

MARTÍN GRASSI\*

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL POLITICAL THEOLOGY: ERIK PETERSON AND YVES CONGAR**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I will argue that a Christian Political Theology is mostly to be found in the concepts of the Church and in the performance of the Holy Spirit by examining the works of Erik Peterson and Yves Congar. For both theologians, the political dimension of ecclesiology is grounded on the action of the Holy Spirit, especially considering the birth of the Church in Pentecost, and the pneumatological nature of the sacraments. Although Political Theology focused mainly on the persons of the Father and the Son, I aim at showing how a Christian Political Theology is ultimately grounded on the conceptual transferences between the political and the theological that the Holy Spirit makes possible through the Church: if there is a Christian Political Theology, it is essentially ecclesiological and pneumatological.

**KEY WORDS:** Political Theology; Holy Spirit; Church; Peterson; Congar.

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\* Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina: martingrassi@uca.edu.ar  
This paper was elaborated during my stay at the Institut für Hermeneutik - Universität Bonn as an Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung Researcher.  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9378-6254>

***El Espíritu Santo y la teología política  
eclesiológica: Erik Peterson e Yves Congar***

RESUMEN: En este artículo, intentaré mostrar, a partir de las obras de Erik Peterson y de Yves Congar, que una teología política cristiana debe buscarse ante todo en el concepto de *Iglesia* y en la actividad del Espíritu Santo. Para ambos teólogos, la dimensión política de la eclesiología está basada en la acción del Espíritu Santo, especialmente si consideramos el nacimiento de la Iglesia en Pentecostés y la naturaleza pneumatológica de los sacramentos. Si bien la teología política se ha dedicado fundamentalmente a examinar las personas del Padre y del Hijo, intentaré mostrar cómo una teología política cristiana está en última instancia fundamentada en las transferencias conceptuales entre lo político y lo teológico que la figura del Espíritu Santo hace posible a través de la Iglesia: si hay una teología política Cristiana, es esencialmente de carácter eclesiológica y pneumatológica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: teología política; Espíritu Santo; Iglesia; Peterson; Congar.

«Just as the will of God is an act and is called the world, so his intention is to save men and this intention is called the Church»  
(Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogos* I, 6)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will argue that a Christian Political Theology is mostly to be found in the concepts of the Church and in the performance of the Holy Spirit by examining the works of Erik Peterson and Yves Congar. To that end, it is important, firstly, to clarify what do I mean with the expression «Political Theology», which is a very broad term to include reflections on how Politics and Theology are intertwined in history. In the case of *Christian Political Theology*, there are three «roots» that structures it: Judeo-Christian Scriptures, the capital work of Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei*<sup>1</sup>, and the emergence of the *Political Theology* as a distinct

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<sup>1</sup> Augustinism is still important in Political Theology controversies today, mainly concerning the question of liberalism and Christianity (as one could see in the works of Reinhold Niebuhr, John Milbank, Stanley Hauerwas, Eric Porter, John Bethke Elshtain, Oliver O'Donovan). As Eric Porter would argue, «the continuing debate over modern liberalism has to a large extent consisted in variations on Augustinian themes and antiphonal responses to them» (quoted in: Elizabeth Phillips. *Political Theology. A guide for the perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2012, 121). Augustine's presence is also to be found in the debate between Schmitt and Peterson (Thierry Gontier.

specific discipline in XX<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. One could, yet, discern between two kinds of Political Theology: on the one hand, a *pragmatic Political Theology*, which aims at giving some ethical and political orientation concerning, for example, how can the Church engage in public affairs, if Christians are allowed to use violence in the transformation of the political sphere, to whom are Christians most obliged in their search for a better world, if modern liberalism is in accordance with a Christian world-view, and so forth. These questions could be considered as the religious perspective on secularism, that is, problematizing how the Christian community could give meaning and interact with the secular world. On the other hand, a *theoretical Political Theology* aims at pointing out the conceptual *correspondences* between the political and the theological (as can be found in the works of Carl Schmitt, Erik Peterson, Ernst Kantorowicz, Giorgio Agamben, Jan Assmann, and others)<sup>3</sup>. The main question is not *how to behave* as a Christian and as a citizen at the same time, nor how the political program should address the competing needs of religious communities within the public sphere; the main question is how theological concepts structure and ground our political discourses, and in which ways political figures are also working within theological concepts.

The touchstone of XX<sup>th</sup> century's *theoretical Political Theology* is Schmitt's essay, *Political Theology* (1922), in which he argues that almost every political concept of the modern theory of the State are but secularized theological concepts. The key concept that witnesses this transference of meaning from one discourse to another is, in Schmitt's essay, the one of sovereignty. The political philosopher — who considered himself as a «political theologian» or «theologian of jurisprudence»<sup>4</sup> — met in Bonn

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“Les métamorphoses de la cité terrestre : L'augustinisme politique de Carl Schmitt et d'Erik Peterson”. In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 127-146. Paris: EHESS, 2019). However, Augustine was already influenced by earlier theologians and his work is in debt with the controversies on God's Monarchy and Trinity, and with the historical implications of Messianism, which were found already in the School of Alexandria.

<sup>2</sup> Phillips, 11-30.

<sup>3</sup> In the Hispanic philosophy, the figure of Alvaro d'Ors is especially significant in the discussion on Political Theology. See: Gabriel Guillén Kalle. “La teología política de Carl Schmitt y la teología política de Álvaro d'Ors: una diferencia de principios”. *Revista de Derecho UNED* 12 (2013): 837-850.

<sup>4</sup> Eduardo Schmidt Passos. “Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty”. *The Review of Politics* 80 (2018): 487.

with a theologian who also considered that the theological and political discourses are interwoven: Erik Peterson. However, the protestant theologian (converted to Catholicism later) rejected the way in which his friend understood the intersection between the political and the theological, and wrote his essay, *Monotheism as a political problem* (1935). Peterson aims at the «liquidation of all Political Theology» by deactivating any possible analogy or correspondence between the politics of God and the politics of men. To that end, he argued both from both a Trinitarian and from an eschatological perspective. On the one hand, the Christian God cannot be mirrored neither as a King nor an Emperor for He is not One, but Tri-One (triume). Although the theological controversies over Trinity did not decide on the continuing use of the expression «divine monarchy», which enables the analogies between the Divine ruler and the human sovereigns, the orthodox dogma of Trinity transformed it, and, in Peterson's view, «the expression *divine monarchy* lost its politico-theological character»<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the Kingdom of God is not to be found in history and cannot be enacted by any political State whatsoever. Augustin of Hippo suspended any possible connection between the Emperor and Christ (as Eusebius of Caesarea proposed), and between the *Kingdom of God* and the worldly empires: Christian peace (*pax Christi*) cannot be associated with the *pax romana*, for ultimate peace is only to come with the eschatological second coming of Christ<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Erik Peterson. *Theological Tractates*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, 102.

<sup>6</sup> Peterson, *Theological Tractates*, 104-105. Written over troubled waters, his essay aimed at the raising of German Nazi movement, arguing against the possibility of identifying the *Reign of God* with a historical human reign. In a letter to Friedrich Dessauer, Peterson declared that his intention when writing this book was to fight the so-called *Reichstheologie* of his time (Erik Peterson. *Theologische Traktate*. Ausgewählte Schriften. Vol. 1, edited by Barbara Nichtweiß. Würzburg: Echter, 1994, XIX). Gabino Uríbarri explains that the basic axe of the Catholic *Reichstheologie* was the assumption of a continuity between the Third Reich and the Sacred Roman-Germanic Empire. As Gabino Uríbarri (Gabino Uríbarri. "Erik Peterson: Teología y escatología". In *El monoteísmo como problema político*, Erik Peterson, 30-32. Madrid: Trotta, 1999) explains, the *Reichstheologie* argued, first, that the French Enlightenment should be surpassed and that political principles should be based theologically, and for that sake, they intended to bond the Third Reich with the Kingdom of God. Second, it gave historical facts concerning the Roman-German Empire a theological meaning. Third, it established a correlation between monotheism (One God) with «monarchism» or one-man leadership (One *Führer*). Finally, it claimed that the Third

It would be a mistake to think that Erik Peterson, when liquidating Political Theology, argued for an epistemological divorce between the political and the theological<sup>7</sup>. Quite the contrary, from the very beginning of his academic career he was interested in the articulation and strong link between both discourses. However, his Political Theology will not focus on the way in which the politics of State mirror theological concepts, but on how the theological concepts are in themselves political. Against Schmitt, Peterson argued that political theology is not part of theology, but rather of political thought<sup>8</sup>. However, this bond between the political and the theological is *theologically significant*, and one should clarify that theology is a knowledge performed and construed by the Church, and therefore, this theo-political bond should be traced in ecclesiology. Hence, I will call Peterson's perspective an *Ecclesiological Political Theology*. Although it has pragmatic consequences in thinking the concrete relations between the Church and the public sphere of modern States, Peterson's work is a theoretical one, focused on the political meaning of ecclesiological concepts. Peterson's work on monotheism as a political problem influenced heavily in the years to come, mainly in Jürgen Moltmann and Johannes Metz, and through them in Liberational theology, for «against Schmitt's doctrine of sovereignty, Peterson makes a political assertion in favor of a free and independent church that can exercise its indirect power (*potestas indirecta*)»<sup>9</sup>. In recent years, however, his other

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Reich would come to be the secularized version of the Kingdom of God, leaving aside the radical non-historical meaning of eschatology. There was a similar movement in Protestantism called «Die Deutsche Christen», which Peterson also criticized. Peterson, by considering both the Trinity and the «eschatological reserve» wants to avoid any abuse of the Gospel to justify any political situation (*ibid.*, 36).

<sup>7</sup> György Geréby. «Political Theology versus Theological Politics: Erik Peterson and Carl Schmitt». *New German Critique* 105 (2008): 7-33.

<sup>8</sup> Schmidt Passos. «Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty», 495.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 502. In Schmitt's eyes, the closure of any Political Theology turned to be a «scientific myth» (*wissenschaftlichen Legende*) grounded in the little treatise written in 1935 by Peterson (Carl Schmitt. *Politische Theologie II: Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder Politischen Theologie*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1970, 9). «En el instante de morir teóricamente, Schmitt analizaba la flecha que lo había matado. El futuro era de la cristología política, es decir, de una teología política de la liberación a lo Metz. Schmitt sabía de qué hablaba» (José Luis Villacañas. «La leyenda de la liquidación de la teología política». In *Teología política*, Carl Schmitt, 143. Madrid: Trotta, 2009). However, the «theoretical» Political Theology held the basis for the

theological works were studied. Only a few theologians had repaired on the importance of Peterson's ecclesiology theology, such as Yves Congar and, later, Joseph Ratzinger<sup>10</sup>. Even more, political philosophers and scientist are also now studying Peterson's «théo-liturgie politique»<sup>11</sup>. Hence, I will first examine this Ecclesiological Political Theology of Erik Peterson, and then I intend to show its aftermaths in the ecclesiology of Yves Congar. Following the lead of Giorgio Agamben's work on Trinity as a political problem<sup>12</sup>, I aim at showing that the Holy Spirit plays a key role in Christian Political Theology, stressing the strong bond between ecclesiology and pneumatology.

## 2. ERIK PETERSON'S ECCLESIOLOGICAL POLITICAL THEOLOGY

In his essay *The Church*, written in 1929, Peterson constructs the whole argument on Alfred Loisy's *dictum*, «Jesus proclaimed the kingdom, and it is the church which came». In Peterson perspective, it is paramount to acknowledge that the Church is born in Pentecost, that is, when the Twelve Apostles broke up with the Jewish Christian eschatology that understood the Kingdom as being identified with Jerusalem: the *glossolalia* miracle of the Holy Spirit shows that the Apostles are destined not to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the Jewish community, but to all of mankind. The theological thesis of Peterson is clear: «there is a Church only under the assumption that the twelve Apostles have been called in the Holy Spirit and have arrived at the decision, on the basis of the Holy

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«pragmatical» Political Theology, as one could easily prove, for instance, in Jürgen Moltmann's theology and the influence that Erik Peterson had in his writings.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Hollerich. "Introduction". In *Theological Tractates*, Erik Peterson, XXI. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Richard Figuier. "Têtes de l'aigle et ailes des anges. La théo-liturgie politique d'Erik Peterson". In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 211-223. Paris: EHESS, 2019. « Cette proposition d'une archéologie rituelle de l'espace public est peut-être ce qui demeure de plus novateur dans l'œuvre de Peterson » (Alain Rauwel. "La théologie au tourment du siècle : Destins d'Erik Peterson". In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 36).

<sup>12</sup> Giorgio Agamben. *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Spirit, to go the Gentiles»<sup>13</sup>. In Peterson is clear that the Church is pneumatologically grounded, not Christologically. First, Jesus himself never directly founded the Church nor instituted the offices in it. Jesus did not preach the Kingdom to the Gentiles, but only to the Jews. The hierarchy of the Church, on the contrary, traces itself back to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles<sup>14</sup>. This link between them entails that the Church is an object of faith: due to the legitimacy given by Jesus to his Twelve and because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church is compelled to render decisions and to demand faith where these decisions are concerned. That the Church is the Apostolic Church means, therefore, that neither the legitimacy in legal succession to the Twelve nor the spiritual freedom obtained from the Holy Spirit are missing. The importance of this assertion is paramount for theology, which, for Peterson, is dependent on the idea of dogma: «a Church without apostolic Church law, and without the capacity to make dogmatic decisions, cannot as such be regarded as the

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<sup>13</sup> Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 35. It is noteworthy that in those same years, Jacob Taubes was claiming that Christianity is not born out of Jesus, but out of Paul of Tarsus (Jacob Taubes. *The Political Theology of Paul*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 40), and this because of the same reason: Christianity is no longer Jewish, but *catholic*, that is, trans-national and trans-historical (catholic means etymologically «for everyone», *κατα ὅλος*). However, for Peterson is not true that the Church is built on Paul, but only on «the Twelve». This is an important clarification of Peterson, for if Christianity is the religion of the community of the Church, it must have a connection to those who were elected by Jesus himself, especially in Peter. This is of a paramount importance, for, although Paul's letters occupy a central place in the canon of the New Testament letters, there is no episcopal succession that traces itself back to Paul, because Paul lacks legitimacy and, therefore, is unable to transfer legitimacy to anyone else (Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 36). This claim shows that, for Peterson, there cannot be any Church without its hierarchy and structure, inspired and acted by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> Whereas the expression «the Twelve» refer to the Jews in Jerusalem, the expression «the Twelve Apostles» is pointing at the opening of the proclamation to the Gentiles. Therefore, argues Peterson, «the Twelve» belongs to the messianic Kingdom, while «the Twelve Apostles» belong to the Church; the Twelve were called by the Son of Man while he was on earth in the flesh, and the Apostles only exist in the glorified body of the «Lord» by virtue of the calling of the Holy Ghost; the Twelve received their authority immediately from Jesus, the Apostles by virtue of their reception of the Spirit. The decisive fact, however, that resolves the problem of the Church is that «the Twelve» and «the Twelve Apostles» are identical: «because the Twelve *did* believe in the Holy Spirit, they established the link between the “Kingdom” and the “Church”, between “the Law” and the Holy Spirit» (Ibid., 36).

Church»<sup>15</sup>. Hence, the Church is an autarchic community that can decide on itself, and the pneumatological and legal dimensions of the Church is bringing the political and the theological together. Peterson claims that since the days of the Apostolic Council, the formula «it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us», a formula by which the Church has been recognized, is patterned after the resolution formula of the Ancient city: «it seemed good to the Council and to the People»: in both cases, there is a claim to sovereignty<sup>16</sup>.

The very word «Church» refers to the semantics of the Greek of *polis*, and entails a difference concerning the Jewish understanding of Kingdom. There is a lexical decision to promote the word *ekklesia* to a technical term for the concept of Church. *Ekklesia*, in antiquity, referred to the institution of the *polis* where an assembly of fully enfranchised citizens gathered to perform legal acts. «In an analogous fashion, one could

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 37. Peterson's main theological adversaries were liberal theologians, whose emblematic figure was Adolf von Harnack, because they postulate that there is a possible conciliation between the evangelic message and the socio-political world (Thierry Gontier. "Les métamorphoses de la cité terrestre : L'augustinisme politique de Carl Schmitt et d'Erik Peterson". In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 134). Peterson believed that what defined theology as such was the concept of *dogma*, which entailed the decision of the Church on what the community of faith should believe in. Even more, theological knowledge is rooted in its giving glory to God, and this knowledge cannot be just any kind of rational knowledge, but knowledge of a concrete authority that can ask for concrete obedience. Theology, as knowledge that comes from God and aims at Him, is rooted in God's Incarnation and in dogma as the extension of this Revelation in history. In his essay *What is Theology?* (1926), Peterson defines theology as follows: «theology is the continuing realization, in forms of concrete argumentation, of the fact that the Logos-revelation has imprinted itself in dogma. [...] Theology is the concrete *actualization* of the fact that the Logos of God has spoken concretely of God, so that there is thus concrete revelation, concrete faith, and concrete obedience» (Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 10-11). Theology, hence, is also a matter of the Church's publicity and autonomy within the political, and this absolute autonomy of the Church is due to its obedience to the Kingdom of God, via Jesus-Christ, and expressed in the dogmatic definition of the community of faith (Jean-Philippe Heurtin. "L'Église comme forme politique selon Erik Peterson". In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 180-182). This political dimension of the Church and of theology is what differentiates Adolf von Harnack and Erik Peterson, as can be seen in the epistolary between them (a selection of which can be seen in Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 15-29).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 38.



call the Christian *ekklesia* the assembly of fully enfranchised citizens of the heavenly city, gathered together to perform particular cultic transactions»<sup>17</sup>. Hence, the Christian worship is not a celebration of mysteries, but a *public* worship, an obligatory public work (*leiturgia*). This public and legal character of Christian worship turns the Church into a political entity, like kingdom and *polis*, rather than to voluntary associations. At the same time, the legitimacy and authority given to the leaders of the worship assemblies were authorized by the apostles, grounding the inheritance of power from Christ to the Apostles, and from them to other men. There is a certain ambiguity to the Church, for the Church is neither a religious-political entity such as was the messianic Kingdom of the Jews, nor a purely spiritual entity, without any political structure. There is a blend of Kingdom and Church, and therefore a legal and pneumatological dimension to it<sup>18</sup>.

The relationship between the Jewish synagogue and the Christian *ekklesia* is examined again by Peterson in his work *The Church from Jews and Gentiles* (1933), that he wrote after his conversion to Catholicism. Taking Paul's *Letter to the Romans*, Peterson will show the problem of Israel in that the chosen people seems no longer to be the chosen. Although salvation came from the Jews, in that Jesus Christ was a descendent of this people, the problem starts when the Messiah of the Jews is believed by the Gentiles but rejected by his people. The case of Paul of Tarsus is particularly problematic, for he realizes in his letter that the relationships between the synagogue and the Church are problematic, and his apostleship entails being sent from the Jews to the Gentiles. To understand the Apostolic Church, Paul — according to Peterson — contrasts the «children of the flesh» with the «children of the promise», which are correlates for a natural and for a spiritual order, respectively. In contrast to the fleshy children (Jews) who were sent to the wilderness, the spiritual children (Christians) live in the City of God. These truly children of God are children of God not by means of physical descent but by the dwelling of the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>18</sup> The difference between Schmitt and Peterson is interesting because it is not the case that in Peterson the theological and the political are strange to each other. On the contrary, for Peterson, the theological concepts are essentially political. But it is not a question of transference from the political to the theological: the ecclesiological concepts are *originally* political and they do not owe anything to earthly politics (Heurtin. "L'Église comme forme politique selon Erik Peterson", 178).

Holy Spirit or *Pneuma* in them through the sacrament of Baptism. All the concepts of marriage, begetting and of offspring, so important in Judaism because they were seen as a mark of divine promise, «pass over to the Church and now acquire their authentic, transparent and spiritual meaning»<sup>19</sup>. This spiritual meaning of the children of God entails, however, another important consequence: God only acts on the basis of *election*, and this means that he does not act on the basis of the supernatural against the natural order. Hence, «children of God are not born but reborn»<sup>20</sup>. The *ekklesia*, therefore, is not the synagogue, for whereas *synagoga* refers to a natural entity that is the congregation or flock (*grex*), the *ekklesia* is connected to the verb *ekkaléo*, the *evocation*, the calling forth of God from the world and its natural order. In this regard, the «fleshiness» of the Jews has something in common with the «sensuality» of the Pagans, for they are both bound to the natural sphere. In contrast to the «fleshy Israel», the *ekklesia* points towards the «spiritual Israel», the true Israel, and the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures, as Paul does, is a spiritual one. Consequently, the very interpretation of the «Law» is made spiritual, for now God is no longer bound to the physics of Law but to the free spirit of Love, or more precisely, is the spiritual law of love. The election of the people by God grows out of free love, and therefore *ekklesia* is both the outcome of God's free and merciful election, and it is also the «free one», the mother to whom we are called to freedom. «The natural order of the people and the natural possibilities that go along with that do not define *ekklesia*, but rather the spiritual order and the supernatural possibilities that arise from the *Pneuma*»<sup>21</sup>. God is calling everyone to His glory, and this calling to «all» means concretely Jews and Gentiles, for both are now included under the category of *disobedience*: Jews rejected Jesus as their Saviour. Hence, God can have mercy on «all», and «the mystery of the Church from Jews and Gentiles is the mystery of the divine mercy»<sup>22</sup>.

The pneumatological and the legal dimension of the Church is further examined by Peterson by focusing in the term *ekklesia*. As being itself a kind of *polis*, and not just an association, the Church has a public character (Öffentlichkeit). But it is necessary to understand its political nature

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<sup>19</sup> Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

by its way of life, for a city is always characterized and defined by their citizens way of life. As a kind of *medium* between the *heavenly Jerusalem* (the City of the angels and the saints) and the *earthly Jerusalem* (the City of the Jews), the Church shares the nature of both cities. However, because Christians left the earthly Jerusalem and do not have a lasting city on earth, the Church draws nearer to the heavenly city. By drawing near this heavenly city, the Church partakes of the *ekklesia* where God, the angels and the saints are assembled in a cultic gathering that is celebrated in heaven and that «is not just a city but also a temple and a holy shrine, into which Christ as the heavenly High Priest has entered»<sup>23</sup>. To understand and describe the liturgical nature of the Church, Peterson wrote his work *The Book on the Angels: Their Place and Meaning in the Liturgy* (1935). This theological piece on angelology is particularly interesting to understand the imbrication between the political and the theological. First of all, this heavenly Jerusalem is depicted by Paul of Tarsus as a «commonwealth», and also in the *Book of Revelation* is pictured as a city to which we are called to be its citizens. Hence, «images from the political and the cultic spheres are intermingled»<sup>24</sup>. Even more, Peterson argues, just as the profane *ekklesia* is an institution of the *polis* to enact legislation, the Christian *ekklesia* is an institution of the Heavenly city, that is, «the assembly of the citizens of the heavenly city for the accomplishment of specific cultic acts»<sup>25</sup>. This connection between the heavenly city and the *ekklesia* is forged through the sacraments and worship as such, for «the liturgy that the Church celebrates on earth is an actual participation in the cult celebrated by the angels in the heavenly city»<sup>26</sup>. In this interdependence, the angels play the key role, for all cultic acts of the Church would be a participation of the angels in the earthly cult, and the earthly worship of the Church is a participation in the worship that angels offer to God in heaven<sup>27</sup>. The political consequence is clear: the pilgrim Church in the eschatological Aeon is grounded in the eternal and unshakeable worship of the angels given to the eternal ruler behind the eschatological event, Who as a true ruler, reigns in its invisibility<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

This eternal worship of the angels is intrinsically political, for they praise God unceasingly, day and night, «Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord», giving praise, honouring, and thanksgiving to the Almighty God — as the *Book of Revelation* says. For Peterson, this thanksgiving (*eucharistía*) shows that praise moves from the reality of an eternal cosmos to the acknowledgment of God's will which grounds the very possibility of this link between the heavenly and the earthly liturgies in a political scheme<sup>29</sup>.

The political scheme of liturgy is made clear by the concept of *acclamation*<sup>30</sup>, for the hymns that are performed in the heavenly city are fitting to the God that, as a king, holds His throne for eternity. Moreover, this hymn — according to the *Book of Revelation* — is performed by the twenty-four elders that are themselves «kings». Hence, «the worship of the heavenly Church, and therefore implicitly too of the earthly Church's liturgy, which is joined with that of the heavenly, has an original relationship to the political world, consisting in the fact that the Christians have left the earthly Jerusalem, which is at once *polis* and temple, in order to draw near to the heavenly temple and the heavenly *polis*»<sup>31</sup>. Because these «elders» are not just kings but also priests, their praise is not just an acclamation but also a *doxology*. And the hymn of the heavenly Church found in the *Book of Revelation* is a triumphal hymn (*epiníkion*), that entails that no

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<sup>29</sup> An examination of the concepts of *institution* and *constitutio* concerning the Church can be found in: Paolo Napoli. "Instituer l'Église: Quelques considérations sur un énoncé complexe". In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 89-108. The Church cannot be considered as a product of the development of history, but as a secular constitution of an eternal essence that precedes it, that is, the Heavenly City. The Church actualizes the Heavenly City, the sacraments playing a crucial role in it. « Dans l'esprit de Peterson, la *Konstituierungsweise* de l'Église désigne un ordre dont la portée dépasse les bornes de l'équation institution-constitution, car la société ecclésiale, si parfaite soit-elle du point de vue du droit formel, relève en fait d'un cadre ontologiquement premier et inclusif : le corps mystique du Christ » (Ibid., 97).

<sup>30</sup> For an exploration of Peterson's notion of *acclamation* and its place in his ecclesiology, see: Emiliano Urciuoli. "Erik Peterson et l'acclamation: Introduction à l'ecclésiologie non fasciste". In *Théologie politique et sciences sociales*, edited by Philippe Büttgen, and Alain Rauwel, 39-64. For a comparative study on the place of acclamations in a Political Theology frame between Schmitt, Kantorowicz and Peterson, see: Montserrat Herrero. "Acclamations: a theological-political topic in the crossed dialogue between Erik Peterson, Ernst H. Kantorowicz and Carl Schmitt". *History of European Ideas* 45, no. 7 (2019): 1045-1057.

<sup>31</sup> Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 112.

political decision tied to a victory on earth is truly decisive, but only the victory of Jesus is truly such. The victory of Jesus is *universal* and, hence, the Church hymnody is the transcending of all national hymns; the victory of Jesus transcends the victory of every king on earth. The original relationship of the Church to the political world is stressed here again, for the victory of the Lamb entails the foundation of a new *polis*, and Peterson refers to Augustine's *City of God* and its claim that the peace of Christ cannot be identified with the peace of a Caesar: «The "new song" is the hymn of the New Age, imperishable as it itself is, while every type of ethnic singing, folk music, and national anthem eventually succumbs to its inevitable decline»<sup>32</sup>. A direct attack on the theology of the *Third Reich*: there is no real victory on earth but the eschatological one of the Second Coming. Any political power that intends to identify itself with the power of God, any political power that aims at establishing a definitive kingdom, is destined to fail. Even more, any political power that wills to establish a universal kingdom will not be able to be truly universal, for the only true ruler that can have a universal rule is God, the one Ruler that transcends every national or ethnical difference.

The reflections on peace by Augustine seems to echo here: real and eternal peace is only to be found in the heavenly city under God's unique rule, for every kind of peace on earth is just the expression of a violent conquer and domination of men over men. The difference between *pax Augusta* and *pax Christi*, that Peterson putted forward in his treatise on monotheism finds here further explanation. The key to this difference and to the whole of his Ecclesiological Political Theology lies in his concept of «eschatological reserve» (*eschatologischer Vorbehalt*), a concept that one can find in Metz, Moltmann and others, but that is an original concept of Peterson<sup>33</sup>. This eschatological meaning of God's rule is at the heart of doxology, and the symbol itself of the «Lamb that was slain» «is probably an imperial symbol (*Reichssymbol*), a symbol of the New Age, of the final, eternal, and indestructible kingdom» that stands against the kingdoms of this world, symbolized by beasts of prey<sup>34</sup>. To this eternal kingdom and his eternal Ruler, the whole creation praises both its creator

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>33</sup> Gabino Uríbarri. "La reserva escatológica: un concepto originario de Erik Peterson". *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 78 (2003): 29-105.

<sup>34</sup> Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 114-115.

and its redeemer, the Lamb, and the expression «Amen» is called out by both the visible creation and by the invisible creation, and the «elders» join the angels in this doxological acclamation of God's power; and after this «Amen» only silent obedience follows<sup>35</sup>. Hence, Peterson concludes that «characteristic for this worship in heaven is the way in which political and religious symbolic expressions are thoroughly intermingled, which is shown most clearly in the resemblance of the doxologies to acclamations», and that the heavenly Jerusalem «is both a city and royal court, and yet also a temple and cult site»<sup>36</sup>.

The eschatological universal rule of God and the connection between the angelical and the earthly worship finds its expression in Christian liturgy. This liturgy finds in the hierarchical order of the angels' praise its depth and universality, and «as an eschatological cultus, the worship of the Church originates, not in the self-satisfying, self-enclosed natural order, but in a human mode of being that is transcended by the higher order of being of the angels, and that is first stimulated to its own act of praise by the praise of the spiritual world»<sup>37</sup>. This connection of the Church liturgy to the heavenly city entails, for Peterson, that its religious-political dimension is grounded in the concept of order (*ordo*) that is found in the heavenly hierarchy, that excludes the arbitrariness of purely individual formulations from the liturgy for it structures the whole of the Church's worship into a service similar to the one of the angels<sup>38</sup>. The idea of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 116. In the idea of acclamation there is also the performance of a *people*, and that means that not only acclamations render glory to God, but that also that unifies and gives entity to the worshipping community. In one of his Seminars in Bonn, *Ekklesia. Studien zum altchristlichen Kirchenbegriff* (1926), Peterson writes: «Mais il faut aussi considérer ceci : si l'*Ekklesia*, c'est-à-dire la communauté assemblée, était l'Église elle-même, alors logiquement tout acte de volonté de l'assemblée cultuelle devait en définitive toujours rester l'acte des volontés des présents mises ensemble — car il manque la distinction conceptuelle entre personne juridique et organe d'une personne juridique — et apparaître par conséquent comme le résultat d'un accord, d'une convention. Il faut donc comprendre que dans le culte du christianisme ancien, l'acclamation comme forme de l'assentiment a constitué une composante essentielle — non pas seulement du culte, mais, par connexion nécessaire, de l'*Ekklesia*. L'*Ekklesia*, pour le dire en un mot, se constitue à chaque fois dans l'*Amen* du peuple» (quoted in Napoli. "Instituer l'Église", 102).

<sup>37</sup> Peterson, *Theological Tractates*, 122.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 123.

*hierarchy* and its connection to liturgy is to be especially expressed in the monastic orders, for «to the essential definition of a monk (in the ancient sense of the word) belongs the fact that the monk imitates the angel's way of being and thereby also imitates in the monastic order the liturgy that is tied to the angelic existence»<sup>39</sup>. Through the monastic *officium*, the monks join *freely* to the *continuous* hymnic praise of the angels, and this entails a difference between the monks and the resto of the people, for the acclamation of the people turns now to be a hymnody performed by the monks following the angelical paradigm: whereas an acclamation is uttered within the frame of natural time, the angelical hymnody is sung in the endlessness of eternity. Hence, the monks are those human beings whose entire existence has been raised above the natural order and who approximate to the *liturgical nature* of angels, devoted entirely to an endless worship of God the Lord. The Church's liturgy, as a participation in the heavenly worship, finds the mediation of angels also in the sacraments and cultic acts<sup>40</sup>. However, the importance of angels regarding the very life of the Church is not just symbolic or paradigmatic, but performative of the nature of liturgy, as «the work of a people», as a political action. «As the emperor demonstrates the public character of his political authority when he appears in the company of his bodyguard, so Christ demonstrates the public character of his religio-political authority when he is accompanied by the bodyguard of the angels at the Holy Mass»<sup>41</sup>.

The angelic participation in the Church is grounding the ultimate political meaning of worship, in the claim that God is the ultimate Ruler of this world and history. In this claim, the Church and the political realm are confronted. To understand this confrontation, Peterson will examine the concept of *martyr*, those who are friends of the king and that possess the right of an audience with him to tell him everything freely. In the intercessory prayer of the martyrs, the Greek Church stressed this public character of the Church, for it is a prayer of a polis that is only to be found as a «commonwealth» in heaven<sup>42</sup>. In its pilgrimage on earth the Church as a pilgrim city participates on the autarchic power of the heavenly commonwealth. Hence, the Church is the *Church of the martyrs*, those who

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 127-134.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 135.

are witness to the truth. In his essay, *Witness to the truth* (1937), Peterson focus on the definition of the Apostolic Church as the *Church of the martyrs*. Since the eschatological *aeon* has irrupted through the Incarnation of Christ, «the final, critical time has broken in, bringing not reconciliation but decision, not peace but the sword»<sup>43</sup>. The critical times that Jesus Christ began, the eschatological fellowship of suffering and destiny is shared by Jesus and His Apostles, and they will be brought, as their Master was, to the courts and judges of this world. They will become, thus, *martyrs*, witnesses of the truth, and they will not speak on their behalf, but the Holy Spirit will speak through them and «transform their speech from a mere apologetic defence to a *witness* against Jews and Gentiles»<sup>44</sup>.

Although Peterson does not refer to the Spirit any longer, it is noteworthy that one of the key names for the Holy Spirit is *paraclete* (*parákletos*), that is, the defendant and mediator on courts. However, interestingly, the shift from a defence to an accusation is here especially relevant, for the martyrs are not criminals or bandits, but witnesses of the truth; and in being witnesses they accuse the judges, bound to the earthly kingdoms, and not to the one true rule of God. «So, with one blow, the martyr reveals the powers that rule this world and also bears witness to the superiority of a coming one»<sup>45</sup>. Peterson, thus, claims that the public confession of Christ's name is the final command of Jesus given to His Apostles: in the eschatological *aeon* there are only two possibilities, either to confess or to deny the truth of Jesus<sup>46</sup>. The eschatological *aeon*, hence, brings an unsurpassable division between those loyal and those who are disobedient to God. Hence, to be a witness of Jesus' truth is but the very nature of the Church, that is not only Apostolic, but is also the «Church of the martyrs». If there are no martyrs at all, then the existence of the Church would end, for the martyrs manifest the public claim of the Church: as its name already shows, martyrs are to be brought to the public juridical institutions and be subjected to their laws and penalties, and their confession is, therefore, not a private but a public one, confessing «him who will return publicly in the glory of the Father in order to judge this

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>45</sup> Schmidt Passos. "Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty", 506.

<sup>46</sup> Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 154.



world» and by «this very confession the martyr leaps beyond this world's concept of "public" and demonstrates in his words the public claim of another, a coming new world»<sup>47</sup>. And because the words of the martyr are not a confession of guilt, but of faith, these words come from the Holy Spirit and speaks on God's behalf.

This new world that is coming is reflected upon in the *Book of Revelations*, which shows the conflict between the political powers and God's Kingdom. The revelation of Christ in His glory «means that the Lord takes on a "public character" analogous to the public character of the political realm» as it is shown in the transference of the symbols of political sovereignty to Christ in the *Book of Revelations*<sup>48</sup>. But not only Christ is hailed as «the ruler of the kings of the earth», «King of kings and Lord of lords»; men are also revealed by the seal that an angel stamps on their brow and that mark them as the «slaves of God», the elected ones. The concept of *seal* is here emphasized by Peterson, for the seal (used by the Church to describe the action of baptism and that makes this sacrament something other than a «mystery» or subjective initiation) reveals our alliance to everyone, men and God: not only the elected are sealed, but also the followers of the Antichrist: «in view of the revelation of Jesus Christ there is no more anonymity among human beings»<sup>49</sup>. As with Augustine of Hippo, the mixed character (*permixtum*) of the Church is only decided in the *Eschaton*, when everyone will be revealed as either a friend or a foe to God's City. The political sphere as such is consequently revealed, and because power in the final analysis demands to be worshipped, «the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 163-164.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 164. It is interesting here the explanation that Peterson gives to the persecution by the Church of the heretics, not just as a theoretical or theological practice of keeping a discourse coherent, but mostly as a political action: the false teacher is seen as standing in the service of a demonic power. The theological epistemology seems to be grounded in a political scheme: either human knowledge comes from the Holy Spirit, or it comes from the satanic spirit. Hence, there is no «pure knowledge» after the coming and Revelation of Jesus, but inevitably stands either under the power of the Antichrist or the power of Christ. A heresy, consequently, is not a theological schools controversy, but a stand on a political order of an anti-Christian stamp (Ibid., 165-167). It is interesting that Peterson is here close to Schmitt's political perspective, for the binomial that defines the political is that of friend-foe.

only question is whether we are worshipping the legitimate power of the Almighty or the usurped power of the one who makes himself like God»<sup>50</sup>.

Interestingly, there is no power without glory, nor glory without power, and the whole history is but a struggle between two powers: the one that comes from God and the one that comes from the demon. However, only God is truly powerful, whereas the Antichrist and his followers are just rebelling and will be punished in the End of times. In the meantime, every Christian — because they are called to confess publicly the Kingdom of God — should share this desire to conquer with Christ, because the Antichrist is waging war against the saints and the Church, forcing them to take a decision, for the Antichrist makes the political symbol a cultic object. Christians «must “conquer” in that they become “public”, they become “public” in their witness for Jesus»<sup>51</sup>. This Kingdom of Jesus is universal, and its universal scope — argues Peterson — is not only misunderstood by a representative of a monarchy, or a democracy, but even by Pontius Pilate, the representative of the Empire. Pilate could understand a national or even imperial kingship but could not comprehend a kingship that does not belong to this world. Jesus the King confronts Pontius Pilate and performs a public testimony within the logic of the Roman Empire, but transcending this political reality becoming «a witness against all “dominations and powers” of this world»<sup>52</sup>. This Kingdom of God is not of this world because it is not bound to the present age, but to the one that is to come, and therefore the kingship of Jesus is bound to its priesthood, and although in history attempts has been made to unite these two forms of state and religious authority, «only Christ was *rex* and *sacerdos* in one»<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 180. «Since Christ is priest and king, earthly power is stripped of its demonic character and can no longer raise the claim, as paganism once did, to be the bearer of sacramental functions. Since Christ is priest and king, priestly kingship can exist only in the people of God, which in the *ekklesia*, the Assembly, celebrates the mysteries of the priestly king. In the Church *all* of those anointed with the holy chrism of baptism are anointed to a priestly kingship, as St Augustine often stressed. [...] The martyrs who have followed the Lamb wherever he goes have shown by their deaths that there is no kingship of Christ without his priesthood. And the martyrs' deaths and glory are quite simply the most appropriate form in which the priestly kingship of Christ is realized in the members of his mystical body» (Ibid., 180-181).

The Kingdom of God, of which martyrs confess their belonging and the ultimate kingship of Christ, is eschatological. It is «through the struggles of its martyrs, in the overcoming of a world in which the Jews have no king and the pagans have only Caesar, the Church regards Christ as imperator in anticipation of his kingship of the world to come»<sup>54</sup>. The Church, then, partakes of this eschatological Kingdom and shows Christ kingship by giving testimony of Him. However, this public character of the Church, entails the participation of the angels, those who are the citizens of the City of God. And angels are, at the same time, grounding the mystical life of the Church and its theology. In contrast to the Greek mysticism, the Christian *gnosis* is not about a subjective and individual path towards the conceptual knowledge of God: the full achievement of *gnosis* culminates in *theología*, understood as the praise of God<sup>55</sup>. We should remember the impossibility of any theology outside dogma, being dogma the decision of the *ekklesía* on the truth of what we must believe, and therefore the objective-public dimension of faith<sup>56</sup>. Only in liturgy humanity is raised above its natural existence and joins the worshipping choir of the angels, and thus «the origin of the mystical life in the Church is to be sought in the giving praise in the holy Mass»<sup>57</sup>. Through this praise, we are admitted into the choir of angel-like monastic life, and therefore an approximation to the angels' order of being, and human metaphysical and ontological status is, hence, sublimated into an angelic kind of existence. Theology is, accordingly, not just a conceptual knowledge of God, but a way of naming the praise of the angels and the mystical glorification of God<sup>58</sup>.

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As Schmidt Passos affirms, «conflict between the martyr and the sovereign becomes inevitable because the martyr wants to make the truth of Christ visible in the public sphere, while Schmitt's sovereign, who claims political monopoly over the truth, cannot tolerate the publicity of Christian revelation, which delegitimizes his authority and exposes his transience» (“Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty”, 509).

<sup>54</sup> Peterson, 150. This quote belongs to a very short but dense paper of Peterson, “Christ as Imperator”, written in 1936. The affirmation of Christ as *Imperator* entails, dialectically, the ultimate denial of human political power (see: Heurtin. “L'Église comme forme politique selon Erik Peterson”, 183-187).

<sup>55</sup> Peterson. *Theological Tractates*, 135-136.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-14.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

### 3. THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH: YVES CONGAR

Within XX<sup>th</sup> century Catholic theology, Yves Congar has a special place concerning pneumatology and he is a milestone concerning the reunification of spiritual anthropology and ecclesiology through his *anthropologie pneumatologique* and *ecclésiologie pneumatologique*<sup>59</sup>. At the same time, Congar was a theologian committed to the *Second Vatican Council* and the question on the nature of the Church was one of his main concerns, as well. In the midst of the second half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the political dimension of Christianity also shapes his ecclesiological reflections. Hence, by bringing together Political Theology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Eschatology, Yves Congar is a paramount figure to see how Peterson's Ecclesiological Political Theology finds some continuation<sup>60</sup>. Interestingly, Congar was one of the few that read and admire the work of Erik Peterson, and he even tried to get his work translated into French. I will start examining his work *The Messianic People*, published in 1975, when the *pragmatical Political Theology* was rising through the works of Metz, Moltmann and Liberational Theology, and I will then show the pneumatological grounds of his Ecclesiology and Political Theology.

In the preface to this book, Congar claims that this book examines an old concern of him: that of redemption and the calling to the *Kingdom of God*. However, especially since 1968, it seems unavoidable to decide on the nature of the relation between the Christian redemption and the political movements of human emancipation. In order to make such a decision, and building on the *First* and *Second Vatican Councils*, Congar first examines the nature of the Church, and he defines it — following some German theologians — as the «Original Sacrament» (*Ur-Sakrament*). On the one hand, since liturgy is not a private action, but the celebrations of the Church, the Church is the «Sacrament of unity» as far as it is the gathering of the holy people, organized under the authority of the bishops. On the other hand, the Church is also the «Sacrament of redemption»,

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<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Teresa Groppe. *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 169.

<sup>60</sup> An interesting example of the similarities between Peterson's and Congar's concern on the transference from the political to the ecclesiastical, and vice versa, can be found in the essays collected in: Yves Congar. *Droit ancien et structures ecclésiastiques*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1982.

for the Church is the People of God, is the *messianic people* that is led by Jesus Christ and that embraces the whole of mankind. Hence, the Church is the instrument of Redemption, and «by the Spirit of Pentecost, Christ has constituted his Body, the Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation»<sup>61</sup>. Aiming at a unique goal, the Church walks as a pilgrim towards the eschatological *Kingdom of God* that will bring salvation to humankind, both manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love to men within history. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Mother-Church, Spouse of the Lord, exhorts his Children to be the sign of Jesus in the way towards the Kingdom<sup>62</sup>. Hence, in analogy with Jesus, the structure of the Church resembles that of Christ in that they are both humane and divine, and their human and visible dimension has an instrumental role in the hands of God's economy of Redemption. This structural analogy finds its theological ground in the concept of *sacrament*. That the Church is the «sacrament of Redemption» entails to understand *sacrament* as the way in which God at the same time signifies and performs His economy of Redemption in a human historical context. Using the metaphor of language, which is both a material and a spiritual means of communication, sacraments are but the expression and the vehicle of the spiritual, the means of an intention (*intendere*), a way towards communion with men and God. Congar, therefore, understands the Church in its double dimension, within an eschatological and historical perspective<sup>63</sup>.

Although both Christ and the Church are the bearers of redemption, their mediation is essentially different: whereas Christ is the mediator of Redemption as the Chief and the Font, the Church has a ministerial task in regards this Christological mediation. Christ is not only the founder of the Church in a historical, but also in an actual sense. The idea of the

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<sup>61</sup> Yves Congar. *Un peuple messianique: L'Église, sacrament du salut; Salut et libération*. Paris: Cerf, 1975, 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>63</sup> « Si, selon le mot bien connu de Clement d'Alexandrie, 'de même que la volonté de Dieu est une cité et qu'elle s'appelle le monde, ainsi son intention est le salut des hommes, et elle s'appelle l'Église', on comprend que Dieu, insérant son alliance de grâce dans la trame de la création et de son histoire, ait choisi certaines réalités sensibles de notre monde pour en faire les moyens de son alliance de grâce. Ce seront des hommes et leur destin propre (Abraham !), un peuple, des mots, des gestes, des éléments sensibles comme le pain, le vin et l'huile, des hommes appelés à être, pour les autres, des instruments de Dieu » (*Ibid.*, 24).

Church as a sacrament (*Ur-Sakrament*) was for Congar a way to reject the prevailing juridical definition of the Church as something that, once instituted by Jesus, sustains itself and functions in its own. The Church is the Sacrament of Redemption only in virtue of her union to Christ, and her goal does not reside in herself, but in the *Kingdom of God*. Hence, the Church is no more than «the announcement and the instrument of preparation» of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, for it is Jesus the first and decisive celebrant of sacraments<sup>64</sup>. For this reason, the description of the Church as being both the *Spouse* and the *Body* of Christ is important to clarify its double performance: the image of the Spouse entails both alterity and presence, whereas that of Body refers to identity and immanence. Quoting Augustine of Hippo, Congar claims that the difference and the bond between both images plays a key role in ecclesiology, for «in order to become the bodily members of Christ, the Spouse must be united with her Lord and receive from Him the fecund virtue of the Spirit»<sup>65</sup>.

However, the Church is born in the day of Pentecost. As it was the claim of Peterson, the Church received in that day its public mission on earth, its «publicity» (*publicité*). Although it is not explicitly connected by Congar, if Pentecost is the fruit of the Pasch as its fulfilment, it is because Christ is the paradigmatic martyr; the one who gives a final testimony of his Father's Kingdom even facing crucifixion: in obeying the will and plan of God, Jesus was glorified and given the name and title of Lord<sup>66</sup>. Although there is a difference between Peterson's and Congar's ecclesiology concerning the birth of the Church, which for the latter has also a Christological dimension, they both agree on the political consequence of Pentecost:<sup>67</sup> «With the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Church [...] appeared with the highest possible degree of publicity» and «was set out on its missionary work»<sup>68</sup>. In Pentecost, the Church received

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>66</sup> Yves Congar. *The Mystery of the Church*. Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960, 8.

<sup>67</sup> «As soon as the Spirit comes upon men, he moves them to bear witness to Christ [...]. Pentecost was not the beginning (birth) of the Church, if by that we mean its constitution or its setting up. That was done in the course of Christ's own life, inasmuch as he proclaimed the Gospel, revealed the Father; chose the twelve apostles, founded the primacy of Peter; inaugurated the sacraments (especially Baptism and the Eucharist), and so on. Pentecost was, precisely, the placing of the Church in the world» (Ibid., 42)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

both its *soul* and its *law*<sup>69</sup>. By the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Church received both its «animation» as the Mystical Body of Christ and its law as a juridical structure, for it is the Holy Spirit the one that gives life to the redemptory structures that Christ established, the one that gives faith to the apostolicity, sacraments to be celebrated, and ministries and missions to be accomplished: «The Spirit makes the sacraments effective, but they are administered in the name of Christ»<sup>70</sup>, and therefore «the Church is truly the sacrament of salvation because of the operation of the Spirit»<sup>71</sup>. It is the Spirit the one that organizes and animates the whole Body of the Church<sup>72</sup>.

The Church, therefore, is both proceeding from the mission of the Word and the mission of the Spirit, and this is why every operation of the Church is performed within and thanks to an *epiclesis*, an invocation to the Spirit<sup>73</sup>. This concept is a key concept in Congar's ecclesiology, for it refers primarily to the work of the Spirit within the juridical structures of the Church, grounding her supernatural (spiritual) nature. Instead of opposing structure and life, law and grace, earthly and heavenly cities, *epiclesis* is bringing these polarities together<sup>74</sup>. Furthermore, this concept

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>72</sup> Yves Congar. *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*. Paris: Cerf, 1979, 1:162.

<sup>73</sup> *Epiklesis* means invocation and it has been used mainly in the Oriental Christian tradition. It is used in the eucharistic prayer, but also in other sacraments. The eucharistic *epiclesis* had a special development due to the affirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In the tradition of Antioch and of Syria, the sending of the Holy Spirit is done «on us and on the offered gifts»: this sending of the Spirit is a «transforming and sanctifying action» that works on the gifts and on the participants, performing the communion between them and God. Although the *epiclesis* is to be found first regarding the person of the Son in the Eucharist, it was then referred to the action of the Holy Spirit. The word *epiklesis* is the Greek translation of the Septuagint to the Hebrew for *invocation*: in the invocation of the name of God over a thing or a person, this means that this person or thing becomes God's property (Xavier Pikaza, and Nereo Silanes, eds. *El Dios cristiano. Diccionario teológico*. Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1992). *Epiklesis* has, therefore, a political connotation, for it describes the sovereignty of God over the sacralized things and the power to subject people or things under His Kingdom.

<sup>74</sup> Yves Congar. *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 3:294-319. «L'Eglise tout entière est de nature sacramentelle. Elle est, *dans et par le Christ*, le grand et primordial sacrament du salut [...]. Elle l'est tout entière, peuple, ministres, trésor des moyens de grâce, institution.

is especially interesting if one takes its etymology, for this word is a compound of *epi* and *kletos*. It is noteworthy that the idea of «calling» is, of course, grounding the idea of Redemption, for Redemption is the calling of God to the whole creation towards its Kingdom; but this idea of calling (*kletos*) is present in *ekklesia* and also in one of the most important names given to the Spirit, *paraclete* (*para-kletos*)<sup>75</sup>.

In the sending of his disciples, Jesus pictures their ministry in an analogy to His own ministry: the apostles are sent by Jesus as He himself was sent by His Father, and they do not belong any longer to this world, as He himself was alien to it. Thus, as the Son cannot do anything by Himself, but only on behalf of His Father, the Apostles cannot act but on behalf of Jesus<sup>76</sup>. The concept of *dispensatio* (one of the Latin translations of the Greek *oikonomia*) is, therefore, analogical, for it is said of the Son but also of the Church, in a kind of line of succession, in a kind of juridical transposition, that grounds the ministry of the Church in the ministry of Jesus, and the ministry of Jesus in the monarchic rule of the Father. Equally important is to stress that these ministerial offices are not possible without the performance of the Spirit. As evidence of this pneumatological foundation, sacraments are the very sign of this divine *dispensatio*, and the Baptism as the first and most important of sacraments is performed by the Spirit, even concerning the ministry of Jesus, for Jesus is anointed by the Spirit through John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Therefore, the whole ministry of Jesus is also grounded pneumatologically.

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Loin que les venues du Saint-Esprit en elle concurrent et mettent en question sa nature d'institution, elles l'établissent dans sa vérité. Car c'est une institution d'une espèce particulière. Elle agit dans le présent sur la base d'événements passés et en vue d'un avenir qui n'est rien moins que le Royaume de Dieu, la Cité eschatologique, la vie éternelle dans la communion de Dieu lui-même. Telle est bien la structure du sacrement : mémoire de l'événement fondateur, signe prophétique de l'avenir absolu, grâce présente issue de celui-là et préparant celui-ci. Mais c'est le Saint-Esprit qui assure l'unité de ces trois moments. [...] Au plan dogmatique, nous l'avons vu, "je crois en l'Eglise sainte..." est conditionné par l'absolu „Je crois en l'Esprit Saint“. Le dogme commande une vie ou activité ecclésiale totalement épiscopétique» (Congar. *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 3:351).

<sup>75</sup> « L'apostolicité est cette propriété, qui est pour l'Eglise à la fois un don de grâce et une tâche, et qui la fait remplir l'entre-deux de l'Alpha et de l'Oméga en assurant la continuité de l'une à l'autre, l'identité substantielle du terme et du principe » (Congar. *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*. 1:55). And this apostolic nature is given by the Holy Ghost in Pentecost.

<sup>76</sup> Congar. *Un peuple messianique*, 42.



It is not just a coincidence that Tertullian was a decisive influence in Christian theology both regarding the concept of *dispensatio* and the concept of *sacramentum*. Congar himself argues that this concept was not an invention of Tertullian — who has a decisive influence on the creation of a Latin Christian language — but that it was taken from the common language as rooted in *sac*, *sacer*, *sancire*, that is, in giving a religious meaning to something. This could refer to an initiation, to an initiation owe (as in a military use), or to the sacred bond that is its outcome. The Christian use of *sacramentum* was not only successful because it was the Latin translation of the Greek *mysterion* in the Scriptures, but because of the use of *mysterion* in the II century as referred to Baptism and Eucharist: this is also found in the Hebrew word *Sôd*, translated in the Septuagint as *mysterion*, to refer not only to the secret plan of God, but also used in reference to circumcision, a kind of sacrament of initiation into the holy community, that is, like a sign, a seal, a *sphragis*. Christian Baptism is, as well, the entrance into the community of the *Body of Christ*, the entrance into the communion of the central mystery of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection<sup>77</sup>. However, Christian sacraments are not the Pagan rituals of initiation: the main difference here is that these sacraments are not a mysterious ritual but the communion in the performance of the Redemptory events of Jesus Christ. «It is not about harmonizing the secret forces of the world, but of participating in the history of Redemption and the promises of God»<sup>78</sup>. Liturgy and its sacramental performances, as in Peterson's perspective, are the sign of the participation of the Church to the Heavenly City<sup>79</sup>. Hence, the synthesis between faith and sign is performed

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>79</sup> «In the Apocalypse, "Lamb" is the name of Christ as associated with God in the exercise of his sovereignty and in the glorification of the elect» (Yves Congar. *The Mystery of the Temple, or the Manner of God's Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to the Apocalypse*. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1962, 210). «Heaven, where the Lamb sits upon the throne, is a palace as well as a temple. A liturgy is celebrated in which the angels have their part to play together with the elect and the mysterious 24 elders. We are given frequent glimpses of this heavenly liturgy. It is a liturgy of praise and prayer. [...] Thus, the image we are given of the heavenly Church is that of a great host of pilgrims who have reached the Temple at Jerusalem and are in God's presence» (*Ibid.*, 211). «The prayer of the Church seeks to hasten the Second Coming. The sacraments, in a sense, "desire" to be swallowed up in the reality they mediate, and the temple of time "desires" to be engulfed in the temple of eternity» (*Ibid.*, 213).

ultimately in Baptism, called also the «sacrament of faith». Baptismal faith is both a received knowledge of God and a principle of Redemption, is both catechesis and sacrament, mystery in its double sense of knowledge and of redemptory act of God performed in the sacred signs that are read according to faith<sup>80</sup>. Eucharist is, also, a key sacrament to understand this participation in the history of redemption: «The Eucharist, the sacramental body of Christ, is thus the means whereby the Church becomes supremely the body of Christ and the temple of God in the new Dispensation»<sup>81</sup>.

Nevertheless, Congar argues that, whereas the theology of sacraments was deeply developed, a theology of the Church as *sacramentum salutationis*, as sacrament of Redemption, was not fully examined. When in the XX<sup>th</sup> century the Catholic theology returned to the idea of *mystery* behind the sacramental celebration, the belonging of Christians to the mystic Body of Christ as an organic member of it came forward, and the juridical aspects of sacraments and rituals as founded by Christ made way towards a pneumatological perspective. Hence, the idea of the Church as *Ur-Sakrament* played a key role, and accordingly Congar defines the Church as «the great and universal sacrament of the unique mediation of Christ»<sup>82</sup>. All sacraments refer to the Church as their font: the particular case of Penitence is illustrative, for the liturgical reconciliation and absolution entails the readmission of the sinner into the community of the Church and, consequently, brings the reconciliation with God<sup>83</sup>. «Sacraments

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<sup>80</sup> Congar. *Un peuple messianique*, 52.

<sup>81</sup> Congar. *The Mystery of the Temple*, 185. «And so the Church is holy in depth, inwardly holy. Her sacraments brings sanctity which is real. In her the means are of the same nature as the end, because Jesus Christ is the source of both end and means. The Holy Spirit is not present in and given to us only as a force, but as a holy Reality. It is the Spirit himself who is present and given, who dwells both in holy souls and in the Church. Sanctity means not merely to be consecrated to some work for God, it is inner communion and conformity with him» (Ibid., 203). Thus, the relics of the martyrs, in their closeness to the Eucharistic Christ, have a key role in the settlement of the Temples.

<sup>82</sup> Congar. *Un peuple messianique*, 64.

<sup>83</sup> « On raisonne analogiquement le cas des autres sacrements: Le premier moment de leur célébration situe ou incorpore le fidèle à ce grand sacrement à la fois visible et spirituel qu'est l'Eglise (moment de " sacrement et res "), et ainsi l'amène à la pure réalité spirituelle de grâce : L'effet immédiat et premier du sacrement particulier est de conduire l'homme dans le sacrement-source, d'où est sorti ce sacrement

— argues Congar — would be (just) the particular actualization of the action of the Church as the *original sacrament* (*sacrament première*), radical and global in the definite and decisive personal situations»<sup>84</sup>. Hence, as the grounding and first sacrament, the Church is the *sacrament of Redemption*, and this claim entails that the Church is the «messianic People», as defined by the *Second Vatican Council*. This People has Jesus as its chief and their dignity lies in their freedom as children of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in their hearts like if it were a temple, and their law is the new commandment of love. Their destiny is the *Kingdom of God*, inaugurated on Earth by God Himself and that will definitely come with the Second coming of Jesus, when the glory of God shines over all His creation and save it from sin and corruption. This messianic people, «although it does not comprise the whole of mankind, and it seems to be just like a little troupe, yet it constitutes for the whole human genre the strongest seed of unity, hope and salvation»<sup>85</sup>. Established by Christ to communicate life, love and truth, this messianic people are the instrument of Redemption for all men.

Furthermore, this messianic people of God that is the bearer of the sacrament of salvation is made of different individuals, each of them having a certain gift, a certain calling. These different talents have their place within the people of God and play a certain role in this messianic mission of the Church. Congar argues that one should consider closely the concept of *charisma*, which the *Second Vatican Council* stressed in regards ecclesiology: *charismas* are «the gifts of nature or of grace made by the Holy Spirit for the common use (*utilité commune*)»<sup>86</sup>. Taking Paul of Tarsus, Congar argues that this diversity of charismas finds its unity in its origin and in its goal, for everything comes from the same Spirit and aims at the construction of the one Body of Christ<sup>87</sup>. Hence, the messianic people, the Church, has a trinitarian structure: it is the people of

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lui-même, comme une ramification, pour atteindre tel homme en particulier et telle situation de sa vie' (Semmelroth). Ainsi le baptême incorpore à l'Eglise et par là, au Christ. Il est assez facile d'établir un rapport analogue, à deux étages, pour les autres sacrements » (Ibid., 65-66).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>85</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 9, quoted in: Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 78. For an organological understanding of the Church, see: Congar. *The Mystery of the Church*, 22ss.; and Congar. *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 1:162ss.

God-Father, the Body of Christ (God-Son), and the Temple of the Holy Spirit<sup>88</sup>. The idea of people of God, therefore, entails an eschatological perspective of the history of Redemption, the idea of a pilgrim people, and the affirmation of a relation of this people to the whole of humankind in its marching towards unity and peace. Consequently, the messianic people of the Church is in the service of unity, of bringing humankind into the one *Kingdom of God*<sup>89</sup>. The pneumatological dimension of the Church must be stressed theologically, and although reflections have been made on the action of the Spirit in the individual's souls, Congar claims that there is still much work to do concerning the performance of the Spirit in regards the sacraments and the life and building of the Church. On the one hand, institutions, formulas, and rituals must be animated by the Spirit, and revealed by the Spirit as means towards the eschatological *Kingdom of God*. On the other hand, the history of Redemption is performed by everyone in the Church and not just by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and this claim entails a «ecclesiology of communion». By acknowledging the role of the Spirit, the Church is given a trinitarian grounding and moves from a pre-Trinitarian monotheistic idea of God — that is mirrored in a patriarchal, monarchical, and pyramidal ecclesiology — to a Trinitarian model of community<sup>90</sup>. In this Trinitarian modulation, one could also detect the influence of Peterson in the shaping of a new kind of Political Theology, different from the one of Schmitt.

The messianic people, as being the people of Jesus Christ (being *Christ* the Greek translation of the Hebrew «Messiah»), answer to the ultimate calling of God to the whole creation, that calls it towards the eschatological peace. The way in which this people act, thinks, and speaks within God's plan, is not possible without the existence of spiritual, prophetic,

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<sup>88</sup> Congar. *Un peuple messianique*, 82.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-90. « C'est sous l'aspect de communion de Personnes que la sainte Trinité est un modèle ecclésiologie, en même temps qu'on trouve, dans l'Eglise, un reflet des attributs appropriés ou propres aux Personnes : autorité et puissance, don du Serviteur, communication dans l'amour. 'Qu'ils soient un comme nous sommes un' (Jn 17, 22). C'est l'œuvre, pour ce qui est de l'Eglise, du Saint-Esprit. C'est celui-ci qui est l'âme personnelle du Sacrement du salut. Il le fait sans cesse dans l'histoire, en usant pour cela des ressources que l'histoire apporte et qu'il met au bénéfice du Corps du Christ » (*Ibid.*, 89-90). The monarchical political grounds of monotheism, in opposition to the Trinitarian God, was the key critique of Peterson to Schmitt.

eschatological men<sup>91</sup>. As such, these men and the ecclesiastic institutions work as critical stances in history for the justice of God and against the worldly injustice<sup>92</sup>. At this point, Congar engages with the political theologies of Moltmann and with Liberational theologies. In the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament, *sôzô* (from which *sôteria*, *sôter* derives) translates mainly the Hebrew word for liberation and security (*Yâsha'*), and comes from the adjective *saos* that means *intact, safe*. This Greek word has different semantic values: to be saved from a danger or from a disease, to maintain oneself safe, to do good and cure, to sustain being, and, in the religious language, all these meanings are gathered. In this context, as translating *Yâsha'* (that means to get rid of an oppressive power), salvation (*sôzô*) refers to the intervention of a powerful element that emancipates and saves us. Hence, salvation refers to the victory of the powerful God in favour of His chosen people, and the Jewish piety, thus, consisted in trusting the power, fidelity, and goodness of God, who saved His People from oppression. «To announce salvation is to announce that God enacts His power, is to announce that He rules»<sup>93</sup>. In the *New Testament*, the eschatological peace expresses this ultimate salvation, and the Hebrew *shalom* is translated into the Greek *eirênè*, and both peace and salvations are identical to the biblical and eschatological concept of «life», for death is not just the end of existence, but a mutilated form of life, and life is the plenitude of being and well-being (*santé*), totality and plenitude of both body and soul<sup>94</sup>. Congar keeps with his interpretation of salvation in a theological and political way, pointing that the very name of Jesus, *Yeshoua*, means «Yaveh saves»: Jesus himself is presented as the *savoir* both by his acts, his gestures, and by formal declarations<sup>95</sup>. Jesus name, hence, signifies both the person and his power, and it is,

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<sup>91</sup> The idea of a *prophetic Church* was examined by Andrew Meszaros by comparing John Henry Newman and Yves Congar, but it focuses on an epistemological question concerning how «doctrinal propositions are both products of history and effective instruments of God's revelation» (*Prophetic Church: History and Doctrinal Development in John Henry Newman and Yves Congar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 240). The political reading of this prophetic dimension of the Church is not considered, and it is striking that there is no mention of Erik Peterson in this book, although there is references to the public dimension of the Church.

<sup>92</sup> Congar. *Un people messianique*, 97.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 109-110.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

thus, proclaimed and received by faith, that is the means for redemption. Even more, because of his filial obedience to God the Father, Jesus Christ is made the «Captain of our salvation (*archègos*)», according to Paul of Tarse (Hb 2,10), and in John's writings, Jesus is depicted as the Son that was sent by His Father as saviour of the world (1Jn 4,14; Jn 3,16-18; 4,42; 12,47), which denotes the universal scope of His redemption<sup>96</sup>. The idea of *dispensatio* is evident here, for our Saviour Jesus is not the *God-King*, but the *Captain*, is not the one that sends, but the one that is sent as the Son by the Father.

This redemptory performance of Jesus entails that, first, his messianism is not just a temporal, but an eschatological one; second, that he saves us from sin, from the wrath of God and from death itself; third, that his redemption aims at the healing of our bodies, and at the recovery of the fraternal relationships between all of men (one could say, Jesus heals both the organic and the social body)<sup>97</sup>. Consequently, *salvation* is a theological-political concept, only if it is interpreted in an eschatological perspective, for the *Kingdom of God* is the power by which and the situation in which salvation is given<sup>98</sup>. However, this eschatological salvation happens within history because, due to Jesus Christ, the *Kingdom of God* has come to us and is transmitted by the apostolate of the Church, where, animated by the Holy Spirit, «the ministry of the word and of the sacraments, which are echoing the gestures of the Kingdom, are performed»<sup>99</sup>. It is through the Holy Ghost, the Church is wholly bound up with the heavenly city<sup>100</sup>. The understanding of salvation, however, is different in each epoch, as Congar explains<sup>101</sup>. First, Antiquity considered the political sovereign as the source of peace, prosperity, and health, and so they called him «son of God the Saviour», whereas for Christians only Jesus was to be called Saviour. However, the early theology employed imperial symbols and expressions to represent Jesus' sovereignty, and Christianity was seen as the empire ruled by Christ as its king. In the Western Middle Ages, under the symbol of the crucified and glorified Christ that is the Judge of the world, redemption was connected to our fight against the demon, and

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 114-139.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>100</sup> Congar. *The Mystery of the Church*, 40.

<sup>101</sup> Congar. *Un peuple messianique*, 145-154.

the need for God's merciful intercessions through indulgences, pilgrimages, processions, *et cetera*. This popular understanding of the Middle Ages subsisted in the theology of grace of the XVI and XVII centuries. In the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, redemption was comprehended under the dramatic alternative of being saved or condemned, where salvation was identified with the redemption of the soul in an individualistic perspective. This redemption was to be acquired by the performance of religious acts and, thus, the salvation of the non-believers was not considered.

This situation changed drastically, however, in the XX<sup>th</sup> century, where a new approach to the concept of salvation came forth. The elements that gave rise to this new perspective are, first, a special consideration for «alterity» in historical, political, and socio-cultural discourses, and the need to think on plurality and on a global sense of the human world. Second, biblical and patristic studies enabled to regain the eschatological meaning of Christian salvation. Third, the valorisation of laicity and its historical role in sight of the *Kingdom of God*. Fourth, the critique of political, social, and religious ideas of the past centuries, mainly of the XIX<sup>th</sup>. Due to these factors, the understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal dimensions changed profoundly, abandoning an Augustinian-Ecclesiocentric perspective of history and redemption. Hence, in Congar's perspective, being a XX<sup>th</sup> century theologian, the idea of redemption or salvation entails human political and historical emancipations, but means more than just that, because of the eschatological meaning of Christian Redemption, that aims at a fullness of life that is not to be achieved on this earth and that comprise both humankind and the whole of creation<sup>102</sup>. This political and theological meaning of Redemption finds its foundation in the *unity of history*, for there cannot be any historical and theological dualism concerning Redemption. In other words, there are not two different histories, the profane and the sacred history, but the one history of humankind in which God was incarnated in Jesus to be our Saviour. There is no true dualism between our soul and our body, neither between a *City of men* and a *City of God*, nor between the temporal and the eternal. Salvation is not outside history; salvation is «its plot (*trame*), meaning (*sens*), and ultimate orientation», and, as such, history is the scenery of God's liberation of men; and human liberation is the human way towards God, and, thus, it is the *sacrament of*

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 154-163.

*Salvation*»<sup>103</sup>. It is noteworthy that the *sacramentum salutationis* is said now about the historical liberations of humankind, but this means that the liberations of humankind are but signs that refer to God's presence in history and to the ultimate eschatological liberation in the *Kingdom of God*. However, if we connect this claim with the understanding of the Church as a critical element of earthly political structures from an eschatological perspective, then the Ecclesiological and Pneumatological theology of Yves Congar is made consistent. This Political Theology, as it was the case with Erik Peterson, is dependent on the very concept of *sacramentum*, which is also dependent on the idea of an «eschatological reserve», for no political institution on earth can be identified with the *Kingdom of God*. If, as the liturgy prays, «To serve God is to reign», to be consecrated to God and so to bring his reign into being is to be a king: «The Church's priesthood is a royal priesthood»<sup>104</sup>.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit seems to play a major role in the ecclesiological political theology of Erik Peterson. The Church is born in Pentecost, founded by the work of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles; the authority and legitimacy of the Apostles is grounded pneumatologically; Christians are *children of the promise*, that is, are children adopted by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in them; the Christian Church is the spiritualization of the Jewish understanding of Jerusalem and of law; the eschatological nature of the

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>104</sup> Congar. *The Mystery of the Temple*, 179. All Christian life is apostolic, «since it is all vivified by this breath, it all derives from the Pasch and from Pentecost. For, ultimately, believing, loving, witnessing, praying, being an apostle, all come to the same thing. Prayer is to ask “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and, since we cannot co-operate for this end except by the power of the Holy Ghost, “give us this day our daily bread”, the bread of faith and love, the bread of the mystical body» (Congar. *The Mystery of the Church*, 51). And also, every Christian shares the priesthood and kingship of Christ: «It is because Christ, having obtained the victory, has taken his place by his Father on the Father's throne, that the faithful are kings reigning with Christ and priests also entering with him into the very Presence of God. The Church of the Apocalypse is a community of kings and priests, that is, of the faithful who share in the dignity and activity of Christ as king and priest» (Congar. *The Mystery of the Temple*, 205).



Church is not only stressing the role of Jesus, but also the one of the Holy Spirit; the place of the angels (whose nature and theological function is very close to the one of the Holy Spirit, reason why the Holy Spirit was considered by Arians as the most powerful angel) is paramount to understand the link between the heavenly city and the earthly city; and finally the Holy Spirit as paraclete is working in the bearing witness of the truth by the martyrs. In short, many of the main considerations of Peterson concerning the Church has a pneumatological dimension. However, there is no explicit examination of the role and function of the Holy Spirit in this political theology made by Peterson. It is noteworthy that one of the few theologians that admired Peterson was Yves Congar, a theologian who wrote a sound pneumatological and ecclesiological theology, but also one that engaged with the political theologies of the second half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. The political and juridical dimensions of the sacraments entail a theological treatment on the performance of the Holy Spirit, for every sacrament is dependent on his agency. It is noteworthy that the idea or concept of *epiclesis* (belonging also to the semantics of the calling, common to *ekklesia* and *parakletos*) is grounding every cultic work of the Church in the action of the Holy Spirit. For Congar, the pneumatological dimension of the Church grounds its being in herself the *Sacrament of salvation*, the *first sacrament (Ur-Sakrament)* by which God's Trinitarian economy is performed in history. A Political Theology based on the idea of a sovereign God meets the modulation of a Trinitarian God that administrates salvation by the *messianic people* that is the Church, a redemption that includes the whole of humanity by the service and mission of the Church. In this modulation, not only the vicarious representative scheme of God-Son is important, but also the performative action of the Holy Spirit, which animates, grounds, and give birth to the people of God.

Although other theologians as Jürgen Moltmann stressed the pneumatological dimension of the Church and its political significance, also by referring to the *Age of the Spirit* (building upon Joachim of Fiore)<sup>105</sup>, there is still missing a research on the place of the Holy Spirit in a *theoretical Political Theology*. Even philosophers as Giorgio Agamben<sup>106</sup>, Jan

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<sup>105</sup> See: Jürgen Moltmann. *Trinität und Reich Gottes. Zur Gotteslehre*. München: Kaiser, 1980; and: Jürgen Moltmann. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

<sup>106</sup> Agamben. *The Kingdom and the Glory*.

Assmann<sup>107</sup>, and in this last years, Nicholas Heron<sup>108</sup>, have no mention of the Holy Spirit, focusing mainly on the political meaning of the relationship between Father and Son, or on the idea of *vicarious power*. However, the Holy Spirit plays a major role in the Christian and Ecclesiological Political Theology<sup>109</sup>. In this paper, I aimed at showing how a theoretical Political Theology (which attends to correspondences between political and theological concepts) is ultimately grounding a pragmatical Political Theology, which gives orientation on the way that the Christian community should behave in the midst of the worldly matters. Should this paper be just an invitation to foster a Political Theology that attends to the conceptual transferences between the political and the theological that the Holy Spirit makes possible through the Church, the *messianic People*, or the *Pilgrim City of God*. If there is a Christian Political Theology, it is essentially ecclesiological.

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<sup>107</sup> Jan Assmann. *Herrschaft und Heil. Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa*. München, 2000.

<sup>108</sup> Nicholas Heron. *Liturgical power: between Economic and Political Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

<sup>109</sup> Fabián Ludueña Romandini. "Mediaeval Pneumatology as a political problem and its relations to the theological oikonomia". *Anacronismo e Irrupción: Revista de Teoría y Filosofía Política Clásica y Moderna* 2, no. 3 (2013): 11-36.

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