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Steger, Carlos Alfredo, Ph.D.

Andrews University, 1993

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION IN THE WRITINGS OF
YVES CONGAR AND OSCAR CULLMANN

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Carlos Alfredo Steger

April 1993

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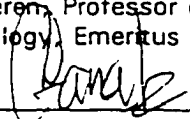
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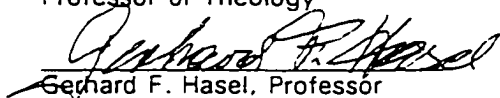
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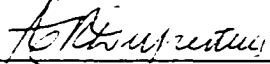
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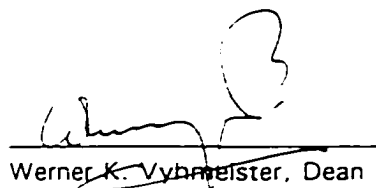
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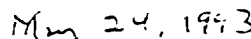
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Richard A. Muller
P. J. Zondervan Professor of
Historical Theology, Calvin
Theological Seminary



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Date Approved

ABSTRACT

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION IN THE WRITINGS OF
YVES CONGAR AND OSCAR CULLMANN

by

Carlos A. Steger

Chair: Raoul Dederen

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION IN THE WRITINGS OF YVES CONGAR
AND OSCAR CULLMANN

Name of researcher: Carlos A. Steger

Name and degree of faculty chair: Raoul Dederen, Dr. es-
Sc. Morales

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Since its first explicit enunciation by the end of the second century, apostolic succession has been considered as one of the basic components of the church's apostolicity. As history shows, however, there have been different views on the nature and function of apostolic succession. Moreover, its legitimacy and normativeness have been challenged, particularly since the sixteenth century onwards. In our century, fairly established confessional positions have been reexamined in the light of new theological perspectives, as is evident in the documents produced by the ecumenical movement.

The purpose of this research was to set forth, analyze, compare, and evaluate Yves Congar's and Oscar Cullmann's views on apostolic succession. To attain this goal their convictions were considered in the context of their doctrine of the church, and, whenever relevant, from the perspective of their overall theological systems, without neglecting the presuppositions undergirding these authors' ideas and the methodologies used to support them.

After a concise overview of apostolic succession throughout history, the dissertation focuses on Yves Congar's position regarding the apostolicity of the church, including apostolicity of ministry and apostolicity of doctrine. Besides his views on Christian history, it includes Congar's view of the bishop of Rome as successor of Peter and his understanding of tradition as the content of apostolic succession.

The study also describes and analyzes Oscar Cullmann's view of the uniqueness of the apostles within the framework of salvation history and his categorical denial of apostolic succession. Attention is given to Cullmann's influential study on the role of Peter in the early church, as well as his analysis of the relationship between tradition, the apostles, and Scripture.

Finally, the dissertation compares and evaluates the inner consistency, the use of sources, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of Congar's and Cullmann's positions from the point of view of their

theological systems, their methodologies and
presuppositions, and in the light of scriptural statements
relevant for the issue of apostolic succession.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AER</u>	<u>American Ecclesiastical Review</u>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
<u>Ang</u>	<u>Angelicum</u>
<u>ATR</u>	<u>Anglican Theological Review</u>
<u>AusBR</u>	<u>Australian Biblical Review</u>
<u>AUSS</u>	<u>Andrews University Seminary Studies</u>
<u>BSac</u>	<u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u>
<u>CBQ</u>	<u>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</u>
<u>CHer</u>	<u>Christian Heritage</u>
<u>CJT</u>	<u>Canadian Journal of Theology</u>
<u>CleR</u>	<u>Clergy Review</u>
<u>CQR</u>	<u>Church Quarterly Review</u>
<u>CT</u>	<u>Christianity Today</u>
<u>CTM</u>	<u>Concordia Theological Monthly</u>
<u>CurTM</u>	<u>Currents in Theology and Mission</u>
<u>DiálEc</u>	<u>Diálogo EcuMénico</u>
<u>DieuV</u>	<u>Dieu Vivant</u>
<u>DL</u>	<u>Doctrine and Life</u>
<u>DownR</u>	<u>Downside Review</u>
<u>EcTrends</u>	<u>Ecumenical Trends</u>
<u>EF</u>	<u>Études Franciscaines</u>
<u>EstEcl</u>	<u>Estudios Eclesiásticos</u>

<u>ER</u>	<u>Ecumenical Review</u>
<u>EspVie</u>	<u>Esprit et Vie</u>
<u>ETL</u>	<u>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</u>
<u>ETR</u>	<u>Études Théologiques et Religieuses</u>
<u>EvQ</u>	<u>Evangelical Quarterly</u>
<u>EvRT</u>	<u>Evangelical Review of Theology</u>
<u>ExpTim</u>	<u>Expository Times</u>
FC	Fathers of the Church
<u>FV</u>	<u>Foi et Vie</u>
<u>GOTR</u>	<u>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</u>
<u>HPR</u>	<u>Homiletic and Pastoral Review</u>
<u>IliffR</u>	<u>Iliff Review</u>
<u>Int</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
<u>IntKathZ</u>	<u>Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift</u>
<u>ITQ</u>	<u>Irish Theological Quarterly</u>
<u>IVELKD</u>	<u>Informationsdienst der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands</u>
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>JEH</u>	<u>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</u>
<u>JES</u>	<u>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</u>
<u>JEvThS</u>	<u>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</u>
<u>JTS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
<u>KD</u>	<u>Kerygma und Dogma</u>
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
<u>LW</u>	<u>Lutheran World</u>
<u>McCQ</u>	<u>McCormick Quarterly</u>
<u>MiscCom</u>	<u>Miscelánea Comillas</u>

<u>MTZ</u>	<u>Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift</u>
<u>NovT</u>	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
<u>NPNF</u>	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
<u>NRT</u>	<u>Nouvelle Revue Théologique</u>
<u>NTS</u>	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
<u>ODCC</u>	<u>Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</u>
<u>ONCDS</u>	<u>Origins: National Catholic Documentary Service</u>
<u>OneChr</u>	<u>One in Christ</u>
<u>PSB</u>	<u>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</u>
<u>RB</u>	<u>Revue Biblique</u>
<u>RBén</u>	<u>Revue Bénédictine</u>
<u>RechSR</u>	<u>Recherches de Science Religieuse</u>
<u>RefR</u>	<u>Reformed Review</u>
<u>RefTR</u>	<u>Reformed Theological Review</u>
<u>RevExp</u>	<u>Review and Expositor</u>
<u>RevScRel</u>	<u>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</u>
<u>RHE</u>	<u>Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique</u>
<u>RHPR</u>	<u>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</u>
<u>RL</u>	<u>Religion in Life</u>
<u>RMAL</u>	<u>Revue du Moyen Age Latin</u>
<u>RRel</u>	<u>Review for Religious</u>
<u>RSPT</u>	<u>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</u>
<u>RTL</u>	<u>Revue Théologique de Louvain</u>
<u>ScuoCal</u>	<u>Scuola Cattolica</u>
<u>StudyEnc</u>	<u>Study Encounter</u>
<u>StVladThQ</u>	<u>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</u>

<u>SJT</u>	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
<u>ST</u>	<u>Studia Theologica</u>
<u>TD</u>	<u>Theology Digest</u>
<u>TDNT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,</u> Kittel and Friedrich, eds.
<u>Th</u>	<u>Theology</u>
<u>TLZ</u>	<u>Theologische Literaturzeitung</u>
<u>TS</u>	<u>Theological Studies</u>
<u>TQ</u>	<u>Theologische Quartalschrift</u>
<u>TToday</u>	<u>Theology Today</u>
<u>TZ</u>	<u>Theologische Zeitschrift</u>
<u>USOR</u>	<u>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</u>
<u>UWR</u>	<u>University of Windsor Review</u>
<u>VCaro</u>	<u>Verbum Caro</u>
<u>VieInt</u>	<u>Vie Intellectuelle</u>
<u>WorldM</u>	<u>Worldmission</u>
<u>ZKG</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</u>
<u>ZKT</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie</u>
<u>ZMR</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und</u> <u>Religionswissenschaft</u>
<u>ZNW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche</u> <u>Wissenschaft</u>

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Apostolic succession is a concept of major importance for many contemporary theologians, "a crucial point in today's [theological] discussions because it is intimately involved with the way the church has been led by the Spirit through the centuries."¹ It plays a role particularly determinant in the Christian attempt to explain the relationship between Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the church. In a sense, Christian doctrines and practices depend on the way one understands this relationship.

The issue has important implications. It is a matter of religious authority, of ultimate and final authority. The Roman Catholic view considers that the bishops in communion with the pope, as successors of the apostles, have received from the latter the mandate to preserve and transmit the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is contained not only in the Scriptures but also in

¹Gerrit C. Berkouwer, The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism, trans. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 166.

the living tradition handed down, since the days of Christ, through an uninterrupted chain of successors to the apostles. Here the supreme authority in the church is found in the teaching office of the church, namely, the bishops in communion with the Roman Pontiff. On the other hand, the traditional Protestant approach rejects any authority derived from genealogical succession to office holders, emphasizing instead the gospel revealed in Scripture as the source of authority for Christians.

Y. Congar and O. Cullmann
on Apostolic Succession

Given its far-reaching implications, apostolic succession has for many generations been the object of polemics and discussions with apologetical overtones. One of the leading figures in the contemporary debate, Oscar Cullmann (b. 1902), has played a significant role. A prominent Lutheran New Testament exegete and theologian, Cullmann published two important works dealing with the issue of apostolic succession, one in 1952,¹ the other in 1953,² at a time when the discussion was well attended and

¹Oscar Cullmann, Saint Pierre, disciple-apôtre-martyr: Histoire et théologie (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1952).

²Oscar Cullmann, La Tradition: Problème exégétique, historique et théologique, Cahiers théologiques, no. 33 (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1953).

intense.¹ Building upon the framework of salvation history he set forth an axiomatic denial of the possibility of any succession to the apostles.² His compelling case provoked a wide range of reactions, especially from Roman Catholics who found themselves compelled to meet the challenge.³

One of the many responses to Cullmann came in an article written by the Dominican Yves Congar (b. 1904),⁴ "the most distinguished ecclesialogist of this century and perhaps of the entire post-Tridentine era."⁵ Congar's

¹The publication of The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy, ed. Kenneth Kirk (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) generated so many reactions that the decade of the 1950s saw more studies on the subject of apostolic succession than any other in the twentieth century.

²Cullmann's argumentation was based on his understanding of salvation history which he had presented earlier in Christus und die Zeit: Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1946). See an exposition of Cullmann's views on pp. 225-32, 237-58 below.

³Jean Frisque (Oscar Cullmann: Une théologie de l'histoire du salut [Tournai: Casterman, 1960]) presents a long list of Roman Catholic responses to Saint Pierre and to La Tradition in pp. 274-76.

⁴Yves Congar, "Du nouveau sur la question de Pierre? Le Saint Pierre, de M. O. Cullmann," VieInt (February 1953): 17-43.

⁵Richard P. McBrien, "Church and Ministry: The Achievement of Yves Congar," TD 32 (1985): 203. In the words of Hans Küng, "Yves Congar est actuellement le meilleur spécialiste de l'ecclésiologie catholique." Hans Küng, "L'Église selon l'évangile. Réponse à Yves Congar," RSPT 55 (1971): 193. "Congar is well known as a wide-ranging, erudite, stimulating theologian and the most eminent ecclesialogist of our time." M. J. O'Connell,

contribution to the debate, however, went far beyond this response as shown by the numerous works he devoted to the subject.¹ His far-reaching influence is evidenced by the frequent references to his writings made by Roman Catholic theologians who addressed Cullmann's challenge.²

review of Sainte Église: Etudes et approches ecclésiologiques, by Yves Congar, in TS 24 (1963): 717. Congar "was (and is) the leading Catholic ecclesiology of the day." Edward J. Gratsch, Where Peter Is: A Survey of Ecclesiology (New York: Society of St. Paul, 1975), 223.

¹Yves Congar, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, hier, aujourd'hui, demain: Encyclopédie en sept volumes, (1948), 1:728-30 (republished in Sainte Église; études et approches ecclésiologiques, Unam Sanctam, no. 41 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963], 181-85); idem, "Inspiration des Écritures canoniques et apostolicité de l'Église," RSPT 45 (1961): 32-42 (republished in Sainte Église, 191-200); idem, "Composantes et idée de la Succession Apostolique," in Oecumenica: Jahrbuch für ökumenische Forschung. 1966, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach and Wilmos Vajta (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1966), 61-80; idem, L'Église une, sainte, catholique et apostolique, Mysterium Salutis: Dogmatique de l'histoire du salut, no. 15 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 181-254; idem, "Apostolicité de ministère et apostolicité de doctrine. Essai d'explication de la réaction protestante et de la tradition catholique," chap. in Ministères et communion ecclésiale (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 51-94; idem, "La consécration épiscopale et la succession apostolique constituent-elles chef d'une Église locale ou membre du collège?" chap. in Ministères et communion ecclésiale (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 123-40.

²Among those who appealed to Congar are Charles Journet, The Primacy of Peter: From the Protestant and from the Catholic Point of View (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1954), 28-34; Kilian McDonnell, "Ways of Validating Ministry," JES 7 (1970): 225-29; Maurice Villain, "Can There Be Apostolic Succession outside the Chain of Imposition of Hands?" in Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity, Concilium, 34, ed. Hans Küng (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 94, 95; Miguel María Garijo-Guembe, "La apostolicidad de la Iglesia y la sucesión apostólica: Problemática al respecto entre las teologías

Just as advocates of the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession have been used to support their views by calling on Congar's writings, their opponents have frequently supported their own case by referring to Cullmann.¹ Cullmann's stance, which Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger considers as "a classic formulation of Protestant thinking on the notion of succession,"² has been the object of more Roman Catholic studies than that of any other Protestant theologian.³

católica y protestante," chap. in Miscelánea José Zunzunegui (1911-1974) (Vitoria: Editorial ESET, 1975), 4:132-37, 158, 167-72.

¹Some instances of authors resorting to Cullmann: Philippe H. Menoud, L'Eglise et les ministères selon le Nouveau Testament (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1949), 33, 34; J. K. S. Reid, The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 44; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, "Is There an Apostolic Succession?" CT 5, no. 2 (October 24, 1960): 8; Leon Morris, Ministers of God (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1964), 48; Jean-Claude Margot, "L'apostolat dans le Nouveau Testament et la succession apostolique," VCaro 11 (1957): 223-25.

²Joseph Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate, and Apostolic Succession," chap. in The Episcopate and the Primacy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), 52.

³A complete survey of twenty years of Roman Catholic reactions to Cullmann's posture concerning apostolic succession may be found in Giuseppe Maffei, Il dialogo ecumenico sulla successione attorno all'opera di Oscar Cullmann (1952-1972) (Roma: L.E.S., n.d.). See especially the bibliography on pp. xii-xvi, which includes 145 titles of Roman Catholic studies. See also Jesús Silvestre Arrieta, "El diálogo ecuménico sobre la sucesión en torno a la obra de Oscar Cullmann," MiscCom 39 (1981):65-109.

Statement and Justification of the Problem

Though Congar is a systematic theologian and Cullmann a New Testament exegete,¹ the fact that their positions were set in opposition by others in the course of the debate suggests the appropriateness of a comparative study of their respective views on apostolic succession. Several elements justify such an investigation. Both French and contemporaries, they shared similar concerns in many respects such as history, tradition, and ecumenism. They knew each other well and maintained a respectful and friendly relationship.² Both participated in the Second Vatican Council, Congar as official expert of the Theological Commission,³ Cullmann

¹In spite of his intentions, "there can be no doubt that Prof. Cullmann is writing more often as a theologian than he is as a philologist or an exegete." Journet, The Primacy of Peter, 4.

²See Jean-Pierre Jossua, Yves Congar: Theology in the Service of God's People, trans. Mary Jocelyn (Chicago: Priory Press, 1968), 45, 46, 63. Recently Congar referred to "my old friend Oscar Cullmann." Yves Congar, Fifty Years of Catholic Theology: Conversations with Yves Congar, ed. Bernard Lauret, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 77; see also idem, Une passion: l'unité. Réflexions et souvenirs 1929-1973 (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1974), 103. Noticing the obvious similarity between the title of his book on ecumenism and one of Congar's works (Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église), Cullmann commented that "c'est un hasard. Mon lien avec le R. P. Congar est plus profond." Oscar Cullmann, Vrai et faux oecuménisme: Oecuménisme après le Concile (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1971), 8.

³"No modern theologian's spirit was accorded fuller play in the documents of Vatican II than Congar's" (McBrien, "Church and Ministry," 203). Congar's

as a Protestant observer personally invited by John XXIII. In spite of what one might expect and which resulted from their opposite confessional stances, they were particularly close to each other in their views on the history of salvation. Cullmann's exposition of salvation history theology found a receptive partner in Congar, who had already oriented his own theology in that direction,¹ and who explicitly adopted the main elements of Cullmann's view.² Both Congar and Cullmann were preoccupied with the preservation and continuation of the apostles' witness in the church,³ which they regarded as of supreme and permanent value for believers in all ages. Yet they reached radically divergent conclusions as far as apostolic succession is concerned. Both showed deep

contribution to the preparation of the Council was explicitly acknowledged by Paul VI himself (Jossua, 65).

¹Jossua, 154. See for instance Yves Congar, "The Church and Its Unity," chap. in The Mystery of the Church, 2d rev. ed., trans. A. V. Littledale (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1965), 15-52, esp. p. 20 (this chapter was written in 1937).

²See Yves Congar, Lay People in the Church; a Study for a Theology of Laity, rev. ed., trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965), 61, 62, 72, 73, 107, 108; idem, Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église, 2d ed., Unam Sanctam, no. 20 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968), 421; idem, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:728-30; and idem, Sainte Église, 181, 184.

³Congar and Cullmann are seen as classic exponents of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant positions regarding the concept of tradition. A survey of the article "Tradition" in representative theological dictionaries and encyclopedias shows that their writings are the sources most frequently quoted.

interest in ecumenical endeavors while striving at the same time to remain faithful to the basic tenets of their own churches' beliefs.

The similar concerns just pointed out underline the validity of a comparative study of Congar's and Cullmann's views on apostolic succession. Though quite a number of dissertations, books, and articles have dealt with specific aspects of Congar's and Cullmann's doctrine of the church, often in a helpful way as far as this dissertation is concerned, none of them has compared the two theologians from this specific perspective.¹ Some dissertations have compared our two authors with other theologians as for instance Robert D. Newton, Jr., "The

¹C. Journet (The Primacy of Peter, 8-37) has attempted to identify the fundamental difference between the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession and Cullmann's view by the way in which the person of Christ is thought to be found in the midst of human beings: Catholics think of an **ontological** (realistic) presence of Christ in the church, while Protestants speak in terms of **mnemic** (symbolical) presence. Rejecting such a distinction as "inassimilable," J. Frisque (Oscar Cullmann: Une théologie de l'histoire du salut, 203-53) contends that Cullmann came to deny apostolic succession because his theological system amounts to a positivistic reduction of salvation history which leaves no room for transcendence. On his part, Otto Karrer (Peter and the Church: An Examination of Cullmann's Thesis [Freiburg: Herder, 1963], 32-90) holds that Cullmann's biblical and historical argumentation relies on questionable historical sources and lacks objective support from the biblical text. Thus far I have found only one instance in which Congar's position on apostolic succession is discussed by a Protestant author, and this as part of a brief evaluation of his contribution to contemporary theology (S. Paul Schilling, "Yves M.-J. Congar," chap. in Contemporary Continental Theologians [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1966], 204, 205).

Method of Biblical Theology in Cullmann, Barth and Bultmann"¹ and Stephen Patrick Mc Henry, "Three Significant Moments in the Theological Development of the Sacramental Character of Orders: Its Origin, Standardization, and New Direction in Augustine, Aquinas, and Congar."² Others have limited themselves to one of the two theologians, addressing various aspects of Congar's or Cullmann's theology such as hermeneutics,³ revelation,⁴ history,⁵ and ecclesiology.⁶ Still others have attempted

¹Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1960. See also Maxwell Vernon Davis, Jr., "A Study of Contemporary Christological Method: Vincent Taylor, Oscar Cullmann, John Knox" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1965); Richard Laurence Eislinger, "Historicity and Historicality: A Comparison of Carl Michalson and Oscar Cullmann" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1970); and John Monroe Landers, "Redemptive History in the Thought of Irenaeus and Cullmann" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1971).

²Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1983. See also Joseph Areeplackal, "The Pneumatological Dimension of Ordained Ministry as Presented by Yves Congar and John Zizioulas" (Th.D. dissertation, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1988).

³Theodore Martin Dorman, "The Hermeneutics of Oscar Cullmann (Switzerland)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983); William Henn, The Hierarchy of Truths According to Yves Congar, O.P. (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1987).

⁴Anne Marie Harnett, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Constitutive and Ongoing Revelation According to Yves Congar" (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1989).

⁵Charles MacDonald, Church and World in the Plan of God: Aspects of History and Eschatology in the Thought of Père Yves Congar O.P. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1982); Jesus Silvestre Arrieta, La iglesia del

to deal with some specific features of Congar's ecclesiology as the role of the laity,¹ holiness and reform in the church,² development of dogma,³ and the ministry.⁴ Another investigation underlines differing theological methods in a study of more than a hundred responses to Cullmann's view on apostolic succession

intervalo: Aspecto escatológico del tiempo de la iglesia en Oscar Cullmann (Palencia: Comillas, 1959); Antonio Briva Mirabent, El tiempo de la iglesia en la teología de Cullmann (Barcelona: Seminario Conciliar, 1961).

⁶Iakonos Canavaris, "The Ecclesiology of Yves M.-J. Congar: An Orthodox Evaluation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1968); John Howard Stoneburner, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Theology of Yves Congar, O.P." (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1969); Timothy I. MacDonald, The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); and Joseph Famerée, "Histoire et Église. L'ecclésiologie du Père Congar, de 'Chrétien désunis' à l'annonce du Concile Vatican II (1937-1959)" (Th.D. dissertation, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1991).

¹Richard Joseph Beauchesne, "Laity and Ministry in Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P.: Evolution, Evaluation and Ecumenical Perspectives" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1975).

²Diane Jagdeo, "Holiness and Reform of the Church in the Writings of Yves Congar, O.P." (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1986).

³Doris Ann Gottemoeller, "The Theory of Development of Dogma in the Ecclesiology of Yves Congar" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1976).

⁴Thomas Joseph Lehning, "The Foundations, Functions and Authority of the Magisterium in the Theology of Yves Congar, O.P." (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1985); David Richard Louch, "The Contribution of Yves Congar to a Renewed Understanding of Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church" (Th.D. dissertation, University of St. Michael's College [Canada], 1979).

written by Roman Catholic theologians, one of which is Congar.¹ Some authors even have compared, however briefly, Congar's ideas with those of Cullmann regarding salvation history and the relationship between Scripture and tradition.²

These studies provide a basic framework of reference and have proved valuable for the present research, yet none of them has considered the implications of their methodologies and conclusions on the issue of apostolic succession. This omission, understandable in view of the particular perspective chosen by each researcher,³ not only left the field open for the present investigation but also called for it. The task initiated by those comparative investigations deserved to be carried on with a thorough study of this neglected aspect which has substantial implications for one's doctrine of religious authority.

¹Maffei, Il dialogo ecumenico sulla successione attorno all'opera di Oscar Cullmann (1952-1972).

²MacDonald, Church and World in the Plan of God, 134-39; and Stoneburner, 104, 120, 121.

³MacDonald's study compares Congar's and Cullmann's views on tradition from the perspective of history and eschatology. Stoneburner's dissertation, in the context of the doctrine of the church in Congar, succinctly compares Congar's and Cullmann's views on salvation history, but does not apply his results when he deals with Congar's view of the structure of the church and apostolic succession.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this research was to set forth, analyze, compare, and evaluate Yves Congar's and Oscar Cullmann's views on apostolic succession. To attain this goal one must consider their convictions in the context of their doctrine of the church, and, whenever relevant, from the perspective of their overall theological systems, without neglecting the presuppositions undergirding their ideas and the methodologies used to support them.

A study of this kind implies limitations. While including aspects of both theologians' overall systems that impinge on the topic under discussion, this dissertation does not provide a comprehensive coverage of the entire scope of their theologies, or even of their views on the sacraments, ministry, the church's role in society and her unity, however important these factors may be to some, even to the authors under discussion. Each deserves, in its own right, a specific study. Similarly, though a study on apostolic succession can hardly avoid mentioning the Bishop of Rome's claims to inherit Peter's see, a thorough examination of the complex issue of primacy remains beyond the scope of this dissertation. These issues are important for this investigation only as they shed light on Congar's and Cullmann's views of apostolic succession.

Outline of the Study

To understand these authors' views one should have a clear grasp of the historical development of the doctrine of apostolic succession. In that Congar and Cullmann represent respectively the Roman Catholic and the Protestant viewpoints, the first chapter presents a concise overview of both traditions throughout history. Within this broad picture, particular attention is given to the main issues around which the contemporary debate on apostolic succession focuses, as well as the attempts made to reach a consensus within the ecumenical movement.

Chapter 2 focuses on Yves Congar's concept of apostolic succession in the context of his ecclesiology. It attempts to present the qualifications and nuances which he proposes in an effort to attain a delicate balance between apostolic succession of ministry and apostolicity of doctrine. His view of the collegial character of apostolic succession under the supremacy of Peter's successor comes into focus in the setting of his understanding of salvation history. The close relationship between apostolicity of faith and succession is further developed through his view of tradition.

A description and analysis of Oscar Cullmann's view of the New Testament apostolate is presented in chapter 3. His categorical denial of apostolic succession is examined within the framework of the understanding of

salvation history which he championed. This chapter includes Cullmann's influential study on the role of Peter in the early church, as well as his analysis of the relationship between tradition, the apostles, and Scripture.

The final chapter attempts to compare and evaluate the inner consistency, the use of sources, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of Congar's and Cullmann's positions from the point of view of their overall theological systems, their methodologies and presuppositions, and in the light of scriptural statements related to the issue of apostolic succession.

CHAPTER II

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since its first appearance in the second century, many have seen in apostolic succession one of the basic components of the church's apostolicity. The nature and function of apostolic succession, however, have been understood in different and even opposite ways throughout history. Moreover, its legitimacy and normativeness have been challenged, particularly since the sixteenth century onwards, as a result of the radical differences between the Protestant and Roman Catholic conceptions of the church. Thus, apostolic succession became a bone of contention in the polemics between the two confessions, being frequently employed with apologetical rather than constructive purposes. In our century, fairly established confessional positions have been reexamined in the light of new theological perspectives, as is evident in the documents produced by the ecumenical movement. A brief exposition of the historical development of the concept of apostolic succession and the reactions against it should provide an adequate background for the understanding of Congar's and Cullmann's stances on the issue.

Apostolic Succession throughout History

The first stages in the origins of the doctrine of apostolic succession remain shrouded by a mist of uncertainty due to the meagerness of sources proceeding from the apostolic and post-apostolic ages. The extant New Testament writings offer no explicit reference to it, and except for Clement of Rome (ca. 96), whose statement is ambiguous, none of the apostolic fathers deals with the issue.¹ By the end of the second century, however, a clearer picture emerges from the writings of several

¹For the problems related to Clement's account and different theories regarding the apostolic fathers' silence on the issue, see pp. 45, 46 below. Most scholars acknowledge that "church history passes through a tunnel" during this period (Charles Gore, The Church and the Ministry, 5th ed. [London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1907], 199), since there is a real "gap in the evidence, which confronts all theories alike" (Dom Gregory Dix, "The Ministry in the Early Church," in The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy, 2d ed., ed. Kenneth E. Kirk [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957], 268). The actual transition from the apostolic age to the post-apostolic epoch eludes observation. Hence, "we do not know in detail how hierarchy came to be established, nor can we say that it was founded upon direct 'apostolic succession' recognizable by any external signs." Sergius Boulgakoff, "The Hierarchy and the Sacraments," chap. in The Ministry and the Sacraments: Report of the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the Faith and Order Movement under the Chairmanship of the Right Rev. Arthur Cayley Headlam (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1937), 96. See also John Knox, "The Ministry in the Primitive Church," in The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, ed. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 2-4; T. W. Manson, The Church's Ministry (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1948), 69, 70; and Menoud, L'Eglise et les ministères, 7.

Christian writers, who attest to a growing consensus considering bishops as the apostles' successors.

Apostolic Succession from the Second Century
to the End of the Middle Ages

It is generally agreed that the confrontation with Gnosticism in the second century was the main reason for the appearance and development of the idea of apostolic succession.¹ Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200) seems to have been the first to give classic expression to this notion. Claiming that the chain of succession was a means to preserve pure the teachings handed down by the apostles, he argued that the "tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the Churches," is the only legitimate one in contrast with the doctrines upheld by

¹See C. H. Turner, "Apostolic Succession: A. The Original Conception; B. The Problem of Non-catholic Orders," in Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry, ed. H. B. Swete (London: Macmillan, 1918), 96-101; Dix, 202-7; Adolph von Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 125, 126; Hans von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 157-61; Ratzinger, "Primacy," 46; George H. Williams, "The Ministry in the Later Patristic Period (314-451)," in The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, ed. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 36; James F. McCue, "Apostles and Apostolic Succession in the Patristic Era," in Eucharist and Ministry, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, 4 (New York: U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, 1970; Washington, DC: Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 1970), 157.

the heretic Gnostics.¹ Like his contemporary Hegesippus (ca. 180), Irenaeus claimed to be "in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times."² While Irenaeus emphasized the succession of teachers as a means of assuring the authenticity of the apostolic doctrinal tradition,³ others

¹Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.2.2 (ANF, 1:415). "It is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church,--those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth." Ibid., 4.26.2 (ANF, 1:497). See Einar Molland, "Irenaeus of Lugdunum and the Apostolic Succession," JEH 1 (1950): 15-28.

²Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.3.1 (ANF, 1:415). While Hegesippus (ca. 180) used the expression "succession" applied to the episcopal office before Irenaeus, he did not refer to this succession as "apostolic" succession, as Irenaeus did. See Turner, 117-20.

³For Irenaeus "the apostolic *cathedra* is more central than the idea of conferral of power from one bishop to another through episcopal consecration or ordination." McCue, "Apostles and Apostolic Succession," 159. Similarly, in Tertullian's early writings (ca. 160-ca. 225) "the emphasis does not fall on a quasi-physical transmission via ordination of apostolic-episcopal power and authority. It is the handing-on of the orthodox faith that is crucial." Ibid., 162. See Tertullian, Prescription against Heretics 32, 37 (ANF, 3:258, 261). According to Irenaeus and Tertullian, the basic elements of the gospel handed down by the apostles were summarized in the *regula fidei*, which constituted the norm to evaluate heterodox doctrines and practices. See J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds (London: Longmans, 1950), 76-88; L. Wm. Countryman, "Tertullian and the *Regula Fidei*," SC 2 (1982): 208-27; and Albert C. Outler, "Origen and the *Regulae Fidei*," CH 8 (1939): 212-21. See also R. Trevijano, "Succession, apostolic," Encyclopedia of the Early Church (1992), 2:798; Arthur C. Headlam, The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion (London: John

soon introduced the idea that a special sanctifying power was conveyed by the episcopal consecration.¹ This in turn led to a gradual elimination of the distinction between the apostles and their successors, involving a strong juridical view of apostolic succession.² With slight

Murray, 1920), 126-30; Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority, 172-74; W. Telfer, The Office of a Bishop (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962), 118-124; Hermann Sasse, "Apostles, Prophets, Teachers: Some Thoughts of the Origin of the Ministry of the Church," RefTR 27 (1968): 20; Leonhard Goppelt, "Church Government and the Office of the Bishop in the First Three Centuries," in Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 20; and Conrad Bergendoff, The One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1954), 5.

¹The idea, hinted at by Tertullian in his Montanist period (see Tertullian, On Modesty 21 [ANF, 4:98, 99]), appears more patently in Hippolytus (ca. 170-ca. 236). The latter affirms that, as successors of the apostles, bishops participate in the apostles' "grace, high-priesthood, and office of teaching." Hippolytus, preface to Refutation of All Heresies (ANF, 5:10). Bishops are endued with this threefold authority by means of ordination, which is supposed to convey to the consecrated person a special gift of the Holy Spirit. The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr, ed. Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick (London: S.P.C.K., 1968), 4-6. See also Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority, 174-77; Dix, 193-96; and Walter J. Burghardt, "Apostolic Succession: Notes on the Early Patristic Era," in Eucharist and Ministry, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, 4 (New York: U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, 1970; Washington, DC: Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 1970), 175.

²Thus, Cyprian (d. 258) identified bishops with the apostles, maintaining that they "succeed to the apostles by delegated ordination" and are their "vicars." See Cyprian Letters 3.3; 66.4; 75.16 (trans. Rose Bernard Donna, FC, 51:8, 226, 306). See also Telfer, 125; McCue, "Apostles and Apostolic Succession," 168; Burghardt, 175, 176; and Turner, 130-32.

individual variations, this idea of apostolic succession became an integral part of the church's doctrinal corpus from the third century onwards.¹

As this general concept of apostolic succession was taking shape, particular attention was given to the bishop of Rome as occupying the see of the apostle Peter.² In a first stage, a clear differentiation was made between the apostle and subsequent bishops occupying his cathedra.³ Eventually, however, Peter came to be seen as

¹Thus, Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260-ca. 340) began his Church History explaining: "It is my purpose to write an account of the successions of the holy apostles," manifesting that he would be "content if we preserve the memory of the successions of the apostles of our Saviour; if not indeed of all, yet of the most renowned of them in those churches which are the most noted, and which even to the present time are held in honor." Eusebius Church History 1.1.1, 5 (NPNF, 2d series, 1:81, 82).

²Kenneth A. Strand observes that the earliest extant succession lists of Roman Bishops, provided by Irenaeus and Hegesippus (through Eusebius), "name two apostles, Peter and Paul, as originators of that succession. Paul, however, soon dropped out of this role in most of the ancient sources, with ongoing Christian tradition looking upon Peter alone as the inaugurator of the Roman episcopal succession." This transition was prompted mainly by the Marcionite crisis toward the end of the second century ("Peter and Paul in Relationship to the Episcopal Succession in the Church at Rome," AUSS 30 [1992]: 217, 227-32). While the preeminence increasingly attributed to the bishop of Rome would have hardly been possible without his claim to apostolic succession, one should keep in mind that his primacy was basically due to a number of historical, sociological, and geographical factors.

³According to Irenaeus, Peter and Paul "committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. . . . To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric." Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.3.3 (ANF,

the first bishop in the chain of succession.¹ Thus, Stephen (d. 257) "contends that he has the succession from Peter," and "claims that through succession he has the See of Peter."² The bishop of Rome was considered to be "the successor of the fisherman" occupying "the chair of Peter,"³ and by the time of Leo the Great (d. 461) the popes had developed a self-image representing themselves as "the heirs and successors and, in a sense, the continuing embodiments of Peter."⁴ Thus, the description of the bishop of Rome as successor of Peter became one of

1:416). This account regards Linus as "the first bishop after the founders, Peter and Paul," making a clear difference between the apostles and the first bishop. J. M. R. Tillard, The Bishop of Rome, trans. John de Satgé (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 84.

¹Thus, according to Hippolytus, Victor "was the thirteenth bishop of Rome from Peter." Eusebius Church History 5.28.3 (NPNF, 2d series, 1:246). Similarly, Augustine affirmed that "the successor of Peter was Linus." Augustine Letters 53.2 (NPNF, 1:298). See Tillard, The Bishop of Rome, 93, 94.

²Cyprian Letters 75.17 (FC, 51:306, 307).

³Jerome Letters 15.2 (NPNF, 2d series, 6:18).

⁴Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era: From Nicaea to Leo the Great," in Papal Primacy and the Universal Church, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, 5 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 97. As occupant of the "Apostolic See," Leo the Great (d. 461) claimed to exert "the authority of the most blessed Apostle Peter." Leo the Great Letters 14 (trans. Edmund Hunt, FC, 34:58). Following the same logic, Gregory the Great (540-604) affirmed that Peter "himself now sits on it [the See of Rome] in the persons of his successors." Gregory the Great Epistles 40 (NPNF, 2d series, 12[b]:228).

the Roman Pontiff's titles most frequently employed throughout history.¹

Up to the end of the Middle Ages, Christianity at large recognized in its bishops the divinely established successors of the apostles.² There were, nevertheless, various understandings of this idea. Thus, Hincmar of Reims (ca. 806-82) advocated a synodal concept of episcopal succession, and maintained, without denying the pope's primacy, that Peter is succeeded by all bishops.³ A few centuries later, though he did not fully develop the notion of the apostolicity of ministry, Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-74) affirmed with the Patristic fathers that the

¹Beginning with Damasus (366-384), "the claim to a universal Roman primacy of jurisdiction on the basis of the Petrine succession is clearly and repeatedly made." James F. McCue, "The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era: The Beginnings through Nicaea," in Papal Primacy and the Universal Church, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, 5 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 72.

²F. A. Sullivan, "Apostolic Succession," New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), 1:696. See also Yves Congar, L'Écclésiologie du haut Moyen Âge: De Saint Grégoire le Grand à la désunion entre Byzance et Rome (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968), 129, 138-51. This view, however, was not without opposition. During the Middle Ages, a number of small groups such as the Albigenses and Waldenses maintained that church's office was not proved by ecclesiastical pedigrees, but by a personal life which follows the example and teachings of the apostles. See Henry James Warner, The Albigensian Heresy, 2 vols. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1922, 1928; rep., New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 65, 66.

³George H. Tavard, "Episcopacy and Apostolic Succession According to Hincmar of Reims," TS 34 (1973): 594-623.

apostles' role "is taken by the bishops,"¹ maintaining that "the Apostles and their successors are the vicars of God with regard to the rule of the Church."² In the exercise of this function, however, the apostles' successors are not without limits, since "just as it is not lawful for them to constitute any other church so too it is not lawful for them either to hand down any other faith or to institute any other sacraments."³ Moreover, remarked the *Doctor Angelicus*, "we do not believe the successors [of the apostles] except insofar as they declare to us those things which they [the apostles] have left us in written form."⁴ This subordination of ministerial succession to the apostolicity of faith, however, should not be identified with the position eventually assumed by the Reformers, since Thomas Aquinas

¹Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae 3a. 67, 2 (trans. James J. Cunningham et al. [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company; London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964-74], 57:59); see also *ibid.*, 3a. 72, 11 (57:223).

²*Ibid.*, 3a. 64, 2 (56:107).

³*Ibid.*

⁴Thomas Aquinas, De verit. 14.10 ad 11 (Parma ed., 9:244), quoted in Avery Dulles, "The Church According to Thomas Aquinas," chap. in A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 160.

held that bishops, as successors of the apostles, constitute the doctrinal authority in the church.¹

At the same time, however, several medieval popes made increasing claims to have supreme authority as Peter's successors. Thus, Boniface VIII (1294-1303) affirmed that the church has only one head, "namely Christ, and Christ's vicar is Peter, and Peter's successor." Since the Lord said to Peter "feed my sheep" encompassing all the sheep in that command, every Christian is "committed to Peter and his successors," whose authority extends beyond the spiritual realm to the sphere of temporal authority, which in his view must be subordinated to the authority of the pope.²

¹Yves Congar, "L'apostolicité de l'Église chez S. Thomas d'Aquin," chap. in Thomas d'Aquin: Sa vision de théologie et de l'Église (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 220-22; and Dulles, "The Church According to Thomas Aquinas," 159-61. Though Thomas Aquinas maintained that Scripture is the norm and source of faith, he decidedly ascribed all authority for the interpretation of Scripture to the church, particularly to the Roman See. Paul de Vooght, "Le rapport écriture-tradition d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin et les théologiens du XIII^e siècle," Istina 8 (1962): 503.

²Boniface VIII, "Unam Sanctam" (H. E. Denzinger, comp., The Sources of Catholic Dogma [St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1957], 468, 469). See also George H. Tavard, "The Bull Unam Sanctam of Boniface VIII," in Papal Primacy and the Universal Church, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, 5 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 106, 107.

Apostolic Succession in Protestantism

The prevalent Roman Catholic view of apostolic succession presented above was unacceptable to the Reformers of the sixteenth century, in whose eyes the authority ascribed to the apostles' successors was an obstacle to maintaining the purity of the gospel. Since faithfulness to the apostles' doctrines was of the utmost importance to them, the Reformers disputed the effectiveness of a mere physical chain of ordinations going back to the apostles as a means to assure apostolicity of faith.¹

Thus, Martin Luther (1483-1546) argued that "the people of God are not those who have the physical succession but those who have the promise and believe it."² To the claim of apostolic succession he responded

¹This perspective was anticipated by men like John Hus (ca. 1372-1415), who was condemned for maintaining, among other things, that "nobody holds the place of Christ or of Peter unless he follows his way of life," so that "the pope is not the manifest and true successor of the prince of the apostles, Peter, if he lives in a way contrary to Peter's. If he seeks avarice, he is the vicar of Judas Iscariot. Likewise, cardinals are not the manifest and true successors of the college of Christ's other apostles unless they live after the manner of the apostles, keeping the commandments and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ." Council of Constance, Session XV (July 6, 1415), (Norman P. Tanner, ed., Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, 2 vols. [London: Sheed & Ward, 1990; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990], 1:430).

²Martin Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," 21:12 in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958-86), 4:33. "We

by upholding the Word of God as the only expression of the church's apostolicity, and the sole norm for the faith and practice of Christian believers.¹ Similarly, Philipp Melancton (1497-1560) affirmed that "the church is an assembly bound together not by succession in office, but by God's Word. It is reborn wherever God renews true doctrine and bestows his Holy Spirit."²

reject the conclusion when they say: 'We are the successors of the apostles in our office; therefore we are the church.'" Ibid.

¹"Accordingly, let us not be concerned about how great and powerful the pope is. He boasts that he is the church and stresses apostolic succession and his personal majesty. Let us look on the Word. If he embraces this, let us consider him to be the church; if he persecutes it, let us consider him to be the slave of Satan." Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," 7:17-24 in Luther's Works, 2:102. "We are interested in the pure and true course, prescribed in holy Scripture, and are little concerned about usage or what the fathers have said or done in this matter" of ordination and ministry. Idem, "Concerning the Ministry," in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Conrad Bergendoff (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958-86), 40:7. "God does not care about your boast that you occupy the seats of the apostles, or even that you are in the Christian Church. No, His concern is that you hear the Son and believe in Him." Idem, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," 8:28, in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958-86), 23:380.

²Philipp Melancton, De Ecclesia et de autoritate Verbi Dei, Corpus Reformatorum 23:598, quoted in Yves Congar, Christ, Our Lady and the Church; a Study in Eirenic Theology, trans. Henry St. John (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957), 6, 7. "The Church is bound to God's word, and not to the Pope or bishops." Philipp Melancton, Melancton on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes 1555, ed. and trans. Clyde L. Manschreck (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), 272 (italics in the original).

Writing more on the subject than his colleagues, John Calvin (1509-1564) contended that the claim of succession is vain unless those who make it "conserve safe and uncorrupted the truth of Christ."¹ In his view "nothing is more absurd than to lodge the succession in persons alone to the exclusion of teaching."² From a historical perspective, he pointed out that the alleged chain of ordinations had several irregularities and interruptions which invalidated any claim to succession.³ While Calvin acknowledged the need for a legitimate continuity to give due sanction to the ordination of pastors, he insisted that this continuity is attained essentially by conserving pure the apostles' doctrine.⁴

¹John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 4.2.2 (trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, LCC, 21:1043).

²Ibid., 4.2.3 (LCC, 21:1045). "We deny the title of Successors of the Apostles to those who have abandoned their faith and doctrine. . . . Wherein does Succession consist, if it be not in perpetuity of doctrine?" Idem, "The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church," in Calvin's Tracts and Treatises, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958) 3:265.

³Calvin, "The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church," 3:271-98.

⁴Ibid., 3:264. See also Thomas F. Torrance, introduction to Calvin's Tracts and Treatises (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), 1:xix, xx; Jean-Jacques von Allmen, "The Continuity of the Church According to Reformed Teaching," JES 1 (1964): 424-44; idem, Le saint ministère: Selon la conviction et la volonté des Réformés du XVI^e siècle (Neuchâtel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1968), 192-212; and Arthur C. Cochrane, "The Mystery of the Continuity of the Church: A

Insisting that the actual working of the Holy Spirit is not bound to a succession of ordinations, the radical wing of the Reformation maintained that "the true succession" is not bound to a "succession of place or person, but to the succession of the teaching of the truth" taught by the apostles.¹

As the Reformation message spread to more countries, various political and religious situations contributed to different attitudes towards the issue of apostolic succession. Most of the national Lutheran churches made a breach in the episcopal apostolic succession, though in some instances, like the Swedish Lutheran Church, the succession to the episcopal office was maintained, without ascribing any dogmatic significance to it.² Strictly speaking, the Lutheran

Study in Reformed Symbolics," JES 2 (1965): 81-96.

¹N. van der Zijpp, "Apostolic Succession," The Mennonite Encyclopedia (1955), 1:141.

²See Martii Parvio, "The Post-Reformation Developments of the Episcopacy in Sweden, Finland, and the Baltic States," in Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold, trans. Toivo K. I. Harjunpaa (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 125-29; C. B. Moss, "Episcopacy in the Church of Sweden," in Episcopacy Ancient and Modern, ed. Claude Jenkins and K. D. MacKenzie (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 321-33; and Jean Georges Henri Hoffmann, La réforme en Suède 1523-1572 et la succession apostolique (Neuchâtel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1945). Due to the relation of the Church of Sweden to the Lutheran Churches of Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, it is generally accepted that these churches' bishops are also formally in the apostolic succession. Parvio, 133-37. Something similar occurs with the Slovak Evangelical Church, which

Symbols as well as the *Kirchenordnungen* of the sixteenth century "have nothing to say about apostolic succession."¹ Since that time, "for the Lutheran tradition the apostolic succession through an unbroken chain of bishops providing ordination is not a necessity to establish a legitimate ministry."² As long as fidelity to the Word of God receives precedence, Lutherans have increasingly tended to consider ministerial succession as *adiaphora*,³ namely,

understands this fact as a formality only, and not as a basic requirement of the episcopal office. "The office of bishop in all the Lutheran Churches is not founded on apostolic succession." Hans-Martin Thimme, "The Development of the Offices of Leadership in the Lutheran Churches of Eastern Europe," in Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 147, 154.

¹Carl S. Meyer, "Apostolicity and Ministry: A Lutheran View." CTM 43 (1972): 81.

²Jerald C. Brauer, afterword to Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 202. This position is reflected, for instance, by Henry M. Muhlenberg (1711-87), who asserted that apostolic and episcopal succession does not infuse any natural or supernatural gifts or qualities, and hence is "a piece of pious ceremony, a form of Godliness empty of Power." The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, trans. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia, PA: Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States and the Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 3:255, quoted in Meyer, "Apostolicity and Ministry," 84. See also Heinrich Hermelink, "The Ministry and Sacraments in the Evangelical Churches of Germany To-Day," chap. in The Ministry and the Sacraments: Report of the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the Faith and Order Movement under the Chairmanship of the Right Rev. Arthur Cayley Headlam (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1937), 151.

³See "Apostolic Succession," CTM 33 (1962): 228.

things indifferent, though there have been individual voices advocating a reintroduction of the church's ministry into apostolic succession.¹

Other sectors of the Protestant Reformation assumed a more favorable outlook towards apostolic succession. While the confessions and catechisms of the Reformed Churches show no interest in restoring the apostolic succession of ministry,² the Scottish Church has attempted to maintain, with a few exceptions, apostolic

¹Thus, Daniel Ernst Jablonski (1660-1741), the Reformed court chaplain in Königsberg, advocated a return to apostolic succession in the Lutheran Church. He had been chosen to be the senior of the Moravian Brethren in 1699, and as such had been consecrated to be a bishop with apostolic succession. In 1701, on the occasion of the preparations for the coronation of the future Prussian King, Frederick III (I), Jablonski attempted to reintroduce the office of bishop in apostolic succession. He was, however, not able to push through his plans. See Bernhard Lohse, "The Development of the Offices of Leadership in the German Lutheran Churches: 1517-1918," in Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 69; and Ernst Benz, Bischofsamt und apostolische Sukzession im deutschen Protestantismus (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1953), 17-55. In 1675, the Danish bishop Hans Vandal maintained that the apostolic succession consisted of three parts--*successio personalis*, *localis*, and *doctrinalis*--and argued that the three were present in the Danish Church. Svend Borregaard, "The Post-Reformation Developments of the Episcopacy in Denmark, Norway, and Iceland," in Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 117, 121, 122. See also Meyer, "Apostolicity and Ministry," 83.

²Arthur C. Cochrane, "The Mystery of the Continuity of the Church: A Study in Reformed Symbolics," JES 2 (1965): 93.

succession in the form of presbyterial succession.¹ The view that bishops are the successors of the apostles was upheld by the Anglican Church from the very beginning, though it was not always understood in the same way.² A new emphasis appeared when the leading men of the Oxford Movement (1833-45) adopted a sacramental understanding of apostolic succession as the basis of their doctrine of the church. In the first of the Tracts for the Times, John H. Newman expressed his fear that "the real ground on which our authority is built--our *apostolic descent*," had been generally neglected.³ In his view, "the Lord Jesus Christ gave His Spirit to His Apostles; they in turn laid their

¹See G. S. M. Walker, "Scottish Ministerial Orders," SJT 8 (1955): 250-52; H. N. Bate, "The Continuity of the Ministry in Scottish Presbyterianism and in Methodism, English and American, with an Appended Note on the Moravian Succession," in Episcopacy Ancient and Modern, ed. Claude Jenkins and K. D. MacKenzie (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 343-59; and W. Manson, "The Doctrine of the Church of Scotland," chap. in The Ministry and the Sacraments: Report of the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the Faith and Order Movement under the Chairmanship of the Right Rev. Arthur Cayley Headlam (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1937), 177, 178.

²See Arthur W. Haddan, Apostolic Succession in the Church of England (London: Rivingtons, 1869), 139-77; William Laud, The Conference with Fisher the Jesuit, rev. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1901), 442-47; and A. J. Mason, The Church of England and Episcopacy (Cambridge: University Press, 1914), 24, 31, 40, 46, 49, 56.

³John Henry Newman, Tracts for the Times, no. 1, quoted in R. W. Church, The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years (1833-1845), 3d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1892), 114 (*italics in the original*).

hands on those who should succeed them; and these again on others; and so the sacred gift has been handed down to our present bishops."¹ According to this view, sometimes referred to as the "pipe-line" theory, apostolic succession is not conditioned by the doctrinal orthodoxy of the individuals who constituted the links in the long chain from the apostles to the present bishops. For the Tractarians, the key element was the uninterrupted series of imposition of hands.² This understanding, however, was rejected by a number of theologians within the Anglican communion itself, who put the emphasis on continuing

¹Newman, Tracts for the Times, no. 1, quoted in Church, 114. Newman maintained that "the bishop who ordained us gave us the Holy Ghost, gave us the power to bind and to loose, to administer the Sacraments, and to preach." Convinced that "the Christian Ministry is a succession," he argued that "if we trace back the power of ordination from hand to hand, of course we shall come to the Apostles at last. . . . And therefore all we, who have been ordained clergy, in the very form of our ordination acknowledged the doctrine of the *apostolic succession*." Ibid., quoted in Church, 115, 116 (*italics in the original*).

²Einar Molland, "Le développement de l'idée de succession apostolique," RHPR 34 (1954): 5. Several Tracts for the Times dealt with apostolic succession. Thus, Tract 4 was entitled "Adherence to the Apostolic Succession the Safest Course"; Tract 7, "The Episcopal Church Apostolical"; Tract 15, "On the Apostolic Succession in the English Church"; and Tract 19, "On Arguing Concerning Apostolical Succession." Eric G. Jay, The Church: Its Changing Image through Twenty Centuries (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1978), 268. It is not without importance that, as E. J. Miller explains, "the paramount note of the church, and the one that most influenced Newman's conversion [to Roman Catholicism], was *apostolicity*." Edward Jeremy Miller, John Henry Newman on the Idea of Church (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos Press, 1987), 46 (*italics in the original*).

faithfulness to the apostles' teachings and mission by the church, rather than transmission of sacramental powers through ordination. This discrepancy has generated an intense debate which has continued for decades in the Church of England.¹

Apostolic Succession in Roman Catholicism
from the Council of Trent to
the Second Vatican Council

The Reformers' objections to the traditional view of bishops in apostolic succession was a major challenge to Roman Catholics, whose teaching on this point prior to the Council of Trent (1545-63) was usually taken for

¹In 1967 B.-D. Dupuy affirmed that "la recherche théologique sur les différents aspects de la succession apostolique a été liée depuis trente ans aux travaux des anglicans." B.-D. Dupuy, "La succession apostolique dans la discussion oecuménique," Istina 12 (1967): 392. The Anglo-Catholic section of the Anglican communion supports the Tractarians' sacramental view of apostolic succession. See Gore, 63-74; Dix, 183-304; and A. M. Farrer, "The Ministry in the New Testament," in The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy, 2d ed., ed. Kenneth E. Kirk (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), 113-82. In contrast, other Anglicans of Evangelical orientation refuse to accept such a view. See Headlam, 126-31; Manson, The Church's Ministry, 11-13, 23; G. W. H. Lampe, Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry (London: S.P.C.K., 1949), 15, 16; R. F. Hettlinger, "Apostolic Succession," chap. in Episcopacy and Reunion (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1952), 63-81; C. K. Barrett, "Apostolic Succession," ExpTim 70 (1959): 200-202; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, The Pioneer Ministry: The Relation of Church and Ministry (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961), 9, 10; and Morris, Ministers of God, 33, 36, 40. For a discussion of the two positions on the issue, see Victor De Waal, "What Is Apostolic Succession? Bishop Headlam v. Bishop Kirk," ATR 46 (1964): 35-54; and H. W. Montefiore, "The Historic Episcopate," in The Historic Episcopate, 2d ed., ed. Kenneth M. Carey (Westminster, MD: Dacre Press, 1960), 105-27.

granted rather than demonstrated. Adopting a defensive approach, they emphasized "that the authority of Christ himself had willed this office, and that the apostles had obediently handed it over to the church in order to preserve for all times this hierarchical structure willed by Christ."¹ Thus, the Tridentine Council stated "that to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood was handed down the power of consecrating, of offering and administering His body and blood, and also of forgiving and retaining sins."² Referring to the function of the church's hierarchy, the council made it clear that "the bishops, who have succeeded the Apostles, belong in a special way to this hierarchical order, and have been 'placed (as the same Apostle [Paul] says) by the Holy Spirit to rule the Church of God' [Acts 20:29]."³

From the sixteenth century onwards, and throughout modern times, the official Roman Catholic ecclesiology was mainly an ecclesiology of apologetics and reaction.⁴

¹Wilhelm Brenning, "Apostolic Succession," Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, English ed. (1968), 1:87.

²Council of Trent, Session XXIII (July 15, 1563), chap. 1 (Denzinger, 957).

³Council of Trent, Session XXIII (July 15, 1563), chap. 4 (Denzinger, 960).

⁴See for instance Thomas de Vio Cajetan, "The Divine Institution of the Pontifical Office over the Whole Church in the Person of the Apostle Peter," in Cajetan Responds: A Reader in Reformation Controversy, ed. and trans. Jared Wicks (Washington, DC: Catholic University of

Movements with less than enthusiastic attitudes towards papal absolute primacy within Roman Catholicism such as Gallicanism, Conciliarism, Febronianism, and Jansenism, as well as the opposition coming from the Protestant Reformation, were met with an emphasis on the hierarchical and especially papal powers claimed to be inherited from the apostle Peter.¹ In this context, it is not surprising that the prevalent official Roman Catholic view during the Enlightenment was that "God created the hierarchy and thus provided more than sufficiently for the needs of the Church until the end of time."²

America Press, 1978), 105-44.

¹See Yves Congar, L'Église: De saint Augustin à l'époque moderne, Histoire des Dogmes, no. 3 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 370-412; idem, "L'ecclésiologie, de la Révolution française au Concile du Vatican, sous le signe de l'affirmation de l'autorité," chap. in L'ecclésiologie au XIX^e siècle, Unam Sanctam, no. 34 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960), 90; Dulles, A Church to Believe in, 111-13; Hans Küng, The Church (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967; Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1976), 571, 572.

²John Adam Möhler, in TQ (1823), 497, quoted in Congar, Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough, 397, 507 (New York: Macmillan, 1967), According to Möhler, the visibility and stability of the church require "an enduring apostleship," which is "perpetuated in uninterrupted succession" through the episcopate. "By this episcopal succession . . . we can especially recognise, as by an outward mark, which is the true Church." John Adam Möhler, Symbolism: Or Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences between Catholics and Protestants as Evidenced by Their Symbolical Writings, 5th ed., trans. James Burton Robertson (London: Thomas Baker, 1906), 258, 306.

Toward the end of its sessions, the First Vatican Council (1869-70) decidedly endorsed the Roman Pontiff's primacy based on the claim of succession to Peter, to which it added the definitions of papal infallibility and papal universal jurisdiction.¹ The council also recognized the apostolic succession of bishops, and explained that the Supreme Pontiff's power in no way interferes with the ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdiction of "the bishops who, 'placed by the Holy Spirit' [cf. Acts 20:28], have succeeded to the places of the apostles."² One observes a similar emphasis on apostolic succession in the statements of Pius IX (1846-1878),³ Leo XIII (1878-1903),⁴ and Pius X (1903-1914).⁵

¹The council stated that "the holy and most blessed Peter, chief and head of the apostles and pillar of faith and foundation of the Catholic Church . . . up to this time and always lives and presides and exercises judgment in his successors, the bishops of the holy See of Rome. . . . Therefore, whoever succeeds Peter in this chair, he according to the institution of Christ Himself, holds the primacy of Peter over the whole Church." First Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution I on the Church of Christ," Session IV (July 18, 1870), chap. 2 (Denzinger, 1824). "If anyone then says that it is not from the institution of Christ the Lord Himself, or by divine right that the blessed Peter has perpetual successors in the primacy over the universal Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in the same primacy, let him be anathema." Ibid., (Denzinger, 1825). See also *ibid.*, Session IV, chap. 4 (Denzinger, 1836).

²*Ibid.*, Session IV, chap. 3 (Denzinger, 1828).

³Referring to the marks of the church, Pius IX stated that the true church of Jesus Christ "should at the same time shine with the prerogatives of unity, sanctity, and apostolic succession." He explained that "the Catholic Church alone is conspicuous and perfect in the

Up to the middle of the twentieth century, Roman Catholic theology in general continued to concentrate on the formal aspect of apostolic succession as the uninterrupted transmission of apostolic powers and tradition through legitimate episcopal ordination.¹

unity . . . whose beginning, root, and unfailing origin are that supreme authority and 'higher principality' of blessed PETER, the prince of the Apostles, and of his successors in the Roman Chair." Pius IX, "Letter of the Sacred Office to the Bishops of England," Sept. 16, 1864 (Denzinger, 1686).

⁴"Jesus Christ, therefore, appointed Peter to be that head of the Church; and He also determined that the authority instituted in perpetuity for the salvation of all should be inherited by His successors, in whom the same permanent authority of Peter himself should continue." Leo XIII, Satis Cognitum, § 11 (Claudia Carlen, comp., The Papal Encyclicals [Wilmington, NC: McGrath Pub. Co., 1981], 2:397). "Just as it is necessary that the authority of Peter should be perpetuated in the Roman Pontiff, so, by the fact that the bishops succeed the Apostles, they inherit their ordinary power." *Ibid.*, § 14 (Carlen, 2:400).

⁵According to Pius X, one of the errors of Modernists is their assertion that elders "were instituted by the apostles as presbyters or bishops to provide for the necessary arrangement of the increasing communities, not properly for perpetuating the apostolic mission and power." Pius X, Lamentabili, July 3, 1907 (Denzinger, 2050). He affirmed that the gift of truth "is, was, and will be always in the succession of the episcopacy from the apostles." Pius X, Motu proprio, "Sacrorum antistitum", September 1, 1910 (Denzinger, 2147).

¹François Biot, "Note sur l'apostolicité de l'Église d'après la constitution dogmatique de Vatican II sur l'Église," ETR 40 (1965): 174.

In what has been described as a balancing and completion of the previous council,¹ the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) conferred to the concept of apostolic succession a foundational place in its documents, highlighting some aspects thus far unaddressed in previous magisterial pronouncements. Thus, while the conciliar documents retain the traditional practice of designating the Roman Pontiff as "the successor of Peter," they apply the term "successor/s" more often to bishops than to the pope.² The historic bond with which bishops are joined to the apostles, and these in turn with Jesus Christ, is described not so much as a chain made up of isolated

¹Closing the third session of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI stated: "the doctrinal task of the First Vatican Ecumenical Council has been completed." Council Daybook: Vatican II, ed. Floyd Anderson (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), 3:303. Some have stated that the First Vatican Council was "the council of the pope," whereas the Second was "the council of the bishops." While this is probably an oversimplification, there is little doubt that the emphasis of the Second Vatican Council on the episcopal office brought balance to the primatial accent of the first. See Basil C. Butler, foreword to The Constitution on the Church of Vatican Council II (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1965), 11; and Paul J. Hallinan, "Bishops," in The Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: America Press, 1966), 389.

²The term "successor/s" appears 37 times in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, 22 times in connection with bishops, and 15 times referring to the pope. Similarly, the word "succession" is found 8 times, of which 7 refer to bishops, and 1 alludes to the pope. See Philippe Delhaye, Michel Gueret, and Paul Tombeur, Concilium Vaticanum II: Concordance, Index, Listes de fréquence, Tables comparatives (Louvain: CETEDOC, 1974), 633, 875.

individuals, but as the continuation of the apostles' college in the college of bishops through succession.¹ As to the dignity of the apostles' successors, the council affirms that "by divine institution bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the Church," so that "he who hears them, hears Christ, while he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ."² This particular honor is concomitant with the bishops' mission and powers. "Christ gave the apostles and their successors the command and the power to teach all nations, to hallow men in the truth, and to feed them,"³ so that

¹The Lord Jesus appointed 12 apostles, whom "He formed after the manner of a college." To continue their ministry and mission, "the apostles took care to appoint successors in this hierarchically structured society." Hence, "the order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in teaching authority and pastoral rule; or, rather, in the episcopal order the apostolic body continues without a break." Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," arts. 19, 20, 22 (Walter M. Abbott, ed., The Documents of Vatican II [New York: America Press, 1966], 38, 39, 43). See also idem, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," art. 4 (Abbott, 399).

²Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," art. 20 (Abbott, 40). "Bishops govern the particular churches entrusted to them as the vicars and ambassadors of Christ." Ibid., art. 27 (Abbott, 51). "Christ, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world (Jn. 10:36) has, through His apostles, made their successors, the bishops, partakers of His consecration and His mission." Ibid., art. 28 (Abbott, 52, 53). See also idem, "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests," art. 2 (Abbott, 534).

³Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," art. 2 (Abbott, 397). Regarding the threefold power of the apostles' successors, Pius XII had stated a few years earlier that Jesus Christ

bishops have "teaching authority and pastoral rule."¹ Moreover, divine revelation "is transmitted in its entirety through the legitimate succession of bishops and especially through the care of the Roman Pontiff himself."² Bishops and the pope constitute the teaching office of the church, to whom has been exclusively entrusted "the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on."³ This is possible thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit, since, as the council explains, to fulfill their duties "the apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. . . . This spiritual gift they passed on to their helpers by the imposition of hands (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14;

"conferred a triple power on His Apostles and their successors, to teach, to govern, to lead men to holiness, making this power . . . the fundamental law of the whole Church." Pius XII, Mystici Corporis Christi 38 (Carlen, 4:44).

¹Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," art. 22 (Abbott, 43). "Religious should always attend upon bishops, as upon successors of the apostles, with devoted deference and reverence." Idem, "Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," art. 35 (Abbott, 421). Cf. Pius XII's statement: "Bishops should be revered by the faithful as divinely appointed successors of the Apostles." Pius XII, Mystici Corporis Christi 42 (Carlen, 4:45).

²Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," 25 (Abbott, 49). "In order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors, 'handing over their own teaching role' to them." Idem, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," art. 7 (Abbott, 115).

³Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," art. 10 (Abbott, 117).

2 Tim. 1:6-7), and it has been transmitted down to us in episcopal consecration."¹ There is little doubt that the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the traditional Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession. At the same time, however, by adopting a broad concept of the church,² the council made it possible to see apostolic succession from the wider perspective of the apostolicity of the whole body of believers, and gave particular consideration to the intimate relationship between apostolic succession of ministry and of doctrine.³

¹Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," art. 21 (Abbott, 41). "By means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred, and the sacred character so impressed, that bishops in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd, and High Priest." Ibid. (Abbott, 42).

²In contrast with the unilateral concentration on the hierarchical and institutional dimensions of the church often made in prior centuries, the Second Vatican Council included the laity within the life and mission of the church. Avoiding rigid definitions and scholastic subtleties, the council gave preeminence to biblical images such as "Body of Christ" and "People of God" which encompass the whole community of believers. See Basil C. Butler, foreword to The Constitution on the Church, 13, 14; and Avery Dulles, introduction to "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in The Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: America Press, 1966), 9-13.

³Biot, 179, 180. In an assessment of the biblical and patristic support which the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" offers for its conception of the apostolic succession, O. Knoch concludes that the evidence suggests a more varied, less uniform line of development than that postulated in the Dogmatic Constitution. Otto Knoch, Die "Testamente" des Petrus und Paulus: Die Sicherung der apostolischen Überlieferung in der spätneutestamentlichen Zeit, Stuttgartar Bibelstudien, no. 62 (Stuttgart:

Contemporary Views on Apostolic Succession

The diverse positions on apostolic succession adopted by each Christian confession in the past remain practically unchanged today. Five main understandings of apostolic succession are currently being advocated.¹ Some are radically opposed to the very concept of succession.² Others insist on applying apostolic succession to the transmission of doctrine alone. Still others regard the ministry in general as an integral part of the succession.³ Those belonging to "catholic" confessions insist more specifically on episcopal apostolic succession. Finally, Roman Catholics add to the

Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973), 11-15, 99-105.

¹Antonio Javierre, "Notes on the Traditional Teaching on Apostolic Succession," in Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity, Concilium, no. 34, ed. Hans Küng (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 17.

²Thus, K.-L. Schmidt affirms that the churches originating from the Protestant Reformation by principle do not admit any apostolic succession. Karl-Ludwig Schmidt, "Le ministère et les ministères dans l'église du Nouveau Testament." RHPR 17 (1937): 316.

³The apostolic succession of the ministry is defined in four major ways: (1) the unbroken succession of the laying-on of hands by bishops, beginning with the apostles, being a matter of pure form without the need of a *consensus de doctrina*; (2) the unbroken succession of the "episcopal" laying-on of hands together with the transmission of the apostolic teaching and order; (3) the unbroken succession of a "presbyteral" laying-on of hands as well as the transmission of the apostolic teaching; and (4) the transmission of the apostolic teaching from office-holder to office-holder. Edmund Schlink, "Apostolic Succession: A Fellowship of Mutual Service," Encounter 25 (1964): 50.

definition the view that the pope is the head of the college of bishops.

Besides its inherent emotional aspect, the issue presents many difficulties due to the scarcity of sources, biblical as well as post-biblical, regarding the doctrine and practice of church organization during the first two centuries of Christianity.¹ The twentieth century has seen intense and prolific debates on apostolic succession, addressing various exegetical, historical, and theological questions particular to this doctrine.²

Issues in the Current Debate on Apostolic Succession

There are, to begin with, exegetical difficulties on which the debate has focused over the last one hundred years. What is the New Testament concept of "apostle"?

¹See p. 16 above.

²For a general overview of the ongoing debate see Antonio Javierre, "Sucesión apostólica: Ciclos de actitudes protestantes en torno a su concepto," Salesianum 16 (1954): 77-108; idem, "Cuestiones debatidas hoy entre Católicos y Protestantes en torno a la sucesión de los Apóstoles," chap. in XVI Semana Española de Teología (17-22 Sept. 1956): Problemas de actualidad sobre la sucesión apostólica (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1957), 3-96; idem, "Notes," 16-27; Louis Bouyer, "The Ecclesiastical Ministry and the Apostolic Succession," DownR 90 (1972): 133-44; Josef Finkenzeller, "Toward an Understanding of Apostolic Succession," TD 24 (1976): 246-51; and Heinz Schütte, Amt, Ordination und Sukzession: im Verständnis evangelischer und katholischer Exegeten und Dogmatiker der Gegenwart sowie in Dokumenten ökumenischer Gespräche (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1974), 71-75; 161-78; 190-96; 230-35; 327-49.

how is the term to be understood?¹ Are the roots of the Christian *apostolos* to be traced back to the Jewish *šāliah*?² Is there any relationship between *apostolos* and *presbyteros/episkopos* in New Testament times? Did the authority of the former pass on to the latter?³ How shall

¹Cf. the classical study by Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "ἀπόστολος," *TDNT* (1964-76), 1:420-43. For a survey of the current debate on the New Testament concept of "apostle," see for instance Rudolph Schnackenburg, "Apostolicity: The Present Position of Studies." *OneChr* 6 (1970): 243-51; J. Andrew Kirk, "Apostleship Since Rengstorf: Towards a Synthesis," *NTS* 21 (1975): 249-64; and Andrew C. Clark, "Apostleship: Evidence from the New Testament and Early Christian Literature," *EvRT* 13 (1989): 344-78.

²For a general overview of the discussion, see Francis H. Agnew, "The Origin of the NT Apostle-Concept: A Review of Research," *JBL* 105 (1986): 75-96. This theory, hinted at by J. B. Lightfoot (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 6th ed. [Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1891], 314, 315) and further advanced by Adolph von Harnack (*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2d ed. [London: Williams & Norgate, 1908], 1:327-31), was popularized by Rengstorf (1:407-45) and championed by Dom Gregory Dix (228-74). Criticism of this view has come from Holger Mosbech, "Apostolos in the New Testament," *ST* 2 (1948): 166-200; Lampe, *Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry* 15, 16; Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession: In the First Two Centuries of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), 15-19; Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1961), § 24 i; Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969), 100-106; Morris, *Ministers of God*, 40, 115-18; Béda Rigaux, "The Twelve Apostles," in *Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity*, *Concilium*, no. 34, ed. Hans Küng (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 6, 7; Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, 39-43; and Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry*, 9, 10.

³For a summary of the main views, see Kenneth A. Strand, "The Rise of the Monarchical Episcopate," *AUSS* 4 (1966): 67-71. C. Gore (278, 279) and A. M. Farrer ("The Ministry in the New Testament," in *The Apostolic Ministry*, 168, 180) maintain that the apostles' authority passed

one explain the New Testament silence regarding apostolic succession?¹ There is also a historical dimension to the

directly from them to the *episkopoi* without ever having belonged to the *presbyteroi*. A divergent view is presented by J. B. Lightfoot (The Christian Ministry [Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1983], 45-47) and Telfer (The Office of a Bishop, xii-xiv, 26, 27, 40, 41), who see a presbyterial system in the first century Christian Church. While each model may have existed in different areas of Palestine, Syria, or Asia Minor, the extant evidence regarding the church of Rome seems to suggest a third alternative, i.e., collegial governance. See Kenneth A. Strand, "Church Organization in First-Century Rome: A New Look at the Basic Data," AUSS 29 (1991): 139-60; and idem, "Governance in the First-Century Christian Church in Rome: Was It Collegial?" AUSS 30 (1992): 59-75. As to the relationship between apostles and presbyters/bishops in New Testament times, Hans Küng ("What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" in Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity, Concilium, no. 34, ed. Hans Küng [New York: Paulist Press, 1968], 30) and Raymond E. Brown (Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections [New York: Paulist Press, 1970], 54, 72) affirm that the latter were not considered to be the successors to the former.

¹Some argue that the concept of apostolic succession is present in the New Testament, though not expressed in technical terms. See, for instance, Javierre, "Notes," 23, 24; André de Bovis, "Le Presbytérat, sa nature et sa mission d'après le Concile du Vatican II," NRT 89 (1967): 1022, 1023; Bernard Dupuy, "Is There a Dogmatic Distinction between the Function of Priests and the Function of Bishops?" in Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity, Concilium, no. 34, ed. Hans Küng (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 80; Kurt Stadler, "Les successeurs des apôtres d'après le Nouveau Testament," VCaro 18, no. 71/72 (3^e/4^e trim., 1964): 83; Max Thurian, Priesthood and Ministry: Ecumenical Research (London: Mowbray, 1983), 54-63. Others hold that there is no reference to apostolic succession in the New Testament. See Michael Schmaus, Dogma, trans. Mary Ledderer (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1972), 4:138, 175; De Waal, "What Is Apostolic Succession?" 40; Dupuy, "La succession apostolique," 397; Raymond E. Brown, "*Episkopē* and *Episkopos*: The New Testament Evidence," TS 41 (1980): 332; idem, Priest and Bishop, 55; Morris, Ministers of God, 60, 122, 123; Lampe, Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry, 14;

controversy. For instance, little if any explicit historical evidence addresses the issue of apostolic succession before the end of the second century.¹ When they do, do early church fathers refer to *apostolic* or to *presbyteral* succession?²

Philip S. Kaufman, "Intercommunion and Union," JES 22 (1985): 599; Vincent Taylor, "Living Issues in Biblical Scholarship: The Church and the Ministry," ExpTim 62 (1951): 271; Reid, 38, 39; McDonnell, 221. Barry Till, The Churches Search for Unity (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), 65.

¹Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, § 26, g; Morris, Ministers of God, 125, 126. Hegesippus (ca. 180) is the first extant writer who introduced the idea of a regular succession of leaders in each local church (Turner, 117, 118). Some have suggested that the concept of succession was borrowed from the idea of succession to the priesthood in Israel (Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Succession, 5-7, 82; Schmithals, 287, 288). Others have seen a caliphate starting with James in the Jerusalem church as the origin of a hereditary episcopal succession (Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church, 31-37). This view has been disputed by Burnett Hillman Streeter (The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry [New York: Macmillan, 1929] 39-44) and Hans von Campenhausen ("The Authority of Jesus' Relatives in the Early Church," chap. in Jerusalem and Rome: The Problem of Authority in the Early Church [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966], 1-20). Most scholars agree that the notion of apostolic succession was formulated by the Christian church to meet the claims of the Gnostic heresiarchs to be the heirs of the apostles (see p. 17 above).

²Before Hegesippus (ca. 180) and Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200), the only one who alludes to the idea is Clement of Rome (ca. 96) but his reference is unclear. Some perceive in his epistle to the Corinthian church (42:2-4; 44:1-3) a definite reference to apostolic succession (Antonio Javierre, La primera "diadoché" de la patristica y los "ellógimoi" de Clemente Romano [Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1958], 5-138), but there is no consensus as to whether Clement is referring to *apostolic* succession (Gore, 290, 291; Dix, 256-63; Knox, 22; Streeter, 220-23; McDonnell, 222) or to *presbyterial*

Exegetical and historical aspects of the issue have contributed to several theological questions concerning apostolic succession. Is apostolic succession an actualization of God's will?¹ Can a distinction be made, as some argue, between what is transmissible and what is intransmissible in the apostolic office?² Are the two institutions--the apostolate and the episcopate--homogeneous or heterogeneous?³ What is to be done with

succession (Turner, 112; Hanson, The Pioneer Ministry, 112; K. J. Woollcombe, "The Ministry and Order of the Church in the Works of the Fathers," in The Historic Episcopate, 2d ed., ed. Kenneth M. Carey [Westminster, MD: Dacre Press, 1960], 43-46). Others deny any allusion to apostolic succession in Clement (Goppelt, 19; Sasse, 19, 20).

¹This is affirmed by A. M. Farrer (foreword to The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy, 2d ed., ed. Kenneth E. Kirk [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957], vii), Joaquin Salaverri ("El concepto de sucesión apostólica en el pensamiento católico y en las teorías del protestantismo," chap. in XVI Semana Española de Teología (17-22 Sept. 1956): Problemas de actualidad sobre la sucesión apostólica [Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1957], 136-46), and Javierre ("Notes," 21).

²G. Martelet, "Eléments transmissibles et intransmissibles de la succession apostolique," VCaro 58 (1961): 185-98. See also Manuel Fernández Jiménez, "Fundamentos teológicos de la distinción de postestades de los Apóstoles en ordinarias y extraordinarias y de por qué los obispos suceden en unas y no en otras," chap. in XVI Semana Española de Teología (17-22 Sept. 1956): Problemas de actualidad sobre la sucesión apostólica (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1957), 279-81; J. M. R. Tillard, "The Eucharist in Apostolic Continuity," OneChr 24 (1988): 15, 16; Menoud, L'Eglise et les ministères, 34, 35; Jean Bosc, "Comment l'apostolicité de l'Église est-elle pensée et vécue aujourd'hui dans les églises de la Réforme," ETR 40 (1965): 166.

³Javierre, "Notes," 18.

the appeal, in some circles, to the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout two thousand years of Christian history as evidence of the divine origin of the episcopal institution?¹

In more recent decades, the debate has given increasing importance to two additional issues, highly disputed. One has to do with the question of the relationship between apostolic succession and apostolic tradition.² The notion of succession was intended to confront the Gnostic challenge and to keep pure the apostolic message. It was conceived as a warranty against the intrusion of false traditions into the legitimate apostolic tradition.³ From this fact it is argued that for practical purposes succession and tradition meant in essence the same thing for second-century Christians, and that before the concept of a New Testament canon emerged the church was already holding another type of "canon," namely tradition guaranteed by succession.⁴ Thus the Roman Catholic Church has developed the view that

¹Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Catholic Understanding of Office in the Church," TS 30 (1969): 568, 569. See also Raymond Brown, Priest and Bishop, 73; George H. Duggan, "The Apostolic Succession," HPR 83 (1983): 65.

²Brenning, 1:87, 88.

³Georg Günter Blum, Tradition und Sukzession: Studien zum Normbegriff des Apostolischen von Paulus bis Irenäus (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1963), 23-97, 161-227.

⁴Ratzinger, "Primacy," 46-50.

"apostolic tradition and apostolic succession define each other. The succession is the external form of the tradition, and tradition is the content of the succession."¹ Conversely, the churches issued from the Protestant Reformation wonder why the church felt the need for another canon (i.e., the New Testament Scriptures) if "tradition guaranteed by succession" had already provided one.²

The broader understanding of apostolic succession has generated some recent discussions in another area as well, namely the relationship between "apostolic succession" and "apostolicity."³ While in the classic view succession was perceived as pertaining exclusively to the ministry, there have been growing appeals, recently,

¹Ibid., 51. See also Frans Josef van Beeck, "Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Sacraments," JES 3 (1966): 97, 100.

²For Irenaeus' and Tertullian's views on the *regula fidei* as doctrinal norm, see p. 18 above.

³For Roman Catholics, apostolicity has to do with that which is "identifiable with the Church of the Apostles by succession and continuity of doctrine." ODCC (1983), s.v. "Apostolicity." According to K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, apostolicity "means the essential identity of the Church throughout her development in space and time with the Church of the Apostles. . . . The Church is apostolic because she was founded by Christ in and through the Apostles; because her doctrine and sacraments are essentially those of the Apostles; because the Pope and bishops, being links in an unbroken chain reaching back to the Apostles, are in a true sense successors of the Apostles." Dictionary of Theology (1981), s.v. "Apostolicity of the Church."

to regard the whole church as successor of the apostles.¹ Others have pointed out the inadequacy of the new approach.² While intimately linked to one another and complementary aspects of the same reality, apostolicity and apostolic succession, from their perspective, remain specifically different from one another.³ It remains necessary, therefore, to confine the expression "apostolic succession" to the way it has been traditionally understood, namely, an uninterrupted series of episcopal laying-on of hands starting with the apostles.⁴

Apostolic Succession in the Ecumenical Movement

Animated discussions on the exegetical and historical aspects of the debate have allowed the ecumenical movement to see the old questions posed by the

¹Küng, The Church, 457, 563. See also idem, "What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" 28-35; Finkenzeller, 249; Dupuy, "La succession apostolique," 398; McDonnell, 229; and George J. Dyer, ed., An American Catholic Catechism (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 20.

²Javierre, "Notes," 22. See also John Macquarrie, "The Ministry and the Proposed New Anglican-Methodist Ordinal," Worship 44 (1970): 360; International Theological Commission, "The Apostolicity of the Church and Apostolic Succession," HPR 75, no. 2 (November, 1974): 23; and Garijo-Guembe, 4:126.

³Javierre, "Notes," 22, 23; Maurice Vidal, "Succession apostolique et apostolicité de l'Église," in Le ministère et les ministères selon le Nouveau Testament, ed. Jean Delorme (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), 465.

⁴Tillard, "The Eucharist," 14-17; idem, "Sacraments et communion ecclésiale," NRT 111 (1989): 641, 642.

issue of apostolic succession in a new light. From its very start the ecumenical movement recognized that any attempt to achieve real unity could hardly ignore the question of apostolic succession.¹ At that stage, however, the documents produced simply pointed out the "conspicuous differences" between the churches, without envisioning any rapprochement.² In 1952, "serious and at

¹As an example of the difficulties involved, one should keep in mind that culminating a series of Roman Catholic objections to the validity of apostolic succession in the Anglican ministry, in 1896 Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) pronounced and declared "that ordinations carried out according to the Anglican rite have been and are absolutely null and utterly void." Leo XIII, "Apostolicae Curae," chap. in The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1903), 405. See also John Jay Hughes, Absolutely Null and Utterly Void: The Papal Condemnation of Anglican Orders, 1896 (Washington, DC: Corpus Books, 1968), 9-27. Independently of the Anglican issue, the prevailing feeling among Protestant theologians during the first decades of the 20th century was that "il faut nous résigner à admettre qu'aucune entente n'est ici possible entre l'Église Catholique, qu'elle soit Romaine, Vieille-Catholique ou Orthodoxe-Orientale, d'une part, et les Églises de la Réforme. L'Église 'Catholique' fait dériver son autorité de son affirmation qu'elle est en possession d'un ministère non seulement institué par Jésus-Christ, mais qui s'est transmis par la voie, qu'il a lui-même voulue, de la succession apostolique. . . . [Par contre] les Églises de la Réforme ne connaissent par principe aucune succession apostolique." Schmidt, "Le ministère et les ministères," 315.

²See the "Final Report of the First World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927)," § 36, 44-47, in A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963, ed. Lukas Vischer (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963), 35, 37, 38. The disparity of opinions is clearly evidenced in the responses of the churches to the Lausanne Report, which range from affirming the necessity of episcopacy in apostolic succession, to those who "find it impossible, with the New Testament as our supreme guide, to acquiesce in the

present irreconcilable disagreement" was reported on the problem of apostolic succession, in connection with which there was "an obstinate difference, held with deep conviction and in a good conscience, which cannot readily be resolved."¹ Since then, it has been frequently

interpretation of the Apostolic succession of the episcopate as historical and indispensable." Convictions: A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Held at Lausanne in 1927, ed. Leonard Hodgson (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934), 81, 185, 186. Ten years later, acknowledging that "fundamental differences of interpretation arise in connection with the doctrine of Apostolic Succession," the Edinburgh conference simply summarized the divergent confessional views on the matter. See World Conference on Faith and Order, The Ministry and the Sacraments: Report of the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the Faith and Order Movement under the Chairmanship of the Right Rev. Arthur Cayley Headlam (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1937), 35, 36; and "Final Report of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order (Edinburgh, 1937)," § 98-103, in A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963, ed. Lukas Vischer (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963), 58-60. Later, the first assembly of the World Council of Churches (Amsterdam, 1948) attempted to classify the variety of divergent opinions in two major traditions, the "Catholic" characterized by "a primary insistence upon the visible continuity of the Church in the apostolic succession of the episcopate," and the "Protestant" emphasizing "the initiative of the Word of God and the response of faith." "First Assembly of the World Council of Churches (Amsterdam, 1948)," in A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963, ed. Lukas Vischer (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963), 77.

¹"Final Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order (Lund, 1952)," § 36-38, in A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963, ed. Lukas Vischer (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963), 94, 95. As expressed in 1930, "the real question that . . . confronts those who seek for unity is whether it is possible to unite in one organic union those who believe in the transmission of grace through an unbroken succession from the Apostles with those who claim a grace

admitted that apostolic succession "is a primary barrier to ecumenicity,"¹ and constitutes "the most knotty problem in the ecumenical movement today."² In Hans Küng's words, "the main reason for the absence of intercommunion between Christians lies in the question of apostolic succession."³ Virtually every document produced by bilateral or

given to their ministry direct from their Lord and Master and refuse to accept a theory of the ministry which denies the grace manifestly bestowed upon many who can claim no succession through any line of prelates." Henry Lunn, "The Free Churches and Episcopacy," in Episcopacy Ancient and Modern, ed. Claude Jenkins and K. D. MacKenzie (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 401. The disagreement was also acknowledged in The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963, ed. P. C. Rodger and Lukas Vischer (New York: Association Press, 1964), 65, 66. See also Gustave Thils, Histoire doctrinale du Mouvement œcuménique, 2d ed., Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, no. 8 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, [1962]), 60-63, 102, 103.

¹Clyde L. Manschreck, "Apostolic Succession," The Dictionary of Bible and Religion (1986), 61. "Le problème de la succession apostolique est l'un des problèmes-clefs de l'ecclésiologie contemporaine." Von Allmen, Le saint ministère, 192.

²Otto F. Stahlke, "The Apostolic Succession in Recent Lutheran Discussions," The Springfielder 26 (1962): 37. "The problem of apostolic succession . . . is indeed the crux in the discussions between Catholic and Protestant theologians and it is the hardest problem." Karrer, Peter and the Church, 22.

³Hans Küng, preface to Apostolic Succession: Rethinking a Barrier to Unity, Concilium, no. 34, ed. Hans Küng (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 1. "The most important question regarding the theology of the episcopal office and regarding the mutual recognition of ministries is the problem of the apostolic succession." Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission, "The Ministry in the Church, 1981," § 59, in Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 266.

multilateral conversations has addressed the issue in an attempt to overcome the obstacles involved.

By the 1960s, however, it was possible to observe a development towards some degree of convergence regarding apostolic succession among those participating in ecumenical conversations, as rigid traditional positions seemed to give way to more open perspectives. In 1972 a survey of bilateral conversations reported that "the traditional problems of the historic episcopate and of apostolic succession seem to present less difficulty,"¹ and three years later it was stated that the problem of apostolic succession "is now treated in a more flexible manner."² This new attitude was the result of a broadened vision of apostolic succession, embracing a variety of interdependent elements that made it difficult to maintain exclusive claims for a sole line of ministerial validation through succession.³ It is becoming generally accepted in

¹Nils Ehrenström and Günther Gassmann, Confessions in Dialogue (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1972), 138.

²Nils Ehrenström and Günther Gassmann, Confessions in Dialogue, 3d ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), 195.

³Ibid., 185. Together with a broader view of apostolic succession encompassing the whole community of believers, there is an increasing recognition in ecumenical circles of the distinction between what is transmissible and what is not in the apostolic office. See for example Faith and Order Commission, "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective," StudyEnc 8, no. 4 (1972): 6, 7; Christ and the Church, Faith and Order Paper, no. 38 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1963),

ecumenical circles that "the primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the life of the Church as a whole,"¹ in which episcopal succession is "a pre-eminent sign of the apostolic succession of the whole Church in faith, life and doctrine."² In consequence,

54; Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission, "The Gospel and the Church, 1972 (Malta Report)," 52, in Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 180; idem, "The Ministry in the Church, 1981," § 16, 17, in Growth in Agreement, 252, 253; Roman Catholic/Orthodox Joint International Commission, "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity," II.18-21, IV.48, 49, ONCDS 12 (1982): 298, 300.

¹"The Ministry," § 27, chap. in One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry: Three Agreed Statements, Faith and Order Paper, no. 73 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), 36. See also Faith and Order Commission, "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective," StudyEnc 8, no. 4 (1972): 6, 7; "Ministry," § 35, chap. in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 43; Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission, "The Gospel and the Church, 1972 (Malta Report)," in Growth in Agreement, 181; idem, "The Ministry in the Church, 1981," § 59-61, in Growth in Agreement, 266, 267.

²"The Ministry," § 37, in One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry, 39. Already in 1957, a special committee appointed by the United Evangelical Church of Germany expressed that apostolic succession can be treasured "as a sign . . . of the actual apostolic succession of the Church and of ecclesiastical office." "Erklärung zur Apostolischen Sukzession," IVELKD (1958): 12, quoted in Hans Küng, Structures of the Church, trans. Salvator Attanasio (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964), 182. From then on, apostolic succession is increasingly viewed in ecumenical circles as a sign of the unity and apostolicity of the church. See for instance, Schlink, "Apostolic Succession," 82; Faith and Order Commission, "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective," 6-9; the "memorandum" issued jointly by a working group of six university ecumenical institutes in Germany (which included scholars

churches which uphold apostolic succession are invited to recognize that a continuity in apostolic faith and mission has been preserved in churches which have not retained the historical form of episcopacy. At the same time, churches without an episcopate in apostolic succession are exhorted to express their willingness to accept it as a sign of the apostolicity of the whole church.¹ Churches without apostolic succession of ministry are encouraged "to recover the sign of the episcopal succession."²

such as H. Fries, H. Küng, W. Pannenberg, and E. Schlink), "Reform and Recognition of Church Offices," JES 10 (1973): 395; and Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility, trans. Ruth C. L. Gritsch and Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985; New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 99, 100.

¹"Ministry," § 37, 38, chap. in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, 44, 45; "The Ministry," § 35, 37, chap. in One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry, 39. "Lutherans feel free 'to face up to the call for communion with the historic episcopal office,' i.e., the historically evolved pattern of episcopal ministry in the form of the office of bishop standing in apostolic succession. Nevertheless, Lutherans and Catholics place different accents on the significance of that historic episcopal office for the church." Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, Facing Unity: Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship, § 97 (n.p.: Lutheran World Federation, 1985), 47.

²"Ministry," § 53, chap. in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, 49. Episcopacy in apostolic succession is a sign "that ought to be striven for if absent." "The Ministry," § 37, chap. in One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry, 39. Though as "a sign of the apostolicity of the church," apostolic succession is not "an automatically effective guarantee," it is, nevertheless, "an essential sign which . . . must not be omitted in a one Church-to-be." Fries and Rahner, 99, 100.

Still, many are aware that among the problems which remain unresolved and need to be worked on, "that of apostolic succession is of particular importance."¹ As recently as 1990, a report of the Faith and Order Commission acknowledged that apostolic succession "remains a major issue for further dialogue."² In spite of all the efforts to reach a consensus on the matter, "for many on both sides of the issue the question of episcopal succession remains the most difficult problem for further dialogue on ministry."³

¹"Ministry," § 52, in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, 49. As A. Dulles asserts, "there are still unresolved problems about . . . apostolic succession in the ministry." Avery Dulles, "Ministry and Intercommunion: Recent Ecumenical Statements and Debates," TS 34 (1973): 645.

²Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses, Faith and Order Paper no. 149 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 84.

³*Ibid.*, 128; see also *ibid.*, 157.

CHAPTER III

YVES CONGAR AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

There is little doubt that Yves Congar is considered by many as "the most important theologian of the structures of the church in this century,"¹ and his influence is "still very much in force today."² This chapter focuses specifically on his views regarding apostolic succession. After a quick portrait of the French Roman Catholic theologian, I set forth Congar's understanding of apostolic succession and its relation to his views on salvation history and on tradition. This chapter is limited to a descriptive and analytical presentation of Congar's thought, keeping the more evaluative comments for the final chapter of this dissertation.

¹Thomas F. O'Meara, "Ecumenist of Our Times: Yves Congar," Mid-Stream 27 (1988): 70, 71.

²Ibid., 76. According to Michael M. Winter ("Masters in Israel: VI. Yves Congar," ClerR 55 [1970]: 281), "of all the theologians alive today, none has influenced the Church's thinking as much as Fr Congar."

The Man and the Theologian

Yves Congar was born April 13, 1904 in Sedan, France.¹ He was the fourth son of middle-class parents who faithfully practiced their Roman Catholic faith. The religious fervor of his family, particularly the piety of

¹The most valuable source of information regarding Congar's life and theological pilgrimage for the period 1929-63 is his autobiographical essay included in Yves Congar, Chrétiens en dialogue: Contributions catholiques à l'oecuménisme, Unam Sanctam, no. 50 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), ix-lxiv. English translation: Dialogue between Christians, trans. Philip Loretz (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966), 1-51. Idem, Une passion: l'unité. Réflexions et souvenirs 1929-1973 (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1974), contains not only the preceding essay (pp. 7-88), but also a chapter covering the period 1964-73 (pp. 89-113). Interesting personal recollections of his dynamic and sometimes difficult existence appear in interviews like those recorded by Jean Puyo (Une vie pour la vérité: Jean Puyo interroge le Père Congar [Paris: Le Centurion, 1975]) and Patrick Granfield ("Yves Congar," chap. in Theologians at Work [New York: Macmillan Company, 1967], 243-62). Numerous books and articles offer instructive sketches of Congar as man, Christian, and theologian. See Jossua, 11-86; Aidan Nichols, Yves Congar (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989); idem, "Yves Congar," in The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century, ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 1:219-36; Alfons Auer, "Yves J.-M. Congar," in Tendenzen der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Geschichte in Porträts, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1966), 519-23. Jakob Laubach, "Yves Congar," in Theologians of Our Time, ed. Leonard Reinisch (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 165-81; James J. Back, "Yves Congar: Revitalizing the Ecumenical Movement," chap. in Contemporary Theologians (New York: Triumph Books, 1989), 39-50; Wendell Sanford Dietrich, "Yves Congar," in The New Day: Catholic Theologians of the Renewal, ed. Wm. Jerry Boney and Lawrence E. Molumby (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 21-33; Schilling, 185-205; Winter, 275-88; André Duval, "Yves Congar: A Life for the Truth," The Thomist 48 (1984): 505-11; O'Meara, "Ecumenist of Our Times: Yves Congar," 67-76; and Tom Stransky, "Congar, Yves," Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement (1991), 217, 218.

his mother, and the misery and horrors of World War I contributed significantly to his decision to become a priest. At the same time, the circumstances surrounding his childhood, more particularly the Protestant and Jewish friends of his parents, exercised a definite influence on the course of his whole life.¹

After completing his studies in a Carmelite major seminary, Congar entered the novitiate of the Dominicans in 1925 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1930. He was twenty-six years of age. During those years he gained a solid education in historical theology as well as Thomistic thinking under the guidance of such masters as Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), and Étienne Gilson (1884-1978).

In 1931 Congar began his teaching career at the Dominican seminary of *Le Saulchoir*, concentrating early on ecclesiology, a doctrine that remained the passion of his life. Besides his regular program of study and teaching,

¹Years later Congar recognized the seeds of his ecumenical interest in the friendships he enjoyed with Protestant and Jewish comrades during his childhood, and the cordial relations between Protestants and Catholics in his small village during the war years. He recalls that when, in 1914, the parish church of his little town was set on fire by the German Uhlans, the Protestant pastor offered the curé a Protestant chapel where he and his congregation met for the next six years. Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 4.

he developed an intense public life which included preaching, lectures, and ecumenical activities.¹

As early as the time of his ordination, Congar decided to devote much of his efforts to the ecumenical cause. This vocation prompted him to seek out personal ecumenical encounters with Lutheran theologians such as Oscar Cullmann as well as Reformed, Anglican, and Orthodox scholars and pastors.²

Congar's literary production is amazingly abundant. Given its most unusual extent it seems hardly pertinent to put forth an exhaustive survey of his writings within the limits of this document. By 1967 the catalogue of his books and articles, including translations to several languages, listed 958 titles;³ by 1987 that number had increased to 1790.⁴

¹The number of sermons (or series of sermons) and conferences (or series of conferences) delivered by Congar increased over the years: 161 from 1930 to World War II; 553 from his liberation in 1945 to his return from exile in 1957; 947 from December, 1957, to 1965. Jossua, 18.

²"Many pioneers in ecumenism, many Protestant and Orthodox theologians, saw this young Dominican descend upon them. Such was the case for Oscar Cullmann who tells of the fear his old servant had of this 'monk.' A native of one of those exclusively Protestant villages of Alsace, she was sure he would bring harm to her master." Ibid., 63.

³See Pietro Quattrocchi, "General Bibliography of Yves Congar," in Jossua, 185-241.

⁴Aidan Nichols, "An Yves Congar Bibliography 1967-1987," Angelicum 66 (1989): 422-66. References to French editions of Congar's works in this dissertation are due to the lack of English translation.

The outbreak of the Second World War mobilized Congar as a military chaplain. In 1940 he was captured by the Germans, remaining a prisoner in various camps until the end of the war.

Earlier difficulties arising from Congar's ecumenical activities and from some of his publications¹ turned into open hostility on the part of the Roman curia toward him by 1947. In Congar's own words, "from the beginning of 1947 to the end of 1956 I knew nothing from that quarter [Rome] but an uninterrupted series of denunciations, warnings, restrictive or discriminatory measures and mistrustful interventions."² In the early 1950s he was denied permission to publish new editions or translations of his more important works³ and was told to

¹The publication of Chrétiens désunis: Principes d'un oecuménisme catholique (Unam Sanctam, no. 1 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1937]; English translation: Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion, trans. M. A. Bousfield [London: Centenary Press, 1939]) had already displeased some members of the Roman hierarchy in 1939, though this was to be one of Congar's most significant ecumenical writings. Many bishops and priests have recognized the profound influence of this work on their approach to ecumenism and the nature of the church. Some have even suggested that the history of Roman Catholic participation in ecumenism can be divided into "before Chrétiens désunis" and "after Chrétiens désunis." Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 25.

²Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 34.

³Such as Esquisses du mystère de l'Église (Unam Sanctam, no. 8 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1941]; English translation: The Mystery of the Church, 2d rev. ed., trans. A. V. Littledale [Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1965]) and Vraie et fausse réforme, which is considered one of the finest works of Congar, the one in which,

submit all his writings to Rome for censorship, down to the smallest review. At the beginning these stipulations were not strictly implemented,¹ but in 1954 the Roman censorship became exceedingly suspicious and severe.² Congar was then removed from his teaching task at Le Saulchoir and assigned first to the École Biblique in Jerusalem and then to Blackfriars, Cambridge, with his movements restricted to a minimum and the prohibition to discuss ecumenical issues. He "succeeded in overcoming all this, both spiritually and at the level of ordinary human sanity, by complete resignation to the cross and to reduction to insignificance."³

During those most difficult years he learned the value of what he calls "active patience," and became convinced that the cross is a condition of every priestly work. He perceived that the task he had assumed demanded

according to Chenu, Congar gave of himself more than he did in any other work. Jossua, 28.

¹At that time Congar was surprisingly able to publish his Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat, Unam Sanctam, no. 23 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1953). English translation: Lay People in the Church.

²Thus Le Mystère du Temple ([Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958]; English translation: The Mystery of the Temple: Or the Manner of God's Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to the Apocalypse, trans. Reginald F. Trevett [Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1962]), written by Congar during his stay in Jerusalem in 1954, was read by seven censors and the *nihil obstat* was not granted till four years later. See Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 42.

³Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 43.

a price, and he was willing to pay it.¹ In spite of suspicion and mistrust which surrounded him on all sides, his loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church remained unshaken. Relief came in December 1955 when Congar was authorized to return to France and join the Dominican monastery in Strasbourg.

This distressing chapter in Congar's life was definitively closed with the accession of John XXIII (1958-63) to the Roman pontificate. The new pope himself appointed him as a theological consultant to the preparatory commission for the Second Vatican Council. During the council itself Congar was an official *peritus* of the Theological Commission and worked on most of the major documents issued by the council. He saw the causes he had served vindicated by the council² and recognized by the pope.³ "No modern theologian's spirit was accorded

¹"Only when a man has suffered for his convictions does he attain in them a certain force, a certain quality of the undeniable and, at the same time, the right to be heard and to be respected." *Ibid.*, 45.

²See Congar, *Une passion: l'unité*, 90; *idem*, "Letter from Father Yves Congar, O.P.," TD 32 (1985): 215; and *idem*, "Reflections on Being a Theologian," New Blackfriars 62 (1981): 405.

³Paul VI (1963-78) remarked that Congar is the theologian who has had most influence on him. Robert McAfee Brown, *Observer in Rome: A Protestant Report on the Vatican Council* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 155. The pope also acknowledged that Congar was one of those who most contributed to the preparation of the Second Vatican Council. Henri Fesquet, *The Drama of Vatican II: The Ecumenical Council, June, 1962-December, 1965*, trans. Bernard Murchland (New York: Random House, 1967), 197.

fuller play in the documents of Vatican II than Congar's," writes R. McBrien.¹

In the wake of the ecumenical climate created by the council, Congar endeavored to explain the Roman Catholic position on apostolic succession, beginning with his 1966 essay "Composantes et idée de la Succession Apostolique"² whose argumentation was further developed in subsequent years as the Dominican theologian took part in ecumenical dialogues.³

See also Jossua, 65.

¹McBrien, "Church and Ministry," 203. See also Joseph Famerée, "L'ecclésiologie du Père Yves Congar. Essai de synthèse critique," RSPT 76 (1992): 377, 378.

²Published in Oecumenica: Jahrbuch für ökumenische Forschung. 1966, 61-80.

³Thus his thoughts on the apostolicity of the church included in Yves Congar, L'Église une, 192-222, and in idem, Ministères et communion ecclésiale ([Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971], 51-94, 123-40). Later he made a presentation entitled "La succession apostolique" in the fifth meeting of the dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome, Italy, March 3-8, 1975). See the Appendix in The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1970-77 (Geneva: W.A.R.C., 1977; Vatican: Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1977), 36. Unfortunately the actual text of Congar's presentation in this meeting was not published. My correspondence with Dr. H. S. Wilson, Secretary of the Department of Theology of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, leads me to conclude that on this occasion Congar used his essay "Composantes et idée de la Succession Apostolique," already published in Oecumenica, 61-80. For a summary of the discussion which took place after Congar's exposition at the Rome meeting see G. Locher, "Summary of Discussions on Paper IV: 'Apostolic Succession'," Rome, March 5, 1975. TD [photocopy], World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

In 1965 Congar was appointed by Pope Paul VI to the Academic Council of the "Institute for the Study of Salvation History" in Jerusalem. Four years later he became a member of the Pontifical International Theological Commission designed to provide the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith¹ with the consultative and advisory services of theologians. More recently he was invited to attend the Extraordinary Episcopal Synod of 1985, but his poor health prevented his participation.

Congar's untiring work has been recognized and honored many times and in many ways. Thus in 1964 the Dominican Order named Congar a Master of Sacred Theology, the crowning of the career of a professor in the Order. In 1965 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Fribourg,² and in 1986 another from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, Rome.³

A chronic and painful neurological disease that afflicted Congar for the first time in 1935 worsened with the passing of time. In 1984 his paraplegia had become

¹Responsible for safeguarding Roman Catholic doctrine of faith and morals. Accordingly, it examines doctrinal questions and theological opinions, and, when necessary, reproves those regarded as opposed to principles of Catholic faith. See 1992 Catholic Almanac, ed. Felician A. Fow and Rose M. Avato (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991), 147.

²Winter, 275. See also Henn, 7.

³Nichols, "An Yves Congar Bibliography," 422.

too advanced and he had to be hospitalized in the *Hôtel des Invalides*.

Before closing this section it may be helpful to mention the major theologians and theological systems that seem to have most influenced Yves Congar's own thought. First and foremost, Congar confesses to be a follower of Thomas Aquinas (1225-74),¹ though quite recently he admitted: "Although I am a grateful and faithful follower of Thomas Aquinas, I have had occasion gradually to extend my vision."² Instead of simply repeating categories and conclusions presented by the *Doctor Angelicus*, as if they were formed once and for all, Congar increasingly regarded Thomas Aquinas as a master whose thought will help us give form to our own, a model of open-mindedness to reality and respect for every atom of truth.³ In many of Congar's

¹Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme*, 16. See also Puyo, 38-40, and the numerous studies on Thomas Aquinas gathered in Yves Congar, *Thomas d'Aquin: Sa vision de théologie et de l'Église* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984).

²Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 6. Congar explains that two things led him to open up to other horizons, namely "ecumenism and the study of history, to which should also be added an attention (limited, but quite real) to the quests and the writing of today. Ecumenism and history acquaint us with other interpretations which also have their own reasons and their own truth." *Ibid.*

³Yves Congar, "Theology in the Council," *AER* 155 (1966): 229. See also Jossua, 15, 16. Congar "has certainly developed his theology along the Thomistic lines. Yet he is not a hard-line Thomist. Although he is influenced by Thomas, Congar believes that a real Thomist

writings one can also perceive the influence of Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838)¹ and John Henry Newman (1801-90).² In addition, as a result of his ecumenical encounters Congar was exposed to Orthodox as well as Protestant thinking, and incorporated some aspects of these perspectives into his own theology.³ That influence is particularly noticeable regarding the theme of salvation history, advocated by Oscar Cullmann.⁴

knows how much of St. Thomas' thinking is necessary to keep and how much belongs to his age and not ours." Jagdeo, 267.

¹See Yves Congar, "Johann Adam Möhler: 1796-1838," ITQ 150 (1970): 47-54. See also idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College, Promoters of the Work of Christ," chap. in The Mystery of the Church, 2d rev. ed., trans. A. V. Littledale (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1965), 142, 143; idem, Tradition and Traditions, 193-96; idem, Sainte Église, 11-15; and Thomas F. O'Meara, "Revelation and History: Schelling, Möhler and Congar," ITQ 53 (1987): 17-35.

²See Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 16; idem, Sainte Église, 567; idem, Tradition and Traditions, 209-11.

³Jossua, 76-80. See for instance Yves Congar, The Revelation of God, trans. A. Manson and L. C. Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 8-15. Congar felt particularly attracted by the spiritual genius of Martin Luther. Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 5, 6. An example of that interest is his analysis of Luther's experience and theology in Vraie et fausse réforme, 341-85, and in his book Martin Luther, sa foi, sa réforme: Études de théologie historique (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983).

⁴Congar acknowledged Cullmann's influence several times, for instance, Congar, Lay People, 61, 62, 72, 73, 107, 108; idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 421; and idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 202. Congar's thought developed "under the increasing influence of biblical theology in the Catholic Church since the [second world]

Congar's Ecclesiology

In order to obtain a correct understanding of the Dominican theologian's view on apostolic succession one has to consider first the main points of his doctrine of the church. The number of studies devoted to Congar's view of the church or to some of its particular aspects shows the importance of his ideas in contemporary theology.¹ I limit myself here to a general synthesis of

war, and above all of Cullmann's theology of the history of salvation." T. Mark Schoof, A Survey of Catholic Theology: 1800-1970, trans. N. D. Smith (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Newman Press, 1970), 108. For similarities and differences between the two theologians see pp. 288-312 below.

¹Several dissertations have been devoted to Congar's ecclesiology in general or to one of its specific aspects. See MacDonald, The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar; Stoneburner, "The Doctrine of The Church in the Theology of Yves Congar, O.P.;" Canavaris, "The Ecclesiology of Yves M.-J. Congar: An Orthodox Evaluation;" Beauchesne, "Laity and Ministry in Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P.: Evolution, Evaluation and Ecumenical Perspectives;" Jagdeo, "Holiness and Reform of the Church in the Writings of Yves Congar, O.P.;" Lehning, "The Foundations, Functions and Authority of the Magisterium in the Theology of Yves Congar, O.P.;" Louch, "The Contribution of Yves Congar to a Renewed Understanding of Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church;" Gottmoeller, "The Theory of Development of Dogma in the Ecclesiology of Yves Congar." Congar's ecclesiology has also been presented in several books and articles. See Jossua, 87-126; Nichols, Yves Congar, 52-95; Jérôme Prunieres, "L'ecclésiologie du P. Congar: Oeuvre témoin d'une crise," EF 39 (1966): 253-83; Famerée, "L'ecclésiologie du Père Yves Congar," 377-419; Dietrich, 21-29; Schilling, 189-97.

his ecclesiological thought returning to specific dimensions later on in this chapter.¹

Early in his theological career, Congar perceived the need for an ecclesiological renewal, so that "a notion of the Church as great, living, rich, full of biblical and traditional vigor penetrates Christianity."² Such a notion of the church can only be obtained through a return to the sources, which for him are Holy Scripture, the fathers, the liturgy, dogmatic definitions, and the life of the church under the regulation of the magisterium.³ This *ressourcement* into tradition, whose meaning goes

¹It was during his days as a student brother in 1928-29 that Congar first conceived the ambition of writing a treatise on the church, a concern which became a lifelong desire repeatedly expressed. See Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme (1st ed.), 7; and idem, Sainte Église, 7. In spite of a sizable number of publications on the subject, he never fulfilled that plan. In 1967 Congar explained that he did not write such a treatise before because "it would have been miserable. Now I would do better; but shall I ever do it?" Jossua, 22. That hesitation became even stronger in 1971: "it will probably never be written." Yves Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," The Jurist 32 (1972): 169. Still, even in the absence of such a treatise, Congar has outlined his doctrine of the church often enough to provide us with a clear picture of his view.

²Cited from the prospectus written by Congar announcing the launching of the Unam Sanctam series, quoted in Jossua, 89, 90.

³Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 303, 304; see also idem, "The Historical Development of Authority in the Church. Points for Christian Reflection," in Problems of Authority, ed. John M. Todd, trans. Reginald F. Trevett (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1962), 149.

farther than a mere return to fixed notions of the past,¹ became characteristic of Congar's methodology. In fact, his approach to any subject matter usually combines abundant biblical references and ideas with a wealth of historical documentation coming from the fathers, Thomas Aquinas, pronouncements of the hierarchy, as well as more recent or contemporary contributions.²

For Congar, the deep reality and mystery of the church cannot be exhausted by a single definition. The term "church" itself can be understood in several ways.³

¹Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 305.

²"Congar is primarily an historical theologian who uses history in a creative way," explains A. M. Harnett. "He finds at least one reference in the Christian tradition, usually in patristic or medieval theology and/or in Aquinas, to substantiate or, rather, to make the point he himself wishes to make." But his "strength as an historical theologian is also a source of weakness. . . . The reader has to conclude that the interpretations of an issue that he has chosen to express through tracing historical data or that he has stated in the words of other theologians are in fact his positions." Harnett, 330, 333. See also Nichols, Yves Congar, 201, 202.

³The Dominican theologian distinguishes four meanings of the word "church": (1) the elements of the institution, i.e., the deposit of faith, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry; (2) the community of the whole people of God; (3) the hierarchy, integrated by some members of God's people which are bearers of the apostolic powers; and (4) the divine-human union resulting from the combination of the preceding three elements. Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 94-97. Unfortunately, it is not always clear which sense of the word church is Congar referring to when he uses it in his writings. The reader will eventually come to understand that in numerous instances Congar endorses or at least comes close to endorse the traditional Roman Catholic equation of the magisterium with the church, in spite of his insistence that the laity belongs to the church.

Out of the multiple images employed by biblical writers to describe the church, Congar considers the "body of Christ" to be the conception that reflects most fully the bond that unites Christ and the Holy Spirit with the whole body of believers.¹ At the same time, the church can be designated as the People of God, a rich concept that focuses on the community called by God and moving through history in a constant pilgrimage toward the eschatological consummation.² From another perspective, the Dominican theologian sees the church as the universal sacrament of salvation, the visible sign and instrument that efficaciously mediates divine grace to the entire world.³

Undergirding these and other images of the church,⁴ in Congar's view the reality of the church

¹See Yves Congar, Jesus Christ, trans. Luke O'Neill (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 140-44; idem, The Mystery of the Church, 25-30 and 75-95; and idem, Sainte Église, 26-30, 40-43.

²See Yves Congar, This Church That I Love, trans. Lucien Delafuente (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1969), 9-38; and idem, Sainte Église, 22-26.

³See Yves Congar, Un peuple messianique: L'Église, sacrement du salut. Salut et libération (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1975), 13-98; idem, This Church That I Love, 39-61; and idem, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," NRT 93 (1971): 786.

⁴Other images of the church considered by this author are society (Congar, Sainte Église, 30-37), communion (ibid., 37-40), organism (idem, The Mystery of the Church, 182), and temple of the Holy Spirit (idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 151-247).

embraces two aspects, "structure" and "life."¹ He emphasizes that the proper understanding of this distinction "is the key to Catholic ecclesiology,"² and failure to perceive the difference "is at the bottom of many errors."³ By "structure"⁴ Congar understands the aggregate of the means of grace necessary to constitute men and women as Christ's church. These means are the

¹Though already present in Congar's writings on the church at the start of his career (see Congar, Divided Christendom, 75-80, 90), this distinction was fully worked out by Congar in the years from World War II to the Second Vatican Council.

²Congar, Lay People, 167; see also *ibid.*, 110; and *idem*, The Wide World My Parish: Salvation and Its Problems, trans. Donald Attwater (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1961), 19. This distinction, which is foundational in Congar's ecclesiology (see MacDonald, The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar, 12-14; Stoneburner, 183; and Harnett, 237), allowed him to make significant contributions within Roman Catholic theology toward the clarification of crucial issues such as reform in the church (see Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 100, 136, 426, 428, 429) and the place and role of the laity (see *idem*, Lay People, 121-270), affirming simultaneously "the equality of all the faithful in the dignity of Christian life as well as their functional inequality as members" (*idem*, This Church That I Love, 23).

³Congar, Lay People, 278. See also *idem*, Vraie et fausse réforme, 305.

⁴Congar distinguishes structure from structures. For him, structure (singular) gives its own identity to the church, whereas structures (plural) are the exterior forms, stable yet transformable, which the structure (singular) takes through history. *Ibid.*, 57, n. 50; *idem*, "Ministères et structuration de l'Église," chap. in Ministères et communion ecclésiale (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 47. Thus he disagrees with Hans Küng, who employs the term "structures" (plural) to designate ecclesial realities such as laity, charisms, councils, which in Congar's view are part of the church's life. See Küng, Structures of the Church, 106-341.

deposit of faith, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry with its sacred powers whereby the one and the other are transmitted. Together they form the church as institution, in which resides the church's essence,¹ and which, on account of its divine origin, cannot be superseded nor reformed.² By "life" Congar understands the fellowship of men and women with God and with one another in Christ. Life is a communal principle; it is the activity exercised by men and women making the community-temple of God, forming the church as *societas fidelium*.³

¹Congar, *Lay People*, 28, 31, 32, 262, 355. See also idem, *Vraie et fausse réforme*, 92, 93, 411; idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 112; idem, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," chap. in *Dialogue between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism*, trans. Philip Loretz (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966), 203-5; idem, "Ministères et structuration," 46, 47; idem, *This Church That I Love*, 87; and idem, "The Council as an Assembly and the Church as Essentially Conciliar," in *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: Studies in the Nature and Role of the Church in the Modern World*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Alain Woodrow (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 74.

²"To want to reform the church on this level would mean to rise up against the work of God and thus to place oneself outside the truth." Yves Congar, "Church Reform and Luther's Reformation, 1517-1967," *LW* 14 (1967): 353.

³Congar, *Lay People*, 28, 31, 262. Where life is, there is development. In the intermediate period which separates the first from the second advent of Christ, everything in the life of the church is development. In this context, Congar warns that the church is in danger of falling into what he calls the temptation of the synagogue: to resist any improvement in the way she accomplishes God's work, to think that the current intermediate stage is already the final perfection. Idem, *Vraie et fausse réforme*, 157-78.

Particularly since the time of the Protestant Reformation, Roman Catholic theologians emphasized the hierarchical structure of the church, her institutional and juridical nature, at the expense of her life. "While Protestantism was making the Church a people without a priesthood, Catholic apologists reduced the Church to a priestly system without a Christian people," explains Congar.¹ This clerical view of the church, this absolutizing of the magisterium, had led to an exaggerated emphasis on the apostolicity of ministry, and the accent was heavily laid on apostolic succession.²

Reacting against this unbalanced view of the church, Congar affirmed that even though a certain tension is bound to remain between these two poles (i.e., structure and life) ecclesiology has to strive to maintain them in balance,³ since the church "is both communion with

¹Congar, Lay People, 47. See also idem, "L'ecclésiologie," 77-114; and idem, "Le diaconat dans la théologie des ministères," chap. in Le diacre dans l'Église et le monde d'aujourd'hui, Unam Sanctam, no. 59 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 126. Over against this tendency, Congar forcefully advocated for a recognition of the positive and active role of the laity in the church. See Beauchesne, 37-43, 79-88, 147-76.

²Congar, "Ministères et structuration," 34, 35; and idem, L'Église une, 191.

³Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 144. Congar observes that Protestants emphasize *life* to the exclusion of *structure*, while Catholics accentuate *structure* usually forgetting *life*. He contends that the Catholic "one-sidedness is not heretical, or even really erroneous, while one-sidedness in the sense of assembly of the faithful is erroneous and even, as worked

God in Christ *and* the means for attaining this fellowship."¹ During the 1940s and 1950s, however, Congar seems to have found it difficult to achieve this equilibrium, maintaining that chronologically speaking structure came first, that the hierarchy is ontologically anterior to the existence of the community. He contended that the structure--encompassing the deposit of faith, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry--existed antecedently to the faithful, to constitute and sustain them as their mother. "The Apostles were appointed to preach the gospel and minister the sacraments before there was any community of faithful."² Before existing as a community the church existed as an institution. "First comes the organization, and afterwards life and movement."³ The church-institution precedes the church-

out in Protestantism, heretical." This is so because, in his view, the Catholic emphasis on structure does not exclude the aspect of community, while the Protestant view involves an essential negation of structure, thus endangering the very existence of the church. Congar, Lay People, 47-50.

¹Ibid., 110 (italics in the original).

²Ibid., 172.

³Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 128. "Just as Adam was formed before he was given the breath of life, just as the dry bones were brought together and clothed with flesh before new life quickened them (Ezechiel xxxvii), so the Church was given a structure (something like the metal skeleton of our buildings today) before the Spirit was sent upon her." Congar, Lay People, 326. See also idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 93; and idem, Laity, Church and World, trans. Donald Attwater (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1960), 16.

communion, like the means precedes the end.¹ At the same time, however, Congar was prompt to remark that chronological precedence does not mean that the institution is more important than communion. Indispensable as it is for the church, structure belongs to her earthly condition and will pass away when Christ delivers up the kingdom to His Father, while the communion already realized on earth will endure forever in heaven.²

In spite of his explicit intention, by assigning temporal and ontological priority to the structure, Congar's view remained faithful to the "hierarchological" understanding which prevailed for centuries in Roman Catholic theology.³ Increasingly dissatisfied with an approach that placed the ministry before and outside the community of believers, he has come more recently to accentuate the fact that Christ instituted a "structured

¹Congar, Lay People, 29-31. See also idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 92, 373. According to Congar, the church first existed in God without yet existing as such, not even as "structure," in two ways: in divine predestination, and in the incarnation of Christ, who in becoming man virtually contained the whole church, having in Himself all the properties or energies by which the church was to exist. See idem, Lay People, 30; and idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 92.

²Ibid., 373, 411; idem, Lay People, 32, 110. The church is in danger of falling into what Congar calls "pharisaism." This does occur whenever she allows the means to become the end. Excessive emphasis on the ecclesiastical apparatus can lead one to neglecting the life of the community and to overlooking the vital role of the Holy Spirit. Idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 142-45.

³See p. 75 above.

community." Thus, in a 1970 article, which he himself characterized as a *retractatio*,¹ the Dominican theologian recognized that what was founded with the twelve apostles was not merely the structure but also the community of disciples. In this new approach the community appears as the enveloping reality within which the instituted sacramental ministries are placed, and the action of Christ and His Holy Spirit is seen both on the hierarchy (structure) and on the community (life).²

Throughout this development Congar has attempted to achieve a closer integration of structure and life in the understanding of the church, avoiding at the same time to call in question--even less to deny--the existence per

¹Yves Congar, "Mon cheminement dans la théologie du laïcat et des ministères," chap. in Ministères et communion ecclésiale (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 9-30. English translation: idem, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," The Jurist 32 (1972): 169-88. He referred to this article as his *retractatio* in idem, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," 792, n. 13.

²Congar's early approach "translates into a linear scheme of this type: Christ makes the hierarchy and the hierarchy makes the Church as community of faithful. Such a scheme, even if it contains a part of the truth, presents inconveniences." On the one hand, explains the Dominican theologian, pastoral reality and the New Testament offer a much richer view. On the other, this scheme implies a total passivity on the part of the laity. Congar, "My Path-Findings," 175-81; idem, "Apostolicité de ministère," 51-94; idem, "Le diaconat dans la théologie des ministères," 129, 130; and idem, Laity, Church and World, 71, 72.

se of both poles as part of the church's nature.¹ Leaving aside the Thomistic causal approach that considers the apostolic hierarchical ministry to be the instrumental cause of the church,² in later writings he opted for the concept of community as the starting point for his

¹Thus, in 1977 Congar asserts that "one should not separate, but always consider together, the reality of the spiritual life and the means by which it is communicated and expressed in the earthly visible Church." Congar, "Ministry in the Early Church and Subsequent Historical Evolution," in Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church. Hong Kong, February 27--March 5, 1977, ed. Pedro S. de Achutegui (Manila, Philippines: Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, 1977), 348. Even though in his most recent writings Congar considers the church as a community, he still maintains the institutional aspect of the church, the structure given her by Christ, as part of his ecclesiology. See idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 3 vols., trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 2:39, 43, 46, 54; idem, Un peuple messianique, 37, 75, 80, 81; and idem, "One Mediator," in The Ministry in the Church, by the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1982), 111.

²In 1952, Congar explained that the apostolic college is the efficient cause of the church. Once she is established it becomes the formal cause by becoming immanent in the group as its organizing authority. The hierarchical ministry succeeds to the apostles' function as the formal cause indwelling in the church. Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 139, 140. In 1961 Congar still emphasized the apostles' role as efficient instrumental cause of the church. See idem, "Inspiration des Écritures," 36, 37; idem, Sainte Église, 192, 93. At this stage Congar seems to have shared Journet's view of the apostolic hierarchy as the efficient cause of the church. See Charles Journet, The Church of the Word Incarnate: An Essay in Speculative Theology, Vol. 1, The Apostolic Hierarchy, trans. A. H. C. Downes (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 16-155. Years later, however, he stated that "c'est une catégorie valable et nous pouvons en justifier l'usage, mais c'est aussi une catégorie qui peut favoriser une conception d'ensemble trompeuse, voire fausse." Congar, "Ministères et structuration," 35.

ecclesiology,¹ bringing together the structure established by Christ and the Spirit-breathed life of the community of believers. In his latest book, written in 1984, while acknowledging that the distinction between structure and life has been criticized for being inadequate,² he still retained the two concepts.³ In spite of his recent emphasis on the community aspect, for him the church continues to have a structure willed and instituted by Jesus Christ.⁴

¹Congar, "My Path-Findings," 174-77; idem, "Ministères et structuration," 34-41; idem, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," 787, 792.

²This is probably Congar's reaction to T. I. MacDonald's criticism. See the latter's The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar, 279-86.

³Congar, The Word and the Spirit, 81, 82. According to Harnett, 324, the loosening of the dichotomy between structure and life in Congar's thought is "due very likely in part to his dialogue with Hans Küng."

⁴Several authors have noticed the evolution towards a more balanced perspective in Congar's thought, and the general consensus is that the shift in emphasis does not mean a negation of the structure of the church. "Emphasis on the church as an institution . . . persists in Congar's mature interpretation of the church as 'structured communion.'" Dietrich, 26. "The basic distinction of his classical period, structure and life, has continued to find a place in his work. . . . Statements from the 1940's and 1970's could be placed side by side and it would be difficult to date the statements accurately." Lehning, 165; cf. for instance Congar, The Mystery of the Church, 26 (written in 1937) with idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:12 (originally published in 1979). "In works written after Vatican II . . . Congar attempts to make a closer connection between the institutional elements and the community, but he does not abandon the basic structure-life model." Harnett, 241. See also Beauchesne, 221; Louch, 240; Gottemoeller, 95, 165; Jagdeo, 252; MacDonald, Church and World, 124; and

Against the background of the dialectic of structure and life in the church, Congar discusses all major ecclesiological problems in relation to the four attributes of the church which have been traditionally recognized since the First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), namely unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.¹

The fourth attribute of the church--apostolicity--is of special importance for this dissertation. As early as 1948 Congar dealt with apostolicity from two different perspectives: apostolicity as a property and apostolicity as a note of the church. As a property, apostolicity is the identity of work, ministry, and mission of the church

Famerée, "L'ecclésiologie du Père Yves Congar," 405, 408.

¹Thus, the Dominican theologian addresses the ecumenical problem in the light of the unity of the church, understood as a gift of God accomplished throughout her catholicity. From this basis Congar pursues the ecumenical search for means to facilitate the integration of diversity into the unity of a single communion. Among the ways towards unity, Congar came to see "re-reception" and the "hierarchy of truths" as two particularly promising concepts, from his perspective, for the cause of ecumenism. See Congar, Diversity and Communion, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1984), 126-33, 171-77; idem, "On the 'Hierarchia Veritatum'," in The Heritage of the Early Church, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, no. 195, ed. David Neiman and Margaret Schatkin, trans. Uta Kriefall (Rome: Pontificiae Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973), 409-20. In a similar way, Congar examines the need and extent of self-reform within the church from the perspective of the church's holiness, which he understands simultaneously as a divine gift and a human task. See Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 99-121; idem, L'Église une, 123-47; idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:52-64.

with the work, ministry, and mission of the apostles. As a note, apostolicity is the expression of a continuity without breach from the apostles until the present, which allows men and women to recognize the true church. Especially since the sixteenth century, informs Congar, this note has included three correlated aspects, depending on whether apostolicity is considered from the point of view of origin, doctrine, or succession of ministers.¹

With the passing of time, Congar came to consider apostolicity essentially as apostolicity of doctrine and apostolicity of ministry, stressing the intimate relationship between these two dimensions.² He gradually balanced his view, which at first was principally and spontaneously clerical, recognizing the decisive character of apostolicity of faith,³ understood in a dynamic way.⁴ In his most recent writings, Congar sees apostolicity primarily as the communion of the whole church in the faith of the apostles. "It is only within this communion

¹Congar, "Apostolicité," 1:728-30; idem, Sainte Église, 181-85.

²Congar, L'Église une, 214; idem, "Composantes et idée," 69.

³Congar, "My Path-Findings," 175-81; idem, "Apostolicité de ministère," 51-94; and idem, Laity, Church and World, 71, 72.

⁴Yves Congar, "Une, sainte, catholique et apostolique," chap. in Un concile pour notre temps, Informations catholique internationales, Rencontres, no. 62 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961), 243, 244.

that the 'apostolic succession' in the strict sense of the term, in other words, the succession of the bishops, can take place."¹

Considered as a whole, Congar's ecclesiology has shifted from a structure-ecclesiology focused on Christ and His earthly ministry, to a life-ecclesiology centered on the Holy Spirit as the agent of the glorified Christ.² Still, throughout this shift of emphasis the Dominican theologian attempted to keep both aspects as integral parts of his doctrine of the church.³

¹Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:45.

²Congar noticed that Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), whom he profoundly admired, had shifted from a view of the church dominated by the Holy Spirit to one leaning more towards the institutional dimension proceeding from the incarnation of Christ. See the account of Möhler's theological shift in Yves Congar, "Note sur l'évolution et l'interprétation de la pensée de Möhler," RSPT 27 (1938): 205-12; and idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 142-44. Interestingly enough, Congar himself gradually moved in the opposite direction. In his early works the main thrust was on Christ as the founder of the church and the continuation of His work by the apostolic ministry during His physical absence. See for instance Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 15, 91-97; and idem, Lay People, 110, 262, 278, 353-55. Later writings show more emphasis on the permanent presence of the glorified Lord through the action of the Holy Spirit. He no longer conceives the church "only with reference to the Word Incarnate, but also to the Spirit in the variety of gifts and services." Idem, "Ministry in the Early Church," 354. See also idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:39-51.

³In 1969, for instance, the Dominican theologian criticized the eminently pneumatological ecclesiology presented by Hans Küng in his book The Church, which in Congar's opinion failed to give proper recognition to the Christological aspect of ecclesiology, i.e., the structure of the church as the means to join the believer to the incarnate Word. Yves Congar, "L'Église de Hans Küng,"

Congar's Concept of Apostolic Succession

At first, the Roman Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession strikes one as rather simple and quite easy to define. Yet, as the first chapter of this dissertation has shown, it has been grasped and advocated in many different ways.¹ Congar is not unaware of the difficulties inherent in the attempt to define this doctrine, and in several of his works he endeavored to make clear his own understanding.²

RSPT 53 (1969): 701, 702. Ten years later, writing about the relationship between visible sacramental acts coming from Jesus Christ through apostolic succession, and the spiritual inward influence of the Holy Spirit, Congar emphasized that "both poles are necessary," for they "are united and complement one another." Idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:45. As late as 1984 he summarized his thought in this way: "No Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 1. See also idem, "Pneumatologie ou 'Christomonisme' dans la tradition latine?" ETL 45 (1969): 394-416.

¹See pp. 17-24, 43-50 above.

²In the article "Apostolicité," 1:728-30 (reprinted in Sainte Église, 181-85), Congar briefly touched on the notion of apostolic succession and its components. But it is in "Composantes et idée de la Succession Apostolique" (published in 1966) and in L'Église une, sainte, catholique et apostolique (published in 1970, probably the closest to a systematic ecclesiology that our author ever wrote, according to Nichols, Yves Congar, 60) that Congar offered the most detailed treatment of his concept of apostolic succession. Some of his essays published in Ministères et communion ecclésiale such as "Apostolicité de ministère et apostolicité de doctrine: essai d'explication de la Réaction protestante et de la Tradition catholique," (51-94), and "La consécration épiscopale et la succession apostolique constituent-elles chef d'une Église locale ou membre du collège?" (123-40), are also helpful to understand his stance regarding this topic. Since these works have not

Succession to the Apostolic College

The doctrine of apostolic succession necessarily presupposes a specific concept of apostle as the first link in the chain of succession. It is a well-known fact that there have been and still are diverse opinions and interpretations regarding the New Testament concept of the term.¹ Congar's own definition of apostle is of major significance for this study of his view on apostolic succession.

Defining an Apostle

One's view of the New Testament concept of apostle depends, to a certain degree, on how one understands its relation to the Twelve. Congar argues that whether or not one regards the Synoptic texts which refer to the apostles as redactional, it remains beyond question that the Twelve were selected by Jesus Himself as a special group of disciples. Together with other scholars, he holds that during the first decades of Christianity the use of the term apostle was somehow loose, including not only the Twelve but other "apostles" as well.² Several factors

been translated into English, whenever I have deemed necessary to quote verbatim from them my own translation appears in the body of the text, while the French original appears in footnotes.

¹See pp. 43, 44 above.

²Such as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14); James (Gal 1:19); Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7); Apollos (1 Cor 4:6, 9); Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1; 2:6). See

seem to have contributed to the limiting of the concept as time went by. Apparently, Luke may have been the one who proposed the identification of the Twelve with the apostles, explains he, thus creating the institutional apostolate as a close entity in the church.¹

Still, Congar remains cautious not to draw too sharp a contrast between the so-called Pauline and Lucan concepts, and warns that it is not possible to find in the New Testament rigorous indications about the organizational structure of the church. More specifically, the New Testament vocabulary alone cannot give a final answer to the complex questions posed by the institutional church, which was developed and defined more precisely only in the course of time in response to challenges against her identity and organization. Therefore, concludes Congar, the apostolicity of the church is relatively independent from the exact meaning of the word "apostle" in the New Testament.²

More important than terminological considerations, for the discussion of apostolic succession, is Congar's theological concept of the apostolate gathered from the data provided by the New Testament. An *apostolos* is

Yves Congar, "Apostel (Theologie)," Lexikon des Mittelalters (1977-1992), 1:783.

¹Congar, L'Église une, 182-84.

²Ibid., 184, 185. See also idem, "Ministères et structuration," 31.

essentially an envoy, someone sent, who in the case of the Christian *apostolos* is sent by Jesus Christ to continue His mission.¹ This idea is emphasized by the Aramaic word "sent," *šālīaḥ*, which Congar quotes to explain the juridical relationship between the envoy and the sending one: "the one sent represents the person of his master and has the same authority. . . . This is, undoubtedly, the whole idea of the apostolate instituted by Christ," affirms Congar.² He frequently remarks that, according to the Jewish notion of *šālīaḥ*, "the messenger as such forms one person, one subject of rights and activities with the sender."³ Asserting that the principle of identity of mission, which establishes that the authority of the sending one passes onto the one sent, is "the valuable

¹Yves Congar, "The Apostolate," chap. in Priest and Layman, trans. P. F. Hepburne-Scott (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 3, 4; idem, "Theology of the Apostolate," WorldM 7 (1956): 283, 284.

²Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 107. See also idem, Lay People, 274.

³Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 311. See also similar expressions in the following works: idem, The Meaning of Tradition, Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, sec. I, vol. 3, trans. A. N. Woodrow (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964), 50; idem, "La hiérarchie comme service selon le Nouveau Testament et les documents de la Tradition," in L'Épiscopat et l'Église universelle, ed. Y. Congar and B.-D. Dupuy (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 81; and idem, Power and Poverty in the Church, trans. Jennifer Nicholson (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1965), 38.

aspect" of the Jewish *šālīaḥ*,¹ Congar retains this notion in his more recent writings to illustrate the nature of the apostolate: the apostle represents the one who sends him.² Being Christ's "representatives," the apostles participated in His authority to carry on His mission. The apostolate always includes the idea of a procurator of authority, maintains the Dominican theologian.³ He was aware, however, that one cannot equate without qualifications Christ's mission with the apostles' mission, a theme to which I return later on.⁴

An important aspect in Congar's view of the apostolate is his understanding of the apostles' role and function. According to Congar's early writings the apostles' mission involved doctrinal, priestly, and pastoral activities⁵ as a continuation of Christ's own

¹Congar, *L'Église une*, 217; see also idem, "Composantes et idée," 72.

²Congar, "One Mediator," 111. Acknowledging that the correlation between the Jewish *šālīaḥ* and the Christian *apostolos* is a disputed matter among scholars (see idem, *Tradition and Traditions*, 311; and idem, *L'Église une*, 197, n. 37), in his more recent writings Congar is cautious in the use of this notion.

³Congar, "Inspiration des Écritures," 42; and idem, *Sainte Église*, 199, 200.

⁴See p. 135 below.

⁵Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 36-39. In Congar's opinion these three roles are clearly attested in the book of Acts: the apostles by their preaching bear witness to the salvation accomplished by Christ's passion and resurrection, they are ministers of the sacred mysteries, and they are also heads of the various

mission.¹ Probably as a result of the animated discussions concerning apostolic succession carried on in the 1950s, the Dominican scholar's writings started to differentiate, still in a sketchy way, between these activities, which constituted the apostles' ministerial function, and their foundational role in the church.² In more recent works he explains in greater detail the two basic functions of the apostles. On the one hand, as

communities of the faithful being so constituted by their teaching function. From the standpoint of the government of the Christian communities (i.e., the third function mentioned above) the authority of the apostles includes the legislative, judicial, and punitive powers. Although the vocabulary of that time did not use these terms, Congar insists that what they indicated subsequently is already to be found everywhere in the New Testament writings. For the legislative power he refers his readers to Acts 15:28 and 1 Cor 7:10, 12; for the judicial power, 1 Cor 5:4, 12; and for the punitive power, 1 Cor 5 and Matt 18:17. Ibid. Congar emphasizes that the apostles understood their authority as loving service for the sake of Jesus. Idem, "The Historical Development of Authority in the Church," 121.

¹Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 105, 106.

²Though not completely developed, such a differentiation appeared for the first time in Congar's writings in 1953 (Congar, "Du nouveau," 30, 36; and idem, Lay People, 276). A more elaborated statement of the distinction is found in idem, La foi et la théologie (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), 43, 44, written in 1958-59. Before adopting this distinction between foundational and ministerial functions in the apostles, Congar differentiated between "function" and "personal situation." For him, the apostles' ministerial function belongs to the institution--not to the person--and therefore can be handed down to successors. Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 72, 412, 427.

eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection,¹ they were the foundation of the church, bearing the charisms of revelation and inspiration. On the other, they were the ministers of the churches they had founded, enabled to discharge this function by the doctrinal, priestly, and pastoral powers received from Christ.² The relevance of this distinction for Congar's concept of apostolic succession is apparent in the following pages.

Apostolic Succession: Definition

Roman Catholic teaching holds that Catholic bishops are the successors of the apostles. This assertion is a critical point in ecumenical discussions regarding apostolicity.³ It seems that Congar's deep commitment to the cause of Christian unity explains why,

¹"The apostles were essentially witnesses, heralds of the Good News, preachers and teachers." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 21.

²Congar, "Composantes et idée," 62; idem, L'Église une, 224. The second apostolic function includes the exercise of the three offices indicated in Matt 28:18-20, namely preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and pastoral government. Idem, "Composantes et idée," 69. See also idem, "Apostel," 1:782. The distinction between the apostles' foundational role and their ministerial functions has been increasingly emphasized by Roman Catholic theologians. See Martelet, 185-98; Journet, The Primacy of Peter, 53-57; and Fernández Jiménez, 275-343.

³Congar, L'Église une, 192, 193. The "questions touching on the ministry constitute the most stubborn breaking-points between disunited Churches." Idem, Challenge to the Church: The Case of Archbishop Lefebvre, trans. Paul Inwood (Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1976), 21.

especially in the years following the Second Vatican Council, his writings exhibit a definite effort on his part to clarify the exact meaning of the Roman Catholic view by a careful explanation and qualification of its formulation.

Apostolic succession: limits

Congar's doctrine of apostolic succession is built on the traditional concept of apostle, which includes only those witnesses to the risen Lord who, by virtue of the mission and powers bestowed by Christ, became the foundation of the church. This group was constituted first of all by the Twelve, with the subsequent addition of Paul.¹

As he evolved in his understanding of apostolic succession, Congar referred more and more to the need to acknowledge basic dissimilarities between the apostles and their successors. At first, he just mentioned the existence of those differences without much detail of their nature.² The need to explain such differences prompted him to distinguish, in the late 1950s and during

¹Congar, L'Église une, 194. For the traditional concept of apostle, see Honoré Coppieters, "Apostles," The Catholic Encyclopedia, (1907-1912), 1:627, 628; Antonio Javierre, "Apostle," Sacramentum Mundi, English edition (1968), 1:77; Rengstorf, 1:431; and Francis H. Agnew, "Apostle," The New Dictionary of Theology (1987), 49.

²See Congar, "Du nouveau," 30, 36; and idem, Lay People, 276.

the 1960s, between two different functions of the apostles.¹ He affirms that bishops succeed the apostles in their ministry only, and not in their special role as founders of the church related to the *ephapax* (uniqueness) of the apostolate.² Bishops succeed to the apostles' powers as leaders of the church, powers which are transmissible, but not to the apostles' charisms of revelation and inspiration granted them as founders of the church, which are nontransferable.³ In this context one could even say that bishops succeed less to the apostles than to the first ministers established by the apostles (or by one apostle) to govern the churches the latter had founded.⁴

Searching for a broader foundation for his ecclesiology, Congar developed an inclusive concept of collegiality drawing mainly from the Orthodox concept of

¹See pp. 88, 89 above.

²Congar, "Composantes et idée," 62. The apostles' exceptional role as eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection and founders of the church is indissolubly tied to the unique historical time of the incarnation. Ibid. "The apostolate . . . belongs to the sphere of the Incarnation, of the coming of the Son of Man, whose own mission it continues." Idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 106.

³Yves Congar, "Conclusion," chap. in Le concile et les conciles: contribution à l'histoire de la vie conciliaire de l'Église (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960), 297, 298; and idem, L'Église une, 224.

⁴Congar, "Composantes et idée," 62.

sobornost.¹ In fact, he introduced the word "collegiality" into the Roman Catholic theological vocabulary ten years before the Second Vatican Council.² From this collegial perspective, too, he detects basic differences between the apostolate and the episcopate. Even considered as a college, bishops do not have the revelatory charism which the apostles had.³ With the exception of the bishop of Rome, individual bishops have neither infallibility in their teaching nor universal authority over the church. It is only as a college that bishops enjoy that authority, for apostolic succession is a succession from college to college, emphasizes Congar.⁴

¹Before Vatican Council II, Congar considered collegiality to combine together the meaning of *collegium*, *congregatio*, *communio*, *communitas*, *societas*, *corpus*, fellowship, and unanimity. Congar, Lay People, 282, 283. For Congar's comments on the Second Vatican Council concept of collegiality see idem, Le Concile au jour le jour: Troisième session (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965), 44-46.

²See Congar's own statement in Granfield, 258; see also Jossua, 107.

³"Les Apôtres ont été source: leurs successeurs ne le sont pas. Ils rentrent dans un courant dont ils ne sont pas les initiateurs. Ils ne transmettent qu'en recevant." Congar, L'Église une, 214; idem, "Composantes et idée," 69.

⁴Apostolic powers were given to the apostles as a college and not individually. For that reason, explains Congar, the power to forgive sins was not reiterated to the apostle Thomas when the risen Lord appeared to him eight days after He bestowed that power to the group of ten apostles. Yves Congar, "Collège, primauté . . . conférences épiscopales: Quelques notes," EspVie 96 (1986): 388, n. 12. See also idem, L'Église une, 225; idem, "La consécration épiscopale," 123-40; and idem,

Leaving out specific cases such as the bishop of Rome who succeeds Peter, and whose line of succession is claimed to be solidly established, each individual bishop is the successor to the apostles as a body.¹

It follows that for Congar both bishops and the pope are the successors to the apostles' ministerial mission and powers, but not in the same way. Bishops succeed to the apostolic college as a body, collectively. Therefore it is not possible to speak of a personal successor to John, James, or Paul.² At the same time, the bishop of Rome personally succeeds Peter in the specific role he exercised in the midst of the apostles. Peter alone received the privilege of a universal pastorate constituting him not only the head of the apostolic college but also of the universal church, a prerogative inherited only by the occupant of the Roman see.³

"Conclusion," 301-14.

¹Congar, "Composantes et idée," 63; idem, L'Église une, 195, 196. See also idem, La foi et la théologie, 164.

²Though sometimes Congar alludes to the bishop of Rome as successor of Peter and Paul (see for instance Congar, Fifty Years of Catholic Theology, 50; idem, L'Église une, 223, 244; idem, "Ministry in the Early Church," 349), usually he considers the pope to be the successor of Peter alone.

³Congar, L'Église une, 246-48. For Congar's discussion of the differences between Peter and the other apostles, see p. 114 below.

Even so, according to Congar apostolic succession is not merely the uninterrupted continuity in the occupancy of an episcopal chair. That would be a material succession which could even occur with an usurpation of the office or a transition to heresy. As much as the mere presence of a bishop in a particular chair does not necessarily mean that there is apostolic succession, the transitory absence of a bishop from that see does not mean the interruption of succession. The latter subsists in the college of bishops and can be actualized again when a new bishop is appointed to that chair.¹

Nor is apostolic succession purely and exclusively an act of sacramental validity.² Congar rejects the view held by the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement who considered succession as a kind of fluid which would pass from the one validly ordained to the one to be ordained. It is this conception that allowed the *episcopi vagantes* to appear, a miserable caricature of true apostolic succession in Congar's opinion.³

¹Congar, "Composantes et idée," 63, 64; idem, L'Église une, 205.

²According to traditional Roman Catholic theology, the correct matter and form, as well as the right disposition and faith of the recipient, are necessary for the valid and efficacious administration of the sacraments. Raphael Schulte, "Sacraments," Sacramentum Mundi, English ed. (1968), 5:380.

³Congar, "Composantes et idée," 64; idem, L'Église une, 206. See also idem, "Apostolicité de ministère," 88; idem, "Le diaconat dans la théologie des ministères," 125;

If apostolic succession is not, strictly speaking, a continuation of all the apostles' functions, if it does not merely consist of a mechanical continuity in the possession of a chair on the basis of sacramental transmission of powers, what, then, are the essential components of genuine apostolic succession in Congar's view?

Apostolic succession: components

In 1948 Congar mentioned two "components" of the notion of apostolic succession: valid ordination and authentic mission.¹ This position reflects his early emphasis on the identity of mission between Christ, the apostles, and their successors,² and goes hand in hand with the lack of distinction between the apostles' foundational function and their ministerial role observed in his works of this period.³ Similarly, in 1956 he

and idem, Challenge to the Church, 24. *Episcopi vagantes*, "wandering bishops," are those who have been consecrated in an irregular manner, or who, having been regularly consecrated, are in communion with no recognized see. ODCC (1983), s.v. "Episcopi vagantes."

¹Congar, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:730; idem, Sainte Église, 185. "The consecration of ministers is jointly the work of the Holy spirit and the apostolic body. The authority of the apostles is, as it were, equated with that of God himself." Idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 120.

²See Congar, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:729; idem, The Mystery of the Church, 35, 36; and idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 106.

³See p. 88 above.

defined apostolic succession as "a handing-down of mission with its legitimacy and the powers belonging to any mission."¹

Though valid consecration through the laying on of hands remains one of the two essential components of apostolic succession in Congar's later writings,² the stress is laid increasingly on a new component, namely fidelity to the apostles' faith. Thus, in 1963 he affirmed that ministers are the direct inheritors of the apostles as much by the legitimacy of their succession as

¹Congar, "Theology of the Apostolate," 284; idem, "The Apostolate," 4. In Congar's view, apostolic succession is "conceived not as the pure sacramental transmission of a power, but as the continuity of the mission with its envoy-authority, its content of faith or of message, its soul of grace and of charity." Idem, Blessed Is the Peace of My Church, trans. Salvator Attanasio (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1973), 31.

²Thus, in 1974 Congar affirms that the sacramental character of the episcopal consecration "est radicalement la forme concrète de la succession apostolique." Yves Congar, "Église de Pierre, Église de Paul, Église de Jean: destin d'un thème oecuménique," in The Ecumenical World of Orthodox Civilization, ed. Andrew Blane (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 174. As late as 1986, Congar maintains that "l'ordination sacramentelle . . . de l'évêque est un élément décisif de la 'succession apostolique'." Idem, "Collège, primauté," 390. Ordination through the laying on of hands is the only means to join the ministry of the church to that of the apostles. Idem, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," 787, 791, 794, 795. "La consécration sacramentelle met les ministères ainsi institués dans la continuité du ministère apostolique institué par le Christ." Idem, "Le diaconat dans la théologie des ministères," 124. There cannot be succession without ordination, for its goal is not only to assure purity and identity of doctrine, but also to maintain a true sacramental ministry. Congar, "Composantes et idée," 66; idem, L'Église une, 208.

by the genuineness of what they transmit.¹ A few years later, identity of faith becomes for Congar not only one characteristic but the first condition to apostolic succession.² "I personally have come to see not merely the place but the primacy and decisive character of apostolicity of faith" over the validity of the consecratory rite, he admitted in 1971.³

Safeguarding the doctrine taught by the apostles is indeed a significant element in Congar's growing concept of apostolic succession. Succession is essentially succession into a chair, a *cathedra*. As the formal aspect of apostolic succession is unity of mission, so its core is identity of doctrine. The bishops' teaching is a rule for the faithful, but bishops are in turn under the rule of the apostles' teaching. The episcopal function carries on authority, yet is not by

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 329.

²Congar, "Composantes et idée," 65; idem, L'Église une, 206.

³Congar, "My Path-Findings," 180. Various Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians were, at the time, calling for a greater recognition of apostolicity of doctrine in the understanding of apostolic succession. See, for instance, the "memorandum" jointly issued by the ecumenical institutes in Germany, "Reform and Recognition of Church Offices," 390-401; Schlink, "Apostolic Succession," 50-83; Küng, "What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" 28-35; Antonio Javierre, "Le thème de la succession des Apôtres dans la littérature chrétienne primitive," in L'Épiscopat et l'Église universelle, Unam Sanctam, no. 39, ed. Yves Congar and B.-D. Dupuy (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 171-221; and idem, "Notes," 16-27.

itself its own standard. The exercise of an office in the church is conditioned by its fidelity to the living tradition of the apostles, made present throughout history by the Holy Spirit.¹

In practical terms, succession of doctrine is tied to the question of the criterion of orthodoxy. On the local level, explains Congar, this criterion is the bishop, who through apostolic succession has received the *charisma veritatis*.² On the universal and decisive level, it is agreement with the other Roman Catholic churches, and particularly with the bishop of Rome.³

¹Congar, "Composantes et idée," 66, 67; idem, L'Église une, 208-10. For a presentation of Congar's concept of tradition see pp. 145-51 below.

²Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 4.26.2 (ANF, 1:497). According to Congar there are three main interpretations of Irenaeus' controverted statement: (1) *charisma veritatis* means a grace of infallibility or at least of orthodoxy, received at ordination with the succession; (2) *charisma veritatis* indicates objective truth received through tradition, in the objective sense; (3) *charisma veritatis* refers to personal spiritual gifts granted by the Holy Spirit upon the apostles' successors. Congar, L'Église une, 210, n. 73; idem, "Composantes et idée," 68, n. 29; idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:48, n. 18; and idem, The Word and the Spirit, 69. The Dominican theologian does not explicitly approve or disapprove any of these views. Based on the tendency of his later writings one could think that he would be more comfortable with the third one, though each one of them may have had some degree of truth for him. See idem, "Magisterium, Theologians, the Faithful and the Faith," DL 31 (1981): 553.

³Congar, "Composantes et idée," 67-69; idem, L'Église une, 210, 211.

Apostolic succession, therefore, cannot be separated nor isolated from the transmission of apostolic doctrine. Legitimate ordination, conditioned by permanence in the true faith, bestows divine grace that enables bishops to teach right doctrine with authority. Congar acknowledges that bishops remain bound to the canonical Scriptures and to the tradition of the apostles, but these cannot be considered, as Protestants do, as staying outside of the church, judging her from the exterior. There is a conjunction of objective criteria and the institution (or office). Preservation of tradition and profession of true faith are assured by the succession in the instituted ministry.¹

From the perspective of faithfulness to the apostles' teachings, Congar affirms that apostolic succession is inseparable from the apostolicity of the whole church. In fact, they determine and guarantee each other. In this context he recognizes that in a sense "the layman is, like the bishop, a successor of the Apostles."² At the same time, he warns that apostolic succession

¹Congar, "Composantes et idée," 69, 70; idem, L'Église une, 214, 215. See also idem, Tradition and Traditions, 292, 293.

²Paul VI quoted by Jean Guitton, The Pope Speaks: Dialogues of Paul VI with Jean Guitton, trans. Anne Fremantle and Christopher Fremantle (New York: Meredith Press, 1968), 253. Congar referred to this statement of Paul VI in L'Église une, 212; I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:49, n. 24; and "Apostolicité de ministère," 63.

should not be confused with the apostolicity of the whole church, just as one should not overemphasize one to the detriment of the other.¹ As Congar sees it, such is the case with the Protestant conception, which is bound up with a humiliation or depreciation of ministry as one of the elements that constitute the church.² While insisting that the apostolicity of the whole church takes place above all in the permanence of apostolic faith, the Dominican scholar refuses to leave the apostles' powers outside of the notion of apostolicity, neither does he exclude from this notion the succession of ministry.³ In

¹Similarly, A. Javierre holds that "la tan decantada 'sucesión apostólica de toda la Iglesia' no sólo es una fórmula arbitraria, sino que en vez de clarificar el tema, lo confunde sin remedio." Antonio M. Javierre, "Unidad eclesial. Primer encuentro africano de Fe y Constitución," DiálEc 9, no. 35/36 (1974): 498, quoted in Garijo-Guembe, 4:126.

²Nichols correctly observes that "with respect to the primacy of apostolic doctrine over apostolic succession in the narrower sense, Congar is similarly careful to avoid either the defining of a Catholic position over against the Reformers in these matters, or the simple collapsing of the former into the perspective of the latter" (Yves Congar, 89). Louch, 138, explains that for Congar "a true and full theology of apostolicity must include both the Catholic emphasis on apostolicity of ministry (episcopal consecration, continuance of the apostolic college) and the Protestant emphasis on apostolicity of doctrine (fidelity to the Word, to Sacred Scripture, to the teaching of the apostles)."

³Congar, L'Église une, 211-13. See also idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:45; and idem, "Apostolicité de ministère," 63. Congar refuses to follow Hans Küng's effort towards a revalorization of the apostolicity of the whole church, because Küng's approach is bound to his insistence on the idea that the church as a whole is the successor of the apostles (see Küng, The Church, 455-61;

other words, Congar upholds the need to achieve a synthesis between apostolic succession, conceived for a long time in isolation from the continuity of apostolic faith, and the apostolicity of the whole church.¹

In brief, Congar's initial insistence on succession of ministry was subsequently compensated with an accent on succession of doctrine and faith, but neither aspect has ever been suppressed or eliminated in his thought.² His efforts rather were directed towards

idem, "What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" 28-35). In Congar's opinion, Küng's view disregards the foundation of "powers" in the apostles by Christ establishing a hierarchical authority at the beginning of a direct succession of instituted ministers. Congar, "L'Église de Hans Küng," 703. For that reason, he considers Küng's The Church to be "insatisfaisant pour une théologie de l'apostolicité et surtout de la 'succession apostolique'." Congar, L'Église une, 182, n. 2.

¹"La vérité consisterait, pensons-nous, à chercher une synthèse entre une 'succession apostolique' trop longtemps isolée de l'apostolicité de toute l'Église, surtout dans la continuité de la foi, et cette apostolicité." Congar, "L'Église de Hans Küng," 703. Quite recently, Congar recalled the importance of the "unity between the 'apostolic succession' of the Church's ministers and the apostolicity of the whole body." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 131. See also idem, "The Conciliar Structure or Regime of the Church," in The Ecumenical Council--Its Significance in the Constitution of the Church, Concilium, no. 167, ed. Peter Huizing and Knut Walf, trans. Francis McDonagh (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 4.

²See Congar, "Apostolicité de ministère," 92, 93. "Apostolicité de foi ecclésiale et succession apostolique," affirms recently Congar, "ne sont pas étrangers l'un à l'autre." Idem, "Collège, primauté," 390. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has been emphasizing the same fact. Thus he writes that "there is . . . no separation of the material from the formal aspect (succession in respect to the word, succession in respect

harmonizing apostolicity of doctrine and apostolicity of ministry without sacrificing one for the other.¹

Apostolic Succession: Evidences

For Congar, apostolic succession was not a late creation of the church. He contends that its origin is not to be sought in the Greek world,² nor in the Gnostic heretics of the second century,³ but in the institution of

to the imposition of hands)." Joseph Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 246.

¹Congar argues that the whole tradition of the church "revient à harmoniser l'aspect d'apostolicité de doctrine et celui d'apostolicité de ministère sans sacrifier l'un à l'autre comme les Réformateurs nous semblent l'avoir fait." Congar, "Apostolicité de ministère," 86. "Les réformateurs protestants ont misé exclusivement sur l'apostolicité de doctrine, laissant de côté l'apostolicité de ministère." Idem, "Collège, primauté," 390. See also idem, "Fifty Years in Quest of Unity," in Lausanne 77: Fifty Years of Faith and Order, Faith and Order Paper no. 82 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), 31, 32.

²The principle of succession had been recognized and accepted in the philosophical and political life of Greece long before the appearance of Christianity. Congar, L'Église une, 216; idem, "Composantes et idée," 71. Congar warns, however, that to attribute a Greek origin to the Christian idea of succession is to ignore the intimate continuity between Christianity and Jewish ideas and institutions. Idem, L'Église une, 198.

³It has been suggested that Christian apologists like Irenaeus and Tertullian when referring to apostolic succession merely made use of the arguments employed by the heretics and turned those arguments against them. While admitting that the Gnostic challenge may have prompted Irenaeus to formulate his theology of succession, Congar emphasizes that the idea of succession was so common in pagan as well as Jewish communities that it appeared as a natural category to Christians. Congar,

the apostolate by Christ as known to us through the New Testament and the tradition of the church.

As to whether the apostolic writings provide one with enough information to affirm that bishops are the successors of the apostles, Congar's answer is affirmative, though he acknowledges that the available documentation is incomplete, that Paul's testimony alone is reported, and that hence the New Testament offers only a dim light on the subject.¹ Besides, the same New Testament, written by the apostles themselves, necessarily describes the situation while they were still alive and not what occurred after their death. Therefore, this author states, to demand from the apostles' writings a precise formulation of that which would come later is either to take the New Testament circumstantial texts as juridical² and constitutional (whereas they are only

L'Église une, 199.

¹Other Roman Catholic theologians recognize that "a fortiori there is nothing to support the thesis that, by a chain of laying on of hands, every local presbyter-bishop could trace a pedigree of ordination back to 'the apostles'." Brown, "*Episkopē* and *Episkopos*," 332. "The New Testament does not affirm that bishops collectively inherit the functions of the apostles or that the bishop of Rome is Peter's successor." Dulles, A Church to Believe In, 104. See also Schmaus, 4:138. Therefore, "we make an undue presupposition when we draw a simple straight line of succession from the apostles to the bishops." Küng, "What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?" 30.

²To be understood to mean pertaining to ecclesiastical rules or laws, in this case of divine origin.

concrete testimonies), or to ask for indications which, because of their own nature, they cannot provide. "A principle of *Scriptura sola* strictly applied is here fatally deceptive because of the very nature of the matters addressed."¹ Still, he concludes, a reality may be present in the text even without the word we habitually use to name it.²

What Congar finds in the New Testament is the basic idea of a cascade of missions coming from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the apostles, and from the latter to their successors.³ Thus, he sees in Matt 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 the church's conscience of the mission the Twelve received by a mandate of the Lord. This mission,

¹"Un principe de *Scriptura sola* étroitement appliqué est ici fatalement décevant, en vertu de la nature même des choses en question." Congar, *L'Église une*, 200. Roman Catholic theologians in general admit that their views on apostolic succession are not based exclusively on Scripture. Thus, Garijo-Guembe, 4:161, recognizes that "para la teología católica una metodología del *Scriptura sola* resulta fatal." See also Wladimir D'Ormesson, *The Papacy*, trans. Michael Derrick, Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, no. 81 (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), 36, 37.

²Congar, *L'Église une*, 200, n. 43. Congar contends that succession was implied in the events and writings proceeding from the apostles themselves. Similarly to what happened with many other aspects of Christian doctrine, reality preceded its systematic formulation. *Ibid.*, 199.

³Congar, "Theology of the Apostolate," 283, 284; *idem*, "The Apostolate," 3, 4; *idem*, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, 31, 32; *idem*, "La hiérarchie," 76; *idem*, *L'Église une*, 185; and *idem*, "Apostel," 1:781. A similar view is held by D'Ormesson, 50.

accompanied by the means necessary for its accomplishment, which were based on Christ's power (*exousia*) and His presence with the apostles,¹ transcends the apostles' limited space and time. Even if time were to be short, space required a delegation of the apostles' pastoral authority.² It is Congar's contention that if the Christian mission were limited to the person and time of the apostles we should not be baptizing today. But since the missionary enterprise was clearly intended to endure throughout history, the powers granted by Christ to the apostles to carry it on must also continue in the church. The task committed to the apostles can only be accomplished by a ministry derived from them.³ The

¹Congar, "Conclusion," 297. The Lord's presence with His church will endure until the end of history. Jesus Christ finished His farewell words with the promise "to be with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:20). Time will pass on; the apostles will die. And yet, Jesus will still be with them whenever they do what He has charged them to do--teaching, baptizing, leading--until the end of the age. In consequence, beyond the limited personal existence of the apostles, their actions together with their enabling powers must continue in the church, specifically in the ministry issuing from and continuing the apostolate. Congar, "Du nouveau," 33, 34.

²Congar, "Magisterium, Theologians, the Faithful and the Faith," 549. Thus Paul established presbyters in the communities which he had founded (Acts 14:23). He also appointed delegates to supervise various groups of communities. Such seems to have been the role of Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 4:12), Artemas (Titus 3:12), Epaphras (Col 1:7; 4:12; Phlm 23), Titus (2 Tim 4:10; Titus 1:4), and Timothy (1 Tim 1:2, etc.).

³Congar, L'Église une, 201, 216, 217; idem, "Composantes et idée," 71, 72.

apostles' ministry was intended to continue as long as the church herself would last, for that ministry is the means for the permanence of the church in the faith and life received from Christ.¹

In an attempt to explain how the notion of succession imposed itself upon the apostles, Congar distinguishes two stages in their life and ministry. First, the apostles believed that the return of the Lord was so close at hand that they did not think of a future organization of the church. As time went by, the apostles realized that eventually they would die and started to establish a structure of ministers to assure the permanence of their work. Apostolic delegates like Titus and Timothy had to secure the continuity of the apostolic task, appointing local presbyters (Titus 1:5) by virtue of an authority superior to that of the presbyters themselves (1 Tim 5:17-22), endowing them with the task of teaching sound doctrine, which they in turn had to transmit to others (2 Tim 2:2). The appointment of presbyters was made by the imposition of hands, similarly to the way Timothy himself had been ordained (1 Tim 5:22; 4:14). The examples of Timothy, Titus, and other apostolic delegates show that the apostolate as a ministry for the edification

¹Congar, L'Église une, 224.

of the church was intended to continue in the successors of the apostles.¹

While not indulging in an exhaustive study, Congar also appeals to the testimony of several church fathers as historical witnesses to apostolic succession during the first centuries of the Christian era. To this end he quotes Clement of Rome (ca. 96),² Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200), Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 225), Hippolytus (ca. 170-ca. 236), and Cyprian (d. 258).³ Congar asserts that the

¹Ibid., 199-202. The apostles "were to be 'stewards of God's mysteries' (1 Cor 4:1), to baptize, to celebrate the eucharistic meal, to lay on hands. Moreover, they soon handed on to others the charge of performing many of these functions, of baptizing, of anointing the sick (James 5:14), of the Eucharist. . . . In this regard, we possess, in early documents, a whole assemblage of facts whose meaning is perfectly clear and which, very early on, are summed up by Irenaeus in the notion of 'apostolic succession'. This idea, according to some, is presupposed all through the Acts." Idem, The Mystery of the Church, 37. At the same time, however, other Roman Catholic theologians recognized that "the presbyter-bishops described in the NT were not in any traceable way the successors of the Twelve apostles," (Brown, Priest and Bishop, 72), "nor does the New Testament provide direct evidence that any of the Twelve ever ordained bishops or looked on bishops as successors to the Twelve" (Avery Dulles, "Successio apostolorum--Successio prophetarum--Successio doctorum," in Who Has the Say in the Church? Concilium, no. 148, ed. Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng [New York: Seabury Press, 1981], 65 [italics in the original]).

²According to Congar, Clement of Rome describes *post eventum* exactly what Acts and the Pastoral Epistles had already expressed as prevision and intention. Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 74. Given the ambiguity of Clement's testimony some scholars maintain that he does not refer to apostolic succession. See p. 46 above.

³Congar, L'Église une, 202-5. See also idem, "Du nouveau," 41; and idem, "Composantes et idée," 63.

idea that legitimate ministers succeeded to the apostles in their authority to teach the faithful is found, in one form or another, in all the ancient documents.¹

Congar's main concern is not a simple enumeration of early witnesses, biblical or patristic, to the existence of the doctrine of apostolic succession. His interest is rather in determining the theological meaning of these testimonies. Did the church fathers attest *apostolic* succession or just a succession in a ministry established by the apostles but essentially different and disconnected from theirs? In the light of the evidence provided by the New Testament and patristic writers, is the authority of the episcopal ministry derived from the apostles, who in turn received theirs from the Lord, or is it rather an authority of representation delegated to the ministry by the congregation? In contrast to the interpretation advocated by Protestants, who consider that all apostolic authority was transferred from the apostles to their writings rather than to the bishops, Congar insists that the evidence endorses the unity of mission and function between the apostles and their successors. Titus and Timothy had the same function the apostles had before them in the ministry for the edification of the

¹Congar, L'Église une, 193; idem, Tradition and Traditions, 35, 36.

church.¹ Men pass away, but the mission and its accompanying authority remain identical. This principle of identity is what the Jewish *šālīaḥ* made clear: the authority of the one sent is the same as that of the sending one.² In Congar's opinion the combined testimony of the New Testament and church fathers supports the Roman Catholic view of the hierarchical ministry whose authority comes, through succession, from the apostles.

Succession to Peter's Primacy

From the perspective of apostolic succession the bishop of Rome is in a special position and his case deserves to be specifically studied. Since all discussions on apostolic succession eventually converge on the Roman Catholic claim that the pope is the successor of Peter, we need to address it, however briefly. Besides, a fair understanding of Yves Congar's concept of apostolic succession requires that one pay attention to his views on primacy.³

¹Congar, L'Église une, 203, 204.

²Congar, "Composantes et idée," 72; idem, L'Église une, 217.

³Besides his article "Du nouveau sur la question de Pierre?" Congar dedicated an entire section of L'Église une (224-53) to establish the legitimacy of Peter's primacy in the early church and its continuation through the preeminence exercised by the bishop of Rome. This volume presents us with the most articulated outline of the Dominican scholar's view on the subject.

Peter's Primacy According
to the New Testament

Congar is well aware of the difficulties involved in the Roman Catholic doctrine of Peter's primacy. Some of these proceed from the New Testament text: differences between biblical statements written at different times, he affirms, by men with divergent perceptions of the nature of things. There is also the fact that we know Jesus only through the testimony of His disciples. At the same time, one's view of the nature and purpose of the New Testament determines how one will interpret it. In Congar's opinion the New Testament articulates the faith of different Christian communities whose comprehension of one and the same spiritual reality varied from one to the other, even from one writer to another.¹

Peter's primacy, maintains the Dominican theologian, is evidenced by the fact that, according to the synoptic Gospels, he was the first disciple to receive a special call from Jesus,² and that his name always appears first in the extant lists of apostles.³ Moreover,

¹Congar, L'Église une, 226, 227.

²Ibid., 228. See Mark 1:16-20; Matt 4:18; 10:2; Luke 5:1-11.

³Congar, L'Église une, 228. See Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13.

Peter is mentioned first in the list of apparitions of the risen Christ as recorded by Paul.¹

In Christ's decision to give Peter a new name (i.e., Cephas, "rock"), Congar sees a sign of Christ's intention to put him as the foundation of the new people of God.² In his view, this purpose was later clearly and explicitly expressed by the Lord in Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13-19).³ Roman Catholics believe that on this

¹Congar emphasizes that in 1 Cor 15:3-5, Paul is reporting what had been transmitted to him before the writing of any of the apostles' memoirs. In this passage Paul enumerates a series of apparitions according to an order which in Congar's view is more qualitative and hierarchical than chronological. He argues that if one takes into consideration that witnessing to Christ's resurrection is a constitutive element of an apostle, and that the special apparition to James (vs. 7) seems to have been the origin of the latter's incorporation into the group of apostles and of his particular primacy at the head of the Jerusalem church, one has to admit that priority in seeing the risen Lord supposes and establishes a certain primacy of Peter in the apostolate. Congar, L'Église une, 227, 228; see also idem, Lay People, 280, 281.

²Congar, L'Église une, 228, 229. See Mark 3:16; John 1:41, 42; Luke 6:14. See also idem, "Cephas - céphalè - caput," RMAL 8 (1952): 5-42. Congar explains that before Peter, the only cases where God changed a person's name were Abram to Abraham (Gen 17:5), Sarai to Sarah (vs. 15), and Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:29). In each instance the change went together with a promise related to the constitution of God's people at the level of its foundation. Congar, L'Église une, 228, 229.

³Congar defends the literary and historical authenticity of this text. He argues that one should not be surprised to find the word "church" in the mouth of Jesus since, even though the Lord did not frequently use that expression, the reality signified by that term was present in Jesus' preaching and teaching. Besides, the existence of the community of Qumran shows that a strong eschatological thrust is no obstacle to the constitution

occasion Christ designated Peter, on the basis of his confession of faith in the Messiah,¹ to be the rock upon which Jesus Christ would build His church.² At the same time, as the Dominican theologian repeatedly explained, Roman Catholic doctrine holds that Peter is the rock "only as vicar of the real foundation, of him who is the real corner stone," namely Jesus Christ.³ The church can have no other foundation than Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11), who is the cornerstone of the foundation constituted by the

of a messianic community. Congar, L'Église une, 230.

¹Congar observes that there is a good number of biblical and rabbinical precedents to the idea that the messianic community would be built upon the rock of believed truth. In this context, he maintains that Peter is the rock on account of his faith in Jesus' messiahship and divine sonship. Ibid., 231-33.

²While disavowing the interpretation of this passage that equals the rock to the Lord Himself, or to Peter's confession of faith in the Son of God, Congar does not deny the truthfulness of these concepts as long as they are kept within their own textual contexts. He is willing to incorporate them as secondary elements in his interpretation of Matt 16:18, provided that they do not take the place of the first and most explicit sense of the text--the rock is Peter. Congar, "Du nouveau," 21.

³Yves Congar, Faith and Spiritual Life, trans. A. Manson and L. C. Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 25. See also idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 162, 163, 198, 199. In a study devoted to the historical development of authority in the church, Congar acknowledges that in the history of the exegesis of Matt 16:17-19 the rock was not always identified as Peter. He explains that up to the death of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, "'hanc petram' was taken to mean the 'stone' of the confession of faith, and insistence was laid on Christ as the foundation. Later the text was held to refer to Peter alone." Idem, "The Historical Development of Authority in the Church," 143, 149.

apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). Yet, within this foundation, none of the apostles except Peter was singled out by the Lord as the underlying rock.¹ As foundation of the church Peter received supreme spiritual authority over the whole church, including the other apostles.²

Protestants often underline the fact that the powers given to Peter were afterwards extended to the rest of the apostles. Congar acknowledges the correctness of that statement, but argues that "it is not opposed to a theology that finds in the texts at the same time both an hierarchical principle *which includes* Peter's apostolic primacy and a principle of corporate exercise of authority."³ Thus, though Peter received a power or

¹Congar, "Du nouveau," 19. See also idem, Lay People, 280.

²The "keys" represent the administrative authority of a household or a domain, explains Congar. In the case of a house it implies the function of a majordomo; if it is a kingdom, a prime minister. The keys, then, designate the power that an assistant receives from his master to manage his domain in his name. Authority is also indicated by the expression "binding and loosing" which on the one hand expresses authority to declare what is licit and what is not, and on the other signifies power to condemn or to absolve. Congar, L'Église une, 232, 233. Peter's supremacy, however, should not be understood as an absolutist monarchy. "Nous pensons," affirms the Dominican theologian, "que ni le Nouveau Testament s'il s'agit de Pierre, ni l'histoire ancienne de l'Église s'il s'agit du pape, ne favorisent une thèse de monarchie pétrinienne ou papale." Idem, "Le problème ecclésiologique de la Papauté après Vatican I et Vatican II," EstEcl 45 (1970): 410.

³Congar, Lay People, 280 (italics in the original). "At the end of a detailed study of the biblical foundations for the primacy of Peter, I came to

quality which is afterwards given to all the apostles, he has it as leader, not only chronologically but hierarchically first,¹ for "he personally receives these gifts in a way that sets him apart."²

Peter's primacy is also inferred by Congar from Luke 22:31, 32 and John 21:15-17. He thinks that the intention of Jesus' statement in the Lukan passage is to

the conclusion that Peter received the primacy in the order of the apostolate and of apostolicity itself." Idem, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," 205.

¹Congar, Lay People, 280. See also idem, "Le problème ecclésiologique de la Papauté," 411. This hierarchical distinction, however, does not mean that the other apostles received those gifts from Peter. They obtained everything from the Lord Himself as much as Peter did, though the latter received them first to employ them in a special way. Congar, L'Église une, 235.

²"Mais il reçoit personnellement ces dons d'une façon qui le distingue ou le singularise." Yves Congar, "Le Pape comme patriarche d'Occident: Approche d'une réalité trop négligée," Istina 28 (1983): 384. See also idem, "The Pope as Patriarch of the West," TD 38 (1991): 5; idem, "Collège, primauté," 385; and idem, Fifty Years of Catholic Theology, 50. The following chart, found in idem, "Le Pape comme patriarche d'Occident," 383, 384, shows the hierarchical difference between Peter and the Twelve:

<u>All the apostles</u>	<u>Peter</u>
Foundation (rocks) Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14	First foundational rock Matt 16:18
Pastors Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2	Universal pastor John 21:15-17
Hold keys and the power to bind and loose Matt 18:18; John 20:23	Holds keys and power to bind and loose in a special way. Matt 16:19
Witnesses to Christ's resurrection Acts 1:8	First witness to Christ's resurrection 1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34
Jesus prayed for all John 17:9, 20	Jesus prayed for Peter so that he could confirm others. Luke 22:32

protect not only Peter but also the complete body of believers through its head, Peter, from Satan's attack against them. Luke 24:34 shows, he says, that Peter did strengthen his brethren after the resurrection.¹ On the other hand, Jesus' mandate to Peter to feed His lambs and to tend His sheep recorded in John 21:15-17, in Congar's opinion, is tantamount to charging Peter with a universal pastorate over Christ's flock. In other words, the Johannine statement denotes that Peter was appointed vicar of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd.²

Congar is particularly cautious when it comes to the Antiochian incident referred to in Gal 2:11-14. Dismissing what he considers to be excessive interpretations of the text,³ he emphasizes that Peter is, among the Twelve, the one who stood closest to Paul

¹Congar, L'Église une, 234, 235. The record of Peter's personal weaknesses in the Gospels demonstrates that Jesus differentiated between the individual as such and the function which that individual was called to carry on. In His promises to Peter, Jesus' intent was not to establish the primacy of an individual but to found an institution. Idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 72, 427.

²Congar, Faith and Spiritual Life, 19-24; idem, L'Église une, 236, 237.

³Some indeed wanted to see in this passage one of the strongest testimonies to Peter's primacy. As an example Congar cites X. Roiron ("Saint Paul témoin de la primauté de saint Pierre," RechSR 4 [1913]: 489-531), and J. Chapman ("Saint Paul and the Revelation to Saint Peter Matt XVI, 17," RBén 29 [1912]: 133-47), who argued that the authority ascribed to Peter's example is so powerful that it presupposes his primacy. On the other hand many Protestants consider this incident as a clear evidence against such a primacy. Congar, L'Église une, 238.

agreeing with him particularly on the need to know how to compromise, for the sake of peace, between the strong and the weak. In Antioch, however, Paul merely deemed Peter's concessions to be ambiguous and even dangerous for the spiritual well-being of Gentile Christian believers.¹

In regard to Paul, Congar strives to prove that the apostle to the Gentiles did not question Peter's preeminence. He postulates that dividing the mission field in two sections, namely the Gentiles and the Jews (Gal 2:7-9), in no way limited the scope of Peter's authority.² Furthermore, Paul's insistence on the life in the Spirit over against the flesh³ was no impediment for his recognition of an apostolate understood as a

¹Congar, *L'Église une*, 239. Congar argues that Peter and Paul basically agreed "sur les attitudes pratiques à tenir en matière de pureté ou de contamination par les viandes offertes aux idoles ou quelque autre pratique alimentaire." He supports this statement with the following biblical references: Acts 10:11f.; 11:2f.; 15:11 (cf. with Gal 2:15-21; 3:22-26; Rom 11:32; Eph 2:1-10); see also 1 Cor 8; Rom 14:19-15:2. Ibid.

²The partition of the missionary task was not rigid, and both Paul and Peter often crossed the ethnic and religious boundaries agreed upon. In fact, each time Paul entered a new territory he exerted much effort to address first the Jews before reaching out to the Gentiles. Conversely, Peter was the first apostle to open the door for the entrance of Gentiles into the church. Ibid., 239, 240.

³Congar contends that, according to the epistle to the Galatians, "pour saint Paul, tout le rapport religieux salutaire vient de la mort et de la résurrection du Christ, principe d'une vie selon l'esprit. Ce qui se situe avant est charnel, et tout cela a été englouti dans la mort du Christ pour faire place à un ordre nouveau." Ibid., 240 (*italics in the original*).

continuity of the *acta Christi in carne*. In spite of fierce attacks on the origin of his own apostolate as coming directly from the glorified Lord, Paul did as much as he possibly could to keep himself in harmony with the institutional apostles and especially with their head, Peter.¹

Succession to Peter's Primacy: Evidences

Congar admits that the New Testament does not provide explicit evidence for a succession to Peter in his position of spokesman and head of the church.² Moreover, "it is not so easy to demonstrate this succession historically," confesses the Dominican theologian.³ In

¹Ibid., 240, 241.

²Ibid., 242. Thus, he recognizes that the church fathers are far from unanimous about "the interpretation of Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16-19. Except at Rome, this passage was not applied by the Fathers to the papal primacy; they worked out an exegesis at the level of their own ecclesiological thought, more anthropological and spiritual than juridical." Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 398, 399. Other Roman Catholic theologians likewise acknowledge that their teaching on apostolic succession to Peter's primacy is not based exclusively on Scripture. Thus, P. Benoit recognizes that "aucun texte de l'époque apostolique ne rapporte cette transmission par Pierre de ses pouvoirs spéciaux à l'évêque de Rome." Pierre Benoit, review of Saint Pierre, Disciple-Apôtre-Martyr, by Oscar Cullmann, in RB 60 (1953): 578. See also Schmaus, 4:175. Similarly, H. Fries and K. Rahner admit that in the New Testament "nothing is said specifically about a succession in this service" entrusted to Peter by the Lord. Fries and Rahner, 64.

³Congar, Fifty Years of Catholic Theology, 50. Quite recently, Congar recognized that the assertion that the special privileges conferred by the Lord to Peter were

his opinion, nevertheless, the assertion that Peter had, by divine will, successors to his supremacy in the church does not lack support in Scripture neither confirmation in history.

The succession of Peter is a logical implication of the general apostolic succession presented above.¹ Congar argues that if apostolic succession intends to keep within the church the same pattern of leadership exercised by the apostles, it is necessary to retain in the episcopal college the very structure of the apostolic college. Apostolicity of ministry demands that Peter's preeminence over the other apostles, willed by Christ, be maintained over the other bishops by Peter's successors.²

Congar holds that, like many other dogmas, the succession of Peter is deduced by a reasoning which in this case incorporates successors to the apostles in Christ's act of instituting the church.³ There is need,

also intended for his successors "est plus difficile à établir." Idem, review of Le Primat de l'évêque de Rome, by Alfonso Carrasco Rouco, in RSPT 75 (1991): 355.

¹See pp. 90-102 above.

²Congar, L'Église une, 225, 242.

³"Il est vrai qu'une succession de Pierre dans sa position de premier, d'initiative et de représentation, n'est pas attestée de façon expresse. On la déduit par un raisonnement." Ibid., 242. "De fait, quand la théologie catholique est mise en demeure de justifier son affirmation d'une succession, prévue et voulue par Jésus, en la fonction pétrinienne de chef de l'Église, elle recourt à un raisonnement. Il est clair que si Jésus avait ajouté, en Matthieu 16, 18-19, en Luc 22, 31-32, en

therefore, explains Congar, to justify an extension of this kind. Can such an expanded meaning of the New Testament passages be found without doing violence to the text? In Congar's view yes, since at least two New Testament Petrine passages (Matt 16:17-19 and John 21:15-17) are clearly addressing the future of the church and imply a future realization of Peter's function, beyond Peter's own person and time.¹

Jesus' statement recorded in Matt 16:17-19 is in agreement with the promise-fulfillment pattern which is

Jean 21, 15-17, une mention expresse des successeurs, il n'y aurait pas de discussion, au moins sur ce point. Mais il ne l'a pas fait, et c'est pourquoi un raisonnement est nécessaire pour englober des successeurs dans l'institution et la promesse du Seigneur. Le problème sera dès lors de justifier cette extension du texte, et ce problème lui-même pourra être posé à deux niveaux: 1° Cette extension ne fait-elle pas violence aux textes? Découle-t-elle de certains, au moins, d'entre eux? 2° Est elle imposée par des faits et des textes du christianisme ancien?" Congar, "Du nouveau," 31.

¹Congar, "Du nouveau," 32. Congar observes that, with one exception, all the verbs in Matt 16:18, 19 are conjugated in the future tense, thus indicating that Christ's pronouncement was a promise to be fulfilled beyond His own time, even until the *parousia*. Congar, L'Église une, 234. A number of Roman Catholic theologians argue along the same lines. See L. Cerfaux, review of Saint Pierre, Disciple, Apôtre, Martyr, by Oscar Cullmann, in RHE 48 (1953): 812, 813; idem, "S. Pierre et sa succession," RechSR 41 (1953): 193, 194; Journet, The Primacy of Peter, 69; J. Cambier, "Dialogue avec M. Cullmann," ETL 29 (1953): 650; D. B. Botte, "Le 'Saint Pierre' d'Oscar Cullmann," Irénikon 26 (1953): 142-45; Fernández Jiménez, 292, 293; Javierre, "Sucesión apostólica: Ciclos de actitudes protestantes," 104, 105; and Salaverri, 143, 144. See also Joseph Anders Burgess, A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965 (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1976), 172, 173.

characteristic of the entire economy of salvation.¹ As Congar understands it, one of the traits of this pattern is that the accomplishment of divine promises has enduring consequences. Thus, the fact that everyone entering into God's people becomes a child of Abraham is the realization of God's promise to the patriarch. The Messiah is the Son of David because He represents the culmination of the promise uttered by the prophet Nathan to the king.² Likewise, the fulfillment of Christ's promise expressed in Matt 16 is coextensive with the complete existence of the church. It is during her entire history that the church will overcome the forces of evil. Similarly, the church in all ages will have the ministry of the "keys" and of "binding and loosing." Consequently, as in the case of the other apostles, this promise assumes the presence of the personal ministerial function of Peter in the church as long as she lasts.³

¹Congar, L'Église une, 242, 243. In Congar's opinion everything in God's plan revealed in Scripture follows the system of promise and fulfillment. He owes to W. Vischer (La loi ou les cinq livres de Moïse [Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux and Niestlé, 1949]) his understanding of the law of promise and fulfillment, and the principle of the *pars pro toto* (i.e., the election of some for the salvation of many), closely related to the former. See Congar, The Wide World My Parish, 11-13; and idem, The Revelation of God, 8.

²Congar, "Du nouveau," 38, 39.

³Congar, L'Église une, 234; idem, "Du nouveau," 39, 40. For Congar, "the decisive importance of Matthew 16:17-19" comes from the fact that in his opinion this is "the only text where Jesus speaks explicitly of the

The historical fulfillment of divine promises, with their enduring consequences, constitutes for Congar an indispensable hermeneutical tool. He argues that the content of God's promises is elucidated by their consummation. As the oak makes known what was in the acorn, so the fulfillment of biblical promises makes their meaning intelligible to us. Each promise lays the foundation for its accomplishment, but the latter reveals the content of the former, which usually is not completely unveiled in its own original enunciation.¹ It was not until Pentecost that the meaning of the promise made to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be

conditions under which he will found his Church." Idem, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," 204 (*italics in the original*).

¹Congar, L'Église une, 186, 234; and idem, "Histoire," Catholicisme, hier, aujourd'hui, demain: Encyclopédie en sept volumes (1962), 5:776. God's gifts are first given in a seed, develop by stages, and finally attain their fulfillment. From the beginning those seeds contain, although hidden, the plenitude toward which they are ordained. Progressive actualization in history increasingly reveals God's purpose included from the beginning in the germ of things. Everything takes its meaning from its final completion. Development in sacred history is accomplished along lines of interiorization, of intensification of the presence of God. Congar, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:728; idem, Sainte Église, 181, 182. See also idem, "Histoire," Catholicisme, 5:776; idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 125-28; and idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 107-235. In Congar's view, this pattern determines biblical ontology and epistemology. For him, "biblical ontology is radically eschatological: truth is found at the end of things." Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 265. See also idem, "Une, sainte, catholique et apostolique," 228; idem, Un peuple messianique, 88; idem, L'Église une, 186; and idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:56.

blessed (Gen 12:1-3) took its full meaning. Likewise, it is only after the incarnation that the promise to David of making him a house (2 Sam 7:11-16) could receive its total interpretation.¹ Because the Lord's promise envisions all the duration of the church, it is in her history that the meaning of Matt 16 becomes evident. In fact, from the end of the second century on, it became increasingly clear that Jesus Christ willed a continuation of the apostles' ministry and power in their successors, particularly in the case of Peter.² Congar sees, then, in the historical development of the church's structure a key to unlock the intent of Matt 16.³ Divine promises become clear through

¹Congar, "Du nouveau," 41, 42. Congar also refers to this principle as that of seed ripening, indicating that God's purpose moves from a seed to the unfolding of everything that was implicit in that seed. See idem, The Revelation of God, 8, 9; and idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 125-28.

²In his interpretation of the New Testament Petrine statements, Congar seems to follow the approach suggested by J. H. Newman who, after mentioning Old Testament promises, stated that "in like manner, 'On this rock I will build My Church,' 'I give unto thee the keys,' 'Feed My sheep,' are not precepts merely, but prophecies and promises, promises to be accomplished by Him who made them, prophecies to be fulfilled according to the need, and to be interpreted by the event, --by the history, that is, of the fourth and fifth centuries, though they had a partial fulfillment even in the preceding period, and a still more noble development in the middle ages." John Henry Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 1878 ed. (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878), 156.

³Congar, "Du nouveau," 41, 42. The Dominican theologian claims, however, that history is not the foundation of the Roman bishop's primacy. "History has done a great deal for the Roman primacy, more than

their realization in the church's history, for Revelation becomes explicit in and through the church.¹

That which Matt 16:17-19 prophetically depicts as a promise, John 21:15-17 presents as a charge and a command. As Congar sees it, not only the date of composition² but eminently the content of this text indicate that Christ appointed Peter to be His vicar as supreme pastor in the church. In Congar's opinion, this passage is reminiscent of preceding biblical statements

Catholic apologists generally recognize, but its institution is not derived from history; it is not only a fact in the life of the Church but also very much a feature of its apostolic structure." Idem, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," 205 (italics in the original). "The papacy, in the form fixed by centuries of history, is an historical form of a divine institution (that of Peter as supreme pastor and head of the apostolic college), itself already modified by an apostolic initiative (the fact that Peter had his 'see' at Rome)." Idem, The Meaning of Tradition, 46.

¹"Il est nécessaire d'admettre que la Révélation s'explique dans l'Église. C'est l'histoire, guidée par Dieu, qui est le lieu où se dévoile la loi de croyance et de vie de l'Église." Congar, L'Église une, 243.

²Some take the date when this statement was presumably written as the basis to interpret it in support of a Petrine succession. Thus, Rudolf Graber (Petrus der Fels: Fragen um den Primat [Ettal: Buch- und Kunstverlag, 1950) contends that this text, written when John was the last survivor of the apostolic college, had the purpose of dissuading the faithful from believing that John had the primacy, turning them instead towards the authority of Peter's successors. In Congar's view, this interpretation goes beyond the immediate sense of the text. On the other hand, without entering into such speculations, many exegetes claim that this passage, as well as Matt 16:13-19, was added to the Gospels after the death of Peter. Congar does not deny that this addition may have lent some support to the idea that Peter should have had a successor in his office. Congar, L'Église une, 237.

related to the shepherd image, such as that recorded earlier in the same Gospel: "I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). The Dominican theologian points out that the purpose of this statement could only be achieved after Jesus' death. Likewise, John's comment on Caiaphas' prophecy that Jesus should die "not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52) denotes a task which was to be realized not by Jesus during His earthly ministry, but rather by the apostolate after Pentecost. Accordingly, after His death and resurrection, the Lord entrusted Peter with a universal pastoral ministry over everything connected with Christ's sheepfold. Therefore, a continuation of the apostolate, in particular Peter's universal vicariate, seems legitimately implied in Jesus' words.¹

Apostolic Succession and Salvation History

Congar's view on apostolic succession cannot be examined in isolation from his overall conception of the history of salvation. Congar, who always showed an

¹Congar, "Du nouveau," 32, 33. See also idem, Faith and Spiritual Life, 19-21.

irresistible fondness for history,¹ declares toward the end of his career that his "whole reflection was done in the keynote of God's plan of salvation, the history of salvation."²

Congar's View of Salvation History

The whole history of salvation is, for Congar, centered around the unique event of Jesus Christ and the salvation accomplished by the passion, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God.³ Moving toward its center, sacred history went through a sort of progressive concentration from humankind into one people, from one people into a remnant, and from this remnant into one person, Jesus Christ. Conversely, after the incarnation the economy of salvation followed an inverse movement starting with one Savior, passing to the apostles, from

¹See Congar's unpublished notebook quoted in Jossua, 147, 148.

²Yves Congar, foreword to The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes, by Timothy I. MacDonald (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), xxii.

³Congar, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:728; idem, Sainte Église, 181. See also "The Christian Idea of History," chap. in Priest and Layman, trans. P. F. Hepburne-Scott (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 277, 278; idem, "Christ in the Economy of Salvation and in Our Dogmatic Tracts," in Who Is Jesus of Nazareth? Concilium, no. 11, ed. Edward Schillebeeckx and Boniface Willems, trans. Aimée Bourneuf (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), 6; and idem, Situation et tâches présentes de la théologie (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 86.

them to the church, finally stretching out to the whole world.¹

Through His death and resurrection Christ accomplished our salvation, and yet, the consummation of that salvation still lies in the future. The kingdom of God is already present, but in a restricted way and its full manifestation is yet to come. To illustrate this concept Congar borrows Cullmann's illustration of the decisive battle and "V-day."² At Easter the Lord obtained the decisive victory over the enemy. But the adversary has not yet lost all his strength and fighting continues before he will give in. The day of his final surrender, V-day, is when Christ comes again in power and majesty.³

¹Congar, Lay People, 61, 62. The Christian view of history is lineal, in opposition to the cyclical conception sustained by the Greeks. See idem, "Histoire," Catholicisme, 5:768, 775.

²Congar, Lay People, 72, 73; see also idem, "Histoire," Catholicisme, 5:777. Congar is indebted to Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, rev. ed., trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press, 1962), not only for this illustration but for much of his conception of salvation history. He affirms, however, that long before Cullmann elaborated the concept of the intermediate time, the church fathers and Thomas Aquinas had already advanced the idea. For Thomas Aquinas the church is situated between the Synagogue, period of prophecy and preparation, and the Kingdom of God, period of consummation and plenitude. Congar, Sainte Église, 49, 50.

³Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 420-23. See also idem, The Mystery of the Church, 20; idem, Lay People, 72, 73, 107, 108; and idem, Sainte Église, 52. "We look forward to a victory. . . . That is why we look forward to his return with all our hearts, all our hope; we are utterly dependent on it. So long as here on earth

Congar maintains that a correct perception of this dialectic between the already realized and given, and the still promised and awaited, is one of the foundations of a solid ecclesiology.¹

The intermediate time, which Congar calls the "space-between" since it lies between Jesus' ascension and His *parousia*, is the time of the church.² For Congar the word "time," in this expression, has not so much a quantitative as a qualitative sense, designating more a status than just mere duration.³ Inserted in the cosmic and in the human time, the church has her own time which has a positive value from the point of view of the history of salvation.⁴

This intermediate period in one sense belongs to the final reign of the Messiah, but nevertheless is also a time of expectation and preparation, awaiting the full completion of God's kingdom.⁵ Based on the principle of

there are tears and death, enmity and division, loneliness and sin, all the ills which surround us, we shall pray with all our hearts for the coming of Jesus Christ . . . when he will bring us the fullness of those fruits whose seed he planted in his blessed Passion and Resurrection." Idem, "The Christian Idea of History," 283, 284.

¹Yves Congar, "Sacerdoce et laïcat dans l'Église," VieInt 14 (1946): 11.

²Congar, Lay People, 68, 69.

³Congar, Sainte Église, 52.

⁴Congar, La foi et la théologie, 105.

⁵Congar, Lay People, 68, 69.

pars pro toto (i.e., a part for the whole), the Dominican theologian asserts that the time of the church "is necessary in order that what has been done once for all in Christ may be done by everybody, or at any rate by very many."¹

There also exists a relationship between the time of the incarnation and the time of the church, which due to its significance for the issue of apostolic succession needs to be considered in detail. Congar defines apostolic times as "a brief period of essential shaping and inauguration and therefore definitively normative."² The post-apostolic church no longer enjoys the charisms of the founding apostles. Her time is not constitutive, as the time of the incarnation, but rather continuator and explicative of what happened during that unique period.³

¹Ibid., 70. The law of the *pars pro toto*, which, together with the law of promise and fulfillment, Congar borrowed from W. Vischer (see p. 121 above), expresses the idea of a representative minority through which God carries out His purposes for all, i.e., the election of some for the salvation of many. See also idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 186, 189.

²Yves Congar, Called to Life, trans. William Burridge (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 33. Recently Congar indicated that the "constitutive period of the Church," namely the time of "the inspired composition of the New Testament," goes into the second century A.D., since several theologians "accept that some of the New Testament writings were composed after the death of the apostles, possibly even in the second century A.D." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 58.

³Congar, "Histoire," Catholicisme, 5:778; see also idem, Tradition and Traditions, 310.

At the same time Congar also affirms that it is impossible to make a complete separation between them since there is an interior and vital continuity between Christ and His body, the church.¹ The Roman Catholic Church "does not conceive her historic life as *separated* from the apostolic times, from the *ephapax* of the incarnation . . . [but rather] as a progressive extension of the apostolic sphere, for ever normative, in space and time."²

The church's situation during this time is not a kind of empty parenthesis in the history of salvation, but rather a period of active cooperation with the Lord in building up the body of Christ, the kingdom of God. It is the time of the mission and of the apostolate. This

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 492. "The church is, in this space-between, the body of Christ, in which Christ lives in the world and 'completes' himself from the world's substance." Idem, Lay People, 72; see also *ibid.*, 327. Congar is aware that the expression "continued incarnation" is open to criticism and usually avoids using it. Nevertheless he insists that it does convey, even if clumsily, some genuine elements of biblical truth. Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 492; see also *ibid.*, 312, 313, 345; and idem, Un peuple messianique, 40, 41.

²The Roman Catholic Church "ne conçoit pas sa vie historique comme *séparée* du temps apostolique, de l'*ephapax* de l'Incarnation. . . . [Elle] conçoit sa vie historique comme une extension progressive de la sphère apostolique, à jamais normative, dans l'espace et dans le temps (dans le temps d'une vraie histoire)." Congar, "Conclusion," 296 (*italics in the original*).

activity and growth gives the time of the church its whole meaning.¹

While affirming with Cullmann that the incarnation of Christ and the apostolate are unique and central to the history of salvation, Congar insists that their uniqueness has a dynamic value not only from outside the flow of salvation history or from the remote past disconnected with the present, but from within salvation history, by an active and living presence. It is from this perspective, explains Congar, that the cross, although unique, is present in the sacraments. Similarly revelation, even if bestowed once for all, exists in tradition. Likewise the apostolate, whereas it participated in the *ephapax* of the incarnation, is currently living in the ministry of the hierarchy which is the prolongation of the apostolic ministry.²

¹Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 118; see also idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 192, 193; idem, "Histoire," Catholicisme, 5:778; idem, "The Christian Idea of History," 279; and idem, Laity, Church and World, 62.

²Congar, "Du nouveau," 37, 38; idem, "The Christian Idea of History," 281, 282; and idem, The Mystery of the Church, 118. Congar finds fault with Protestants for separating Christ in too radical a manner from the church. In his opinion they isolate in an excessive manner the *ephapax* of Christ from its effects on humanity. Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 148, 409. Conversely, he maintains that "the sacramental nature of the time of the Church" entails a presence of saving acts, which were performed once for all, but are effective, nevertheless, by a present operative power they keep. Those saving acts are in some way "beyond temporal limits," for God communicates to them "certain

Apostolic Succession and the Time of the Church

As Congar sees it, the time of the church is filled with the operation of the Holy Spirit and the action of the apostolate. Both work simultaneously and coordinately from inauguration to consummation. The time of the church is characterized by both "a permanence or identity of Christ's work--the 'once-for-all' of Christ's and the apostles' event, of which the apostolic succession is, in its way, the sign--and by God's ceaseless comings, suitable to the Holy Spirit."¹

The source of salvation has already appeared, but its fruits must be gathered by those two agents of

possibilities and a density which surpass the conditions of earthly time." Hence, Congar maintains that in the particular case of the incarnation there is "a continuing presence of the past in the present." Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 259-64, 315. See also idem, La foi et la théologie, 105, 106; and Vraie et fausse réforme, 137.

¹Referring to the time of the church Congar affirmed that "cette durée est caractérisée à la fois par une permanence ou une identité de l'oeuvre du Christ--c'est le 'une fois pour toutes' du fait du Christ et des apôtres, dont la succession apostolique est à sa manière le signe--et par d'incessantes venues de Dieu, appropriées au Saint-Esprit." Congar, La foi et la théologie, 105, 106. See also idem, Lay People, 352, 353; and idem, Divided Christendom, 85. Jesus Christ builds up His body through two agents, His apostles and His Spirit, whom He sent to continue and to complete the work He had accomplished for the salvation of humankind. Idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 139; idem, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:728; idem, Sainte Église, 182; idem, The Revelation of God, 151, 154, 155; idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 297; and idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:42.

Christ.¹ "Salvation, entrance into the kingdom, the life of the heavenly city, are an essentially apostolic thing that is bound up with the ministry of the apostles, and subsequently of their successors."² The mission of the apostolate continued by the hierarchy on the one hand, and that of the Holy Spirit on the other, is to assure the homogeneity of the church between Christ's ascension and His coming again with what was laid down in the beginning.³ To that effect, the Holy Spirit is at work to produce invisibly and from within what the hierarchical ministry does visibly and from without.⁴

¹Congar, Sainte Église, 52.

²Congar, The Mystery of the Church, 39. "The apostolic act of witness was unique, but the apostolic act of presentation or transmission of that witness must be continued in the form of teaching: and this would be the work of the ministry." Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 20.

³Congar, L'Église une, 187; idem, "Composantes et idée," 76.

⁴Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 116, 117, 136. See also idem, Christ, Our Lady and the Church, 55; idem, The Mystery of the Church, 35; idem, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:728; idem, Sainte Église, 182; idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 380, 425; and idem, The Revelation of God, 157. As to the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the hierarchical ministry, Congar maintains that the former has a sort of "free sector" in relation to the latter. Idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 132-36. Later he admitted the inappropriateness of such expression (see idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:11, 12), and in his latest book confessed: "It is a mistake to think, as I did in 1953 that a kind of 'free sector' reserved for the Holy Spirit exists alongside the operation of the instituted structures and means of grace." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 61. On Congar's view of the limitation of the

During the time of the church, apostolic succession resembles the armature of the building, the backbone of the body. Its role is to join the Alpha to the Omega, an expression frequently used by Congar to designate Christ, beginning and end of our redemption.¹ The apostolate is to connect Christ as the beginning of everything to Christ "who fills all in all" (Eph 1:23). For everything comes from Christ incarnated, dead, and resurrected, and everything moves to "mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).² During the time of the church the salvific work of the Lord is carried on by the apostolic ministry which is the sensible and living means of linking each

Holy Spirit's freedom see Famerée, "L'ecclésiologie du Père Yves Congar," 390; Pierre Bonnard, "L'Esprit Saint et l'Église selon le Nouveau Testament," RHPR 37 (1957): 86; and Max-Alain Chevallier, Esprit de Dieu, paroles d'hommes: le rôle de l'Esprit dans les ministères de la parole selon l'apôtre Paul (Neuchâtel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1966), 212.

¹Jesus Christ is the Alpha inasmuch as He is the cause of man's salvation, and He is the Omega inasmuch as He is the end and plenitude towards which moves the whole history of salvation. Congar, The Mystery of the Church, 21; idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 116, 117; idem, Lay People, 70, 326, 327; idem, The Mystery of the Temple, 167; idem, L'Église une, 187; and idem, "The Christian Idea of History," 278, 279.

²Congar, L'Église une, 221; idem, "Composantes et idée," 75. See also idem, Lay People, 163, 164; idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 112; idem, Sainte Église, 54, 55; and idem, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 2:39.

individual Christian to the unique historic event of the cross.¹

In Congar's view the mission of the apostles and of their successors is to bring the presence of an absent Lord to the world during the time of the church. They have to "re-present" in an active way the Savior who is not corporally and visibly on earth anymore. Their mission is, therefore, a vicariate. As early as 1937, Congar called the attention of his readers to the fact that, strictly speaking, the apostles, and after them the episcopal body, are not Christ's successors. They are only His vicars. In other words they receive from Him a power of proxy during His absence.² There is a difference regarding the way in which that vicariate was given to the apostles on the one hand and to today's bishops on the other. The apostles were chosen, ordained, and sent by Jesus Christ Himself, while bishops are chosen, ordained, and sent by mediators of the Lord. Bishops are the apostles' delegates whose ultimate function is to represent Christ. In spite of this difference, bishops represent Christ as much as the apostles did, for both are

¹Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 380; see also idem, The Mystery of the Church, 37; and idem, Blessed Is the Peace of My Church, 27.

²Congar, The Mystery of the Church, 45, 46.

bearers of the active presence of Christ in the church during His physical absence.¹

The apostles and their successors are connected by a historic link with the historic Christ, so that they participate in the prerogatives related to the mission, powers, and dignity of Jesus Christ Himself.² Congar emphasizes that the structure of the church comes directly from what Christ was and did for us in the days of His

¹Congar, L'Église une, 197, 198. "Le triple pouvoir de gouvernement, de sacerdoce et de magistère, qu'on distingue communément dans l'Église, apparaît pour ce qu'il est, comme réellement le même que l'autorité, le sacerdoce et le magistère des Apôtres, procédant, finalement, du Christ, lequel est constitué par son onction, roi, prêtre et prophète, voie, vie et vérité. Les actes ministériels de la hiérarchie sont les actes mêmes de l'apostolat des Douze et procèdent de ceux de la messianité de Jésus; l'enseignement qu'elle livre, les sacrements qu'elle célèbre, sont les mystères mêmes qu'ont enseignés et célébrés les Apôtres." Idem, "Apostolicité," Catholicisme, 1:729 (italics in the original); idem, Sainte Église, 183, 184.

²Congar, "Ministères et structuration," 39, 40. To show the apostles' participation in Christ's mission Congar presents this chart:

	<u>Christ</u>	<u>Apostles</u>
Light	John 8:12; 9:5	Matt 5:14, 16; Eph 5:8; Acts 13:47
Rock	Mark 12:10; 1 Cor 10:4; Eph 2:20-22	Matt 16:18
Foundation	1 Cor 3:11	Eph 2:20
Door	John 10	Rev 21:12
Shepherd	John 10:11-16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25	1 Pet 5:2; John 21:15-17; Eph 4:11
<i>epískopos</i>	1 Pet 2:25	Acts 20:28
Forgive sins	Matt 9:6; Mark 1:7; 2:10; Luke 5:21, 24; 7:49	John 20:23

earthly life, the *acta Christi in carne*.¹ By the calling of His disciples, the promises made to Peter, the different actions establishing the Twelve in their apostolic powers, as well as by solemnly sending them forth, Jesus Christ instituted the apostolic ministry in the church. Divinely empowered, this apostolic ministry is the indispensable agent of the incarnate Lord that transmits the deposit of faith and administers the sacraments, without which the body of believers cannot exist as such.² "The essential structure of the Church . . . is bound up with the realization of apostolic succession in the episcopate whereby . . . there exist the deposit of apostolic faith, the sacraments and the apostolic powers."³

¹Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 112. "The institutional Church, the Church in its outward structure, is wholly dependent on, and continuous with, the Incarnate Word and the messianic energies in which the apostolic powers share." Ibid., 139.

²Congar, *Lay People*, 31, 262. As late as 1970, Congar reaffirmed the indispensable role of apostolic succession for the existence of the church in this way: "S'il s'agit de ce qui est strictement nécessaire et suffisant pour que l'Église existe comme Église de Jésus-Christ, nous dirons: le sacerdoce selon la forme où l'on parle de succession apostolique dans le ministère, c'est-à-dire comme collège épiscopal, Pierre à la tête. C'est lui qui structure l'Église." Idem, "Ministères et structuration," 48.

³Congar, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," 204. In Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's words, "the hierarchy based on the apostolic succession is the indispensable condition to arrive at the strength, the reality of the sacrament." Joseph Ratzinger, *The*

The historic link with the incarnation provided by succession is indispensable for the existence of the church, since in Congar's view "one thing is certain: a community which lacks the apostolic succession, which does not admit of degrees of its possession, cannot qualify even as a local Church in the strict theological sense of the word."¹ In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council he modified his view, recognizing some degree of ecclesial reality in Protestant communions which, in a sense, are "churches." Still, he insists that if those communions want to attain full ecclesial reality, their ordained ministry needs to be linked to the apostles' ministry through the laying on of hands.²

From the point of view of salvation history, according to Congar, the basic difference between the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church is determined by "the way one conceives the time of the church or history, in its relationship with the time, constitutive and normative, of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Or the way one conceives the relation of the

Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church, interviewed by Vittorio Messori, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 49.

¹Congar, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," 206.

²Congar, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," 793, 796.

construction to its foundation."¹ More specifically, the Dominican theologian sees the divergence between the two theologies in "the conception of the time of the church . . . and of the apostolicity, of the relationship between the apostolicity of ministry, which they [i.e., Protestants] disregard, and the apostolicity of doctrine."²

The significance of this discrepancy is such that Congar sees in it the deepest and most decisive difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation.³ The issue at stake, the Dominican scholar addresses time and again in his writings, is whether one is joined to the source of salvation by a spiritual, personal, "vertical" link of an act of Christ in heaven, or by a sensible ecclesial, historical, "horizontal" link

¹The difference is to be found in "la façon de concevoir le temps de l'Église ou l'histoire, dans son rapport avec le temps constitutif et normatif de Jésus-Christ et des apôtres. Ou encore, la façon de concevoir le rapport de la construction avec ses fondements." Congar, "Conclusion," 300.

²The divergence is situated in "la conception du temps de l'Église et . . . celle de l'apostolicité, du rapport existant entre l'apostolicité du ministère, qu'ils [i.e., Protestants] méconnaissent, et l'apostolicité de la doctrine." Congar, La foi et la théologie, 43.

³Congar affirms that "among the differences which remain between the Reformers and ourselves, the most decisive and radical does not arise from the conception of Scripture but of the Church." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 104.

joining us to the Christ of the incarnation.¹ At stake is the whole conception of one's relation with God. It all boils down to a simple question: What is it that unites us to Christ for our salvation?² How are we joined to the unique act of the salvific incarnation and death of Jesus Christ?³

Traditionally the Roman Catholic answer has been that the essential tie lies in the joint action of the Holy Spirit and the apostolic ministry.⁴ Congar insists that in essence it is a matter of joining men and women, through the immensity of space and time, to the unique historic event of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the only means for the passage from God to human beings, and from them to God. In his view, all historical, "horizontal," and institutional continuity is accompanied by a "vertical" action, a spiritual event directly brought about by the Lord from heaven. The whole purpose of the existence of

¹Congar, Lay People, 171.

²Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 372, 376, 380. See also idem, Tradition and Traditions, 493; and idem, "Conclusion," 300.

³Congar, L'Église une, 219; idem, "Composantes et idée," 74; and idem, Dialogue between Christians, 355.

⁴Congar, Christ, Our Lady and the Church, 7. Louch, 136, rightly observes that "Congar accepts the traditional idea that to be the living link with the Church of the apostles is at the heart of the hierarchical ministry in the Church."

the hierarchy with its law of succession is to ensure that all comes from the single event of Christ's incarnation and passover. The apostolic ministry, through which the church receives the apostolic faith and the sacraments, is the visible bond that unites us to Jesus Christ.¹ "The hierarchical priesthood and the apostolic succession . . . have no other profound meaning but that of manifesting and realizing across history the fact that everything comes to us from the historical incarnation, from the *acta et passa (et dicta) Christi in carne*."²

In contrast, Congar believes that the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers completely disregarded the institutional ministry as the instrument to unite the believer to Christ. They denied "the ministry's character of continuing in history the ministry by which the apostles began to carry out the mission given by our Lord."³ Protestants put the Holy Scripture in place of the apostolic ministry, failing to see how the church

¹Congar, L'Église une, 218-20; idem, "Composantes et idée," 73, 74. See also idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 372, 376; and idem, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 117. In the words of J. Frisque, "le lien avec le Christ ne peut être vécu qu'au sein de l'Église unanime. Mais comment ce lien est-il assuré? Il l'est par les 'successeurs' des apôtres qui proposent à la foi du croyant l'appui de la Parole et du Sacrement." Frisque, 248.

²Congar, Dialogue between Christians, 391.

³Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 463. See also idem, "Réponse," chap. in Le courage des lendemains (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1966), 103.

through the apostolic succession lives by what Christ, who was made flesh and lived among His own, has done for the church and left in her possession. Having reduced apostolic succession to a mere question of exterior position or place without any relation to salvation, they did away with the church as institution, rejecting the structure willed by Christ to join us with the incarnate Lord.¹ In Congar's view, Protestants have rejected the incarnation as the starting point and the church

¹Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 357-59, 373-404. As an example of the Reformers' view Congar quoted, among others, from Philipp Melanchton (1497-1560), who wrote: "The Church is an assembly bound together not by succession in office, but by God's Word." Philipp Melanchton, De Ecclesia et de autoritate Verbi Dei, Corpus Reformationum, 23:598, quoted in Congar, Christ, Our Lady and the Church, 6, 7. To illustrate the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant conceptions, Congar compares the church to a lake which can be fed through different ways. One possibility is that the water may come from a distant source in the high mountains by a natural water-course. The single source high up and far off stands for the Word incarnate, who sprung into being at a definite time and space. The conduit will be the apostolic ministry which, through uninterrupted succession, mediates grace and truth to the church. Another way in which water could come to the lake would be, after evaporation, in the form of rain, falling as rain does vertically from the skies, unforeseeably, in obedience to a divine command, where and when heaven decreed. This is, in Congar's view, an adequate representation of the Protestant view, though he anticipates that they will probably complain that this is a one-sided portrayal of their position, for they also allow some degree of continuity in the means by which the lake is fed from its source. Congar, Christ, Our Lady and the Church, 31-36. The same illustration, though less developed, appears also in idem, Sainte Église, 66, 67. See also idem, Lay People, 171.

institution as the visible historical chain which connects the believer with the earthly Christ.¹

The author under consideration does not deny that within the Protestant view there is some degree of continuity between the incarnate Christ and the believer, provided by the Bible, the written Word of God, and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Since in so doing Protestants postulate some institutional element, he asks them "to accept all the consequences of what they thus admit."² Thanks to the uninterrupted historic line formed by ministers in succession to the apostles, in Congar's view the "horizontal" ecclesiology described above (i.e., the Roman Catholic one) includes that part of truth which the "vertical" ecclesiology, typical of Protestantism, emphasizes, without the pitfalls of the latter.³

In synthesis, Congar maintains that throughout the time of the church the episcopate in succession to the apostles is the indispensable means that unites the faithful to the Source of salvation, namely the incarnate

¹Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 398. In brief, Congar summarizes the Roman Catholic understanding with this schema: incarnate Word → church institution → Christian life and church community. On the other hand, this is his sketch for the Protestant view: celestial Christ → Christian life and church community. Ibid.

²Congar, Christ, Our Lady and the Church, 36.

³Ibid., 37.

Jesus Christ, conveying the sacraments and the apostolic faith. Particularly in relation to the latter, the living action of the apostles' successors plays a key role which, in view of its significance for this research, deserves further consideration.

Apostolic Succession and Tradition

Since the very moment of its explicit enunciation towards the end of the second century, apostolic succession has been usually associated with tradition. As one can expect, apostolic succession plays a major part in Congar's understanding of tradition, its nature, and authority. He fully shares Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's conviction that "apostolic tradition and apostolic succession define each other. The succession is the external form of the tradition, and tradition is the content of the succession."¹ Although Congar's main works

¹Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate, and Apostolic Succession," 51. Ratzinger's statement appears quoted in Yves Congar, "A Brief History of the Forms of the Magisterium and Its Relations with Scholars," in The Magisterium and Morality, Readings in Moral Theology, no. 3, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 316; idem, L'Église une, 192; and idem, "Towards a Catholic Synthesis," in Who Has the Say in the Church? Concilium, no. 148, ed. Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng, trans. John Maxwell (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 80. Similarly, J. Daniélou asserts that "la notion de Tradition n'a de sens que si elle implique une succession, assurant la transmission fidèle d'un message qui garde l'autorité de celui qui en a été l'origine." Jean Daniélou, "Qu'est-ce que la tradition apostolique?" Dieu 26 (1954): 77. Though historically the idea of tradition was explicitly and systematically formulated before that of apostolic succession, the latter

dealing with tradition were published in the early 1960s,¹ his concept of tradition as the all-encompassing transmission of the essential realities of Christianity has hardly changed since the beginning of his career, and has continued practically changeless after the publication of these books.

Congar's Concept of Tradition

Tradition in the general sense of transmission is, according to Congar, the very principle of the whole economy of salvation. The fulfillment of the plan of redemption proceeds from the Father to the Son, from Christ to the apostles, and from the latter to the church. The divine economy rests on "a communication descending like a cascade from God through Christ and the apostles."²

is found associated to the former in all the ancient documents. Thus, it was distinctively affirmed by Hegesippus (2d cent.) and Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200), who emphasized the bond of unity between true tradition and the succession of legitimate ministers from the apostles on. Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 35, 36; idem, "A Brief History," 315.

¹Yves Congar, La Tradition et les traditions: Essai historique (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1960); idem, La Tradition et les traditions: Essai théologique (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1963); English translation: Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay; idem, La Tradition et la vie de l'Église (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1963); English translation: The Meaning of Tradition.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 16. See also idem, Tradition and Traditions, 489, 490; idem, "Inspiration des Écritures," 38; and idem, Sainte Église, 195. This image of the "cascade" from the Father through the Son and the apostles to the church, basic in Congar's

Within tradition, the Dominican theologian distinguishes between two specific components, namely the object and the subject of tradition. The object or material content of tradition is usually called passive tradition. Its constitutive *loci* are formed by the apostolic heritage communicated by Scripture and the unwritten apostolic traditions. Its declarative *loci* are the monuments of tradition such as the writings of the Fathers, the liturgy, the teachings of the magisterium, and the ecclesiastical canons. On the other hand, the subject of tradition is usually called active tradition. It refers to the living agent who transmits the apostolic deposit. In a general sense the whole church is the subject of tradition, albeit in a more specific sense it is the teaching church (i.e., the magisterium) who has the responsibility of transmitting tradition.¹

The object or content of tradition can be transmitted, according to Congar, through written as well as unwritten means. In a narrower sense, however, he perceives tradition as including only what is handed on by

conception of tradition, is foundational for his understanding of apostolic succession. See p. 105 above.

¹See Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 296-307, 425, 426; idem, "Tradition in Theology," in The Great Ideas Today--1974, ed. Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, trans. Otto Bird (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974), 4-20; idem, "Essai de clarification de la notion de tradition," VCaro 16, no. 64 (4^e trim., 1962): 284-94; and idem, La foi et la théologie, 144, 145.

some means other than writing. This is precisely the way Christianity was communicated during its first decades when there was no written record of Jesus' and the apostles' message. In Congar's opinion, the subsequent appearance of Gospels and apostolic letters did not eliminate that form of transmission nor its authority.¹ The fragmentary and occasional nature of the apostles' writings makes it more than plausible for one to think that the apostles did not record in writing all the rules which they gave to the churches. Those apostolic traditions which were never recorded in the apostles' writings are treasured and transmitted by the church.²

While in Congar's view the content of tradition is first of all the divine doctrine, the object of faith, it encompasses much more than intellectual truths and propositions.³ It is the transmission of the very

¹Congar maintains that numerous texts of the second and third centuries, as well as of the fourth and fifth centuries, demand that besides the New Testament Scriptures the church take as a further norm non-written traditions which also go back to the apostles. Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 40.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 19, 20, 36, 37. "If apostolic doctrine was able to exist in the Church, in the apostolic period, without writings, it could continue to do so." Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 416.

³This is so because revelation is not understood by Congar in a mechanical sense, as though the apostolic revelation was composed of a series of propositions. His theology of revelation puts all its weight on the vital and experiential covenant relationship that God wants to establish with men and women in Christ. Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 21; see also idem, Situation et tâches,

substance of the Christian faith, a living faith, the handing over of the aggregate of realities which constitute the new covenant.¹ Those living realities transcend rational comprehension and formulation, and escape any external justification of a historical and critical nature.² The transmission of these realities is made not so much by discursive means, but rather by means of the concrete experiences of life and of the familiar everyday realities of human existence.³

Faithful to traditional Roman Catholicism, Congar does not limit tradition to the mere mechanical transmission of a passive deposit. If it would be just a matter of accurate transference of certain statements and formulations, a book could do it more effectively than human beings aided only by their memories and experiences. But the nature of tradition, he holds, requires that the deposit be incorporated into living subjects who in turn will pass it on. Living subjects necessarily put something of themselves into what they receive. Even

16, 35.

¹Congar is here referring to "the sacraments, ecclesiastical institutions, the powers of the ministry, customs and liturgical rites, in fact, all the Christian realities themselves." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 17, 18.

²Ibid., 29.

³Ibid., 26; see idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 437, 445, 468; and idem, The Mystery of the Church, 48.

more, these subjects live in history, a fact that affects the conservation, transmission, and even the content of what is kept and passed on. The latter, however, asserts Congar, does not affect the deposit in a way that would destroy its identity.¹

In other words, according to Congar tradition--encompassing passive and active components--is not static but definitely dynamic, living. Because of its own nature, living tradition comprises two equally important aspects, one of conservation and one of development. The church maintains both elements in tension as she strives to keep the balance between preservation of the *purity* of tradition on the one hand, and achievement of the *totality* of tradition on the other. "The tradition of the apostles is simultaneously unchanging and timely, recollection of the events and unfolding of their significance."² This process of incorporation and enrichment occurs as generation after generation of Christians, inhabited by

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 105-7.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 19. See also idem, "Conclusion," 295. In a sense, "tradition is not in dependence on time: rather it triumphs over it, even, one might say, discounts it altogether." This is so because Christ, reigning as Lord above time, assures the continuing identity of the truth possessed by the Church. Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 264.

the Holy Spirit, lives and expresses the gospel taught by Jesus and the apostles.¹

To be legitimate, however, this development needs to be regulated by "ordained ministers, [who] following on in succession to the apostolic ministry, are the subject of tradition in a special and particularly qualified way."² The college of bishops united to the pope has received the mandate, authority, and power to hand on the apostolic deposit. The role of the magisterium is to keep faithfully, to judge authentically, and to define infallibly the content of that deposit. The episcopate can perform this threefold task because, through apostolic succession, it is united to the apostolic mission, surmounting in that way the vicissitudes and transience of time, as well as distance and space.³ As a result of the magisterium's threefold activity, material tradition,

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 110-14. "Living tradition" is closely related to other expressions such as "the Catholic spirit," *sensus fidei*, or "the mind of the church." See *ibid.*, 35, 36, 75.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 329; see also *ibid.*, 20. The mission of the Twelve, passed on subsequently to their successors, is a mission by mandate assigned by the Lord. *Idem*, The Meaning of Tradition, 60.

³Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 62, 63. See also *idem*, "Magisterium, Theologians, the Faithful and the Faith," 549. The episcopal body occupies the place of the apostles and is, in consequence, the custodian and interpreter of the apostolic word. *Idem*, Vraie et fausse réforme, 438, 439. The hierarchy "derives its authority from the twelve, just as the twelve had been sent directly by Jesus Christ." *Idem*, "The Apostolate," 3; *idem*, "Theology of the Apostolate," 283.

which includes everything that one generation transmits to the next, is changed into formal tradition and into a rule of faith for the church.¹

Can one guarantee that this living development will be able to keep tradition close to the deposit originally entrusted to the apostles? From Congar's perspective two instruments, acting together yet on different levels, do warrant that tradition does not lose its apostolic identity. Internally (particularly within the church's magisterium) the Holy Spirit assures the fidelity of tradition to its roots.² Externally the historical succession of hierarchical ministers guarantees the apostolicity of tradition in the church.³ Thus, there is an inner, immediate, and "vertical" action of God through the Holy Spirit, and an exterior communication of defined truths effected by a historical, visible, and

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 66, 67. See also idem, Laity, Church and World, 66.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 146. "All through the historical succession made up of the authentic witnesses of Tradition, Christ . . . ceaselessly acts to make his Gospel ever new, in continuity with the form he gave it once and for all. . . . Christ never ceases to teach his Church by the gift of the Spirit." Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 343, 344. See also idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 430.

³Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 38. "La transmission sans altération de la Tradition est assurée par la succession, *Paradosis kata diadochèn*." Idem, L'Église une, 215; idem, "Composantes et idée," 70.

"horizontal" succession of ministers. Both work together to secure the identity of the gospel along history.¹

Apostolic Succession, Tradition, and Scripture

Since the concept of apostolic succession is closely related to that of tradition, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between apostolic succession, tradition, and Scripture.² Do they hold equal authority? Which one is the final criterion for the Christian believer?

Congar's view of the relationship between Scripture and tradition has evolved from the subordination of the former to the latter in his earlier writings, to the equalization of both elements in more recent writings. Thus, till the early 1950s he emphasized that "the true rule of faith of the Church is its tradition," understood not in the narrow sense of non-written traditions, but

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 54. Unity in one common and true faith in the church "implies conformity with the operations of the Holy Spirit of truth within the organism of the Church, and hence a common submission to the teaching authority and pastoral government of the apostolic hierarchy." Idem, Divided Christendom, 243.

²This need has been recognized by the International Theological Commission presided by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which after enumerating the most frequent difficulties related to apostolic succession, acknowledges that "behind all these questions there is the problem of the relationships among Holy Scripture, Tradition and the solemn declarations of the Church." International Theological Commission, 23.

rather in the broader sense of what has been handed over (*tradere*) by Christ to the apostles and by them to the Church, which includes Scripture.¹ At this stage he showed little, if any, interest in the differentiation between Scripture and tradition in the narrower sense, nor in their mutual relationship.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, as a result of discussions on the Tridentine Council's statement concerning Scripture and tradition,² Congar began to

¹"La vraie règle de foi de l'Église, c'est sa tradition, par quoi nous entendons: ce qui a été livré (*tradere*) par le Christ aux apôtres et par ceux-ci à l'Église. Nous ne prenons donc pas ici le mot tradition au sens des 'traditions non écrites,' . . ." Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 436. "La sainte Ecriture fait partie du dépôt de la foi, lequel est lui-même une partie du trésor de réalités qui . . . forme le contenu ou la substance de la tradition." *Ibid.*, 437. See also *ibid.*, 444, 445.

²The Tridentine fathers stated that "the purity itself of the Gospel is preserved in the Church, . . . and this truth and instruction are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, . . . [the Synod] receives and holds in veneration with an equal affection or piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, . . . and also the traditions themselves, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession." Council of Trent, Session IV (April 8, 1546), chap. 1 (Denzinger, 783). The discussion centers on the meaning of the relationship between Scripture and tradition, expressed by the conjunction "and" which according to some means that "the saving Gospel was only partially contained in the Scriptures," or, according to others including Congar, means that "the saving Gospel is contained entirely in the Scriptures, as it is also contained entirely in Tradition." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 43. Congar shares the view expressed by Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 342; E. Ortigues,

consider them rather as two equal and complementary means through which the gospel reaches the church. He maintained that Scripture and tradition are intimately related to each other since they actually complement each other. As far as Scripture is concerned, he emphasized that its bare text does not necessarily yield its correct meaning to just any individual reader.¹ The Bible needs to be interpreted, hence its meaning is found, in a certain way, outside of it.² The fact that personal and independent interpretations may likely result in erroneous doctrines is evidenced, in his view, by the proliferation of divisions within the Protestant Reformation. Consequently, the only sure way to interpret the Scriptures is in the church. Tradition is, in fact, an interpretation of Scripture, but it is an interpretation

"Écritures et Traditions apostoliques au concile de Trente," RechSR 36 (1949): 271-99; and Josef Rupert Geiselmann, "Das Konzil von Trient über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen," in Die mündliche Überlieferung, ed. Michael Schmaus (Munich: Max Heuber, 1957): 123-206. Other Roman Catholic theologians have advocated the same view. See, for instance, Karl Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible, trans. Charles H. Henskey (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 35-38; George H. Tavard, "Scripture, Tradition and History." DownR 72 (1954): 243; and Schmaus, Dogma, 1:218.

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 10; idem, Tradition and Traditions, 154.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 86.

made by the church and as such it is "guaranteed by the succession of hierarchical ministers."¹

In Congar's opinion the Bible itself does not claim to be the exclusive source of Christian doctrine nor the sole rule of faith. He believes that once the canon was established, the church continued holding to non-written apostolic traditions as a norm to be respected besides Scripture.² For Congar, then, Scripture and tradition complement each other.³ In fact, "there is no doctrine of the Church based solely on Scripture

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 38; see also *ibid.*, 42. "Basic to the Catholic position . . . is the duality and unity of the text and its meaning. We hold that this duality and unity are themselves related to the duality of the Word Incarnate and his Holy Spirit, and to the unity of the work which they have been sent by the Father to accomplish." *Idem*, "Holy Writ and Holy Church," Blackfriars 41 (1960): 13 (*italics in the original*). Referring to "la tension entre doctrine du magistère et doctrine de l'Écriture," Congar affirms that "la solution ne consiste pas à éliminer ou à oublier l'un des deux termes. L'un et l'autre s'imposent." *Idem*, "Réponse," 106.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 36-38. See also *idem*, Tradition and Traditions, 39-41.

³Knowing that this concept scandalizes Protestants, Congar points out that in practice Protestants depend on tradition as much as Roman Catholics do. Although claiming to live by the *Scriptura sola* principle, they interpret Scripture according to their own tradition. Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 417, 453, 454. "The issuing of confessions of faith by Protestant communions goes against the notion of the complete sufficiency of Scripture alone as the rule of ecclesiastical faith," remarks Congar. *Idem*, Tradition and Traditions, 421.

independently of Tradition, and none that she holds solely by oral Tradition independently of Scripture."¹

In answer to the question whether the material content of unwritten tradition is similar to that of Scripture, Congar sees them as expressing, at least implicitly, the same salvific truths.² He concedes that the expression "apostolic tradition" does not necessarily mean that a practice or a doctrine should have been explicitly held and transmitted as such by the apostles.³ It simply indicates that the matter in question came essentially from them but was subsequently formulated and defined by the church. He further admits that tradition teaches a few "particular points not actually found in Scripture." But it is always merely a question of

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 100 (italics in the original); see also *ibid.*, 41, 42, 45; *idem*, Tradition and Traditions, 413, 414; and *idem*, Called to Life, 35. Congar's interpretation of the Council of Trent is in line with this concept: "The saving Gospel is contained entirely in the Scriptures, as it is also contained entirely in Tradition." *Idem*, The Meaning of Tradition, 43. "S'il s'agit de points de doctrine, nous pouvons admettre, après comme avant le concile de Trente, que tout se trouve, d'une certaine façon, dans les Écritures." *Idem*, "Conclusion," 293.

²See Yves Congar, "The Debate on the Question of the Relationship between Scripture and Tradition from the Viewpoint of Their Material Content," in A Theology Reader, ed. Robert W. Gleason (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 115-29.

³Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 38; *idem*, Tradition and Traditions, 289.

"secondary points, . . . practical points of application and not articles of faith."¹

Concretely, for Congar the correspondence between Scripture and tradition means that the latter renders explicitly things which are contained only implicitly in the former. In relation to doctrines concerning the religious life, sacraments, Mary, and devotion to the saints, Congar acknowledges that "Catholics cannot adequately justify their position by appeal to explicit [biblical] texts," for Scripture simply does not express those tenets formally,² though, insists Congar, this is not to be understood to mean that the Roman Catholic Church does not find her doctrines in Scripture.

By meditating on the texts and events, by examining the implications of her experience of the sacred truths she possesses, by rereading the texts once more in the light of this experience, the Church gradually recognizes in the divine word a richer content than

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 39. Those unwritten traditions are mainly "points of liturgy or of discipline." Idem, "The Debate," 119. Among the non-written apostolic traditions mentioned by Congar are "the institution of Sunday as the Lord's day," and "the baptism of newly-born infants." Idem, The Revelation of God, 32. See a detailed list of non-written apostolic traditions in idem, "Traditions apostoliques non écrites et suffisance de l'Écriture," Istina 59 (1959): 282-94; and idem, Tradition and Traditions, 50-61.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 408. See also idem, "The Debate," 118. "The Catholic is unable to justify his position entirely by referring to a text; but . . . he can *rediscover* a certain testimony in Scripture, . . . [he] *recognizes in the text* certain proofs not revealed by a simple reading of the text." Idem, The Meaning of Tradition, 117, 118 (italics in the original).

that which had been revealed by a merely historical interpretation of the texts alone.¹

Reasoning in the light of the analogy of faith, Catholics can rediscover a particular article of faith in the distant references made in the texts of Holy Scripture. Congar argues that "by bringing texts into relation with one another, even if they are rather remote at the literary level . . . we can sometimes go beyond the formal terms of the Text" to find the deep truths implied in it.² This particular task is accomplished under the twofold and harmonious direction of the Holy Spirit and the pastoral ministry of the successors to the apostles.³

While Scripture and tradition do express, at least implicitly, the same truths, the Dominican theologian is careful to add that "Scripture and Tradition are not on the same level. Scripture has an absolute sovereignty; . . . it governs Tradition and the Church, whereas it is

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 141. See also idem, "Conclusion," 294, 295. "It is not so much the text [of Scripture] that explains the Church's reality as the reality that explains and makes clear the text." Idem, The Mystery of the Church, xii.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 407. "Hence the Church justifies its belief by scriptural texts without ever being restrictively limited to what they state expressly. It recognizes, on the basis of what it already holds and has experienced, supports for this that a purely scientific reading of the text could not uncover." Ibid., 408, 409.

³Ibid., 413.

not governed by Tradition or by the Church."¹ He insists that, though they are paid the same respect, Scripture has an absolute value which tradition has not.² The Holy Scriptures "are the supreme guide to which any others there may be are subjected. . . . Scripture is always the supreme rule and is never submitted to any other objective rule."³

¹Ibid., 422.

²The Holy Spirit is operative in both Scripture and tradition ensuring a certain continuity between them. But Congar distinguishes the Spirit's action of simple assistance (in tradition) from that of true *inspiration* (in Scripture). Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 94. See also idem, La foi et la théologie, 43. "Inspiration implies a positive influx and often a contribution of ideas which do not come from within the person who is the object of inspiration. Assistance leaves intact the human performance of the faculties of clergymen, that is, it does not dispense them in any way from the human search after truth by the methods required by that search, namely, study, criticism, discussion, reasoning, repetitions and new approaches." Idem, This Church That I Love, 92; see also *ibid.*, 88.

³Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 94, 95. "If Tradition or the Magisterium claimed to teach something contradicting the holy Scriptures, it would certainly be false, and the faithful ought to reject it." *Ibid.*, 95; see also *ibid.*, 148. "To imagine that the Church, at a given moment in its history, could hold as of a faith a point which had no statable support in Scripture, would amount to thinking that an article of faith could exist without bearing any relation to the centre of revelation, and thus attributing to the Church and its magisterium a gift equivalent to the charism of revelation." Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 414 (*italics in the original*). Apostolic writings provide "the necessary criteria by which we must measure our faithfulness to the apostolic heritage." *Ibid.*, 352; see also *ibid.*, 294. "The function of Scripture is to provide a standard of God's thought to which we can refer in order to see what is in conformity with apostolic thought. With the Bible we have always an element of reference, a standard measure to

At the same time, however, in Congar's view the sovereign character of Scripture does not prevent it from being *just one* principle regulating the belief and life of the church. In addition to it God has established two other elements: tradition and the hierarchical ministry of the church. Reciprocal interrelations between these three components make it impossible to segregate them from one another, still less to oppose one to the others.¹ "These three realities are . . . insufficient, even inconsistent, when separated one from another for they entail one another."² Conversely, when held together, these three elements constitute the means laid down by God to link the

which we can refer in order to verify whether the word is in genuine conformity with the original deposit." Idem, The Revelation of God, 31.

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 422. See also idem, The Meaning of Tradition, 95; and idem, "Church Reform," 354. Congar contends that one cannot confine all authority to Scripture, for in his opinion Jesus has not established the Scriptures as the *only* means to constitute His church. The Lord has also instituted the sacraments and the apostolic ministry endowed with charisms and authority to create His church. Idem, "Église de Pierre, Église de Paul, Église de Jean," 175.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 423. See also idem, The Revelation of God, 42. As late as 1984 Congar reiterated that "the three realities--the normative documents, the sense of faith of the People of God and the charism of ordained ministers--have to be seen as a single whole. They complete and in a sense also condition one another. They should function together. Each one, considered by itself and separate from the other two, is no longer what God intended it to be." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 34.

believer to the revelation given once and for all to the apostles.

In this context, Congar's assertion regarding the supremacy of Scripture seems to be cancelled out by an equally specific affirmation that "tradition represents a value in its own right, apart from Scripture, a value which becomes a norm."¹ It "envelops and transcends Scripture. It is more complete and could be self-sufficient."² This is so, holds Congar, because tradition includes apostolic teachings which were not recorded in the apostles' writings. Moreover, tradition is the transmission not only of ideas and statements, but of realities which surpass the texts and cannot be reduced to mere words. Tradition could perfectly exist without any written record or text.³ For that reason, concludes the Dominican theologian, to accept only that which has come down from the apostles in written form is "to pledge oneself to an inheritance which has, in fact, been maimed."⁴

The same is true of the church, namely the teaching magisterium, with regard to Scripture. On the one hand the church has no autonomy regarding the

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 153.

²Ibid., 95.

³Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 437.

⁴Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 416.

apostolic deposit, but on the other, states Congar, "she is not tied within strict limits to the testimony contained in the monuments of her tradition. It transcends them as well as being contained by them."¹ The church and the magisterium are closely tied to the *depositum fidei*, and yet "command resources which go beyond those of a purely documentary kind."²

Since in a sense at least, tradition and the successors of the apostles transcend Scriptures, one could still pose the question: "Of the two, Scripture and Church, which is superior to the other, which is the foundation for the authority of the other?"³ "'Is the Church founded on the Bible, or is the Bible founded on the Church?' 'Is the Church to be judged by the Bible, or does the Church judge the Bible?'"⁴ In Congar's opinion,

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 142.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 454.

³Congar, "Holy Writ and Holy Church," 15.

⁴Congar, The Revelation of God, 23. Congar is well aware of the criticism often voiced by Protestants against the Roman Catholic view of tradition guaranteed by succession. Idem, Tradition and Traditions, 366-69. Thus, K. Barth argues that such a view implies that "neither Peter, the apostolate, nor the Holy Spirit, is any longer a free power in the Church and over against the Church. On this presupposition the Church is again left to itself and referred to itself and its self-reflection. This is why we cannot endorse the Roman Catholic doctrine of succession." Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, 13 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-69), 1:104. See also Schmidt, "Le ministère et les ministères," 318. This situation was recognized in 1964 by J. Ratzinger, when he admitted that "thus far, everything that has been done was

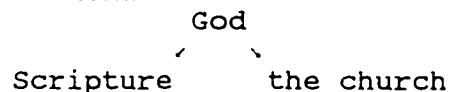
this is a "false formulation of the question" that can only lead to an erroneous answer.¹ "It was thus that the question was set out in the sixteenth century. But it is precisely this way of putting it that we cannot accept. Sometimes one simply has to say: you have not asked the right question," contends the Dominican theologian.² He rejects this question because it separates, even opposes, Scripture and the church, two equal and complementary realities in his view, which have their common source in Christ, the sole supreme authority.³ Since the canon of

done precisely to secure the first side of that bond as tightly as possible--namely, the binding of the Word to the Witness [i.e., the apostles' successors]. But for the protection of the second half of the whole--the binding of Witness to Word--there has been no such concrete guarantee, no such concern." Joseph Ratzinger, "The Ministerial Office and the Unity of the Church," JES 1 (1964): 56. As late as 1984 Congar commented that "the radical question asked by the Reformers is still with us: does the Catholic Church not identify itself with its norm, situating it within itself?" Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 33.

¹Congar, "Holy Writ and Holy Church," 16.

²Congar, The Revelation of God, 24. See also idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 435.

³Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 435, 436. In idem, The Revelation of God, 25, he schematizes the Protestant position in this way: God → Scriptures → each individual believer → the church. On the other hand, he continues, the doctrine wrongly attributed to Roman Catholics by the Reformers could be represented in this way: God → the church (hierarchy) → Scripture. He contends, however, that the correct Roman Catholic view is represented with this schema:



Scripture was determined by the church, and since Scripture can be rightly understood only within the church, Congar contends that the Bible cannot do without the church, adding immediately that likewise the church cannot do without the Bible.¹ Yet, it is in view of this very reasoning that one has to return to the question: Where resides the ultimate authority for the faith and life of the believer? As a faithful Roman Catholic, Congar makes plain that the divine activity which operated in the time of the apostles persists in the time of the church.² "Assisted by the Holy Spirit, the magisterium distinguishes, among the elements of material tradition,

¹Congar, The Revelation of God, 25-33.

²Congar explains that the prophets and apostles, "au 'temps de l'Incarnation' dont parle O. Cullmann," have given a written interpretation of the events of the economy of salvation. Being divinely inspired, this interpretation is forever normative. Still, he insists that the process of interpretation continues in the time of the church, under the assistance of the Holy Spirit. This assisted interpretation is tradition, particularly the pronouncements of the magisterium. Congar, "L'Église de Hans Küng," 700. More recently he affirmed that "revelation is not closed if the word is understood in the sense that the Church knows the whole content of the Word of God. . . . namely the revelation that takes place in the Tradition and the life of the Church." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 57. Since "the inspired composition of the New Testament" after the death of the apostles, possibly even in the second century A.D., "formed part of the original constitution of the Church," Congar argues that "the charism of infallibility which follows the inspired character of the Scriptures is consistent with that of the Church." Ibid., 58. "Revelation occurred once only. Its centre and its peak is Jesus Christ. In that sense, it is closed. But it is spread out in time and space by the action of the Holy Spirit." Ibid., 130.

. . . that which constitutes the true apostolic tradition, and its meaning."¹ This functional charism of the apostles' successors constitutes them as the final criterion of faith and practice in the church.²

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 269. See also idem, La foi et la théologie, 116, 117.

²Related to this assertion is the question of the relationship between the theologians and the magisterium. Congar's view of the scholars' position in relation to the hierarchy evolved from dependence to integrated cooperation. Thus, till the 1960s he clearly subordinates the theologians to the teaching authority of the apostles' successors, which together with the Holy Spirit constitute the final criterion of truth. See Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 450-79; and idem, Tradition and Traditions, 270. Later, in 1976 Congar suggests the need to reconsider that relationship, arguing that "we cannot define the dependent condition of theologians only with reference to the 'magisterium,' even while this retains its truth." He insists on the necessity to place above both, doctors and hierarchy, "the truth, the transmitted apostolic faith, confessed, preached and celebrated." Idem, "A Brief History," 328. "Who has the say in the Church: first and most clearly of all, the bishops, and first and foremost amongst them the bishop of Rome, successor of Peter." Idem, "Towards a Catholic Synthesis," 77. More recently the Dominican theologian affirmed that "the hierarchical-pastoral and the scientific functions are different but should be complementary." Nevertheless, he recognizes that "given the nature of the hierarchy of the Church . . . one is superior to the other and consequently regulates it in some sense." Within limits and conditions, "the 'magisterium' is the rule of faith." Idem, "Magisterium, Theologians, the Faithful and the Faith," 552. At the same time, however, he holds that "one should apply to the declarations of the 'magisterium' the principle of literary genres which is used in the interpretation of Scripture." Ibid., 558. On the relationship between theologians and the hierarchical magisterium see also Dulles, A Church to Believe In, 118-32; and idem, "Successio apostolorum," 61-67.

Conclusion

For centuries, especially since the Tridentine Council, Roman Catholic theology has perceived the church, besides its "Roman" feature, as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The apostolic dimension, in particular, has been considered mainly from a juridical and mechanical perspective, increasingly coloring ecclesiological deliberations with an overemphasized hierarchical tone. Against this background, Yves Congar stands out as the most influential advocate of a renewed ecclesiology in contemporary Roman Catholicism. Throughout his life, not always easy, the Dominican scholar endeavored to present a more comprehensive concept of the church through a *ressourcement* into the inexhaustible sources of Scripture and tradition, addressing at the same time the current needs and demands of a church living in a complex and rapidly changing world.

Basic to and characteristic of Congar's ecclesiology is the interaction between structure and life in the church, the dialectical tension between the historical continuation of Christ's work through the apostles and their successors on the one hand, and the dynamic and spontaneous interventions of the Holy Spirit on the other. From an emphasis on the former in his earlier writings, Congar gradually moved toward concentration on the church's life generated by the Holy

Spirit.¹ Though other factors may have contributed to this approach, it seems that the ecumenical dialogue as well as the Second Vatican Council exerted a marked influence on Congar, prompting him to conceive the church more as a structured communion than an essentially hierarchical society,² and to envision her apostolicity not only in terms of the ordained ministry, but also and foremost in terms of doctrine and faith.³ This shift was made possible by the fact that Congar distanced himself, to a certain degree, from the Thomistic causal approach to ecclesiology, perceiving its limitations to address the questions posed by the contemporary world.

While many have come to appreciate Congar's efforts to dissociate himself from the hierarchical

¹See p. 83 above.

²In Schilling's view, "the prominence which Congar gives to the *congregatio fidelium* in his discussions of the church does much to restore the biblical notion of the faithful people of God which is often underestimated or missing in Catholic theology. By distinguishing the communal principle from the hierarchical in the nature and life of the church, and by identifying the church as a whole with the faithful community, he also provides a crucial point of contact with the Reformation understanding of the church as the 'congregation of faithful men'." Schilling, 201.

³In the context of his view of apostolic succession, Congar explicitly acknowledges that "partly thanks to the ecumenical dialogue, always fertilizing power, and partly owing to reflection on the experience of the Council, I personally have come to see not merely the place but the primacy and decisive character of apostolicity of faith." Congar, "My Path-Findings," 180. See also idem, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," 796.

conception of the church, it should be noticed that what he rejected was the distortion of the institutional dimension of the church, but not her divinely given structure per se. In fact, his whole view on apostolic succession appears to be determined by the nonnegotiable dimension of the church's structure.

Gathering together his new ecclesiological insights, Congar has made a significant contribution to the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession. In an attempt to refocus the doctrine, he sees the whole community of believers as the site where apostolic succession takes place, without denying that the hierarchical ministry is the proper and specific actualization of that succession. By the same token, Congar insists on faithfulness to the apostles' teachings as an essential component of apostolic succession, maintaining with equal emphasis the need for valid ordination in succession to the apostles as a means to guarantee the apostolicity of doctrine. It may be necessary to indicate that, while acclaimed by many as the most outstanding Roman Catholic ecclesiologist of this century, in his attempt to come to a more balanced understanding of apostolic succession Yves Congar has not always been able to avoid ambiguities, and what some have

perceived as contradictions or at least irreconcilable statements.¹

It is interesting to notice that while he remained faithful to his Roman Catholic premises, in later years Congar showed less interest in arguing the issues related to apostolic succession.² This may be due, to some extent at least, to the irenic spirit that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, as well as to Congar's own ecumenical concerns.

While frankly recognizing his indebtedness to Cullmann and other Protestant theologians with regard to his view on salvation history, the Dominican scholar wholeheartedly incorporated and developed this approach. It became an integral part of his own ecclesiological system, and from this perspective he defined apostolic succession as the legitimate continuation of the apostolic ministry and authority throughout the time of the church until the *parousia*. To avoid misunderstandings, however, Congar gradually clarified this continuation by

¹Thus, he affirms that the bishops's magisterial function "n'est pas par elle-même son propre critère, elle est conditionnée par sa fidélité à la Tradition des Apôtres vivante et actualisée dans l'histoire par le Saint-Esprit." Congar, *L'Église une*, 210. At the same time, however, he holds that besides the Holy Spirit the guarantor of this living "Tradition des Apôtres" is precisely the episcopate in succession to the apostles. Idem, *Tradition and Traditions*, 38.

²The traditional Roman Catholic view on apostolic succession is still present in Congar's latest book. See Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 82, 83.

distinguishing between the apostles' unrepeatable and unique charisms pertaining to the *ephapax* of their foundational function and the transmissible powers bestowed upon them as leaders and pastors of the church. During the time of the church, apostolic succession assures that the hierarchical magisterium accomplishes its *raison d'être*, namely "mediation of grace and truth,"¹ linking the salvation of each believer to the unique historical fact of salvation, to the Christ of history.²

A divergent understanding of the relationship between apostolic times (the *ephapax* of the incarnation) and the time of the church constitutes, according to Congar, the basic difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics and explains their divergent views on apostolic succession. Closely related to this issue he sees another bone of contention between both confessions in their conflicting views regarding the relationship between Scripture and tradition, which also has an immediate bearing on apostolic succession. Both divergences have to do with the issue of final authority in the church.³

¹Congar, Lay People, 277.

²Congar, The Mystery of the Church, 37. See also idem, Lay People, 113, 114.

³Congar, "Conclusion," 292-300. See also idem, "Composantes et idée," 61; idem, "Ministères et structuration," 33; idem, La foi et la théologie, 43; and idem, "Note on the Words 'Confession', 'Church' and 'Communion'," 206, 207.

The importance of this problem is demonstrated by the methodology and the sources employed by the Dominican theologian to elaborate his view on apostolic succession. Scripture, which for him is the supreme though not unique norm for the church, offers no explicit support to the concept of apostolic succession. Nevertheless, he deduces the notion of succession by a reasoning which, in the light of the church's experience and of her magisterium, recognizes it in the biblical texts. The lack of a clear foundation for apostolic succession in Scripture does not constitute a major difficulty for Congar, since his theology relies on other sources besides Scripture, namely tradition and the teaching magisterium of the church.

"The fact that bishops are 'the successors of the apostles' is asserted in such a way by tradition and by the hierarchical magisterium that it imposes itself as a given fact of faith," he affirms.¹ In the last analysis this methodology reveals that, according to Yves Congar, the ultimate authority in the church is not the Bible. For him "the last word belongs to the Holy Spirit, and to his human instrument, set up by God among his people--the

¹"Que les évêques soient 'les successeurs des Apôtres', le fait est affirmé de telle manière par la Tradition, puis par le magistère extraordinaire, qu'il s'impose comme une donnée de foi." Congar, L'Église une, 193.

magisterium of the episcopal college, the heir of the apostolic college in the order of the ministry."¹

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 270.

CHAPTER IV

OSCAR CULLMANN AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

Beyond doubt, the work of Oscar Cullmann stands as "an important contribution to the biblical-theological thought of our time," and "places him in line with the great critical scholars of the past and present centuries."¹ The writings of this Protestant New Testament exegete, theologian, and historian of the early church have had remarkable repercussions in contemporary ecumenical and ecclesiological discussions, particularly those related to the issue of apostolic succession. This chapter attempts to delineate Cullmann's concept of the apostolate within the framework of salvation history and his appraisal of the idea of succession to the apostles. Following the approach of chapter 2, this is circumscribed to set forth Cullmann's thought in a descriptive and analytical fashion, reserving its assessment for the last part of this dissertation.

¹S. C. Guthrie, "Oscar Cullmann," in A Handbook of Christian Theologians, ed. Dean G. Peerman and Martin E. Marty (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1965), 353.

The Man and the Theologian

Oscar Cullmann was born on February 25, 1902 in Strasbourg, Alsace.¹ Cullmann, whose Lutheran home was located in a region where some 70 percent of the population spoke French, grew up speaking both French and German.²

Cullmann came to teaching theology in a rather unusual way. To his original desire to study classical philology he added theology, not with the intention of becoming a pastor but out of interest in the subject matter as such.³ His intellectual formation included classical and theological studies at the University of Strasbourg (1920-24). From 1924 to 1926 he stayed in

¹Cullmann reveals some aspects of his overall theological development in "An Autobiographical Sketch," SJT 14 (1961): 228-33. Several studies offer biographical as well as theological portraits of Cullmann. See Frisque, Oscar Cullmann; Karlfried Fröhlich, "Oscar Cullmann: A Portrait," JES 1 (1964): 22-41; Guthrie, "Oscar Cullmann," 338-54; Ans J. Van der Bent, "Cullmann, Oscar," Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement (1991), 256; John J. Vincent, "Oscar Cullmann," in Theologians of Our Time, ed. A. W. Hastings and E. Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1966), 112-22; Anton Vögtle, "Oscar Cullmann," in Tendenzen der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Geschichte in Porträts, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1966), 488-93; David H. Wallace, "Oscar Cullmann," in Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology, ed. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 163-202; "Cullmann, Oscar," in Contemporary Authors, ed. Francis C. Locher (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Company, 1982), 106:130, 131.

²Alsace had come under German control in 1871 and was returned to France in 1919.

³Cullmann, "An Autobiographical Sketch," 229.

Paris where he took up studies at the *École des Hautes-Études* with A. Loisy (1857-1940), and at the Sorbonne with A. Lods (1867-1948) and M. Goguel (1880-1955) among others. His stay in Paris was the most fruitful of his whole apprenticeship.¹

In 1926 Cullmann became director of studies at the *Thomasstift* in Strasbourg and an instructor in Greek at the University of Strasbourg. Four years later, upon receiving his doctorate in theology, he was appointed Professor of New Testament at the same university, in addition to which he started teaching Church History shortly thereafter.

In 1938 Cullmann accepted the position of Professor of New Testament and Ancient Church History at the University of Basel where he remained until his retirement in 1972. At the same time he returned regularly to teach at Strasbourg (1945-48) and was later appointed to fill three academic posts in Paris: in 1949 at the *École des Hautes-Études*, the next year in the *Faculté Libre de Théologie Protestante*, and in 1953 at the Sorbonne, an assignment he kept till 1972. He has also taught as visiting professor at the Waldensian Seminary in Rome and at Union Theological Seminary in New York, not to mention the numerous lectures he delivered both in Europe and in the United States of America.

¹Ibid., 230.

Cullmann considered his home ground to be Basel, sharing his time between two residences: the theological seminary building and the *Theologisches Alumneum*, a boarding home for students where he lived and which he managed with the assistance of his sister, Louise Cullmann, from 1941 on. He appreciated the worldwide inclusiveness and the association with various churches and countries facilitated by the University of Basel and the *Alumneum*.¹

The constant interaction with students and colleagues of other denominational convictions clearly contributed to Cullmann's interest in ecumenism. In this context, his frequent contacts with Roman Catholics,² as well as his ecumenical contributions, led Pope John XXIII to invite him personally as a Protestant observer at the Second Vatican Council.

In his writings Cullmann tackled various issues highly debated in the contemporary theological realm, always studying them from the perspective of the New

¹Ibid., 232, 233.

²Looking in retrospect to his initial ecumenical contacts with Roman Catholic theologians, in 1965 Cullmann commented: "This was at a time when there were still very few contacts between the theologians of the two Churches. I remember particularly, too, a conversation that I had with Fr Congar when I was a younger professor at the University of Strasbourg between the two wars." Oscar Cullmann, "Oscar Cullmann," in *Ecumenical Experiences*, ed. Luis V. Romeu, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965), 33.

Testament and the early church. Many of his numerous publications have been translated into several languages, making him "one of the most widely read Protestant theologians of our time."¹

Cullmann's remarkable theological contribution has been widely recognized and several universities granted him honorary doctorates.² The esteem and respect of his New Testament colleagues and his ecumenical friends have found embodiment in several compilations of essays dedicated to the eminent Lutheran theologian.³

¹Fröhlich, 23. Cullmann's works have been published in French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Japanese, Icelandic, Hungarian, and Swedish. A partial list of his publications from 1925 to 1959 can be found in Frisque, 262-76; see this inventory extended up to 1961 in Willy Rordorf, "Bibliographia Cullmanniana," in Neotestamentica et Patristica: eine Freundesgabe, Herrn Professor Dr. Oscar Cullmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag überreicht, ed. W. C. van Unnik (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), ix-xix. For his more recent writings see Heiko Heck, "Bibliographia Cullmanniana 1962-1971," in Neues Testament und Geschichte: Historisches Geschehen und Deutung im Neuen Testament. Oscar Cullmann zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Heinrich Baltensweiler and Bo Reicke (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 329-44; and Matthieu Arnold, "Bibliographia Cullmanniana 1972-1991," RHPR 72 (1992): 113-18.

²Lausanne (1945), Manchester (1949), Edinburgh (1952), Lund (1953), Basel (1972). See Frisque, 261; and "Cullmann, Oscar," in Contemporary Authors, 106:131.

³Neotestamentica et Patristica: Eine Freundesgabe, Herrn Professor Dr. Oscar Cullmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag überreicht, ed. W. C. van Unnik (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), for his 60th birthday; Oikonomia: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie. Oscar Cullmann zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet, ed. Felix Christ (Hamburg-Bergstedt: Herbert Reich Evang. Verlag, 1967), for his 65th birthday; Neues Testament und Geschichte: Historisches Geschehen und Deutung im Neuen Testament.

Oscar Cullmann's name is generally associated with salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*). Though others had addressed the concept from the eighteenth century on,¹ Cullmann gave it a primordial place in New Testament studies. In so doing he opened a new trail in which, accepting little, if any, significant influence from other scholars,² he devoted his energies "to listen to what the

Oscar Cullmann zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Heinrich Baltensweiler and Bo Reicke (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), when he became 70 years old; Testimonia Oecumenica: In Honorem Oscar Cullmann Octogenarii die xxv Februarii A.D. MCMLXXXII (Tübingen: Refo-Druck Hans Vogler, 1982) to celebrate his 80th birthday; finally, the Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses dedicated its vol. 72, no. 1 (January-March 1992) to honor Cullmann on his 90th birthday.

¹See John H. Gerstner, "Heilsgeschichte," Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1984): 505; Karl Gerhard Steck, Die Idee der Heilsgeschichte: Hofmann-Schlatter-Cullmann, Theologische Studien, no. 56 (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1959); and Isaac C. Rottenberg, Redemption and Historical Reality (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1964), 25-51.

²"I am not at all dependent upon the systematic theologians of earlier centuries mentioned above. . . . My own interpretation has been gained purely from my involvement with the New Testament." Oscar Cullmann, Salvation in History, trans. Sidney G. Sowers (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 14. Cullmann explains that the 19th-century German school of salvation history "was entirely dominated by the philosophy of Hegel. In contrast to this school I have endeavored to present redemptive history as strictly and closely connected with the exegesis of the Bible and always from this perspective." Oscar Cullmann, "The Relevance of Redemptive History," in Soli Deo Gloria: New Testament Studies in Honor of William Childs Robinson, ed. J. McDowell Richards, trans. John A. Hare (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 13. See also Frisque, 10.

authors of the New Testament have to say to us."¹ "The fact that complete absence of presuppositions is impossible must not excuse us from striving for objectivity altogether."² Perceiving that "historico-exegetical investigation of the Bible had been falsified . . . by prevailing currents of philosophy,"³ he became increasingly aware of the unavoidable "demand for obedient listening to the strangeness of the Bible,"⁴ "even when what I hear is sometimes completely foreign, contradictory to my own favourite ideas," to "my own philosophical and theological 'opinions'."⁵ To do so, Cullmann adheres unreservedly to the historical-philological method, especially to form criticism, but also to its younger

¹Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, trans. A. J. B. Higgins and S. Godman (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), xi.

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 67.

³Cullmann, "An Autobiographical Sketch," 229.

⁴Ibid., 232. Cullmann emphasizes the need to "make an honest effort to renounce all standards derived from any other source than the most ancient Christian writings themselves." Idem, Christ and Time, xii.

⁵Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, rev. ed., trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1963), xiv. "Though I know I shall perhaps never reach my goal, I at least try more than ever to abstract from exegesis all later conceptions, however much I may like them." Idem, "The Reply of Professor Cullmann to Roman Catholic Critics," SJT 15 (1962): 43. See also idem, Salvation in History, 70; and idem, "Theology an Indispensable Expression of Faith According to the New Testament," MCCQ 20 (1967): 265.

companion redaction criticism, "as the foundation of all interpretation of the oldest Christian documents."¹ For him the philological historical-critical method is "the only guarantee for the objectivity sought after in hearing the text's proclamation."²

¹Cullmann, The Early Church, xi. "I know no other 'method' than the proven philological-historical one." Idem, The Christology of the New Testament, xiv. Cullmann immediately explains that "for scientific reasons" he resolutely rejects "the theological preconceptions of a modernizing interpretation which are commonly associated with the historical-philological method--preconceptions which, in the interest of some philosophical theory or other, seek either to strip off as a mere external garment or forcedly to reinterpret the very thing which is central to the faith of the first Christians." Idem, The Early Church, xi (italics in the original). Cullmann's advocacy of form criticism is evident from his very first publication, namely idem, "Les récentes études sur la formation de la tradition évangélique," RHPR 5 (1925): 459-77; 564-79; see also idem, "The Necessity and Function of Higher Criticism," chap. in The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. and trans. A. J. B. Higgins (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 3-16; and idem, "Holy Spirit and Critique," IlijffR 36 (1979): 5-9. Without ever renouncing form criticism, later he added redaction criticism as a component of his methodology. See idem, "Origines du Christianisme," chap. in Problèmes et méthodes d'histoire des religions: Mélanges publiés par la Section des Sciences religieuses à l'occasion du centenaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 170. For an overall discussion of Cullmann's methodology see Dorman, "The Hermeneutics of Oscar Cullmann (Switzerland)."

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 73. The historico-critical method, however, does not seem to be a sure guarantee for objectivity. In Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's words, "people sometimes give the impression that the exegetes, with their historico-critical methods, have found the 'scientific' and hence the nonpartisan solution. This is not the case, however; every 'science' unavoidably depends upon a philosophy, an ideology. There is no neutrality, here least of all." Ratzinger, The Ratzinger Report, 164. As U. Luz sees it, "historical-

Though the salvation history horizon of Cullmann's theology always included a variety of themes and issues, one can distinguish several stages in his career according to the predominant center of interest observed in each period. Thus, after emphasis on methodological considerations in the late 1920s and early 1930s, his works seemed to converge on eschatology during the remaining part of the 1930s and during the 1940s. In the early 1950s he focused his attention on the historical-theological problem of Peter and the issue of tradition, two interrelated topics which directly impinge on the question of apostolic succession. His participation as Protestant observer at the Second Vatican Council prompted him to become more and more involved in ecumenism, which became his dominating preoccupation from that time on. Together with other factors to be mentioned later on, this shift of emphasis seems to have affected Cullmann's perception of the issue of apostolic succession.

Cullmann's Concept of Apostle

Applied to the issue of apostolic succession, the methodology outlined above calls for a careful examination of "what the nature of the apostolic office is in the New

critical research of the Bible . . . has delivered the Bible to historical relativity . . . which cannot be the basis of a truth beyond its own situation." As a result, one of today's hermeneutical problems is "the impotence of historical-critical exegesis." Ulrich Luz, "The Primacy Text (Mt. 16:18)," PSB 12 (1991): 41.

Testament."¹ This is, in fact, the starting point of Cullmann's argumentation.

Apostles in General

Cullmann asserts that in the early church the term "apostle" was used in more than one way. In a wider sense it simply designated an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ, one who had seen the Lord. This meaning of the word included a group considerably larger than the Twelve, as it can be clearly inferred from the enumeration in 1 Cor 15:5-8 which speaks on the one hand of the Twelve, and on the other of "all the apostles."²

The second and narrower sense of the term alludes to a witness of the resurrection who also received a

¹Oscar Cullmann, Peter, Disciple--Apostle--Martyr: A Historical and Theological Study, 2d rev. and expanded ed., trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1962), 220. The great importance of the New Testament concept of apostleship is also noticeable in Oscar Cullmann, "The Tradition," chap. in The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. and trans. A. J. B. Higgins (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 59-99.

²Oscar Cullmann, "Kyrios as Designation for the Oral Tradition Concerning Jesus," SJT 3 (1950): 187; idem, "The Tradition," 66; idem, Peter, 221; and idem, "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament," chap. in The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, trans. S. Godman (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 118. To see Jesus, however, was not enough to be an apostle. To begin with, seeing had to be accompanied by believing in Him. In fact, many saw Him but refused to believe in Him. For the relation between seeing and believing, see idem, Early Christian Worship, trans. A. Stewart Todd and James B. Torrance (London: SCM Press, 1953), 40-48.

specific commission from Christ, either during His earthly ministry or after His crucifixion and resurrection.¹ Paul explicitly asserts to have received such a charge (Gal 1:15, 16).² The Twelve also belong to this restricted group,³ although in their case another condition had been fulfilled: they had lived with the historical incarnate Jesus. They received the apostolic commission twice, first from the Incarnate One, and then from the Risen One. It means that besides being witnesses of Christ's resurrection the Twelve had the additional function of

¹An apostle is "an eyewitness of the resurrection who is called by the risen Christ, one who belongs to the Twelve and was called by the incarnate Christ." Oscar Cullmann, Unity through Diversity: Its Foundation, and a Contribution to the Discussion Concerning the Possibilities of Its Actualization, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 96, n. 72. In the words of E. Schlink, "the eye-witnessing and the commissioning by the risen Lord, are the basis for the dogmatic concept of apostle," which describes the situation "normal to the New Testament." Schlink, "Apostolic Succession," 70-73.

²Paul's calling was a vocation not to the apostolate in general but to a very definite apostolate to the Gentiles with deep eschatological dimensions. See Oscar Cullmann, "Le caractère eschatologique du devoir missionnaire et de la conscience apostolique de saint Paul," chap. in Des sources de l'Evangile à la formation de la théologie chrétienne (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1969), 70, 71. See also idem, Salvation in History, 250, 251.

³For a discussion of the discrepancies between the four different lists of the Twelve offered by the Gospels and Acts see Oscar Cullmann, "Le douzième apôtre," RHPR 42 (1962): 133-40.

guaranteeing the continuity between the risen and the historical Jesus.¹

Although Paul did not belong to the group of the Twelve, it is in his writings, particularly, that Cullmann finds an emphasis on the direct link existing between the apostle and Jesus Christ. Is an apostle the one who has received the gospel *di' apokalypseōs* and not *di' anthrōpou* (Gal 1:12), by direct revelation without human intermediary. When the Judaizers refused to recognize Paul as an apostle for his lack of connection with the earthly Jesus, he answered affirming that he had seen Christ and had received the gospel directly from Him. The same occurred to the other apostles. Each of them had received a direct revelation of the risen Christ and with it a direct call from the Lord.²

That direct tie of the apostle to Jesus is parallel to the relation between the Jewish *šāliah* and his

¹Cullmann, *Peter*, 221. See also idem, "The Tradition," 72; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 194. Cullmann develops more fully this idea in relation to his new understanding of revelation (see pp. 186-88 below). In that context he affirms that "the twelve had to guarantee the continuity between the new events and the *kerygma* given them concerning events to which they were also witnesses. This means that they had to witness that the incarnate Jesus and the exalted Christ are identical, or, that the incarnate Lord continues to work on as the exalted Lord." Idem, *Salvation in History*, 102, 103.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78, 79; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," *SJT* 6 (1953): 116, 117.

sender: the *šālīaḥ* is as he that sent him.¹ During the 1950s Cullmann used this Jewish institution to clarify the nature of the apostolic office in the New Testament. The apostle has received a special commission from Jesus; so, explains Cullmann, according to the rule in late Judaism, he is like Jesus himself, and is bound to give accounting to Him.²

The essential function of the apostles is to be bearers of direct revelation from the Lord.³ As eyewitnesses they transmit that revelation to the church.⁴ To understand Cullmann's view regarding this unique function of the apostolate it is necessary to explain his concept of revelation, which has evolved through the years.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78.

²Cullmann, *Peter*, 220. As far as I know, Cullmann does not further mention the *šālīaḥ* concept in later publications.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 68; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 189. The apostolic commission has also an eschatological character, for the apostle's task is to prepare men and women for the *parousia* of the Savior. Based on 2 Thess 2:6, 7 Cullmann affirms that this dimension is particularly important for the apostolate of Paul, whose apostolic conscience is overwhelmingly eschatological. Idem, "Le caractère eschatologique," 72.

⁴Cullmann, "The Tradition," 71; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 193, 194. "The significance of the office of apostle in salvation history" is given by the fact that "an apostle is an immediate eyewitness to Christ's resurrection." Idem, *Salvation in History*, 251.

In the early 1950s Cullmann affirmed that the direct revelation received by the prophets and apostles concerns not only the facts of the history of salvation, but also the theological understanding of these facts in themselves. In the case of the apostles, however, there is no justification to the distinction between salvific events and their theological meaning, "for both are revealed to the apostle by the Lord, and of both he is a direct witness."¹ Yet, by the mid 1960s Cullmann adopts a more complex view, differentiating between three acts in the phenomenon of revelation. Based on the idea that the biblical message is the narration of interpreted events, he distinguishes between the naked event itself, beheld by the prophet or apostle, and the revelation of a divine plan being disclosed in this same event to the biblical writer. Further, maintains Cullmann, the prophet or apostle associates this new revelation with earlier salvation historical revelations and reinterprets them from this new perspective.² Though this view of

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 72; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 194.

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 90. Though Cullmann includes this third act as part of the process of revelation, he also refers to it as "the reflection ascribed [by the New Testament] to inspiration by the Spirit." Ibid., 118. The basis of the New Testament message is the narration of interpreted events, but these events are not just simply added up. Instead, each time a new revelation occurs, the interpretation of past saving events is corrected in the light of the new event. Cullmann acknowledges that biblical writers did not

revelation is not without problems,¹ it assigns particular

distinguish between events and their interpretation. But he holds that allowing the naked event to stand by itself will give us a better understanding of its interpretation. Ibid., 84-114. See also idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History and the Ecumenical Dialogue," chap. in Vatican Council II: The New Direction, trans. Faith E. Burgess (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 23-25. This new perspective prompted Cullmann to change his attitude towards the attempt to reconstruct the life of the historical Jesus. In his very first article (published in 1925) Cullmann affirmed that form criticism compelled theological research to definitively renounce to establish the historical facts of Jesus' life. Idem, "Les récentes études sur la formation de la tradition," 468, 471, 578. The need to uncover the naked salvific event, however, induced him to affirm, in 1968, that "aujourd'hui, et depuis longtemps, nous avons abandonné ce scepticisme outré. Sans retourner à l'arbitraire des anciennes 'Vies de Jésus', il faut se baser désormais précisément sur les résultats objectifs et sûrs de la *Formgeschichte* et de la *Redaktionsgeschichte* pour parvenir, . . . avec beaucoup de prudence, à une représentation approximative du moins de ce Jésus de l'histoire qui a engendré la foi en Christ." Idem, "Origines du Christianisme," 171, 172. For Cullmann's writings which have not been translated into English, I provide my own translation in the text, with the original French in the footnotes. This follows the practice I established with Yves Congar.

¹Some consider Cullmann's view of revelation presented in Salvation History as "the most important contribution of the book." Reginald H. Fuller, review of Heil als Geschichte: Heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament, by Oscar Cullmann, in JBL 84 (1965): 472. See also James P. Martin, review of Heil als Geschichte: Heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament, by Oscar Cullmann, in Int 20 (1966): 342. Other scholars, however, maintain that Cullmann's understanding of revelation "contains ambiguities" and "raises the question whether or not Cullmann's approach is really able to overcome the problems related to the whole issues of history and history of traditions with its two pictures of history, namely that established by the historical-critical method and that presented by the kerygma of the Biblical witnesses." Gerhard F. Hasel, New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 115, 116. In I. G. Nicol's view, Cullmann's approach is perplexing since on the one hand he insists on the need to

significance to the need that the bearer of revelation be himself/herself an eyewitness to the event. This essential dimension is particularly important for the New Testament concept of apostleship.¹ In the apostles' case the events of the incarnation and their salvation-historical interpretation were given simultaneously to them by the historical Jesus, although the apostles understood these events and their interpretation only after Easter, when they not only transmitted them, but also, at the same time, interpreted them anew.²

distinguish between the event and its interpretation, but on the other he has to abandon such a distinction due to the fact that the Bible furnishes us only with kerygmatic interpretations. Iain G. Nicol, "Event and Interpretation: Oscar Cullmann's Conception of Salvation History," Th 77 (1974): 17-19. On his part, R. E. Murphy reacts against Cullmann's restriction of revelation to acts only, since a good amount of ideas, laws, and other biblical materials are not derived from "acts" of God, and yet have salvation history significance. Emphasis on the acting God should not lead to overlook, even less to replace, the speaking God. Roland E. Murphy, review of Salvation in History, by Oscar Cullmann, in CBQ 30 (1968): 87. The question arises as to whether Cullmann's view of revelation "really does justice to the revelation found within the Old and New Testaments. Does the Bible not present something more than the God who acts? Does not God also speak? And when God also speaks does he not reveal information about his person . . . which go beyond the mere interpretation of his actions?" James M. Boice, review of Heil als Geschichte: Heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament, by Oscar Cullmann, in Christianity Today 9, no. 21 (July 16, 1965): 26.

¹Cullmann, Salvation in History, 90.

²Ibid., 104. Cullmann explains that because the apostles were custodians of Jesus' interpretation, namely of His *kerygma*, "and were also those who interpreted it anew in the light of the Easter events, the *kerygma* and the new interpretation in the light of the events of the

This indispensable role of the apostles as bearers of direct revelation makes them the foundation of the church. In Cullmann's opinion, statements like Eph 2:20, Rev 21:14, and Rom 15:20 demonstrate that the early Christians considered the apostles to be the foundation of the church. This view is not in contradiction with 1 Cor 3:11; 10:4, Matt 21:42, and 1 Pet 2:4, which speak of Jesus Himself as the foundation stone or cornerstone. "This is doubtless the silent presupposition in all the other passages. But this does not prevent the apostles from being the foundation composed of human instruments of God and resting in turn upon Christ."¹

In the foundation provided by the apostles, Peter occupies a prominent role as the specifically visible rock upon which the whole edifice of the church is built. Surprisingly enough for a Lutheran theologian, Cullmann reaches this conclusion after a detailed exegesis of Matt 16:17-19 presented in his book on Peter. Given the important role of the apostle Peter in the early church and the Roman Catholic claim regarding succession to that

disciples' lifetime appear very closely related." That is why any separation between the *kerygma* received from Jesus and the apostles' new interpretation "is extremely difficult." Ibid., 105. Cullmann's view on apostolic tradition (see pp. 261-65 below) underscores even more strongly that both the interpretation provided by Jesus and the reinterpretation of the apostles have ultimately the same source: the Lord. Idem, "The Tradition," 63-71.

¹Cullmann, Peter, 222; see also *ibid.*, 201, 202.

position, it is essential to outline in detail Cullmann's thought on Peter.

The Apostle Peter

It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the particulars of Peter's biography with its concomitant historical problems. Attracted by the Peter figure from the beginning of his theological career, Cullmann devoted several writings to the exegetical, historical, and theological problems related to the apostle.¹ Important as those works are, I will restrict myself here to

¹Cullmann's interest in Peter can be traced back to 1930, and is attested by his doctoral dissertation on the pseudo-Clementine writings (see Oscar Cullmann, Le problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin: Étude sur le rapport entre le gnosticisme et le judéo-christianisme, études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses publiées par la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de l'Université de Strasbourg, 23 [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930]), and his article on the causes of Peter's death (idem, "Les causes de la mort de Pierre et de Paul d'après le témoignage de Clément Romain," RHPR 10 (1930): 294-300). Two years later, Cullmann wrote three dictionary articles on the apostle Peter and the epistles of Peter (see idem, "Simon Pierre," Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la Bible, 2d ed. (1956), 2:676-78; idem, "Pierre (1^{re} épître de)," Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la Bible, 2:398-400; and idem, "Pierre (2^e épître de)," Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la Bible, 2:400, 401). About two decades later, the Lutheran theologian published a thorough study on Peter developing the ideas suggested in his previous works (idem, Saint Pierre, disciple-apôtre-martyr: Histoire et théologie; English translation: Peter, Disciple--Apostle--Martyr: A Historical and Theological Study. To complete the cycle he wrote two articles related to Peter for Kittel's dictionary (idem, "Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς," TDNT [1964-76], 6:100-112; and idem, "Πέτρα," TDNT [1964-76], 6:95-99).

Cullmann's view on the role of Peter as leader, missionary, and foundation of the church.

Leader and Missionary

During Jesus' earthly ministry Peter assumed a special position in the group of disciples. He often stayed at the forefront, acting as spokesman for the Twelve. The lists of apostles recorded by the synoptic Gospels confirm Peter's leadership over his colleagues. Cullmann observes, however, that at this stage Peter was more a representative of the disciples than their leader.¹

After Jesus' ascension Peter was, according to the combined testimony of the first chapters of the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul, the leader of the primitive church with headquarters in Jerusalem.² Following his imprisonment by Herod and his miraculous liberation, however, he left Jerusalem "and went to another place" (Acts 12:17). Cullmann affirms that this statement of Acts and the subsequent silence regarding Peter in the rest of the book plainly indicates a transition in the activities of the apostle and in his position in the early

¹Cullmann, Peter, 19-33; idem, "Πέτρος," 6:101-3; and idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:676. Cullmann underlines that even the Gospel of John, which presents the figure of the anonymous beloved disciple in competition with Peter, confirms the Synoptic testimony to Peter's special and unique position in the apostles' circle. Idem, Peter, 28-31.

²Cullmann, "Πέτρος," 6:109; idem, Peter, 34-38; and idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:677.

church. In Cullmann's view the evidence strongly suggests that at that crucial time Peter assumed the leadership of the Jewish Christian mission, while in Jerusalem itself James took over his position as head of the church. From this moment on, Peter is mentioned only in relation to the Apostolic Council (Acts 15), which was presided by James rather than Peter, whereas the latter appears to be only the representative of the Jewish Christian mission.¹ Not without reason Cullmann observes:

It is quite remarkable that the apostle who later is regarded as the personification of organized church government in reality exercised such a function for only a short time at the beginning, and then exchanged it for missionary work. Peter is not the archetype of the church official but of the missionary.²

Cullmann underlines that in his new function as missionary Peter came to be subordinated to Jerusalem and acted in dependence of James's authority, as it is shown by the incident of Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).³ This

¹Cullmann, Peter, 38-57; idem, "Πέτρος," 6:109-11. Without denying Peter's missionary efforts, M. Goguel maintains that the early church did not carry out its missionary enterprise following a detailed plan, but rather depending on individual initiatives. Hence, in his opinion Cullmann's idea of a direction of the Jewish Christian mission by Peter seems to be an anachronism. Maurice Goguel, "Le Livre d'Oscar Cullmann sur saint Pierre," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses 35 (1955): 205.

²Cullmann, Peter, 41. "Le travail de missionnaire répondait mieux à ses capacités que le travail d'organisateur." Idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:677.

³Cullmann, Peter, 48, 49. "The fact that he had cause to 'fear' the representatives of James shows plainly that there could be no question of a Petrine primacy at

administrative tie, nevertheless, does not coincide with the theological stance of Peter in relation to the Jerusalem church. Cullmann sees Peter's theology closer to Paul's than to James's, especially in regard to the question of table fellowship with Gentile Christians.¹

What happened during the last part of Peter's life remains an enigma for us in spite of all recent studies and debates. His name has been connected with three important Christian centers, namely Antioch, Corinth, and Rome, although practically nothing certain can be said about the time and kind of activities the apostle may have carried on in those places.²

Was Peter's leadership of the church something he assumed on account of his personality, or as the result of

this period; if there was any primacy it was in the hands of James." Idem, "Πέτρος," 6:110.

¹Cullmann, Peter, 52, 66-70. "Peter's viewpoint was very close to Paul's. Like Paul, he held to the universality of the gospel, and theologically he seems to have attributed the same role to the death of Christ as did Paul." Idem, "Dissensions within the Early Church," USQR 22 (1967): 87. See also idem, The Christology of the New Testament, 74, 75; and idem, "Courants multiples dans la communauté primitive. A propos du martyre de Jacques fils de Zébédée," RechSR 60 (1972): 60. Noticing that the theology of the first epistle of Peter appears especially close to Paul's, particularly to the ideas expressed in Romans and Ephesians, Cullmann holds that Peter leaned more and more on Paul's understanding of salvation. If in Antioch Peter was under the supervision of James, argues Cullmann, one can assume that in Rome, toward the end of his life, he came under the influence of Paul. Idem, "Pierre (1^{re} épître de)," 2:399.

²Cullmann, Peter, 54; idem, "Πέτρος," 6:111, 112; and idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:677.

a special apostolic commission entrusted to him by Jesus Christ? Cullmann holds that even during His earthly life Jesus called Peter to a special position in the church, although the moment and circumstances of that call cannot be determined with certitude.¹

The clearest pre-Calvary commission to Peter is recorded in Matt 16:16-19. According to Cullmann, in this incident Christ, who is the master of the house, the Kingdom of Heaven, committed to Peter the keys of His house.² The Lord also granted Peter the power to "bind and loose," which in Cullmann's view is the prerogative to

¹Cullmann, Peter, 57, 58. Cullmann mentions several possibilities: it could have occurred when Jesus gave him the name Cephas, "Rock," though the time of that event is also uncertain. Was it on the moment of his call as disciple (Mark 3:16)? Or was it on the even earlier occasion of his first encounter with Jesus (John 1:42)? Other possibilities include the time of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:17-19), or in connection with Jesus' commission to Peter to "strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32) given at the time of the Last Supper. See idem, "Πέτρος," 6:103, 104; and idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:676.

²Thus, Cullmann holds, Jesus installed Peter as the administrator of His house. He may also have had in mind the mission that Peter would carry out by his preaching, opening access to the Kingdom of Heaven. Cullmann, Peter, 209, 210. "Since Peter, the rock of the Church, is thus given by Christ Himself, the master of the house (Is. 22:22; Rev. 3:7), the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he is the human mediator of the resurrection, and he has the task of admitting the people of God into the kingdom of the resurrection. Jesus Himself has given him power to open entry to the coming kingdom of God, or to close it, like the Pharisees, who with their mission close the door to the kingdom of heaven, Mt 23:13." Idem, "Πέτρος," 6:107, 108.

teach and to exercise discipline in the church, the emphasis being probably on the authority to forgive sins.¹

After His resurrection Jesus charged Peter with the leadership of the church. Cullmann considers that the commission from the risen One (John 21:15-19) conferred to the apostolate of Peter an even greater and more direct significance than that issued by the historical Jesus. It is true that in the New Testament the Lord's appearances to Peter (1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34) are reported separately from the resurrected Christ's special commission to the apostle (John 21:15-19). In Cullmann's opinion, nevertheless, the fact that (according to the oldest Christian tradition we know of) Peter was the first one to whom the Lord appeared (1 Cor 15:5) is of the greatest importance to show that Christ "put the seal, so to speak,

¹"Peter thus receives a share in the authority of Christ to forgive sins. To the functions that had been committed to the disciples even in the lifetime of Jesus, . . . there is now added this highest office of forgiving sins, an office that Christ alone controls but commits also to Peter with a view to establishing the earthly people of God." Cullmann, Peter, 211. Cullmann thinks that Peter's action in condemning Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) could be explained as a fulfillment of the promise recorded in Matt 16 granting Peter the power to bind and to loose, the authority to exercise discipline in the church. Ibid., 58, 231; idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:677. Cullmann is also aware, nevertheless, that according to Matt 18:18 Peter shares the power of binding and loosing with the other disciples. Idem, "Πέτρος," 6:108. Commenting on Cullmann's view on this aspect, Jones regrets that Cullmann had not "considered more carefully the tense of the Greek verse for 'binding' and 'loosing'." J. Estill Jones, review of Peter, Disciple--Apostle--Martyr, by Oscar Cullmann, in RevExp 51 (1954): 539.

upon the distinction which during his lifetime he had given Peter by naming him Cephas."¹

The special commission from the risen Lord came to Peter in the call to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). The background of this episode is to be found in the image of the Good Shepherd portrayed in John 10:1-18. Cullmann remarks that, in the light of Jesus' statements, the office of shepherd includes not only the leadership of the church ("the sheep hear his voice, and he . . . leads them out," John 10:3), but also missionary work ("I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also," John 10:16). These are precisely the two functions which, as mentioned above,² Peter exercised in the early church.³

Foundation of the Church

Cullmann devoted the second half of his book on Peter to a detailed discussion of Matt 16:17-19. Convinced that the interpretation of this passage had been blurred all too often by confessional prejudices,⁴ he tried to explain it as objectively as possible, declining

¹Cullmann, Peter, 60; see also *ibid.*, 59-64; and *idem*, "Πέτρος," 6:104.

²See pp. 191, 192 above.

³Cullmann, Peter, 65.

⁴*Ibid.*, 164.

to go further than the evidence permits.¹ According to his stated commitment to obedient listening to the biblical text,² Cullmann holds that the interpretation of Matt 16:17-19 "must not be burdened in advance by one's judgment regarding the later papal claim."³ Even though an analysis of all the exegetical considerations skillfully developed by Cullmann falls beyond the purpose of this dissertation, a report of his main conclusions is necessary in order to aptly understand his concept of the apostolate of Peter.

Cullmann sees in the quite Semitic linguistic character of the passage a strong argument in favor of its genuineness.⁴ He finds further evidence of its authenticity in the use of the word *ekklēsia*, church,

¹As observed by Jones, 538, "most attractive in Cullmann's style is his objectivity and independence," so that "he seems utterly objective in his conclusions."

²See p. 179 above.

³Cullmann, Peter, 164.

⁴Cullmann argues that the saying could not have arisen first in Greek communities because in the Greek text the wordplay here intended does not appear at all. In Greek the text reads "You are *Petros* and upon this *Petra* I will build my church," while in Aramaic it would have read "You are *Kepha* and upon this *Kepha* I will build my church." He sees the Semitic character of this pericope further confirmed by other factors: the reference to Peter's father in *bar-yônâ*; the expression 'flesh and blood' for 'men'; the word pair 'bind and loose'; the strophic rhythm--three strophes of three lines each; and the illustration of the rock as foundation, which has an exact parallel in the rabbinical literature where Abraham is mentioned as the rock of the world. Cullmann, Peter, 192, 193; and idem, "*Πέτρος*," 6:106.

which had definite antecedents in the Old Testament idea of people of God, the *qahal/ekklēsia*.¹

The Lutheran theologian, however, differs from most scholars in his understanding of the historical framework of Jesus' statement which in his view belongs to the Passion story rather than the Caesarea Philippi episode. Based on the fact that the rock statement (Matt 16:17-19) is absent in the parallel texts of Mark and Luke, and that even in Matthew these verses seem to interrupt the sequence of the story, Cullmann contends that Jesus' declaration, while authentic, took place during the Last Supper and was connected, more precisely, to the prediction of Peter's denial recorded in Luke 22:31-34.²

¹Against those who deny the authenticity of the Matthean text because it contains the word "church," Cullmann argues that "statistics concerning the use of a word, however, cannot be decisive," for a concept may well be present in a verse without that particular term. Moreover, the Greek word for church, *ekklēsia*, occurred already about a hundred times in the Septuagint expressing the idea of "people of God," quite common in Jewish thinking. Therefore Jesus did not create a new concept here. It is inappropriate, Cullmann contends, to assume that the word "church" here can only designate an organized church in the later sense. Such an approach would ignore the earlier usage of the word in the LXX. Moreover, the Jewish Messianic eschatology required the existence of a Messianic community. As Messiah, Jesus must have had in mind a community, an *ekklēsia*. Therefore, concludes Cullmann, "there is no scientific justification" to deny the authenticity of the text. Cullmann, *Peter*, 194-99; and idem, "*Πέτρος*," 6:106, 107.

²Cullmann, *Peter*, 176-91; idem, "*Πέτρος*," 6:105; and idem, "L'Apôtre Pierre instrument du diable et instrument de Dieu: la place de Matt. 16:16-19 dans la

As far as the text itself is concerned the more sensitive aspect is the identification of *petra*, the rock. In contrast with a number of church fathers and Protestant Reformers,¹ Cullmann considers it self-evident that Jesus

tradition primitive," in New Testament Essays, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester: University Press, 1959), 94-105. In other words, for Cullmann, the saying in Matt 16:17-19 is genuine, but originally did not belong in the context in which Matthew has placed it. He admits that this is merely a hypothesis, though quite a probable one in his opinion, and warns that his interpretation of the text as a whole "does not stand or fall with the acceptance of this theory concerning the original setting" of the pericope. Idem, Peter, 191. Most scholars, nevertheless, are reluctant to accept Cullmann's hypothesis, which has been characterized as "plainly subjective and psychological." S. L. Greenslade, review of Petrus. Jünger-Apostel-Märtyrer, by Oscar Cullmann, in SJT 6 (1953): 206. Some, like M. Fernández Jiménez, consider it with sympathetic eyes, arguing that Cullmann's hypothesis could prove highly beneficial for the Roman Catholic position on apostolic succession, eliminating some puzzling duplicity of the Matthean context. Yet, attractive as this theory may be, he refuses to follow it due to its insurmountable exegetical problems. Fernández Jiménez, 286. Others, like Congar, remain unconvinced by Cullmann's arguments insisting that the episode takes its deeper sense if it is kept in the place assigned to it by Matthew. Congar, "Du nouveau," 20, n. 3; idem, "La hiérarchie," 69, n. 1. The similarities between Matt 16:17-19 and Luke 22:31-34 do not seem sufficient to prove that both passages refer to the same episode. Could not Jesus have dealt with the subject on different occasions, whose record would be similar, but distinct at the same time? Pierre Benoit, review of Petrus, Jünger-Apostel-Märtyr, 2d ed., by Oscar Cullmann, in Revue Biblique 69 (1962): 443. For a discussion of Cullmann's view, see Robert H. Gundry, "The Narrative Framework of Matthew xvi 17-19: A Critique of Professor Cullmann's Hypothesis," NovT 7 (1964): 1-9.

¹There have been three main interpretations of *petra* in this text throughout history. According to the often-called "Antiochene exegesis," the rock is the confession or the faith of Peter (John Chrysostom [ca. 347-407], John of Damascus [ca. 675-ca. 749]). A second view, held in the East (Origen [ca. 185-ca. 254],

on this occasion referred to the person of Peter rather than to Peter's faith or to Himself.¹ He contends that "the parallelism of the two statements: 'you are rock, and upon this rock I will build . . . ' shows that the second

Theodoret [ca. 393-ca. 466]) as well as in the West (Augustine [354-430]), considers that Christ Himself is the rock upon which the church is built. Without polemical intentions, this "christological" interpretation became the dominant one in the Western church during the Middle Ages, and was continued by the Protestant Reformers who gave it an anti-Roman accent. Finally, with comparatively few supporters in patristic and medieval times, the "pontifical" interpretation of the rock as Peter and his successors prevailed in Roman Catholic circles since the counter reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries. See Tillard, The Bishop of Rome, 108-11; Luz, 49-52; Bernard L. Ramm, "The Exegesis of Matt. 16:13-20 in the Patristic and Reformation Period," Foundations 5 (1962): 206-16; Theodore T. Taheny, "The History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:18-19 in Commentaries of the Early Middle Ages" (S.T.D. dissertation, Woodstock College, MD, 1960); Congar, L'Ecclésiologie du haut Moyen Age, 154, 155; Donald J. Grimes, "The Papacy and the Petrine Texts: A Study in the History of Biblical Exegesis (A.D. 800-1300)," (Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1981); John E. Bigane III, Faith, Christ or Peter: Matthew 16:18 in Sixteenth Century Roman Catholic Exegesis (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981); and Burgess, A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965.

¹Already suggested in Cullmann, "Simon Pierre," 2:676 (written in 1932), and in idem, Christ and Time, 173 (written in 1946), this interpretation was fully developed during the 1950s in idem, Peter, 212-17; idem, "Πέτρος," 6:98; and idem, "Πέτρος," 6:107, 108. Though he did not return to the subject in detail, in 1986 Cullmann referred approvingly to his 1952 study. See idem, Unity through Diversity, 55, 96, n. 70. Disagreeing with Cullmann on this point, G. Johnston affirms that "Jesus as the Son of Man, the servant Messiah, was the Rock on which God's Kingdom is built." George Johnston, review of Peter: Disciple--Apostle--Martyr: A Historical and Theological Study, by Oscar Cullmann, in CJT 1 (1955): 55.

rock refers to nothing different from the first one."¹
 This is even more clear in the supposed Aramaic original,
 where the same word *kepha* would have occurred both times,²
 though Cullmann acknowledges that "there may indeed be
 some truth in the view that in the last analysis the rock
 means Christ himself."³ Still, he argues that this is not
 the meaning of the Matthean statement, which affirms "that
 Jesus' role as rock is transferred to a disciple."⁴

Matt 16:13-19 presents a mutual giving of names
 between Jesus and Simon, argues Cullmann. In the same way
 that Simon gives to Jesus the name which later is
 regularly added to the name of Jesus--Christ, Messiah--so
 Jesus gives to Simon a descriptive title--Peter, Rock.
 Jesus, then, gave to Peter his new name together with a

¹Cullmann, Peter, 212.

²Matt 16:18 "présuppose un original araméen dans lequel le genre du nom et celui du mot signifiant 'rocher' est le même (*kepha*), ce qui n'est pas le cas dans le grec (*Petros-Petra*). L'Église . . . doit être construite sur le rocher qu'est Pierre." Cullmann, "Simon Pierre," 2:676. "Only the fairly assured Aramaic original of the saying enables us to assert with confidence the formal and material identity between *Πέτρα* and *Πέτρος*: *Πέτρα* = כְּפָא = *Πέτρος*." Idem, "*Πέτρα*," 6:98. While maintaining that the two Greek words "are often used interchangeably," Cullmann explains that "*πέτρα* is predominantly used in secular Gk. for a large and solid 'rock'," whereas "the masc. *πέτρος* is used more for isolated rocks or small stones, including flints and pebbles for slings." Cullmann, "*Πέτρα*," 6:95; idem, "*Πέτρος*," 6:101; and idem, Peter, 20.

³Cullmann, Peter, 212.

⁴Ibid. Cullmann contends that "there is no reference here to the faith of Peter," but rather to the person of the apostle himself. Cullmann, "*Πέτρος*," 6:108.

full explanation of its meaning. This was, according to Matthew, the first time Jesus gave this title to Simon.¹ Against the traditional Protestant view, Cullmann asserts that if the saying were referring to the faith of Peter, one could no longer directly discern its connection with the giving of the name to Peter, *Kephas*. He insists that the giving of the name involved the person of Peter, and not merely his faith.²

The question remains, however, whether Peter's role as Rock was intended to be perpetuated in the church, whether Peter, or the other apostles for that reason, would be replaced by a line of successors in their respective function. Cullmann answers this question within the framework of his view on salvation history.

Apostolic Succession from the Perspective
of Salvation History

If there is a term that could adequately characterize Oscar Cullmann's theological system, that

¹Cullmann, Peter, 22, 182. It has already been indicated that in Cullmann's opinion the giving of the name to Peter could have happened on other occasions (see p. 194 above). "In itself the time when the name was given has no fundamental significance. What is important, however, is first of all the fact that according to the unanimous witness of the Gospels Mark, Matthew, and John, Jesus did give this name to Peter and, second, that according to a tradition handed down only by Matthew, Jesus *explained* this name on a special occasion by his purpose of founding his Church upon the Apostle whom he designated as the Rock." Ibid., 23 (italics in the original).

²Cullmann, Peter, 212, 213.

term is "salvation history."¹ The influence of his perspective "has been pervasive, in particular among American evangelical Protestants,"² finding at the same time a sympathetic reception in European Roman Catholic circles.³ Detaching itself from the dilution of redemptive history in Barthian dialectical theology,⁴ and especially from the total eradication of history in the Bultmannian demythologizing of Scripture,⁵ Cullmann's view

¹In Christ and Time Floyd V. Filson translates the German term *Heilsgeschichte* as "redemptive history." However, *Heil* is more correctly translated 'salvation', rather than 'redemption', for which the German has another word, *Erlösung*. "Salvation history" is, then, a more accurate translation, and indeed it has become the usual wording used in the English-speaking world. See Sidney Sowers, "Translator's Preface," Salvation in History, 17. "Salvation history" is, therefore, the expression that is used in this dissertation.

²Dorman, 1. See also Reginald H. Fuller, "Some Further Reflections on Heilsgeschichte," USQR 22 (1967): 93.

³Frisque, 7. Indeed, "few NT scholars are as widely respected in Protestant and Roman Catholic circles as Professor Cullmann." Raoul Dederen, review of Vatican II, The New Direction, by Oscar Cullmann, in AUSS 8 (1970): 92.

⁴See Oscar Cullmann, "Les problèmes posés par la méthode exégétique de l'école de Karl Barth," RHPR 8 (1928): 70-83. Cullmann considers that Barth's conception of time is "the last but quite momentous remnant of the influence of philosophy upon his exposition of the Bible," being, hence, "incompatible with that of Primitive Christianity." Idem, Christ and Time, xiii. See also idem, Salvation in History, 175-77.

⁵See Oscar Cullmann, "Rudolf Bultmann's Concept of Myth and the New Testament," CTM 27, no. 1 (January 1956): 13-24; idem, "Out of Season Remarks on the 'Historical Jesus' of the Bultmann School," USQR 16 (1961): 131-48; idem, "Le mythe dans les écrits du Nouveau Testament,"

has been welcomed as an alternate approach to the Bible. Almost all his writings refer in one way or another to this foundational theme,¹ which constitutes the unifying element of his theology, and stands at the core of his view on apostolic succession.

Cullmann's Concept of Salvation History

Professor Cullmann considers that at the heart of all New Testament theology is the concept of biblical history, also called salvation history.² Made up of a

chap. in Comprendre Bultmann (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 15-31; and idem, Salvation in History, 40-52.

¹Cullmann's numerous writings devoted to salvation history reached a climax and synthesis in two books, namely Christ and Time (1946), and Salvation in History (1965). The former is a rather descriptive presentation of the biblical view of time and salvation history, whereas the latter complemented that presentation with an analysis of the genesis of the biblical writers' view, and its implications for the church today. Referring to Christ and Time, recently Cullmann affirmed: "J'attache moi-même une importance particulière à cet ouvrage, parce qu'il développe l'idée qui a été pour moi comme une révélation libératrice . . . comme une clef d'interprétation pour beaucoup de problèmes essentiels posés par le Nouveau Testament." Matthieu Arnold, "Interview d'Oscar Cullmann," FV 92 (1993): 12.

²"Redemptive history is for me a thing far too important to become the descriptive phrase and slogan of a theological school. Redemptive history is the heart of all theology which is based upon the Bible. It represents an essential aspect of all theology." Cullmann, "The Relevance of Redemptive History," 13. Conversely, several scholars under the influence of R. Bultmann deny that salvation history is indeed the core of the New Testament. See Rudolf Bultmann, "History of Salvation and History," chap. in Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 226-40. Luke is perceived as introducing salvation history into Christian thought as a distortion

restricted number of specific events, this history takes its meaning from, and reaches its climax in, its center, Jesus Christ.¹ Compared with general history, biblical history "forms a line which, though not shorter, is yet infinitely smaller."² For the Christian this history of

of the perspective presented by Jesus, Paul, and John, who did not conceive an ongoing process of salvation in history centered in Christ. See Philipp Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," in Studies in Luke-Acts, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1966), 33-50; and Hans Conzelmann, Theology of St. Luke (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 95-130, 149-56. In Salvation in History, 187-291, Cullmann answered these and similar criticisms demonstrating that the concept of salvation history is indeed an integral part of the whole New Testament.

¹"There can be no *Heilsgeschichte* without Christology; no Christology without a *Heilsgeschichte* which unfolds in time." Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, 9. In fact, in this book, Cullmann arranged his discussion of the Christological titles of the New Testament according to the major divisions of salvation history. Christ's place in salvation history is not limited to His function as its climaxing center, or mid-point, but includes also His participation in salvation history from its very beginning and at all times. Idem, Christ and Time, 107-14. "The story of salvation is . . . identical with the story of Christ." Idem, "The Return of Christ: The New Testament Hope," chap. in The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, trans. S. Godman (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 145. "The line of the history of salvation . . . is therefore identical with the line of the work of Christ himself." Ibid., 149.

²Cullmann, Christ and Time, 20. Cullmann's conception of salvation history remained virtually changeless throughout his entire career. He merely added new insights. Thus, his summary presented in "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," in Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer, ed. John T. Carroll, Charles H. Cosgrove, and E. Elizabeth Johnson, trans. Michael J. Gorman (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 358, agrees with the presentation he made in Christ and

salvation centered in Christ is the measuring standard of all secular history.¹

The Line of Salvation History

Based on his analysis of the New Testament terms related with time, Cullmann comes to the conclusion that the early church had a linear understanding of history. The *oikonomia* of salvation takes place in a continuous time process which embraces past, present, and future, always under the lordship of God. From the perspective of the New Testament it is not time and eternity that stand opposed, but limited time and unlimited, endless time.²

Time and in subsequent works.

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 19-27. See also idem, "The Relevance of Redemptive History," 10, 11. For Cullmann's discussion of the relationship between history and salvation history, see idem, Salvation in History, 150-56.

²Cullmann, Christ and Time, 37-50. Of all Greek New Testament terms, *καίρος* ("a point of time") and *αἰών* ("an age") are the most significant to understand the biblical view of time. In its temporal sense, *αἰών* designates a long duration of time which can be (1) unlimited in both the backward and the forward directions, (2) limited in both ends, identical with the "present" age, and (3) limited in one direction but unlimited in the other, i.e. time before creation and time that extends beyond the end of the present age. For the relationship between time and eternity, see *ibid.*, 61-68; and regarding God's lordship over time see *ibid.*, 69-80. Without necessarily rejecting Cullmann's general theological position, J. Barr has criticized his "concept method," which in his view leads to inaccurate generalizations, charging him of failing to reckon with word uses which do not fit his own view. James Barr, Biblical Words for Time, 2d ed. (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1969), 50-85. This criticism, however, "springs from a linguistic philosophy which is quite analytical and nominalistic,

This means that the biblical view of time and history stands in sharp contrast with the Greek cyclical conception. The first Christians placed both the divine creation of all things and their divine goal in the same historical line whose center is Jesus Christ. Cullmann deplores that whenever there has occurred a debate between Hellenism and Christianity, it almost without exception had as its outcome the Hellenizing of Christianity.¹ Thus, he sees the acceptance of the Greek belief in the immortality of the soul by the Christian church as a clear

whereas Cullmann . . . is more idealistic in his linguistic theory." In view of this difference of linguistic philosophy, D. H. Wallace contends that "much of Barr's criticism of Cullmann fails to register." Moreover, "Barr's atomizing critique of Cullmann may expose a weakness in lexicography from time to time, but it does not disestablish the general validity of his program of *Heilgeschichte*, for it rests upon a much larger foundation than the exegesis of some of the words for time." Wallace, 189, 190.

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 51-60. "The Greek concept of cyclic time is the real cause of the neglect of the true history of salvation in theology and the Church." Idem, "The Return of Christ," 161; see also *ibid.*, 144. The elimination of salvation history from Christianity was precisely the ultimate target of Gnosticism. The Christian faith, like the Jewish faith, distinguished itself from other religions of the first centuries by its unique salvation-historical character. "The Jewish, and even more the Christian, salvation history simply does not permit union with Graeco-Oriental syncretism. . . . In Judaism and Christianity, salvation history would have to have been equated with myth to be accommodated thus by reinterpretation to Gnostic syncretism." Idem, Salvation in History, 25, 26; see also "The Relevance of Redemptive History," 14; and idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 44, 45.

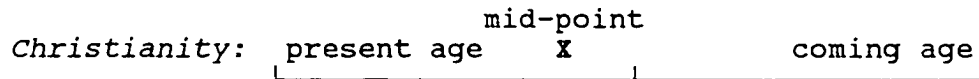
indication of the Christian capitulation to Hellenism.¹ Likewise, he considers the vanishing out of the early Christian eschatological expectation as a result of the adoption of the Greek view of history.²

While based on the Old Testament perspective, the Christian understanding of history differs, however, from the Jewish conception in a crucial way. Judaism works in a framework of a twofold division of history into this age and the coming one. The decisive mid-point on this scheme is considered to be the future coming of the Messiah. The outstanding Christian innovation resides in the fact that since Easter the central point that separates the present age from the coming one no longer lies in the future, but has already been reached. And yet, the old dividing point is still valid. Cullmann illustrates this difference by the following schema:³

¹Already during the first centuries, the Christian hope of the resurrection, based in salvation history, was set aside. "1 Corinthians 15 has been sacrificed for the *Phaedo*." Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), 8.

²The church ceased to proclaim the imminence of the *parousia* not because of its delay, but rather because she abandoned the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" (see pp. 209, 210 below). "This, and not the extension of time, was the decisive turning-point." Cullmann, Salvation in History, 246, 247.

³Cullmann, Christ and Time, 81-83.



It is important to note that in Judaism the mid-point coincides with the dividing point between the present and the coming age. Both are in the future. On the other hand, in Christianity the mid-point lies in the past whereas the dividing point still remains in the future. The center, the incarnate Messiah, has moved into the present age while the beginning of the coming one, the *parousia*, still awaits its future realization.

In Cullmann's opinion, a clear grasp of this new outlook is not only of immense importance but indispensable to understand the theology of the New Testament. The new perspective is an essential element of Jesus' preaching, who declared that the Kingdom of God had already come, while at the same time holding to the future character of this Kingdom. The whole New Testament is permeated with this tension between the "already" and the "not yet."¹ Cullmann's classical illustration of this

¹The essence of the interval between Christ's resurrection and His return is determined by the tension between "already fulfilled" and "not yet completed."

situation is that of the decisive battle and victory day. At Easter the decisive battle was won, yet the war continues until victory day in the *parousia*.¹

The fact that the decisive battle already took place guarantees the future outcome of the whole conflict. Cullmann insists that the Christian hope does not stand or fall with the delay of the *parousia*, for that hope is not founded on the eschatological event itself but rather on the cross and resurrection of Christ. "The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place."²

Cullmann, Salvation in History, 166-85, 202; idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 34, 35. This tension is crucial since it affects every aspect of Christian thinking. An excellent example is Cullmann's understanding of the relationship between Christ's resurrection and the believer's attitude towards death. "If Christ is the 'first-born from the dead', then this means that the End-time is already present. But it also means that a temporal interval separates the First-born from all other men who are not yet 'born from the dead'. This means then that we live in an interim time, between Jesus' Resurrection, which has already taken place, and our own, which will not take place until the End." Idem, Immortality of the Soul, 42-44. See also idem, Christ and Time, 231-42.

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 84. See also idem, Salvation in History, 44; and idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 30.

²Cullmann, Christ and Time, 87. See also idem, Salvation in History, 182, 183; and idem, "The Return of Christ," 154, 155. Thus, in Paul's case his hope "suffered no loss either in intensity or in its firm anchorage, because from the outset its starting point had been that *the center, the fixed point of orientation, lies not in the future but in the past, and accordingly in an*

All the events included in the line of salvation history, even those which Cullmann considers to be myths,¹

assured fact which cannot be touched by the delay in the Parousia." Idem, Christ and Time, 88 (italics in the original).

¹For Cullmann "myths" are those occurrences and feats which are beyond historical testing, such as creation and the eschatological drama at the end. Cullmann affirms that first-century Christians did not distinguish between history and myth, but rather *historicized* the myths making them part of salvation history. Though he does make such a distinction, Cullmann refuses to remove those myths from the line of salvation history. For him, the fact that a myth is not "historical" does not imply that the happening whose account it preserves is not "temporal." In the Bible, explains Cullmann, history and myth are harmoniously united by prophecy, or rather history is viewed from the prophetic point of view. Oscar Cullmann, "The Connection of Primal Events and End Events with the New Testament Redemptive History," in The Old Testament and Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 115-23. See also idem, "Rudolf Bultmann's Concept of Myth," 22, 23; idem, Christ and Time, 94-106; idem, Salvation in History, 136-50; and idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 25, 26. Several authors have pointed out serious difficulties posed by the "curious ambiguity" (Boice, 26) of Cullmann's view on "myth." Thus, C. F. H. Henry notes that Cullmann "ignores New Testament passages that correlate the historical actuality of the first and second Adams (Rom 5:14-17; 1 Cor 15:22)." Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation and Authority (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-82), 2:290. Moreover, if one rejects the historical reality of a myth, how can one still postulate its temporal reality? As G. Clark puts it, "to say that Adam is a mythological character who never lived . . . makes nonsense of the claim that 'the essential thing in the figure of Adam [is] the fact that a second Adam comes after him. . . . If the first Adam was not real, why should not one regard the second Adam also as merely theological mythology?" Gordon H. Clark, Historiography Secular and Religious (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1971), 343, 344. As J. A. T. Robinson observed, if it is neither timeless myth nor literal history, it is hard to define what it is in between. John A. T. Robinson, review of Christ et le Temps, by Oscar Cullmann, in Scottish Journal of Theology 3 (1950): 89.

take their meaning from the central point constituted by the Christ event. In other words, according to the New Testament writers, the mid-point is in fact the starting point for the understanding of the whole salvation history in both a forward and backward direction.¹

Though the movement of salvation history toward its culmination in the *parousia* is consistently asserted by Cullmann, in later writings he acknowledged more and more the reality of contingent factors hindering that development. In Christ and Time (written in the mid 1940s) Cullmann conceived the progressing line of salvation history in a rather schematic way as a straight line, giving the impression that it moves undeviatingly forward to its consummation.² Since this view was criticized as too artificial,³ two decades later he

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 107-14. "The way into the future has become visible only since the bright mid-point with its brilliant light has illuminated in both directions the previously dark line." Ibid., 89.

²See Ibid., 23, 51-60.

³In the early 1950s Paul S. Minear underlined that Cullmann's "description of time as an upward sloping line is too neat and too geometric to be wholly convincing." See his review of Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, by Oscar Cullmann, in JBL 70 (1951): 53. For some, even Cullmann's more elaborate exposition in Salvation in History does not seem to solve the problem. In Murphy's opinion, "the more detailed Cullmann becomes in articulating the moments of salvation history . . . , the more artificial the 'overarching concept' (Cullmann's own phrase, p. 89) becomes." Murphy, 87. See also Martin, 342. Cullmann's own reaction to such critics as R. Bultmann, E. Fuchs, F. Buri, J. Körner, H. Conzelmann, K. G. Steck, and J. Barr appears in Christ

attempted to rectify this impression, stressing that this line includes "lapses because of man's sin," and hence is not "a straight line, but a *fluctuating line* which can show wide variation."¹ Even more recently, Cullmann emphasized that salvation history "includes non-salvation history (*Unheilsgeschichte*), which, as a result of human sin, always resists the flow of the divine plan."² A Portuguese proverb, which Yves Congar shared with Cullmann in a personal conversation, expresses adequately Cullmann's understanding of continuity and contingency in the line of salvation history: "God writes straight, but with crooked lines."³

Exceptionally unique events such as the fall, the incarnation, and the *parousia*, divide the line of salvation history in successive periods or stages. Each one relates to the mid-point of salvation history in a special way. Among them, the relationship between the and Time, rev. ed., xvii-xxxi.

¹Cullmann, Salvation in History, 15 (italics in the original).

²Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 29.

³Cullmann, Salvation in History, 125. "Although the biblical revelation supplies the general movement with the direction and goal mentioned above, it would be a mistake to think that the development is running in a straight line. Sin, apart from which all salvation history is totally unintelligible, stands at the beginning of salvation history and determines its further development. In mysterious ways God can make use of human sin to carry out his plan." Ibid., 311. See also idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 42, 43.

time of the incarnation and the period of the church is particularly significant for Cullmann's view on apostolic succession and deserves further consideration.

The Time of the Incarnation
and the Time of the Church

The linear conception of salvation history summarized above implies that each one of the *kairoi* that constitute it is by nature a unique unrepeatable event. This is the *ephapax* (once-for-all) characteristic of the events which make up redemptive history. Cullmann insists that every episode and every period of time has its own decisive value for the whole biblical history. In the case of the mid-point, this *ephapax* has a twofold meaning: "simply once as a historical happening," and "decisively unique for the salvation of all men and all times." In other words, it denotes both once and once for all.¹

The period of the incarnation is the center and climax of salvation history.² In Cullmann's view it

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 123.

²The centrality of the incarnation is clearly seen in the principle of representation, i.e., the election of a minority for the redemption of the whole, which according to Cullmann characterizes the entire line of salvation history. This principle operates in a double movement of progressive reductions from the many to One, and of progressive expansion from the One to the many. In the Old Covenant salvation history moved from a sinful humanity to a people, from Israel to a remnant, and from the remnant to the Messiah. With His expiatory death and resurrection, salvation history reached its center. Conversely, the New Covenant envisions an expansive motion from Christ to the apostles, from them to the church,

comprises, approximately, "the years from the birth of Jesus Christ to the death of the last apostle," that is, "from about the year 1 to the year 70 or 80 of our era, without these being taken as exact limits."¹ Because it is the period of direct revelation,² the center is the norm for the whole extent of salvation history. The fact that everything receives its meaning from it and is illuminated by it determines the key role of this period for Cullmann when he comes to discuss apostolic succession.³

All other events within salvation history are themselves unique salvific occurrences, but are such only as related to the mid-point. Old Testament events constitute a preparation for Christ and shed light upon the incarnation and its meaning. The relationship between the Old Testament period and the once for all Christ-event

coming finally to the redeemed humanity in the Kingdom of God. Ibid., 115-18. See also idem, "The Return of Christ," 143; idem, Salvation in History, 101; idem, "The Relevance of Redemptive History," 12; idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 27-29; and idem, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 358.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 76.

²By direct revelation Cullmann means incarnate revelation, God Himself dwelling among human beings.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 76; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 114. For the significance of the central period in connection with apostolic succession see pp. 225-32 below.

is one of preparation and fulfillment.¹ On the other hand, future events announced in Scripture will bring the completion of that which has already been decided. Though adding something new to salvation history, they remain nevertheless founded on the unique event at the mid-point.²

Cullmann admits that to establish the nature of the relation of the present stage of salvation history to the mid-point is far more complex than is the case for the past and for the future phases. This relation, which is of particular significance for the issue of apostolic succession, is affected by the fact that the time of the church already belongs to the new era, and yet is still within the present one. "It is already the time of the

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 131-38. Cullmann observes that the relationship between Old Testament history and Christ is one of reciprocal enlightenment. The death and resurrection of Christ enable the Christian believer to see in Old Testament history the preparation for Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One. But only the thus understood Old Testament history enables the believer to grasp the work of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen One, in connection with the divine plan of salvation. Ibid., 137.

²Cullmann, Christ and Time, 139-43. "Just as the 'Victory Day' does in fact present *something new* in contrast to the decisive battle already fought at some point or other of the war, just so the end which is still to come also brings something new. To be sure, this new thing that the 'Victory Day' brings is based entirely upon that decisive battle, and would be absolutely impossible without it." Ibid., 141 (*italics in the original*); see also idem, Salvation in History, 167.

end, and yet is not the end."¹ The church, the body of Christ, exhibits the characteristic tension of the present intermediate period. On the one hand the Holy Spirit is at work in her midst. On the other, flesh and sin remain present in the church.²

As to the extension of the time of the church, Cullmann contends that Jesus anticipated that a period of time, undetermined but rather short, would elapse between His ascension and His second coming.³ This interval is simultaneously the time of the reign of Christ over all things in heaven and on earth and the time of the church.⁴

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 145 (italics in the original).

²Ibid., 154-56; idem, "The Kingship of Christ," 119; and idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 35, 36.

³Cullmann, Salvation in History, 209-30. According to Cullmann Jesus expected that the intermediate period would last no more than a few decades. Idem, "The Return of Christ," 152. This view has been criticized by J. W. Bowman, who considers that it destroys Cullmann's entire schema and wrecks his whole view of the centrality of the cross and resurrection. In Bowman's opinion, "it is impossible to believe that he [Christ] could have thought of his own time in some sense as a mid-point in human history as a whole if he thought of the end as coming during his own generation." John Wick Bowman, review of Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, by Oscar Cullmann, in Int 4 (1950): 485, 486.

⁴Christ's kingship is frequently expressed in the New Testament by the phrase: "Christ sits at the right hand of God." The simplest expression, however, is the formula "*Kyrios Christos*," "Christ rules as Lord." While the Kingdom of God will begin only at the end, when Christ shall have subjected Himself to God, we already stand in the Kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13). Cullmann, Christ and

Chronologically, though not spatially, the kingdom of Christ completely coincides with the time of the church, which is its spatial center.¹

The missionary preaching of the gospel by the church gives to the period between Easter and the *parousia* its meaning for salvation history. This preaching is an integral part of the divine plan of salvation and is one of the signs of the end, which will come only when the gospel shall have been preached to all peoples (Mark

Time, 151-54. See also idem, "The Kingship of Christ," 105-37; and idem, The Christology of the New Testament, 203-34. Christ's lordship also extends to the entire general history of mankind and the processes of nature. In other words, the whole world has been subjected to His rulership. Idem, Christ and Time, 185-90. For Christ dominion over the invisible "powers" see *ibid.*, 191-210; and idem, "Authorities," in A Companion to the Bible, ed. J.-J. von Allmen, trans. P. J. Allcock et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 26-31.

¹In Cullmann's view the basic difference between the members of the church and the members of the kingdom of Christ, which includes the whole world, is that the former know about Christ's lordship, whereas the latter do not know it and belong to it unconsciously. Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, 224-32; idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 37. Not without reason, Daniel von Allmen wonders if Cullmann has not overlooked that the New Testament passages which proclaim Christ's universal lordship show a certain eschatological tension. Christ has indeed received this lordship. But to become effective, it has to be proclaimed and accepted. Regarding this particular conception, has not Cullmann cancelled out the "not yet" he so strongly emphasizes as essential during the time of the church? Daniel von Allmen, review of Le salut dans l'histoire: L'existence chrétienne selon le Nouveau Testament, by Oscar Cullmann, in RB 74 (1967): 429.

13:10; Matt 24:14).¹ Jesus' missionary command to the church covers the whole span of time starting at Pentecost up until the end (Acts 1:6-8; Matt 28:18-20). Each generation of Christians has to preach the good news of salvation to the entire world.²

Although salvation history continues in the period of the church, Cullmann warns against the attempt to identify particular current events as part of it. He argues that the Bible only indicates the direction in which salvation history continues, and its final consummation, but not the details of its unfolding.³ On the other hand, though he still thinks that "only the salvation history recorded in the Bible is normative," in recent writings he also affirms that we can recognize its

¹Cullmann explains that the New Testament "does not say that the end will come only when all are converted," for according to the Christian eschatological expectation wickedness will increase towards the end of time. "It is not the case that the coming of the Kingdom depends upon the success of this [Christian] preaching; it depends rather upon the fact of the preaching." Cullmann, Christ and Time, 158-60.

²Oscar Cullmann, "Eschatology and Missions in the New Testament," in The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, trans. O. Wyon (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), 409-21; idem, Christ and Time, 162-67; and idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 37, 38.

³Cullmann, Salvation in History, 299-301. Cullmann is careful to distinguish between salvation history and church history, which are "as little to be identified as are redemptive history and secular history." Idem, Peter, 240, n. 48. "Church history is not simply salvation history." Idem, Salvation in History, 309.

continuation in some specific events, certainly very carefully, and from the point of view of the Bible.¹ While insisting on the fundamental difference between the apostles' witness and ourselves, Cullmann maintains that we have to judge current events from the special vantage point of salvation history, recognizing in them both the positive saving work and the demonic counterattacks. "As members of the Church we must put the newspaper beside the Bible and, more particularly, the Bible beside the newspaper."² Today we are obliged to make constant new interpretations, not only of the present, but of the past and future of salvation history in relation to its development in our time. As he sees it, the only difference between the beginning of the period of the church in apostolic times and its continuance throughout the ages consists in the fact that the eyewitnesses of the Christ event are dead today, and we therefore give our witness, so to speak, second hand. *"All the rest of the*

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 29. The Bible is the norm given to us so that we may be able to judge our time and discover, with great care, the unfolding of the divine plan. Idem, "The Relevance of Redemptive History," 17, 18.

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 310. "We ought to use the Bible to understand our newspapers. But we must not do this in the same way as the sects; they try to use the Bible to calculate the date of the final end, thus arrogating to themselves the right to know precisely what God has not wished to reveal to us ('the day and the hour')." Idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 42 (*italics in the original*).

essential features of the interval [of the church] which are discernible during the time of the apostles therefore have validity for our time too."¹ Hence we have to reinterpret both the events narrated by the biblical writers and post apostolic events of salvation history. Current preaching, exegesis, and theology express the result of these new assessments.²

Two methodological attitudes are necessary, in Cullmann's view, to assure the legitimacy of our new interpretations. Indebted to form criticism, Cullmann considers the various early Christian communities as "the place where all the writings of the New Testament arose, where all the new interpretations of salvation history dawned on the New Testament writers." Therefore, he maintains, it is entirely justifiable and even necessary to take into account the life of the church today in our reinterpretations of past and future salvation history.³

¹Cullmann, Salvation in History, 305 (italics in the original). See also idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 41.

²Cullmann holds that we must attempt to distinguish between the events of salvation history and the interpretation given to them by the biblical authors. He argues that if we are able to recover, even partially, the "naked events" independently of the biblical writer's interpretation, the result will be a better understanding of that interpretation. Cullmann, Salvation in History, 96. See also idem, "Origines du Christianisme," 172.

³Cullmann, Salvation in History, 326, 327.
"Certainly the goal of form criticism is to find Jesus in the *Church's witness*, and this aim ought to lead us to regard the *present-day Church* as the place where we can

Yet, if the inclusion of the present life of the church is not to become a source of error, it must go hand in hand with the use of philological, literary, historical, and archaeological aids. "We must submit ourselves to the constant control of these scholarly aids and be ready to give up ideas and associations that seem important to us whenever such things do not stand up under this control."¹

The church's role in salvation history has a positive value, however, only insofar as it remains grounded in the mid-point, the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Hence Cullmann refuses to endorse the position of theologians like Congar who, while adopting a concept of salvation history quite similar to his,² advocate that

come to a better understanding of the Jesus of the New Testament, taking due account of the temporal distance between the Church of today and that of the first century. The encounter with the Christ present in the Church of today permits us to understand the work of the incarnate Christ." *Ibid.*, 188, 189 (italics in the original).

¹Cullmann, Salvation in History, 327, 328. See also *idem*, "Theology an Indispensable Expression," 264, 265.

²Several authors have pointed out a number of similarities between Congar's and Cullmann's views on salvation history. Thus, T. I. MacDonald notices that both theologians envision salvation history as the progressive concentration from mankind to Christ, its center and climax, and from Him to mankind. MacDonald, The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar, 96, 97. Within this framework, explains J. S. Arrieta, they conceive the time of the church as an "intermediate" period, characterized by the tension between the "already" and the "not yet." Arrieta, La Iglesia del Intervalo, 113, 142, 143. Moreover, C. MacDonald shows that Congar and Cullmann agree on the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the church throughout its time, and exhibit analogous views of

tradition and the successors of the apostles determine Christian beliefs or the role of the church. In his view, this amounts to an absolutizing of the present. To elevate the time of the church to the same level as the mid-point is to disregard the uniqueness and centrality, the *ephápax* of the Christ event. Both Scripture and the apostolate belong to the center of salvation history and as such are unique. Therefore they remain the foundation and norm for all other future events and interpretations.¹

Apostolic Succession and Salvation History

Cullmann's position regarding apostolic succession is determined by his understanding of the nature of the apostolate within the framework of the New Testament view of the history of salvation. In the context of salvation history, the problem of apostolic succession has to do basically with the relationship between the time of the incarnation and the time of the church, particularly the church's participation in the tension between the

the Kingdom of Christ and of its relationship with the church, as well as agreeing on the relationship between sacred and secular history, between church and world. MacDonald, Church and World, 81-84, 105, 106, 134-39.

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 168-74. Cullmann affirms that the disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants depends, in the last analysis, on their respective understanding of the *ephápax* of the mid-point of salvation history. Ibid., 122.

"already" and the "not yet" which characterize the time of the church.¹

In this relationship the status of the apostolic age appears in a somewhat complex way. On the one hand it is part of the unique time of direct revelation, while on the other it already belongs to the intermediate period between Christ's resurrection and the *parousia*.² This fact, and more particularly Cullmann's awareness of the significance that the time of the church has for salvation

¹Cullmann, Salvation in History, 257, 306; idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 36; idem, Unity through Diversity, 80. Protestants, on the one hand, think that Catholics fail to heed the "not yet," as it is exemplified in the Catholic doctrine of the infallible magisterium in succession to the apostles. On the other, Catholics believe that Protestants do not take the "already" seriously, an assertion explicitly confirmed by Congar in This Church That I Love, 29. In consequence, though both sides admit that our present time, the time of the church, is an integral part of salvation history, they "remain radically separated on the question which characterizes this intermediate time--namely, that of the infallibility of the church and of tradition," two problems which are intimately related to the issue of apostolic succession. Cullmann, "The Relevance of Redemptive History," 19.

²Cullmann, Christ and Time, 171. "The question whether salvation history continues is therefore settled by Protestant theology in too simple a manner when it is answered in the negative with an appeal to the principle of Scripture. But its complexity is also overlooked if it is simply answered in the affirmative in such a way that no distinction exists between, on the one hand, the salvation history of the Bible which comes to a climax in the events of Jesus Christ, and on the other, the events during the time of the Church." Idem, Salvation in History, 299; see also *ibid.*, 304.

history,¹ led him to wonder whether one ought indeed to retain the category of succession to the apostles in the Christian church. Was there a need or a reason to assure the continuity of the apostles' function in the church in order to keep her united to the mid-point of salvation history?

Succession to the Apostles

The apostolic age, made up of the years between the Lord's ascension and the death of the last apostle, is the epoch when the time of the incarnation overlaps with the period of the church.² While this view was invariably maintained by Cullmann, one can perceive in his writings some degree of development towards more precision regarding the standing of the apostles themselves in relation to the time of revelation and the time of the church. In 1946, he affirmed that "the apostles . . . received a place in the unique event at the mid-point, although on the other side they already belonged to the

¹See Cullmann, "The Tradition," 77; idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 115; and idem, Christ and Time, 174.

²In a lecture pronounced before a number of bishops and cardinals during the third session of Vatican Council II (1964) Cullmann stated that "although the apostolic age is part of the period of the Church, it is still, on the other hand, part of the time of the incarnation." Idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 30.

. . . period of the Church."¹ A few years later, in 1952 he maintained only the first part of that statement, asserting that "all the apostolic action . . . belongs, one may say, to the incarnation of Christ."² This omission regarding the time of the church becomes open disavowal the next year: "the apostolate does not belong to the period of the Church, but to that of the incarnation."³ The removal of the apostolate from the time of the church does not necessarily mean a denial of a partial historical coincidence between the period of revelation and that of the church during the apostolic years. It only clarifies the nature and extent of that superposition in an attempt to underline, even more than in his earlier view, the uniqueness of the apostolate.⁴

¹Cullmann, Christ and Time, 171.

²Cullmann, Peter, 217. "What Peter will do belongs to the period of revelation, to the time of the apostles, and so to the foundation." Ibid., 229.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78. See also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 116. Similarly, in the mid 1960s Cullmann affirmed that the apostles "have the certainty of belonging to the incarnate Christ as eyewitnesses, that is, of being members of the saving drama become flesh in Christ." Idem, Salvation in History, 117. Cullmann consistently maintained this view in his more recent writings. Thus, in 1990 he affirmed that the apostles' writings are "elements of the *incarnation*." Idem, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 353 (italics in the original).

⁴In Christ and Time, 171, Cullmann had already indicated that, even considered as part of the time of the church, the apostles "occupy an exceptional position, namely, as foundation." His subsequent exposition in "The Tradition," 75-80, highlights even more strongly the

Succession and the uniqueness
of the apostolate

As to the nature of the apostolic office, Cullmann remarks that "the apostolate is by definition a unique office which cannot be delegated."¹ As mentioned earlier, according to the New Testament the apostle is an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Later church leaders simply cannot claim to be that kind of witness. They and every believer should be witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord, but only the apostles are eyewitnesses.² The fact that the apostles were eyewitnesses is of utmost importance for Cullmann, and is the basic reason he gives to assert that "the apostolic calling is unique (έφάπαξ); it is not transferable."³

uniqueness of the apostolic office. This view is criticized by Congar, who regrets that "among Protestants the tendency is always--clearly evident in the works of Oscar Cullmann--to sever the history of the Church from its divine origins." Congar, The Revelation of God, 32. See also idem, Situation et tâches, 96; and idem, Tradition and Traditions, 491.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 77. See also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 115, 116.

²Cullmann, Peter, 221. See also idem, Unity through Diversity, 96, n. 72. Sharing Cullmann's view as presented in Christ and Time, P. Menoud holds that "l'autorité des apôtres vient de leur place unique dans l'histoire du salut et de leur fonction spécifique de témoins du Ressuscité, du Christ qui les a élus et envoyés, et non d'un caractère sacré qui leur serait reconnu." Menoud, L'Eglise et les ministères selon le Nouveau Testament, 32.

³Cullmann, Christ and Time, 171.

The uniqueness of the apostolate is confirmed by the practice of the Jewish *šālīḥ*, which during the 1950s Cullmann considered to be closely related to the Christian *apóstolos*. According to the rule in late Judaism, the apostle is as Him that sent him, and is bound to give account to Him. He cannot transmit to others his unique mission. Upon the fulfillment of his commission, he returns it to Jesus and cannot hand it on to another.¹

The fact that the New Testament considers the apostles to be the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20) is seen by Cullmann as another evidence that there could be no successors to their apostolate. The foundation can be laid only once and this can occur only at the beginning of the building process.² Cullmann points out that according

¹Cullmann, Peter, 220. See also idem, "The Tradition," 78; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 116. Cullmann's stance on the non transmissible character of the *šālīḥ* appears to concur with the actual evidence, according to which the envoy indeed was not entitled to transfer his commission to another person. Hence, instead of lending support to the idea of apostolic succession, the parallelism between the Christian *apóstolos* and the Jewish *šālīḥ* rather shows that there could hardly be successors to the Christian apostolate. See Manson, The Church's Ministry, 39, 40; Lampe, Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry, 15-18; Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Succession, 15-20; Reid, 40; Hanson, The Pioneer Ministry, 10; Morris, Ministers of God, 116; and Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, introduction to The Christian Ministry, by J. B. Lightfoot (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Company, 1983), 18.

²Cullmann, Christ and Time, 172. He argues that in Eph 2:20 and Rom 15:20 the foundation is to be understood in a chronological way. The same applies to Matt 16:17. Ibid., Peter, 222. E. Schlink maintains that "the apostles are truly the foundation of the church, not

to the New Testament the apostles alone, and nobody else, fulfill the same functions which belong to Christ Himself.¹ Thus, while other images or metaphors in the New Testament are applied first to Jesus, then to the apostles, and finally to the church and her leaders, the illustration of the foundation, which for Cullmann is similar in meaning to that of the rock, was limited by the New Testament writers exclusively to Christ and the apostles.² "That is why the New Testament attributes the same images as are applied to Jesus to the apostles: 'rocks', and the corresponding images of 'foundation' and

just of individual congregations, but of the whole church at all times in all places." Moreover, "the apostles were not only the builders and planters of the *early church*, but they are the builders and planters of the *church of all times and in all places*." Schlink, "Apostolic Succession: A Fellowship of Mutual Service," 73, 74 (italics in the original).

¹"The missionary charge that Jesus gives them in Matthew 10:7f. corresponds exactly to the mission which in his reply to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:6) he assigns to his own person as Messiah: to heal the sick, to cast out demons, to raise the dead, to preach the good news." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78.

²Cullmann, Peter, 222. It would have been helpful if Cullmann had mentioned some of the other New Testament images or metaphors. His interest, however, focuses on the exclusive character of the apostles as foundation of the church. "Elsewhere in the NT the individual Christian is never called Πέτρα, though he is λίθος in the spiritual building, the body of Christ (1 Pt. 2:5)." Idem, "Πέτρα," 6:98.

'pillars'. Never are these images used to describe the bishop."¹

There is no denying on Cullmann's part that elders and bishops were appointed by the apostles as church officers, and that they in turn will succeed one another in office. One may call them the apostles' successors, but, in Cullmann's opinion, this is an ambiguous expression which opens the way to misunderstandings.² They are successors in a purely chronological sense, not according to the nature of their office. "Their function follows that of the apostles, but as a fundamentally different one."³ For that reason the relation between the apostles and bishops is not to be understood in the sense of a continuation of the apostolate. "The apostles give over to those men the leadership, *but not their own*

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78. See also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 116.

²When Cullmann admits "that an apostolic succession is directly or indirectly present in . . . the New Testament," (Cullmann, Peter, 214, n. 74), he does not understand "apostolic succession" in the Roman Catholic sense. He explains that "tendencies towards a so-called 'apostolic succession'--if we choose to use this ambiguous expression--are thus actually to be found in the New Testament, but with the explicit reservation that this succession, as far as it concerns the essence of the apostolate, is not to be understood in the sense of a continuation." Ibid., 224.

³Cullmann, Peter, 224. Cullmann does not explain what he regards as the specific functions of bishops.

apostolic office."¹ Cullmann insists that the apostles were well aware that they could not in any way pass on their apostolate since it could only be given by Jesus Himself and without mediation (Gal 1:12). In the post-apostolic period there must always be church leaders, bishops, and missionaries in the church, but never again can there be apostles.²

Though he did not address the issue again as thoroughly as in the early 1950s, Cullmann's more recent writings allow one to think that his basic stance against the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession remained unchanged, except in the case of Peter, which is discussed later.³ Thus, during the 1960s he frankly pointed out that the Second Vatican Council, which made a visible "effort to give the conciliar texts a biblical foundation,"⁴ failed to provide an adequate justification

¹Ibid. (*italics in the original*). Cullmann argues that since the function and authority of bishops cannot be identified with that of the apostles, the New Testament passages that speak of the appointment of local church officers by the apostles permit no deductions as to how bishops are to follow bishops in the future. Though Scripture does not condemn the principle of succession of church officers in their functions, "it does not express itself as to the *how* of determining the succession of bishops." Ibid., 224, n. 11 (*italics in the original*).

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78; idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 116; and idem, Peter, 220, 224.

³See pp. 251-59 below.

⁴Oscar Cullmann, "The Bible in the Council," in Dialogue on the Way: Protestants Report from Rome on the Vatican Council, ed. George A. Lindbeck, trans. Calvin

from Scripture for its doctrine of apostolic succession. Cullmann observes that the documents issued by the council were packed with biblical references added in parentheses. Sill, except in the schemes on the liturgy and on ecumenism,¹ in the majority of instances "there is very

Jacob Eichhorst, George A. Lindbeck, and Walter G. Tillmanns (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 129. See also idem, "Renouveau biblique et oecuménisme: Un point de vue protestant," chap. in Rencontre oecuménique à Genève, Collection oecuménique, no. 4 (Geneva: Éditions Labor et Fides, 1965), 120. The more prominent role recently granted to the Bible in Roman Catholic theology, particularly in the Second Vatican Council, could be judged by some "pessimist" Protestants as part of Catholic "syncretism." Cullmann, however, is confident that this revalorization of the Bible will have a positive effect upon the Roman Catholic Church. He argues that when the Bible is granted its rightful place at the center of the church's life and thought, it will eventually cleanse her from errors and defilements. In practice, so he thinks, many times the council tacitly recognized the supremacy of the Bible over tradition. In fact, however, the council never explicitly stated the superiority of Scripture which continues to be considered on the same level as tradition. Oscar Cullmann, "Oecuménisme, Bible et exégèse," chap. in Vrai et faux oecuménisme: Oecuménisme après le Concile (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1971), 65-69.

¹The documents on the liturgy and on ecumenism are, from Cullmann's point of view, "entirely inspired by the Bible" (Cullmann, "The Bible in the Council," 138; see also idem, "Renouveau biblique et oecuménisme," 120), though the decree on ecumenism links the fullness of the church with Peter, "whose succession (exclusively confined to the Roman Church) is taken for granted without question" (idem, "Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism," ER 17 (1965): 94). He also believes that to a lesser degree other constitutions, decrees and declarations of the Second Vatican Council are likewise biblically based. In this regard Cullmann mentions the document concerning the laity, the decree on missions, the one dealing with priestly formation, and the statement referring to the Jews. Idem, "The Reform of Vatican Council II in the Light of the History of the Catholic Church," chap. in Vatican Council II: The New Direction, trans. James Hester

often no genuine internal connection between what the schema affirms and the biblical text."¹ He deplores this way of using biblical statements especially since in the conciliar texts "there are certain theologically important declarations for which one would like to see the biblical basis. This is true of the principle of apostolic succession which is affirmed in several places."²

Succession to the apostles
in ecumenical context

In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, new ecumenical dimensions permeated Cullmann's whole theological thought. While one would expect some shift in

(New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 80-84.

¹Cullmann, "The Bible in the Council," 138. Except in the documents just mentioned, Cullmann contends that "very often the numerous biblical references added in parentheses are not really the basis of the document but simply proof texts, *dicta probantia*, added as afterthoughts in order to establish a rather exterior relation between a prefabricated schema and the Bible. This is to a large extent true of the schema *De Ecclesia*, discussed during the greater part of the second session. . . . Actually, in many cases, the reference applies simply to a word or an expression, and not at all to the idea itself which is developed in the schema." Idem, "The Place of the Bible at the Council," *JBL* 83 (1964): 249.

²Cullmann, "The Bible in the Council," 139. Thus, "the reference to 1 Tim 3:15, which speaks of the church as the 'pillar and ground of the truth,' would be justified only in a context which concentrates on these two concepts; but the relation is completely external when this reference is given for a sentence which says that Christ has erected the church, pillar and ground of the truth, on Peter, the apostles, and their successors. This affirmation, needless to say, is absent from the biblical text in question." Idem, "The Place of the Bible," 250.

his views on apostolic succession, it appears that his ecumenical concerns led him to maintain his position on that particular issue, with the exception of the specific case of Peter, which we shall soon consider.¹ Based on Paul's teaching on the diversity of charisms granted by one and the same Spirit, Cullmann contends that every Christian confession has a permanent spiritual gift which it should preserve and purify, and which the other churches should respect as such.² From this fundamental perspective he developed a particular understanding of what he calls true ecumenism, whose goal is to attain "unity through diversity."³ Since unity does not mean

¹See pp. 251-59 below.

²Oscar Cullmann, "L'oecuménisme à la lumière de la notion biblique du charisme," chap. in Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies. Yearbook 1972/73 (Tantur: Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies, 1973), 43-49; idem, "La tâche oecuménique de la faculté de théologie protestante de Paris," RHPR 57 (1977): 343; and idem, Unity through Diversity, 9. The application of 1 Cor 12, in which only individual members of the congregation are addressed, to the relation between different churches is justified, in Cullmann's view, by the idea that the New Testament itself presents different types of Christianity (synoptic, Johannine, Pauline). Moreover, Cullmann argues, Paul ascribes particular charisms to each one of the different churches to which he writes. Idem, "L'oecuménisme à la lumière de la notion biblique du charisme," 49-51. See also idem, "Courants multiples dans la communauté primitive," 57; and idem, Unity through Diversity, 17, 29.

³See Oscar Cullmann, "La tâche oecuménique actuelle à la lumière de l'histoire de l'Église," chap. in Vrai et faux oecuménisme: Oecuménisme après le Concile (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1971), 63; idem, Unity through Diversity, 31; and idem, "L'oecuménisme à la lumière de la notion biblique du charisme," 44. Fairly

uniformity, he does not envision a fusion or merge of all churches into one, but rather a "community of (harmoniously separated) churches" in which each one retains, purified of distortions,¹ her own distinctive charisms granted by the Holy Spirit.²

similar to Cullmann's proposal, a model of "reconciled diversity" has been suggested in the "Working Paper on the Ecumenical Role of World Confessional Alliances," elaborated in 1974 by the Conference of Secretaries of World Confessional Alliances. The idea was adopted by the Lutheran World Federation in its assembly at Dar-es-Salaam in 1977. Thomas P. Rausch, Authority and Leadership in the Church: Past Directions and Future Possibilities (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 126, 127. The notion of unity in reconciled diversity appeared more recently as one alternate model for Roman Catholic-Lutheran union in the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission's report Facing Unity: Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship, 16, 17.

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 13-22, 35. Cullmann insists that "each church is to respect and learn from the charisms of the other in order to deepen the church's own charisms, to purify them, and to guard them against perversion." Ibid., 19. To learn from the other churches' charisms does not mean to imitate them, for the gifts of God's grace cannot be imitated. Moreover, there is the danger to imitate the deformations rather than the authentic charisms. Idem, "L'oecuménisme à la lumière de la notion biblique du charisme," 54, 55; idem, "La tâche oecuménique actuelle," 64. Cullmann's strong warning against the distortion of charisms proceeds from his conviction that "it is these distortions which create divisions, while the charisms themselves create unity." Idem, Unity through Diversity, 22; see also idem, "L'oecuménisme à la lumière de la notion biblique du charisme," 51.

²As Cullmann sees them, Protestants share two basic charisms, namely concentration on the Bible and Christian freedom. The essential charisms of the Roman Catholic Church are universalism and the institution or organization. The charisms of the Orthodox Church are the emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the conservation of traditional liturgy. Idem, Unity through Diversity, 20; idem, "L'oecuménisme à la lumière de la notion biblique du

In the context of this ecumenical approach, which some find difficult to accept,¹ Cullmann sees no obstacle for divergent views on apostolic succession to coexist in the community of churches. Thus, his conviction that "plurality is not opposed to unity, but . . . is even the

charisme," 54; and idem, "La tâche oecuménique actuelle," 59. For him, "the continued existence of the Catholic Church, the Orthodox church, and the Reformation churches alongside each other has attained a certain meaning" in salvation history. For Catholics, the presence of the Orthodox and Protestant churches is "a warning against distortions." For Protestants, the continued existence of the Catholic Church poses the question: "should the many elements in harmony with the Bible that have been lost in the course of post-Reformation history due to the process of narrowing and false secularization--elements now only present in the Catholic (or Orthodox) churches--be recovered by the churches of the Reformation?" Idem, Unity through Diversity, 32; see also idem, "The Reform of Vatican Council II," 100. "Le charisme protestant de la concentration risque de devenir étroitesse, le charisme catholique de l'universalisme risque de devenir syncrétisme, incorporation d'éléments inassimilables, étrangers à l'évangile. Le danger protestant c'est le 'trop peu', le danger catholique c'est le 'trop'." Idem, "La tâche oecuménique de la faculté," 344. See also idem, "An Observer Speaks," CHer 24, no. 2 (February 1963): 27.

¹Thus, asserting that "unity and diversity are two poles that . . . grow or diminish in direct proportion to one another," A. de Halleux contends that unity is not caused by diversity, but rather by *koinonia*. André de Halleux, "Cullmann's Unity through Diversity: A Catholic Response," TD 38 (1991): 22. On his part, T. Peters argues that "we simply cannot build a unity atop our present diversity, especially when that diversity is in large part defined in terms of irreconcilable confessional positions." For him, this fact "makes the Cullmann proposal incredibly naive." Ted Peters, review of Unity through Diversity, by Oscar Cullmann, in CurTM 16 (1989): 299. See also André de Halleux, "L'unité par la diversité selon Oscar Cullmann," RTL 22 (1991): 510-23; and Jean-Marc Prieur, review of L'unité par la diversité, by Oscar Cullmann, in ETR 62 (1987): 467, 468.

foundation of unity,"¹ is at the root of his disavowal of newly proposed models of unity which concentrate on convergence and consensus, since in his view these proposals eventually lead to the complete elimination of differences between confessions, "as for example with regard to the issue of episcopal succession."² Within a concept of unity which excludes homogenization in the area of how ministerial office is understood, there is ample room for divergent and even opposing views on apostolic succession in the community of churches.³

Succession to Peter

Living in daily contact with Roman Catholics from the initial years of his teaching career, Cullmann came to see that it is particularly on the question of the primacy of Peter that the two sides are divided.⁴ The Roman Catholic claim that the pope is to be regarded as Peter's successor has been thoroughly discussed by Cullmann on the

¹Cullmann, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 354 (italics in the original).

²Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 74. Cullmann expresses this concern particularly in relation to ecumenical documents such as Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry issued by the Faith and Order Commission in 1982, and the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission's report Facing Unity, finished in 1985. The same problem affects, in his view, the proposal of H. Fries and K. Rahner, Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility.

³Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 75; see also *ibid.*, 59.

⁴Cullmann, "Oscar Cullmann," 34.

basis of his exegesis of Matt 16:16-19.¹ As mentioned earlier, in this passage he notices two promises made by Jesus to Peter, namely that he would be the rock or foundation upon which the church will be build, and that he would exercise preeminent leadership in the church.²

As foundation of the church

Does this mean that in Peter's case there would be successors in his role of foundation of the church? In Cullmann's view Roman Catholic exegesis proceeds in a rather arbitrary way when it tries to find in this pericope a reference to successors.³ "On exegetical

¹Cullmann's main work dealing with the issue of Petrine succession is his book Peter, written in 1952. Eight years later, in the foreword to the second edition of this book Cullmann expressed his intention to write another volume, "entitled Peter and the Pope," to deal with the theological issue of succession to Peter's primacy. (Cullmann, Peter, 15; this intention also appears in ibid., 184, n. 80; and 232, n. 29). One can only regret that Cullmann was unable to carry out this wish, although subsequent allusions to the subject show that it remained important to him.

²See pp. 191-201 above.

³Cullmann reproves Roman Catholic theologians for failing to provide a thorough explanation concerning how they see a reference to succession in Jesus' words. "It is noteworthy that we find very little concerning the point which one would gladly find discussed by precisely these scholars--concerning the question, that is, . . . whether and how, indeed, the promise of Jesus contains any idea whatever of a succession. . . . In the Roman Catholic *commentaries* the presence of the idea of succession is for the most part not examined; it is rather presupposed as an undiscussed fact. And yet this should be proved, for it certainly is not at all self-evident, and he who reads the saying without prejudice will never by himself get the idea that Jesus here speaks--in a sort

grounds we must say that the passage does not contain a single word concerning successors of Peter."¹

This promise was addressed first of all to an apostle, not to a bishop.² It has to be remembered, insists the Lutheran theologian, that because of its nature the apostolic office cannot be repeated nor transmitted. The apostles' unrepeatable character proceeds from the fact that they were unique eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. There never will be such a witness again.³

of prophetic way--to successors of Peter." Cullmann, Peter, 174, 175 (italics in the original).

¹Ibid., 213. Some Roman Catholic scholars contend that Jesus did not speak explicitly of successors because He did not want to shatter the disciples' conviction that the parousia was to come in the immediate future. See R. Gutzwiller, "Neue Diskussion um Petrus," Orientierung 16 (1952): 216; and Botte, 143.

²It is true that Peter, the apostle, also became church leader and missionary. But this saying of Jesus was directed to Peter in his function of apostle, not as church administrator or missionary. "When, as in the case of Peter, we are dealing with a church head and missionary who is likewise an apostle, the apostolic concept is necessarily the dominant concept." Cullmann, Peter, 220. The functions of leadership and mission do certainly continue in the church. But the function of leading and doing missionary work as an apostle does not. Ibid.

³Ibid., 221. See p. 227 above. "A role that Jesus promises to an apostle may not be transferred to men of later times, if it belongs to the very *meaning and nature* of the designated function that it can only be exercised by such men as have lived with the Incarnate One *during the earthly life of Jesus.*" Ibid., 219 (italics in the original).

Cullmann's view of Peter as the foundational rock of the church is to be understood chronologically, as in the case of the apostles in general. The foundation of a house is laid but once, at the beginning.¹ Besides, foundation and building may not be interchanged. Elders and bishops have to see to it that any further construction is done on the foundation of the apostles, but they are not themselves the foundation.²

The unique function as rock which, according to Cullmann, Peter fulfills in salvation history, is of such a character that its unique effectiveness continues even beyond his death. Peter--and not one of his successors--is and will remain the foundation of the church.

¹Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 173. See p. 228 above. Jesus' statement referred to two subjects: Peter and the church. One is the foundation, the other is the building to be erected upon that foundation. "In this sentence it is *only the work of building* which belongs to an unlimited future, *not the laying of the foundation of the rock on which is built.*" Idem, *Peter*, 214 (italics in the original). See also idem, "*Πέτρος*," 6:108. When Cullmann, in a chronological sense, refers to the foundation and building of the church, he does not understand that the church of the first centuries was qualitatively uncompleted. "The building is already a complete whole in the lowest story of the church structure; the number of stories has only chronological significance." Idem, *Peter*, 227, n. 14.

²"A confusion of foundation and building is present, however, when one appeals to the fact that the apostles installed elders and bishops in order to claim for a bishop Jesus' saying to the rock apostle. Although Roman Catholic theology itself emphasizes very strongly the uniqueness of the apostolic office, it devaluates that office in this decisive point of the application of Matthew 16:17 ff." Cullmann, *Peter*, 225.

Continued influence, however, does not imply successors.¹ The relation of Peter to the church is explained by Cullmann on the basis of what he considers to be one of the characteristics of salvation history, namely that "what continues has its roots in the once-for-all unique event" which "cannot be repeated but is the foundation of a continuing situation whose ongoing life derives from this never-to-be-repeated event."²

As to how the apostle Peter continues, today, to be the foundation of the church and to play the role entrusted unto him some 2000 years ago, Cullmann underlines that this continuance of the apostles during the time of the church does not consist in "the person of the bishop who at any given time is the living link in an unbroken chain of succession, but rather [in] the Apostolic Scriptures."³ In contrast to the Roman Catholic

¹Ibid., 215, 216.

²Ibid., 217 (italics in the original). For Cullmann all the apostolic action is part of the *basic* event and belongs to what happened once for all at the center of salvation history. He sees a failure to take into consideration this characteristic of biblical thinking in the Roman Catholic position that "concludes, from the continuance of the Church and from the continued necessity of church leadership, that successors are included in the person of the rock addressed, Peter." Ibid.

³Ibid., 225. In this quotation, the statement: "the person of the bishop who at any given time is the living link in an unbroken chain of succession," was added by Cullmann to the second edition (1960) of his book, which I am regularly quoting in this dissertation. For more details concerning the continuation of the apostles'

claim that the rock role continues through successors,¹ Cullmann insists that through his written testimony Peter continues to support the structure of the church, in spite of the scanty presence of his writings in the New Testament canon.² Without the apostles we would have no

foundational role through their writings, see pp. 269, 270 below.

¹L. Cerfaux categorically affirms: "Par les successeurs, nous reposons sur le roc fondamental." Cerfaux, review of Saint Pierre, 813. On his part, B. C. Butler argues that *Kepha* is not a proper name, but the title of an office. "The function he [Peter] has to fulfill as Rock is especially that of securing the stability of the Messianic community and its preservation as a united entity till the consummation of the age. This function is of its intrinsic nature capable of transmission." Basil C. Butler, "St. Peter: History and Theology," Cler 43 (1958): 518, 523. From another angle, A. Vögtle contends that it is necessary to distinguish between a *foundational position* and a *foundational function*. If the *position* is taken only once at the beginning, the *function* is needed as long as the building stands. Therefore, concludes he, if with Cullmann one admits that the building of the church continues after the apostle's lifetime, it is legitimate to infer that Jesus had in mind a continuation of the *foundational function* throughout the whole time of the church. Anton Vögtle, "Der Petrus der Verheissung und der Erfüllung. Zum Petrusbuch von Oscar Cullmann," MTZ 5 (1954): 14-27. See also Fries and Rahner, 65. The foundation of a social structure is the authority, which has to continue as long as that organization exists. Gutzwiller, 216; and Fernández Jiménez, 290, 292. The apostolic foundation of the church is a *living foundation*, which continues through successors. Max Meinertz, "Ein neues Buch über den Apostel Petrus," ZMR 37 (1953): 238, 239.

²Not without reason, several theologians consider that Cullmann's view of the extension of Peter's unique rock role through his New Testament writings seems undermined by the fact that we have only two short epistles from him. Congar, "Du nouveau," 39, 40; Harvey K. McArthur, review of Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, by Oscar Cullmann, in RL 23 (1954): 463. Moreover, weakening this "disconcerting" view (Fernández Jiménez,

New Testament. Everything that we know of Jesus we owe to them, and to Peter "in a special way."¹ He remains the rock, the foundation, "in the Gospels and in a derived way in the Book of Acts and the letters, which rest entirely upon the first apostolic witness [i.e., Peter]."²

293) which leaves the church resting on "a small and precarious rock" (Butler, "St. Peter: History and Theology," 524) is the fact that some scholars express serious doubts concerning the authorship of the second of the two epistles. Aggravating the situation, Cullmann himself explicitly affirms that the second of Peter's epistles was not written by the apostle nor during his lifetime, but rather by an anonymous Christian of Asia Minor toward the middle of the second century. Cullmann, "Pierre (2^e épître de)," 401; idem, Salvation in History, 296, n. 1. "If Peter was a rock only in so far as we owe the Scriptures to him, . . . how can we avoid the impression that our Lord was making much ado about very little in the famous Petrine texts?" Moreover, if the rock-apostle supports the church through his continuing witness in the Scriptures, "is it not obvious that Paul or John deserved the name of Cephas [rock] more than the one who received it from Jesus and from Paul?" John F. McConnell, review of Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, by Oscar Cullmann, in CBQ 16 (1954): 365. See also J. Gniska, review of Petrus. Jünger - Apostel - Märtyrer, by Oscar Cullmann, in Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 73 (1962): 137; and Maffei, 53, 54.

¹To show the foundational role of Peter in the writing of the Gospels, Cullmann quotes Papias' report which claims that "the Gospel of Mark was written according to the sermons of the apostle Peter, and so rests upon his testimony. If this report is correct, then it is also historical to say that the oral tradition lying behind the written Gospels goes back in the first instance to the apostle Peter, especially if we, in agreement with recent study, regard the Gospel of Mark as the oldest Gospel." Cullmann, Peter, 226.

²Ibid., 226. While recognizing that Cullmann's view on the continuation of the apostolic foundation through the apostolic writings "is a very interesting and suggestive one," T. W. Manson observes that it "is bound, if followed up, to raise new questions." T. W. Manson, review of Petrus: Jünger--Apostel--Märtyr: das historische

As leader of the church

It was as an apostle that Peter exercised the leadership of the church. In other words his leadership was *apostolic* and consequently, according to Cullmann, it belonged to the never-to-be-repeated laying on of the foundation. Thus Peter's leadership was, strictly speaking, non-transferable.¹

As mentioned earlier, Peter did not retain this leadership more than a few years, and this at the very beginning of the history of the Christian church.² When he left Jerusalem to take over the supervision of the Jewish Christian mission, explains Cullmann, he subordinated himself to the authority of James, who had assumed the leading position in the church.³ The Antioch

und das theologische Petrusproblem, by Oscar Cullmann, in JEH 4 (1953): 93.

¹Ibid., 228. Echoing Cullmann's view, J. A. Burgess argued that "as far as distinguishing between Peter and his function is concerned, the Protestant reply is simply: just as it is impossible, when using historical methods, to distinguish between Peter and his faith, so it is impossible to distinguish between Peter and his function, as Roman Catholic exegetes try to do. No matter how dynamic the function, it is Peter's function." Burgess, 175.

²See p. 192 above.

³Roman Catholic theologians reject Cullmann's assertion that James took Peter's place in the leadership of the church at large. Thus, J. Gnilka and R. Gutzwiller argue that after leaving Jerusalem Peter continued to hold the primacy over the whole church, even over James. See Gnilka, 135, 136; and Gutzwiller, 215. On the other hand, Frisque holds that "les conclusions essentielles du Saint Pierre demeurent, même si Pierre n'a pas transmis son

episode shows that Peter did not transfer his primacy to that city, for now the preeminence rested upon James, always in Jerusalem.¹

Should we regard Peter's handing over the direction of the church to James as the beginning of a succession sequence? No, contends Cullmann. In the life of Peter there is no starting point for a chain of succession in the leadership of the entire church. The apostle never established a bishop as the leader of the whole church. The authority of James, who took Peter's place as head of the mother church in Jerusalem, was not derived from Peter but from James's direct relation to Jesus. "A chain of succession in the leadership of the *entire Church*, going back to Peter and to Matthew 16:17 ff., thus does not exist."²

primat à Jacques." Frisque, 166, n. 68. Other Roman Catholic scholars, like O. Karrer, maintain that even "if Cullmann's view is correct and his proof completely sound, not only is the principle of succession unharmed, but on the contrary is confirmed. . . . Peter had a successor in the primacy--James." Karrer, Peter and the Church, 32, 33, 59; see also Congar, "Du nouveau," 30, 31.

¹Cullmann, Peter, 229, 230, 233, 234. The fact that Peter did not move the location of the church's leadership from Jerusalem to Antioch--but rather handed it on to James who remained in Jerusalem--makes it most difficult to claim that later on Peter transferred the leadership from Antioch to Rome. Ibid., 231.

²Ibid., 235 (italics in the original). In the words of K. Barth, "in this passage [Matt 16:17-19] there is no mention at all of any institutionally guaranteed continuance of the authority, power and mission even of Peter, in another person appointed by him, of a *successor Petri*." Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV, 1: 718.

There is no denying by Cullmann that the church in all ages has needed and still needs leaders. Yet, for those who fulfilled and continue to fulfill that function the leadership exerted by Peter certainly is an example and pattern, but nothing more. The fact that at the beginning a single person stood at the head of the church does not necessarily imply also that in later times one individual must stand at the head of the entire church.¹ In the Bible, he explains, "we do find a primacy of the Apostle Peter, but nothing about the question of knowing *if*, nor above all *how* the Apostle can have successors in the Church."² The conclusion that Peter's leadership is to be continued through an unbroken chain of succession cannot be derived from Matt 16:17-19. It would have been useful to know what Cullmann's reaction would have been to those Roman Catholic theologians who, based on form criticism, find the mere existence of the Matthean passage itself as evidence in favor of a Petrine succession.³

¹"Peter himself cannot so to speak arise in every new generation. Never again will the *kepha*, the Rock, himself exercise the leadership." Cullmann, Peter, 231.

²Oscar Cullmann, "Between Two Sessions of the Council. Experiences and Hopes of a Protestant Observer," UWR 1 (1965): 33 (*italics in the original*). This article is the translation, made by F. Temple Kingston, of a lecture delivered by Cullmann at the Sorbonne on January 31, 1963.

³Appealing to form criticism, Roman Catholic theologians like Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Otto Karrer, have disputed Cullmann's claim that Peter's primacy, formally declared in Matt 16, ended with his

Without carrying out a thorough study of other New Testament texts frequently quoted in connection with apostolic succession--something disapprovingly noticed by Roman Catholic theologians¹--Cullmann asserts that none of them lends support to the claim that the Roman bishop is Peter's successor.²

death. Ratzinger argues that "one of the most certain insights of the Form Critical method" is that the evangelists "handed down only those words and deeds of the Lord which possessed validity for the present Church. If then the words of commission to Peter have been handed down to us, they stand as proof that when St. Matthew wrote his Gospel these words were understood as valid for that time. . . . For this reason alone, we must dismiss all explanations which hold that the Office of Peter was terminated by his death--or even earlier than that. The Gospel of St. Matthew, written after the death of Peter, proves the actual continuance of that which had already been established--namely, the Office of Peter." Joseph Ratzinger, "The Ministerial Office and the Unity of the Church," 52. See also Karrer, Peter and the Church, 47; idem, "Apostolische Nachfolge und Primat: Ihre biblischen Grundlagen im Licht der neueren Theologie," ZKT 77 (1955): 162, 163; E. L. Allen, "On This Rock," JTS 5 (1954): 61, 62; Paul Gaechter, "Petrus und seine Nachfolge: Zum Petrusbuch von Prof. Oskar Cullmann," ZKT 75 (1953): 337; Vögtle, "Der Petrus," 46; Fries and Rahner, 65; and Maffei, 34-37.

¹Roman Catholic theologians reproached Cullmann for giving insufficient consideration to Matt 28:18-20 in connection with the issue of apostolic succession. Thus, Journet complains that "Prof. Cullmann attaches no particular importance to this passage of Saint Matthew, which in our opinion is of the utmost importance. He does not deny its genuineness; he simply omits discussion of it." Journet, The Primacy of Peter, 47. Similar protests appear in Karrer, "Apostolische Nachfolge und Primat," 140; Javierre, "Le thème de la succession," 200; and Fernández Jiménez, 296.

²Regarding succession to Peter's primacy, Matt 16:17-19; Luke 22:31, 32; and John 21:15-17 "are the three favourite Catholic texts." Butler, "St. Peter: History and Theology," 451. See also F. Refoulé, "Primauté de

Moreover, Cullmann regards it impossible to apply this text exclusively to the Roman bishops.¹ There is no reference in the Matthean passage to a transfer of the administrative center of the church to Rome, nor is there, in the entire New Testament, a single statement mentioning the name of Rome in connection with Peter.² In Cullmann's

Pierre dans les évangiles," RevScRel 38 (1964): 4. While concentrating his attention on the first, Cullmann argues that the other New Testament passages clearly indicate that Jesus' commission to Peter was limited to the apostle's life. They did not even suggest future successors to Peter's office. Thus, he emphasizes that the commission to feed the sheep (John 21:15-19) is inseparably connected with the prediction of Peter's martyrdom, indicating that the charge was limited to the period of Peter's life. Cullmann, Peter, 65, 66. Likewise, the command to strengthen the brethren (Luke 22:31, 32) is closely connected with the prediction of Peter's denial. Cullmann remarks that even in this passage, which implicitly speaks of the future church, Jesus did not mention any successors, but the historical Peter alone, the apostle who would deny his Master. Ibid., 215. He insists that "the Roman Primacy with its exclusive claim, upheld only by the possibility of legitimate succession, is not based in the New Testament." Oscar Cullmann, "The Early Church and the Ecumenical Problem," ATR 40 (1958): 183, 184.

¹"No indication is present in Matthew 16:17 ff. that the center of the Church is located where one finds the bishop whose office is validated by a chronological chain of succession which leads back to Peter." Cullmann, Peter, 232.

²Ibid., 232. If there is one church that could claim to have inherited the primacy, that church is the church of Jerusalem, the only one from which Peter at one time ruled the church at large, the church which continued being the center of Christianity after Peter departed to the mission field. Besides, Cullmann argues, even if one assumes that Peter did transfer the location of the head of the church, which certainly was not the case, the church of Antioch could establish a greater claim to the primacy than the church of Rome. The tradition according to which Peter was the first bishop of Antioch is much

view, historical developments in the history of the church have no theological significance nor can they be used to justify the claim of succession to Peter's primacy.¹ There is no denying that from the second century on the church of Rome increasingly played an effective leading role within the church at large. This reality, however, does not prove that the bishop of Rome has the primacy over the church of all times by divine right. Even if one would accept historical developments as the outcome of divine guidance,² it does not mean that the newly acquired role is a divinely intended *norm* for the church of all times. The fact that the bishops of the church of Rome later made the claim that they alone are intended in the promise of Jesus expressed in Matt 16:17-19 cannot demonstrate the legitimacy of this claim.³

older and better attested to than is that of Peter's Roman episcopate. Ibid., 234, 235.

¹Cullmann rebukes Roman Catholic theologians for their "flight into later history," a reference to their use of later historical developments to justify the pope's claim to primacy by succession from Peter. Ibid., 237.

²Acknowledging the lack of sufficient historical evidence of apostolic succession during the first two centuries, Roman Catholic theologians often employ this argument. See Schillebeeckx, "The Catholic Understanding of Office," 568, 569; and Brown, Priest and Bishop, 73. "If one accepts that God excercises a special Providence in caring for his Church, the doctrine of the Apostolic Succession . . . will cause little difficulty." Duggan, 65.

³Cullmann, Peter, 237, 238. Cullmann emphasizes that until the beginning of the third century it never occurred to a single bishop of Rome to refer the saying in

The appeal to tradition is likewise considered illegitimate by Cullmann. "One cannot prove the foundation of the Roman tradition by use of this tradition itself."¹ This is a clear case of circular reasoning and is logically unacceptable. A similar begging of the question, a *petitio principii*, is evident when Roman Catholic theology appeals to a dogmatic utterance to justify that the bishops of Rome are the sole successors of Peter.

For the exclusive claim to proclaim dogmas through the possession of sole apostolic authority is nevertheless dependent on this very dogma of the legal succession to Peter. What is involved here is not just another dogma; it is that dogma that is meant to justify completely the exclusive right of the Roman Catholic Church to promulgate dogmas.²

Finally, Cullmann brings forward his view on salvation history to invalidate the Roman Catholic idea

Matt 16:17-19 to himself in the sense of the leadership of the entire church. Ibid., 238. It is significant that at a time when the Roman See already had a certain consciousness of pre-eminence, it still did not justify this awareness by referring to Matt 16. Ibid., 239. Besides, though several early church fathers like Clement of Rome (ca. 96), Ignatius (ca. 35-ca. 107), Papias (ca. 60-130), Dionysius of Corinth (ca. 170), Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 225), Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-ca. 215), and Gaius (early 3d cent.), report Peter's journey to Rome and his martyrdom in that city, "aucun de ces écrivains ne parle encore de Pierre comme évêque de cette Église. Le premier évêque de Rome aurait été Linus . . . et c'est seulement au III^e siècle que l'on commencera à insister sur l'épiscopat romain de l'apôtre." Idem, "Simon Pierre," 2:677.

¹Cullmann, *Peter*, 237 (italics in the original).

²Ibid., 241.

that the promise to Peter had to be visible and tangible in history, since the church is visible and continues on earth the work of Christ. It is true that Cullmann affirms the continuation of the work of Christ in the visible earthly church. But he also maintains that the period of the church is part of salvation history only as long as it finds its norm in the central period constituted by Christ and the apostles. Jesus' promise to Peter was indeed visibly fulfilled in the early years of the apostolic church. Yet, the need for successors does not follow at all from the belief that the church continues visibly the work of Christ.¹

Toward an ecumenical "agreement on succession"?

Without explicitly disavowing the arguments presented above, as a result of a change in his ecumenical perspective after the Second Vatican Council,² Cullmann's more recent writings show an increasing modification of his view on succession from Peter's primacy. In 1965 he affirmed in an ecumenical panel discussion that one of the most essential problems which needs to be addressed in ecumenical dialogues is "the question of the primacy, especially the one concerning the mode of succession," for

¹Ibid., 239, 240.

²For Cullmann's views on ecumenism after the Second Vatican Council see pp. 233-37 above.

"we agree on succession, but not on the mode of succession."¹ In view of this statement one may wonder to what extent he indeed does "agree on succession" with Roman Catholic theology. Is he referring to a mere episcopal succession in the government of the church, or is he pointing to an apostolic succession founded on Peter's apostolic leadership? The first alternative would be in harmony with Cullmann's earlier position,² but it hardly seems to agree with the prevalent Roman Catholic view, which is expressed by the second option. Since at the time, unfortunately, the Lutheran theologian merely mentioned the problem without any further suggestion, one has to examine his subsequent writings to answer this question.

¹In this ecumenical encounter, in which Augustin Cardinal Bea, Marc Boegner, W.-A. Visser't Hooft, Nikos A. Nissiotis, and Oscar Cullmann participated, he affirmed: "Je crois que dans le futur dialogue, trois points essentiels, entre beaucoup d'autres problèmes moins importants qui nous séparent, devront être examinés avant tout. Premièrement, la question du rapport entre la Bible, le magistère et la tradition, . . . Deuxièmement, la question de la primauté, et plus spécialement ce qui concerne le mode de la succession (nous sommes d'accord sur la succession, mais pas sur le mode de succession)." Cullmann, "Renouveau biblique et oecuménisme," 118. The third essential problem pointed out by Cullmann, which also relates to apostolic succession, is "la tension biblique entre ce qui est 'déjà accompli' et ce qui n'est 'pas encore achevé', [laquelle] est supprimée dans certaines institutions de l'Église où, selon la théologie catholique, tout est déjà réalisé." Ibid., 119.

²See p. 230 above.

Some light comes from a 1975 essay in which, from the perspective of mutual respect of the charisms of each church as a means to attain unity through diversity, Cullmann considered that the papacy, understood more as Petrine service than as Petrine office, is one of the charisms that expresses the identity of the Roman Catholic Church.¹ Recognizing the juxtaposition of collegiality and primacy in the conferring by Jesus of the founding function to *all* the apostles (Matt 18:18) and to *one* apostle (Matt 16:17-19),² Cullmann argues that this model could be applied to the structure of the union of different churches in which, freed from distortions, the papal charism could fulfill a unifying service.³ The problem remains, however, as to how to continue this pattern in history, since there is no information on that

¹Oscar Cullmann, "Papsttum als charismatischer Dienst," in Papsttum heute und morgen: 57 Antworten auf eine Umfrage, ed. Georg Denzler (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1975), 44-47. Similarly, in 1986 Cullmann affirmed that "if the papacy is understood only as the ministry of Peter, a ministry 'which is subordinated to the primacy of the gospel' . . . then it too . . . can be counted among the Catholic charisms." Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 89, n. 19.

²Cullmann, "Papsttum als charismatischer Dienst," 45.

³Ibid. In Cullmann's view, some of the distortions of this charism are legalism, exaggerated emphasis on the institution in detriment of the prophetic element in the church, neglect of the collegial control, and power abuse. Ibid.

aspect in Jesus' statement to Peter.¹ Hence Cullmann concludes his essay recommending that "the mode of succession should be examined in the light of the Bible, which however leaves this question as such open."²

The "agreement on succession" pointed out by Cullmann in 1965 would refer, then, to the desirability to retain the papacy, provided that it be free from the distortions and exaggerations accumulated throughout history, as a service for the unity of the church, based on the model of Peter's leadership. The disagreement concerns the mode of succession, and proceeds from the silence of the Scriptures on the subject.

This new perspective is explicitly recognized by Cullmann himself in a personal letter written to Giuseppe Maffei in 1976, where he explains: "Without disavowing what I have said about the uniqueness of the apostolate (ocular testimony), I have pondered this idea since then [1952]: Peter head of the Church, a model for the government of the Church for *all* times."³ After referring

¹Ibid.

²"Ebenso sollte der Modus der Sukzession im Lichte der Bibel, die diese Frage als solche allerdings offen lässt, jedenfalls geprüft werden." Ibid., 47.

³Oscar Cullmann to Giuseppe Maffei, 22 October 1976, quoted in Giuseppe Maffei, Il dialogo ecumenico sulla successione attorno all'opera di Oscar Cullmann (1952-1972) (Roma: L.E.S. [Libreria Editrice Salesiana], n.d. [1979?]), 172, n. 208. As provided by Maffei, Cullmann's letter reads as follows: "Sans renier ce que j'ai dit de l'unicité de l'apostolat (témoin oculaire),

to his short essay "Papsttum als charismatischer Dienst," which I quoted in the preceding paragraph, he continues: "I admit, to a certain extent, a succession (even 'monarchical'), not only in what concerns Peter the apostle, but also Peter as head of the first community, and I ascribe to this point a greater significance today than in 1952."¹ He concludes, nevertheless, indicating where the point of disagreement resides:

But my objection, even today, concerns the MODE of succession. One can imagine several modes. The word of the Lord in Matthew 16 says nothing about that, even if it points to a succession. The mode advocated by the Roman Catholic Church is one of the possibilities, but is it the only one?²

This ambivalence of consensus and divergence on succession to Peter's primacy appears again in Cullmann's

j'ai réfléchi depuis lors [1952] sur cette idée: Pierre chef de l'Église modèle pour les gouvernements de l'Église de tous les temps. Il y a un an j'ai écrit 4 pages sur la papauté ministère charismatique (dans un volume collectif 'Papsttum heute und morgen'). J'admets donc en un certain sens une succession (même 'monarchique'), non seulement en ce qui concerne Pierre l'apôtre, mais Pierre *chef* de la première communauté et j'attribue aujourd'hui à ce point une plus grande importance qu'en 1952. Mais mon objection se rapporte encore aujourd'hui au MODE de succession. On peut imaginer *plusieurs* modes. La parole du Seigneur [dans] Matth 16 ne dit rien là-dessus, même si elle vise une succession. Le mode préconisé par l'Église catholique romaine est l'une des possibilités, mais est-ce la seule? J'aimerais que là-dessus porte la discussion." Ibid., (italics and capitals in the original).

¹Oscar Cullmann to Giuseppe Maffei, 22 October 1976, quoted in Maffei, 172, n. 208 (italics in the original). It seems to me that Maffei's study failed to recognize the magnitude of Cullmann's shift indicated in this letter as well as in other recent writings.

²Ibid., (italics and capitals in the original).

latest book, which sheds further light on the extent of his "agreement on succession" noted in his previous writings. The community of churches suggested by this author as the goal of the ecumenical endeavor is in need of some kind of structure, however loose, to affirm in a visible way its unity in diversity and to protect it from disintegration. In this context Cullmann suggests "the possibility of a limited acknowledgment of the Roman pope by non-Catholic churches, an acknowledgment linked to certain conditions."¹ He argues that the pope could be, under specific conditions, the president of the community of churches to be established, for "one can and should derive a model for an office for the unity of the church from Matt. 16:18ff."² Based on the concept of a hierarchy of truths,³ Cullmann assigns the Roman Catholic

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 50.

²Ibid., 56. Envisioning a similar Petrine ministry in the context of Christian unity, Congar remarked: "Une papauté telle que l'histoire l'a faite, centralisatrice, impériale, étroitement autoritaire: non! Un ministère papal présidant à la communion et à l'unité dans un régime collégial et conciliaire: pourquoi pas?" Yves Congar, Essais oecuméniques: le mouvement, les hommes, les problèmes (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1984), 93.

³Cullmann considers this notion, introduced by the Second Vatican Council in the "Decree on Ecumenism," art. 11, as "the most important in the whole Schema for the future of our dialogue." Cullmann, "Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism," 94. He argues that while all different truths are kept as binding truths, they do not stand on an even status with each other, but are ranked from the top down, so that foundational truths are distinguished from those that are derived from them. For

understanding of the New Testament basis for the papacy "to that category of teachings that a number of churches will not adopt for themselves, but that can be granted to the sister churches within their framework."¹ As to how the pope could serve the community of churches Cullmann suggests that "for the non-Catholics he would exercise

him, the criterion to determine which truths constitute the apex is not the Bible taken in its entirety, but rather the earliest Christian confessions of faith cited by the authors of the New Testament and "the more developed confessional statements of the church of the first few centuries." Since even from this perspective of a "hierarchy of truths" differences remain between the churches, he suggests Paul's calling to loving consideration for the "weak in faith" as the model for the conduct of the separated churches. Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 22-28; idem, "Einheit in der Vielheit im Lichte der 'Hierarchie der Wahrheiten'," in Glaube im Prozess: Christsein nach dem II. Vatikanum, ed. Elmar Klinger and Klaus Wittstadt (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 356-64; idem, "The Reform of Vatican Council II," 75; idem, "La tâche oecuménique actuelle," 60; idem, "Renouveau biblique et oecuménisme," 122; and idem, "The Council and the Essence of the Gospel," in Challenge . . . and Response: A Protestant Perspective of the Vatican Council, ed. Warren A. Quanbeck, trans. Ernest H. Gordon et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 192. Assuming the existence of theological pluralism in the New Testament itself, Cullmann holds that each church "has concentrated on one aspect of the theology of the New Testament, namely, the one that corresponded to its own charismatic identity." He considers that the concentration on certain theological ideas from the New Testament "is legitimate whenever it is based on a spiritual gift and *does not entail the exclusion of the other truths proclaimed by the New Testament.*" There must be a mutual respect among the churches, for "the different theological ideas in their diversity complete each other to form a superior synthesis." Cullmann, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 355, 356 (italics in the original).

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 56. See also idem, "The Reform of Vatican Council II," 75, 76.

this function on the basis of *jus humanum* (Matt. 16:18 would be only a model for them) and on the basis of the historical role the papacy has played, despite many unworthy popes."¹ On the other hand, for Catholics the pope would remain all that he has meant to the Roman Catholic Church, on the basis of his claim to *jus divinum* (divine right) grounded on the New Testament.²

Though Cullmann is willing to accept a Petrine service on the basis of the model provided by Matt 16:17-19, he rejects the Roman Catholic claim to a *jus divinum* for the papacy, for "there is nothing in the words directed to Peter about successors."³ In view of this

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 57.

²Ibid. Cullmann fears, however, that this proposal "will be met by Protestants and Orthodox with a kind of resistance that will be difficult to overcome," due to an "anti-Roman feeling" which is tied to "the inability of many Protestants to free themselves from a past they have not yet overcome, especially with the regrettable tendency to allow persecution situations from past history to encourage them to continue to cultivate polemical attitudes." Ibid., 58. On the other hand, Cullmann considers it "impossible for the Catholics to give up this one point: in Catholicism the Petrine service (*Petrusdienst*) remains bound to the *jus divinum*." Ibid., 55. Hence he concludes that "there is justifiable fear that it [i.e., this proposal] would be rejected from both the Protestant and Catholic sides." Ibid., 57.

³Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 55. In answer to this observation, Roman Catholics hold that "if the church is to continue in history, these words could not have been limited to the person of Peter," whose function was not "a laying of the foundation as an event which occurs only once," but "a foundational function." Roman Catholic theology finds this "grounded in retrospect by the New Testament on the basis of its later historical experiences." Ibid. Interestingly enough, in this book

silence of the text, the Lutheran theologian considers that the basic problem is: "How is this succession to be determined?"¹ He is well aware of the concession made to a certain degree by recent Roman Catholic theologians, who understand apostolic succession "as determined 'primarily' in terms of content as 'succession in faith,' to which then the sign of the succession of the episcopal office on the basis of ordination as a guarantee of this faith is added in a merely supplementary fashion."² Against this view, nevertheless, Cullmann argues that "it is not evident [from the New Testament text] that this succession occurs only by means of the bishop's office."³ In the specific case of the pope, he insists that the Roman Catholic claim to apostolic succession cannot be exegetically grounded in Matt 16:18, for Jesus' statement is directed to the person of Peter, "but only to him."⁴

In summation, as far as apostolic succession in general is concerned, the Lutheran theologian consistently rejected the Roman Catholic view. Regarding apostolic

the Lutheran theologian shows no particular interest in refuting this argumentation, which sounds like a Roman Catholic answer to Cullmann's contentions put forward in 1952 in his Peter, 218-42.

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 55.

²Ibid., 56. For the Roman Catholic view alluded to by Cullmann, see Fries and Rahner, 99, 100.

³Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 55.

⁴Ibid., 56.

succession to Peter's leadership, Cullmann's initially firm posture against the possibility of such a succession gave way to a moderate and qualified acceptance of the papacy as a continuation of the pattern established in Matt 16:17-19. This shift does not mean that he accepted the Roman Catholic teaching on apostolic succession (particularly on Petrine succession), however closer he may have come to it. In this new approach the pope would not take Peter's place by divine right, and therefore could not claim infallible authority. The question of authority takes even more importance when apostolic succession is considered in connection to the issue of Scripture and tradition.

Apostolic Succession from the Perspective
of Tradition

Closely related to the issue of apostolic succession is the question of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. Here again, Cullmann tackles the issue from the perspective of salvation history, and the solution he offers sheds light on his view of the apostolate and the possibility of its continuance through uninterrupted succession during the time of the church.¹

¹Cullmann's main contribution to this subject is found in La Tradition: Problème exégétique, historique et théologique; English translation: "The Tradition," chap. in The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, 59-99, which basically contains an adapted version of two earlier articles: "Kyrios as Designation for the Oral Tradition Concerning Jesus," 180-97; and

Apostolic Tradition

The New Testament shows two opposing attitudes towards tradition. On the one hand, Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they "hold fast the tradition (*krateite tēn paradōsin*) of men" (Mark 7:8). On the other, Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to "hold to the traditions (*krateite tas paradoseis*) which you were taught by us" (2 Thess 2:15). Given Jesus' unambiguous rejection of the tradition of the elders, Paul's positive stance regarding apostolic tradition requires an explanation.¹

The Author of Apostolic Tradition

Scholars have long debated the meaning of Paul's statement "I received from the Lord" (1 Cor 11:23), particularly in its bearing upon Paul's understanding of the relation between tradition and revelation. Although he leans toward one of the two major interpretations of this statement,² Cullmann considers that neither of them

"Scripture and Tradition," 113-35.

¹When Cullmann refers to apostolic tradition he uses the term "apostolic" in its strict historical sense, not in the Roman Catholic extended sense which includes later ecclesiastical tradition.

²One interpretation maintains that Paul referred here to a direct, immediate revelation from the Lord (as in Gal 1:12). In this case the meaning of the apostle's words is "I received it directly in a vision from the Lord." The other holds that Paul had in mind the transmission of tradition in the church (as in 1 Cor 15:3). Paul's use of the expression "from the Lord" represents a serious challenge to the latter view. Its supporters argue, nevertheless, that the proposition

seems to do full justice to Paul. He in turn submits that the apostle on the one hand is actually speaking here of a tradition handed on by the apostles to the church, a *paradosis*.¹ On the other hand, however, the phrase "from the Lord" (*apo tou kuriou*) points not only to the historical Jesus as the chronological beginning and the first link of the chain of tradition, but also to the risen Lord as the real author of the whole tradition of the apostles.² The Lord Himself is at work in the

"from" (*ἀπό*) points to the ultimate source, to the chronological origin of the chain of tradition. Accordingly, Paul would be simply saying "I received it through a chain of tradition which *begins* with the Lord." With some reservations, Cullmann is inclined to move in this direction. Cullmann, "The Tradition," 60-62 (*italics in the original*); and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 181-83.

¹Cullmann asserts that the early church lived in an atmosphere permeated with the concept of tradition. He sees the correspondence of language between 1 Cor 11:23 (*ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ὁ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν*) and 1 Cor 15:3 (*παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις ὁ καὶ παρέλαβον*) as a confirmation that in the former text Paul refers to a chain of tradition. First Corinthians contains several allusions to traditions about Jesus including words of the Lord (1 Cor 7:10; 9:14), a summary of the Christian faith (1 Cor 15:3), and the narrative of an episode of His life (1 Cor 11:23). Paul must have received these traditions from other apostles. When he went to Jerusalem to meet Cephas (Gal 1:18) it is most likely that his main objective was to learn these traditions. Cullmann, "The Tradition," 63-66; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 184-88.

²Those who take the phrase "from the Lord" to mean that Christ is merely the origin of a chain of tradition argue that Paul did not use here the preposition *παρά*, as is usual with the verb *παραλαμβάνειν*, but *ἀπό*. In reply Cullmann affirms that the difference between *παρά* and *ἀπό* is not fundamental in this case. "If it is said that *ἀπό* indicates only the *direction* of the origin, and not the

transmission of His words and deeds by the apostolic church.¹

In other words, Cullmann suggests that Paul designated the apostolic tradition as *Kurios*, for it is the exalted Lord who now proclaims, through the tradition, what He had taught His disciples during His incarnation on earth.² "Paul can place on the same level the revelation

immediate origin, the same can apply to *παρά*. Besides, there is at least one example in Paul where *ἀπό* unquestionably denotes the *immediate* origin of a communication, Colossians 1.7: 'as you learned from Epaphras' (*ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρά*)." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 67 (*italics in the original*); and *idem*, "Kyrios as Designation," 189.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 62. "In actual fact, then, it is the exalted Christ who is meant, and not the historical Jesus. And yet Paul is not thinking of a special vision nor of the revelation on the road to Damascus, . . . The formula of 1 Corinthians 11.23 refers to the Christ who is present, in that he stands behind the transmission of the tradition, that is, he works in it. The words *ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου* can quite well mean a direct communication from the Lord, without it being necessary to think of a vision or to exclude intermediaries through whom the Lord himself transmits the *paradosis*." *Ibid.*, 67, 68 (*italics in the original*); see also *idem*, "Kyrios as Designation," 189. This view, which is entirely shared by Congar (see Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 11-13), seems to allow a continuation of Christ's direct activity in the transmission of *paradosis*. Thus, commenting on this passage Chrysostom stated that "even today also it is He who doeth all, and delivereth it even as then." Chrysostom, Homilies on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians 27.5 (NPNF, 12:161). Cullmann rejects this extension arguing that the Pauline text does not justify the attribution to the Lord of all later traditions. Cullmann, "The Tradition," 62.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 66, 68. See also *idem*, Salvation in History, 105, 106. The English translation of La Tradition omitted part of a footnote where Cullmann distinguishes between "objective" and "subjective" revelation. The former is the person and

on the road to Damascus and the apostolic tradition he has received, because in both Christ is directly at work."¹

The Agents of Apostolic Tradition

Yet, Cullmann maintains that Christ's *paradosis* distinguishes itself from the rabbinic principle of tradition in two ways. First, the mediator of the tradition is not a rabbi, but an apostle. Second, "the principle of succession does not work mechanically as with the rabbis, but is bound to the Holy Spirit."²

work of the incarnate Christ. The latter, "la révélation subjective, par les instruments humains, a lieu dans un processus de transmission, de tradition, à la fois du temps des apôtres et du temps de l'Église apostolique." Idem, La Tradition, 14, n. 1; cf. with "The Tradition," 62. In this way he includes both tradition and revelation (in the "subjective" sense) in the apostles' role of bearers of divine revelation.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 69. Many scholars perceive a contradiction between Paul's emphasis on the divine origin of his gospel which he received directly from God, and those passages where he mentioned traditions which he received through human mediation. In general terms, they attempt to solve this apparent contradiction by distinguishing between historical facts, which Paul received from other apostles, and their theological interpretation, granted to Paul by a direct *apokalypsis*. Cullmann thinks that actually Paul did not discriminate between facts and interpretation, but rather attributed both to the *παράδοσις* of Christ. Ibid., 66, 67, 72; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 188, 189, 194.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 72; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 194.

From Cullmann's perspective the apostolate plays a unique role in the transmission of tradition.¹ Unlike the Jewish teacher, the apostle is a direct witness of the risen Christ. He stands in a unique position because he has received a direct revelation from the Lord, and, if he belongs to the Twelve, he also accompanied the incarnated Savior during His earthly ministry.²

In addition, Cullmann perceives a reciprocal dependence of the apostles to bear their witness. No single apostle is able, as a direct eyewitness, to transmit information about *all* the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. Each one must rely on the testimony of the other apostles. Likewise, each one has to pass on to the others what had been revealed to him. Thus, concludes Cullmann, "only the entire *paradosis*, to which all the apostles contribute, constitutes the *paradosis* of Christ."³

¹"It is no accident that in the very key-passages for the *paradosis* of Christ, above all Galatians 1.12 and 1 Corinthians 15.3 f., the apostolate is always dealt with at the same time." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 73; see also idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 195, 196.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 72; and idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 194.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 72, 73; see also idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 195. "The apostles compare their testimonies; for the richness of the revelation demands a plurality of apostolic testimonies, as it demands a plurality of written Gospels, and they transmit to one another their unique apostolic testimonies." Idem, "The Tradition," 79; see also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 117.

To transmit the *Kurios* tradition, the apostles depend on the gift and ministry of the Holy Spirit, which according to Cullmann has two implications. To begin with, the apostle cannot pass on tradition through an automatic chain of succession. That was the way the rabbis handed on their tradition, which, for that reason, was only "tradition of men" (Mark 7:8). In contrast the apostle depends on the Holy Spirit and the Lord's call to enable him to transmit tradition. Moreover, since the *Kurios* is the *Pneuma* (2 Cor 3:17) the apostle's function regarding tradition can be traced back ultimately to the Lord Himself. This is why he concludes that "there is no antithesis between apostolic tradition and direct revelation."¹

Apostolic Succession and Apostolic Tradition

For Cullmann there is an intimate relationship between the issue of apostolic succession and the relationship between Scripture and tradition. Each implies the other, and the answer given to one will determine the outcome of the other.² He personally

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 74; see also idem, "Kyrios as Designation," 197.

²It is not surprising that the discussion raised by Cullmann's book *Peter* issued in a debate on the relation between Scripture and tradition (see Jean Daniélou, "Réponse à Oscar Cullmann," *Dieu* 24 (1953): 107-16). In that context Cullmann believes that his works *Peter* and "The Tradition" complement each other. Cullmann, "The Tradition," 57.

perceives the relation between Scripture and tradition as the relation between what he calls apostolic tradition (i.e., tradition originated in the Lord and transmitted by the apostles) and ecclesiastical tradition (i.e., tradition originated in and transmitted by the post-apostolic church as an interpretation and development of apostolic tradition).¹

In essence this brings us back to the theological relationship between the apostolic period and the time of the church,² and raises the question as to which means of transmitting the apostolic tradition is to be regarded as genuine. Given its direct connection with the issue of

¹Regarding the divergence between Cullmann's and Congar's views on tradition, the latter holds that the root of the discrepancy lies in the concept of tradition itself. In Congar's opinion, Cullmann's idea of tradition is too exclusively intellectual (Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 153), whereas he sees tradition encompassing the very substance of the Christian faith, the whole realities of Christianity, above what the apostles have explicitly committed to writing. See pp. 145-52 above.

²As mentioned earlier (see pp. 214-22 above), after its central climactic moment salvation history still continues through the history of the church, but the time of the church is just an intermediate interval which, like any other epoch in salvation history, has to remain always subordinated to the time of the incarnation. "The period of the church, then, is a prolongation of the central period, but it is not the central period." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 77; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 115. Cullmann agrees with Roman Catholic theologians in the recognition "that the divine history of salvation continues to be unfolded in many facts of postbiblical history to our day, but the difference . . . consists in this: for us, this postbiblical history is not *normative*, only biblical history is that." Idem, "Between Two Sessions of the Council," 34 (*italics in the original*).

apostolic succession, this question deserves further attention.

Apostolic Succession or Scripture

There are, indeed, different views regarding the way in which apostolic tradition, the irreplaceable witness of the apostles, can reach the believers in all ages after the death of the apostles. Roman Catholics hold that by apostolic succession the infallible magisterium of the church transmits and explains apostolic tradition. "But is the *uniqueness* of the apostolate guaranteed in that way?" asks Cullmann.¹ It is obvious for him that this position, which amounts to co-ordinate apostolic tradition with ecclesiastical tradition, overlooks the uniqueness of the apostolate. Since the apostles were called by Christ without intermediaries-- "outside the succession of a tradition"²--should not their witness likewise reach the believers without the intermediacy of mediators?

If so, how then does the unique testimony of the apostles reach us today? Cullmann sees the answer in Christ's high-priestly prayer which establishes a specific

¹"Mais l'*unicité* de l'apostolat est-elle garantie de la sorte?" Cullmann, *La Tradition*, 34 (translation mine, mistranslated in *idem*, "The Tradition," 80; italics in the original).

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78; see also *idem*, "Scripture and Tradition," 116, 117.

line: Christ → apostles → post-apostolic church. Future members of the church are described in this prayer as those who believe because of the word of the apostles (John 17:20). The apostle, who as bearer of direct revelation cannot have any successor, must continue himself to fulfill his function in the church today. "In the Church, not *by* the Church, but *by his word*, *διὰ τοῦ λόγου* (John 17:20), in other words, *by his writings*."¹

The uniqueness of the apostles' testimony is preserved and safeguarded by their writings, which ensure the direct transmission of the revelation of God in Christ to the believers in all epochs. By putting it into written form, the apostles reduced to a minimum the danger of deformation of the gospel by human elements. Cullmann holds that the church ought to respect God's plan by reserving only to the apostolate the prerogative to communicate to the believers in all ages the divine

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 80 (italics in the original); see also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 118. This solution is quite similar to the one Cullmann already suggested to the problem of the continuation of Peter's role as rock or foundation of the church. Idem, *Peter*, 225. See pp. 241-43 above. This position is consistently maintained by Cullmann even in his most recent publications. In a 1990 essay he affirms that "when the first generation disappeared, the eyewitnesses survived among subsequent generations through *their writings*, and thanks to these *writings*, Christians continued, and continue still today, to have the same experience as that of the first generations." Idem, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 352 (italics in the original).

revelation through their writings.¹ The very presence of the apostles in the church is given to us not in the person and teachings of any alleged successors but rather in the New Testament Scriptures.²

To the Roman Catholic objection that an inert book cannot confront us with the living Christ, but that the magisterium in succession to the apostles fulfills this task, Cullmann, as just mentioned,³ responds that the *Kurios* Christ is present in the tradition of the apostles, both in its oral and in its written form.⁴ Through the

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 80, 81; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 118, 119.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 82; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 120. As K. Barth holds it, "the apostolic succession of the Church must mean that it is guided by the Canon, that is, by the prophetic and apostolic word . . . fixed in writing." Barth, Church Dogmatics, I, 1:104. Sharing a similar view, E. Schweizer writes that "the apostle lives on in the form of the New Testament in the Church of today." Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, § 26, c. Likewise, H. von Campenhausen holds that the New Testament "became the real heir of the apostles' authority." Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority, 23, 24. See also Hughes, "Is There an Apostolic Succession?" 8; Daniel Jenkins, The Gift of Ministry (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 52, 53; Menoud, L'Eglise et les ministères, 53; and Morris, Ministers of God, 48.

³See pp. 261-64 above.

⁴Cullmann considers that, besides Scripture, the apostles' tradition was preserved in the apostles' creed. In his view, "the rule of faith, though transmitted in oral form, was accepted as a norm alongside scripture only because it was considered as having been *fixed by the apostles*." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 88 (italics in the original); idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 125, 126. "The important thing is the *principle* of an apostolic creed," since he recognizes that "of course, the Apostles'

apostles' writings the Holy Spirit brings the believing reader face to face with Christ.¹

Cullmann's stance against successors to the apostles does not mean that the work of the Holy Spirit was circumscribed to the apostles alone. On the contrary, the New Testament clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit, who prior to Pentecost had been reserved to certain

Creed and even the old Roman symbol from which it grew did not exist in the apostolic age." Idem, "The Tradition," 94, 95 (*italics in the original*). On this basis, J. Daniélou has accused Cullmann of indeed accepting the normative value of non-written tradition alongside Scripture. He argues, "mais du coup n'est-ce pas admettre une autre norme que la seule Écriture?" Moreover, since the rule of faith "représente sans doute déjà un développement dogmatique par rapport au Nouveau Testament, . . . il est difficile de maintenir son caractère apostolique" strictly speaking. Daniélou concludes that "si Cullmann admet la valeur normative du Symbole des Apôtres, même au cas où son caractère apostolique est exclu, il reconnaît implicitement la valeur normative de la Tradition dans sa substance." Daniélou, "Réponse à Oscar Cullmann," 115, 116. See also Pierre Benoit, review of La Tradition: Problème exégétique, historique et théologique, by Oscar Cullmann, in RB 62 (1955): 260-62.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 81. The writings of the eyewitness of the Christ event are "special means of grace granted to humans by God to transmit to all future generations the good news of the revelation in Christ, so that Jesus Christ might be present among them as he was present among the apostles. Thus the writings are not 'dead letters,' as some have said, but sources of life continuing to spring forth eternally." Idem, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 353 (*italics in the original*). "Why is scripture not a dead letter, but a source of life in which Christ is present? Because, on the one hand, the *Kyrios* speaks directly through it . . . ; and, on the other, the actualization of the revelation, in spite of our human imperfection and the possibility of errors in interpretation, is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. . . . The *Kyrios* is present in scripture, and the Holy Spirit is present in the reader who has faith." Idem, "The Tradition," 99.

individuals, became available to the whole community of believers.¹ In the post-apostolic church the Holy Spirit continues guiding God's people into all truth.

"Inspiration through the Holy Spirit" is still present in the church. But the church will examine and evaluate every later working of the Spirit in the light of the criterion and norm provided by the apostolic witness as recorded in Scripture.²

¹Cullmann maintains that Christ is present in the sacraments through the Spirit. See Cullmann, Early Christian Worship, 116-19. On this basis, Daniélou ("Réponse à Oscar Cullmann," 114) accused Cullmann of being untrue to his own position, since on the one hand he acknowledges the present activity of the Lord in the sacraments, while on the other he denies the divine activity in the teaching office of the church. For Cullmann, Daniélou's criticism is groundless since the sacraments and the magisterium belong to different spheres. The sacraments are an actualization of the work of Christ, in exactly the same way as in the time of the apostles who observed them as we do. On the other hand, a fundamental difference exists between the apostles and post-apostolic church officers. Cullmann, "The Tradition," 83. As J. Frisque remarks, Daniélou's objection "est sans valeur, car il n'est pas possible de placer sur le même plan sacrements et magistère infaillible." Frisque, 160.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 82-84. See also idem, "La tâche oecuménique de la faculté," 350. In "Scripture and Tradition," 120, Cullmann had written that "there will still be revelation" in the post-apostolic church. Later he omits this short sentence in La Tradition, 37, to avoid misunderstandings, explaining in a footnote that in this expression the word "revelation" was used in the sense of "inspiration." Unfortunately the English version of La Tradition, translated by A. J. B. Higgins, fails to show the distinction that Cullmann made between the two terms. In at least three instances the translator has substituted "revelation" for "inspiration," giving to the English reader the wrong impression that Cullmann used both words interchangeably. Cf. idem, La Tradition, 37, 38, and 45 with idem, "The Tradition," 83, 84, and 91. Cullmann's

Nor may the fact that Scripture needs to be interpreted justify the claim proffered by the magisterium of the church to exercise an infallible authority. Cullmann points out that whenever, throughout the centuries, the ecclesiastical interpretation assumes the same normative value as the apostolic norm itself the apostolate is devalued and loses its uniqueness. This confusion between the time of the apostles and the period of the church has nothing in common with the biblical view of salvation history, which perceives a tension between the Holy Spirit's work and the operation of antagonistic spirits during the time of the church. This tension, explains the Lutheran theologian, "hinders us . . . from binding the Holy Spirit to an infallible teacher."¹

view of "inspiration" has been characterized as "étroite et inexacte" by P. Benoit, for whom "l'inspiration est un charisme très riche et de portée analogique, dont l'inspiration scripturaire n'est qu'un cas particulier, et qui n'est pas le plus élevé." He argues that the Holy Spirit continues inspiring the church, particularly "les chefs appelés par Dieu à construire cette Église." Benoit, review of La Tradition, 263.

¹Cullmann, "Between Two Sessions of the Council," 35, 36. It should be noticed that Cullmann does not reject ecclesiastical tradition considered as an interpretation of Scripture. His contention is rather aimed against attributing to that interpretation a standing equal to that of the Scriptures. He is aware of the danger of false interpretations of Scripture on the part of believers. "But if we set between scripture and ourselves as a norm the total collection of official interpretations given in all past centuries by the Church, then errors which are insignificant, when considered singly, are increased by virtue of a development which no tradition transmitted by men who are not eye-witnesses can escape." Idem, "The Tradition," 85, 86; see also *ibid.*,

He rather sees the Spirit in correlation with the Bible, for "the Holy Spirit interprets scripture, but is at the same time controlled by it,"¹ since Scripture is "a superior norm destined to control the present action of the Holy Spirit in the domain of truth."² Hence, "no infallible teaching office . . . can take a place equal to the apostles' once-for-all eyewitness to the decisive events of Christ's death and resurrection in the Bible--not even as the interpretation of the Bible."³ The apostles alone, not alleged successors, remain normative for the church of all ages through their writings gathered in the New Testament.

97; idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 123, 134; and idem, "Die kritische Rolle der Heiligen Schrift," in Die Autorität der Freiheit: Gegenwart des Konzils und Zukunft der Kirche im ökumenischen Disput, ed. Johann Christoph Hampe (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1967), 1:194-96. Cullmann thinks that his view of the Kyrios as present Himself in the apostolic tradition adds relevance to the Reformers' principle: *scriptura sui ipsius interpres*. Idem, "The Tradition," 85.

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 87.

²Scripture is "une norme supérieure destinée à contrôler l'action présente du Saint-Esprit dans le domaine de la vérité." Cullmann, La Tradition, 37 (translation mine; the English translation ["The Tradition," 83] missed the point; italics in the original).

³Cullmann, Salvation in History, 303.

Apostolic Succession, Tradition
and Scripture

The priority of Scripture over tradition preserved by apostolic succession becomes evident when one considers the establishing of the New Testament canon. A study of the history of the early church shows how the need for an authoritative norm was increasingly felt from the very beginning. Cullmann contends that the apostles themselves, and later the church of the second century, took measures to establish the apostolic Scriptures as such a norm, superior to the authority of bishops in succession to the apostles, and to that of the emerging church tradition.¹

No one will deny that the oral tradition of the apostles chronologically preceded their writings (2 Thess 2:15) and was quantitatively richer than the written apostolic tradition. But it is of utmost importance to correctly appreciate the fact that the apostles gave to this tradition a written form, thus setting the limits of genuine oral apostolic tradition, and making the written apostolic witness the definitive norm for the church.²

After the passing away of the apostles it became evident that the so-called oral apostolic tradition might

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 87-89; idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 124-26; idem, Christ and Time, 170, 171.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 87, 88; and idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 124, 125.

not in all instances be considered genuinely apostolic. As evidence, Cullmann mentions, for instance, the legendary character of the oral traditions about the Lord gathered by Papias (ca. 60-130), as well as those recorded in the numerous apocryphal Gospels.¹ For him it is apparent that

the tradition, in the Church, no longer offered any guarantee of truth, even when it claimed a chain of succession. For all these traditions were justified by a chain of transmission reaching back to the apostles. . . . The teaching-office of the Church in itself did not suffice to preserve the purity of the gospel.²

The failure of the church and of her leaders, even in succession to the apostles, to preserve in oral form and without distortions the apostolic tradition made it necessary to recognize the apostolic writings as the sole and sufficient³ norm to evaluate all other expressions of the gospel. It was in this context that by the middle of the second century the church began to establish the

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 89; idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 126; idem, Christ and Time, 170; and idem, "Die kritische Rolle der Heiligen Schrift," 1:192.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 90. See also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 127.

³"To say that the writings brought together in a canon should be regarded as a *norm* was to say that they should be regarded as *sufficient*." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 90, 91 (italics in the original); see also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 128.

principle of the canon of Scripture.¹ By so doing, explains Cullmann, the church herself traced a clear line of separation between the time of the apostles and that of the church, between the *foundation* laid down by the apostles as eyewitnesses² and the subsequent *building* of the church by bishops, between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition.³

While it indicated the end of the process of revelation,⁴ Cullmann affirms, the establishing of the

¹Cullmann is aware that the canon itself was definitively established much later. For that reason he refers here to the *principle*, not the fixation, of the canon.

²"No one can understand the origin of the canon without taking this New Testament idea of eyewitness into account. The discussion between Catholics and Protestants on Scripture and tradition suffers from the fact that the full significance of the fact that the idea of a canon is founded on the concept of the apostles' eyewitness is not recognized." Cullmann, Salvation in History, 296. See also idem, "Die kritische Rolle der Heiligen Schrift," 1:193.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 78, 79, 89. See also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 117, 126; and idem, "The Bible in the Council," 131-33.

⁴With the incarnation, which chronologically included the lives of its eyewitnesses, all salvation history found its climax, and the revelation of the divine saving plan was concluded. The New Testament canon indicates the end of the process of revelation. Cullmann, Salvation in History, 294-96. Idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 41. As mentioned earlier (see pp. 186-88 above), in Cullmann's view the process of revelation includes not only events but also their interpretation provided by the eyewitnesses of those events. "The interpretation that came with the setting up of the canon in itself marks the *end of all the preceding history of interpretation*." The canonical Scriptures constitute the "*total interpretation* which concludes the

canon was not intended to prevent the rise of later church tradition. Still, all subsequent tradition would have to be submitted to the superior criterion of the apostolic tradition, codified in the Holy Scriptures.¹

Nor did the recognition of the New Testament canon deprive the church from a magisterium.² She essentially

whole process of interpretation." Idem, Salvation in History, 296 (italics in the original).

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 90. See also idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 127, 128; and idem, Christ and Time, 171. By the decision to establish the canon "the church recognized that *from that time* the tradition was no longer a criterion of truth." Idem, "The Tradition," 90 (italics in the original). "If the fixing of the canon had been carried out by the Church on the tacit assumption that its teaching-office, that is, the *subsequent traditions*, should be set along-side this canon with an *equal normative authority*, the reason for the creation of the canon would be unintelligible. If after as well as before its creation the teaching-office of the Church continued to be a *supreme norm* of equal value, the Church could on its own authority alone always judge afresh as a last resort on the conformity of the teaching of its scholars with the apostolic tradition. In this case the fixing of a canon would have been superfluous." Idem, "The Tradition," 92 (italics in the original).

²It is helpful to keep in mind that Cullmann acknowledges the relative authority of the church's magisterium, but not on the basis of apostolic succession. Thus, in a 1968 essay he recognized that the second-century church overcame the danger of distortions of the gospel by establishing three lines of defense: the New Testament canon, the creed, and the ecclesiastical ministry. In relation to the latter he unfortunately did not discuss the claim to apostolic succession as one of its alleged authenticating elements. Interestingly enough, while he affirms that the church still possesses, from that time on, these three means to protect her charisms from deformations, in his opinion only two of them, namely the canon and the creed, are the *norms* to judge any development. Cullmann, "La tâche oecuménique actuelle," 56, 57.

recognized the fact that her magisterium was not the supreme doctrinal authority,¹ and gave this teaching-office its exact character. Its efficacy and authority comes precisely from its submission to the apostolic writings contained in the canon of Scripture.²

During apostolic times the eyewitnesses of divine revelation, those who confessed the Christian faith, and the teaching ministry were one and the same people, namely

¹Roman Catholics insist that it was the church that established the canon, and that she continues to hold the authority she exerted by that act. The creation of the canon, therefore, did not mean a shift of authority from the living church to the written Word. See Daniélou, "Réponse à Oscar Cullmann," 109. Cullmann, however, does not refer to transference of authority from the church to Scripture, because, he argues, "in actual fact, there was no doctrinal authority properly so called in the period before the canon was fixed. The proof of this is the spate of apocryphal traditions, all of which sprang up within the Church itself." Cullmann, "The Tradition," 91. Apostolic writings were not declared canonical in virtue of the authority of the church but they rather "*forced themselves on the Church by their intrinsic apostolic authority, as they do still, because the Kyrios Christ speaks in them.*" Ibid., (italics in the original). As late as 1990 Cullmann contended that "our 27 books of the New Testament asserted themselves . . . as elements of the *incarnation*, as the only authentic witness from the apostolic period." Cullmann, "Pluralism and Unity in the New Testament," 353 (italics in the original).

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 91; idem, "Scripture and Tradition," 128; idem, "The New Direction: Divine Revelation and the Virgin Mary," chap. in Vatican Council II: The New Direction, trans. Carl Schneider (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 49; and idem, "The Bible in the Council," 134. "We might even go so far as to say, paradoxically, that the teaching-office of the Church at least approaches real infallibility in so far as, through submission to the canon, it abandons all *claim* to infallibility." Idem, "The Tradition," 92 (italics in the original).

the apostles. Thus, Cullmann asserts that during the apostolic age tradition, Scripture, and the teaching office were intermingled and on the same level. After the formation of the canon, the eyewitnesses and those who confess and teach the Christian faith are no longer the same, since the eyewitnesses can hardly have successors. Hence "the postapostolic tradition and the postapostolic teaching office are subject to the norm of the apostolic tradition fixed henceforth in Scripture."¹

In synthesis, in the discussion of the relationship between apostolic succession, Scripture, and tradition,² Cullmann concludes that the unique testimony of the apostles to divine revelation preserved in Scripture, which testimony is the foundation of the church, must be regarded as the supreme authority over tradition and apostolic succession, which belong to the work of building the church. After the Second Vatican Council, in an attempt to maintain a balanced view of the three elements, the Lutheran theologian suggested to "replace the formula, 'Scripture alone', by the formula,

¹Cullmann, "The New Direction: Divine Revelation," 47, 48. See also idem, "Renouveau biblique et oecuménisme," 119, 120; and idem, "Die kritische Rolle der Heiligen Schrift," 1:193.

²Cullmann consistently emphasized the close relationship that exists between these three elements, namely apostolic succession, Scripture, and tradition. Cullmann, "The Tradition," 57; idem, "Between Two Sessions of the Council," 33.

'Scripture, tradition, and magisterium, but the Scripture as sole superior norm.'¹

Conclusion

The centuries-long debate between the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church on the issue of apostolic succession received new impetus with the work of Oscar Cullmann. By considering the problem from the biblical perspective of salvation history, he was able to restate it in a way which contributed to a more informative understanding of the Protestant position. Thus, while emphasizing the uniqueness of the apostolate as part of the time of the incarnation, this approach also explained the continuation of the apostles' witness in the church through their writings. At the same time, this new perspective provided common ground for dialogue with Roman Catholic theologians, who were pleased by Cullmann's recognition of the continuation of salvation history during the time of the church.²

¹Cullmann, "The Bible in the Council," 135. In Cullmann's opinion, the ecumenical dialogue will progress if Protestants "can recognize the value of the living tradition in the postapostolic church and the value of the teaching office," and if Roman Catholics acknowledge "Scripture as a superior norm in relation to the Church." It is in this context that he suggests the new "formula." Idem, "The New Direction: Divine Revelation," 50. See also idem, "Die kritische Rolle der Heiligen Schrift," 1:197.

²With evident satisfaction Congar wrote that Cullmann had "restored reality to the 'time' of the Church, to the period of her duration, and thus to the

Within this framework, which conversely to Roman Catholic theology does not allow for a "transcendence"¹ of certain events above history,² Cullmann unequivocally rejected the possibility of succession to the apostles' function in the church.³ The Lutheran theologian

Church herself," ideas which "are central to the whole doctrine of the Church." Congar, The Revelation of God, 112, 113. He regrets, however, that by applying this view of salvation history to Matt 16:17-19, Cullmann set "une nouvelle manière de récuser les conséquences ecclésiologiques que les catholiques tirent du texte." Idem, L'Église une, 229, n. 5.

¹Roman Catholics postulate a transcendence of the incarnation and the apostolate over and above time and history. Thus, maintaining that the incarnation and salvation belong to a "metahistoric order," (Congar, Vraie et fausse réforme, 411, n. 193), Congar affirmed that the incarnation and the apostolate have a dynamic value, not only for the history of the church, as if they were acting from a disconnected and remote past, but in this history *through an active and living presence*. With other Roman Catholic theologians, he criticized Cullmann for accepting only a chronological dimension in salvation history, eliminating all transcendence above time. Idem, "Du nouveau," 37. See also Frisque, 206-53; and Arrieta, La Iglesia del Intervalo, 173-75.

²As T. M. Dorman explains, "for Cullmann the biblical events are not open to transcendence in and of themselves, but they do witness to God's transcendent Being when viewed in connection with God's saving activity in Jesus Christ, which in turn must be seen in the context of biblical eschatology's time-line. To emphasize 'transcendence' at the expense of the time-line is to sacrifice a valid historical dualism (this age/age to come) for a 'Greek,' cosmological dualism (history/transcendence) which is constantly tempted to impose 'transcendent' ideas upon the biblical Heilgeschichte, rather than to submit our ideas about God's transcendence to His revelation in biblical history." Dorman, 175 (emphasis in the original).

³In the words of G. C. Berkouwer, "Oscar Cullmann has performed a noteworthy service in showing that the *once-for-allness* of the 'salvation time' that broke into

categorically affirmed that he assumed this position neither because of "stubbornness on our part"¹ nor out of confessional prejudice, but on the basis of "the Primitive Christian apostolic concept," intimately related to the biblical view of salvation history.² By the same token, even though he identified the rock with Peter (Matt 16:18), he argued that the foundation can be laid down only once, explicitly denying, until the early 1960s, the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic claim that the pope is the successor of Peter.

While still holding to his negative position regarding apostolic succession in general, in more recent years Cullmann increasingly tended to a more approving stance in the particular case of succession to Peter's primacy in the church. This change, already hinted at in

the world with Christ gives to the apostles, as eye-witnesses of that time, a unique position." Berkouwer, The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism, 166.

¹Cullmann, "Between Two Sessions of the Council," 33.

²Cullmann, Peter, 226. Though unable to follow him in all his conclusions, a number of Roman Catholic theologians have recognized Cullmann's intellectual loyalty and scientific objectivity. Thus, P. Benoit writes about Cullmann's "parfaite loyauté scientifique mise au service d'une recherche ardente de la vérité." Benoit, review of Saint Pierre, 579. On his part, E. L. Allen refers to Cullmann's "scrupulous avoidance of the intrusion of confessional considerations," as "an example of scholarship at its best." Allen, "On This Rock," 59. See also G. Dejaifve, "M. Cullmann et la question de Pierre," NRT 75 (1953): 365; Gniska, 137; and Botte, 141.

the mid-1960s,¹ is tied to Cullmann's willingness to acknowledge the papacy as one of the charisms of the Roman Catholic Church. In this context, he went so far as to suggest the possibility that the pope, exercising "a purified Petrine service" (*Petrusdienst*), could be the leader of the community of churches to be established. Still, for Cullmann the papal office remains a matter of *jus humanum* since in his view the New Testament (particularly Matt 16:18-19) provides only a model or example, but says nothing about the mode of succession to Peter's primacy in the church.

Several factors seem to have contributed to Cullmann's shift regarding the pope as possible successor to Peter's primacy in the church. Because the first evidences of the shift appeared toward the end of the Second Vatican Council, it seems probable that Cullmann's personal experience as a Protestant observer of the council encouraged his theological change, which was more fully manifested in his later writings. Undoubtedly his growing ecumenical concerns for communion between separated churches played a significant role prompting him to accept the need for a unifying ministry in succession

¹One wonders whether some awareness of Cullmann's shift is reflected in the following comment that Jean Guitton ascribes to Pope Paul VI: "You have remarked that for this author [i.e., Oscar Cullmann] Peter's office dies with Peter. Perhaps. I do not know. One would have to ask him about this, know what is now the state of his inquiry, what is his perspective." Guitton, 190.

to Peter's. This acceptance was facilitated by Cullmann's understanding of "unity through diversity," which, in conjunction with his concept of a hierarchy of truths, entails the coexistence of explicit doctrinal discrepancies between confessions. On the other hand, it is based on this very understanding that he does not regard his emphasis on the uniqueness of the apostolate and his rejection of the Roman Catholic view on apostolic succession as an insurmountable hindrance to the convergence of Christian churches.

The fact that Cullmann adopted a more accommodating stance regarding the particular case of succession to Peter does not mean that he renounced the basic Protestant presuppositions. The Scriptures as the supreme authority *vis-à-vis* the church and her magisterium remain the non-negotiable foundation of his theology, even in his later writings. Thus, his refusal to accept the doctrine of apostolic succession is consistently based on the complete lack of Scriptural support for that particular teaching. Also constant in his writings is the definition of the apostles as eyewitnesses of the Christ event, belonging to the time of the incarnation as the foundation of the church, thus fulfilling a unique function in salvation history. From this starting point, which remained unchanged throughout his career, he

maintained the impossibility of succession to the apostolate.

Still, it is not always easy to harmonize these principles with Cullmann's later concessions regarding Petrine succession in the church. In view of some of his recent statements one is bound to wonder whether he has gone too far for the sake of unity. Granted, he refuses to go all the way through with Roman Catholic theology as to the New Testament basis for the Roman Pontiff's claim of divine right to succeed Peter. Yet, he seems to go beyond the New Testament evidence when he affirms that "one can and should derive a model for an office for the unity of the church from Matt 16:18-19."¹

Cullmann's view on apostolic succession presented in Peter (1952) has been characterized as a dialectic of closeness to and distance from the Roman Catholic position, "pleasing and annoying Catholics and Protestants by turn."² Subsequent developments in his thought

¹Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 56.

²Vincent, 120. The acceptance of Peter's primacy based on a divine mandate seems to place Cullmann in a rather unusual position. As B. C. Butler asserts it, "you might say that he [Cullmann] is a Catholic in his view of the most primitive Church, but a Protestant (with some qualifications of that comprehensive word) as regards all post-apostolic times." Butler, "St. Peter: History and Theology," 518. J. F. McConnell characterized Cullmann's Peter as "a somewhat ambiguous sign of our highly ambiguous times." John F. McConnell, review of Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, 2d ed., by Oscar Cullmann, in CBO 24 (1962): 456. See also Fröhlich, 37, 38.

outlined in this chapter seem to confirm this as a fair description of his stance on apostolic succession.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION: A STUDY IN CONTRAST

The investigation of Congar's and Cullmann's views on apostolic succession set forth in the preceding chapters has provided enough elements to perceive similarities and differences between both theologians. The time has come to set forth, compare, and evaluate them. This inquiry has also made way for a clearer understanding of the assumptions at the foundation of the concept of apostolic succession held by each of these two authors, not to mention their methodology. This in turn should allow us to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

The aim of the present chapter is to present a comparative and evaluative analysis of Congar's and Cullmann's views on apostolic succession. For the sake of clarity, though on a somewhat artificial basis given their respective points of departure as will be noticed later on,¹ I show first the contrast between these authors' views of the apostolate and of apostolic succession, within the framework of their general theological systems.

¹See p. 344 below.

In the second part I evaluate their views as to their inner consistency and their use of the sources including Scripture. Due to the correlation between these authors' views on apostolic succession and their overall theological perspectives, my comparative analysis is not possible without a certain number of repetitions.

Congar's and Cullmann's Views in Contrast

From what we have seen thus far, there seems to be a clear relationship between the concept of apostle adopted by Congar and Cullmann and their respective views on apostolic succession. Their answers to the question of succession seem determined, to quite an extent, by their notions of apostleship. At the same time, however, their concepts of apostle, and their postures on succession resulting from them, are closely intertwined with various theological concepts and perspectives which are essential components of their systems.

Apostolic Succession to the Apostles in General

Though at first sight these theologians' respective concepts of the apostolate seem quite similar, a closer examination shows that each, in fact, defines "apostle" in a different way. This is due, in part, to the speculative dimension that continues to characterize the contemporary debate on the concept of apostle, as exemplified, for instance, by the on-going discussions on

the relationship between the Christian *apostolos* and the Jewish *šālīaḥ*, which both Congar and Cullmann mention not only in their attempts to explain their understanding of apostle, but also to support their views on apostolic succession.¹ While steady historical research has tended to reconcile these kinds of divergences,² other differences, at the deeper level of basic theological perspectives and presuppositions, continue to underlie these authors' notion of apostle.

Apostles: Definition and Functions

In Congar's view, the apostles were basically Christ's representatives in the church, the continuators of His mission, sent as the Father had sent Him into the world (John 20:21). Hence, for the Dominican theologian the apostles were Christ's vicars, exercising a power of proxy during His physical absence, participating in His prophetic, priestly, and kingly prerogatives. On his part, Cullmann defines the apostles as those eyewitnesses

¹Though both theologians mention the *šālīaḥ*, they emphasize different aspects of this juridical institution. Arguing in favor of apostolic succession, Congar recalls the principle of identity of mission contained in the *šālīaḥ*, concluding that the apostles' mission and powers are perpetuated through their successors. See p. 87 above. On the other hand, Cullmann underlines that the apostle, like the *šālīaḥ*, cannot transmit to others his unique mission. See pp. 184, 228 above.

²See Kirk, "Apostleship Since Rengstorf," 249-64; Everett Ferguson, "Apostle," Encyclopedia of Early Christianity (1990), 72; and Clark, "Apostleship," 344-82.

of Christ's resurrection who received a special commission directly from the Lord. They were called to bear witness to the risen Christ, becoming not only missionaries, but also and foremost the foundation of the church. This basic divergence between Congar's and Cullmann's understanding of the apostolate becomes more obvious when one compares their respective views of the apostles' essential function in the church.¹

From the beginning of his career, the Dominican theologian affirmed that the apostles received certain charisms and sacramental powers from Christ, enabling them to fulfill a triple function--doctrinal, priestly and pastoral--in the church. Later he added that, as eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection, they were also the foundation of the church having received to that effect the special charisms of revelation and inspiration. Congar did not elaborate much on the foundational function of the apostles and the charisms attached to it. Conversely, he showed special interest in the threefold ministerial role of the apostles and the powers and authority they exercised in that capacity.²

¹See pp. 88-90 and 185-89 above.

²In Congar's view the fact that Christ gave certain powers to the apostles is indicated in Luke 9:1ff.; Matt 16:17-19; 18:18; 28:18-20; Luke 22:19; and John 20:21-23. See p. 90 above.

In Cullmann's view the apostles' basic function was to be personal eyewitnesses to the incarnate Lord. Since the Christ event--comprising His life, death, and resurrection--was the climaxing revelation ever granted to human beings, the essential function of the apostles was to be bearers of direct revelation. By virtue of their divine commission the apostles constituted the foundation of the church. Though he acknowledges that the apostles were leaders in the early church, Cullmann does not consider leadership nor pastoral ministry to be part of the apostles' basic function, which consisted essentially of bearing direct revelation.¹

Thus, the basic difference between Congar's and Cullmann's concept of apostle seems to arise from the scope which they assign to the apostles' essential functions. While agreeing that the apostles' unique role was the founding of the church through the charisms of revelation and inspiration inseparably connected to the fact that they were eyewitnesses to Christ, they disagree on whether the apostles' primary function was restricted to this dimension (Cullmann) or included doctrinal, priestly, and institutional functions inherent to their

¹See pp. 187-89 above. Cullmann's view on the particular case of Peter's leadership going back to a commission of Jesus Christ is considered later on. See pp. 299-303 below.

apostolate (Congar). This divergent understanding directly impinges on their views on apostolic succession.

Apostles and Apostolic Succession

The analysis presented so far shows the close correlation between Congar's concept of the apostolate and his stance on apostolic succession. Giving preeminence to the powers of proxy assigned to the apostles as official envoys, Congar's concept requires a continuation of the apostles' representational character through successors, whose function would be to represent Christ till the *parousia*. In his estimation the apostolic ministry with its teaching, sacramental, and ruling powers is the indispensable component of the church's structure that mediates grace (sacraments) and truth (deposit of faith) from the incarnate Lord to the believers. Such a mediatory office is indispensable to constitute men and women as Christ's church during the intermediate period between Easter and the *parousia*.¹ It is not without importance that while he acknowledges the difference between the concepts of structure and apostolicity, Congar employs them in such similar ways that they can be considered as functionally identical in his ecclesiology.²

¹See pp. 72-80 above. One should bear in mind that the structure of the church, encompassing the deposit of faith, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry, plays a key role in Congar's ecclesiology.

²As observed by Lehning, 131.

This indispensable character and role of apostolic succession can be further perceived in the Dominican theologian's understanding of salvation. He contends that, besides the Holy Spirit's action, salvation requires a sensible bond of union with the incarnate Christ. Salvation "is bound up with the ministry of the apostles, and subsequently of their successors,"¹ who are the essential tie to bind men and women across history to the unique event of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, from whom flow grace and truth. Without apostolic succession the believer would be cut off from the source of salvation, the incarnate Son of God.²

In Cullmann's case, the answer to the question of the possibility of apostolic succession is determined by his understanding of the apostles' functions within the framework of his conception of salvation history. By stressing the need to start the discussion on apostolic succession by establishing first "what the nature of the apostolic office is in the New Testament," as well as "the

¹Congar, The Mystery of the Church, 39. In Congar's view, the priesthood conveying grace to the faithful requires "the law of apostolic succession." Idem, Divided Christendom, 101.

²See pp. 136-43 above. A quite similar view is presented by J. Frisque, 247, 248, in his analysis of Cullmann's view.

essence of the apostolate" according to the Bible,¹ "centering the whole discussion on this idea of the apostolate,"² he makes clear that in his view the possibility of succession depends first of all on how one understands the New Testament concept of apostle and his functions. Accentuating the apostles' unique quality of eyewitnesses to the revelation made in Christ, Cullmann's concept leads him to conclude that "the apostolate is by definition a unique office which cannot be delegated."³ In his view, the apostolate belongs to the time of the incarnation and participates of its characteristic uniqueness (*ephapax*) that makes it unrepeatable. Moreover, as bearers of direct revelation the apostles are the foundation of the church, a role which cannot be delegated. Obviously this view of the apostolate and its place in salvation history precludes any possibility of apostolic succession.⁴

The fact that Congar adopted a view of salvation history strikingly similar to that of Cullmann⁵ does not necessarily mean that the two theologians agree on the

¹Cullmann, Peter, 220, 224.

²Cullmann, "The Tradition," 87.

³Ibid., 77.

⁴See pp. 227-32 above.

⁵See pp. 125-31 and 204-22 above.

issue of apostolic succession.¹ Like his Lutheran colleague, Congar recognizes that the apostolate belongs to the time of the incarnation, and affirms that this period constitutes the unique foundation and norm for the church in all ages. He does not perceive, however, a rift between the time of the incarnation--to which the apostolate belongs--and the time of the church, for in his view there is a definite transcendence of the incarnation and the apostolate over and above time and history.² Hence, he conceives the period of the church "as a progressive extension of the apostolic sphere . . . in space and time."³ The distinction between the apostles' foundational role and their ministerial functions increasingly emphasized by Congar allowed him to simultaneously affirm the uniqueness of the incarnation and the foundational apostolic functions on the one hand, as well as the possibility of succession to the teaching, sacramental, and ruling apostolic functions on the other.

¹As noticed earlier, the discrepancies between Roman Catholics and Protestants can be traced back to the way in which each side understands the church's participation in the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" during the time of the church. See pp. 223, 224 above.

²See pp. 130, 131, 282 above.

³Congar, "Conclusion," 296. The Dominican theologian argues that the church's Fathers and the Middle Ages' theologians "saw no necessary dichotomy between the time of the Incarnation or the apostles . . . and some particular moment of the Church's history." *Idem, Tradition and Traditions*, 290.

The extent of the divergences noticed between these theologians regarding "apostle" in general takes a rather different turn when one compares their views on the particular case of Peter. Though on this point their understanding seems surprisingly more similar, their divergences remain as radical when the specific issue of succession is considered.

Apostolic Succession to Peter's Apostolate

Cullmann addresses the issue of apostolic succession to Peter from two main perspectives: Peter as foundation of the church, and Peter as the church's first leader. Since this approach is shared, to a certain extent at least, by Congar, it seems appropriate to deal separately with each one of these two steps. In view of the fact that Cullmann has given particular importance to Matt 16:13-20 in his discussion of apostolic succession to Peter, the reader will understand that the present analysis of these authors' views on the issue pays particular attention, however briefly, to this passage.

As Foundation of the Church

It is no secret that the most sensitive aspect of the Matt 16:13-20 statement, which both theologians regard as an authentic saying of Jesus, is the identification of *petra*, "rock" (vs. 18). In contrast with the sixteenth-century Reformers, Cullmann, a Lutheran theologian, argues

that in this text *petra* designates the apostle Peter (Petros), rather than Jesus Christ or Peter's confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah.¹ As one would expect, Congar agrees that in this passage Peter is indeed the rock upon which the church is built. By emphasizing Peter's faith in Christ, however, his understanding does not entirely coincide with Cullmann's view.² At any rate, the identification of Peter with the rock is not a major issue between these two theologians. What separates them is the question whether Peter can have successors to his rock role.

Rejecting any application of the rock to possible successors, Cullmann argues that the Matthean saying addresses only the matter of laying the foundational rock of the church, and not the future task of building up the church. He affirms that just as a foundation can be laid only once and remains effective for the rest of the building work, so the unique foundation of the rock Peter established at the beginning continues to support the structure of the church beyond the apostle's death through his writings, as found in Scripture.³

¹See pp. 199-201 above. Though Cullmann acknowledges that in other New Testament statements *πέτρα* is applied to Christ, he insists that "Mt. 16:18 forces us to assume a formal and material identity between *πέτρα* and *Πέτρος*." Cullmann, "*Πέτρα*," 6:99.

²See pp. 112-14 above.

³See pp. 238-43 above.

While insisting on the nontransferable character of Peter's foundational charisms of revelation, Congar refuses to confine Peter's rock role to the apostle's testimony to the risen Lord preserved in his writings. Adopting "a fairly conservative apologetical approach to the primacy and Petrine succession,"¹ he argues that the Caesarea Philippi promise implies a permanent presence of the apostle in the church.²

As Leader of the Church

The accord between Congar and Cullmann includes not only the identification of Peter as the basic rock-foundation of the church, but also the recognition of Peter's primacy in the early church. Both theologians agree that Peter received this primacy by a direct commission from the incarnate Christ (Matt 16:19), a charge confirmed after His resurrection by the Lord Himself (John 21:15-17).³

¹Richard P. McBrien, review of L'Église: Une, sainte, catholique et apostolique, by Yves Congar, in TS 33 (1972): 571.

²Congar, "Du nouveau," 39, 40.

³These authors emphasize different aspects in their interpretation of Christ's commission to Peter. Thus, regarding "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 16:19), Congar accentuates the administrative authority conveyed by the symbol of the keys, while Cullmann, without denying this aspect, emphasizes the missionary dimension of opening access to the Kingdom of Heaven through the preaching of the gospel. More harmony can be perceived in their understanding of the promise related to binding and loosing, which they interpret as empowering

Moreover, these theologians concur also on the need to find the fulfillment of Christ's promise (Matt 16:17-19) in subsequent church history, yet with a significant variance. Cullmann, for his part, holds that "it is permitted and required" to "read the promise of Jesus in the light of the history of the Apostolic Age," and thus finds Peter leading the primitive church in its early years, before yielding the primacy to James.¹ On the other hand, refusing to confine Peter's primacy to a short period, Congar contends that even if Peter eventually took over the leadership of the Jewish Christian mission, as Cullmann suggests, this was not to the detriment of his universal pastorate.² Moreover, Congar argues that since the verbs used by Jesus are in the future tense, this promise of spiritual and administrative primacy implies a realization that can by no means be limited to Peter's life, but clearly goes on

the apostle Peter with supreme spiritual and administrative authority in the church. See pp. 114, 194, 195 above.

¹Cullmann, Peter, 41-57, 228, 229.

²Congar, L'Église une, 236, n. 11. A permanent primacy of Peter till his death seems almost indispensable for the Roman bishop's claim of succession to Peter. It seems necessary to affirm, as Congar does, that "Peter had his 'see' at Rome" as supreme pastor of the church (idem, The Meaning of Tradition, 46). If at an earlier stage Peter abdicated in favor of James when he was leaving Jerusalem, as Cullmann suggests, the view that the apostle exerted a universal pastorate from Rome would be more difficult to sustain.

as long as the church exists. In his view, the promise-fulfillment pattern of the economy of salvation leads one to seek in later church history the fulfillment of this promise, thus illuminating its meaning. This is necessary, admits the Dominican scholar, because Jesus did not explicitly mention successors to Peter in this nor in any of the other New Testament Petrine sayings.¹

Apart from the issue of the time span intended by Jesus for Peter's primatial ministry, the question remains as to the possibility of succession to this ministry. I have referred earlier to these authors' divergent views on the apostles' ministerial role.² This requires, however, further observations regarding the particular case of Peter. While maintaining that one should not entirely separate the foundational role from the ministerial functions in the person of Peter,³ Congar seems to consider each function as being sufficiently autonomous as to allow successors to one of them while not to the other. On the contrary, in Cullmann's opinion Peter's governing function is completely dependent on, and subordinated to, his foundational apostolic mission of bearing witness to Christ's resurrection. He contends that "when, as in the case of Peter, we are dealing with a church head and

¹See pp. 119-24 above.

²See pp. 290-92 above.

³Congar, L'Église une, 242.

missionary who is likewise an apostle, the apostolic concept is necessarily the dominant concept."¹

Accordingly, Cullmann maintains that since "the leadership of the Church by Peter is also *apostolic* leadership," it has a "non-transferable character."² In other words, for him Peter's supreme leadership is so closely related to the apostle's foundational role, that the latter determines the non-transferable character of the former.

In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, Cullmann's earlier rejection of apostolic succession to Peter's leadership gave way to a limited and nuanced acceptance on his part of "a succession (even 'monarchical')" to "Peter as *head* of the first community."³ Expressing his willingness to accept the pope as the leader of the community of churches hoped for, he contends that "one could say with Congar . . . : 'a Petrine office (*Petrusamt*) in the collegial and conciliar sense--why not?'"⁴

The Lutheran theologian affirms that this qualified acceptance does not disavow his previous

¹Cullmann, Peter, 220.

²Ibid., 228 (*italics in the original*).

³Oscar Cullmann to Giuseppe Maffei, 22 October 1976, quoted in Maffei, 172, n. 208 (*italics in the original*). See pp. 254, 255 above.

⁴Cullmann, Unity through Diversity, 53, quoting Congar, Essais oecuméniques, 93. See also pp. 255-57 above.

emphasis on the uniqueness of the apostolate. While insisting that Matt 16:17-19 says nothing about successors, Cullmann sees no obstacle to consider this text as a model for a primatial and unifying office in the church.¹ It is true that as early as 1952 Cullmann had referred to Peter's leadership as an example or pattern for future leaders in the church, but at that time he expressly emphasized that such a model was valid for *all* church leaders.² The new dimension in Cullmann's more recent interpretation restricts the application of the Petrine model perceived by him in Matt 16:17-19 to the sole Roman Pontiff.

In summary, one can see how the concept of apostle, in this particular case the understanding of Peter's apostleship, adopted by each theologian within the framework of his basic theological system, determines the outcome of the discussion on apostolic succession. Congar exhibits a view of Peter's apostolic preeminence consistent with the one he had postulated concerning the ministerial and institutional powers exerted by the apostles in general. Following a similar logic his position requires apostolic succession to Peter as in the

¹See p. 253 above.

²Cullmann, Peter, 228. "Applying to the later period Jesus' promise to Peter," he affirmed that "all leadership of the later Church built upon the apostle should know that the keys are given to it and that it has the task of binding and loosing." Ibid., 231.

case of the other apostles. This was less so with Cullmann who, by admitting pastoral and administrative supremacy as parts of Peter's apostleship, departs from his view on the apostolate in general. This inclusion of church government in Peter's apostolate seems to have prepared the way for his more recent nuanced acceptance of a continuation of Peter's primacy through the papacy.

The analysis of the relationship between Congar's and Cullmann's concept of apostle on the one hand, and of their views on apostolic succession on the other, finds its more relevant aspect when one considers them in connection to these authors' views on apostolic tradition.

Apostolic Succession and Apostolic Tradition

The two theologians under discussion concur that as eyewitnesses to Christ and bearers of direct revelation the apostles constitute the foundation of the church. This initial harmony gives way to divergent opinions as soon as one inquires how, after their death, the apostles continue to fulfill this foundational role. Basically, while both agree that the apostles' preaching of the gospel originated the "apostolic tradition," they disagree on the manner in which that proclamation reaches men and women throughout history. Cullmann maintains that the only reliable way the apostolic testimony to divine revelation can continue to be the foundation of the church is through the apostles' writings. On the other hand,

Congar holds that besides Scripture it is through non-written apostolic traditions kept by the church and guaranteed by apostolic succession that this task is fulfilled. This is little more than the basic issue of the relationship of Scripture to tradition, which these authors have extensively discussed with each other personally and in written form.¹

Apostolic Succession and
the Canon of Scripture

As the apostolate belongs to the time of the incarnation, so writing down the apostles' witness is one of the essential facts of the incarnation, explains Cullmann. He argues that the uniqueness of the apostles' eyewitness to Jesus Christ can be safeguarded only by their writings brought together in the New Testament, rather than by the apostles' successors who, like any other intermediaries, would be an inevitable source of

¹As major representatives of their respective confessional positions, Congar and Cullmann repeatedly refer to each other's view. "On this subject," explains Cullmann referring to the problem of Scripture and tradition, "I have had very fruitful discussions . . . with Father Congar." Cullmann, "Between Two Sessions of the Council," 34. Other explicit references to Congar appear in Cullmann, Salvation in History, 302; idem, "Foundations: The Theology of Salvation History," 40; and idem, Unity through Diversity, 88, n. 18. On the other hand, Congar's writings on tradition quite often explicitly attempt to refute Cullmann's understanding, which he considers to be representative of the Protestant position. See for instance Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 24-26, 37, 38, 93, 94, 98, 99, 152, 153; and idem, Tradition and Traditions, 38-42, 468, 471, 472, 491, 492.

deformation. To preserve the purity and uniqueness of the apostles' testimony, Cullmann maintains, the church of the second century began to establish the principle of the canon separating written apostolic tradition from all subsequent ecclesiastical traditions in a way that subordinated the latter to the sole and normative control of the former.¹

Judging Cullmann's interpretation of the fixing of the New Testament canon as "highly disputable,"² Congar argues that the aim and effect of the concept of a canon was not to establish a rift between the apostles and the bishops, between apostolic tradition and church tradition, since once the principle of the canon was accepted the church continued holding to non-written apostolic traditions, maintained and guaranteed by bishops in apostolic succession, as a norm to be respected besides Scripture.³

Without denying the value of non-written traditions, Cullmann holds that by carrying out the idea of a canon the church submitted all oral tradition transmitted by a chain of succession to the superior criterion of the apostolic Scriptures. Had the canon been fixed by the church assuming that the apostles' successors

¹See pp. 268-80 above.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 468.

³See p. 155 above.

and the tradition they transmitted would be set alongside this canon with an equal normative authority, "the reason for the creation of the canon would be unintelligible," and its fixing "would have been superfluous."¹ The establishing of a New Testament canon reveals the church's intention to recognize the authority of Scripture over the apostles' successors and the oral tradition whose guardians they are regarded to be.

The issue is not exhausted, however, by a discussion of the meaning of a canon of the apostles' writings, since according to Congar the role of the apostles' successors is not limited to the task of transmitting the deposit of faith, which in his view encompasses Scripture and oral apostolic tradition, but includes as well the task of authentically interpreting and defining it.

Apostolic Succession and the Interpretation of Scripture

One of the three tasks which characterize the apostles' transmissible functions, specifies Congar, is the exercise of doctrinal authority. In accord with traditional Roman Catholic theology the Dominican theologian describes this particular role of the apostles' successors as "keeping faithfully, judging authentically, and defining infallibly" the content of the deposit of

¹Cullmann, "The Tradition," 92.

faith handed on by the apostles to the church.¹ This function is perceived as clearly distinct from the non-transferable foundational role of the apostles as bearers of divine revelation. Congar expresses this distinction by differentiating carefully between the Spirit's gift of inspiration (to the apostles) and that of assistance (to the successors of the apostles).²

The task of the magisterium, always with the Holy Spirit's assistance, is to assure the church's faithfulness to the apostles' teachings, a dimension increasingly emphasized by Congar as an essential component of apostolic succession. In fact, he came to consider fidelity to the apostles' faith as the first condition to, and the core of, apostolic succession.³ Congar recognizes that some of the non-written apostolic traditions kept as part of the deposit of faith are clouded with uncertainty, and that in some cases, such as the oral traditions gathered by Papias, they may convey "a considerable amount of legendary material."⁴ He holds, therefore, that the magisterium in succession to the apostles is necessary not only to guarantee the

¹Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 63; idem, "Composantes et idée," 69.

²See p. 159 above.

³See pp. 97-101 above.

⁴Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 352.

faithfulness of tradition to the apostolic deposit, but also to define infallibly what really is the true apostolic tradition.¹

Conversely, while acknowledging the value of a doctrinal ecclesiastical authority to prevent and correct misleading individual interpretations which could eventually appear, Cullmann insists that such an office must always subject itself to the superior norm of Scripture, without any claim of infallibility for its interpretations.²

The Question of Authority

One can see that at the core of the problem of apostolic succession and Scripture lies the question of the final authority for Christian faith and practice. Very much aware of this issue and of its implications, Congar openly explains that for Roman Catholics the answer is found in the scheme *Holy Spirit--Apostolic ministry*, while the Protestant position is summarized by the *Holy Spirit--Bible* approach.³ Both theologians recognize a close interrelation between the Holy Spirit on the one

¹See pp. 150, 151 above.

²See pp. 278-80 above.

³Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme*, 441. In Congar's view, the Protestant approach eliminates the bond existing between the Holy Spirit and the instituted apostolic ministry, denying His assistance to the magisterium. Idem, *Tradition and Traditions*, 464, 465.

hand, and the apostolic ministry or the Bible on the other. This view appears to amount to a certain circumscription of the Holy Spirit's activity, proceeding from the second component in each pair. Thus, Congar maintains that during the time of the church the gifts imparted by the Spirit "have to be assimilated to the rule of apostolicity, which is that of continuity with the work done by the Incarnate Word, under the double form of apostolicity of doctrine and apostolicity of ministry."¹ Hence, in his view the Holy Spirit's freedom is limited "because God has bound Himself to the covenant structures He has constituted,"² of which the hierarchical ministry is one of the essential components.

Cullmann, on the other side, holds that in the post-apostolic church "the Holy Spirit interprets scripture, but is at the same time controlled by it,"³ since Scripture is "a superior norm destined to control the present action of the Holy Spirit as far as truth is

¹Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic College," 134.

²"La Réforme la reprend encore sous une autre forme: celle de la liberté que le Saint-Esprit garde à l'égard de l'Église. Nous ne nions nullement cette liberté, tout en pensant que la *théologie* catholique n'en a pas assez tenu compte, mais nous l'affirmons limitée: non en ce sens qu'un homme, qu'une institution créée comme telle puissent lier Dieu, mais parce que Dieu s'est lié lui-même aux structures de l'Alliance qu'il a constituées." Congar, "Composantes et idée," 71.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 87.

concerned."¹ Evidently, both theologians perceive the need of a visible and objective criterion of truth as the final norm and rule of faith and practice, besides the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.²

One should not infer from this that Congar has little room for biblical authority, or that Cullmann denies all authority to a teaching office in the church. Congar views the Bible as an objective, though not unique, norm or criterion of truth. On his part, Cullmann recognizes the need for a teaching office though not on the basis of apostolic succession, but insists that this office is never to act or speak infallibly, and that it can fulfill its proper role only by submitting itself to the superior norm of Scripture. He maintains, "with the Reformers, that the Bible must be a purifying principle" over against tradition guaranteed by the church's magisterium, and insists on the need to "maintain the exclusive character of the authority of the Bible."³

¹Scripture is "une norme supérieure destinée à contrôler l'action présente du Saint-Esprit dans le domaine de la vérité." Cullmann, *La Tradition*, 37 (translation mine; the English translation ["The Tradition," 83] missed the point; italics in the original).

²For a brief comparison between Congar's and Cullmann's subjection of the Holy Spirit to the control of the magisterium or of Scripture, see also MacDonald, *Church and World*, 138.

³"Comme protestants nous avons une grande responsabilité vis-à-vis de nos frères catholiques. . . . Notre tâche devrait consister à leur montrer, avec les

It is evident that, in the debate regarding Scripture and tradition, the crux of the matter is not merely the concept of tradition as Congar asserts,¹ but the problem of authority as contends the Lutheran theologian.² In this context it is not difficult to perceive that one's stance on the issue of apostolic succession has far-reaching implications for the discussion of Scripture and tradition. The question is whether the final authority for the faith and practice of Christian believers is to be sought in Scripture on the one hand, or in the apostles' successors keeping, transmitting, and defining the deposit of faith on the other.

Réformateurs, que la Bible doit être un principe d'épuration. . . . Nous devons . . . nous efforcer de maintenir le caractère exclusif de l'autorité de la Bible en tirant d'elle les normes de notre action." Cullmann, "Oecuménisme, Bible et exégèse," 74, 75.

¹See p. 267 above.

²"La différence entre tradition apostolique et tradition postapostolique nous semble donc porter sur autre chose: l'autorité." Cullmann, La Tradition, 14, n. 1 (missing in the English translation). In the introduction to his essay on apostolic succession, Congar admits the importance of the issue of authority ("l'expérience récente de Sessions oecuméniques nous montre que la question de l'autorité revient sans cesse dans les esprits"), but does not deal explicitly with it in the treatise itself. Congar, "Composantes et idée," 61. "The point of deepest cleavage [between Catholicism and Protestantism] lies in the conception of religious authority." John H. Kromminga, "The Protestant Approach to Roman Catholicism," RefR 14 (1960): 14.

Congar's and Cullmann's Views: An Evaluation

The contrasting views of Yves Congar and Oscar Cullmann on apostolic succession invite us to appraise the assets and liabilities of each position. To evaluate and criticize them is not an easy task. Still, one can ponder the inner consistency of their respective views, as well as their use of sources, particularly the apostles' own canonical writings, which both regard as authoritative.¹

Congar's View on Apostolic Succession

The question arises as to the criterion to be used in the evaluation of Yves Congar's understanding of apostolic succession. One could consider his position in relation to Roman Catholic teaching on the issue, but not being a member of that communion I have chosen to employ a criterion which, transcending strictly confessional boundaries, could function, at least to some extent, as a common denominator. Noticing that Protestant "liberalism, having abandoned the scriptural principle, finds no difficulty in putting what it calls tradition on the same footing as Scripture, which it has dislodged, as it were,

¹As a Seventh-day Adventist I hold a high view of Scripture, accepting it as "the written Word of God, . . . the infallible revelation of His will," and "the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and trustworthy record of God's acts in history." "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," 1, in Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, rev. ed. ([Washington, DC]: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 23.

from its pedestal," Congar asserts: "We prefer the frank opposition of dogmatic Protestants," for whom "the Scriptures are a norm of absolute value."¹ Since Congar professes that "Scripture is, for the Church, an external guarantee--ultimately, the only sure one--that what she believes and preaches belongs to the revealed deposit,"² it seems fitting to evaluate his views in the light of the Bible.

Strengths

Even a casual reader will admire the lucid, clear, and smooth style of Congar's writings, especially in the original language. When he deals with controversial issues like apostolic succession, one comes to appreciate the irenic tone used to express the confessional teachings standing behind his personal convictions.

¹Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 466. Similarly, in his answer to Cullmann's book on Peter, C. Journet expresses that "once we decide to leave out of the picture the great mass of liberal Protestants and confine our conversation to that portion of Protestantism which is willing to acknowledge the divinity of Christ and some kind of divine inspiration for Holy Scripture, we believe that there is a 'common basis' between them and ourselves, namely Christ and the Scriptures." Journet, The Primacy of Peter, xi.

²Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 294. For Congar, "Scripture is a necessary critical reference for any development or growth of Tradition." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 147. He affirms that "the holy Scriptures . . . are the supreme guide to which any others there may be are subjected," and that in his view "Scripture is always the supreme rule and is never submitted to any other objective rule," Ibid., 94, 95.

Most of Congar's essays, as is the case of those related to this topic, contain abundant references to biblical materials, both Old and New Testaments, as well as historical sources spanning from the church's fathers to contemporary theologians, including official documents of the church's magisterium. This bibliographic wealth adds weight to his presentations, revealing arduous and serious research. It would be difficult to deny the merits of this author's intention to draw directly from the sources, including Scriptures.¹

Not without reason, many consider Yves Congar as the most outstanding Roman Catholic ecclesialogist of the twentieth century.² His increasing accent on the church as community³ is only one of his many contributions to Roman Catholic ecclesiology.⁴ While attempting to correct the overemphasis on the institutional dimension that characterized Roman Catholic theology for centuries,

¹As J. H. Stoneburner expresses it, "a Protestant theologian can only be encouraged by the strong biblical thrust of Congar's interpretation of the reality of the Church." Stoneburner, 360.

²See pp. 3 and 58 above.

³See pp. 78-80 above. Closely related with the communal principle, one can see with sympathy Congar's emphasis on the positive and active role of the laity in the church. See p. 73 above.

⁴Several dissertations and numerous articles have been written on Congar's ecclesiology, or a particular aspect of it. For a partial list see pp. 8-10, and 69 above.

Congar's view of the church as "a structured community" seeks to attain a balance between the communitarian and institutional aspects of the church. Over against traditional Roman Catholic ecclesiology, his more balanced understanding of the church is more akin to the New Testament data,¹ and provides a more plausible setting for his understanding of apostolic succession. Considering the church as a structured community also allowed him to situate apostolic succession within the context of the apostolicity of the whole church, without confusing the two concepts.² Closely related to the community dimension, Congar's view on the collegial character of the episcopate contributed to compensate the ultramontane tendencies that triumphed at the First Vatican Council, and to redefine the relationship between bishops and the pope in connection with apostolic succession.

As far as apostolic succession itself is concerned, by adopting a salvation-history approach Congar has been able to place apostolic succession in a context which facilitates its understanding for Protestant minds.³ His growing emphasis on faithfulness to the apostles'

¹See Dietrich, 29.

²See Louch, 139.

³See Stoneburner, 360, 361; Schnackenburg, 267; and Georges Chantraine, review of L'Église une, sainte, catholique et apostolique, by Yves Congar, in NRT 94 (1972): 861.

teachings as the first condition of apostolic succession¹ seems to bring him closer, though not entirely, to the Protestant Reformers' demand for faithfulness to the apostles' doctrine as more weighty than a mere chain of uninterrupted succession to the apostles.² One can also commend the Dominican theologian's emphasis on the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit as an indispensable element that validates a juridically valid ordination in succession to the apostles.³ Though not the first Roman Catholic theologian to adopt this particular approach, Congar was among those who strongly encouraged it and contributed to its increasing acceptance by his Roman Catholic colleagues.⁴ Still, his stance on apostolic succession calls for a few questions.

Weaknesses

While the *ressourcement* advocated by Congar could be considered auspicious for his theology, the status he assigns to Scripture in relation to the monuments of tradition, pronouncements of the magisterium, and historical testimonies, remains a motive of concern for

¹See pp. 97-102 above.

²See pp. 24-27 above.

³Congar's notion of apostolic succession "presumes and builds on a pneumatology." Louch, 142.

⁴See Schnackenburg, 267-69; and Garijo-Guembe, 4:167-72.

the present writer. His understanding of apostolic succession, as well as the evidence he offers to sustain it, appears at times overstated, and not always in harmony with the testimony of the New Testament writings.

Thus, it is difficult to find explicit support in the New Testament for Congar's concept of the apostles' powers. The Twelve, to be sure, received "power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases" when the Lord sent them on their first mission (Luke 9:1; Matt 10:1; Mark 6:7), but is this the kind of teaching, sacramental, and ruling powers mentioned by Congar when he delineates his concept of apostle, or when he alludes to the apostles' successors?¹ To substantiate his view, this author refers to texts such as Matt 16:17-19; 18:18; 28:18-20; Luke 22:19; and John 20:21-23. Do these statements (or any other New Testament passage) lend support to such an opinion?

Leaving the discussion of Matt 16:17-19 for later on,² a careful examination of the Matt 18:18 and John 20:21-23 texts themselves hardly allows one to conclude that Jesus' promises, as recorded in these passages, included the conferring of priestly powers to the

¹These powers, through which the hierarchical ministry participates on Christ's prophetic, priestly, and kingly prerogatives, are granted to enable the magisterium to mediate the deposit of faith and grace to the Christian believer. See pp. 88-90 above.

²See pp. 329-35 below.

apostles.¹ Likewise, an attentive reading of Matt 28:18-20² shows that while He certainly referred to His all-encompassing power, the Lord said no word about a delegation of such power to the apostles. Neither does

¹What Jesus commits to the disciples is the "privilege of giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God by correctly announcing the terms of forgiveness. There is no proof that he actually transferred to the apostles or their successors the power in and of themselves to forgive sins," a right which belongs to God alone (Mark 2:5-7). Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 7 vols. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1932), 5:315. See also Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 9:193, 194.

²Congar assigns special significance to Matt 28:18-20, the passage he quotes most often in the context of the apostles' teaching, priestly, and ruling powers. See for instance Congar, Lay People, 352; idem, "Composantes et idée," 63, 69, 72, 76; idem, L'Église une, 26, 195, 203-4, 214, 216, 225; idem, "La consécration épiscopale," 135; idem, "Magisterium, Theologians, the Faithful and the Faith," 549. In his view, the mandate recorded in this passage was "given to the Twelve and, after them, to the college of bishops who inherit their mission and their authority in the order of ministry" (idem, Lay People, 26; see also *ibid.*, p. 396). He contends that according to the Matthean statement Jesus established "a hierarchical mission" which "entails sacred powers, spiritual powers tending to salvation according to the functions of priesthood (sacraments), prophecy (authority of the magisterium) and kingship (authority in spiritual government)" (*ibid.*, 353). While distinguishing between mission in the wide and restricted sense--the former being carried out by the laity, the latter by the apostles and their successors--Congar affirms that "lay people have . . . a participation in the hierarchy's mission, not in its powers" (*ibid.* 354). See also idem, Blessed Is the Peace of My Church, 30, 31.

Luke 22:19 offer any indication that they received from Christ sacramental authority to celebrate the Eucharist.¹

A similar result is obtained when one searches the New Testament to find indications of the apostles' actual exercise of sacramental powers. It is not without significance that "with the exception of Baptism, we have virtually no evidence of the exercise of these powers by the Twelve."² Even concerning baptism, Paul himself explicitly left its administration outside of his apostolic responsibilities (1 Cor 1:17).

Regarding apostolic succession itself, the New Testament texts dealing with the apostolate totally ignore a commission to the apostles to transmit their own apostleship to successors. "Nowhere in Scripture do we find any word of Christ instructing the apostles to appoint successors, or to pass on their mission in the

¹Acknowledging the scarce data provided by the New Testament, Congar himself frequently recognized that the whole Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist "depends directly on the oral teaching of the apostles . . . much more than on the Gospel texts." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 97, 98 (italics in the original). See also *ibid.*, 24; *idem*, Tradition and Traditions, 350-52; and *idem*, The Revelation of God, 32, 33.

²Brown, Priest and Bishop, 54. See also *ibid.*, 63; Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, § 24, b; and "Reflections of the Roman Catholic Participants," chap in Eucharist and Ministry, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, no. 4 (New York: U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, 1970; Washington, DC: Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 1970), 24.

form of the episcopal or priestly office."¹ Was Congar unaware of his fellow Dominican B.-D. Dupuy when the latter explained that to conceive apostolic succession as "a cascade of successive sendings from Christ to the apostles, and from the apostles to the bishops," seems unwarranted by the gospels' texts? Alluding to the biblical support claimed for this view, Dupuy maintained that "nothing, strictly speaking, is said in John 20:21 about the transmission of this mission by the apostles to others."² Moreover, the concept of succession "passing on powers through ordination faces the serious obstacle that the NT does not show the Twelve laying hands on bishops either as successors or as auxiliaries in administering sacraments."³ Since "there is no explicit mention in the New Testament of any kind of actual succession from the apostles,"⁴ one is bound to conclude that Congar's view is built on other sources rather than on the biblical testimony. As S. Paul Schilling remarks, "Congar's

¹Schmaus, Dogma, 4:138; see also *ibid.*, 4:175.

²Dupuy, "La succession apostolique," 397. One should keep in mind that the idea of a cascade of missions coming from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the apostles, and from the latter to their successors, is basic to Congar's understanding of apostolic succession (see p. 105 above), and of tradition (see p. 146 above).

³Brown, Priest and Bishop, 55. See also pp. 45, 108 above.

⁴McDonnell, 221.

interpretation of apostolic succession . . . lacks convincing scriptural foundations."¹

Since Congar's view of apostolic succession is based on historical and theological developments within the Roman Catholic Church, one wonders if his reading of the New Testament evidence is not a form of "eisegesis, the reading back into the text of ideas of later generations not intended by the original authors,"² which E. Schweizer regards "highly questionable" if not simply "inadmissible."³ Moreover, concerning the historical evidence itself, when Congar maintains that "the idea that the ministers had authority to teach the faithful in continuity with the apostles is found, in one form or another, in all the ancient documents,"⁴ is he not going beyond what the actual historical evidence allows?⁵

Similar difficulties seem to affect Congar's views on the specific case of Peter's primacy. It may be

¹Schilling, 204.

²Kaufman, 599. Roman Catholic theologians recognize that this is how they proceed. Thus, K. McDonnell writes: "We think first of developed forms for which we need to find historical justification. The developed forms come first and the historical justification comes second." McDonnell, 213.

³Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, § 1, c.

⁴Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 35, 36.

⁵For a discussion of the historical data see pp. 16-21, 44-46 above.

questioned whether Congar's procedure to deduce succession to Peter's primacy from biblical passages is a safe approach to Scripture or not. Do these texts (especially Matt 16:17-19 and John 21:15-17) allow an interpretation of Jesus' promises in the light of their alleged fulfillment beyond the span of Peter's life? Congar supports his approach by referring to the fact that God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and to David (2 Sam 7:11-16) became effective--and hence their meaning became evident--many years after the death of both. Might Congar have overlooked, however, that each of these Old Testament promises explicitly states that its fulfillment would occur at a future time, beyond the lives of Abraham or David, and would be realized in their descendants (Gen 12:7) or offspring (2 Sam 7:12)? In Jesus' promise, however, one hardly finds a reference to a fulfillment through descendants or successors after Peter's death. Any attempt to explain Jesus' promise in the light of later fulfillments beyond Peter seems unwarranted by the text.¹

While he holds that faithfulness to the apostles' doctrine is of utmost importance, by recognizing the magisterium's infallible authority to interpret as well as

¹Such hermeneutical procedure "makes revelation uncertain at least with regard to the Church and raises the question why this prophecy was not understood by all the Christians" until several centuries after the Lord uttered it. Canavaris, 140.

transmit the tradition handed on by the apostles, Congar seems to endorse the traditional Roman Catholic view that considers the apostles' successors as the final criterion of truth in the church.¹ This does not seem to prevent him to affirm that the dogmatic definitions of the magisterium have always been regulated by Scripture, that "there is not a single point of belief that the Church holds by tradition alone, without any reference to Scripture."² At the same time the church's living process of transmission and interpretation, the oral tradition, kept and defined by the apostles' successors includes some "particular points not actually found in Scripture,"

¹Congar acknowledges that although "l'enseignement des évêques est bien une règle pour les fidèles, . . . il est lui-même réglé," but in his view the norm or rule which governs the magisterium is not Scripture but "la Tradition des Apôtres." Congar, "Composantes et idée," 67; idem, L'Église une, 210. Since the Dominican scholar affirms that "la transmission sans altération de la Tradition est assurée par la succession" (idem, "Composantes et idée," 70; idem, L'Église une, 215), and insists that the criterion of tradition is apostolicity "guaranteed by the succession of hierarchical ministers," (idem, Tradition and Traditions, 38), in the last analysis the norm for faith and practice in the church is bound to the apostles' successors. As to the relationship between Scripture and tradition, recent studies suggest that in the later Middle Ages there were alternative views to the one usually held since the Council of Trent. See Heiko Augustinus Oberman, Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 53-60; and De Vooght, 499-510.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 41, 42. This approach is based on the contention that tradition is not a source essentially different from Scripture. It merely is a parallel and complementary channel through which the unique source of revelation (i.e., Jesus Christ and the apostles) reaches us today.

though he insists that they are only "secondary points, . . . practical points of application and not articles of faith."¹ To this class belong, in his view, tenets such as Sunday keeping, infant baptism, prayer and mass for the dead, liturgy, sacraments, Mariology, devotion to images, and veneration of saints and martyrs.² Another look at these points, however, leads one to conclude that several of them can hardly be described as belonging to the category of "secondary points." In fact, the Dominican theologian himself acknowledges that "the realities held by the Catholic and rejected by the Protestant as not proven by Scripture . . . are realities that concern the religious relationship in its inmost truth; they are in no way secondary, but intimate and almost secret."³

In summary, Congar's contention that "Scripture has an absolute sovereignty" and "governs Tradition and the Church"⁴ does not seem to harmonize with what occurred in the last four hundred years within the Roman Catholic

¹Ibid., 39.

²See a comprehensive list in Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 50-61; and idem, "Traditions apostoliques," 282-94.

³Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 118. "Les choses qu'on a chance de méconnaître surtout, si l'on admet un statut de bibliocratie, sont les choses les plus secrètes et, à bien des égards, les plus profondes de la réalité chrétienne." Idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 447.

⁴Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 422. See also pp. 158, 159 above.

Church, nor with his own statements. There is little evidence that in fact for him Scripture is the final authority.¹ Does not the apostolate find itself devalued by such an infallible teaching office, and its uniqueness impaired if not annulled? In spite of affirmations to the contrary, is not the superior normative value of Scripture diminished, and its role assigned to the apostles' successors?²

Cullmann's View on Apostolic Succession

Considering the Bible as the "superior" norm in the church over against tradition and the teaching office, Cullmann professes that Scripture is "the sole foundation

¹Though he admits that the Holy Scriptures are "the supreme guide," Congar holds that the Bible fulfills this role "without being the absolute rule of every other norm." Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 94, 95. His view reminds one of the Second Vatican Council statement on the role of the apostles' successors: "The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church. . . . It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others." Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," art. 10 (Abbott, 117, 118).

²As observed by Cullmann, "The Tradition," 84. While one admits that God uses human channels to transmit the gospel throughout history, "the restriction of this agency to a special class of persons given their authority by Christ himself through the apostles is no more justified than the limitation of the church per se to the clergy." Schilling, 204.

of our faith."¹ Agreeing with Cullmann on this basic presupposition, I evaluate his view on apostolic succession in light of the biblical evidence.

Strengths

Cullmann's reputation, which extends over several decades, is probably due essentially to the impact made by his development of the biblical view of salvation history. In a clear and forceful style he combined the results of New Testament studies, historical research, and theological reflection, addressing disputed issues in the realms of eschatology, ecclesiology, Scripture and tradition, among others. While insisting on "the demand for an obedient listening to the text" of Scripture,² thanks to his remarkable exegetical skills Cullmann has been able to make original contributions in almost every field he has explored. His marked intellectual loyalty and scientific objectivity secured the respect of his colleagues.³

¹Cullmann, "Theology and Indispensable Expression," 263.

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 70. Nuances are underlined later on in this chapter. See pp. 338-41 below.

³As Congar expressed it, Cullmann "est un homme d'une très grande loyauté intellectuelle. . . . Extrêmement loyal, je le redis, il a vraiment dépassé les préjugés étroits." Puyo, 145, 146. See also p. 283 above.

By looking at the whole issue of apostolic succession from the perspective of salvation history, Cullmann expressed with renewed strength the uniqueness of the apostolate, and his volume on Peter has become "the classical book" evidencing that the apostles could have no successor.¹ Based on the centrality of the incarnation, he emphasized the uniqueness of the apostles' eyewitness to that once-and-for-all salvific event. With his emphasis on the essentially temporal nature of salvation history according to the biblical perspective, Cullmann invalidates all idea of a transcendence of the incarnation and the apostolate above temporal limits.² It is also worthwhile to point out that Cullmann's concept of apostle seems to coincide to quite an extent with the evidence provided by the New Testament. From the perspective of salvation history it is difficult to avoid his conclusions and his denial of the actual possibility of apostolic succession.³

¹Luz, 49.

²Thus, Congar's view on this point (see pp. 131, 132 above), shared by other Roman Catholic theologians, is difficult to sustain in the light of Cullmann's exposition of the biblical salvation historical perspective (see p. 282 above).

³Thus J. Frisque observes that "Cullmann a mis en oeuvre une méthode bien précise, et le résultat est là, monolithique. Inutile de chercher quelque rupture au cours du travail." In his view, Cullmann "a beau jeu de montrer à ses détracteurs que, s'ils l'ont suivi pour le reste, ils doivent le suivre également ici!" Frisque, 236, 247.

At the same time, by pointing to the continuation of salvation history after the apostolic era, Cullmann contributed to a revalorization of the time of the church as an integral part of salvation history, as long as one keeps it in a proper subordination to the center, the incarnation. Moreover, the Lutheran theologian's rejection of the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession did not lead him to deny the need for leadership in the church, again under the superior norm of Holy Scripture.

The appreciation for such significant contributions to contemporary ecclesiology does not prevent one, however, from recognizing some difficulties which deserve treatment and response.

Weaknesses

While Cullmann's stance concerning the possibility of succession to the apostolate in general seems to be in harmony with the mainstream Protestant heritage, one may perceive a gradual departure from that legacy in his views on succession to Peter's apostolic primacy. Given the importance attached to Matt 16:17-19 by Cullmann in this regard, we need to return briefly to some aspects of his interpretation of Jesus' statement.

Though he was not the first to equate *petra* with Peter, Cullmann contributed to the acceptance of this view among Protestant scholars, who thus found themselves on

common ground on this aspect with traditional Roman Catholic theology. This position, however, seems to entail some difficulties, particularly when this author explains how the rock Peter does continue to play his foundational role in the church till the end. Since Roman Catholic theology is prone to envision this continuation through Peter's successors,¹ Cullmann's approach acquires distinct significance in the context of this dissertation. As noticed earlier, however, given the fact that we have only two short epistles from Peter, several scholars find it difficult to agree with Cullmann's view, which seems to entail a rather small and precarious rock as the foundation of the church.²

History amply shows that other interpretations of the Matthean pericope have been championed,³ suggesting different understandings of *petra* which address this problem and other issues related to Cullmann's view. If one approaches Jesus' statement in the light of its Old Testament background, and considers it in its immediate context as well as in relation to the New Testament testimony about the rock upon which God's people stand, one arrives at a distinct identification of *petra*. When

¹See p. 242 above.

²For a more detailed exposition of this problem see p. 242 above.

³See p. 199 above.

Jesus spoke of building His church on a rock, in keeping with his Jewish heritage Peter would by instinct have interpreted the image in terms of what it meant in the Old Testament, namely a symbol of God.¹ Is it not pertinent to assume that after declaring Jesus to be the Son of the living God, Peter would naturally identify Him with the rock? This assumption seems corroborated by what Peter himself said and wrote later on.² In the Matthean passage itself, since we do not know with certitude the exact

¹See Deut 32:4; 2 Sam 22:2, 3, 32, 47; 23:3; Ps 18:2, 31, 46; 28:1; 31:2, 3; 42:9; 62:2, 7; 71:3; 78:35; 89: 26; 92:15; 94:22; Isa 17:10. See also George A. F. Knight, "Thou Art Peter," TToday 17 (1960): 168-72; C. F. D. Moule, "Some Reflections on the 'Stone' Testimonia in Relation to the Name Peter," NTS 2 (1955-56): 56-58; and Johnston, 55. The need to take into consideration the meaning of the rock in the Old Testament to interpret Jesus' statement is emphasized also by the Roman Catholic theologian Daniel Iturrioz, "¿Es posible una verdadera sucesión apostólica enteramente independiente del sucesor de San Pedro?" chap. in XVI Semana Española de Teología (17-22 Sept. 1956): Problemas de actualidad sobre la sucesión apostólica (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1957), 184-87.

²Shortly after Pentecost, Peter himself declared that Jesus Christ, the stone rejected by the builders, had become the head of the corner in the foundation of the church (Acts 4:11). Moreover, in his first epistle Peter combined *líthos* (stone), *petra* (rock), and *akrogōniáios* (cornerstone) in one passage applying the three terms to Christ as foundation of the church (2 Pet 2:4-8). In this passage "it is noteworthy that while Christians in general are compared to 'living stones', a phrase also used of Christ, the term *πέτρα* is applied to him alone." Oscar J. F. Seitz, "Upon This Rock: A Critical Re-examination of Matt 16:17-19," JBL 69 (1950): 331. See also Henry Burton, "The Stone and the Rock," The Expositor, 2d Series, 6 (1883): 434, 435.

wording of Jesus' statement in Aramaic,¹ should we not take seriously the difference between *petra* and *Petros* in the Greek text as inspired by the Holy Spirit?² Does not the immediate context as well as the structure of the pericope point to Christ rather than Peter as the rock?³

¹Cullmann appeals to the parallelism between the two sentences intended by the pun or wordplay ("you are *Petros*, and on this *petra* . . ."), arguing that this is more evident in the "fairly assured Aramaic original of the saying" where presumably the same word, *kepha*, occurs both times. See pp. 200, 201 above. While this could have been the case, a recent study concludes that the Aramaic evidence is ambiguous, and that one cannot be sure which Aramaic word underlies *petra*, there being more than one Aramaic term fitting the semantic field of *petra*. Chrys C. Caragounis, *Peter and the Rock*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, no. 58 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 26-30.

²Though the inter changeability between both terms could lead one to assume the equation $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\alpha = \Pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\varsigma$, this does not mean that in the Matthean text $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\alpha$ and $\Pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\varsigma$ referred to the same reality. On the contrary, the fact that Matthew could have perfectly used the same word in both sentences making clearer the wordplay, but decided not to do it, prevents one from hastily equating both terms. As Caragounis asserts, "The conscious juxtaposition of $\Pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\varsigma$ and $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\alpha$ in Mt 16:18 indicates that the two terms are used in their distinctive meanings, and that consequently the referent of $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\alpha$ is not $\Pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\varsigma$." Caragounis, 116. See also W. A. Wordsworth, "The Rock and the Stones," *EvQ* 20 (1948): 9-15.

³"The 'rock' here is Christ himself, as the context would seem to imply (16:15--Jesus Christ asking, 'who do you say I am?')." Strand, "Peter and Paul in Relationship to the Episcopal Succession," 224, n. 32. Indeed, the context of this passage is concerned with the person of Jesus rather than the person of Peter. Likewise, its structure highlights Jesus and His Messianic office, not Peter. See Caragounis, 69-87; J. Warren, "Was Simon Peter the Church's Rock?" *EvQ* 19 (1947): 196-210; and Frank Stagg, "Matthew," *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. Clifton J. Allen et al. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1969), 8:172, 173.

Moreover, the theological evidence of the entire New Testament indicates that the early church unanimously understood that Jesus Christ Himself is the underlying *petra* upon which the church is built, and all the apostles, including Peter along with the prophets, being the first layer of living stones in the church's spiritual edifice.¹ There is little doubt that Cullmann adopted this position after solid and serious study of the issues involved. Yet, one wonders if a greater concern for the unity of the Scriptural testimony would not had led him to a Christological interpretation which has enjoyed strong support throughout history.²

¹Eph 2:19-21. *Petra* is used figuratively five more times in the New Testament, all of which clearly refer to Christ (Matt 7:24, 25; Luke 6:48; Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 10:4; and 1 Pet 2:8), a fact which led Cullmann himself to acknowledge that "rightly understood, Christ alone is *πέτρα*" (Cullmann, "*πέτρα*," 6:99). Moreover, New Testament writers unanimously identify Christ as the cornerstone in the foundation of the church (Matt 21:42-44; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17, 18; Rom 9:32, 33; Eph 2:20). Paul emphatically affirms that "no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11). See also Seitz, 330-33; Max Wilcox, "Peter and the Rock: A Fresh Look at Matthew XVI. 17-19," *NTS* 22 (1976): 74; Almoni Peloni, "The Stone and the Rock," *The Expositor*, 2d Series, 6 (1883): 438, 439. Reviewing Cullmann's book on Peter, G. Johnston states that the rock in Judaism was "the Messiah, as in Paul (1 Cor 3:11), and I should prefer to think that Jesus as the Son of Man, the servant Messiah, was the Rock on which God's Kingdom is built." Johnston, 55.

²See for instance Origen *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* 12.10 and 12.11 (ANF, 10:456); Augustine *Sermons* 76.1 (NPNF, 6:340); *ibid.*, 147.3 (NPNF, 6:545); *idem*, *Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John* 124.5 (NPNF, 7:450); *idem*, *Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John* 10.1 (NPNF, 7:520); *idem*, *Expositions on*

Likewise, and still on the basis of his interpretation of the Matthean pericope, Cullmann's view that Peter's primacy was based on a special commission of the Lord is another motif of concern. There is little doubt that, according to the Book of Acts, Peter exerted a ministry of leadership during the first years of the apostolic church, probably some sort of *primus inter pares* leadership. The view that this leadership was founded on a specific divine mandate conferring to Peter the primacy over the entire church, however, seems to go beyond the

the Book of Psalms 61.3 (NPNF, 8:249); idem, Retractations 1.20.1 (trans. Mary Inez Bogan, FC, 60:90); Theodoret, Letters 146 (NPNF, 2d series, 3:318); Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 2a 2ae, q. 174, a. 6 (45:91); idem, Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. 2, lecture 6 (trans. Matthew L. Lamb [Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966], 113, 114); Martin Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments," in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Bernhard Erling and Conrad Bergendoff (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958-86), 40:219; idem, "Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil," in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Eric W. Gritsch (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958-86), 41:314; John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 2:291, 295; and Ulrich Zwingli, "Defense Called Archeteles, in Which Answer Is Made to an Admonition that the Most Reverend Lord Bishop of Constance (Being Persuaded Thereto by the Behavior of Certain Wantonly Factious Persons) Sent to the Council of the Great Minster at Zurich Called the Chapter," in Ulrich Zwingli Early Writings, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1987), 252.

New Testament evidence.¹ One may wonder if Cullmann paid sufficient attention to the fact that the prerogatives bestowed upon Peter by the Lord were granted to the other disciples as well.² Moreover, is not the fact that even

¹"There are, in fact, no so-called attestations to Petrine primacy in the NT that can *unequivocally* be considered as furnishing evidence of Peter's having had ecclesiastical primacy over the rest of Christ's twelve disciples." Strand, "Peter and Paul in Relationship to the Episcopal Succession," 224, n. 32. Even if one considers Peter's condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) in connection to the promise related to binding and loosing (Matt 16:19; see Cullmann, Peter, 58, 231), this is far from enough to prove that Christ conferred the primacy to Peter. Moreover, in the light of Acts 8:22-24 it would be very difficult to maintain that Peter had a permanent office of supreme spiritual authority. See J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing (Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23)," JBL 102 (1983): 115, 116.

²The promise concerning binding and loosing is not the exclusive prerogative of Peter, since all the other disciples also received it (Matt 18:18; John 20:23). As to the "keys," Cullmann himself affirms that they refer to the preaching of the gospel which, by transmitting the knowledge of God's plan of salvation, opens the door of entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Cullmann, Peter, 209, 210. Jesus pointed out that even the Pharisees, because of their knowledge of God's will revealed in the Old Testament, had access to "the key of knowledge" of how to enter the kingdom (Luke 11:52; Matt 23:13-15). By revealing the way to the kingdom of heaven, the Lord granted the key of knowledge to His followers (Matt 11:25; John 14:4), who received the command to preach the gospel to all nations, thus opening the kingdom of heaven to everyone who listens and accepts the gospel (Matt 28:18-20). Hence, it is hardly possible to maintain that Peter received a special and supreme authority over the other disciples. See D. A. Carson, "Matthew," The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8:370-74; and Henry Wansbrough, "St. Matthew," A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, rev. ed., ed. Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969), 936. As Ulrich Luz affirms, "Peter plays no other role and receives no other benediction than all the other

after the Caesarea Philippi episode the apostles were involved in repeated arguments about "which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24; Matt 18:1; Mark 9:33-35) an indication that none of them, not even Peter, understood Christ's words as conferring to the latter the primacy over the other disciples?¹

As noted earlier in the case of the rock,² Cullmann's view of Peter's primacy in the early church does not necessarily entail an approval on his part of the Roman Catholic view on apostolic succession. Still, its similarity to the latter³ seems to have facilitated his recent favorable attitude towards the Roman Pontiff as a continuator of the Petrine model. This author's application of Matt 16:17-19 to the leadership personified by the pope is not without problems. That he may have

disciples." Luz, 45.

¹"The Gospel According to St. Matthew," Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953-57), 5:431. As the Roman Catholic exegete B. van Iersel asserts, "Later in the gospel [according to Matthew], an unfavourable judgment is passed on a structure in the Church in which individuals in authority are able to make decisions. In 20:25-28 and 23:8-12, on the other hand, it is stated emphatically that Jesus' Church is a community of brothers (and sisters in 12:50) and that no one is greater than another in that community." Bas van Iersel, "Who According to the New Testament Has the Say in the Church?" in Who Has the Say in the Church? Concilium, no. 148, ed. Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 12.

²See pp. 297, 298 above.

³See p. 286 above.

felt it necessary to change his view on the subject is one thing. One cannot help but wish, however, that Cullmann had explained on what basis he concludes that the statement he made some thirty years earlier was no longer valid, namely that a future application of Jesus' saying "is neither explicitly nor by suggestion limited to one see."¹ Though he prefers the term model to the concept of succession as a reference to the continuation of a Petrine service, this particular terminology is no less confusing and misleading for some.² If one keeps in mind his own

¹Cullmann, Peter, 219.

²At least two times (Cullmann, "Renouveau biblique et oecuménisme," 118; and Oscar Cullmann to Maffei, quoted in Maffei, 172) this author employed the term "succession." In 1952 Cullmann had indicated that to employ the expression "apostolic succession" to designate the continuation of the church's leadership by elders and bishops would be to use an "ambiguous expression" which "opens the way to misunderstandings." Cullmann, Peter, 224. Agreeing with this appraisal, T. W. Manson maintains that "we ought seriously to consider whether it would not be a good thing to dispense with the misleading term 'apostolic succession'." Manson, The Church's Ministry, 58, n. 37. For O. Karrer, the question "whether the theological term 'apostolic succession'--a later historical invention--is the most perfect term conceivable is a debatable question." Karrer, Peter and the Church, 62. While avoiding, to some extent, the ambiguities of the expression "apostolic succession," the term "model" faces the problem that the New Testament does not provide a clear-cut pattern of church organization to be imitated. See Knox, 2-4; and Schlink, "Apostolic Succession," 61, 62. Even the "Petrine trajectory" so much in vogue today (see Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House; New York: Paulist Press, 1973], 163-68) is far from satisfactory from the perspective of the New Testament data.

observation made in 1957, that "as soon as we Protestants introduce a plan for unity in the sense of subjection under the Papacy in whatever form, we would be no longer Protestants and would betray our basic conviction,"¹ one cannot help but wonder if with his recent proposal Cullmann is not, to some extent at least, departing from the principle of "obedient listening" to the authors of Scripture.²

Cullmann's recent willingness to accept a papal office subordinated to the primacy of the gospel as a continuation of the Petrine model, is probably due, at least in part, to his ecumenical concerns for Christian unity. This approach, however, is not without its difficulties.³ Is not the application of Paul's notion of spiritual gifts to entire churches of divergent and at times opposite doctrinal confessions a matter very much open to discussion?⁴ May one not also wonder whether by advocating a concept of unity which encourages the coexistence of differing and even antithetical doctrines,

¹Cullmann, "The Early Church and the Ecumenical Problem," 183.

²See p. 179 above.

³See André de Halleux and Ted Peters as referred to on p. 236 above.

⁴Though sharing a concern for church's unity similar to Cullmann's, Congar expressed reservations regarding the former's application of Paul's teaching to entire churches. See Congar, Fifty Years of Catholic Theology, 78, 79.

Cullmann is not endorsing a relativism which could undermine any attempt to establish objectively the truth regarding, in this case, apostolic succession?

As a whole, Cullmann's approach to apostolic succession demonstrates his desire to uphold the *sola Scriptura* principle. Maintaining that the apostles' witness is not continued through successors but through their writings,¹ and emphasizing the need to go directly to those writings without the intermediary agency of an infallible teaching office,² he leaves little room to doubt that for him the Bible is the sole and supreme norm. Yet, his view on the authority and reliability of Scripture, however, seems, to some degree at least, negatively affected by his methodology and his concept of revelation. As to the former, one may wonder to what extent the basic postulate of form criticism--that the Gospels contain the oral tradition about Jesus as it developed itself to meet the needs of different Christian communities--is indeed compatible with Cullmann's assertion that the apostles' writings are "the immediate expression of their testimony as eye-witnesses" to Jesus Christ.³ While making it more difficult to accept the New Testament writings at face value as bearers of the direct

¹See pp. 241, 242, 269 above.

²See pp. 278-80 above.

³Cullmann, "The Tradition," 80, 81.

revelation in Jesus Christ granted to the apostles, form criticism has provided Roman Catholic theologians with an additional instrument to challenge Cullmann's views on apostolic succession.¹

In regard to Cullmann's view of revelation as event, interpretation, and reinterpretation, by maintaining that Scripture includes "distorting influences involved in the interpretation" of salvation history events,² "is not Cullmann forced to deny his basic premise that *both* event and interpretation constitute revelation?"³ One may also ask if the idea of "distortions" in the biblical writings, together with the assertion that today we must reinterpret past salvation history from the vantage point of its present development,⁴ does not tend to give only a relative value to the apostles' "interpretation." To what extent is he

¹See p. 246 above.

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 96. See also idem, "The Tradition," 80, 81. Cullmann considers these "distortions" as an unavoidable consequence of "the human situation." Idem, Salvation in History, 97. In Dorman's view, however, "to say that the biblical writers *had to* distort the meaning of certain revelatory events simply because they were human" is "not a compelling argument." He maintains that "Cullmann's overall position would be more coherent if he dispensed with the principle that human statements must be subject to distortion simply because they are human." Dorman, 305, 306 (italics in the original).

³Dorman, 303 (italics in the original). See other problems of Cullmann's view of revelation in p. 187 above.

⁴See pp. 219-22 above.

not implying that the Scriptures are not the final authority when he insists on the need for continuous reinterpretations? How different is this from the Roman Catholic understanding of tradition comprising the official pronouncements of the church's magisterium?¹ Has he given sufficient attention to the fact that later reinterpretations could likely depart from the original divinely intended meaning of the revelation events? It seems that Cullmann's goal of "complete subjection to the text" of Scripture² would have been more fully achieved by avoiding the use of a historical-critical methodology, and by distinguishing more clearly between normative revelation and its subsequent interpretation.

¹Drawing on Cullmann's conception of revelation as event-interpretation-reinterpretation, Congar affirms that the prophets and apostles gave, in written form, "une interprétation inspirée" of salvific events. "Mais l'interprétation continue dans l'histoire, sous l'assistance du Saint-Esprit: c'est la Tradition, comprenant les interventions majeures du magistère pastoral." He maintains that the divine economy of revelation "ne peut pas s'arrêter au moment de la Révélation scripturaire." The Dominican theologian insists that "on ne peut pas, dans une vision intégrale des actes par lesquels Dieu révèle son Propos, faire une . . . coupure entre un moment apostolique . . . et la suite positive de l'histoire." Congar, "L'Église de Hans Küng," 699, 700. He sees "a continuity between the constitutive period of revelation and the time of the church," which includes "the revelation that takes place in the Tradition and the life of the Church." Hence, in his view "the charism of infallibility which follows the inspired character of the Scriptures is consistent with that of the Church." Idem, The Word and the Spirit, 57, 58, 65.

²Cullmann, Salvation in History, 70.

Conclusion

In the contemporary debate on apostolic succession, Yves Congar and Oscar Cullmann stand as commanding representatives of the Roman Catholic and Protestant views. While deeply concerned with their respective confessional faiths, both theologians made distinctive contributions to the discussion, reshaping the issues traditionally involved in the subject. Thus, Congar emphasized the indissoluble interrelationship between the structure and the community of believers, which is a "structured community," within which the apostolic succession of ministers appears as an indispensable agent of salvation. Along with this, he increasingly recognized the need to include apostolicity of doctrine as an essential component of apostolic succession. Cullmann, on the other side, approaching apostolic succession from the perspective of salvation history, developed new means of emphasizing the uniqueness of the apostles as eyewitnesses to the direct revelation which occurred once and for all in Christ at the time of the incarnation.

The new climate created by the Second Vatican Council, in which both scholars were actively involved, as well as the development of the ecumenical movement, to which both theologians devoted interest and energy, may have induced these authors to soften the emphasis of their

positions, leading them to come closer to each other's view on several points. This rapprochement, however, does not include their basic postulates, which remain unchanged even in their latest writings. Thus, though Congar accentuated more and more the community aspect of the church and the Holy Spirit's action, he still maintains that the "structure" given by Christ to the church is part of her essential nature.¹ To give up this dimension would have been tantamount to renouncing Roman Catholicism.² Similarly, while more recently he revealed his willingness to accept the pope, subordinated to the primacy of the gospel, as leader of the community of churches following the model of Peter's leadership, Cullmann still maintains his view on the uniqueness of the apostolate as an office that cannot be transferred to successors, hence refusing to recognize the pope as Peter's successor by divine right. In fact, to do so would be equivalent to giving up

¹Reacting against a hierarchical view of the church, Congar suggested the notion of communion as the starting point for ecclesiology. See Congar, "My Path-Findings," 169-80. Had he followed this proposal to its last consequences, he would probably have abandoned the idea of the ministry in apostolic succession as an essential component of the structure of the church. His later writings, however, give evidence that he still maintains the institutional dimension in his ecclesiology. See pp. 75-80 above.

²In the words of S. P. Mc Henry, "it is clear to him [Congar] that if he surrenders the primacy of the hierarchical priesthood he would be very similar to the position of the Reformers before him." Mc Henry, 209.

Protestantism.¹ Even so, and from this perspective, his later view leaves him in an uneasy position to justify the Protestant postulate on that point.

The root of the divergences between Congar's and Cullmann's convictions is to be found in the point of departure each theologian assumed. Congar seems to have correctly appraised the situation when he writes that "the Protestant starts from the Word of God [i.e., the Bible], . . . while the Catholic starts from the reality of Christianity itself which reaches him in and by the Church, ever since the apostles."² Thus, while Cullmann begins with the New Testament data concerning the apostles, Congar starts with a specific conception of the church based on the historical reality and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. From this perspective, the Dominican theologian sees in the Lord's sayings, as recorded in the New Testament, the creation of the apostolate as an institutional office at the foundation of the structure of the church, a permanent office to be inherited by the later episcopate.³ Reading the New

¹Oscar Cullmann, Message to Catholics and Protestants, trans. Joseph A. Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 20, 21. See also p. 337 above.

²Congar, The Meaning of Tradition, 117.

³For Congar "it is not so much the text [of Scripture] that explains the Church's reality as the reality that explains and makes clear the text." Congar, The Mystery of the Church, xii. See also idem, Tradition

Testament without this institutional presupposition, the Protestant Cullmann sees the apostles simply as unique witnesses to Christ, who as receptors of divine revelation became the unique foundation of the church.¹

In this context, the basic presuppositions underlying the concept of apostle have far-reaching theological and practical consequences.² Thus, with

and Traditions, 409; and Nichols, Yves Congar, 50. This pattern seems to be evidenced in Congar's approach to the apostles, whom he sees from the point of view of the institutional church. "Jesus instituted an apostleship and invested the Twelve with its powers. This was an hierarchical, juridical mission, which made the foundation of the Church as an institution and gave it a sort of framework." Congar, Lay People, 326.

¹In spite of all the ecumenical rapprochement, Congar recognizes that "une différence de portée générale demeure: tandis que les catholiques lisent volontiers, dans les dits du Seigneur, une visée institutionnelle, les protestants ne voient guère, dans les mêmes passages, qu'un épisode de portée tout historique et personnelle. Une question préjudicielle semble implicitement résolue (cf. la Vorverständnis, préconception!): Jésus a-t-il ou n'a-t-il pas voulu et fondé une Église? Ou bien l'Église est-elle oeuvre du Saint-Esprit?" Congar, L'Église une, 243. Similarly, the Dominican theologian maintains that "si les protestants, même pour les apôtres, les Douze, voient tout sous l'angle de la foi personnelle, c'est qu'ils ne pensent jamais l'Église comme institution, mais seulement comme assemblée des hommes fidèles." Idem, Vraie et fausse réforme, 412. See also *ibid.*, 426, 427.

²Beneath the issue of apostolic succession one finds the basic question of authority in the church. Well aware of this problem, Congar points out that the Reformers reproached the Roman Catholic Church of having taken the place of Scripture, God's revelation, as the supreme norm. On the other hand, he thinks that the Reformers misunderstood and ignored "the reality of the instituted and assisted apostolic ministry." Congar, Tradition and Traditions, 469. In his view, Protestant theology usually declines to consider "the ministry as a prolongation, into the time of the Church, of the

Congar, the Roman Catholic Church sees the apostolate continued through successors, who wield the apostles' teaching, priestly, and ruling powers in the church. This is the final and authoritative word in the definition and interpretation of the deposit of faith. In contrast, for Cullmann and the churches ensuing from the Protestant Reformation, "the continuance of the apostles in the period of the Church, is not the person of a bishop who at any given time is the living link in an unbroken chain of succession, but rather the Apostolic Scripture."¹ The latter stands as the sole and sufficient norm for the faith and practice of the Christian believer.

While showing that Roman Catholics and Protestants can learn from each other's approach, Congar's and Cullmann's pilgrimage seems to me to demonstrate that a complete convergence of both views into a synthesis is hardly possible. To assume, as Roman Catholics usually do, that Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium in apostolic succession can be granted the same normativeness seems unrealistic, for in practice any attempt to do so

apostolate instituted by Christ." Ibid., 485. As A. Siegfried remarked, the protest of the Reformation was made "against the very conception of a Church holding her authority by a transmitted delegation." André Siegfried, address delivered before the Académie Française, March 22, 1956, quoted in D'Ormesson, The Papacy, 78.

¹Cullmann, Peter, 225.

tends to end up putting the teaching office over both Scripture and tradition as the final authority.

The very existence of the church depends on her faithfulness to the gospel of salvation revealed by Jesus Christ to the apostles. The knowledge of this gospel is accessible to us primarily through the apostles' writings gathered in Holy Scripture. Though tradition can be a helpful interpretive guide and safeguard against novel and private interpretations of Scripture, it can never be the foundation of the church's faith and practice. Likewise, while some form of a teaching office is necessary to maintain the unity of faith in the church, because of its fallible character such an office has to subordinate itself to the rule of Scripture, regardless of whether it belongs to a line of apostolic succession or not. As the divinely inspired and normative deposit of the truth of the Christian revelation, the Bible possesses a unique authority and is the supreme norm in the church.

The recognition of the fact that there is a certain value in tradition and a teaching office in the church, however, poses new questions which require careful consideration. Thus, within the context of the current debate, it is necessary to define anew how respect for tradition and for the church's magisterium squares up with the supremacy of Scripture.

Recently and in various circles, there has been a growing tendency to understand apostolic succession essentially as the church's faithfulness to the apostles' teachings. Hence, it seems urgent that further attention be paid to this view, which strikes me as more in harmony with the New Testament testimony, and with the rationale of second-century Christian writers on the subject. Besides, and in the same context, serious consideration should be given to whether, from a scriptural perspective, the true evidence and sign of apostolic succession is indeed the ministry in an unbroken chain of ordinations, or rather the believers' faith, practice, and life actuated by the apostles' spirit, believing and obeying the truth taught by the apostles.

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