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"MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST" AND "CATHOLIC CHURCH" EXACTLY COEXTENSIVE.

A survey of the revealed concept of the Mystical Body, as distinct from the analogous concepts which are the "extended senses" of the term.

INTEREST in the doctrine of the Mystical Body has become a distinctive feature in the theological writing of our time. Through the widening stream of discussion, however, which the doctrine evokes there runs a noticeable current of vagueness and uncertainty. Who, precisely, are members of the Mystical Body? What are the *essential* elements of the concept of that Body? Much of the effectiveness of the rapidly expanding literature on the subject is lost, because it fails to remove the uncertainty which, in so many minds, is crystallized into these two questions. The interesting series of questions which recently appeared in THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW, concerning those in mortal sin and their membership in the Mystical Body, reflected one aspect of the uncertainty. But I think it is also true that the answers which were given reflected the general uncertainty, in their turn.

Is this vagueness unavoidable? Are the sources of our theological knowledge such, that this uncertainty is inevitable? Quite the opposite is true. The Mystical Body is, of course, a mystery; but its exact identity and the catalog of the essential elements which enter into its concept are not mysteries. Many of the younger readers of the REVIEW will remember the lectures of Fr. Sebastian Tromp, S.J., in the class rooms of the Gregorain University in Rome; and many will doubtless recall

this eminent Professor's insistence that the uncertainty in this matter is as unfortunate as it is unwarranted.[1] Because I am persuaded of the truth of this distinguished scholar's words, because I feel that the current vagueness about the precise meanings of the doctrine of the Mystical Body lays a grievous and wholly needless handicap upon the zeal of many priests, who would, after the example of St. Paul and the Fathers, inspire the faithful from the pulpit with the tremendous meanings of this revealed doctrine,[2] I submit these pages to the REVIEW. Their purpose is to show how exactly St. Paul and the authoritative teaching of the Holy See define the nature and extent of the Mystical Body of Christ and how unnecessary, therefore, is the hesitation—and even the confusion—which too often accompany its explanation today.

The clarity of thought which, in this matter of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, is so easily possible and so much to be desired, requires of us three things. First, we must realize that there exists not one, but many concepts of the Mystical Body. Each of these concepts is clear and distinct in itself. Confusion comes only when the attempt is made, consciously or unconsciously, to fuse several of them into one which will combine the essential features of all, or to predicate of one of them something which can be truly predicated only of a very different concept of the Mystical Body. Thus we can predicate of the Pauline concept of the Mystical Body identity with the Church of Christ; but to predicate the same of certain other concepts of Christ's Body not only must lead to confusion but actually has, in the past, led to heresy. It could not be otherwise, in view of the self-evident fact that the elements of many of these concepts are mutually incompatible.

In the second place, clear and correct thinking about the Mystical Body demands that we recognize, among these many different concepts, one which is unique in its dignity and pos-

[1] Cf. Fr. Tromp's own words, in *Corpus Christi Quod Est Ecclesia* (Rome, 1937), p. 156, "Non agitur, dico, de re difficili, vel saltem non de maiore difficultate quam in qua versantur ii, quibus explicandus est conceptus Ecclesiae."

[2] Cf. the words of the Vatican *Schema* which was left among the unfinished business of the Council at the time of its suspension: "Ecclesiam esse corpus Christi mysticum . . . haec est, quae, ut fidelium mentibus obiiciatur atteque defixa haereat, satis numquam commendari potest, praecellens Ecclesiae species . . ." Coll. Lac., VII, col. 567.

sessed of an authority transcending that of all the rest. Among these many concepts of the Mystical Body, one is divinely revealed truth, while the others are of human origin. That which is revealed truth is the concept of the Mystical Body which St. Paul teaches. All the others, the concepts by which saintly men have sought to explain the relations between our Saviour and different classes of men, must be given a lower position and authority. These are the extended senses of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. They are analogous to the revealed concept. The revealed concept, however, the Pauline concept, is alone the *proper* concept of the Body of Christ.

The third indispensable requirement, if the uncertainty which so often attaches to this doctrine is to be dispelled, is an accurate understanding of St. Paul's concept of the Mystical Body. Given such an understanding of the precise meaning of the Apostle, given a steadfast realization that this alone is the proper meaning of the term and that, as such, it must never be confounded with other concepts of the Mystical Body which prescind from, or exclude, various of its essential elements, the uncertainty of which we speak will be found to have been destroyed at its source.

The genuine meaning of the Pauline concept of the Mystical Body can be summed up in three assertions. First, and the most general: The Mystical Body is the Church, in which the faithful are joined as members to Christ, the Head. Second, and more precise: all Catholics, and only Catholics, are the members who constitute the Mystical Body. Third, and the reason why the Mystical Body is a "theandric" being: the ultimate internal principle of life in this Body, that which is called its Soul, is the Holy Ghost.

I.

Let us consider first the words with which our Saviour Himself, prior to St. Paul, spoke of the union between Himself and the faithful. From His lips, as well as from those of the Baptist, we have the fact of this union allegorically described as the union between a Bridegroom and Bride,[3] and Christ Himself indicates the *intimacy* of such a union with these words:

[3] Matth. 9: 15; John 3: 29.

" now they are not two, but one flesh." [4] In the discourse on the Last Judgment, He teaches that the union between Himself and His " least brethren " is such that, at least morally, they are identified with Him. " Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." [5] It is, further, a *vital* union, one which includes an inflow of life and power from Christ to those who are united with Him, without which vital influx these latter are incapable of any supernatural life or action. " I am the vine; you the branches . . . without me you can do nothing." [6] Finally, Christ teaches us that this union is also a *visible* thing, since it is intended by Him as a *sign* " that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." [7] Thus from the lips of our Saviour Himself we learn that the union between men and their Redeemer is intended to be a *visible, living* union, as *intimate* as the union between those who are " now . . . not two, but one flesh."

The reality and the intimacy of the union between Christ and the faithful were vividly impressed upon St. Paul in the first words which he ever heard from the lips of Christ. Going to Damascus to continue his persecution of the Church, he heard, through his sudden blindness, the words: " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? . . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." [8] Thus, in the very birth of his apostolate, the truth was borne in upon St. Paul that Christ and the Church of Christ were united, in some mystery of unity, into one and the same thing. For the remainder of his life, with ever increasing clarity and detail, the Apostle proclaimed the mystery of this unity as *the* great Mystery. To all mankind he announced it as " the mystery of Christ . . . the mystery which from ages has been hidden in God." [9] The burden of his mission became " the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ within you." [10] It is this mystery of the Whole Christ, as it is explained in detail by St. Paul, which we must now examine.

[4] Matth. 19: 6.
[5] Matth. 25: 40.
[6] John 15: 6.
[7] John 17: 20-23.
[8] Acts 9: 4-5.
[9] Eph. 3: 4-9, Westm. vers.
[10] Col. 1: 26-27, Westm. vers.

The grand fruit of the universal Redemption which was accomplished by Christ is represented by the Apostle as "one new Man." The Redeemer died for Jews and Gentiles "that he might make the two in himself *into one new man* . . . in one body . . . in himself." [11] Because of this, St. Paul tells the faithful: "Ye are all *one person* in Christ Jesus." [12] This one new Man, this "one Person", is a new creation upon the face of the earth. It is the "nova creatura" [13] which is the explanation of the passing of the Old Testament and the reason for the specific character of the New. In virtue of this new creation, this one new Man, "the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new." [14]

Of this one new Man, Christ is the Head and the Church is the Body. "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory . . . hath made him head over all the church, which is his body." [15] Nor is this union of Christ and the Church merely a static combination of accidentally united elements. It is a living, dynamic union in which Head and members mutually perfect one another, unto the fullness of the "one new Man." The source and, therefore, the quality of the life which animates this mystical "one Person" will be considered later, when we come to speak of the Soul of the Church. It is sufficient now to indicate that it is a *common* life, transforming all the diverse elements which constitute the Mystical Body into mutually perfective parts of the one living whole. The Head perfects the Body, as St. Paul writes in the Letter to the Ephesians: "The head, Christ . . . from him the body deriveth its increase, unto the building up of itself in charity." [16] In turn, the Head, Christ, is perfected and made complete by the Body which is His "fullness." [17] Finally, within the Body itself, the several members have mutual need of one another,

[11] Eph. 2: 15-16; italics mine.

[12] Gal. 3: 28, Westm. vers.—thus avoiding the inaccuracy of the Vulgate "unum". Italics mine.

[13] Gal. 6: 15. Note that, in the preceding citation from Ephesians, the verb is the verbal form (*κτίση*) of the same word (*κτίσις*) which is here rendered "creatura".

[14] II Cor. 5: 17.

[15] Eph. 1: 17-22; cf. Col. 1: 24.

[16] Eph. 4: 16, Westm. vers.

[17] Eph. 1: 23.

and glory in each other's well-being as such suffers in the distress of any other.[18]

It is proper, and in accordance with the Divine plan, St. Paul explains, that the Mystical Body, as a living thing, should grow and increase; and this in two ways, quantitatively and, if we may so speak, qualitatively. Quantitatively, it is to grow by ever adding to itself new members from among mankind,[19] and the divinely-instituted instrument of this growth is the Sacrament of Baptism by which men are incorporated into the one Mystical Body and made members of Christ.[20] Qualitatively, the Mystical Body is to grow into an ever greater conformity of its individual members to the Head, Christ, "till we all attain . . . to the full measure of the stature of Christ . . . and grow in all things into him who is the head, Christ." [21]

To this mystical "one Person", to the new creature who is this "perfect man",[22] St. Paul applies the name which is our Saviour's own, the name Christ. Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle illustrates the composition of the Church by comparing it with a human body, in which the many members, despite their multiplicity and their differences, are united into one harmonious whole. After describing this union of many into one as it exists in a human body, St. Paul does not conclude: "so also it is with the Church." Nor does he conclude, as one might expect: "so also it is with the Body of Christ." He says, simply: "so also it is with Christ" [23] and immediately proceeds to show how a like union of many different members into one is found to exist in the Church. To this instance of such usage by St. Paul, there might be added many of those texts in which the oft-repeated phrase "in Christ" occurs; for it is highly probable, if not certain, that these words also, in many cases, refer not merely to the Physical

[18] I Cor. 12: 20-31.

[19] Eph. 4: 11-13—"unto the building up of the body of Christ, till we all attain to the unity of the faith . . . to the perfect man, to the full measure of the stature of Christ." Westm. vers.

[20] I Cor. 12: 13—"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into body . . ." *Cf.* also Gal. 3: 27; Eph. 4: 6.

[21] Eph. 4: 14-15, Westm. vers.

[22] Eph. 4: 13.

[23] I Cor. 12: 12.

Christ but directly signify the Mystical Christ, in whom the Incarnate Word "is the savior of his body." [24]

To sum up, before proceeding to the next point of our inquiry, what we have so far seen of the meaning of the revealed concept of the Mystical Body: there now exists in the world, as a result of the universal Redemption, "a new creature", a mystical Person, a new and perfect Man, the Mystical Christ. This is a living, growing being whose different parts share a common life and are mutually perfective of each other. In the unity of this new Man, Christ is the Head and those who are united to Him are the members of His Mystical Body. And this Mystical Body is the Church.

II.

But what did St. Paul mean by "the Church" when he described it as the Body of Christ? He meant the *visible, organized* Church, the visible unity of many different members in one visible whole. In other words, he described as the Body of Christ exactly what the Vatican *Schema* declared the Mystical Body of Christ to be,—"hanc visibilem conspicuamque societatem . . . totam in se collectam penitusque cohaerentem, *in sua conspicua unitate* indivisum ac indivisibile corpus praeferre, quod est ipsum corpus mysticum Christi." [25] Although some few of the Fathers who participated in the Vatican Council objected to this exact identification of the Mystical Body with the visible Church, we shall see, both from the words of St. Paul and from the explanation of his words by the Holy See, that the theologians who prepared the *Schema* for the Council reflected the mind of the Apostle unerringly.

There are several passages in which St. Paul explains in detail why the Church is the Body of Christ. In every instance it is clear that he is dealing with the Church as a union of many different visible elements into one visible, organized whole. The Apostle enumerates in these passages the various charismatic gifts by which the many members are made different, but mutually complementary, organs of the one Body.

[24] Eph. 5:23. We may here remark the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, who says that St. Paul applied the name "Christ" to the Church not once but "saepius": *Vita Moysis*, Migne, PG, XLIV, col. 386.

[25] Coll. Lac., VII, col. 569; italics mine.

Upon analysis, one fact is found to be everywhere characteristic of these enumerations. The elements which he mentions are always visible elements; the organs of which the Mystical Body is represented as fashioned are visible elements of the visible, organized Church.

Let us glance at the two most important of these passages. In the first,[28] all of the seven elements which the Apostle describes as entering into the diversified organization which makes of the Church one Body are visible elements. They are: members to whom is given a prophetic office, others who are teachers, others who are set up as rulers, others whose function is ministerial, and others to whom are given various charismatic offices, all visible, whose operations might today be described as Catholic Action.

Analysis of the second passage reveals the same fact. In this passage, which comprises the entire twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, there are two such enumerations and again we find that all of the elements which are listed, —nine in each enumeration—are visible components of a visible organization. St. Paul makes it plain in both of these passages that he calls the Church the *Body* of Christ because of its *organization;* and, describing that organization in detail, he makes it also clear that it is the *visible* organization of the Church to which he refers. In other words, when he spoke of "the Body" he used the word according to its obvious meaning,—the visible, organized part of a visible living thing.

Here, for the first time, we turn from the words of St. Paul to the authoritative teaching of the Holy See. From the time of St. Leo the Great (440-461) to the present, there is not one century, save possibly the eighth, which does not yield to the searcher one or more papal documents in which light is thrown upon the true meaning of the revealed concept of the Mystical Body of Christ. Of this wealth of documents we select one which is particularly relevant to the present point of our discussion. We find, in this document, a brief but comprehensive explanation of the Pauline concept. We find, furthermore, explicit confirmation of the point we have just been making. Not only is it the visible Church which is called

[28] Rom. 12: 3-8.

by Holy Scripture the Body of Christ: St. Paul describes the Church as a Body, the Holy See explains, *precisely because* the Church is visible!

The document which we cite is the Encyclical "*Satis cognitum*", of Pope Leo XIII.[27] The Holy Father explains, in the first pages of the Encyclical, the essentially dual character of the Church of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church. It is made up, he teaches, of a visible, external element and an invisible, spiritual element.[28] Elaborating upon this fundamental fact, the Pontiff then proceeds to explain the essential nature of the Church and the meaning of the revealed concept of the Mystical Body.

The dual nature of the Church, composed as it is of a visible and an invisible element, is given as the reason why it is called in Revelation the Body of Christ. It is the *Body* of Christ precisely because it is a visible thing. It is the Body *of Christ* because it lives with Christ's life. In the Pope's own words: "Quibus de causis Ecclesiam cum *corpus,* tum etiam *corpus Christi* tam crebro sacrae litterae nominant: *Vos autem estis corpus Christi.*[29] Propter eam rem quod corpus est, oculis cernitur Ecclesia: propter quod est Christi, vivum corpus est . . . quia eam tuetur ac sustentat, immissa virtute sua, Iesus Christus." [30]

The Pontiff then describes again the dual essence of the Church, this time in the light of the revealed concept of the Church as the Mystical Body, as the one new Man. As, in a human being, neither body nor soul is, by itself, the man, so neither the visible part of the Church nor the invisible part is, by itself, the Church of Jesus Christ. "Nimirum alterutram esse posse Iesu Christi Ecclesiam tam repugnat, quam solo corpore, vel anima sola constare hominem. Complexio copulatioque earum duarum velut partium prorsus est ad veram Ecclesiam necessaria, sicut fere ad naturam humanam intima animae corporisque coniunctio." [31]

[27] 29 June, 1896, *Acta Sanct. Sed.*, XXVIII, 708-739.
[28] *Ibid.*, 709.
[29] 1 Cor. 12: 27.
[30] *Ibid.*, 710.
[31] *Ibid.*

As this duality, this union of visible and invisible parts into one whole, is of the essence of the Church, so it is of the essence of the proper concept of the Mystical Body. The Pope makes this clear by paralleling the ancient heresies about the Physical Christ with the more recent errors concerning the true nature of the Mystical Christ. As our Saviour was possessed not merely of a visible human nature, not merely of an invisible divine nature, but constituted by the hypostatic union of the two, so the Mystical Body is not merely a visible thing, nor merely an invisible supernatural thing, but constituted in its essence by the union of the two. Leo writes: "Sicut Christus, caput et exemplar, non omnis est, si in eo vel humana dumtaxat spectetur natura visibilis, quod Photiani ac Nestoriani faciunt: vel divina tantummodo natura invisibilis, quod solent Monophysitae: sed unus est ex utraque et in utraque natura cum visibili tum invisibili: sic corpus eius mysticum non vera Ecclesia est nisi propter eam rem, quod eius partes conspicuae vim vitamque ducunt ex donis supernaturalibus rebusque ceteris, unde propria ipsarum ratio ac natura efflorescit." [82]

Before returning to the pages of St. Paul and the next point of our inquiry, let us sum up clearly the point which we have just demonstrated, since it is the foundation of what will immediately follow. The Mystical Body of which St. Paul speaks and which, as a constituent part of Revelation, is explained by the magisterium of the Church, *is a visible* Body. When God reveals to us that the Church is the Body of His Son, it is the *visible, organized* Roman Catholic Church which is thus described as united to Christ, as its Head, in the ineffable unity of "one new Man". Without its visible organization the Church *might still be* "Mystical". But without its visible organization the Church could not be the Mystical *Body!*

III.

The question now arises: who are the *members* of the Mystical Body? Who, exactly, are they to whom has been given the priceless privilege of being made one with Christ, as with their Head? The answer to this question is implicit, but plain, in the explanation which St. Paul has already given of the essential

[82] *Ibid.*

visibility of the Mystical Body. If the Mystical Body is essentially a visible, organized thing, as the Apostle has described it and as the Holy See has so unequivocally declared it to be, no one can be a part of that Body who is not a part of the visible organization which that Body essentially is. But who are the parts, the members, of the visible organization of the Church, that visible organism which alone is described by St. Paul as "the Body of Christ"? All Catholics, and only Catholics! Non-Catholics who are in the state of grace or non-Catholics who are validly baptized have become the subjects, each according to his own spiritual state, of one or another *special relation* to the Mystical Body: but they are not *members* of it until they become members of the visible organism which it is, the visible Roman Catholic Church.

There remains another, and more concentrated, proof from the words of the Apostle, to demonstrate the exact coextension of the Mystical Body and the Roman Catholic Church. Here analysis serves to reveal the completeness of this coextension indicated by St. Paul in a few words. The proof takes us back to a basic truth of logic, from which science we learn that the "extension" of the predicate of any assertion can never be less than the "extension" of the subject of which such a predicate is affirmed. Thus "all citizens of Pennsylvania are American citizens" is a true assertion: but it would be false to say that "all American citizens are citizens of Pennsylvania", because the extension of the predicate in this case is less wide than the extension of the subject. From this comes the rule in logic that no proposition can be "simply converted"—that is, have its subject and predicate interchanged without change in either and without destroying the truth of the assertion—unless the two terms of the proposition are of exactly the same extension. For if either of the terms were of lesser extension than the other, that lesser one could not stand in the position of predicate to the other. But—a plain, unmistakeable fact!—St. Paul himself "simply converts" the proposition that the Roman Catholic Church is the Body of Christ. At one time he says that the Church is the Mystical Body;[33] at another, that the Mystical Body is the Church.[34] One of these statements would have to

[33] Eph. 1: 23.
[34] Col. 1: 24.

be false if one of these terms—the Church or the Mystical Body —were less extensive than the other.

To this plain meaning of St. Paul we must add a piece of plain speaking by the magisterium, in the person of the late great Pope, Pius XI. This authoritative document makes it definitely clear that non-Catholics, whatever their internal spiritual state, are not actual members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The reason why it is *impossible* that they should be actual members lies in the fact of their visible separation from the Church which is that Body; such visible division, the Pope says, is impossible among the members of the Mystical Body. In fact, the impossibility of such division in the Mystical Body is given by the Supreme Pontiff as the reason why such division is impossible among the actual members of the Church itself.

The document of which we speak is the Encyclical "*Mortalium animos*",[35] in which Pius XI discusses, and prohibits, participation by Catholics in those interdenominational congresses whose aim is a "union of the churches". There can never be question of a literal union of "churches", he explains, for there is only one true Church of Jesus Christ, and that is the Spouse of Christ which can never enter into an adulterous union with another that is not His Church. Neither, on the other hand, can there ever be real question of bringing together again parts of the one true Church which have, by some mischance, fallen into visible division. The Pope marvels, with St. Cyprian, that anyone could conceive of it as possible that the members of the one true Church could ever become thus visibly divided. And then—the point which we have already noted as precisely to our present purpose—he gives as the reason for the impossibility of such division among the members of the Church, the fact that the Church is the Mystical Body and such division among its members is impossible in that Body.

Since this point is such an important factor in the proper concept of the Mystical Body, let us quote the words of the Pontiff himself. Speaking of the "unam veram Christi Ecclesiam, omnibus sane conspicuam," in which the visible division of its members is thus impossible, Pius says: "Et idem sanctus Martyr (Cyprian) iure meritoque mirabatur vehementer, quod

[35] 6 Jan., 1928, *Acta Apost. Sed.*, XX, 5-16.

credere quispiam posset 'hanc unitatem de divina firmitate venientem, sacramentis caelestibus cohaerentem, scindi in Ecclesia posse et voluntatum collidentium divortio separari'. Cum enim corpus Christi mysticum, scilicet Ecclesia, unum sit, compactum et connexum, corporis eius physici instar, inepte stulteque dixeris mysticum corpus ex membris disiunctis dissipatisque constare posse: quisquis igitur cum eo non copulatur, nec eius est membrum nec cum capite Christo cohaeret." [36]

"Inepte stulteque" are, therefore, the blunt words with which the magisterium of the Church brands the assertion that such division as exists between Catholics and all non-Catholics, whatever their internal spiritual state, can exist between the members of the Mystical Body. The impossibility of such division among the members of the Mystical Body is the very reason for the impossibility of such division among the members of the Church itself!

This, then, must be said in summary, concerning the identity of the members of the Body of Christ. To be made one with our Saviour in the Mystical Body is to be made one with Him in a visible organization. This visible organization, His Church, is not only identified with the Mystical Body; it is *adequately* identified with it. The two are exactly coextensive. If Catholics in mortal sin were not members of that Body, then not "the Church" but only "part of the Church" would be the Body of Christ.[37] If non-Catholics, too, were actual members of the Mystical Body, then not "the Mystical Body" but only "part of the Mystical Body" would be the Church. And, in official confirmation of this last, we find the Holy See explaining that Catholics and non-Catholics, separated as they are, cannot be members together in the one Body of Christ. Who, then, are the members of the Mystical Body? All Catholics, and only Catholics!

IV.

It would be inadequate to say that the Mystical Body is a visible organization, and stop there. The Mystical Body is also a living organism. This brings us to the next point of our

[36] *Ibid.*, 14-15; the citation is from St. Cyprian, *De Ecclesiae Unitate*, 6.

[37] To maintain that such Catholics would no longer be included in the Church would be heresy. Cf. Denzinger, *Ench. Symb.*, nn. 1422a and 1515.

study, the source and the character of the life with which the Mystical Christ is vivified.

We need not delay here to prove the mere fact of life, a common life, within the Mystical Body. We have already seen the words of St. Paul in which the fact of that life, and the diversity of its operations in the different members, is set forth. What concerns us now is the source of that life. What, in other words, is the Soul which animates the Mystical Body, unto the formation of the "one new Man", the Whole Christ?

That is to be called the Soul, which, in any given Body, is the ultimate internal principle whence flows the unity, the organization and the life itself of that Body. According to the explanation of Revelation itself, this principle, in the case of the Mystical Body, is the Holy Ghost. Let us turn to the words of St. Paul in which this explanation is given.

Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle tells us that the Church is "one Body and one Spirit."[38] This one Spirit, the "Holy Ghost",[39] is the internal principle of life which vivifies the members of the Body, assimilates them to the Head in a common life, and unites them into the one Body which they constitute.[40] Depicting the role of the Holy Spirit still further, in His relation to the Mystical Body, St. Paul explains that it is He who, "dividing to everyone according as he will",[41] effects the diversity and, at the same time, the harmonious cooperation of the members of the Body.[42] It is the Holy Ghost, in other words, who effects the very organization which makes the Body of Christ a true Body.

It must be noted, however, that all of this life-giving activity of the Holy Ghost in the Mystical Body is performed by Him only inasmuch as He is the "Spirit of Christ".[43] For it is Christ, the Head, of whose fullness we have received and from the riches of whose grace the members of the Body draw their life.[44] All the supernatural life which the Holy Ghost diffuses

[38] Eph. 4: 4. Westm. vers. annotation: "The 'Spirit' is the Holy Ghost, given to the Church so fully and so really as to be called by divines, after St. Paul, 'the Soul of the Church'."

[39] I Cor. 12: 3.

[40] Cf. Rom. 8: 11 and I Cor. 12: 13, together with Gal. 3: 27-28.

[41] I Cor. 12: 11.

[42] I Cor. 12: 1-31.

[43] Rom. 8: 9; cf. Gal. 4: 6.

[44] Eph. 1: 8; cf. John 1: 16; 15: 1ss.

through the Mystical Body derives from Christ the Head,[45] from whom alone all imbibe the life-giving Spirit.[46]

Thus it is the doctrine of St. Paul that the Holy Ghost, operating always as " the Spirit of Christ ", is the Soul of the Mystical Body. Nevertheless, the Apostle himself never employs the actual term " soul ", being content, perhaps, to let the word " Spiritus " speak for itself.

The authentic magisterium, however, has identified the Holy Ghost as the Soul of the Church and of the Mystical Body, in so many words. Pope Leo XIII, in the Encyclical *Divinum illud*,[47] describes the operations of the Holy Spirit in the universal Church and concludes with these words: " Atque hoc affirmare sufficiat, quod cum Christus sit caput Ecclesiae, Spiritus Sanctus sit eius anima: ' Quod est in corpore nostro anima, id est Spiritus Sanctus in Corpore Christi quod est Ecclesia.' " [48] By this authoritative expression of Catholic doctrine we have it indisputably established that the Soul of the Church and the Soul of the Mystical Body is one and the same, the Holy Ghost.

In striking contrast to the weight of authority, from the plain meaning of St. Paul's words and from the explicit teaching of the Holy See, which guarantees the doctrine that the Holy Ghost is the Soul of the Mystical Body and the Church, is the inadequacy of the arguments which are offered in defense of the alternate doctrine. This latter position, still to be found in the writings of many theologians, maintains that *sanctifying grace*, either by itself, or in conjunction with the theological virtues or in conjunction also with other invisible elements, such as authority, is the Soul of the Church which is the Mystical Body of Christ. The opposition between the two doctrines is, of course, more apparent than real. But, even apart from the external and conclusive fact of its non-conformity with the language of St. Paul, of the Fathers,[49] and of the magisterium, there are three inescapable difficulties inherent in the latter doctrine, none of which can be urged against

[45] Eph. 4: 16.

[46] I Cor. 10: 1-6, together with 12: 13.

[47] 9 May, 1897; *A.S.S.*, XXIX, 644-658.

[48] *Ibid.*, 650. The citation is from St. Augustine, *Serm. 187, de temp.*

[49] For detailed examples of Patristic usage, cf. *De Spiritu Sancto Anima Ecclesiae: testimonia selecta e Patribus Graecis, Text. et Docum.*, ser. theol., I (Univ. Greg., Rome, 1932) and *De Spiritu . . . e Patribus Latinis, ibid.*, VII.

the former. First, sanctifying grace is not *one thing*, numerically the same in the different members. While it is specifically the same in all, it is a numerically different thing in each and so can no more properly be called the Soul of the Mystical Body than "human life" can be said to make of all human beings one man. Secondly, grace cannot be correctly called the *ultimate* internal principle of life, for grace itself springs from a further internal principle, the Holy Ghost, indwelling in the Body. Thirdly, grace is not adequate to explain *all* the essential properties of the Mystical Body; it fails to explain, for instance, the infallibility of the magisterium, an essential function in the Mystical Body's life. But, aside from these intrinsic considerations, we are dealing here with a matter of theological truth. The argument which should settle the question is, therefore, the ultimately decisive theological argument, the dogmatic one, the argument from authority. And in this case legitimate authority, in the person of Pope Leo XIII, has definitely settled the question for us. The Soul of the Church, the Soul of the Mystical Body, is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost.

This would seem a proper place to mention the unfortunate manner of speaking, sometimes encountered in unscientific discussion of this question, which identifies the Soul of the Church as a *group* of all the just. We do not refer, of course, to the universally accepted phrase by which theologians describe all the just as "*pertaining* to the Soul of the Church". The view which we condemn is that which makes the group itself the Soul, and speaks of all the just, whether Catholics or not, as "members of the Soul" of the Church. Although this manner of speaking uses the word "Soul", it is really an invisible *body* which is described; and the Church is thus represented as an impossible monstrosity in which a visible Body is vivified by another, and invisible, body! This invisible body which is so described as the Soul of the Church is nothing else, when we examine it closely, than a Protestant concept of the true Church of Christ; it is precisely the concept which was condemned by the Church in the writings of Quesnel and of the Synod of Pistoia.[50] No soul, and least of all the Divine Soul

[50] The condemnations are recorded in Denz., nn. 1424, 1515.

of the Church, can be constituted of " members ". Members are *parts of a body*, and among the theologians who have merited recognition in the field of ecclesiology there is no one who makes his own or approves such a manner of speaking.[51]

No discussion of the doctrine of the Mystical Body can be complete without some recourse to the Fathers of the Church. Bearing in mind the four points which we have now established as essential to the revealed concept of the Mystical Body, let us turn for a moment to the pages of the first great champions of Catholic Truth and see if the same four characteristics are reflected there. And that we may bear them in mind, let us repeat the four now. The Mystical Body is the Church; it is, more explicitly, the visible, organized Church; its members are all Catholics and only Catholics; and the Holy Ghost is its Soul.

To the Fathers of the Church the Mystical Body of Christ was a reality ever present to their minds and on their lips. Explaining that this Body is *the Church*, they describe the familiar episode on the road to Damascus as the remonstrance which it is proper that the Head should make when the Body is unjustly struck.[52] They excoriate heresy and schism as the tearing apart of the Body of Christ,[53] thus identifying the *visible* Church as that Body. The heretics and schismatics themselves are described as no longer part of the Mystical Body,[54] and so it is indicated that *only Catholics* are members of that Body. On the other hand, Catholics in mortal sin are called the " feet " of the Mystical Body, soiled with the dust of earth,[55] or, less poetically, are described as diseased and gangrenous members, a source of shame and contagion to the whole Body; [56] and, by so speaking, the Fathers show that they consider *all Catholics* to be members of the Body of Christ. Finally, we may recall

[51] For example, cf. the disapproval voiced by De Guibert, S.J., *De Christi Ecclesia* (Rome, 1928), p. 133.

[52] Acts 9: 1-5. A vivid example is the comment of St. Augustine: " Calcato pede, clamat Caput "! Fr. Tromp, *op. cit.*, p. 78, lists many passages where St. Augustine speaks to this effect, together with similar instances from the writings of Origen, Athanasius, Basil, *et al.*

[53] Thus St. Clement of Rome, *Epist. 1 ad Cor.*, 46; Migne, *PG*, I, col. 304.

[54] St. Augustine, *Serm.* 5, 1; Migne, *PL*, XXXVIII, col. 53.

[55] St. Jerome, *Adv. Iov.* 2: 29; Migne, *PL*, XXIII, col. 340 (326). Cf. also St. Ambrose, *Epist.* 41: 26; *PL*, XVI, col. 1120.

[56] Thus Chrysostom, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Ven. Bede *et al.*

the passage in which we heard Pope Leo XIII make his own the words of St. Augustine, when he named the Holy Ghost as the *Soul* of the Mystical Body. While the outstanding feature of the Fathers' treatment of the doctrine of the Mystical Body is the lavish genius with which they applied the doctrine to all phases of the economy of Redemption, illustrating each with some one of the extended senses which the revealed concept itself suggests, such examples as the above will suffice to show that, in the midst of so many extended meanings, neither the Fathers nor their auditors ever lost sight of the *proper* and Pauline meaning of the doctrine.

We find, in the writings of the Fathers, discussion of a rather startling question which reminds us of a tremendous truth involved in the last point we considered, the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Church as its Soul. Because of this relationship, the Church, the Mystical Christ, is a *theandric* Being, fashioned after the image of its "caput et exemplar"[57] even in this supreme dignity! The Mystical Body is the union of a visible, human element and a divine, invisible element into the unity of one new Man, the Whole Christ, who is neither merely human nor divine alone, but both human and divine. When we find the Fathers seriously discussing the question, whether it is proper to *adore* the Church,[58] it is striking evidence of how clearly they appreciated and bore witness to this theandric quality of the Mystical Body.

St. Paul, also, indicates the theandric character of the Body of Christ. At times this appears in his description of the intimate union between its human element and the Blessed Trinity as a whole. Thus, to submit one example, he instructs the Ephesians: "through him (the Son) we . . . have access in one Spirit to the Father."[59] At other times, it is the individual presence and activity of each of the Three Divine Persons within the Mystical Body which is described. To the Holy Ghost the Apostle attributes all the manifold, most intimate operations which we have recently examined, a union so intimate that it can be truly called the relationship of a Soul to

[57] The phrase of Pope Leo XIII, from the Encyclical *Satis cognitum*, cited above.

[58] For a brief discussion of the Patristic doctrine concerning the question noted, cf. Tromp, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

[59] Eph. 2: 18.

its Body. From the Word Incarnate, made one with the Mystical Body as its Head, comes all the "nourishment" [60] and the "increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity." [61] Finally, the intimacy of our union with the First Person is brought out when St. Paul describes Him as "the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all." [62]

It is in this fact, the truth of its theandric nature, that the full supernatural splendor of the Roman Catholic Church appears. Having come, as it were, to this summit, where earth merges into heaven, we are in a position to look back over all the road we have traveled in this search after the true meaning of the revealed concept of the Mystical Body of Christ. What is that Body? Why is it called Christ's Body and who are its members? Whence comes the life with which it lives and breathes and has its being? Making our way through the words of St. Paul, through whom God made the revelation, and of the authoritative magisterium which God has given to us to explain it, we have considered all these questions and seen that they may be answered in no uncertain terms. The Mystical Body of Christ is the visible, organized Church which He purchased at the price of His Precious Blood and into whose veins He now makes that Blood to flow from our altars. Essentially visible and for that very reason called a Body, its visibility is the visibility of the Church, so that all Catholics and only Catholics are its members. It is Christ's Body because from Him, its Head, it draws its life, its nourishment, its growth, and the very Spirit which animates it, the Holy Ghost, its Soul. It is a Body whose human members are vivified by a Divine Soul so that the Church is made mystically "one Person",[63] a theandric "perfect Man",[64] the Whole Christ. It is the answer to our Saviour's sacerdotal prayer: "For them (the Apostles) . . . do I pray . . . for them also who through their word shall believe in me; that they all may be one . . . And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as we also are one: I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one." [65]

[60] Col. 2: 19.
[61] Eph. 4: 16.
[62] Eph. 4: 6.
[63] Gal. 3: 28, Westm. vers.
[64] Eph. 4: 13.
[65] John 17: 20–23.

V.

With the exact sense of the Pauline concept of the Mystical Body established, some practical reflexions and conclusions are in order. For instance, who are they who, in the concrete, come within the ambit of "all Catholics, and only Catholics"? This question takes us back to the treatise *de Ecclesia*, where we find it given the following answer. Among infants, Catholics are all those children, and only those, who have received the Sacrament of Baptism. Among adults, Catholics are all those, and only those, who are baptized and who, *in addition*, are actually united by the triple visible bond of external profession of the one Catholic Faith, obedience to the one authority of the Church, and communion in the one Catholic cult. Certainty in this matter falls short of completeness with regard to two problems. Does excommunication break the triple visible bond which is essential? Probably it does in the case of those who are completely excommunicated ("excommunicati vitandi"); certainly it does not in the case of those who have incurred a lesser excommunication. Probably, therefore—but only probably—those who have incurred the complete excommunication are no longer Catholics. Secondly, in the case of adults, it is not certain whether sincere internal faith must accompany the external profession of belief; more probably the occult heretic, as long as the triple external bond remains, continues to be actually a Catholic, though of course an unworthy one. Such is theology's description of the essential requirements for actual membership in the Church which, as we have demonstrated, is synonomous with actual membership in the Mystical Body.

Another reflexion, and one which is of immense importance, is this: the fact of membership in the Mystical Body, priceless as that privilege is, does not necessarily mean that one is in the state of sanctifying grace. In the Body of Christ, to echo the words of the Fathers, there are living and healthy members who are Catholics in the state of grace, and there are at the same time diseased, putrescent, dead members—Catholics in mortal sin. Mortal sin, as such, does not break the tie which binds a man as a constituent member to the visible Body which is Christ's. Only such a sin as public heresy, schism, or apostacy

does that, and then only because such a sin breaks the tie of visible unity with the Body. Just as in a natural body, when some one of the extremities grows atrophied and turns black, until at last the soul seems to have withdrawn from that part and decay already set in, nevertheless that extremity still remains a part of the body and the object of the whole body's solicitude and care until amputation makes it cease at last to be a member, so the Catholic in mortal sin remains a member of the Mystical Body—though a *dead* member, and continues to be the object of innumerable medicinal activities on the part of the Soul and the other, living members as long as public heresy, apostacy, or the like does not definitively put an end to his membership.

Thus far in these pages we have dealt with the proper and revealed concept of the Mystical Body. It is necessary now to say a word about the other concepts of Christ's Body, the "extended senses" of the term which go back to the earliest days of the Fathers. The Fathers, and after them the theologians, have evolved and extended the meaning of the Pauline concept in many ways, to illustrate the various relations which can exist between the Redeemer and various classes of men, precisely as the same authors have variously evolved and extended the correlative concept of "the Church". They speak of the absolutely spotless Church, purified of every stain, such as will actually exist only in the ultimate, celestial state. Similarly, they often describe the *celestial* Body of Christ whose members are those only who have attained to eternal glory in heaven. Again, they speak of the Church as embracing not only the visible society upon earth (its proper concept) but also "the Church suffering" in purgatory and "the Church triumphant" in heaven; and often describe the Mystical Body in the same extended sense.

Nor is this all. Often one sole aspect of the Pauline concept is considered, to the neglect or even exclusion of its remaining, and equally essential elements. The element of *subordination to Christ* is sometimes considered by itself; and then His members are said to be not only men but also, at one end of creation, the angels, and, at the other end,[66] even inanimate creatures!

[66] Thus, for example, Catharinus. Cf. Mersch-Kelly, *The Whole Christ* (Bruce, 1938), p. 492.

At another time the *participation of Christ's supernatural life* will be the only element considered; and then His members are designated as all the just and only the just. It is important, however, to note that when the heretical Synod of Pistoia predicated of this concept of the Mystical Body what Holy Scripture predicates of the Pauline concept, namely, identity with the Church, the proposition was condemned by Pius VI.[67] Again, the *conformity in human nature* which obtains between Christ and His Body has sometimes been singled out for consideration in the discussion of this doctrine, and the whole human race, therefore, described as the Mystical Body of Christ. About this last concept we must remark that it makes the Mystical Body a "corpus *vivificandum*" rather than the "corpus *vivificatum*" which we should expect in every extension of the meaning of the Mystical Christ.

Many other extended senses of the doctrine of the Mystical Body might be added to those which we have described.[68] But these will suffice to show their variety. In spite of the multiplicity of these concepts, it should not be too difficult to appraise the meaning and the validity of the term in any given context, and to keep the *proper* meaning always clear and distinct. Distinct concepts in this matter are not only possible: they are also highly important and to be guarded with the greatest of caution. The history of heresy should be enough to point the need of clear, correct thinking about the doctrine of the Mystical Body. Many heresies, and among them the most grievous, concerning the true nature of the Church of Christ have sprung from a misunderstanding of this very doctrine. Some one of the many extended meanings of the term was defended as the proper meaning of the Mystical Body, St. Paul was quoted as identifying the Mystical Body with the Church (as the Apostle undeniably does), and the result was heresy. Thus the Synod of Pistoia, in the condemned proposition referred to above.[69] Thus Paschasius Quesnel, who taught that "the Church, or Whole Christ, has the Incarnate Word as its Head and all the saints as members", and was condemned.[70]

[67] Denz., n. 1515. Cf. nn. 1423-1426.
[68] Others are listed by St. Thomas, III, q. 8, art. 3, c.
[69] Denz., n. 1515.
[70] *Ibid.*, n. 1424.

Thus John Huss, who taught that "the grace of predestination is the bond by which the Body of the Church and its every member is indissolubly united to Christ, the Head", and was condemned.[71] Thus, too, John Wycliffe; and thus, in their turn, so many of the whole dark galaxy of heresiarchs, Luther, Calvin, and the rest.

After the manner of a thesis in theology, let us close with the solution of an objection. Surely that which is vivified by the Soul is a member of the Body! Surely, therefore, all the just, whether they be Catholics or not, are members of the Mystical Body of Christ. For are they not all vivified by the Soul of the Mystical Body?

We might reply that all who are in the state of grace, while they are not members of the Mystical Body of which St. Paul and Revelation speak, are yet members of Christ according to an analogous concept of His Body. But such a reply does not really come to grips with the difficulty. It is urged that all the just must be members of the Mystical Body in its proper sense, for all are vivified by the Soul of *that* Body. How, then, can this fact be reconciled with the Apostle's teaching that the Mystical Body is a *visible* organism and with the insistence of Pius XI that Catholics and non-Catholics, divided as they are, cannot be members together in the one Body of Christ? The best answer would seem to be found in an undeniable distinction that is to be made in the character of the operations of every soul. It is the soul's function not only to *nourish* but also *to assimilate foreign matter into* the body. That which is already an actual part and member of the body is the object of the soul's operation in its nutritive function. That which is still foreign matter to the body, not yet actually incorporated, is the object of the soul's operation in its assimilative function. Only in this latter way, non-Catholics who are in the state of grace are the objects of the vivifying action and presence of the Soul of the Church. It is freely granted that all the operations of the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier of men are accomplished by Him as the Soul of the Church and directed to the one end, that all may be made one in the Mystical Christ. But this happy consummation, so devoutly to be wished, is not to be

[71] *Ibid.*, n. 647.

effected, as far as individual men are concerned, by the sole fact of internal justification. To have Christ as our Head means not merely to receive the life of grace from Him as the angels receive it from God, but to be a part of *the visible organism* into which He pours that life.

Thus, I trust, the words of the distinguished scholar which were cited in the beginning of this survey stand justified. The Mystical Body of Christ is a Mystery. But its exact identity and the catalog of those essential elements which enter into its concept are not mysteries. The Mystical Body is the Church, the visible Roman Catholic Church. All Catholics, and only Catholics, are its members. And the ultimate internal vital Principle which, as its Soul, pours through this Body the stream of eternal life is the Holy Ghost. This is the revealed concept of the Mystical Body, as distinct from all the analogous, extended meanings of the term which illustrate the pages of our literature. The revealed concept of the Mystical Body is God's doctrine; its many other concepts are man's adaptations of God's doctrine. These latter are human efforts to portray our Saviour's relation to various classes of mankind. The former is God's way of revealing to us the true, supernatural nature of the Roman Catholic Church, which is the prolongation through all remaining time of the Mystery of the Incarnation, the joining of heaven and earth into the unity of "one person in Christ Jesus", the abiding presence among men of Him whose task is still the salvation of the world.

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CAULKING PETER'S BARQUE.

The Pastor's Census Problem.

I.

MOST PRIESTS have a deep concern for the souls committed to their care, which will normally be resolved into a practical apostolic effort to instruct, to sanctify, and to guide. The absence of practical results from such a concern may be based upon several factors. Pastoral administration, no matter how apostolic, is myopic when its scope is not sufficiently measured. Within the limits of the parish, the pastoral obligation is to teach, govern, sanctify and save all the parishioners, not merely some. Few dioceses can give an accurate report of their Catholic populations. While some pastors know the number and the spiritual state of their parishioners, many will honestly confess: "I do not know mine, and mine know not me."

If a tabulation of religious affiliations had been included in the recent decennial census required by the Federal Constitution it might have answered the recurring questions anent Catholic population, increase and leakage, but its omission requires the Church either to effect her own enumeration or to remain uncertain about the extent of her responsibility. A diocese or a parish can ascertain the efficacy of its administration only when it knows the souls committed to its care and where they are.

Many and diverse are the methods employed in dioceses and parishes to determine the extent of the leak in Peter's barque. Some pastors have employed nuns, seminarians, catechists or professional census-takers; others have personally undertaken the work and some seem to have succeeded in obtaining a complete census of their parishes. These means of acquiring a knowledge of the spiritual state of a parish may apparently be satisfactory, but they are not available to all pastors. Besides, many grave obstacles preclude an accurate annual census in the ways mentioned; therefore any successful and effective plan to execute it is worthy of serious consideration.

The coöperation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy is doing much to spread the Kingdom of God throughout these United States. In many sections of the country layfolk, men and women, under the direction of their pastors, have helped