



## “Do not Stifle the Spirit”: The Vision of Yves Congar for Charismatic Ecclesiology

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### Abstract

The commemoration of the half-centenary of the Second Vatican Council has garnered enormous interest in the protagonists, circumstances and, interpretations that evolved in the period leading up to and following the council. Beyond the dialectics of hermeneutics of (dis)continuity of the council which has gained currency in recent post-conciliar discourse, however, attention has equally been drawn to the grand leitmotif that birthed the Council, namely, the clichéd *aggiornamento* and the pentecostal renewal envisioned by Blessed Pope John XXIII. Despite its determining importance, Cardinal Walter Kasper opines that the Church is still certainly a long way from being able to speak of a new Pentecost. One of the architects of such ecclesial reforms and pneumatological renewal in the Council was the erudite French ecclesiolgologist and ecumenist Yves Marie Congar (1904–1995). This article seeks to demonstrate that Congar was not only a celebrated pneumatologist but also a visionary of charismatic ecclesiology, deemed as a resourceful tool for re-evangelization.

### Keywords

Yves Congar, Pneumatology, Charisms, Charismatic Ecclesiology, New Evangelisation

### I. Introduction

As the Catholic Church commemorates the half-centenary of the Second Vatican Council, interest in the protagonists and circumstances that evolved in the period leading up to the council and the years since has resurfaced. One particular area that keeps on generating attention is the debate on the hermeneutics of (dis)continuity

of the council.<sup>1</sup> Beyond this dialectics of interpretation, however, other scholars are equally drawing attention to the grand leitmotif that birthed the council, namely, the clichéd *aggiornamento* and the New Pentecost<sup>2</sup> envisioned by Blessed Pope John XXIII. Against the highly clerical and pyramidal understanding of the church at the time, the Pope's decision to convene a council could not have been unwelcome. Even though most of his closest collaborators balked at his *aggiornamento*, the pope was unperturbed. One of the architects of such ecclesial reforms and pneumatological renewal in the Council was the learned French ecclesiologist and ecumenist Yves Marie Congar (1904–1995). That the French Dominican theologian secured himself a place among the heroes<sup>3</sup> and luminaries of the Council and twentieth century ecclesiology is not in doubt. He captured a sense of pneumatological renewal in the Church without losing tradition<sup>4</sup> and paid continuous attention to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.<sup>5</sup> As the Congarian scholar Joseph Famerée points out, Congar was not only always in "constant spiritual contact with his time,"<sup>6</sup> but also important for contemporary ecclesiological life.

Following the ebullient years of the council and at the pinnacle of his ecclesiological career, Congar published his three-tome masterpiece, *Je crois en L'Esprit-Saint*,<sup>7</sup> which was "composed in part

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars assert that the category of (dis)continuity is a misleading one as it is hindered by a descriptive nature of the categories. To overcome such descriptions an 'ontology of meaning' approach is suggested to deal with a proper explanation of the hermeneutics of the council, see John D. Dadosky, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Re-Interpretation of Vatican II," *Heythrop Journal* 49, no. 5 (2008): 742–763; Neil Ormerod, "Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity? Toward an Ontology of Meaning," *Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (2010): 609–636.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Thomas Hughson, "Interpreting Vatican II: "A New Pentecost."," *Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2008): 3–37.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Komonchak, "A Hero of Vatican II: Yves Congar," *Commonweal* 122, no. 21 (1995): 15–17.

<sup>4</sup> Congar is really regarded as a man of tradition, cf. Jonathan Robinson, "Congar on Tradition," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005), 329–355.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Flynn, "Yves Congar and Catholic Reform: A Renewal of the Spirit," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 32 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005), 99–133; Patrick Mullins, "The Spirit Speaks to the Churches: Continuity and Development in Congar's Theology," *Louvain Studies* 29, no. 3–4 (2004): 288.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Famerée, "L'ecclésiologie du Père Yves Congar: Essai de synthèse critique," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 76, no. (1992): 417.

<sup>7</sup> Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans., David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroad, 1983. French original: *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 3 vols. Paris: Cerf, 1979–1980). The titles are set out as follows: Vol 1. The Holy Spirit in the 'Economy': Revelation and Experience of the Spirit. Vol 2. He is Lord and Giver of Life. Vol 3. The River of the Water of Life (Rev 22:1) Flows in the East and in the West. Throughout this article, I shall cite only the main title with the respective volume.

as a response to the rise of the charismatic movement in the Roman Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council."<sup>8</sup> Beyond his passionate zest for pneumatological ecclesiology, Congar's ardent vision for, as it were, a charismatic ecclesiology is undeniable. His pneumatological ecclesiology was suffused with and informed by the critical role of the charisms in the life of the church.

In this article, I want to demonstrate how Congar was not only a celebrated pneumatologist but also a visionary of charismatic ecclesiology by teasing out the development of Congar's thought therein and showing how it can shape the life of the church today. I will begin by sketching out the state of affairs of charismatic ecclesiology in the life the church today. I will then outline how the exigencies of the charismatic ecclesiology were paramount in the thought of Congar. In the final part, I will validate how Congar's vision for charismatic ecclesiology can help the church deal with the smorgasbord of problems that confronts it today especially in the area of re-evangelization.

### *I. Charismatic Ecclesiology: Status Quaestionis*

The renewed yearning for the Spirit ushered in at the turn of the past century both in academia and spiritual life continues to be felt more than ever.<sup>9</sup> This is phenomenologically experienced not only in the developing context of the global South, but also in the universal Church. As Philip Jenkins has demonstrated, the center of gravity in the Christian world which has shifted inexorably to the south is coterminous with the resurgence of a charismatic form of Christianity.<sup>10</sup> The charismaticization of worldwide Christianity<sup>11</sup> which coincides

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Cunningham, "Book Review of Yves Congar's *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*," *Commonweal* 125, no. 11 (1998): 27. Actually, Congar writes at the very beginning of the General Introduction that "[t]he present 'Renewal' movement, all too frequently known as 'charismatic renewal', will have a place in it, but it is not the source of my wish to embark on the work, which in fact preceded it. It simply gives to our undertaking a contemporary interest and even an urgency with which I am favourably disposed to comply." See Congar, vii.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Dreyer captures this pneumatological renewal in three main areas, namely, in "individual Christians who hunger for a deeper connection with God that is inclusive of all of life as well as the needs of the world; the church that seeks to renew itself through life-giving disciplines and a return to sources; and the formal inquiry of academic philosophy and theology." See, Elizabeth Dreyer, "An Advent of the Spirit: Medieval Mystics and Saints," in *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology* ed. Bradford Hinze and D.Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University 2001), 123.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Revised and Expanded ed. (Oxford: University Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Moritz Fischer, "'The Spirit Helps Us in Our Weakness': Charismatization of Worldwide Christianity and the Quest for an Appropriate Pneumatology with Focus on the

with the growth of Christian populations in the South is an ecclesial reality that cannot be overlooked without suffering the ecclesiological consequences. Throughout the history of the church, theology in general and ecclesiology in particular have always sought to articulate the practice of the faith in tandem with *the context*. Indeed, there are strong philosophical and theological arguments that support theological paradigm shifts and recontextualisation.<sup>12</sup> Taking a cue from Peter Hodgson "we can also speak of a paradigm with reference to a culture or to an intellectual activity such as theology, meaning thereby a confluence of factors or elements that determine the predominant shape or pattern of the culture or theology in question. Major shifts in the cultural paradigm have generally elicited corresponding shifts in the theological paradigm."<sup>13</sup>

A propos charismatic ecclesiology and charismatic renewal<sup>14</sup> in the church, however, there are still inclinations to keep to the status-quo. What is exhibited presently in the church could be characterized in terms of what the behavioral sciences refer to as "approach-avoidance conflict."<sup>15</sup> There is a seeming paranoia against recognizing in this phenomenon a truly ecclesiological acceptance and normative operation. While on the one hand Vatican II and other magisterial documents hammered the importance of charismatic renewal in the church, existential praxis in the church seems to suggest otherwise. In this vein, the pertinent question that clamors for an answer is: why does the Church continue to shy away from anything that smacks of "charismatic"? It seems as if the term "catholic church" and "charismatic" are mutually exclusive. In spite of the grandiose treatises that the church writes of the Spirit, any mention thereof in normative terms is deemed Protestant or Pentecostal and not Catholic.<sup>16</sup> In this

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 95–121.

<sup>12</sup> For biblical, philosophical and theological arguments in this endeavor, see the now almost classical interpretation offered by the Belgian fundamental theologian, Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2004), 21–35.

<sup>13</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, *Ecclesial Freedom in the New Paradigm* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), 11–12.

<sup>14</sup> Charismatic renewal here should not be confused with the Catholic Charismatic Movement. The former carries a bigger perspective than the latter, even though the latter equally strives to champion the cause of the former.

<sup>15</sup> The term was coined by the German social psychologist Kurt Lewin and refers to a type of conflict which shows a person's paradoxical disposition of favor for something (approach) while at the same time harboring unhealthy suspicion for what is at stake (hence avoidance). See Lewin, K. *A Dynamic Theory of Personality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1935.

<sup>16</sup> Congar bemoans this unfortunate perception in one of his experiences during the Council. He recalled that during the proceedings of Council, one acclaimed theologian said to one of the *periti* "You speak of the Holy Spirit, but that is for the Protestants.

vein, one would not be wrong to discern semblances of stifling the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner was more poignant in wrestling with questions of this nature when he asserted: "We must face the possibility, with fear and trembling, that we could be the ones who stifle the Spirit – stifle Him through that pride in "knowing better," that criteria of the heart, that cowardice, that unteachability with which we react to fresh impulses and new pressures in the Church."<sup>18</sup>

More recently, Cardinal Walter Kasper equally battled with the issue at the last Synod of Bishops for Africa in Rome (4–25 October, 2009)<sup>19</sup> in which he challenged the Church to seek for appropriate responses to the charismatic forms of Christianity that is fast depriving the Church of its members to the other churches. In the words of Kasper, instead of asking 'what is wrong with the charismatic pentecostal churches', the church should pose itself the counter-question: 'What is wrong with us [Roman Catholics]?' Surmising the cumulative reasons that account for such differences between Catholic and the aforesaid churches, John Haughey opines that "these churches have developed a very basic charismatic ecclesiology, meaning they fully expect and train their members personally to discover and exercise the charisms of the Spirit."<sup>20</sup> With qualification, one can appreciate some of the reasons advanced by Haughey and continue to seek answers to the self-critical question posed by Kasper in advancing the cause of charismatic ecclesiology.

But how does charismatic ecclesiology actually evince itself and how does one characterize it? In other words, is there anything like a distinctive 'charismatic ecclesiology?'<sup>21</sup> To be sure, Congar himself did not give any precise definition of 'charismatic ecclesiology,'

We have the teaching authority." See Yves Congar, "Pneumatology Today," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 167, no. (1979): 436.

<sup>17</sup> This informs my choice of the title of this article, which is inspired not only by the Pauline dictum (1 Thess 5 : 19, 21), but also by Congar's usage of it as caption for the third part of his tome *I Believe* which specifically deals with charismatic renewal in the church

<sup>18</sup> Karl Rahner, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," in *Theological Investigations*(London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), 80.

<sup>19</sup> Pope Benedict has issued the Post-Synodal Exhortation "Africae Munus"

<sup>20</sup> John Haughey, "Charisms: An Ecclesiological Exploration," in *Retrieving Charisms for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Doris Donnelley (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>21</sup> See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 72. Here, Kärkkäinen borrows the argument of Paul Lee, a Catholic and an informed analyst of the Third Quinquennium Report (1985–1989) of the Roman Catholic and Pentecostal Dialogue who argues that Pentecostalism is so much a 'movement' and preoccupied with the 'imminency' of the kingdom and hence ecclesiological deliberations are secondary in their theology. In contemporary times, there are growing attempts to justify the place of Pentecostal ecclesiology in the broad spectrum of the Church, See Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 10–21.

except to say in the context of the charismatic renewal that it "introduces the vitality of the charisms into the heart of the Church, . . . bears the label of 'charismatic' and helps to make the charismatic theme more widely known."<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, I use it in this context to refer to that kind of ecclesiology that is at once at home with the manifest and expressive dimension of the charisms in the life of the Church in a structural manner, particularly as it pertains to the laity and their ministries and is permissive of the effusive presence of the Spirit in the church. Thus this terminological category is not to be understood as a 'distinctive' term but as a 'descriptive' approach for an ecclesiology that makes room for the normativity of the charisms in the foreground of the Church's life and for asserting that "the Church is charismatic."<sup>23</sup> Rather than elevating charismatic ecclesiology to a universal level, I stand for the view that charismatic ecclesiology and practice function as indispensable catalysts for the development of global Catholicism that charismatic ecclesiology perpetuates at the cost of its own particularity.<sup>24</sup>

Charismatic ecclesiology, whether seen in the light of classical Pentecostalism or neo-charismatics within the Catholic Church – with its emphasis on a personal experiential dimension of the Spirit; a deeper life of faith and prayer; emphasis on charisms and the study of the Word of God; and (neo)evangelization – is certainly an avenue for renewal in the church. In spite of the challenges that post-modernity<sup>25</sup> poses to contemporary ecclesial life,<sup>26</sup> many people are still drawn to Pentecostal and charismatic forms of ecclesiology and renewal in the churches and this is one critical area that Congar toiled for in his theological career.

<sup>22</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 2:152.

<sup>23</sup> See Arnold Bittlinger, ed. *The Church Is Charismatic* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> See Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 2.

<sup>25</sup> The term was defined by Jean-Francois Lyotard as "incredulity to meta-narratives." See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1984), xxiv-xxv. Lieven Boeve states, commenting on Lyotard's work, "with the collapse of these master narratives, however, it becomes clear that there had been attempts to direct and guide the processes of modernization . . . . In this sense, 'postmodernity' might also be characterized as 'radicalized modernity': the era in which functional differentiation, or viewed more broadly, the pluralisation of the world, can no longer be kept together under one single perspective." Boeve, 51.

<sup>26</sup> Against the aftermath of postmodern sensibilities, Gerard Mannion observes that, "Christianity longer forms a dominant part of a modern master narrative – but more positively, it is no longer in any sense obliged to feel the need to follow the modern form of logic." Gerald Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 5 no.5. Here also see Graham Ward, *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), xiv.

## II. Congar’s Pneumatological Ecclesiology Imbued with Charismatic Ecclesiology

### *Congar’s Understanding of Pneumatology*

Going beyond the state of affairs of pneumatology in his days,<sup>27</sup> Congar made strenuous efforts to shape and develop his own understanding of pneumatology. In doing so, he found it problematic and elusive to define the person of the Holy Spirit. For him, “revelation and knowledge of the Spirit are affected by a certain lack of conceptual mediation.”<sup>28</sup> Unlike the Father and the Son, whose very names reveal their mutual relation and the unique character of their persons, Congar noted, the terms “holy” and “spirit” do not belong only to the categories and the person of the Holy Spirit, because the Father and the Son are equally ‘holy’ and ‘spirit’. In this regard then, he surmises that the theology of the Holy Spirit should not only be a mere dogmatic theology of the third Person in the Trinity but should have a practical bearing on the current exigencies of the Church. It is on account of the relationship that should exist between pneumatology and ecclesiology that he proposed a definition of pneumatology which is at once innovative and visionary. He writes: “By pneumatology I mean something other than a simple dogmatic theology of the third Person. I also mean something more than, and in this sense different from, a profound analysis of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in individual souls and his sanctifying activity there. Pneumatology should I believe, describe the impact, in the context of the vision of the Church, of the fact that the Spirit distributes his gifts as he wills and in this way builds up the Church. A study of this kind involves not simply a consideration of those gifts or charisms but a theology of the Church.”<sup>29</sup> Congar posited firmly that “pneumatology, like ecclesiology and theology as a whole, can only develop fully on the

<sup>27</sup> The Congarian specialist Joseph Famerée observes that these periods cannot be overlooked if one wants to understand the ecclesiology of Congar. He writes: «Pour bien situer le Congar d’après Vatican II, il faut cependant au préalable étudier avec précision son œuvre pré-conciliaire » see Joseph Famerée, *L’ecclésiologie D’yves Congar Avant Vatican II: Histoire et Église. Analyse Et Reprise Critique* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 25.

<sup>28</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 1:vii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 156. Elsewhere, Congar wrote: « On doit entendre par là [pneumatologie] un renouveau de conscience du rôle de l’Esprit, non seulement dans l’existence de chrétiens, mais dans l’ecclésiologie, dans la conception que nous nous faisons de l’Église et de sa vie. En effet, les exposés de théologie trinitaire ne manquent pas, ni non plus ceux qui touchent le rôle de l’Esprit dans l’âme des fidèles, mais nous sommes plus indigents s’il s’agit de l’Esprit à l’égard des sacrements et de son impact sur la façon dont l’Église se construit et se réalise. » see Yves Congar, *Un Peuple Messanique. L’église, Sacrement Du Salut. Salut Et Libération* (Paris: Cerf, 1975), 86.

basis of what is *experienced* and *realized* in the life of the Church. In this sphere, theory is to a great extent dependent on praxis."<sup>30</sup>

Hard on the heels of Congar's understanding of pneumatology, one hardly finds borderlines between Trinitarian theology, pneumatology, Christology, ecclesiology and all other forms of theological thinking he (Congar) may be engaged in.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, his deep rapprochement<sup>32</sup> between the Spirit and the life of the Church is reflected in his nuanced predilection for the Irenaeus adage – "where the Church (*ecclesia*) is, there is also the Spirit of God and where the Spirit of God is, there is also the Church and all grace."<sup>33</sup> This axiom, for Congar, is open to critical questions. "Is the presence of the Spirit conditioned by the Church and does the Church have to be defined by the presence and the manifest action of the Spirit?"<sup>34</sup> He proffers answers to the effect that Catholics are more interested in the former while Reformed Protestants adhere to the latter. In order to reach a *via media*, Congar effectively posits charismatic ecclesiology as a favorable model for such a synthesis.<sup>35</sup>

Further, Congar's hermeneutics of pneumatological ecclesiology found a qualitative change in the post conciliar period<sup>36</sup> where he laid a great emphasis on pneumatological anthropology and pneumatological ecclesiology, by stressing the importance of the role of the Spirit in the church and in the human person. Elizabeth Groppe therefore notes that the greatest contribution of Congar in pneumatology is the link he made between pneumatological ecclesiology and pneumatological anthropology."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 1:172. Emphasis mine.

<sup>31</sup> Cf Avery Dulles, "Preface," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>32</sup> In view of this close relationship McBrien thinks that Congar's could as well be entitled *I believe in the Church*. See Richard McBrien, "I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Role of Pneumatology in Yves Congar's Theology," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005), 327.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Congar, *I Believe*, 1:68. He also notes that Augustine always linked the Church and the Holy Spirit, likewise did Albert the Great. The latter writes: "I believe in the Holy Spirit . . . I believe in him also as far as his work is concerned, which is to make the Church holy. He communicates that holiness in the sacraments, the virtues and the gifts that he distributes in order to bring holiness about, and finally in the miracles and the graces of a charismatic type (*et donis gratis datis*), see *ibid*, 5–6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 209.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid*. Here Congar quotes Dom Clément Lialine in rejecting "ecclesiolatry" or ecclesiocentrism whereby the Church is given absolute and supreme value to the detriment of God, the Word, God's initiative and the gospel.

<sup>36</sup> Famerée, *L'ecclésiologie D'yves Congar*, 437. See also Mullins: 288, 303.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 101. See also Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, "The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit," *Theological Studies* 62, no. 1 (2001): 451–478. This observation notwithstanding, other Congarian scholars point to different



*The Spirit as the Co-instituting Principle of the Church*

In his earlier writings, Congar swam in the general theology of the Church at the time. He always thought of the Spirit as the animator of the Church. In his later writings, however, he emphasized that the Spirit is not only the animator of the Church but also its co-institutor.<sup>38</sup> Together with the Word, the Spirit establishes the Church in its charismatic reality, as well as establishing the means of grace, namely the scriptures, the sacraments and the apostolic ministry. Congar retracted<sup>39</sup> his own idea of a kind of "free zone" reserved for the Spirit alongside the structural elements of the means of grace.<sup>40</sup> To the contrary, both the Word and the Spirit act together in the charisms and structural means of grace.

Drawing again from an Irenaean poetic imagery that the Church is made by the two hands of the Father, Congar affirmed that both the Christ and the Spirit co-institute the Church. By this, Congar wanted to underscore the divine agency in the institution of the Church, without limiting it only to the second person of the Trinity, but rather to highlight the role of the Father and that of the Spirit as well. Thus in his later works, he championed the role of both the Christ and the Spirit as instituting principle in the Church. Through this Irenaean imagery, Congar affirmed thus: "the church appears therefore to come both from the Word in his incarnation and from the Spirit – or the glorified Lord – who is unceasingly active both in men and women and in sacramental or juridical structures. Truly, God works with his two hands conjointly."<sup>41</sup>

ecclesiological nerve centers in the ecclesiological writings of Congar. For instance, Timothy MacDonald interprets the leitmotif for Congar's ecclesiology as structure and life, see Timothy MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984). On his part, Douglas Koskela argues that the attempt to find the tensions between the divine and human dimensions of the Church was central to the ecclesiology of Congar, see Douglas Koskela, "The Divine-Human Tension in the Ecclesiology of Yves Congar," *Ecclesiology* 4, no. 1 (2007): 88–106. Cornelis van Vliet on the other hand argues that even though the term *Communio sacramentalis* is not used by Congar, it provides a synthesis for the different conceptions of the Church discussed by him (Congar). See Cornelis Van Vliet, *Communio Sacramentalis: Das Kirchenverständnis Von Yves Congar-Genetisch Und Systematisch Betrachtet* (Mainz: Mathias-Grünewald, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> See Congar, *I Believe*, 2:5–14.

<sup>39</sup> On the general retractions of Yves Congar, see Rémi Chéno, "Les *Retractions* D'Yves Congar Sur Le Rôle De L'Esprit Saint Dans Les Institutions Ecclésiales," *Revue des sciences philosophique et théologique* 91, no. 2 (2007): 265–284.

<sup>40</sup> See Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans., David Smith (London: Chapman, 1986. French original: *La parole et la soufflé*. Paris: Desclée, 1984), 61. Here Congar admits that "it is a mistake to think as I did in 1953 that a kind of 'free sector' reserved for the Holy Spirit exist alongside the operation of the instituted structures and means of grace."

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 83. On the role of the Spirit as co-institutor of the Church, see especially James Patrick Quinn, "The Two Hands of the Father: The Role of the Holy Spirit Along with

In the Spirit, Christ has laid the foundations of the Church both in his earthly life and in his glorified state. He recognized that Jesus laid the foundations of the church but its full institution was the work of the apostles after Pentecost.<sup>42</sup> Surely, Jesus is the foundation of the Church insofar as he instituted certain foundations of the sacraments, as clearly manifested, for instance, in the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and allowing himself to be baptized. Despite these indisputable events, Congar notes that these sacramental rites developed significantly in the course of the history of the Church.<sup>43</sup> For instance, Christ chose the apostolic body but this was given a further development and shape in the course of ecclesial history. In all these instances, Congar wants to emphasize that Jesus Christ is not simply the founder of the Church, but more broadly its foundation. "In speaking of Christ, Saint Paul does not so much refer to him as founder (founder, in the past, of a completed society, *societas perfecta*), but as an ever-present foundation [in the use of the Greek present passive participle word *keimenon*] (cf 1 Cor 3:11 ff)."<sup>44</sup> According to Congar then, Christ and the Spirit act inseparably to establish the "means of grace" which include the Word, sacraments, and the apostolic ministry.<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Groppe consequently observes that "Congar's conviction that the Church is made by the Spirit was a consequence of his growing emphasis on the non-duality of Jesus Christ and the Spirit and a component of his pneumatological Christology."<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately, Congar had realized that all too often it was presumed that Jesus Christ had instituted the hierarchical and sacramental elements in the Church and so there was no need for divine initiative again. Congar repudiates such notions and points out that "[i]t is God who established and builds up the Church through the power of Jesus Christ and the Spirit. It is God who calls us (Rom 1:6, People of *God*, Church of *God* : 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1); it is *God* who distributes the gifts of service (1 Cor 12:4–11); it is *God* who makes things grow (1 Cor 3:6)"<sup>47</sup> Thus for Congar, "the Church was not simply founded in the beginning – God continues without

Christ as the Co-Institutor of the Church in the Writings of Yves Congar" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> Yves Congar, "Pneumatologie Dogmatique," in *Initiation À La Pratique De La Théologie*, ed. Bernard Lauret and François Refoulé (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 496.

<sup>43</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Yves Congar, "Pneumatology Today," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 167, no. (1973): 442.

<sup>45</sup> Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 61.

<sup>46</sup> Groppe, *Congar's Theology*, 102.

<sup>47</sup> Yves Congar, "Renewed Actuality of the Holy Spirit," *Lumen Vitae* 28, no. (1973): 441–442. emphasis original.

ceasing to build it up, which is of course the basic idea contained in 1 Cor 12."<sup>48</sup>

Over against any pretensions of human self-sufficiency, and Christo-centric ecclesiology Congar asserts the importance of the Spirit's role in the establishment of the Church. If it is co-instituted by Him, it stands to reason that the Spirit should be given a prominent role not only in the Church's *bene esse* but also its very *esse*. And this constitutive role of the Spirit is not a once and for all event but a continuous recalling of the Spirit upon the Church.

*The Life of the Church is a continuous Epiclesis*

Based on the liturgical usage of epiclesis in the celebration of the sacraments, Congar referred to the life of the Church as one long epiclesis ("*la vie de l'Eglise est tout entière épiciétique*"). In the celebration of the sacraments in the Church, earthly material elements of the Church are transformed into actions of grace through the divinizing power of God. In the liturgy Christ's redemptive act becomes efficacious but not simply a reenactment of a historical event in the life of Christ.<sup>49</sup> The Church as a whole is sacramental in its nature and continues to celebrate the sacraments for the sanctification of the Church and the people. This is possible through the epiclesis in the celebration of the sacraments. Congar observed that when we profess "I believe in the Holy Church, it is conditioned by 'I believe in the Holy Spirit'. This dogma means that the life and activity of the Church can be seen totally as an epiclesis."<sup>50</sup>

The Church's sacramental structure is ensured in its essence by the presence of the Spirit. This ensures that the events celebrated do not have only the past significance of founded events or the grace of the present but are prophetic signs for the future. "There is a sacramental presence where the Holy Spirit enables, by means of 'earthly' elements, men to live here and now from the past, present and future work of Christ, and where he makes them live from salvation."<sup>51</sup> The Church as a whole is sacramental in its nature; and is realized "*in and through Christ*, the great and primordial sacrament of salvation."<sup>52</sup> This assertion should not lead to any one-sidedness of Christomonism, because, it is only in a proper understanding of

<sup>48</sup> Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 80.

<sup>49</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 3:271.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:271.

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

pneumatological Christology that one can understand pneumatological ecclesiology. Following from this, Congar is emphatic that the building up of the Church through the celebration of the sacraments is made efficacious through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not disrupt the order of the sacraments: "far from the comings [sic] of the Holy Spirit to the Church challenging and questioning its institutional character, they establish it in the present truth."<sup>53</sup> Through the power of the Holy Spirit in the form of epiclesis and other interventions, mortal human beings are able to be transformed into divine life itself. The implication is that the celebration of the sacraments should lead to a deeper initiation of the Christian and the entire life of the Church can be seen as an epiclesis, a constant calling down of the Spirit upon itself.

Apart from the epicletic character of the Church which is evidenced in the celebration of all the seven sacraments of the Church, Congar also observed that Christian knowledge and the Word of God equally have sacramental structure of a kind, in that they are meant to go through and beyond a visible and tangible expression, which as such is part of our world, to an insight into the Word of God himself in and through men's minds, which can be assimilated to the *res* of the sacraments."<sup>54</sup> Congar observed that the Holy Spirit is traditionally invoked in the reading and preaching of the Scriptures to underscore his importance as the interpreter of the Word of God.<sup>55</sup>

Thus since the Church in Christ is in the nature of a sacrament and there is an epicletic dimension in the celebration of the sacraments, Congar is far from wrong when he underscores such an important aspect in the life of the Church. This leads also to the ecclesial affirmation that the Church is the sacrament of the Spirit.<sup>56</sup> Congar again notes that in several ancient manuscripts which contain the words of the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy kingdom come' is rendered as 'May thy Spirit come upon us and purify us.'<sup>57</sup> By this continuous calling of the Spirit upon itself the Church recognizes the Spirit as one which "furthers the cause of the gospel . . . encourages great initiatives to renew the Church . . . inspires necessary reforms and prevents them from becoming merely external arrangements, so that they are able to lead new life according to the Spirit of Jesus."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 3: 270.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Marc Steen, "De Kerk Als Sacrament Van De Geest. Enkele Reflectie," in *Volk Van God En Gemeenschap Van De Gelovigen. Pleidooien Voor Een Zorgzame Kerkopbouw*, ed. T. Merrigan and P. De Mey J. Haers (Averbode: Altiora, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 2:57.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

*Charisms as Structuring Principle of the Church*

One of the core ideas that Congar made basic in his charismatic ecclesiology is the role of the Spirit as the giver of charisms in the Church. The charisms had been repudiated for a long time and Congar, even before the dawn of the second Vatican Council called for the renewal of their importance in the life of the Church.

The history of charisms in the Church is so much connected to the entire history of the Church that it would be a gargantuan task to attempt a recontextualisation of it. Some ecclesiastics have attempted to establish that “the end of charismatic anarchy signified the end of Charismatic period and the beginning of firm and definitive organization of Church life.”<sup>59</sup> To the contrary, the charisms are operative in contemporary times as in the beginning of the Church: “the Holy Spirit lives in the Church of our times just as in the primitive Church. Charismatic gifts are still sent down in the Church of our time just as in the apostolic age. The charismatic age did not end but continues to exist within the Church even though it now takes a different form. The end of the charismatic age would signify the end of the Church’s very existence, for the Church was and still is a charismatic organism.”<sup>60</sup>

Vatican II made it emphatic that the charisms are still within the Church and continue to build the mission of the Church. Although some scholars think *Lumen Gentium* did not clarify the terms grace, charism and office,<sup>61</sup> it made it evidently clear that the gifts of the Spirit are still abundant and for the renewal of the Church. Francis Sullivan gives a thumbnail description to the understanding of charisms in *Lumen Gentium*: “a charism, then, as understood by Vatican II can be described as a grace-given capacity and willingness for some kind of service that contributes to the renewal and up-building of the Church.”<sup>62</sup>

Through the charisms given to the members of the ecclesial body, the Church grows and thrives. Congar explained that the charisms are gifts of the Spirit given for the mission of the Church.<sup>63</sup> For him, the Spirit awakens natural human talents and elevates them to a newer and deeper level of orientation towards God. This is meant

<sup>59</sup> This observation is made by Afanasiev. See Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, trans., Vitaly Permiakov (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 133. That such is the case is evidenced by Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini when he addressed the Second Vatican Council in 1963 to the effect that the gift of tongues have ceased and were only helpful at the beginning of the Church, see Congar, *I Believe*, 173.

<sup>60</sup> Afanasiev, 134.

<sup>61</sup> Haughey, 235.

<sup>62</sup> Francis Sullivan, *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock 2004), 13.

<sup>63</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 2: 26; Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 80–81.

for the love of God and service to the community at large. "The Church receives the fullness of the Spirit only in the totality of the gifts made by all her members."<sup>64</sup> To underscore the dynamism of the charisms in all the members of the Church, Congar affirmed that "[the Church] is not a pyramid whose passive base receives everything from the apex."<sup>65</sup>

One important aspect that Congar brings to bear on the charisms is that they are the foundational principles of the Church. He emphasized that charisms "should be treated not simply as gifts for personal spiritual enrichment or ornamental additions to a self-sufficient ecclesial institution but rather as contribution to the Church's very constitution."<sup>66</sup> Although Vatican II made a positive rediscovery of the place of the charisms in the Church, Congar notes with concern that "we are still a long way from opening the life of the Church, its parishes and its organizations to the free contribution of the charisms."<sup>67</sup>

Congar therefore affirms without qualification, that the charisms are the *Ordnungsprinzip* of the Church, that is, the ecclesial 'principle of order' and construction.<sup>68</sup> By 'order' is not meant "the external organization of the Church as defined in the juridical sense. It is rather the principle that makes the Church as organism."<sup>69</sup> The nature of the charisms is such that they are always renewed at unprecedented levels in the Church as way of giving life to the Church.<sup>70</sup>

Due to its important role in the church, Congar emphasized the indispensable role of discernment. "The first condition for the validity of the experience of charismatic discernment is to have recourse to other forms of discernment in order to confirm and justify charismatic discernment, because it is new and often spontaneous and confusing. . . . The second condition of validity is to go back to the charismatic community and the exercise of this dynamism of service within the community."<sup>71</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Congar, "Pneumatology Today," 443.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Groppe, *Congar's Theology*, 105.

<sup>67</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 2: 128.

<sup>68</sup> Congar actually borrows the term *Ordnungsprinzip* from Gotthold Hasenbüttl, a disciple of Hans Küng, as he calls him. He however notes that such a theology must be placed in the proper context of the Sacrament of Orders and given Christological balance. See Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 78–84. See also Gotthold Hasenbüttl, *Charisma: Ordnungsprinzip Der Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969).

<sup>69</sup> Congar, *Word and Spirit*, 80.

<sup>70</sup> Rahner, 88–89.

<sup>71</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 181. Hard on the heels of this Congar sees that these conditions are not always observed

He was wary of the situation where people rely on ‘common sense’ instead of relying on ‘charismatic discernment. “If ‘charismatic discernment’ exists, it is rare and, when it occurs, it calls for co-operation.”<sup>72</sup> This corporal dimension of the discernment of the Spirit was paramount for St. Paul when he admonished the Thessalonians “not to quench the Spirit but test everything (*panta de dokimazete*).

In view of the crucial role discernment plays in the exercise of the charisms, Congar grouped the criteria for the discernment of spirits into three, namely, doctrinal or objective discernment, subjective or personal discernment and discernment within the community.<sup>73</sup> Objective discernment has to do with the testing of the Spirit against the holistic scriptural and ecclesial teachings and particularly that of obedience. Congar here invokes his mantra of the indivisibility between Christology and pneumatology: “all our research leads us to the conclusion that Christology is the most important condition for the soundness of any pneumatology.”<sup>74</sup> But the critical question to be posed is: does Congar along with most writers emphasize a one-sided approach of obedience of charisms to the hierarchy? The consequence of this would be the absolutization of the hierarchy at the expense of the charisms. If there are both hierarchical and charismatic gifts, is it (im)possible for the hierarchy to equally obey the charismatic gifts, as both gifts come ‘from above’? As it stands now, it is as if the hierarchy is the watchdog of the other charisms.

Subjective discernment “consists of an assessment of our inner tendencies on the basis of that renewal of our understanding and value-judgment of which Paul speaks in Rom 12:2 and Eph 4: 23.”<sup>75</sup> This must be done in line with the fruits of the Spirit that is borne in our lives. Lastly, Congar observes, that discernment within the community consists of “a search conducted by all the members of a group for a clear consensus of God’s will for the group or for one of its members in a particular case or situation. The criteria for the validity of such an exercise in discernment are the presence of spiritual guides or competent animators.”<sup>76</sup> Here, the good of the community and the signs of the times have to be discerned and brought to bear on the life of the general community. Congar thus effectively asserts that all gifts are to be discerned without subduing them.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> For critical explanation of these different modes see Ibid. 182–183.

<sup>74</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 182.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 183.

### III. Yves Congar's Vision for charismatic Ecclesiology

Having analyzed some of the key grounds upon which Congar's ecclesiology rests, I now attempt to highlight where such an ecclesiology will be crucial in the life of the church.

#### *Link between the Word and the Spirit in Charismatic Ecclesiology*

One of the problems that often comes up in charismatic ecclesiology is the over-insistence on the role of the Spirit at the expense of Christological themes. Whenever themes on the Spirit are mentioned, they fail to also stress the importance of the Christ. Thus one of the major conditions for authentic charismatic ecclesiology is the appropriate link between the Word and the Spirit. From what has been discussed thus far, Congar stresses the co-joint activity of the Word and the Spirit. The implication of this correlation is that not only is pneumatological Christology necessary but also christological pneumatology. In this perspective, an authentic pneumatology is achieved in reference to Christology, the Word, the sacraments, ecclesial institutions. In other words, the health of charismatic ecclesiology is conditioned essentially by its Christological reference. Sometimes, what is observed is that members in the Charismatic Renewal blow the importance of the Spirit out of proportion by emphasizing that the Spirit blows wherever He wills. Congar, who himself held this view, modified it as he matured in his thoughts about the Spirit. By emphasizing the Spirit, one should be guided by the mutuality between the Christ and the Spirit, thereby not falling into the trap of moving from one extreme to the other, namely, from Christomonism to pneumatomonism. This idea was already pregnant in *Lumen Gentium* when it asserted that "they [the faithful] are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, *possessing the Spirit of Christ*, accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her."<sup>77</sup> The implication of this is that any purely Christocentric and institutional view must be overcome.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> LG 14, emphasis mine.

<sup>78</sup> Yves Congar, *Le Concile De Vatican II. Son Église, Peuple De Dieu Et Corps Du Christ* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 169. Attempts at overcoming some of these have been outlined recently by Rémi Chéno, *L'esprit-Saint Et L'église: Institutionnalité Et Pneumatologie, Vers Une Dépassement Des Antagonismes Ecclesiologiques*, Cogitatio Fidei (Paris: Cerf, 2010).



*The Reception of the Sacraments and charismatic ecclesiology*

Another area that Congar's charismatic ecclesiology envisages is the reception of the sacraments. Cardinal Suenens had long bemoaned that Catholics are sacramentalised but not evangelized. Congar lays the foundation of overcoming such existential problematics by noting that although the celebration of the sacraments is strictly an exercise in sacramental theology, it is deemed rightly "as a chapter in pneumatology."<sup>79</sup>

To this end, the celebration of the sacraments – in particular the sacraments of initiation – was an important area in the pneumatological ecclesiology of Yves Congar.<sup>80</sup> He stressed the important role of the Spirit as a corrective to the binitarian nature in the treatment of the sacraments in Latin sacramentology. In addition, he bemoaned the reception and initiation of Christians into these sacraments as a kind of mere formality without any impact in the life of the Christian. For him, the sacraments are to make Christians come to terms with the experiential aspect of their lives, which is sometimes referred to as baptism of the Holy Spirit.

For Congar, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation are the sacraments through which the Spirit continues to act in the same way He acted in the life of Jesus. He views the gifts of the Spirit which are conferred on the recipients as a single process in the ritual celebrations of the sacraments.<sup>81</sup> The root of baptism and confirmation lies not in the power of the Church but in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Drawing from the incarnation, Congar notes that the Spirit had an indispensable role in the life of Jesus. This can be seen in two aspects, namely the role of the Spirit at the Incarnation and the consecration of Jesus at the Jordan River. The implication, especially of the latter is that Jesus not only possessed the Spirit but ministered under the promptings of the Spirit. By means of the sacraments therefore, the same Spirit of Christ is given to Christians: "The Spirit, however, had to be given to all of us and that is why it descended on Jesus at his baptism. This happened so that he could communicate the Spirit to us. It was for this reason that the Word became Jesus Christ."<sup>82</sup>

A propos the sacrament of confirmation in particular, Congar takes his lead from his medieval confrere, Aquinas in noting that although

<sup>79</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 3:271.

<sup>80</sup> In fact, Congar himself does not treat all the sacraments in his pneumatological ecclesiology. He deals specifically with Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist and Order in a special manner and which could be applied to the rest of the sacraments. See *Ibid*, 217–243.

<sup>81</sup> Congar, *I Believe*, 219.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:20.

the Spirit is given in baptism, there is the need for its 'sealing.' This makes it possible for "a personal act of commitment to the service of Jesus Christ, in the Church, in the presence of witnesses, made at the beginning of adolescence or on the threshold of adult life."<sup>83</sup> Aware that the celebration of the sacraments should carry some sort of experiential consciousness, Congar probes into what he referred to as some kind of "uneasiness" in the celebration of the sacraments, especially of confirmation. It causes some uneasiness when people say for instance that they have been confirmed in the power of the Spirit and no new thing seems to happen. "It is of course, said – quite correctly – that the supernatural reality takes place in secret and cannot be experienced immediately, and that in baptism too nothing seem to happen. Nonetheless, a certain dissatisfaction remains, and Christians who are already committed to the Christian way of life are troubled by the sacrament of confirmation."<sup>84</sup>

Congar is very anxious to see that the offices of Christ as the king, priest and prophet are more highlighted during confirmation. "The last-mentioned office is particularly important in the case of confirmation."<sup>85</sup> This in a way is reflected in a charismatic ecclesiology. Indeed, Congar comes alive when he expresses his desire for a merger of confirmation with the Renewal concept of Baptism in the Spirit. He writes:

"There should be a personal act of commitment to the service of Jesus Christ, in the Church, in the presence of witnesses, made at the beginning of adolescence or on the threshold of adult life . . . the best arrangement would be for it to take place within the framework of the Eucharist, celebrated within the community. An environment of prayer is absolutely necessary . . . In this way, a beginning would be made in the training of committed, adult Christians. There would perhaps only be a few of them – those who really believed – but something would be happening. I would be very much like to see the members of the Renewal take part in such days of preparation and the ceremony of confirmation . . . With or without 'baptism in the Spirit' it would be the making real, to an adult personal consciousness, of the grace received unawares in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation."<sup>86</sup>

By the two-fold epicletic structure in the Eucharistic celebration restored into the life of the Church after Vatican II, Congar was optimistic that a new breadth has been put into the pneumatological celebration of the Eucharist. The new Eucharistic Prayers introduced after the council thus become a means to live the consciousness of the presence of the Holy Spirit not only in the Eucharistic species itself

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:224.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:218.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:219.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:224.

but more importantly in the lives of the Christian. The fruits of the sacraments must be communicated in mission. Taking his lead from Augustine, Congar maintains that to live in the life of the Spirit, one therefore belongs to this Body of Christ, which is the Church. It is not only a question of receiving the Body of Christ in the Eucharist; one must equally and more importantly be given life by the Holy Spirit.<sup>87</sup> This for Congar also holds true for Aquinas who insists that the eating of the body and blood of Christ is also a participation in the divine life of the Holy Spirit.<sup>88</sup>

*Congar’s ‘Total Ecclesiology’: The Laity vis-à-vis Charismatic Ministries*

Charismatic ecclesiology is strongly laity-focused, and there is hardly any author who does not recognise the vision of Congar for the laity. Because the faithful have the charisms of the Spirit in equal share as the hierarchy, there is no theological basis to sideline the faithful. His thoughts about the laity witnessed progressive improvement in the heyday of his theological career.<sup>89</sup> To be sure, Congar opined that “at bottom there can be only sound and sufficient theology of the laity, and that is a ‘total ecclesiology [*ecclésiologie totale*].”<sup>90</sup> In other words, the theology of the laity presupposes the ambitious project of a complete theology of the Church as a whole. In fact, the chapter from *Lumen Gentium* on the laity, was drafted by a team in which Congar was, to say the least, very prominent.<sup>91</sup> In spite of this, the Vatican could not reach a definitive definition of the laity. Congar in

<sup>87</sup> See *ibid.*, 3:258–266.

<sup>88</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> For a deeper study on the progressive thoughts of Congar on the laity see Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 49–75; Ramiro Pellitero, “Congar’s Developing Understanding of the Laity and Their Mission,” *Thomist* 65, no. (2001): 327–359; A.N. Williams, “Congar’s Theology of the Laity,” in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 32 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2005), 135–159. In fact, these authors and most Congarian theologians observe that it was Congar’s *True and False Reforms and Lay People in the Church* that brought him into conflict with the Church authorities, which culminated in his being silenced by the Church until the dawn of Vatican II, when such a ban was lifted by Pope John XXIII.

<sup>90</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, trans., Donald Attwater (Westminster, MD: Newman 1965. French original: *L’Église catholique devant la question raciale*. Paris: Unesco, 1953.), xvi. See also Yves Congar, “My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries,” *The Jurist* 32, no. (1972): 169., where he says he has “not written that ecclesiology”.

<sup>91</sup> See Yves Congar, *Mon Journal Du Concile*, ed. Eric Mahieu, 2 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 2:510–511; William Henn, “Yves Congar and *Lumen Gentium*,” *Gregorianum* 86, no. (2005): 563–592; Lakeland, 49.

this respect notes that “the Council did not wish to commit itself to a definition of the layman. It was satisfied with giving a description that was both positive and negative or exclusive.”<sup>92</sup> Thus there were many factors that Congar wanted inserted in the theology of the laity, but never saw the light of day. It is on account of this that Paul Lakeland opines that “there is a vein of radicalism in Congar’s theology of the laity that has yet to be fully explored.”<sup>93</sup>

Congar broadens his pneumatological ecclesiology by asserting that the theology of the Holy Spirit also necessitates the theology of the laity. The laity also possess the Holy Spirit and particularly so the charisms of the Spirit. Understood in this sense, they must be treated as active ‘subjects’ within the Church rather than as passive objects in the Church.<sup>94</sup> While guarding against Protestant extremes, which makes the Church without priesthood and Roman Catholic apologetics, which reduces the Church to priests without the laity, Congar insists on the basis of the sacramental reception of baptism and confirmation, they must be given the due recognition as participating in the priestly, prophetic and kingly offices of Christ.<sup>95</sup>

Touching specifically on the theology of ministry,<sup>96</sup> of which the laity forms an essential part, Congar stresses the importance of ministries in the context of what he views as the realization of the Church as the People of God. As Gaillardetz notes, the rediscovery of charisms as a ministerial concept was critically important in Vatican II.<sup>97</sup> Commensurate with their calling and endowment by God’s Spirit, all the members of the Church are stewards of God’s grace and have something to contribute to the entire life of the Church. Congar

<sup>92</sup> Yves Congar, “The Laity,” in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame, IN: University Press, 1966), 241. The same view is held by Edward Schillebeeckx that Vatican II did not say anything specific about the lay state, Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 122. It is however surprising also to note that elsewhere, Congar also refers to Vatican II as the “council of the laity.” See Yves Congar, *Laity, Church, World*, trans., Donald Attwater (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1960. French original: *Si vous êtes mes témoins. Trois conférences sur laïcat, Église et monde*. Paris: Cerf, 1959), 238.

<sup>93</sup> Lakeland, 50. In fact, Lakeland opines that Congar’s *Lay People in the Church* “is the most influential single work ever written on the topic [laity].” Ibid. 77. See also Paul Lakeland, “The Laity,” in *From Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 193–208.

<sup>94</sup> See Yves Congar, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology: Conversations with Yves Congar*, ed. Bernard Lauret, trans., John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988. French original: *Entretiens d’automne. Présentes par B. Lauret*. Paris: Cerf 1987), 68. Here Congar actually thinks that the need for the laity to be subjects is particularly true for women and young people in the Church. It is reasons such as these that he estimates make some of the laity leave the Church.

<sup>95</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, 115.

<sup>96</sup> See especially Congar, “My Path-Findings,” 169–188.

<sup>97</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 136–141.

thus insists on a diverse range of services for which the laity are also called and contributes in great measures to an adequate understanding of the theology of the laity. He recounts that apart from a major role played by Küng<sup>98</sup> in the restoration of charismatic ministries in the Church, he has himself also to congratulate:

But I myself made a contribution to restoring the idea of ministries...The plural noun is essential. It signifies that the Church of God is not built up solely by the actions of the official presbyteral ministry but by a multitude of diverse modes of service, more or less stable or occasional, more or less spontaneous or recognized and when the occasion arises consecrated, while falling short of sacramental ordination. . . . Such modes of service proceeds from gifts of nature or grace, from those callings which saint Paul named 'charisms'. . . . They do actually exist but up to now were not called by their true name, ministries, nor were their place and status in ecclesiology recognized. To move on to this double recognition is extremely important for any just vision of things, for any satisfactory theology of the laity.<sup>99</sup>

Thus Congar moves beyond his own earlier thinking of the laity in relation to the priest: "it is worth noticing that the decisive coupling is not 'priesthood/laity as I used in *Jalons*, but rather 'ministries/modes of community service.'<sup>100</sup> Flynn in this vein observes that the prospects of the latter coupling lie in the fact that it contributes towards a more inclusive vision of ministry. Secondly, it acknowledges both the contributions of the ministerial priesthood and the services performed by the laity, which Congar insists, must also be recognized as ministries.<sup>101</sup> Further, the replacement of the dialectics 'priesthood/laity' by 'ministries/modes of community service', founded on the principle of equal dignity and shares in the charisms of the Spirit boldly asserts the mission of the Church as a responsibility shared by all, while retaining the distinction between pastors and the rest of the people of God.<sup>102</sup> Miroslav Volf corroborates

<sup>98</sup> Congar, "My Path-Findings," 175.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 175–176. See also Yves Congar, "Intervention Du Père Yves Congar," in *Tous Responsables Dans L'église?*, ed. Paul Huot-Pleuoux *et al*(Paris: Cerf, 1973), 56–72. Actually, Congar's model of ministries is based on different degree of involvement in the life of the Church. The first is the level of general ministry. These include visiting the sick, parents catechizing their children etc. The second level includes more stable and public ones such as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, catechists etc. In the third level are found ministries of deacons, priests and bishops. See Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, trans., John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1984. French original: *Diversités et communion. Dossier historique et conclusion théologique*. Paris: Cerf, 1982), 43–47. See also Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, Revised ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 183.

<sup>100</sup> Congar, "My Path-Findings," 176. He makes similar retractions in *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology*, p .65

<sup>101</sup> Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 128.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

Congar's view when he affirms that the "universal distribution of the charismata implies *common* responsibility. Such common responsibility is compatible with the particular charismata of leadership."<sup>103</sup> Edward Hahnenberg also sees in Congar's theology of the laity and ministry a promising endeavor for the life of the Church.<sup>104</sup> As a matter of fact, Congar's vision is realized and vigorously pursued by Pope Benedict when he writes of the laity that "they must no longer be viewed as 'collaborators', of the clergy but truly recognized as 'co-responsible', for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity."<sup>105</sup>

In spite of the lacunae that have been identified in the formulations of Congar about the laity,<sup>106</sup> his articulations are unprecedented insofar as he acknowledges the charisms of the faithful in this endeavor. Indeed, he himself made *retractions* of his theology of ministries.<sup>107</sup> It is our contention that the theology of the laity still remains heuristic in nature and the task of coming to its full appreciation in the Church is still incomplete.<sup>108</sup> This view is quite important: the claim of Congar for a "total ecclesiology" is yet to be fully explored by the Church. Such a 'total ecclesiology' could move the Church beyond the bipolar priest-laity community to a more *polycentric community*.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 230.

<sup>104</sup> Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach* (New York: Crossroad, 2003), 122–127.

<sup>105</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, 26 May, 2009. "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI on Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility," [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20090526\\_convegno-diocesi-rm\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090526_convegno-diocesi-rm_en.html) (accessed 10 May, 2010).

<sup>106</sup> For instance Gabriel Flynn thinks that it engenders an inevitable downgrading of the position of members of the laity who do not exercise any particular ministry in the church and that it does not correspond to the total ecclesiology that Congar himself envisaged, see Flynn, *Congar's Vision of the Church*, 132. Famerée also criticizes Congar for his use of the expressions 'periphery' and 'centre' in his earlier works before the council as contributing to polarization in the Church, see Famerée, *L'ecclésiologie D'yves Congar*, 117.

<sup>107</sup> Chéno, "Retractions," 267–269; Congar, "My Path-Findings," 174.

<sup>108</sup> See John Paul II, 1989. "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifidelis Laici* on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World," [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html) (accessed April 10, 2010). For reasons that the theology of the laity is still unfinished see Richard R. Gaillardetz, "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64, no. (1999); Gerard O'Connell, "The Synod on the Laity: An Unfinished Agenda," *Month* 249, no. (1988): 869–879.

<sup>109</sup> This involves the participative model of all the faithful in the life of the Church. See further details in Volf, 224–226.

*Charismatic Ecclesiology and the New Evangelization*

In his *motu proprio Ubiquumque et Semper* which established the Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation, Pope Benedict XVI sought to launch a re-evangelization project that was long the vision of Pope Paul VI and Blessed John Paul II in ecclesiastical regions where the Christian (Catholic) faith is in fast decline. Among the various reasons for the dearth of ecclesial practice in these regions, one cannot lose sight of the worship and liturgical styles adopted by these churches. In an era when charismatic worship styles exhibited by communities such as the Taizé Movement, Focolare, St Egidio, Arc Community, Emmanuel Community, Foyer de Charité, etc. is in vogue with the majority of the youth and is making significant impact on (re)evangelization, one sees no reason why charismatic ecclesiology should not be given a pride of place in the present evangelization. Karl Rahner spoke of this when he observed that the future church would be characterized as one "built from below by basic communities as a result of free initiative and association".<sup>110</sup> In a recent survey conducted by the Pew Centre, most Catholics responded that they leave the Catholic Church to join the evangelical churches simply because their unmet needs are satisfied in the latter.<sup>111</sup> Quite pathetically, some authors aver that respective authorities in these regions do not give attention to why the church is bleeding in terms of losing members.<sup>112</sup>

The new evangelization that is being hammered out is clearly a renewal in the life of the Spirit. When one takes into account that the revival and normative manifestations of the Spirit is the leitmotif that strands charismatic ecclesiology, then it stands to reason that it has a great potential to boost the impact of the new evangelization. As Lochner has noted, the presence and impact of the Holy Spirit—without whom there is no new evangelization—is important for the new evangelization.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the World to Come* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 108.

<sup>111</sup> See <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1204/religion-changes-affiliations-survey> (published April 27, 2009, accessed November 3, 2011).

<sup>112</sup> Writing under the topic "The Hidden Exodus: Catholics becoming Protestants," in a recent article, the Jesuit Thomas J. Reese claims for example, that "the US Bishops have never devoted any time at their national meetings to discuss the exodus. Nor have they spent a dime trying to find out why it is happening." See <http://ncronline.org/news/hidden-exodus-catholics-becoming-protestants> (April 18, 2011) (accessed 2nd November, 2011)

<sup>113</sup> He writes, "Ohne den Heiligen Geist und ohne ein neues Sich-Öffnen für die Kraft von oben aber gibt es keine Neuevangelisation" and again, „Der ... Auftrag, den der Herr der Charismatischen Erneuerung anvertraut hat, ist die Neuevangelisation. To this end, he opines that the German bishops are not doing enough. "in Deutschland aber ist bisher wenig oder gar nicht geschehen. Mit wenigen Ausnahmen haben die Bischöfe kaum

In effect, the new evangelization which has been identified as one that requires conversion,<sup>114</sup> chimes in with communion ecclesiology,<sup>115</sup> among others areas that can become effective if the clarion call of charismatic ecclesiology is heeded.

## Conclusion

The second Vatican Council was convened with the intention of ushering in a new Pentecost in the life of the church. Half a century afterwards, however, Walter Kasper opines that the Church is "certainly a long way from being able to speak of a new Pentecost in our Church."<sup>116</sup> In light of what Philip Jenkins has observed that church growth in the twenty first century is led by churches in which the Holy Spirit plays a very public role, not only of inspiration but also of empowerment<sup>117</sup>, the church cannot leave this to chance. The celebration of this half-centenary gives the church a golden opportunity to revisit some of the core issues that the Council envisioned. The Fathers of the Council, though of diverse opinions, wanted the Spirit's full integration into the life of the Church. Congar's vision therein and for contemporary ecclesial life and charismatic ecclesiology, as it did in the fecund years at the dawn of Vatican II,<sup>118</sup> still remain in force.

Despite tensions such as its preoccupation with the charism, subjectivism, theology of 'immediacy', exaggerated supernaturalism, exaggerated ecstasy, etc. charismatic ecclesiology has a prominent role to play within the total understanding of the Church. It brings to the Church a fresh understanding of her nature as *ecclesia semper reformanda*, as well as reminding her most importantly of the personal experiential dimension of the Spirit.<sup>119</sup>

The Church's reception of charismatic ecclesiology has been notable but certainly made with some reservations. These reservations

darüber gesprochen," see Hansmartin Lochner, *Charismatische Erneuerung: Ein Weg Der Neu-evangelisierung* (Altoetting: Geiselberger, 2010), 20–21.

<sup>114</sup> Richard Rymarz, "Conversion and the New Evangelization: A Perspective from Lonergan," *Heythrop Journal* 51, no. 5 (2010): 753–767.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Rymarz, "The New Evangelisation in an Ecclesiological Context," *Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 5 (2011): 772–784.

<sup>116</sup> Walter Kasper, "The Renewal of Pneumatology in Contemporary Catholic Life and Theology: Towards a Rapprochement between East and West," in *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity*, ed. A. Denaux D. Donnelly, J.Famerée (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>117</sup> Jenkins, 55–78.

<sup>118</sup> See Flynn, "Yves Congar's Theology," 460.

<sup>119</sup> This is important for current discussions in pneumatology, see John R. Levison, "Recommendations for the Future of Pneumatology," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 33, no. 1 (2011): 79–93.



stem from the church's checkered history, which has made it more wary of later developments. But the church cannot always live in distrust of the manifestations of the Spirit by restricting itself to *a single model*, which Avery Dulles has masterfully demonstrated cannot be capable of describing the church. Again as Gerhard Lohfink has emphasized, "The story of the gathering of the people of God from Abraham until today never took place according to a model. It was always the Spirit of God who brought about new initiatives in the Church, often quite surprisingly and contrary to every expectation."<sup>120</sup> This is what the Church of the twenty first century should avail itself of, and this in none other than charismatic ecclesiology. In the end, the Church is made alive and active when it stays between the Charybdis of institutionalism and juridicalism which tends to regulate and monitor the charism and the Scylla of charismanianism and Joachimism which tends to give undue attention to the spectacular charisms. How does one stay within this? The answer is offered by charismatic ecclesiology through which the church always prays *Veni Creator Spiritus!*

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<sup>120</sup> Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need a Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God*, trans., Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), xviii.