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Holy Tradition in Theology of Yves Congar

Introduction

In a crisis of authority and principles of *tradition* one seeks the end of the pre-modern order marked by awareness of the constant relationship with transcendence, with the divine Being. (...) What truth can fertilize man's quest if the *traditionally* perceived transcendence no longer constitutes a horizon of the sense of history?¹

New time, the modern, is almost unanimously identified with the phenomenon of "separation from tradition", and is defined as "the movement of post-traditional" or as a "modern surrogate for the 'worn contents of tradition' (Habermas)"². The disappearance of the "big story" Liotard's "meta-narratives", the deletion of the paradigm of absolute truths, centralisation of a subject that uses mind not to accept anything as solved, completed and immutable, caused transformation of the concept of tradition, so that it becomes accepted as a reality that limits knowledge and freedom of thought in an aggressive manner, leading to a process that can even be defined as "de-traditionalisation"³. The distance from the modern tradition, "the separation of the modern man from his traditions"⁴, is associated with the perception of others as self-encapsulated, untouchable, immutable, authoritarian reality, which does not tolerate criticism, reflection, relativization, and is consequentially stored in the archives of the category of pre-modern.

Some authors still consider this approach to tradition to be "one of the most important prejudices" regarding the enlightenment modernity, which should be reviewed, because tradition, according to them, does not necessarily have to be the counterpart to the modern⁵. Within the context of such attempts, in addition to the philosophical⁶,

¹ cf. C. Dotolo, *Moguće kršćanstvo. Između postmoderniteta i religioznog traganja*, Zagreb, 2011, p.23 (underlined by Z.M).

² cf. U. Lelke, "Tradicija", in R. Šnel (editor), *Leksikon savremene kulture*, Belgrade, 2008, pp. 701–702.

³ cf. G. Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Post-modernity. Questions for the Church in Our Time*, Minnesota, 2007, p. 17.

⁴ Drago Perović, "Conatus essendi i pitanje o bogu (Jedan aspekt Levinasove kritike zapadnoevropske onto-teologije)", *Bogoslovlje* 71:1 (2011) pp. 95-103 (95).

⁵ cf. U. Lelke, "Tradicija", quotation, p. 702.

⁶ Heidegger's discussion of the being, leads him towards the need to analyze the temporal and historical aspects of the problem, and consequently the issues of heritage, inheritance, tradition. The Symposium of the Serbian Philosophical Society, held in September 2012, in Sremski Karlovci was dedicated to the topic of "Understanding Tradition, Tradition of Understanding," which confirms the current urgency of the issue.

one should also infer theological examination regarding life, awareness and faith of the Church, which is an essentially important term in Tradition⁷. Reflecting on the aforementioned categories means that theology seriously takes into account the challenges of the pluralistic society, which requires a “radical review of self-understanding of long-time confirmed religious heritage inherited through *tradition*”⁸.

The mentioned necessary theological exploration of the concept and content of Tradition, valid for all Christian denominations, being increased after the Second World War, was made concrete in the results that aim to overcome many misunderstandings (especially the centuries old Western issue of the Scripture and Tradition) and to clarify the related ambiguities, which should be provided by members of all Christian denominations, including the Orthodox Church. The Holy Tradition, in almost all its forms, has dwelled, according to one Orthodox theologian, for quite a while, “in the crisis of perception, and especially in the crisis of adopting importance and impact”⁹ that it should have on the life of Christians. The same need was felt, as early as half a century ago, by the members of the Committee of *Faith and Order* of the World Council of Churches (Montreal, July 1963), but also by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, whilst considering the issue of Revelation in the constitution of *Dei Verbum*, which was brought about on 18 November, 1965. A man, whose commitment to the ecumenical movement, and commitment within the work of the Grand Council of his Church, directly influenced the course of the debate and the outline of closing documents, and the man who paved the way to restoring the original *Christian* theology of Tradition, was the great Dominican theologian Yves Congar.

Cardinal Yves Congar (1904-1995)¹⁰ was one of the most important theologians of the 20th century. His scientific oeuvre (more than 1800 bibliographic units¹¹) includes research in the field of ecumenism, pneumatology, the theology of salvation history, systematic theology, the history of dogma, but his complete reflection flows into the course of his most prolific creativity - into ecclesiology. Congar was a faithful son of the Dominican order and his Church. In his life, he managed to obediently accept in a Christian manner even the most difficult decision of the Catholic hierarchy, even the humiliation of being excluded from the academic circles, suspended from the position of the lecturer at the Le Saulchoir Dominican Faculty of Theology in 1954. However, he had a chance to see the results of his theological endeavour and see a big change that had tak-

⁷ cf. R. Fisichella, “Predaja”, *Enciklopedijski teološki rječnik*, Zagreb, 2009, pp. 914–916. Of the Orthodox theologians, J. Zizioulas points out to the need for a creative reception of Tradition, so that the Church can solve the problems of time and realise the work of salvation in history, claiming even that “even we, the Orthodox Christians have reached the point where we do not know what to do with our Liturgy and tradition,” in his, “Symbolism and Realism in Orthodox Worship”, *Sabornost*, 1-4 (2001), pp. 13-35 (34).

⁸ N. Bižaca, “Ozbilnost pluralizma”, *Crkva u svijetu*, 43 (2008), pp. 323–326 (323). A similar attempt was made by A. Domazet, “Crkva – nositeljica tradicije u postmodernoj”, *Obnovljeni život* 4 (2001), pp. 423–436, arguing that “many elements of the Church tradition, when they meet the postmodern are no more understandable or acceptable; Tradition has turned into unintelligible language” (423).

⁹ cf. Z. Krstić, “Црквена дисциплина под призмом канонског предања”, in Id, *Православље и модерност. Теме практичне теологије*, Belgrade, 2012, pp. 25–34 (25).

¹⁰ The basic biographical information of our author can be found, among others, in J. Antolović, “Graditelji suvremene teološke misli: Yves Congar”, *Obnovljeni život*, 3 (1975), pp. 250–255; T. Kraljević, “Congar Yves”, in R. Vince (edited), *Kršćanska misao XX stoljeća*, Zagreb, 2009, pp. 254–258.

¹¹ J.-M. Vazin, „Présentation raisonnée de la bibliographie d’Yves Congar”, *www.catho-theo.net* 5 (2006/2), pp. 160–187.

en place in his Church, “which he loved so much”¹². Our author lived to bear witness to the fact that it was that same Church which accepted the multitude of his theological intuitive indications of reform, and, consequently, he was called the father and inspirer of many decisions made by the Second Vatican Council¹³. Finally, on 26 November 1994, six months before Congar’s death, Pope John Paul II proclaimed him Cardinal-Deacon of the Holy Roman Church.

Tradition of Theology is one of the most important issues in the Yves Congar’s theological research. To fully understand the significance, originality and creative novelty of his theological conclusions on the subject of Holy Tradition, it is necessary to seriously take into account the situation and ecclesiological climate of the Roman Catholic Church in the first half of the twentieth century, until the great turning point - the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Theological understanding of the categories of Tradition before the Council, must be well studied, if one wants to analyse the subject of our research - Tradition in Congar’s theology, because it was the hints of our theologian that were quickly transformed into the heritage of the Church and were unanimously accepted as “Traditional”, so they have lost some of their exclusivity, uniqueness and importance, which had adorned them in the most important moment. With hindsight, it is easy to overlook the originality of Yves Congar’s thought and conclusions. To further fathom the theology of this father, especially his theology of Tradition, we will first present the theological atmosphere of the pre-council period. After that, we will provide a synthetic description of Congar’s reflection on the topic, so that in the third section of the study we will be able to offer the answers to two key questions of this study: What are the theological implications of the renewed approach to Tradition offered by Congar and accepted by the official Magisterium of the Catholic Church and what are possible ecumenical consequences of finding a new platform of the interchurch convergence on the subject of Tradition and traditions?

In order to solve the given problems we shall use, by all means, the key thematic monographs of father Congar, primarily an extensive two-volume, but classic *Tradition and Traditions*¹⁴, which deals with the issue from both the historical and theological sides. Also, the study *Tradition and the Life of the Church*¹⁵, a book, considered by its author as a book which “represents him well”¹⁶, because provides a synthesised pastoral consequences of the historical and theological assumptions in the mentioned classic. On over 900 pages, provoked by the internal needs of his own Church (*ad intra*), to re-

¹² That is what one of the most important works of Yves Congar is called *Cette Église que j’aime* (1968).

¹³ Claims, for example, B. Forte, “Congar. Libero e Fedele”, *Avvenire*, 143 (1995) 19.

¹⁴ Congar, Yves, *La Tradition et les traditions* Étude historique (Vol. I), Paris, Fayard, 1960, Id, *La Tradition et les traditions* Étude théologique (Vol. II), Paris, Fayard, 1963. We have used the reprint editions of these books, Cerf, Paris, 2010. (Hereinafter *TTH* and *TTT*).

¹⁵ *La Tradition et la vie de l’Église*, Paris, Cerf, 1963. We have used a reprint of the second edition (1983) of this book in Italian, Y. Congar, *La tradizione e la vita della Chiesa*, Cinisello Balsamo 2003. (Hereinafter *TLC*). This edition is very important because it is the only one with a supplement containing the author’s reflection on the outcomes of his research, in the context of the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council and the Ecumenical Conference in Montreal in 1963. Congar is also known for the fact that, after having published his capital and multi-volume work, he published small-scale studies, small *sums* of certain problems that he pondered on. Such is, for example, the three-volume work *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, and a digest edition of the *The Spirit of Man, the Spirit of God*.

¹⁶ “I have often been asked what my favourite book is, that I have had published. This is a question that I would not know how to answer. Still, I love this little book, which represents me very well.” *TLC*, 5.

vive the ossified, scholastic airtight vision of Tradition, as well as by the external demand (*ad extra*) to respond to the challenges of the ecumenical World Council of Churches, to which Congar was fervently dedicated, the author offers his understanding of the concept and the reality of Tradition, based on the testimonies of the Scripture and the fathers.

The fact that Congar wrote complete, homogeneous, systematically coherent books, which comprehensively and substantively treat our subject, suggests a methodological process of research that will involve direct analytical and synchronic approach to his key works on Tradition and traditions. Thorough reading of the history of theology of Tradition from the writings of the French theologian, will allow us to acquire an objective critical approach to Congar's theological – historical construction of the popular and challenging subject.

1. The concept of Tradition in the Catholic theology until the Second Vatican Council

The selection of concrete persons and events from the history of the Church, which Congar finds to be crucial for the analysis of development of categories of Tradition, is both a stable hermeneutical framework of our following and understanding its synthetic judgment of theology Tradition. Such an approach will also direct us to clarify the doubts of the (dis)continuity of the theology of Tradition the Catholic Magisterium on the one hand and Yves Congar, on the other.

The need for a deeper reflection on Tradition occurred in the second century, with the advent of the Gnostics. Until then, as the apostolic writings testify, this dynamic, pneumatological and fundamental determinant of the real life of the Church had not been defined¹⁷, as was the case with the terms such as Church, Revelation, but also with other categories with which one has lived since the apostolic origins, and that manifested the sense of identity and belonging to the eschatological heavenly Jerusalem. The challenge of **Gnosticism** forced the Church to express itself through the mouths of fathers, above all, through the mouth of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, and to publish its theological awareness and faith in Tradition, which is general, public and common to all churches, starting from the Roman Church. In his theological oeuvre, the analysis of Tradition is, however, represented from within the framework of the dogma of the Church's apostolate¹⁸. What Congar tells us, exposing theology of Tradition of the ante-Nicene fathers, especially refers to the relationship of tradition and the "rules of truth and faith" (*regula veritatis, regula fidei*): "The key idea of transferring the contents of those truths and principles of life that are both normative and effective for our salvation"¹⁹. With this statement Congar is leaning towards the Irenaeus's interpretation in the categories of the transfer of primarily *intellectual* tradition, transfer of *knowledge*, which is *public* and not a secret, as it is the case with the Gnostics²⁰. Thus authentic *teaching* would

¹⁷ Congar indirectly underscores this in *TLC*, p. 32.

¹⁸ cf. *TTH*, pp. 41-121 (chapter "Les Pères et l'Eglise ancienne").

¹⁹ *TTH*, 44.

²⁰ In all historical and theological analyses of Tradition, a reference to the work of St. Irenaeus is, by all means, an unavoidable fact. So does A. Solignac, "Tradition: I La tradition dans l'Eglise", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, volume XV, Paris, 1991, pp. 1108–1125. Western theologians almost unanimously believe that the bishop of Lyons claimed that "there was a continuous flow of Christian *science*. (...) Tradition is therefore a guarantee of fidelity to the original apostolic *teaching*, and the guardian from

be a primary link in the chain of succession, which was defined in the apostleship of the *doctrine*²¹. That is why Congar found it important to highlight the fact that the Latin verb *tradere* often means “to teach”, and that Christianity is essentially, though not exclusively, a divine dogma, learning, doctrine of salvation²². The first criterion of Tradition becomes, therefore, *regula fidei*.

It is logical that, interpreting further the fathers from the 4th and 5th centuries, our author calls their efforts to describe or determine Tradition as an attempt to find a *safe* rule of truth (“une règle sûre”). Congar does not bypass the Eastern Fathers either. Referring to the Cappadocian Greats, he places them in the theme of the Baptist faith traditions. He especially mentions Gregory of Nyssa who in reality and the events of Baptism see πρώτη παράδοσις.²³ Our author, however, sees **Vincent Lerins** as the spokesperson of all attempts to determine the rules of faith. This Holy Father wonders how to identify the Catholic Church Tradition and proposes the following criteria: universality, antiquity and unanimity. His formula: “*Id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*”, even Congar himself connects to the Catholic concept²⁴. This period of the Church history recognizes the Scriptures and Tradition as *two paths, two modes, two complementary ways of how to* transfer the entire apostolic heritage, pledge (le dépôt apostolique, παραθήκη). But, since it is the epoch which witnesses the disappearance of not only the apostles, but also of their listeners (a direct echo of antiquity is lost here²⁵), it goes without saying that within communication and historical development of Tradition there will be mixing and adding a certain amount of “personal (individual) opinion” and human traditions²⁶. In the first centuries of Christianity, the Church itself assessed the possibility of the coexistence of some human traditions and divine Traditions (apostolic or ecclesiastical). The then church life in the Holy Spirit investigated the possibility of integrating Tradition in the liturgical and ethical practice of believers. Middle Ages and the period of Reformation witnessed a completely different ecclesial reality, which significantly affected the change in the perceptions of the categories of Tradition and traditions, which were officially – in textbooks and canonically – applied until mid-20th century.

The new church reality was moving towards reconsidering the three standards of faith: The Scripture, apostolic traditions and the church traditions. In the name of the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, the first **reformers** denied, primarily, church traditions, which they identified with the “human traditions”, and which, according to Paul’s recommendation, one should be wary of (cf. Aug 2, 8). The need to elevate the position regarding the triple rule of faith to the level of a decision that is to be made by the council, is associated with the new historical movements, the emergence of the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic reaction to it, which reached its peak during the consolidation of the Magisterium (Magisterium body headed by the Pope), as the supreme crite-

the novelty and erroneous interpretation of biblical texts.” A. McGrath, *Uvod u kršćansku teologiju*, Rijeka, 2007, pp. 193–194. (Underlined by ZM) The issue of “intellectual traditions” shall be analyzed later on.

²¹ *TTH*, p. 51.

²² *TLC*, p. 24.

²³ cf. *TTT*, p. 21.

²⁴ cf. *TTH*, pp. 58–59.

²⁵ cf. *TTH*, p. 62.

²⁶ cf. *TTH*, pp. 63–64, 76.

tion of faith and the life of the Church. **The Trent Council** (1545-1563) decided on the key stances regarding the Church Tradition at their fourth session, on 8 April 1546, in the form of a Decree on accepting the holy books and legends (*Decretum de libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis*)²⁷. The most important claims of the decree read as follows:

The Holy Ecumenical and General Council, lawfully convened in the Holy Spirit, [...] Realizing that the purity and truth of the Gospel and discipline (moral rules) are contained in written books and unwritten traditions (in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus), which the apostles received from the mouth of Christ himself, or which the apostles, so to speak, surrendered themselves with hands (quasi per manus traditae) as if uttered by the Holy Spirit, so they reached us, being passed from one hand to another, [...] with the same reverence and respect (pari pietatis affectu) accepts and worships all the books of the Old and New Testaments [...] and the aforementioned Traditions, that relate to religion, and customs, as uttered by the Holy Spirit and saved in the Catholic Church in the continual succession. (*DH*, p 1501)

Anathema on he who would knowingly and deliberately despise the mentioned tradition! (*DH*, p. 1504)

The fathers of the Trent Council, therefore, wish to preserve the purity and fullness of Gospel²⁸, for Christ himself is the guarantor of the continuity of Revelation²⁹. Gospel, the single source and content of the Revelation³⁰, is mediated twofold - both through the Scripture and through unwritten tradition, more precisely, after the insistence of Congar himself, through unwritten *Apostolic* traditions³¹, which come to us in an unbroken line of surrendering, successions, the credibility of which is guaranteed by the Catholic Church. The Cardinal is trying to prove that the council decisions do not allude to two complementary sources of the Revelation, and that Trent fathers changed the preparatory scheme of the decision in its key attitude: the thesis of two sources (*partim ... partim*), was changed with the one they voted on regarding the two modes of transfer of a unique source of salvation (*et ... et*)³².

Our author explains the fact that the entire Roman Catholic elementary and systematic theology had been devoted to the theory of two sources of Revelation until the Second Vatican Council with the apologetic intention of the theologians of his Church to find adequate justification for normative values of the Papal decrees and decisions before the forceful Protestant demands to minimize it. This attitude had, in retrograde manner, set up the problem of inspiration – inerrancy of the Scripture, Tradition, traditions, councils, Papal encyclicals and decrees. Consequently, the question arose: what instance decides whether a certain tradition is of *divine* origin, and which is “only” a custom originated in the historical development of the Church, not the apostles, the

²⁷ This decree is considered to be the foundation of “all subsequent definitions of faith”. cf. H. Jedin, *Velika povijest Crkve*, volume 4, Zagreb, 2004, p. 388. The quotation from the decree is given based on H. Denzinger, P. Hünermann, *Zbirka sažetaka vjerovanja definicija i izjava o vjeri i čudoređu*, Đakovo, 2002. (Hereinafter *DH*).

²⁸ cf. *TLC*, pp. 89-90.

²⁹ cf. *TTH*, p. 208.

³⁰ “Le concile affirme donc avant tout l’unicité de la source et la pleine valeur de source, *fons*, de l’Evangile”. *TTH*, p. 208.

³¹ The author repeatedly emphasizes the fact that the council was talking *only* about the apostolic tradition, which were *sine scripto Traditiones*. cf. *TTH*, pp. 210-212; *TLC*, pp. 51-52.

³² In *TTH*, p. 214 Congar speaks of it as of a very important change: „La correction est notable: *partim ... partim* a été remplacé par la conjonction *et*”.

formative period?³³ This initiated the formation of a concept of a clearly established Magisterium, which was slowly leaning towards clericalism. Undifferentiated pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that inspires the *Church*, becomes an individualistic approach to hierarchy, which, headed by the Pope, becomes the exclusive legitimate bearer of the Spirit, and consequently of the interpretation and verification of each tradition, of each particular tradition. This process, legalistic in its core, culminates in the pontificates of **Gregory XVI** (1831-1846) and **Pius IX** (1846-1878), when we find the terms which *identify* Tradition and the infallible Magisterium, even the Bishop of Rome.³⁴ The vision of Tradition thus becomes petrified, historical-documentary, archive-like and the Magisterium becomes the fulcrum of the static nature of the Church and its tradition, only to be transformed into the very *source* of Tradition in the end.

Congar sees hints of a different theology of Tradition in the **Tübingen** school (Johan Adam Mueller), which will, thanks to the birth of a new sense of the history in theology and overcoming mere historicism, re-establish thesis of living Tradition (*Tradition Vivante*), as well as the alive and progressive Annunciation, in sermons and mission of the Church (the objective aspect of Tradition), inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is a living voice, the living word, preserved in the hearts of believers (the subjective form of Tradition) that prevents tradition from becoming a “mere ecclesial fossil”. The continuation of such visions of historical dynamism of the development of Christian dogma within Tradition, can be seen with Cardinal **J. H. Newman**, who, having insisted on seeing Christianity more as a the category of events, than doctrine, understands the Church as a living, hierarchically structured body. Tradition of the Church is seen in the ideal of rationality and harmony, *conspiratio pastorum et fidelium*, in a sort of patristic φρόνημα.³⁵

Modernist crisis in the Catholic Church, however, consolidated the opinion that the divine deposit of faith was handed over to the Bride of Christ, but the *Church* is almost unanimously considered to be the Magisterium and the supreme magister on Earth. The dogmatic constitution regarding religion *Dei Filius* of the **First Vatican Council** (24 April, 1870), shall publish that we should believe everything that is in “a committed and written Word of God and everything that the Church requires by the solemn decision of the *Magisterium*” (DH3011). Roman bishops concluded the history of dogmata and the development of Tradition, by proclaiming three new dogmas: In 1854, concerning the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, in 1870, concerning the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome on the matters of dogma and morality that were stated ex cathedra and in 1950, concerning the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary. The last mentioned year is the final point of Congar’s *historical* essay on Tradition and traditions of the Church.

³³ Congar asks a similar question in *TLC*, p. 52. Making distinction between the “constituting” period of Revelation (“le temps constitutif”) and the later historical stages, is quite characteristic of Roman Catholic theology XX century. Similarly, in P. Lengsfeld, “La tradition dans le temps constitutif de la Révélation”, in *Mysterium salutis. Dogmatique de l’histoire du salut. I/2 : La Révélation dans l’écriture et la tradition*, Paris, 1969, pp. 13–30.

³⁴ cf. *T&T*, pp. 237 and 258, where Congar recalls the words attributed to Pope Pius IX: “I am Tradition (La tradizione, sono io)”!

³⁵ A. McGrath, *Uvod u kršćansku teologiju*, quotation, p. 195.

2. Basic characteristics of Congar's theology of Tradition

“What would my faith in the Holy Trinity be reduced to, without Athanasius and Nicaea?”³⁶ Congar's selection of specific personalities and historical events as the benchmark for the analysis of the development of theology of Tradition indicates by itself the key assumptions of his theology of Tradition. Starting from the Old Testament vision of the category, and leading all the way to the attitudes of the Church in mid XX century, a significant number of conceptions of Tradition were observed. Congar distributes them into six major stages (Old and New Testament, the early Church Fathers, the Middle Ages; reform, the Council of Trent and post-Tridentine theology; Magisterium from Trent to 1950), which were not just chronologically bounded. These periods announce a certain ecclesiological foundation, which our author analyzes and presents as a problem in a theological essay, the second volume of his capital study, *Tradition and traditions*, in a concise and direct manner, without being extensively critical, in the book *Tradition and the life of Church*.

Yves Congar approaches Tradition as a Christian phenomenon in what he claims to be “a dogmatic sense of the word”³⁷. A lucid philological analysis points to the Latin word *traditio* and its overtones in the Roman law, but also to the Greek verb forms (*παραδιδόναι*), which connects with athletics (transfer, surrender and service of the relay races)³⁸. Already in the first meaning, the author reads the term of Tradition as the principle of complete *oikonomia* of salvation, which is itself Traditional because it was caused by a Trinitarian, established in a Trinitarian manner. God (and that means father for Congar) does not save the Son, but gives him gifts, gives, rather, *hands him over* to the world, surrendering all to him simultaneously³⁹. The son, however, surrenders himself for us, as well as surrendering to us the Holy Spirit, through the apostles John and Mary, who were representing the whole Church under the cross. *Oikonomia* of salvation begins with a kind of “giving”, and it is *divine* Tradition. Christian Tradition (or Christianity as Tradition) is derived from the act of giving (over), surrendering of “everything”, and that is what the Father did in the Son. Tradition is the surrendering of Jesus Christ⁴⁰. The apostles, whom Christ himself - surrenders to the world, continue the *oikonomia* series in a downward communication of the sort and the transfer of spiritual goods. At this point, our theologian offers one of the descriptive headings of Tradition, saying: “Tradition is a communication of wealth that remains identical to itself. Tradition is a victory over time and its uncertainty, a victory over divisions and spatial distances”⁴¹.

In order to connect his reflections on Tradition to classical or scholastic works on the same subject, i.e. in order to introduce his reflexions to the reader who is rooted in the vocabulary and logic of the existing textbooks and manuals, Congar offers a scheme of philosophical and theological explanations of terms and categories, which he uses himself, giving them, sometimes, even new meanings. For these reasons, the author divides

³⁶ *TLC*, p. 36.

³⁷ *TLC*, p. 12.

³⁸ cf. *TTH*, pp. 20–25, and *TLC*, pp. 21–22.

³⁹ Congar refers to Matthew 11, 27: „Πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου“. *TTT*, p. 112.

⁴⁰ cf. *TTT*, p. 113. In the spirit of the Neo-patristic, Congar here immediately directs to St. Ignatius of Antioch and his famous dictum: “And my archives are - Jesus Christ” (Philadelph. 8, 2).

⁴¹ *TLC*, p. 24.

the Tradition to *the active* (the act by which the subject of Tradition, especially the Magisterium, transfers the deposit of faith) and to *the passive* (the content that is transmitted). According to the origin, Tradition is divided into *divine*, *apostolic* and *ecclesiastic*, and, according to the content or subject matter, they differ *dogmatically* and *customarily* (in a ritual, disciplinary and canonical sense). Considering the lifetime, there are *eternal* and *temporal* traditions, and as per the importance and general necessity there are *universal* and *local* traditions (liturgical traditions, for example)⁴².

The content that is surrendered is the gospel, but also things that are outside of the biblical texts: the sacraments, church institutions, Magisterium laws, tradition and liturgical rites - in one word - the comprehensive reality of Christianity. Although not exclusively, Congar finds Reality (in this case using a capital initial letter "R") that Tradition announces, i.e. gives, *primarily*, a doctrine⁴³. This, however, does not have to be practiced through traditional lectures (of the school or academic types), but through cohabiting with a certain person in a "selected" area, transferring him/her certain acts and a certain lifestyle - the ethos of a particular community⁴⁴. To confirm their thinking, the Cardinal calls on Max Scheler and brings a very important quote, which we will present almost entirely:

In short, the essential characteristic of the tradition is that *I do not know* that I am receiving something, but I accept the *will* of another as my own; I do not give an evaluating judgment prior to the reception, *I do not choose*. (...) Long before the Education and Teaching ruled the child, it had already etched its key guidelines of his destiny and future with his willing *imitation*, his posture, the way of expressing himself, his acts, all the realities he had experienced before understanding their meaning.⁴⁵

In this description Congar sees the most sublime way of teaching that goes beyond the scholastic and scientific clarifications and transcends to the level of human consciousness, intimate and inner acceptance, which the author will also confirm with thoughts of a Catholic philosopher-laic M. Blondel. So that this experience of tradition of ethos, would not be reserved only for a negligible number of isolated individuals, it has to go through ambient assimilation, through harmonization and incorporation into *sensus ecclesiae*, *Fides Ecclesiae*, into Augustine's *catholicus sensus*⁴⁶. A Christian is truly the one who communicates and spends time with another in the faith that has been transferred and delivered to him, and who lives with his brothers, for the brothers and thanks to the brothers in the motherly lap of the Church. Without sudden methodological leaps, Congar introduces theology of Tradition to the framework of ecclesiology⁴⁷.

The act by which this transfer (surrendering, communication) of faith and life is done in a decisive manner, the primary act of Tradition, is Baptism. In his further analysis, Congar highlights the early Christian practice of katechoumena. Preparation for enlightenment is not only a verbal instruction of the announced event, but also its in-

⁴² *TLC*, p. 53. *TTT*, pp. 65-74.

⁴³ *TLC*, p. 24.

⁴⁴ *TLC*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ *TLC*, p. 34. The quotation is by M. Scheler, *Le Saint, le Génie, le héros*, Paris, 1958, p. 36.

⁴⁶ *TLC*, p. 41; *TTT*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁷ Such an analytical path will allow him to come to a very important conclusion: "All the still unresolved issues regarding Tradition, between us /Catholics/ and Protestants lead us to the ecclesiological problem." *TLC*, p. 166.

roduction into the liturgical life (mystagogy), is mainly the tradition of faith, even materially, physical giving over the Symbol of Faith. A few days after receiving the text of the symbol (*traditio Symboli*), reciting it by heart, answering specific questions soteriologic in character, the catechoumena pre-surrenders the same Symbol (*Redditio Symboli*) to the community and enters a qualitatively new relationship with those who will soon receive the paschal hug. And so the faith (in the Holy Trinity), the symbol (confession of that faith) and sacrament (baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity) are surrendered and receive always within the Trinitarian basis Tradition, based on the apostolic tradition, teaching and practice.

Apart from this aspect of the tradition as *transference, transfer*, a leading Dominican theologian points out to the approach to Tradition as a *historical* reality, which is *developmental* in character (*histoire et développement*)⁴⁸. In such a setup for the problem, Congar introduces a pneumatological element, almost forgotten and archived aspect of the Roman Catholic theology in general, and thus of the theology of Tradition. The Holy Spirit is the transcendent entity of Tradition, but Congar associates the word of the Spirit with ecclesiology. He does so in accordance with the Western tradition, using historically linear and logically coherent conclusions. All which God in Christ has done for us continues to exist as a body, as Church. "The New Testament sees the Church as the one who lives because of /the act/ of Incarnation, but also as dynamic /reality/, which extends the Incarnation until the Second Coming of Christ"⁴⁹. "The body is the mission, the Holy Spirit is the soul"⁵⁰, claims Congar, and he even calls a body the "moral" body of the sent ones or witnesses⁵¹. The deepest, decisive, "metahistorical" subject and guarantor of the continuity of the mission is the Holy Spirit. He provides a genuine transfer of Tradition that the Church lives by, reflecting the identity of the Tradition truths. It is interesting that Congar uses the famous quote by St. Irenaeus to confirm his words, and this quote ends in a classical identification of the Spirit, the Church and the truth, linking it to Möhler's idea of tradition which is "the life of the Holy Spirit, which has been animating the ecclesial body since the Pentecost, providing it with unity and communication through time, through a variety of personalities and local communities"⁵².

If the Spirit of God is metahistorical, the invisible entity of tradition, then the Church is a *historical* visible bearer of Tradition. Cardinal Congar supported the idea of "the time of the Church," as "the time of the Holy Spirit" and believes that the interpretation of Tradition in the history of salvation is done in relation with: a) the present to the past and b) the present to the future⁵³. The first reference is not entirely accurate, because the constituent protologic events are present at all times until the present, due to the action of the Holy Spirit:

The incarnate Logos reveals the Father, and constitutes a new and definitive covenant, shaping it and realizing it: he institutionalizes the sacraments, apostolate, founds the Church. The

⁴⁸ cf. *TTT*, 28-43.

⁴⁹ *TLC*, p. 59.

⁵⁰ *TLC*, p. 58.

⁵¹ *TLC*, p. 59.

⁵² *TLC*, p. 66.

⁵³ *TTT*, pp. 37-43.

Holy Spirit inspires the institutionalized form, gifts it with an intimate animate movement, he internalizes within people the gifts that Christ has gained.⁵⁴

The ratio of the present and the future, however, points to the understanding of tradition as a development, moving toward the eschatological or final fulfilment. “The Biblical eschatological ontology: the truth is at the end (...) the truth of things happens/occurs, it happens/*(se fait)*. But, again, biblically speaking, the end is already seen in the beginning”⁵⁵.

The present, which remains an essential analytical point, is bound, therefore, to passing ecclesiology. Congar mentions Thomas Aquinas’ thoughts on the subject. For St. Thomas, the uncreated truth is manifested in the Scriptures and the Church Magisterium, but “Thomas also says that the Church is *only* (Underlined by ZM) a regulation of secondary importance, because it is also measured by the primary Rule - the divine Revelation. It is a kind of an *echo or reflection*”⁵⁶. And here the older commentators (Cajetan) had distinguished the power of the universal Church not to sin in the religion, but even then the Church is not a rule of faith by itself, because the regulatory body is the divine science, which is the foundation of the Church: “*Ac per hoc, quamvis universalis Ecclesiae cognitio non possit errare, non tamen ipsa est fidei regula, sed doctrina divina cui innititur*”.

Congar believes that the task of true Catholic theology is to establish and articulate the relationship of Tradition, Scripture and the Church⁵⁷. In the form of a conclusion, our author thus sets priorities in the relations of the three theological categories. First, the relationship between Scripture and tradition: they *are not* on the same level because the “Scripture is absolutely superior (absolument Souveraine): it is of God, even in its form”⁵⁸. The Script is the rule, the canon (règle), both to the Tradition, and to the Church, while the last two realities are not the measure for Scripture. Furthermore, the Bible is the most certain, the safest norm, as it is determined and fixed - it represents a testimony of stability and non-changeability of the true attitudes of faith. In this vision, the Church and Tradition seem to be dependent /to obedience/ (assujetties) on the Scripture. The author, however, continues and mitigates this view with a touch of subordinism. The sovereign character of the Scripture is, of course, embodied in the saving act of God, the components of which are both the Church and Tradition. Therefore, among these realities there are internal reciprocal relations, which prevent the isolation of any of them, or their opposition. Highlighting one of the three categories leads to the destabilization of unity in the faith and secrets⁵⁹. Instead of this, each of these realities is expressed and manifests the other two: Tradition of a particular community is within the Scripture; the Church is within the Bible and through the act of determining the canon of the holy Bible; Tradition and the Scripture are within the Church, as its objective internal norm; the Church within the Tradition is in the capacity of its *human* subject. At the very end of

⁵⁴ *TTT*, p. 38.

⁵⁵ *TTT*, p. 39.

⁵⁶ *TLC*, p. 76. The Complete scientific apparatus on this topic is presented in *TTH*, p. 287, note 84.

⁵⁷ *TLC*, p. 163.

⁵⁸ Considering how these positions are explicit, we quote these conclusions according to *TTT*, pp. 177-180.

⁵⁹ The Scripture with the Protestants, the Church - Magisterium in some Catholic circles, Tradition in Jewish Kabbalah.

the analysis, Congar concludes the following: “We, therefore, believe in scarcity /insufficiency/ of any of these realities, should they be separated from the others. The balance and strength of the Catholic position is in their balance and wholeness”⁶⁰.

3. *Critical review of the Congar’s Theology of Tradition*

Yves Congar comes from the Western Christian spiritual and ecclesiastic milieu, which was perfectly described by Jean Daniel in his book *The origins of Latin Christianity*⁶¹. On the Christological plan, the West sees *the suffering Messiah* in his “Calvarial” body, rather than the glorified Christ. The anthropological vision of the saved Eastern man and his eschatological situation was replaced by the pessimistic *historical picture of a sinner* (In Tertullian and Augustine, to Luther and Pascal, until Bart). The novelty and importance that the Latin fathers attach to *psychology*, versus Irenaeus’ concern for the salvation of the *Body*, and together with that the interest in the *individual* among the Latin, who would, after Augustine, turn into a typical Western spirituality, as opposed to the cosmic vision of salvation in the Eastern variation of Christianity⁶². Hence, the Metropolitan of Pergamon, John (Zizioulas), points to the dangers that constantly lurk behind the Western thought, using categories such as: expressed interest in **history** Preoccupation with **ethics**, deep respect for the institution to **legalism**, **psychologism**, mysticism, **pietism** and **individualism**⁶³. In these general frameworks we can also interpret the key premises of Congar’s theology of Tradition and we will try to show it in this section of our study. Before that, we shall give a few remarks on how our author perceives theology of Tradition in the work and decisions of the great Council (1962-1965).

Congar certainly introduced positive changes in the Roman Catholic scholastic concept of Tradition, and he did it to such an extent that his work was integrated into the decisions of the Second Vatican Council. The Fathers of the Council, by a majority of almost two-thirds, rejected the first proposed scheme of the constitution of Revelation, by which the doctrine of “two sources of Revelation” would be confirmed. One chronicler of the events in the Council, noted on the occasion: “It can be said that the voting on 20 November, 1962 has ended the era of counter-reform, and that a new era begins for the entire Christianity, with unforeseeable consequences,”⁶⁴. The period between the rejection of the first scheme of encyclical and its acceptance three years later, is the period of fractures and breaks that had taken place so that return to traditional understanding of Tradition could take place. In this study, we will not dwell on the turbulent history of the origin of Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum* yet the note that the article in question had been corrected and amended five times, reflects the anguish of the Council Fathers to transform their faith into Tradition and describe it in traditional categories. The entire final text *DV* is the result of hard and dedicated work of the theologians-advisors to the Council, of the father Yves Congar, and the second section of the said document (“De Divinae Revelationis Transmission” *DV* 7-10), as well as *DV* 21 depend to a great

⁶⁰ *TTT*, p. 179.

⁶¹ J. Daniélou, *Les origines du christianisme latin: Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée – vol III*, Paris, 1978. We have used the Italian translation *Le origini del cristianesimo latino*, Bologna 1993.

⁶² J. Daniélou, *Le origini del cristianesimo latino*, p. 441–442.

⁶³ cf. J. Зизијулас, “Екуменизам и потреба за визијом”, *Искон*, 5 (1999), pp. 38–41 (38).

⁶⁴ R. Rouquette, *Bilan du Concile in Etudes*, 1, 1963, pp. 94–111 (104). Quoted according to *TLC*, p. 167.

extent on his theology of Tradition⁶⁵. We confirm these stances by listing the following elements, common to Congar and the decisions of the Council:

- a) the *integral* vision of Tradition, which includes “*everything* it uses for the holy life of God’s people and for the growth of his faith” (DV 8);
- b) *Apostolic* origin and continuity of the Holy Tradition;
- c) presentation of Tradition *in the stronger personalised categories*, rather than in the conceptual view of the transfer of ideas;
- d) accentuating the dialog aspect of Tradition personified in our Lord Jesus Christ, *as the subject, source and centre of Tradition*, because it is in him that the Father has a dialogue of love with us (DV 21);
- d) the enhanced communicative element of tradition, by underlining the role of the *Holy Spirit* during the transfer and acceptance of Revelation;
- e) integration of *Tradition into the historical process, which is the guarantor of its development and progress*, versus the teachings of the First Vatican Council, which was close to Vincent’s formula of immutability;
- f) insisting on the fact that “*it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty (certitudinem suam) about everything which has been revealed*” (DV 9);
- g) the *ecumenical* openness in addressing the age-old problem of the relationship between the Scripture and Tradition, because the Council provides for a compromise formula: ‘Revelation that is not only in the Scripture’, but does not mention the famous “two sources”.

We shall critically examine the theological justification and durability of these and other attitudes of the Council and Congar himself regarding Tradition, by placing them in a broader – ecclesiological context, taking into account the schematic instructions from Daniélou and Zizioulas.

1. Both for the fathers gathered at the Second Vaticanum and for our Dominican, the Church is the instrument (*instrumentum*) of salvation, the provisional institution (it has its own time, as we have noted) middleware and is preparatory in character, based on the Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, and later animated at the Pentecost. Its mission is to serve humanity, to be simple, humble and friendly mother and sister of all people, as it is still imperfect in holiness (LG 48). From this stance stems the need for the **certainty of the Church**, a concept that we consider incompatible with Orthodox eschatological ecclesiology, which follows the New Testament faith in instability, transience and lack of foundation of the present town, where we dwell temporarily. The Western vision of the Church, however, seeks a safe norm (“une règle sure”), the rules and regulations of religion, the aforementioned rigid rules of truth, reliable and “soteriologically effective”⁶⁶ norms of faith, which are transferred from the protologic sources, like echo, in an unbroken chain of tradition, until our time. The pursuit of safety fits into the perception of time and the institutionalized church (until its sociological and political conversion into the country takes place), as a “historic and visible entity of Tradition”.

⁶⁵ Cardinal Ratzinger argues that it is not difficult to recognize the pen of Y. Congar” in DV. J. Ratzinger, “Commentary on Dei Verbum,” chap. 2, in H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, New York, 1969, III, p. 184.

⁶⁶ TTH, 44.

2. The fact that the Church is transitory or at least a transitional institution, threatens to take the category of Tradition to systems of “**intellectual transfer**”, “apostleship of **Doctrine**”, the “**Course of Christian science**” that has to be stored in the identity of “**knowledge**”. In this sense, tradition can be transformed into a dogmatic textbook, Proceedings of the rules, the legal code. By doing this the category of Tradition gains a pedagogical⁶⁷, Missionary and ethical tone, and loses its ontological, theological and Trinitarian basis. The oeuvre of cardinal Congar contains a sense of *theological* aspect of Tradition, but, like in the decisions of the Council, one feels ambivalence in attitudes. A positive aspect of the growth and development of Tradition (Congar’s mark on the document) can be reduced to the increase of understanding, contemplation, meditation and intellectual studying of the monument of Tradition. After all, the entire *Dei Verbum* constitution emphasizes the attitude that the *Church* is primarily a *student* of the Word of God, and only consequently a teacher. The potential ecclesiological Nestorianism, which we make out in the Congar of that time, and which is avoided in his later works, has its justification. In addition to psychological reasons (he suffered persecution from the Curia itself), we shall mention an objective one: Congar attempts to revalue the role of the ecclesiastical Magisterium and to reduce the immediate imperative impact of the Curia, as well as the abuse of papal primacy. For this purpose, he had warmed to the “traditional” Western themes of the time of the Church, the Church as a mediator, the instrument of salvation, its end, its fallibility(!), and its “humanity”.

3. The mentioned ecclesiological framework, linked to a clear ecumenical directionality and controversy surrounding the historical-critical approach to the Bible, lead to another much too strong attitude in Congar’s theology of Tradition. It is about *the overemphasis* of the Scripture. The authority of the Bible emanates from its antiquity and the fixed canons. It is the oldest, and the only sure testimony to the Apostolic tradition, which is why, says Congar, **the Scripture is the regulation of the Church, and the Church does not regulate the Scripture**. In the same sense, there is evidence of a distinct biblical orientation of *DV*, whereupon the theology of Revelation announced in the dense Scripturist matrix (its two-thirds of the sections are devoted to the Scripture). It seems to us that *DV* and Congar’s thought of Tradition share a common weakness: coexistence of two vocabularies and two approaches to the Church, and therefore to the Revelation and the Scripture and Tradition.

4. Finally, let us mention just one more weak aspect of Congar’s analysis of the reality of the Holy Tradition, which, as it seems to us, rounds up and further clarifies our previous three critical remarks. We shall call it a **non-eschatological approach** to the issue of Tradition. It is, in fact, about the Congar’s approach to time and history as unavoidable factors of reflection on Tradition as surrendering and transmission. His vision of time between the Pentecost and the Parousia as the “time of the Church” also makes it difficult for an Orthodox theologian to a certain point. By addressing this issue, Congar

⁶⁷ Sergei Bulgakov, in his book *Православље. Преглед учења Православне Цркве* (Novi Sad, 1991), shows a similar approach to the issue of Tradition. In just one paragraph of this research, Bulgakov directly associated the term Tradition and Learning four times: “The fullness of the true faith and the true *learning* (...) is guarded by the entire Church and is passed on from generation to generation as ecclesiastical tradition and this Holy Tradition is the most general form of preserving ecclesiastical *learning* in various ways. Tradition is the living memory of the Church, which contains the true *learning*... This is the reason for the faith in the ecclesiastical tradition as the basic source of the ecclesiastical *learning*...” (66)

mentions the existence of all three times of existence: the past, the present and the future. Tradition was received in the past, it is ongoing and is always alive (present) and directs our gaze towards the future. But the future does not have a constitutive (ontological) role in the life of the Church, but only a secondary, added one, almost aesthetic. This remark is, again, applicable to the overall contribution of the Council. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (and in its final redaction we recognize the pen of Congar) there is talk about the Holy Spirit and about the end of time, but is *secondary* when compared to the historical actions of Christ. We claim on this occasion, too, that the conclusions in *DV* are coherent with the basic ecclesiological views of the Council and constitution of *LG*. In both cases, we would prefer to call this vision futurological, rather than eschatological. Here, we identify Congar's fear of "triumphal" self-realization of the Church (the Curia, from the life of the isolated Magisterium), which makes it difficult for him to accept the Orthodox stance, according to which Tradition is *historical* reality, that it is manifested in history, but that Tradition is not the reality of historical origin, because the Church, in whose heart lies the Holy Tradition, also does not have its roots in history. Congar's thought is definitely moving towards this conclusion, but it is only his later ecclesiological, especially pneumatological reflection⁶⁸ that is significantly closer to the eschatological vision of the Church.

Conclusion

In this study, we tried to present basic but representative outlines of the theology of tradition of the Roman Catholic theologians Yves Congar, who had immense impact on the Second Vatican Council, with his monographs and personal presence as an expert. This very issue of the relationship of the Holy Tradition and traditions is one of the most important research fields for the future cardinal. The formation of the theological oeuvre was caused by ecumenical and internal need of his Church for biblical, patristic and Council-related Catholic position on the issue. In these facts and in the imposed urgency⁶⁹ we also find reasons of certain imprecision, vagueness and excessive highlighting of certain points of the triad comprising of the Scripture – Tradition – Church.

In addition to these and others, already marked subjective reasons for the "cracks" in Congar's system (being excluded from the position of a professor and having been prosecuted by the Curia, which identified itself with the Church), we have particularly addressed the objective causes of the aforementioned shortcomings in his reflections. Yves Congar sincerely tries to integrate his thought into a patristic milieu of an undivided Church, still, he does so by not rejecting some deposits of the Western *Tradition*, which, we believe, must be revised, exactly for the advancement of the ecumenical dialogue. Here, we primarily have in mind the *differences* and *Traditional particularities of the Western-Christian philosophy* expressed in the Roman Catholic ecclesiology (along with personology and eschatology).

Congar and the Council are in the same position of trying to overcome the then Christomonic ecclesiology, where the Church is seen as a prolonged Incarnation, founded on Good Friday and delivered to the world through Mary, who was under the Cross.

⁶⁸ Primarily in the book *I believe in the Holy Spirit*.

⁶⁹ The Council was opened in 1962, meeting of the Commission for Ecumenical Dialogue was planned for 1963, yet Congar's trilogy was written in this time interval, in record time.

Such a vision of the Church leads directly into legalistically established and institutionalized system, whose truth is determined and provided for by the Roman Curia, personified in the Pope. Being an active participant in the Council, Congar notices this and feels sorry about the fact:

The Curia understands nothing. It is filled with Italians, who are immersed in ignorance of reality, the political servility, simplistic and wrong ecclesiology in which **everything comes down to the Pope**. They see the Church only as large centralized administrative machinery, the centre of which they are holding. All these days, I have been following the Italians, the Italian ecclesiology. (...) **Ultramontanism** really does exist. Victoriously, it theoretically lives in the official ecclesiology, and powerfully acts in terms of piety.⁷⁰

Unlike Rahner, Congar⁷¹ argues that ecclesiology should be a primary sector of theological research. It seems to us that his oeuvre misses a leap into uncertainty, into the eschatological uncertainty in the “not yet”, that we iconize at Liturgy with the faith in the coming of Christ. The Eucharist itself, as a collective of personalities, is the “pattern of faith”. To the Orthodox Church, in its liturgical *Tradition*, the rule of faith is not a principle, idea or doctrine, but the personality of the saint – who is holy in Christ, in the Church. “Rule of faith” (the repeatedly mentioned *regula fidei*), is, according to the text of hymn, a living personality, i.e. a particular saint (Nicholas, Ambrose...). Holy Tradition, therefore, is not a historical echo of the first heaven, but eschatological voice that comes to us, directly to the Lord’s Table, from the future Kingdom. In this regard, we take the words of Metropolitan Zizioulas:

The church is an entity that receives and re-receives what history passes on to it (παράδοσις), but this transfer **has never been a purely historical matter**; it takes place secretly, eucharistically, i.e. it is seen as a gift that **comes from last days**, as God has promised and prepared for us in his Kingdom. [...] The Tradition ceases to be a **gift of the Spirit** if it is just a matter of historical continuity.⁷²

The time we live in, the time of the Church in Congar’s oeuvre is open for the future, but the author’s vision of temporality is completely Western in character, centred in the present. The hermeneutical horizon is the present; the experience of the Christian “now” is projected, transferred to the future, hence the eschatological terms. Unlike this setting, there is a reverse temporal perspective of the Eastern tradition. It is most clearly confirmed in the liturgical tradition of Orthodoxy. So, for example, when chanting to Saint Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, whose relics realistically, historically, *are* in Bari, we are saying: “*Now* we aren’t invoking you from Bari, but from heavenly Jerusalem, where you are happily rejoicing with the apostles and prophets and saints...”⁷³.

⁷⁰ Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile*, vol. I, Paris 2002, 180.

⁷¹ Karl Rahner, argues that ecclesiology is not the central moment of Christian truth. Calling upon the Council’s doctrine on the hierarchy of truths (*UR* 11), he thinks that “ecclesiology is not the supporting basis or the foundation of Christianity. Jesus Christ, faith, love, giving oneself over to the divine dark and unattainability of God while contemplating the Christ’s figure (...) - these are the realities that are central to a Christian. If it fails to reach out to them and fails to make them real in the deepest fathoms of your being, then his churchness, his sense of belonging to a particular church, will be but an illusion and a façade of deception”. К. Ранер, *Основание веры. Введение в христианское богословие*, Москва, 2006, 446.

⁷² J. Зизијулас, “Апостолски континуитет Цркве и апостолско прејемство у првих пет векова”, *Саборност*, 1–2 (2006), pp. 33–53 (52). All the underlined text in this quotation is ours.

⁷³ The service of Transfer of the relics of our father Nicholas the miracle-worker, the third chant, I summoned the Lord, in *Žiča and Studenica Monthly for May*, 9th day, prepared by Žiča Bishop Hrisostom, Kraljevo - Žiča, 2007, p. 102.

Yves Congar repeatedly insisted on the fact that his theology and the work of the Council are the starting points and catalysts of new activities and further dedicated research, primarily in the area of ecclesiology. The Dominican had his goal at the beginning of his fruitful work in theology: the analysis of the issues of the Papal primacy and comparative ecclesiology on the fundamentals of the single *Tradition* of the undivided Church. Bearers of the present dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholics have been recently working on the said issue, just as the great father of the Church, Yves Congar, wished for and predicted half a century ago. The activities of the International Commission for Dialogue, Congar's work and, we hope, our study of some aspects of his theology are aimed to manifest the truth that theology – serving the Church is on its way towards the unity of this century and the centuries to come.