy* was introduced by Irenaeus “who formulated the doctrine of apostolic succession of ministers as the form and guarantee of the authenticity of tradition” (315). In order to preserve the authentic teachings of Christ, theologians and bishops often argued until their disagreements were settled. Debates were often held between the “speculation of the doctors and the apostolic succession of ordained ministers,” (315) and they quarreled about which truths were in conformity to the salvific plan of Christ. The orthodoxy of the Fathers, in this way, rejected, “what did not agree with their understanding of the faith” (315) in order that Christ’s message would be transmitted in its fullness. Congar, “A Brief History,” 316.

<sup>95</sup> Francis Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), 26.

sciences, possess teaching authority, while *magisterium cathedrae pastoralis*, those who partake in pastoral jurisdiction, possess a teaching office or power (*Contra Impugn.* c. 2 and *Quodl.* III, 9, ad 3).<sup>96</sup> The distinction is explained well by Congar who notes that:

The magisterium of a theologian can be recognized and be a public office in the Church, but its substance comes from his scholarly competence. The pastoral magisterium is linked to the public office of *praelatio*, that is, superiority or authority, to which belongs jurisdiction."<sup>97</sup>

The comments that Congar makes on the insertion of Aquinas answer to the questions of the previous paragraphs. It is obvious at this point that the recent development on the authority of the magisterium, as revealed in *Dei Verbum*, does not take into consideration this distinction made by Aquinas.<sup>98</sup>

In the Church of today, then, the magisterium is seen in the light of the bishops who possess “fullness of power” and “fullness of the priesthood” in the offices of teaching, sanctification, and jurisdiction (*LG* 21; *PO* 7). In this manner, Christ seeks instrumentality through the bishops who must teach the rule of faith as it is without personal opinion or creativity. If this is the case that the bishops possess magisterial authority by their office, what is the proper relationship that they should have with the people of God? In other words, do the theologians and the entire people of God have to obey the rule of faith as precisely as it is handed down without subjective interpretation? What is the relationship between an individual conscience and the magisterium?

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<sup>96</sup> Congar notes that, “This role of Doctors will reach its apogee, a peak sufficiently unhealthy, at the Council of Basel: at the thirty-fourth session, on June 25, 1439, there were three hundred Doctors as against thirteen priests and seven bishops! It explains the importance Luther attached to his title (his function and authority) as a Doctor,” Congar, “A Brief History,” 319.

<sup>97</sup> Congar, “A Brief History,” 415.

<sup>98</sup> Congar notes that the *magisterium cathedrae magistralis* was suppressed around the time of French Revolution. When it was reintroduced in the nineteenth century, it existed only as a function under the authority of the papacy.

## Magisterium and Conscience

William of Ockham gives a possible relationship that one can have with the magisterium. A theologian of the Medieval West in support of nominalism, he “was concerned to subordinate ‘the Church’ strictly to the objective sources of its faith.”<sup>99</sup> In his theology, “there could be no thought of questioning the normative and obligatory character of the conclusions endorsed by the Church.”<sup>100</sup> This understanding hailed by Ockham requires a blind submission to the magisterial teaching office of the episcopacy in surrender of one’s intellect and will without the consideration of individual conscience. Ockham seems to hold such a position since we are to obey the bishops in the rule of faith.

Nevertheless, Thomas Aquinas holds a different position. Opposed to this kind of strict submission to the hierarchy, he states that the role of conscience is essential for living a Christian life. He defines conscience as that which “designates the act itself, the application of any habit or of any knowledge to some particular act” (*De Veritate*, 17, 1, co.) It is an act whether a particular will is good or bad. In every moral operation, a person apprehends a situation according to the *object* in relation to the *end* and

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<sup>99</sup> Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 96.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*



*circumstance*. For instance, if one seeks to be happy, then he or she chooses the object which will enable one to cultivate appropriate virtues.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, by good conscience in specific situations, one can even override ecclesial authority, knowing that one's *intention* is good even if the *end* of such action may contradict ecclesiastical laws, the magisterium, and variant authorities. For instance, with *synderesis* and knowledge of the ten commandments, one desires to keep the Sabbath holy by resting and recreating. Yet, if one cannot support his family by working only six days a week, he *wills* the option to labor for the love of his family members. His *intention*, in this case, is *proportionate* to the *end*.

Aquinas' respect for the role of conscience, in this sense, is radically different from the authoritarian point of view which encourages blind obedience to the moral imperatives of church hierarchy without any regard for individual conscience. Looking at the kind of position which Ockham takes when he states that "the content of what is good is furnished by the divine command, as well as the obligation to do it,"<sup>102</sup> Congar, agreeing with Aquinas, sees how such theology leads to anti-intellectualism by dismissing the role of speculative reason and by refusing to let the faithful know *why* the Church teaches such doctrines.

For Congar, the tension between personal conscience and ecclesial authority, in this manner, can be the defining point of a schismatic division. Congar blames the tension between the magisterium and malformed conscience that led to Protestant Reformation.

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<sup>101</sup> Incorporating Aristotle's philosophy, Aquinas explains that since God created us, nature is good and wants to choose the good; this is because universal principles (to do good and to avoid evil) are engrained in human nature. A good action based on good conscience, therefore, "pursues the particular in such a way as to attain the ultimate good" (175). John Lamont, "Conscience, Freedom, Rights: Idols of the Enlightenment Religion," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* (April, 2009), 169-239.

<sup>102</sup> Lamont, "Conscience, Freedom, Rights," 179.

In his opinion, the overall relationship, between personal conscience and objective truths from *above*, was not melded together harmoniously.<sup>103</sup> Since the rule of faith applies to both the objective and subjective dimensions of the living reality of the Church, both must be considered carefully. Due to the strong emphasis which the hierarchy placed on their juridical powers, reformers like Martin Luther questioned the authentic nature of the hierarchy and stated that more emphasis must be given to the authority of Scripture.

Congar likewise explains the inadequate correlation between Scripture and the magisterium during this period. He writes that “many thought, or at least expressed themselves in such a way as to give the impression, that ‘the Church’, in practice the pope, gave Scripture its ‘authority’ by approving it and declaring it canonical.”<sup>104</sup> Had the pope and bishops taught that “the Church affirms the submission of the magisterium, including that of the pope to God’s institution and the apostolic norms”<sup>105</sup> the reformers could have possibly remained with the Church.<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, the unfortunate outcome was that they dissented, not realizing that they were reacting against false implementations and norms that overly exaggerated the authority of the papacy. As Congar notes, “the spiritual and the objective are not really opposed, any more than the ecclesial and the personal; though it is, unfortunately, true that our expressions are so often inadequate.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> For Congar, “the Reformers were doubtless victims of the bad formulation of the question prevalent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, itself the fruit of excessive exaggeration of ecclesiastical machinery and especially of papal authority.” Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 14.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

In order to mend the tension between the personal and objective; conscience and magisterium, it is worth noting the ecclesial model of Aquinas in which conscience is educated through the virtues. His view of ecclesial structure implies that “the Church is the economy of the return of personal beings to God.”<sup>108</sup> The People of God, therefore, receive the grace of the Holy Spirit inwardly and move closer to the headship of Christ. God calls everyone in the Body to Himself through the practice of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Congar explains more descriptively that:

life is determined like all movement, by its objects; for men to live the life of means having the “ends” and objects of the life of God: this is achieved by the theological virtues, by faith which begins to see as God sees, love which loves as God loves, and by all the moral virtues.<sup>109</sup>

As stated, God, firstly, infuses the faithful with his graces, and by cooperation with these graces, they achieve a joyful life in the Lord. By the habitual practice of the cardinal and theological virtues, each member becomes more *actualized* as Jesus Christ.

In this manner, Aquinas prioritizes the importance of one’s conscience which hopefully is in conformity with the teachings of the magisterium. Since the Church, as an organic whole, moves towards God by the practice of the virtues, such habits graciously form it. Nevertheless, disagreements between the two entities can be apparent. The Medieval theologian Peter Lombard held that “one is not obliged to follow one’s conscience when at odds with church teaching,”<sup>110</sup> Lombard, in this sense, differed in view to that of his successor Aquinas who, in retrospect, preferred good conscience over

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<sup>108</sup> Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960), 103.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 101. “To define the Church as a body having community of life with God is to conceive of it as humanity vitalized Godwards by the theological virtues, which have God for their object, and organized in the likeness of God by the moral virtues.”

<sup>110</sup> As cited by James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 28.

the magisterium, if the magisterial teaching is somewhat flawed in its presentation. In the case of Lombard, one suppresses his or her conscience by obeying the magisterium even if the good conscience dictates what is right. As a result, there is an implicit connection between Lombard, Ockham, and the nominalists in this regard.

The argument that Avery Dulles makes helps us to resolve the differing views between Lombard and Aquinas. Dulles states that “in the normal cases conscience and authority are not opposed,”<sup>111</sup> noting the possible conformity between the teachings of the Church and one’s speculation about them. Nevertheless, he also points out that in cases of fallible teachings, the two can oppose one another. The good conscience of the individual, therefore, can be the initial starting point which leads to a reform of the teachings of the magisterium. Dulles concludes that:

If theologians such as Yves Congar and John Courtney Murray had not publicly manifested their disagreement with certain official teachings, it is far less likely that Vatican II, under their influence, would have adopted new positions on subjects such as ecumenism and religious freedom.<sup>112</sup>

Dulles’ argument shows that a possible interplay between the authority of the magisterium and theologians can take place in handing on the rules of the faith. The magisterium and theologians can enter into a dialogue in order to arrive at truths together.

## **Ecclesial Structure**

### Magisterium and Theologians

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<sup>111</sup> Avery Dulles, “Authority and Conscience,” in *Readings in Moral Theology No. 6: Dissent in the Church*, ed. Charles Curran and Richard McCormick (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988), 107.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

While Dulles explains the kind of relationship that the magisterium should have with the theologians, Gaillardetz explains that before Vatican II, “the dominant conception of the Church itself was excessively pyramidal and consequently saw revelation as ‘trickling down’ from the hierarchy, through the theologians to the laity.”<sup>113</sup> This type of model suggests that the theologians *passively* receive the teaching from the magisterium, that in turn, the people of God *passively* receiving the teaching from the theologians. The model in which Gaillardetz explains, however, can seem somewhat simplistic. Were there no real dialogues between the magisterium and theologians; between the theologians and people of God in regards to faith and morals before Vatican II?

The decree of Pius X, *Lamentabili* (1907), for instance, condemns the Modernist idea that “the learning Church and the teaching Church work together in defining truths, [and] that the only function of the teaching Church is to ratify the generally held opinions of the learning Church”<sup>114</sup> This condemnation suggests that a dialogical relationship did not exist between the magisterium and theologians or people of God in the years prior to Vatican II. The decree gives more authority to the magisterium in dismissing Modernist ideas, which they deemed as erroneous. In this sense, Gaillardetz’s assessment is accurate.

### Magisterium, Theologians, and People of God

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<sup>113</sup> Gaillardetz, *By What Authority*, 136.

<sup>114</sup> Jacques Dupuis, ed., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 2001), 323 (#846/6).

Different to the ecclesial structure prior to Vatican II, Susan Wood notes that Vatican II restructured the relationship between the authority of the magisterium, theologians, and people of God. She writes:

Two developments in the ecclesiology of Vatican II seriously challenged the monarchical or pyramidal model: (1) the development of the principle of collegiality and the affirmation of the sacramentality of episcopal consecration, and (2) the image of the Church as the People of God.<sup>115</sup>

Wood explains how the council implemented a church structure that would include the laity. Her outlook on such a structure, therefore, seeks for “communion of its members.”<sup>116</sup>

Ratzinger, in addition, provides a worthwhile church structure of Vatican II. He verifies the communion-based model in *Donum Veritatis* (1990) in which the magisterium, theologians, and people of God have an ongoing dialogue in order to transmit the teachings of Christ. He writes that a role of a theologian:

is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the Word of God found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church. He does this in communion with the Magisterium which has been charged with the responsibility of preserving the deposit of faith. It thereby aids the People of God in fulfilling the Apostle’s command to give an accounting for their hope to those who ask it.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Susan Wood, *Sacramental Orders* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 7. “The first affirmed that the bishops possess powers by virtue of their episcopal consecration that are not juridically delegated to them by the pope even though they exercise these powers in communion with him. The second affirmed that the Church is not exclusively identified with the hierarchy or its juridical organization, but is the communion of its members. This understanding led to a renewed theology of the laity.”

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis*, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian, no. 6, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19900524\\_theologian-vocation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html).

The quotation truly speaks about a collegial Church which dialogues back and forth between her members. While the magisterium certainly relays to the entire members the rule of faith in function to unify, theologians and the people of God have the duty to think and grapple with the teachings in the light of modern secularity.

In such a manner, with the reform of Vatican II, the structure of the Church became more communion-based, applying *sentire cum ecclesiae*<sup>118</sup> (to feel or think with the Church) of the entire members. The underlying theology was pastoral, noting the contribution of the laity to the organism of the Mystical Body. As Congar foretold in the years before the council, lay people were given a duty in the Church and in society as “Christians who, without prejudice to service of God have their *own proper* calling to serve him and to fulfill the Church’s mission, in and through engagement.”<sup>119</sup>

On a different note, while the implementation called for a stronger and unified church, some of the bishops were dissatisfied with certain changes. Gaillardetz explains that during the 1985 extraordinary synod of bishops, some bishops “voiced concerns regarding overly ideological readings of the ‘people of God’ image.”<sup>120</sup> They were uneasy about “this image of the church being employed to create an opposition between

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<sup>118</sup> While the phrase *sentire cum ecclesia* will be discussed more in depth in Chapter 4, it is fitting to introduce this phrase at this point, because, as Congar notes, it relates directly to the topic of collegiality. Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 235. Congar defines *sentire cum ecclesia*: “This means the feeling of not being alone, of being part of one single body, leading one single life, pursuing one single enterprise with all other Catholics. It means not considering yourself to be the ‘whole,’ not acting or thinking as if your own issues are self-sufficient.”

<sup>119</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1965), 390.

<sup>120</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 92.

the hierarchy and a ‘people’s church.’”<sup>121</sup> Despite such a problem, the council helped to clarify an image of the Church which included an active participation of every member.

As Gaillardetz notes, tensions still exist in the life of the Church. There are disagreements between the magisterium and theologians; theologians and the people of God; and the magisterium and the people of God. Nevertheless, these tensions verify the fact that collegiality is at work. In this manner, the exercise of authority that shapes our understanding of the Church today allows for a dialogue between an individual conscience and magisterium. Congar brilliantly addresses the reality of collegial tensions by explaining the importance of both the subjective and objective dimension of the faith. His resolution to the problem is described here:

The Magisterium does not have an autonomous value: it receives assistance only when it keeps, interprets and defines the Revelation, of which it has been made a witness. Similarly, the Church has no power to create truth. This is why the subjective instinct of the faith should always seek expression in the objective setting of the truths, customs, rites and behaviour on which the Church agrees, and in the fellowship in space as well as time which, in its Councils, has always borne witness using such terms as ‘This is what the Church believes, this is what she has always believed; it is why we have received from our Fathers and what we have lived by, faithful to their traditions.’<sup>122</sup>

The quotation describes the organism of the entire Church at its best. The give-and-take model between every member in the task to grapple with the truth of Christ is a collegial Church at her best. In situations where conscience deviates from the magisterial teachings that have been handed on throughout the ages, one needs to question both the subjective and objective aspects of the Church in order to arrive at the truth. On the other hand, if such is the case that one possesses a conscience that is well-formed to a degree of

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<sup>121</sup> Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, 92.

<sup>122</sup> Congar, *Meaning of Tradition*, 81.



confidence, one can inform and influence the underlying problems within the life of the Church.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I explained how the magisterium, theologians, and people of God exercise their authority. The documents of the Second Vatican Council spoke about a dialogue between these three groups which was not present in the years following up to the council. Because safeguarding the Word of God in scripture and tradition is a difficult task, a genuine conversation between the three groups is crucial in preserving the truths of Christ. While the tension that surfaces between an individual conscience and magisterium gives room for debates and arguments, I discussed the challenge in resolving such conflict. Overall, if the Church is to reform, the magisterium, theologians, and people of God must all work together by participating in *sentire cum ecclesia* and by allowing the Holy Spirit to move the entire Church closer to the Word of God.

In the next chapter, I will explain how the Church reforms. By noting what is *True and False Reform in the Church*, I will discuss the contents of the reforms in history and the underlying issues that must be reformed today. Through a process of reform and an ongoing dialogue between her members, I will posit again how the ecclesial office of the laity can be present in the life of the Church and society.

## Chapter 4

### REFORM AND COLLEGIALITY

In the last chapter, I discussed the function of the ecclesial exercise of authority. It is through authority that the Church remains in the truth of Christ and transmits the faith in both scripture and tradition. I noted the proper ways in which the magisterium, theologians, and people of God can participate together in handing on the truths of the faith. Despite the tension that may surface between individual conscience and magisterial teaching, Congar mends such a tension by promoting an ecclesial structure that allows for both the subjective and objective dimensions of the faith.

In this chapter, I will discuss how the Church reforms the fallible components. Because the Church reforms in every age, she makes improvements in order to answer to the needs of her members at large. Avery Dulles explains that it is certainly a mistake “to assume that because the Church is divinely instituted, it never needs to be reformed.”<sup>123</sup> But what actually is reform? By providing solid examples of reform, I will discuss what it is and why it is necessary. Then, by explaining various types of reform, I will posit that collegiality and *sentire cum ecclesia* are crucial in envisioning a Church that is authentic. By ongoing conversations between the magisterium, theologians, and people of God, the Church can move in a direction towards her founder, Christ.

#### Reform in the Church

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<sup>123</sup> In this article, Dulles recalls the influence of Yves Congar’s thoughts on Vatican II. Congar and the council members retrieved the writings of the early Church Fathers in order to answer pastorally to the needs of the culture of today. Avery Dulles, “True and False Reform,” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, Issue 135 (August/September 2003): 15.

Throughout the history of the Church, various reforms have taken place. On the one hand, Congar notes that: “Sometimes the reform movement has been the result of religious orders correcting their own failings or returning to a more exact expression of their original inspiration.”<sup>124</sup> A good example of this is found in the Franciscan Order which to this day reforms itself in order to be more true to the ideal of poverty that its founder, Francis of Assisi, *truly* desired.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, Congar explains that: “the popes undertook general reform of abuses or addressed moments of crisis.”<sup>126</sup> Pope Pius X, for instance, started a reform to combat Modernism with the motto, *instaurare omnia in Christo*, to renew all things in Christ. As such, Congar relays the historical events that shaped the life of the Church.

### Infallibility and Fallibility of the Church

Congar holds the view that there are four components of the Church. They are 1) infallibility, 2) fallibility of the people of God, 3) fallibility of churchmen, and 4) an interplay between the previous three points. The distinctions that he makes helps us to better understand her nature and pinpoints which aspects must be reformed. First, the

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<sup>124</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 19-20.

<sup>125</sup> Augustine Thompson explains that since the time that Francis of Assisi wrote the Rule, there were already disagreements among the brethren on the proper observance of poverty. To read more on the rule of poverty that Francis intended, see Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). “When all is considered, I agree that when Francis was writing the Rules, there were already questions about how the friars were to observe poverty. Even if the characterization of the differing views by hagiographers reflects a later period when interpretation of the Rule itself had become a central issue, the stories about Francis and poverty are too many in this period to be wholly projection of later concerns” (257).

<sup>126</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 20.

Church is infallible in the “totality of principles established by Jesus Christ to make humanity his body.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, the Church is infallible by her participation of God who is perfect. In this regard, there is no defect. *Lumen Gentium* reiterates the position of Congar by stating that, “all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect” (LG 11). As quoted, since God is perfect, “the church’s quality of *holiness* follows precisely its quality as spouse.”<sup>128</sup> The Church, therefore, is infallible because God himself possesses no defect.

This view of infallibility, however, undermines the human components of the Church. After all, human beings are prone to corruption. To answer that, Gabriel Flynn notes that, “Catholicity has two sources: the fullness of Christ and the virtual fullness of humanity.”<sup>129</sup> In this manner, “in the earthly Church which is made in Christ, there is at once holiness and sinfulness.”<sup>130</sup>

### *Fallibility of the people of God*

It is in this sense of the weakness of humanity that Congar makes the second distinction by, in fact, expressing that the Church is fallible. In this section, he certainly agrees with the point of Flynn by explaining that the Church is not only infallible, she is made up of “humans with all their freedom, their weakness, their instability, and their

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<sup>127</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 92.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>129</sup> Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 156.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

essential fallibility.”<sup>131</sup> This distinction is notably for all People of God who are sinners in need of grace. While she is infallible in “perfect” principles that Christ provides, reform is necessary due to “the abuse that humans may make of its principles”<sup>132</sup> and to correct the mistakes of the past.

During the Catholic Reformation, Robert Bellarmine emphasized the visible structure of the Church which is like a “perfect society.” By making a distinction between the juridical authority of a prince and spiritual authority of a pope, he presented the Church “as a visible society mirroring the institutional integrity of a secular city-state”<sup>133</sup> and emphasized the function of the church hierarchy who possessed the *power* to teach, sanctify, and govern. While Bellarmine’s line of thought accepts the infallible aspects of the Church especially in his description of strong papal authority, his rigorous language on the visible institution, as “a claim regarding the Church’s institutional self-sufficiency,”<sup>134</sup> can be boastful of the authority that is given to the church members especially that of the magisterium.

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<sup>131</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 95.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>133</sup> Congar, however, argues that this view of the *visible* church that Bellarmine posits is one-sided and that this *institutional* view must be conformed to the *invisible* church. He sees the need to emphasize the inward yearning of every member who is part of the common priesthood. Each member possesses a charismatic authority to grow in holiness and to bring the Gospel message to a secular society.

<sup>134</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 72.

The perfect society is, first and foremost, mentioned in *Politics* by Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on *Politics*, explains well the nature of a perfect society. He writes that, “As one man is a part of the household, so a household is a part of the state: and the state is a perfect community, according to *Polit. I, 1*. And therefore, as the good of one man is not the last end, but is ordained to the common good; so too the good of one household is ordained to the good of a single state, which is a perfect community” (*Summa Theologiae* I-II, Q. 90, A. 3, ad. 3).

## *Fallibility of Churchmen*

In his third distinction, Congar again discusses the fallibility of the Church, but this time, particularly of churchmen. He expresses his position by stating that:

there is the habitual governance of the Holy Spirit over the church. But this governance does not rule out particular failings, nor does it always supply for the limitations or the ignorance of churchmen, even those placed in the highest roles.<sup>135</sup>

The quotation describes the perfection of the Holy Spirit that governs the Church, yet, in this case, churchmen, who are prone to corruption, will never adequately live up to the infallible Church. While he sees the need for the leadership of the Church to admit faults not only on a personal level but even on a level of the magisterium, have we seen this kind of confession in the life of the Church?<sup>136</sup>

The fallibility of churchmen and magisterium is revealed in the recent dealings with sex abuse scandals in the Church. For instance, A.W. Richard Sipe notes that “denial and defensiveness are still alive and well in the halls of church power. It embraces a widespread, protean pattern that includes rationalization, avoidance, and shifting of blame.”<sup>137</sup> The ways in which some bishops dealt with the scandals reveal the

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<sup>135</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 103.

<sup>136</sup> While some churchmen have never apologized, some have admitted the faults of the Church. For instance, we see the signs of humility in Pope John Paul II who asked for forgiveness on behalf of the entire Church in “The purification of memory.” The document is about “‘an act of courage and humility in recognizing the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christian.’ It is based on the conviction that because of ‘the bond which unites us to one another in the Mystical Body, all of us, though not personally responsible and without encroaching on the judgment of God, who alone knows every heart, bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us.’” To read more on the “purification of memory,” see International Theological Commission, “In Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past,” [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000307\\_memory-reconc-itc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000307_memory-reconc-itc_en.html) (December 1999).

<sup>137</sup> A.W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 245.

fallibility in need of graces. Nevertheless, this act of denial of churchmen is already revealed in the Gospels. Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times before the cock crows and that Judas will betray him in exchange for money (Mt 26:34, Jn 13:21).

Aware that churchmen, in particular, are prone to corruption, the description of the magisterium that Augustine provides “is most often reserved to God (to Christ), while men of the church have only a *ministerium*.”<sup>138</sup> In the early Church, the duty of a magister was seen as a duty to teach the truths of the faith, which is to hand on the apostolic faith. The true *magister*, in this sense, is Christ who is infallible. He delegates to the magisterium the function to hand on the inspired Words, allowing these churchmen who are fallible to preserve Tradition through their orthodox teaching.

Therefore, the Church is fallible in humanity, yet infallible in the participation in God. This idea brings us to the fourth distinction that Congar makes which is the interplay between the three distinctions already discussed. Abbé Couturier sums up nicely the nature of the Church that Congar posits. Couturier posits that, “The church is infinitely holy and unchangeable because it is *sacral*; it is holy and perfectible because it is *ecclesial*; and it is terribly sinful and in need of sanctification because it is

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Gabriel Flynn also gives some answers regarding the contemporary issues that the Church faces. He writes that, “The problems confronting the Church at the present time are certainly not new. The basic problem today, as in the medieval period, concerns service (pope, clergy/religious, laity and theologians) and worship (liturgy and piety), as well as the concomitant moral and social difficulties which are a direct result of the abuse of power and privilege by some of those engaged in the Church’s service” (116). For more information on such issues, see Gabriel Flynn, ed., *Yves Congar, Theologian of the Church* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005).

<sup>138</sup> Yves Congar, “A Semantic History of the Term ‘Magisterium’” in *Readings in Moral Theology No. 3: The Magisterium and Morals*, ed. Charles Curran and Richard McCormick (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 298.

*ecclesiastical.*”<sup>139</sup> In this sense, reform is necessary in the cases of fallibility in constant renewal.

### Relationship between Church and Society

Congar makes a distinction between church and society so as to reveal the relationship between the two entities.<sup>140</sup> Frequent reform in the Church is necessary if she is to influence society at large in a positive way. Only when her members are continually renewed in holiness through the Holy Spirit can they effectively reach out to people who are estranged from Christ. *Gaudium et Spes* specifically notes the need to renew human society. It states that “for the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence the focal point of our total presentation will be man himself, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will” (*GS* 3). In this manner, a church that evangelizes the secular culture shapes the entire psyche of the person. Furthermore, the pastoral constitution states that:

This societal order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love. God’s Spirit, Who with a marvelous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development (*GS* 26).

As stated reform allows for an authentic church, and as a result, an authentic society. In the past, the state had jurisdiction over the Church, especially in the period of the

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<sup>139</sup> Damasus Winzen, “L’Eglise mystère,” *Oecumenica* (1934), quoted in Congar, *True and False Reform*, 196.

<sup>140</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 101. “I know that some people, especially Protestants, consider this distinction between church and Christian world to be gratuitous and mere wordplay. That follows from the tendency of Protestant thought that misunderstands the distinction between the church as institution and as mystery so as to see in the church only the congregation or the people made up by the faithful. However, at the point that Protestants rediscover this aspect (as is happening at this time), they return to positions rather similar to ours.”



Gregorian reform. Today, however, there is the utmost possibility of having a purely spiritual church without secular jurisdiction. This reality should encourage the Church to see the possibility to make Christ known in the secular culture. The Church has the potential to produce intentional disciples and possible lay office to affect the society directly.

As a historical example, for instance, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas introduced Aristotle to the Church in the Middle Ages. They notably baptized the pagan philosopher and allowed an incorporation of Aristotle's ideas in Catholic thought. The dominant theology during this period was that of Augustine of Hippo who taught that "to know things was to know them in reference to God, who was their end."<sup>141</sup> Albert and Thomas provided a new insight by teaching that all goods in the world find "validity or meaning only in their relation to God."<sup>142</sup>

Albert, Thomas, and Augustine all believed that "everything had a relation to the last goal, God."<sup>143</sup> However, it was Albert and Thomas who taught that this relation "was under the formality of the final cause."<sup>144</sup> In other words, "things-in-themselves" found their ultimate goal as created goods in the world. According to this view, every natural good possessed *its* individual goal towards *its* final end. This new and down to earth approach to philosophy and theology allowed for goodness to be revealed in its

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<sup>141</sup> Yves Congar. *A History of Theology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 104.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>143</sup> Yves Congar. *A History of Theology*, 105.

<sup>144</sup> In a secularized society, the causal relations that Albert and Thomas promoted are certainly useful. When speaking to an agnostic or an atheist, for instance, despite a person's lack of *explicit* belief in God, one can judge such a person to be good in *implicit* desire for baptism. *Ibid.*

*individuated form*, as opposed to being a part of everything that was somehow illumined in the ultimate *Form*.

The reform of Albert and Thomas, then, directly affected the society. Their teaching revealed that liberal sciences can be studied for their own sake without defining it to be strictly a religious study. A study of medicine, for instance, is studied without its relation to philosophy. It enabled the possibility for the thinkers to explore the truths of sciences even if they were not directly linked to God *per se*. It was a Catholic Enlightenment at its best. For these reasons, Pope Leo XIII states in *Aeterni Patris* (1879), “Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students” (*AP* 31). This pope, who served at the end of the nineteenth century, saw the need for everyone to study this enlightened philosophy and theology.

### **Collegiality and Reform**

In various ways, reform can be initiated but must be done according to the needs of the current generation. The approach that Congar initiates, for instance, looks into the subject of *collegiality*. For Congar, collegiality is *sentire cum ecclesia* (to think and act with the spirit and heart of all). It is a kind of participation in the *being* of the Church, which then moves one toward God as well as other Catholics and Christians. While he writes about reforms regarding liturgical rubrics, participation, and ecumenical dialogue, in every instance he points to his main theme which concerns the communion of every

member. Each person in the Church then seeks the “Other” or “others” outside of himself or herself which allows for a unified whole.

In our local parishes, are we seeing this type of collegiality? What about at the diocesan level? Are the People of God concerned for by the magisterium in the diocese that you belong to and vice versa? How about at the national or international level? At this point, one remark must be made: we are not looking to change dogma or the rule of faith. That is not what Congar means by representation. He does not embrace the American mindset of democracy when it comes to reform in the Church. Rather, Congar states that “there is ‘Catholic communion’ only in communion with the apostles, in fidelity to their preaching and the communal life governed by the sacraments and the prayers they celebrated.”<sup>145</sup> Ultimately, it is through variant reforms that shapes the Church to be authentically Christian.

### Collegiality and Reform of Abuse in Justice and Charity

The first kind of reform that Congar mentions is a “simple reform of abuses.”<sup>146</sup> A great example of this kind is exemplified by the sixteenth-century Dominican missionary Bartolomé de las Casas who desired a colonial system that respected the human dignity of all people. While a slave owner, he heard a sermon by a Dominican friar, Antonio de Montesino,<sup>147</sup> who spoke against cruel treatments of the Indios: “Say, with what right and what justice do you hold these Indios in such cruel and fearful

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<sup>145</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 235.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>147</sup> It is arguable whether las Casas actually heard this preaching firsthand. Regardless, he received the prophetic message of Montesino.

servitude? What are you doing to teach them to recognize God, their creator, to be baptized, to come to mass, to observe feast days and Sundays?”<sup>148</sup> With a conversion of heart by *sentire cum ecclesia* las Casas freed his slaves, joined the Dominican Order, and defended the rights of Indios in different parts of the world such as Chiapas, Mexico, and other distinct locations in “New Spain.” He was heavily influenced by the Book of Sirach which states that, “To take away a neighbor’s living is to murder him, to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood.”<sup>149</sup> By receiving the revelation of God through a sermon and the scripture, las Casas realized that the way to follow Christ was to serve his brothers and sisters by seeking justice and charity.

Another great example of reform of abuse is revealed in Catherine of Siena’s *the Dialogue*. The fourteenth-century doctor of the Church wrote down her conversation with God through her keen awareness and intuition. In a section of the book, God calls her to reform the corruption of the clergy. She wrote about them in these strong words:

So great has their darkness and wickedness become, and some of them are such incarnate devils, that they often pretend to consecrate [the Eucharist] while not consecrating at all for fear of my judgment and to relieve themselves of any restraint or fear in their wrongdoing. In the morning they get up from their indecency and in the evening from their inordinate eating and drinking. They have to satisfy the people, but when they consider their sinfulness they see that they neither should nor can celebrate with a good conscience.<sup>150</sup>

This passage reiterates a sense of collegiality. Here, Catherine as a lay person, a Dominican tertiary, saw the loss of sanctity in the clergy by her intuition or *sentire cum*

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<sup>148</sup> Volker Kuster, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 43.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>150</sup> Catherine of Siena, *the Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 254. Catherine was known to be a holy mystic who reformed the Church in different ways. As Pope Pius XI wrote, true reform has “its point of departure in holiness, in persons who were inflamed and impelled by the love of God and neighbors.” Pope Pius XI, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (1937), 154, quoted in Congar, *True and False Reform*, 219.

*ecclesia*. In this case, Catherine went on to reform the state of the clergy. God entrusted to her these churchmen who, out of sloth, stopped celebrating the Eucharist.

On a similar note, recent popes have spoken out as reformers and as *magisters*. Pope John XXIII, for instance, speaks as a prophet concerning immigration policy in *Pacem et Terris*. He writes that “every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own State. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there” (*PT* 25). The Pope shows concern for the needy person who must take care of his or her family members and who is in danger of political persecution. By the virtue of justice, in this sense, the pope encourages all people in society to take care of their brothers and sisters.

Likewise, Pope Francis has spoken against subjectivism and individualism that negate the existence of God and degrade the dignity of workers. By doing so, he communicated directly with the periphery. In *Laudato Si*, he exhorts as a prophet against injustice within the profit-based corporate system:

When human beings place themselves at the center, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative. Hence we should not be surprised to find, in conjunction with the omnipresent technocratic paradigm and the cult of unlimited human power, the rise of a relativism which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests. There is a logic in all this whereby different attitudes can feed on one another, leading to environmental degradation and social decay (*LS* 122).

Pope Francis explains the unjust vice of utilitarianism, an ideology that is based on the sole interest in personal gain. He speaks against this kind of ethical system which dehumanizes the dignity of every individual and which creates a culture imbued with

division, pretension, and aggression.<sup>151</sup> While this kind of self-centered mentality has become the norm of personal ethics, Pope Francis teaches that it is destructive to the common good of society.

### Prophetic Reform and *Sentire cum ecclesia*

Congar furthers our understanding on the nature of reform by exerting that prophetic reform is the most important. Prophetic reform is evident throughout the Old Testament in which prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Ezekiel speak out against sin and liberate the suffering and oppressed toward freedom. Thomas Massaro writes that “these prophets often met stiff resistance to their stern reminders that all Israelites should heed God’s call to practice social justice, protect the most vulnerable, share the wealth more broadly, and respect the delicate web of communal relations.”<sup>152</sup> While the quotation explains that these prophets spoke on behalf of God, what is the nature of prophesy?

According to Congar, “Prophecy means (1) a specially insightful knowledge about things pertaining to God, (2) a knowledge or mission related to the execution of God’s plan, and (3) the prediction of the future.”<sup>153</sup> For Congar, a prophecy is not a

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<sup>151</sup> In his book, Timothy Radcliffe provides a consensus on the lack of economic proportion in the world. To read more on economic disproportion, see a section from Timothy Radcliffe, *What is the Point of Being a Christian* (New York: Burns and Oates, 2005), 153. “It is simply crazy that the 400 richest Americans can have an annual income of \$69 billion in comparison with the \$59 billion which was the combined income of the 161 million inhabitants of Botswana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda. It is simply blasphemous that eight million people a year die of just being poor when others are unbelievably rich.”

<sup>152</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012), 59.

<sup>153</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 178.

directive from a book that requires analytic skills to understand. Rather, it is “based on an inner and immediate feeling.”<sup>154</sup> The gift of prophecy is like a supernatural intuition that a person possesses that allows him or her to see beneath the surface of culture, society, and institution, and even the *persona* of an individual.

Timothy Radcliffe furthers our understanding of prophecy by explaining that it is not about “denouncing the errors of other people,”<sup>155</sup> but finding “ways forward beyond division.”<sup>156</sup> For example, in church politics, one can find the same kind of divisions between liberals and the conservatives that characterize secular political stances. To define who is a good or bad bishop by identifying him as a liberal or conservative certainly undermines the notion that we are a church united in Christ. Radcliffe addresses the problem this way: “I have already suggested that to think in terms of progressives and traditionalists, or liberal and conservatives, is not helpful. These two parties have also been labeled Augustinian and Thomist.”<sup>157</sup> If the Church is to be pure and spiritual without political division, her members must prophesize by seeking an authentic unity.

For both Popes John XXIII and Francis I, a genuine dialogue with “the periphery,” (a word that describes those who are not a part of the church hierarchy), is crucial in the process of reform. As difficult as the process may be, bishops, theologians, and people of God can speak with one another despite the disagreements. Congar encourages this kind of dialogue when he explains that, “I stressed above that the

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<sup>154</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 180.

<sup>155</sup> Radcliffe, *What is the Point*, 166.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

initiative for religious foundations came from the periphery. But we also need to observe that, to become truly ‘Catholic’ and to be incorporated within the church, they had to receive the approval of the central authority.”<sup>158</sup> A prophetic voice, therefore, applies to both the central authority and the periphery. As Ormond Rush notes, “listening to the *sensus fidelium* within the church (*ad intra*) is vital for the credibility of the church’s mission in the world *ad extra*.”<sup>159</sup> A sincere dialogue between the center and the periphery, then, allows for an authentic church that, in turn, evangelizes secular society.

A collegial ecclesial structure is like this: the laity working with the priests; the bishops working with other bishops; and bishops throughout the world working side-by-side with the pope. For Congar, regardless of a particular function, every member looks towards a common vision of the Church. In this way, “solidarity plays out in a way that is both truly collective but also truly personal.”<sup>160</sup> Collegiality, in this way, advocates for a Church that is authentic and spiritual to “attune itself to the structures of the emerging world and of a renewed society.”<sup>161</sup>

## Reform and Delays

True prophetic reform takes time. Church history shows that many prophetic reformers were criticized or even silenced by the magisterium; even so, they stayed

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<sup>158</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 246.

<sup>159</sup> Ormond Rush, “Inverting the Pyramid: The *Sensus Fidelium* in a Synodal Church,” *Theological Studies* Vol. 78, No. 2 (June, 2017): 325.

<sup>160</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 113.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.



patient throughout the process of reform, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Congar gives examples:

It is clear that every ‘prophet’ ought to be ready to face opposition, if not persecution, or at least resistance. This also is part of ‘patience.’ Nobody gives birth without pain. A number of saints have found themselves in prison, even in the cells of the Holy Office; for example, Blessed John of Avila, Cardinal Morone, St. John of the Cross, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Joseph Calasanzus, St. Grignon de Montfort, and a lot of others...<sup>162</sup>

While this quotation explains the Catholic reformers, should we not also claim that Protestant reformers also prophesied on behalf of God?

Reform requires a quality of spiritual mission that allows one to wait in faith and hope: a “certain spiritual docility, a mistrust of self, holding back when tempted by simple, abrupt solutions.”<sup>163</sup> In the opinion of Congar, this authentic kind of patience is what Martin Luther and the Protestant ‘reformers’ lacked.<sup>164</sup> Congar continues to explain that some “reformers” became self-absorbed and one-sided and eventually spoke against Tradition: “they were alike in their way of being subjectively convinced, of claiming things, of criticizing their adversaries, of mocking them, of questioning their integrity. They were also alike by a similar kind of pride, by an interior passion which was pitiless to all opposition.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 284.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>164</sup> As described, in the position of Congar, Luther lacked patience as well as *sentire cum ecclesia*. Congar, *True and False Reform*, 231. “How can one man, even a great religious genius, completely rethink Christianity all by himself? Impossible. You cannot taste and understand the Scriptures as you should, you cannot grasp the truth precisely and especially in its fullness, unless you are the contemporary, the disciple, the companion of Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the apostles—that is, unless you are in communion with the one, holy catholic, and apostolic church.” By contrast, in *From Conflict to Communion*, the Lutheran-Catholic Commission portrays Luther in a more positive light. See: Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion* (Vatican, 2017), [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_2013\\_dal-confitto-alla-comunione\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_2013_dal-confitto-alla-comunione_en.html).

Even though Congar cites examples of Catholic reformers who faced opposition, he himself endured such treatment in his own lifetime. His work on ecumenism and ecclesiology, for instance, was dismissed by the hierarchy as well as his fellow religious brothers in Paris. Despite this challenge, however, he stayed patient and silent during this period of suspicion. His letter to his mother reveals his frustration. He writes to her expressing that he and some other French Dominicans “have been persecuted and reduced to silence... because they were the only ones who possessed a certain freedom of thought, of enterprise and of expression.”<sup>166</sup> Having endured these painful delays, his works were eventually read by Pope John XXIII who encouraged him to influence the Second Vatican Council. Also, shortly before death, Congar was made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II.

### Reform and Tradition

At this point, we may wonder why the magisterium eventually accepted the works of Congar to influence the life of the Church. After a long delay, how did Congar as a theologian affect the Church? As he notes himself, authentic reform brings the Church in line with Tradition. His works, then, moved the members closer to Tradition. Nevertheless, for Congar, tradition does not refer to an outdated model of church that existed in the past. Rather, prophetic reform remains faithful to the deposit of faith;

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<sup>165</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 269.

<sup>166</sup> Yves Congar, ‘Lettre à sa mère’, in *Journal d’un théologien, 1946-1956* (2001): 425, quoted in Paul Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness* (London: Burns and Oates, 2006), 118.

however, prophetic reform can, at the same time, reveal a church that is fully alive, grasping the ideals of today in the light of her teachings.

### *Reform and the Magisterium*

How can the magisterium, then, exercise its office today? Congar describes that its function is to teach pastorally the authentic teachings of Christ while it continues to dialogue with the periphery. When Pope Francis speaks against the secular ideals of subjectivism and utilitarianism, he exemplifies a function as magisterium and prophet. Furthermore, when he exercises these functions, he does so out of charity and a willingness to listen to the periphery. We see the pope serving as a magister, a teacher, who speaks on behalf of the Church.

### *Dialogue between Theologians and Magisterium*

The magisterium, theologians, and people of God are bound to disagree on various doctrines or disciplines of the Church. An example of this is shown through Francis Sullivan, a theologian, who disagreed with the statement of John Paul II in the apostolic letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. In the view of Sullivan, the pope held that the topic of women's ordination was non-definitive and non-infallible, which meant that the doctrine is open for change. Yet, John Paul II also said that not even he, as the pope, could change this teaching. Sullivan disagrees with the pope and says that since the teaching on women's ordination is non-infallible, it can be changed: "I could not agree

that the grounds on which John Paul II based his judgment provide the certainty that a doctrine must have for a pope to declare it infallibly.”<sup>167</sup>

Here, in order to understand this dialogue between a pope and a theologian, a proper definition of the magisterium is necessary. It would be helpful to look at the distinction between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* magisterium. Richard Gaillardetz states that ordinary magisterium “designates all other exercises of the bishops’ teaching authority”<sup>168</sup> while the extraordinary magisterium “involves a solemn and infallible act of defining a matter of faith on the part of either the whole college of bishops, usually in ecumenical council, or the pope as head of that college when he teaches *ex-cathedra*, that is, from the chair of St. Peter.” At times in the history of the church, popes and bishops have acted *extraordinarily* by excommunicating groups which promoted heretical teachings. This kind of decision was rarely made; however, it was made in order to keep the Church united in the orthodox teachings of Christ.

With these two distinct terms, ordinary and extraordinary magisterium, we can have another look at Sullivan’s opinion regarding Pope John Paul II’s position on women’s ordination. Sullivan’s viewpoint, in a way, is reasonable because the pope stated that he acted *ordinarily*, while, in fact, he may have acted *extraordinarily* by ending the ongoing conversation on the topic. Because of this, Sullivan explains that the pope, in his decision, did not follow the collegial structure of the Church.

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<sup>167</sup> Francis Sullivan, “The Definitive Exercise of Teaching Authority,” *Theological Studies* Vol. 75, No. 3 (September 2014): 513.

<sup>168</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 162. He describes two types of ordinary magisterium which include “ordinary teaching of bishops which does not explicitly engage the whole college (the ordinary nonuniversal magisterium) and which does (ordinary *universal* magisterium)” (163).

Congar, however, does not make a clear distinction between ordinary and extraordinary magisterium like Gaillardetz. While Congar may agree that the pope confused the essence of the magisterium, he gives “the central offices of the church the special role of moderating and protecting the church.”<sup>169</sup> His method of defining the magisterium is not based on making a distinction in which one *could disagree* with the magisterium when it is *ordinary* and *could agree* with the magisterium when it is *extraordinary*. In this way, even if one may disagree with the teachings of the Church, Congar would posit that one respects the hierarchy especially the office of the papacy as shown in *Lumen Gentium*:

This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex-cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will (*LG 25*).

The passage reveals a necessary submission to the papacy even if the matter is given in ordinary terms. In such a way, while the discussion must remain open in a form of dialogue between the magisterium, theologians, and the people of God, the magisterium still holds an office that preserves the rule of faith. Nevertheless, as Congar also posits, those in leadership especially the magisterium must first listen even if the words that people speak do not relay truths in any form. If the disagreements are hidden under the table, more aggressive divisions can surface. Honest dialogue engaged in pastoral care will ultimately unify the Church at large by allowing and mending the hidden disagreements in the Church.

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<sup>169</sup> Congar, *True and False Reform*, 304.

## Chapter Summary

In this final chapter, I discussed how Congar treats the nature of reform. By first explaining the Church that he envisions, I noted the distinct types of reform that have taken place in the life of the Church. While the infallible God continues to guide the members, the fallible aspects of the Church that stems from the sins of imperfect human beings need continued renewal. For Congar, *Sentire cum ecclesia* brings the Church together in unity, because the notion of collegiality is made possible. In this way, by collegial structure, Congar does not seek a change in the rule of faith, but calls for an outward vision towards a pastoral reality that seeks a genuine dialogue between all members.

As Joseph Ratzinger notes:

We must allow ourselves to be filled with such faith. It is then that the Church will grow as a company into true life and renew herself from day to day. It is then that she will become a spacious house with many mansions; it is then that the multiplicity of the gifts of the Spirit will be free to operate in her. It is then that we shall behold 'how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity... It is like the dew of Hermon that falls upon Mount Zion; for there the Lord grants blessing and life forever' (Ps 133:1, 3).<sup>170</sup>

Christ left behind challenging tasks for the members of the Church. Yet, if the center and the periphery work together in unity, the message of Christ will be stronger. This kind of reform will make possible for a collegial ecclesial structure and for an evangelization of secularity.

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<sup>170</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 156.

## Conclusion

Yves Congar envisions a Church that continually reforms herself. Such a process can lead to the evangelization of secularity. A true reform in the Church requires a genuine dialogue between central and peripheral authority: magisterium, theologians, and the people of God having crucial, sensitive, and even disagreeable discussions. Through ongoing conversations, the distinct authorities in the Church can positively influence the ecclesial structure and secular society at large, bringing the prophetic messages of Christ to all people.

It is necessary to make the distinction between common and ministerial priesthood in the Church, because it explains the *above* and *below* contexts in describing the proper role of ministerial and common priesthood. The ministerial priesthood in its *unworthiness* possesses a *worthy* office by the virtue of its ordination to be an instrument of Christ. It serves the common priesthood in the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and governing. Because Christ works through the ministerial priesthood, the ordination stems from *above* through the mediation of the bishops.

On the other hand, the common priesthood, by virtue of baptism, confirmation, or matrimony, possesses an authority over secularity. As noted, “world-ecclesial office of the laity” or “Catholic Action” belongs to the lay people who are sharers in the three distinct offices. They *are* the secular dimension of the Church because they encounter secularity daily by Christian words and deeds. While Protestants no longer make the distinction between the two, in the eyes of Congar, it is necessary to transmit the Christian faith in scripture and tradition.

Furthermore, Congar seeks a collegial structure that thinks and feels with the Church (*sentire cum ecclesia*). The Church is *infallible* in her full participation with the *infallible* Christ, yet she holds a sinful nature. In every age, the magisterium, theologians, and the people of God can make mistakes. By seeking authority in scripture and tradition and by remaining faithful to Christ the teacher, what is brought to be fallible by our human nature can continually be reformed through open dialogue. It is crucial today for the magisterium in the Church to listen carefully to her members, theologians, and the people of God. Careful listening and dialogue will not bring about changes in Christ's teachings but will result in moving the Church closer to the infallible Church.

The vision of Congar succeeds in resolving the tension that exists between the democratic mindset of the Enlightenment (which in turn has influenced the American mindset) and the Greek mindset. While the rules of faith that stem from *above* can seem abstract and impersonal, every member, by his or her baptism in the common priesthood, has the authority to speak on behalf of the Church in secularity (even the less educated). Likewise, each lay person has the responsibility as a sharer in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices, to witness to the truths of scripture and tradition. In this light, all the members of the Church possess a distinct authority. All have one mission to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and within this unifying mission, each possesses a unique authority to make Christ known.



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