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*"Ut Ecclesia aedificationem accipiat."*

I COR. 14: 5.



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## THE ACT OF THE MYSTICAL BODY.

UNDER the above title Dr. Joseph Fenton contributed to THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW of May 1939 a very interesting and important paper. Briefly reviewing certain modern writers on the Mystical Body, he more particularly mentions Fr. Mura. There are elements of mystical doctrine which escape these writers, and escape "even the magisterial classification of Fr. Mura". "According to this brilliant theologian (Fr. Mura), the Mystical Body of Christ is something which can be understood in function of four real causes—material, formal, efficient and final. The material cause is definitely the principle, not of unity but of multiplicity. The material cause of the Mystical Body is the head and the members, those who go to make up the fulness of Christ. The other three causes are principles of unity, and the Mystical Body is one by reason of these. The formal cause is either exemplary or intrinsic. The Mystical Body is one by reason of exemplary causality because there is one and only one Model to which its members must be conformed. That ultimate exemplar is the Incarnate Word."

Over and above these four causes of unity there is another principle of unity which has been omitted. This principle is, according to Dr. Fenton, that "we are deputized and empowered in a special way to make the act and the proper operation of Christ our own". This principle is Dr. Fenton's thesis and to its explanation and development his paper is devoted. For, "that which is the proper act of the Head is the proper act of the members who are conjoined with Him," since "the unity of the Mystical Body is essentially something dynamic".

In this important and practical subject, principles of unity have far-reaching effects and consequences. Hence special care is directed to that treated by Dr. Fenton; and is directed for the further reason that his striking ability and patent honesty claim both praise and gratitude. As his treatment, however, is not without difficulties, to specify these difficulties should be helpful.

O wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see oursel's as others see us.

As preliminaries to his argument Dr. Fenton asserts: "If Adam had not sinned, the Second Person would not have

assumed a human nature". "From the very moment of His conception Christ had merited eternal salvation for us in every act He performed, and every hardship He endured. But in the merciful decrees of Divine Providence it had been established that all these other merits of Christ should be ordered to and have their effects from and through the Passion itself."

Though my personal conviction agrees with Dr. Fenton's first assertion, it may be well to remember that many theologians hold a different theory. These therefore, would find it difficult to accept any body of doctrine built exclusively upon it. As regards his second assertion, the first portion seems directly taken from St. Thomas (S. III, Q. 48, a. 1); the latter part conveys what is usually considered as the more common teaching of the French theological school. In each case there are difficulties.

Intrinsically any act of Christ, being theandric was quasi-infinite in merit and so, super-abundantly sufficient to save the world. In a sense also, since a human nature was united to God, the Incarnation might be called the reconciliation of man with God. Yet, because the Father did not so will, none of these merited the salvation of the world. The Passion did not add anything intrinsic to Christ's acts, nor intrinsically did they have their effects from and through the Passion itself. Extrinsically or on the part of sinful man, there were certain obstacles which Christ's previous merits were not calculated to remove but which the Passion was eminently calculated to remove. Christ's previous acts externally prepared Him for the Passion, inasmuch as, according to a feasible opinion, they were intended by Divine Providence unto directly establishing His divinity and divine mission. In this sense they may be considered as preparatory or "ordered to the" Passion; but it is very difficult to understand how they "have their effects from and through the Passion itself".

Before proceeding to look more closely into Dr. Fenton's view, it will help to recall the *de fide* teachings: The Cross and Mass is each a true and proper sacrifice: in everything the Cross and Mass are one and the same sacrifice save in the manner of offering: the salvation of all men is due to Christ and His Cross. Thence an easy conclusion follows: Christ with His Cross is the essential cause of all human redemption and the salvation of each and every human being is the effect of this essential cause. In

his *Summa* (I, Q. 44, a. 1 and many other loci) St. Thomas defines "participation" as the effect of an *essential cause*. Therefore only by participation in Christ and in His Cross can any human person be saved. As participation is used in many senses, perhaps it may be well to make a special note of what seems to be its correct theological meaning. Obviously since, according to St. Thomas, the sacred Humanity, the instrument of the Second Person, "instrumentally operates in virtue of the Divinity," and "the Passion of Christ, though corporeal, shared yet a certain spiritual virtue from the divinity," whereby it "caused the remission of sins," it follows that participation in Christ and in His Passion saves us and makes us "partakers of the divine nature".<sup>1</sup>

There is another point which requires emphasis. Christ the principal agent is a free cause; men who receive Christ's salutary effects are also free. The causal relation between Christ and men will always be such as befits and preserves the individual and mutual freedom of each and all. The freedom, therefore, of members of the Mystical Body is conserved both in their union and relations with one another and also in their unions and relations with Christ. The end and purpose of Christ's union and relations with men is to enable them in union with Him to produce and perfect in themselves, individually and collectively, supernatural and eternal life, unto the greater glory of God. As only life can produce life, it follows that Christ's action here is living, and produces a living effect which is supernaturally and vitally perfective. Thus Dr. Fenton considers that "the member of Christ is sacramentally a participant of the justice of Christ" and that "the members of the Church receive the benefits of the passion and death of Christ, not as separated individuals, but as persons dynamically joined and configured to Him in the sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament of faith." In these statements the words "sacramentally" and "dynamically" suggest Dr. Fenton's view, which may now be more explicitly treated.

It seems correct to say that Dr. Fenton bases his whole thesis on the doctrine of the sacramental character. "The heart of what is properly the doctrine of the Mystical Body in St.

<sup>1</sup> II Pet. 1, 4. Vide S. III, Q. xlviii, art. 6, c; also Q. xlix, art. 1, 3.

Thomas is contained in the question on the sacramental character." His argument is subtle but is not free from ambiguity. For example, he says: "The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ". This is of course quite true. But the Church consists of a "soul" and "body". It would not be correct to say that all who belong to the "soul" also belong to the "body" or vice versa. In this or in similar ambiguities seem to lie the difficulties and perhaps the weaknesses which enter his argument.

No doubt, according to St. Thomas, a sacramental character is a spiritual power or an "instrumental potency" which "enables man to enter into an activity of which Christ is the principal cause in His Passion". "It is an abiding instrumental potency, and as a result the character does not fall under the natural designation of the second species (a permanent *virtus*) of quality, but is only reduced to it." Quite so; the permanent "virtus" or its active power, is from Christ; the permanent potency of uniting authoritatively in a special way with Christ's "virtus" or activity, is the sacramental character. The point is that merely in itself the sacramental character is not united to Christ's activity. A person with a sacramental character, though authoritatively deputed to divine worship, is yet a separate instrument of Christ, and not a conjoined instrument like Christ's own Human Nature. Such person, therefore, requires to be duly united with Christ's activity by sufficient intention and will as well as by certain other divinely appointed means, before the character operates with Christ's activity, making the person for the time being an efficient instrument of that activity. Clearly this union with Christ's activity continues no longer than this particular act. A priest's character is operative with Christ's activity only while the priest is consecrating or sacrificing, or giving some sacrament which requires the power of Holy Orders, but not at other times. This operation and union are not permanent but transitory. A sacramental character is in union with Christ's activity, therefore, either while a person is validly receiving or administering a sacrament, whichever the case may be.

When Dr. Fenton writes: "The enduring quality which constitutes us as members of the Church is the character of Baptism," difficulties at once arise. It can hardly be maintained that the character of Baptism constitutes us "as members of the

Church". Many who have no baptismal character, because they are in the state of grace belong to the soul of the Church and are therefore members of the Church. Many also who have a baptismal character do not belong to the "body" of the Church, such as, heretics, schismatics, vitandi excommunicati; if these are not in the state of grace, they are in no way members of the Church. Those in hell who, according to many theologians, still retain their baptismal characters, are not members of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, Baptism and the Eucharist "in re" or "in voto" are necessary for salvation and for Church membership; but obviously this does not establish that the enduring quality which constitutes us as members of the Church is the character of Baptism. Though the character of Baptism is an essential element that one may belong to the "body" of the Church, it does not seem correct to state, as does Dr. Fenton, that "the man who has the baptismal character belongs to an organization which worships God as an instrument of Christ;" nor that, "the Thomistic teaching on the sacramental character affords us the basis for a properly dynamic concept of the Mystical Body". Dynamic is usually taken to mean "a moving force;" "active;" "energetic;" "relating to force". As already pointed out, in itself merely, a sacramental character is not a moving force; and although it contains a permanent deputation unto divine worship and a permanent instrumental potency unto Christ's activity, yet it is a separate instrument of that activity and as such requires to be duly related by intention, will, and other divinely appointed means to Christ's activity before it can act with Him. The Mystical Body as a body cannot secure this; it must ever be the personal and individual doing of the person who has the sacramental character. St. Thomas expressly states:<sup>3</sup> "Non autem efficitur homo membrum Christi nisi per gratiam." "Virtus passionis Christi copulatur nobis per fidem et sacramenta."<sup>4</sup> (Italics the writer's.)

Hence St. Thomas does not say that the baptismal character constitutes us members of Christ or members of the Church, or

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas also says that the good angels belong to Christ's Mystical Body. S., III, Q. 3, a. 4.

<sup>3</sup> S., III, Q. 62, a. 1, & 6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. S., III, Q. 6, a. 111, ad 1. "De plenitudine Christi omnes homines accipiunt secundum fidem quam habent in ipsam."

incorporates us in the activity of Christ's Passion. These he tells us are due to grace and faith. As supernatural faith is not first grace, such faith always presupposes grace. He also implies that faith is necessary for the valid reception of the sacraments; hence the words "per fidem et sacramenta". A person with the use of reason cannot be validly baptized unless that person has sufficient faith. Persons perpetually devoid of the use of reason (lunatics from birth and always) and infants, by divine ordinance, are endowed with the faith of the Church unto and in the valid reception of baptism *in re*. Thus baptism is called "the sacrament of faith". It is remarkable that St. Thomas does not mention "sacramental character" in his beautiful treatment of Christ's Mystical Body in *Summa* III, Q. 8, a. 3. It is therefore very difficult to see that Dr. Fenton's statements either are correct or correctly convey the teaching of St. Thomas.

From what has been said it will appear that, according to the Thomastic teaching, only the Sacred Humanity of Christ is His "conjoined" instrument. The Mystical Body is not a "conjoined" but a "separate" instrument of Christ. It is united to Him through the "conjoined instrument" by grace and faith, and by sacraments received *in voto* or *in re*. When members of the Mystical Body possess the baptismal character they are authoritatively deputed and enabled to avail of Christ's special activity in the other sacraments—a special activity of which they could not avail without a baptismal character. *Positis ponendis*, the baptismal character enables one to receive not only other sacraments which do not impress a character but those which do; those which do give a special consecration unto divine worship, and the character of priesthood enables the priest to make Christ and His sacrifice really and truly present on earth in the Holy Eucharist. Each character also carries with it a particular grace unto its proper use. Yet as divine worship is ever a "protestatio fidei;" and faith abides in the intellectual powers of the soul; so too does the sacramental character. This establishes the fundamental union of men with Christ through grace and faith; and the great importance of the sacramental character. The point of special interest is that, even without a sacramental character grace and faith can and do unite a man to Christ and to His sacrificial activity—even as that union may be enhanced



by a baptismal or further sacramental character. What has now been said should help the further examination of Dr. Fenton's paper.

Since the sacramental character is an instrumental potency, Dr. Fenton proceeds to argue: "The principal cause and the instrument have one act, and one effect. The act of the principal cause is the act of the instrument." Though there is a certain truth in this argument, there is also ambiguity. It has been much used, and at times much abused, by various writers, mystical and otherwise. The explanation of St. Thomas, found in numerous passages of his works, may be taken as both safe and correct. Take S. IV, Q. 97, a. 5, 3: "Instrumentum autem non solum agit in virtute propria et per modum proprium, sed etiam in virtute principalis agentis et secundum quod est regulatum ab eo." Here it is clear that an instrument has a "virtus propria". Indeed in S. I, Q. 45, a. 5, he considers that, if an instrument had no act and nothing proper to itself, it were useless and foolish to use it. Only with and through this act or "something" peculiar to the instrument does the principal agent act. The instrument, says St. Thomas, "Non perficit instrumentalem actionem, nisi exercendo actionem propriam" (S. III, Q. 62, a.). Agent and instrument produce the one effect and both act in the activity of the agent. To say then that "the act of the principal cause is the act of the instrument" is true in one sense but not true in another. When a bishop confirms, the bishop, not Christ, pronounces the word; the bishop, not Christ, anoints with chrism. Hence it would hardly be correct to say that the bishop's proper act is Christ's proper act, although the act of Christ as principal agent is united with the bishop's acts and produces the supernatural and sacramental effects. Likewise, the Mystical Body has its own proper action which is not the personal action of Christ, and which only in a restricted sense can be designated the act of Christ, the Principal Agent.

Next comes what is perhaps the most interesting portion of Dr. Fenton's paper, that on the sacrifice of the Mass and on the Holy Eucharist. Here it may be premised that Christ entrusted the Mass to the Church, "Se ipsum ab Ecclesia per sacerdotem sub signis visibilibus immolandum."<sup>1</sup> Hence all are agreed that

<sup>1</sup> *Trinit. Sermon. 27, c. 1.*

no priest may lawfully say Mass—nor indeed anyone lawfully receive any sacrament—without due permission from the Church. Does Trent mean to convey more than this by the words "the sacrifice of Himself by the Church through priests"? It seems historically certain that "immolandum" signifies here "complete sacrifice" and not merely the element of sacrifice called "immolation". Fr. de la Taille and some others do think that Trent does mean more; their interpretation of Trent seems influenced or dictated by their own personal view of the meaning of Sacrifice. Dr. Fenton somewhat suggests de la Taille's theory; so let the examination proceed.

"In the eucharistic sacrifice", he writes, "the Mystical Body acts as the instrument of the Passion of Christ, and in this sacrificial operation it makes the Passion of Christ the act of the Church. The sacrifice of the Mass is, then, in a special and metaphysical sense, the act of the Mystical Body, the tremendous instrumental function in which the baptized person is empowered to participate." He then subjoins: "The Mystical Body of Christ is that organization which exists to offer the sacrifice of the Mass." (Italics mine.) Now according to Dr. Fenton all who have the baptismal character are members of that "organization" and all share in the act of offering, yet not all in the same way. For the Church is an "ordered hierarchical society;" and so also is the sacrificial act of the Church "an ordered hierarchical act."—Priests are agents and have an active function: others not priests, are recipients and have a passive function. Further, "Because this action is one in which the Church makes its own the very passion of the Redeemer, the priest who performs this act of sacrifice is said in all truth to assume the person of Christ Himself."

From these statements, it would seem that Dr. Fenton understands the words of Trent "se ipsum . . . immolandum" as the passion of Christ to be offered by the Church. The Mass, therefore, has two essential elements: the passion of Christ and the oblation of the same by the Church. If either be absent, there is no Mass. Hence he considers this Church-oblation "special and metaphysical" or pertaining to the essence, and its operation "sacrificial". Now this Church-oblation, which must be found in every Mass, being the act of an "organization," is an act in which all members of the organization have an ordered

hierarchical share; for (some) members, besides having the character of baptism, may also have the character of the order of priesthood. Thus later Dr. Fenton speaks of the "people" communicating spiritually in Masses at which the priest alone communicates sacramentally. Finally, through this Church-offering the priest enters into Christ's offering, or the one offering of the Principal Priest, and so assumes "the person of Christ Himself".

This is very like Fr. de la Taille's theory. "Non offert quisquam nisi ex parte Ecclesiae, nec quisquam consecrat valide, nisi vere offerens. Quod si sacerdos praecisus non possit ex parte Ecclesiae offerre, sequeretur eum nec valide posse consecrare."\* By his sacerdotal character a priest is deputed as a legate of the Church and ever retains the character of legate; yet he discharges his office of legate only when his prevailing intention is that of acting for the Church. Hence when a heretic, schismatic, or *excommunicatus* celebrates Mass, not as a minister of the Church but absolutely and solely as an official of his sect, his Mass is no Mass, and is invalid. It is difficult to say if Dr. Fenton would agree that the priest's intention here would nullify the efficacy of his sacramental character, granted that such priest really wished to say Mass. Obviously Fr. de la Taille's theory lies at the root of his own solution in this matter, but it is not quite so obvious that Dr. Fenton personally holds that theory.

The present purpose is not minute criticism of that theory but rather to indicate the difficulties found in Dr. Fenton's view and incidentally what seems discrepant with St. Thomas.

Save in the manner of offering, the Cross and the Mass are one and the same sacrifice. The cross was offered for all men; so too is the Mass. Hence the words of the consecration of the chalice: "Qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur." This means that all wayfarers may participate in Christ's Priesthood and sacrifice and partake of Christ's sacrificial activity. They do so by grace and faith. Thus persons without a baptismal character may validly baptize, administer (but not consecrate) Holy Communion; where their faith is sufficient they may validly receive baptism; and where their faith is living they receive *in voto* baptism and Holy Eucharist and are empowered to offer spiritual

\* M. F., Eluc. 33, c. 1.

sacrifices. St. Thomas writes: "The just laic is united to Christ in a spiritual union through faith and charity and *not through sacramental power*; therefore he has a spiritual priesthood unto offering spiritual sacrifices of which it is said in Psalm 50 "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit," and in Rom. 12, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice;" hence also in I. Peter 2, he is called (*dicitur*): "A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." (Italics mine.)<sup>7</sup>

If the text and context of Holy Writ be consulted, it will, I think, be found that "spiritual priesthood" is attributed, not to a sacramental character, but to faith. St. Thomas includes infidels potentially in the Mystical Body<sup>8</sup> and therefore in Christ's priesthood and sacrifice. Thus the Cross and the Mass benefit all wayfarers and depute them to these sacred duties. The sacramental character does nothing more than to increase, uplift and indelibly seal this increased and uplifted "potency," so that the possessor may enter Christ's sacrificial activity and mystical life enhancedly, by means which previously were not possible, that is to say, by receiving or administering *in re* sacraments other than Baptism and by the sacramental sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. A sacramental character is a potency. Of itself no potency to union produces union; nor of itself does any potency to act produce the act. Hence no potency, sacramental or otherwise, unites men to Christ,<sup>9</sup> to Christ's Mystical Body, to Christ's sacrificial activity, nor to Christ's Redemption. Union is effected by faith; and faith implies grace and a due exercise of free will in those who have the use of reason; while a vital union is effected by living faith. The Mystical Body, not having hypostatic union with Christ, is a separate not a "conjoined" instrument of Christ. It requires grace and faith for union and action with Christ. If the Mystical Body lost grace and faith, its union and activity with Christ would cease, and it would not then be the Mystical Body. Faith has not only an internal but also an external efficiency through divinely appointed means. This seems the teaching of St. Thomas. It has already been suf-

<sup>7</sup> S. III, Q. 82, a. 1, 2.

<sup>8</sup> S. III, Q. 8, a. 3, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. S. III, Q. vi, a. 6, ad 1. "Unio nostra ad Deum est per operationem; in quantum scilicet cum cognoscimus et amamus; et ideo talis unio est per gratiam habitalem, in quantum operatio perfecta procedit ab habitu."

ficiently indicated, without giving here further and prolix quotation. This is the teaching of Trent, which calls faith the 'fundamentum et radix omnis justificationis; sine qua impossibile est placere Deo. (Heb. 11: 8).'<sup>10</sup> St. Paul writes to the Ephesians (3: 17): "That Christ may dwell *by faith* in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity. . ." It is very difficult to see, therefore, that Dr. Fenton's statements fundamentally represent the teaching of St. Thomas or even the fundamental teaching of Trent.

Incidentally, he does not seem correctly to use the words of the Council in the following passage: "Even those Masses in which the priest alone communicates sacramentally must be considered common to the Church as a whole, 'partly because the people communicate spiritually in them, and partly because they are celebrated by a public minister of the Church, not for himself alone but for all the faithful who belong to the Body of Christ.'"<sup>11</sup> The text and context show that Trent desires that all who attend Mass should go to Holy Communion: that it approves and does not condemn as illicit Masses in which the priest alone communicates: yea more, it strongly commends that in such Masses, if they are to be considered truly common, on the one hand (*partim*) the "people should make a spiritual communion and on the other (*partim*) that they be celebrated by a public minister of the Church, not for himself alone, but for all the faithful who pertain to the Body of Christ—Atque adeo commendat, si quidem illae quoque Missae vere communes censerentur, partim quod in eis populus spiritualiter communicet, partim vero, quod a publico Ecclesiae ministro non pro se tantum, sed pro omnibus fidelibus, qui ad Corpus Christi pertinent, celebrentur."

This recommendation seems implicitly to acknowledge licit and true, Masses in which neither the people communicate spiritually nor the priest celebrates for all the faithful of the Mystical Body. It is hard therefore to see that Dr. Fenton gives the correct meaning of this quotation. Trent also seems to contradict Dr. Fenton's view. For, if the Sacrifice of the Mass is the act of the Mystical Body "in a special and metaphysical

<sup>10</sup> Sess. XIX, c. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Tr. Sess. 22, c. 4.

sense," it seems impossible that a priest could celebrate Mass without offering it for all the faithful of the Mystical Body. Why then this exhortation of Trent?

Since the priest represents Christ and Christ died for all men, it follows that in this representation the priest offers Mass in a sense for all men and that all wayfarers are benefited by every Mass. Why restrict the offering to the limits of the Mystical Body and make the priest assume the person of Christ only through the intermediary of the Mystical Body or of an organization which exists to offer the sacrifice of the Mass? This view seems replete with insuperable difficulties.

Without being able to see that he is correct, one is yet grateful to Dr. Fenton for the logical and earnest manner in which he develops his principles and thesis and for calling special attention to the sacramental character. His paper supplies much matter for deep and profitable thought.

St. John of the Cross seems to me the best exponent of St. Thomas on the Mystical Body. His way is the "dark way of faith" and has been approved by the Church, for it is the way laid down by St. Thomas and by the Council of Trent. His theology and metaphysics are solidly scholastic and avoid the pitfalls met with in many modern writers. On earth the Mystical Body is constituted by grace and faith, and acts by grace and faith. If developments of mystical teaching were more lucidly worked out on these principles, both the sacramental character and the "Mystery of Faith" would receive a truer and better explanation. The superstructure would still present difficulties; yet one would have less misgivings, since it would then be seen to rest firmly on "the foundation and root of all justification".

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Reply by Dr. Fenton.

Both the thesis called into question by Father Brosnan and the difficulties he alleges are of sufficient importance to demand an exact consideration. To this end I shall cite four salient objections of the eminent English theologian and then append to each its proper resolution.

1. Father Brosnan's objection. "His argument is subtle but is not free from ambiguity. For example, he says: 'The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ.' This is of course quite true.

But the Church consists of a 'soul' and 'body'. It would not be correct to say that all who belong to the 'soul' also belong to the 'body' or vice versa. In this or in similar ambiguities seem to lie the difficulties and the weaknesses which enter his argument."

The resolution. The statement to which Father Brosnan refers could seem ambiguous only to one who considered the "soul" and the "body" as two distinct churches or groups, to either one of which the appellation "Mystical Body of Christ" could be applied. Felder thus states the truth which clears up the foundation of this difficulty. "Anima et corpus ecclesie non sunt duae ecclesiae, altera invisibilis, altera visibilis, sed constituunt unam ecclesiam visibilem simul et vivam."<sup>1</sup> This one Church can be designated as the Mystical Body of Christ without ambiguity or equivocation.

2. Father Brosnan's difficulty. "When Dr. Fenton writes: 'The enduring quality which constitutes us as members of the Church is the character of Baptism, difficulties at once arise. It can hardly be maintained that the character of Baptism constitutes us as members of the Church'. Many who have no baptismal character, because they are in the state of grace belong to the soul of the Church and are therefore members of the Church. Many also who have a baptismal character do not belong to the 'body' of the Church, such as, heretics, schismatics, vitandi excommunicati; if these are not in the state of grace, they are in no way members of the Church."

The resolution. This is the tenth thesis in Billot's *De Ecclesia*. "Id quod primo et principaliter requiritur ut quis sit Ecclesiae membrum, est character baptismalis, isque non putative tantum, sed in rei veritate susceptus. Porro tanta est vis huius characteris, ut nisi aliquo ipsius baptizati actu haec eius efficacia impediatur, semper aggreget hominem unitati corporis Ecclesiae Catholicae. Ideo illi omnes qui usum rationis nondum adepti,

<sup>1</sup> Felder, *Hilarinus: Apologetica sive Theologia Fundamentalis*, Paderborn 1923, Vol. II, p. 40.



quocumque tandem modo et a quibuscumque sacramentum baptismatis vere acceperunt, ipso facto inter vera corporis membra numerantur".<sup>2</sup> The traditional theologians reserve the designation "member of the Church" for those who possess the character of Baptism, excluding even the catechumens. Thus Hermann writes: "Catechumeni, etiamsi corde credant et fidem exterius profiteantur, atque legitimis pastoribus subijcantur, inter Ecclesiae membra non sunt computandi."<sup>3</sup>

3. Father Brosnan's objection. "It does not seem correct to state, as does Dr. Fenton, that the man who has the baptismal character belongs to an organization which worships God as an instrument of Christ, nor that, 'the Thomistic teaching on the sacramental character affords us the basis for a properly dynamic concept of the Mystical Body.'—"It is remarkable that St. Thomas does not mention 'sacramental character' in his beautiful treatment of Christ's Mystical Body in the *Summa Theologica*, in the third part, the eighth question, the third article. It is therefore very difficult to see that Dr. Fenton's statements either are correct or correctly convey the teaching of St. Thomas."

The resolution. To deny that the living and visible Church, the organization of which only those who possess the baptismal character are members, is an organization which worships God as an instrument of Christ is certainly to express an ecclesiology inconsistent with that of the article in question. Father Brosnan's anxiety to stress the distinction and even the separation of the "body" and the "soul" of the Church seems to have obscured in this instance his appreciation of the Church as a visible organization, attaining a definite end through a very definite procedure. Incidentally, St. Thomas's treatment of the Mystical Body is by no means limited to the article to which Father Brosnan refers.

4. Father Brosnan's difficulty. "It is very difficult to see, therefore, that Dr. Fenton's statements fundamentally represent the teaching of St. Thomas or even the fundamental teaching

<sup>2</sup> Billot, Ludovicus, S.J.: *Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi*, 5th edition, Rome, 1927, Vol. I, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Hermann: *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae*, 7th edition, Paris, 1917, Vol. I, p. 345.



of Trent. Incidentally, he does not seem correctly to use the words of the Council in the following passage.—It is hard therefore, to see that Dr. Fenton gives the correct meaning of this quotation. Trent also seems to contradict Dr. Fenton's view."

The resolution. The passage at issue is that in which the words of the Council of Trent (Session 22, Chapter 6) were used in the article. Father Brosnan's difficulty is merely his faulty translation of the words of the Council. He reads the text in such a way as to suppose that the Fathers urge the people to communicate spiritually at Mass, and the priest to celebrate as a public minister, not for himself alone, but for all the faithful who pertain to the Body of Christ. Actually the Council approves and commends Masses at which the priest alone communicates sacramentally, since they are to be considered as common, "partly *because* the people spiritually communicate in them, and partly *because* they are celebrated by a public minister of the Church, not for himself alone, but for all the faithful who belong to the Body of Christ." A glance at the text of the canon gives sufficient evidence that every Mass is, as a matter of fact, offered for all the members of that Church, the proper and perfective act of which is this same Eucharistic sacrifice.\* We can cheerfully admit that Father Brosnan's translation of Trent seems to contradict the doctrine put forward in "The Act of the Mystical Body."

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\*As an indication of the true translation, cf. *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Vol. X, part 1, col. 1132.

## TOWARD MORE FRUITFUL PREACHING

In behalf of both Pew and Pulpit.

THERE SEEMS to be no limit to which men will go in the use of means to gain an end. It was not surprising that atheistic enthusiasts for state absolutism should not scruple to try to gain American favor by their vaunted devotion to democracy. The tremendous advantage of such action during the recent war in Spain justified in their mind the means to the end. But it is surprising and we are rightly shocked when a "preacher" for the pay of a paltry publicity declaims in favor of a moratorium on preaching. If there is humor in it, it is grim, indeed. As well might an attorney advocate the outlawing of all litigation or a bootblack mount his polishing-block and rant against the wearing of polished shoes. These would not thereby betray a sacred trust.

Not so long ago a veritable barrage of Catholic editorial reaction followed hard upon the statement of the New York minister who lightly proposed a moratorium on preaching during the sultry Sundays of summer. With but a single exception, as far as I know, that reaction was "vox et praeterea nihil". And the exception came not from those professedly interested in the preaching of the Gospel, but from a few zealous members of the laity who seized upon the incident as an occasion to call attention to the fact that there was not only not a surplus of preaching and that there was not merely an insufficiency of it, but that in many instances there was no preaching at all. Parishes were found where the warm weather excused from the Sunday sermon from May till October, and where announcements concerning church and school activities crowded the sermon off the Sunday schedule, not only in summer but throughout the whole year.

The movement, or Crusade, as it has come to be known, thus inaugurated was not a case of the "pew" dictating to the "pulpit," a thing quite distasteful to a Catholic layman's sense of hierarchical values and smacking of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That the crusaders realized all this is evidenced from the title they chose for their movement, "The Crusade for a More Fruitful Preaching and Hearing of the Word of God." Instead of being antagonistic and destructively critical, the