

ERNEST MURA

RELIGIOUS OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

*The Nature of the
Mystical Body*

TRANSLATED BY

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B. HERDER BOOK CO.

This is a translation of the first volume of
Le Corps Mystique du Christ, by Ernest Mura, R.S.V.,
published by André Blot, Paris

IMPRIMATUR ✠ Joseph Cardinal Ritter
Archbishop of St. Louis, October 17, 1963

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M972

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15 & 17 South Broadway, St. Louis 2, Mo.
London: 2/3 Doughty Mews, W.C. 1
Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 63-22744
Manufactured in the United States of America
Designed by Klaus Gemming

DICO OPERA MEA REGI

*To Christ Jesus
King, Prophet, and Eternal Pontiff
Adorable Head of the Mystical Body,
through Mary
His Immaculate Mother
Queen of the Universe
I dedicate and consecrate
this work
as a testimony
of fidelity, obedience,
and love.*

189245A Theol.

INTRODUCTION

IN HIS Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, Pope Pius XII cast a significant light on the dogma of the Mystical Body, corroborating with the weight of his apostolic authority a dogma that is held in high regard and that is studied and preached today. The Pope promulgated this solemn document "to throw an added ray of glory on the supreme beauty of the Church; to bring out into fuller light the exalted supernatural nobility of the faithful who in the Body of Christ are united with their Head; and finally, to exclude definitively the many errors current with regard to this matter."¹

The papal pronouncement proved a stimulant and a valuable encouragement to Catholic theologians to delve deeper into and to make better known to the faithful this mystery of Christ, which is the heart and wellspring of Christian doctrine, the food of faith, and the substantial nourishment of a solid and fruitful piety. Indeed, Pope Pius XII invited "all those who are drawn by the Holy Spirit to study [this dogma],"² and expressed the hope that a deeper study of this mystery would "bring forth abundant fruit"³ of perfection and of holiness in the souls of the faithful.

Further, everything at this tragic juncture in which our poor world finds itself, surrounded as it is by the material and moral ruins of the cultural and spiritual patrimony of so many nations and anxiously searching for a firm foundation on which to build the social and spiritual unity of peoples, invites us to turn with burning faith toward the One who is our peace and who has destroyed in his flesh the enmity among peoples (cf. Eph. 2:14), toward him who is the Head of regenerated humanity, the cornerstone on whom the whole structure rises and grows into a holy temple in the Lord (cf. Eph. 2:20-21).

¹ Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, Vatican Translation (National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D.C., 1943), Introduction, par. 11.

² *Ibid.*, par. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, par. 4.

Introduction

Not only on the spiritual level, but even on the level of temporal realities, we can assert without mental reservation that there is salvation only in Christ. Because human nature has been wounded by original sin, it does not have within itself the light or the strength to establish a human order that will guarantee the protection of the rights of each man, the growth of a virtuous life, and the maintenance of social peace. Man is saved only by Christ; he cannot with impunity close himself off from redemptive grace and reject the gentle and salutary yoke of the law of the Gospel. He will learn at his own expense that he who does not gather up with Christ, squanders his moral riches and becomes a pauper.

For this reason His Holiness Pope John XXIII, at the conclusion of his new charter of Catholic social action, the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, invited all his sons to imbue their souls with the dogma of the Mystical Body so that man's labors may be filled with its life-giving power:

We cannot conclude our encyclical without recalling another sublime truth and reality, namely that we are living members of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is his Church: . . .

We invite with paternal urgency all our sons belonging to either the clergy or the laity to be deeply conscious of this dignity and nobility owing to the fact that they are grafted onto Christ as shoots on a vine: "I am the vine and you are the branches." And they are thus called to live by his very life. Hence, when one carries on one's proper activity, even if it be of temporal nature, in union with Jesus the divine Redeemer, every work becomes a continuation of his work and penetrated with redemptive power: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit."⁴

We are happy, therefore, to comply with the desires of Holy Mother Church in bringing out an American edition of this work concerning the total Christ.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body, embracing in its supernatural reality the person of the Word made flesh, our Lord

⁴Encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, given at Rome, at St. Peter's, May 15, 1961. English translation published in the Special Encyclical Supplement of *The Register*, July 23, 1961, pars. 258-59.

Introduction

Jesus Christ and all his brothers or members through grace, is a sublime doctrine, and one that is most fruitful for the life of souls and of human society. Indeed, this doctrine is not new, for it is at least as ancient as Christianity. It can be found already fully developed in the epistles of St. Paul. Yes, we must seek the doctrine of the Mystical Body in the apostolic letters to the Romans, to the Corinthians, and to the faithful of Galatia, of Ephesus, and of Colossus. We find it set down there, not implicitly or merely in outline form, as are so many other revealed doctrines contained in Holy Scripture, but presented in its fullest development and in its diverse constitutive elements. The Apostle had a clear conception of the doctrine, and delineated its essential features for us. He even indicated its detailed elements and practical conclusions.

The writings of St. Paul, however, do not present the doctrine to us in a didactic, orderly, and consecutive manner. Fragments of it are scattered throughout all of his principal letters to the churches. In his epistles, the Apostle did not intend to give a complete and methodical teaching; rather he wished to remind the faithful, according to their needs and to the circumstances of time and of place, of what his oral magisterium had already taught them. He laid stress on his past teaching, depending on the progress the various Christian communities had made in the interior knowledge and love of Christ Jesus.

St. Paul did not translate his sublime doctrine into theological formulas or into scholastic terms. He spoke in a concrete, direct style, intelligible to the faithful whom he had instructed. He did this for the very good reason that he was writing at a time when the technical form of theological language neither existed nor would have been understood.

Because of these two facts—the dispersion of Paul's doctrine among several epistles and in the context of various teachings, and the absence of a specific terminology expressing the truths in question in rigorously precise formulas—theologians of today still have a useful and necessary work to accomplish. They must gather the various elements of the teaching of St. Paul on the

Introduction

Mystical Body into a single body of doctrine and explain the doctrine according to the principles and methods of theology. Once this task has been finished, practical applications to the spiritual life will be easy, and a teaching that abounds with the fruits of holiness will be available to interior souls.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body is, as it were, the central point of all Revelation, the supreme mystery of Christianity; St. Paul calls it "the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God" (Eph. 3:9), "but now is clearly shown to his saints" (Col. 1:26). It is the mystery of our incorporation into Christ, of our life in Christ, of our perfection and spiritual consummation through Christ Jesus.⁵

Even though the faithful do not need to know the profundities of scholastic teaching, or the degrees and distinctions that theology discerns in the dogma of our life in God and of our union to Jesus Christ, nevertheless it is useful and necessary for shepherds of souls to be familiar with these notions in order to be able to dispense wisely to their flock the spiritual food that is suited to them. Directors of conscience must understand clearly the exact meaning of St. Paul's formulas, in order to forewarn those under their direction against improper or even totally false interpretations of the doctrine of the great Apostle.

Because of such exaggerations certain persons, including many devoted to the interior life, show some apprehension with regard

⁵When the doctrine of the Mystical Body is called "the central point of all Revelation," or "the central dogma of Christianity" there is no question of indicating the *formal object* of theology. The specific formality of theology is God himself supernaturally known; it is the Godhead in all that is strictly attributable to it. The various *material objects* which theology attains, outside of God (among them the total Christ which includes the Head and the members), are considered by this science only in their relation to God—so says St. Thomas (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 7). But precisely among these various objects which sacred science treats, the Mystical Body holds a sort of primacy. This doctrine groups all the other dogmas around itself; it throws light on them; it complements and completes them. And even if the very dogma of the Trinity does not enter directly into the theology of the Mystical Body, it is considered indirectly in this dogma as the term and the object of the life of the whole Christ. For a fuller treatment of this subject, see the author's *Le Corps Mystique du Christ*, Volume II, Chapter 15.

Introduction

to the doctrine of the Mystical Body. They suspect formulas such as this one: "It is Jesus who acts in me, who suffers in me." These words, which should be used only with discretion, seem to savor of pantheism, as if they expressed a *substantial* identification of our person with that of our Lord.

Obviously we must be on our guard against any exaggeration of this sort, but it is equally dangerous to fall into the opposite extreme and voluntarily ignore a doctrine which is profitable to souls. The golden mean is to present the truth in a light that reveals all its excellence and dispels possible ambiguities and confusion.

This we shall attempt to do, with God's help, by relating the deposit of Revelation to the teachings of theology. Following the method the Church has always used of breaking the bread of divine Scripture for her children, we shall explain the words of eternal Wisdom in the language of human wisdom. This *rapprochement* will have the twofold advantage of making us penetrate the profound meaning of the sacred books with the help of theology, and conversely of enriching a theology, sometimes dry and abstract, with the unction of the Holy Spirit that permeates the pages of Scripture.

Today more than ever before these two currents of sacred science must flow together into the soul of the priest to combat two contrary perils. For if the study of Sacred Scripture without a theological foundation can be a peril for the faith (as the aberrations of modernism bear witness), speculative theology without the science of Scripture can render charity anemic and remain inoperative. On the other hand, together the two constitute a wonderful resource, a powerhouse of light and strength (*ad omne opus bonum*) for every salutary work of the apostolate and of the spiritual life.

In exploiting the treasures of Holy Scripture, we have turned principally to the doctrine of St. Paul as being the most explicit and complete on the dogma of our incorporation into Christ, and we have thought it best to set it forth in its entirety. This does not mean that we have excluded other sources of the inspired

Introduction

Book: St. John's teachings on the subject, in his Gospel, in his epistles, and in the Apocalypse, are filled with riches.

We shall likewise use, as occasion offers, the precious contribution made by the Fathers of the Church to the doctrine of the Mystical Body. For a more complete presentation of patristic teaching, however, reference should be had to the specialists in positive theology, and especially to the work of Father Mersch.⁶

The doctrine of the Mystical Body has always occupied a place of honor in the teaching of the Church. Following St. Paul, ecclesiastical writers and Catholic doctors have striven to make known to the faithful the ineffable mystery of our incorporation into Christ. The Fathers of the Church, with St. Augustine, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and St. Hilary of Poitiers in the forefront, constantly come back to this central dogma of the faith as the inexhaustible theme of their theological dissertations and of their exhortations to the people. The scholastics in their turn frequently exploit this rich mine of doctrine.⁷ And the prince of scholasticism, St. Thomas Aquinas, is so deeply imbued with this doctrine that he continually borrows from it, both in the *Summa* and in his commentaries on Scripture, arguments that solve difficulties, throw light on problems, or settle questions.

The admirable "French School" of the 17th century, following Cardinal de Bérulle, Monsieur Olier, Fathers Condren and Bourgoing, St. Louis de Montfort, St. John Eudes, and many others, has done very well by the doctrine of the Mystical Body. It has studied the doctrine not only with the mind but with the heart, and has drawn from it beautiful practical conclusions, sublime rules of Christian living, and valuable directives for the ascetical and mystical life.

At last, today, after a period of partial oblivion and of a relega-

⁶Cf. Emile Mersch, S.J., *Le Corps Mystique de Jésus-Christ, Étude de théologie historique* (Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 2nd ed., 1936).

⁷Cf. among others: Piolanti, *Il Corpo Mistico e le sue relazioni con l'Eucaristia in S. Alberto Magno* (Rome, 1939). This work contains numerous references to thirteenth-century scholastics.

Introduction

tion to the background that coincided with the worldwide promulgation of the individualist error, Catholic thinkers are again giving more attention to the dogma of the total Christ, of the organic, supernatural, and divine unity that we form together with Jesus. Treatises of theology once again assign a place to this doctrine among their series of propositions. Periodicals of theological, liturgical, and spiritual science study at length one or another of its aspects. Several fine works have stressed, either from the theoretical or practical point of view, the teaching of St. Paul concerning our union with Christ.

We shall not pause to discuss the excellent works of Dom Columba Marmion, the monk of Maredsous who was such a pioneer in this field. In *Christ the Life of the Soul* and in *Christ in His Mysteries*, while he did not treat the dogma of the total Christ in a didactic manner, he contributed significantly to restoring Christian devotion to the great Pauline doctrine. Under his tutelage, souls have learned once again to live their incorporation into Christ, and theologians have found in his teaching a climate of thought favorable to a more thorough explanation of the Mystical Body.

Among the studies that treat our subject *ex professo*, we must first of all point to Abbé Anger's *La Doctrine du Corps Mystique de Jésus Christ*, published in 1929. A few years later, in 1934, appeared the first edition of our own study, and in 1936, the valuable study of historical theology by Father Mersch mentioned above. Father Mersch exploited with patient erudition the principal treasures of the Old and New Testament, of the Greek and Latin Fathers, and of the princes of theology from the earliest days to our own time, providing us with a magnificent panoramic view of Catholic doctrine on this central dogma of our faith. It makes known to us the riches that Christian spirituality was once able to draw from the admirable mystery of our incorporation into Christ. It convinces us that it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, whether in the exposition of dogma or in the practice of the interior life—in short, in every phase of Christian life.

Introduction

Father Mersch's *La Théologie du Corps Mystique*, published in 1946 after his tragic death in June, 1940, a victim of the wartime bombing, is a less successful attempt at speculative synthesis. The author was not able to put the finishing touches to it, and it contains many controversial and inaccurate statements.⁸ However his earlier work, *Morale et Corps Mystique*, published in 1937, is excellent from every point of view. This is a collection of articles applying the dogma of the total Christ to the most diverse conditions of Christian life: marriage, the priesthood, social action, the religious life, and so forth.

Father Sebastian Tromp, S.J., professor at the Gregorian University, has contributed several studies, some before and some after Pope Pius XII's Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of 1943. In 1937 he published *Corpus Mysticum quod est Ecclesia*, a textbook for theology courses of great doctrinal content and rich in bibliographical references. After this general introduction which was re-edited in 1946, he brought out a second and third part under the same title but with the following subtitles: "De Christo Capite" and "De Spiritu Christi Anima." The doctrine set forth is solid, drawn from the Fathers and from the great theologians. In 1948 Father Tromp published an annotated edition of *Mystici Corporis* entitled *Litterae Encyclicae de Mystico Jesu Christi Corpore*. The author has written many tracts on the same subject. *De Spiritu Sancto, Anima Corporis Mystici* consists of two tracts, the first presenting the teaching of the Greek Fathers, and the second the doctrine of the Latin Fathers.

Special consideration should be given to two impressive works that have appeared since the Encyclical: Monsignor Charles Journet's *L'Église du Verbe Incarné*, a two-volume work; and the work of Father Emilio Sauras, O.P., *El Cuerpo Místico de Cristo*.

In the first volume of his work, Monsignor Journet studies the exterior and juridical aspect of the Church under the subtitle

⁸ Cf. our article, "La Dottrina del Corpo Místico," in a work published by a group of theologians, *Problemi e Orientamenti di teologia dommatica* (Milan: Marzorati), II, pp. 379-98. An English translation of Father Mersch's work, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, was published by the B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, in 1951.

Introduction

Hiérarchie apostolique. (An English edition of the work: *The Church of the Word Incarnate, The Apostolic Hierarchy*, was published by Sheed & Ward, New York, in 1954.) The second volume, published in 1951, with the subtitle *Sa Structure et son unité catholique*, delves into the internal aspect of the Church as a mystical organism quickened by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to sum up in a few lines a work of such great importance. We should note in passing the section devoted to Mary, who exercises the functions of the heart in the Mystical Body and who is also the prototype of the Church.

Father Sauras' work, published in Madrid in 1952, covers the following subjects: (1) the doctrine of the Mystical Body in Holy Scripture; (2) Christ the Head of the Mystical Body and his vital influence on the members; (3) the divine life of the Head; (4) the members of the Mystical Body; (5) the soul of the Mystical Body;⁹ (6) the unity of the Mystical Body; (7) the Mystical Person of the total Christ.

Many studies on the Mystical Body have appeared in Germany, including the following: Thaddeus Soiron's *Die Kirche als Leib Christi*, which has the advantage of placing the theological presentation in the total context of the concepts advanced. The author reduces all explanations proposed to three classes. The first, which Soiron calls *realistico-somatic*, is completely erroneous and it is scarcely believable that lucid minds could have imagined it. This theory takes the words of St. Paul on the unity of the Mystical Body, composed of Christ and of his members, in the sense of a natural, physical unity: Christ and Christians form a single organism, numerically one. Such is also the view of Kastner, *Marianische Christus-Gestaltung der Welt* (1936), Haugg, *Wir sind dein Leib* (1937), Massmann, *Der König und sein Opfer*, and even more crudely, Pelz, in *Der Christ als Christus* (1939), which means "the Christian as Christ." This last work affirms the identity of

⁹ In the view of Father Sauras, the Mystical Body has an uncreated soul, namely, the Holy Spirit, and also a created soul, consisting of grace and all the gifts that accompany it. This point is certainly controversial and finds no support in the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*. For a more detailed discussion cf. below, Chapter 11, p. 211 ff.

Introduction

the physical body and the Mystical Body of Christ, saying without flinching that all efforts to separate them are useless!

These are the aberrations to which Pius XII alluded in the third part of the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, and which show the importance of the work we undertook in 1934 to set forth the true nature of the mysterious unity of the Mystical Body of Christ.

The second series of authors whom Soiron studies in a work entitled *Bildliche Lösung*, sin by default in the opposite direction. For them the unity of the Mystical Body is purely figurative. The Mystical Body, as they see it, is only a symbol, an image that has no relation to reality: thus Deimel in *Leib Christi* (1960).

Between these two extremes there is a third approach that Soiron calls *bildlich-reale*—"figurative-real"—which is the one he himself defends. Under the veil of symbol are hidden profound mysterious realities which the theologian must explain by analogy with natural realities. Also in German, the work of Mitterer, *Geheimnisvolle Leib Christi* (1950), makes a comparison between the doctrine of Pope Pius XII's Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* and the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, only to reach an inadmissible conclusion: namely, that St. Thomas is in contradiction with Pius XII. Even a superficial perusal of the work quickly shows how flimsy is the demonstration that he claims to make of this opposition. Thus, according to Mitterer, the Angelic Doctor would consider the Mystical Body as expressing only the invisible aspect of the Church. We need read only the *Summa*, IIIa, q. 8, a. 3, to see that St. Thomas includes both the body and soul of the Church, both her visible and invisible aspect, in the Mystical Body.

An author more deserving of attention is Jürgensmeir. His work *Der Mystische Leib Christi als Grundprinzip der Aszetic* (*The Mystical Body of Christ as the Fundamental Principle of Asceticism*), whose title tells the subject matter, is limited to one aspect of the spiritual life. Two other good works are *Das Mystikum der hl. Kirche* (*The Mystery of Holy Church*), and a commentary on the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* entitled *Die Kirche*

Introduction

als Herrenleib (*The Church as the Body of the Lord* (1949)),¹⁰ both of which were written by Feckes.

Among these works on the mystery of our union in Christ, what is the purpose and orientation of the present work? It has been our purpose, even as early as 1932-1934 when no study—apart from Abbé Anger's first outline—had yet attempted a methodical explanation of the "Mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4; cf. Col. 2:2), to investigate with the help of theological principles, the inner nature of this divine organism.

First of all, we had to set forth the constitutive principles of this unity peculiar to the Mystical Christ. Once these were established, there remained to be studied in its entirety the supernatural activity of the Body in its Head and in its members. It was an attempt to set up a sort of supernatural metaphysics of the being of the total Christ, and a supernatural psychology of its faculties of action; or rather an organic theology, both speculative and practical, dogmatic and moral, of the Mystical Body of Christ.

The years have sped by since the first edition of our study. The Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, has thrown new light on the dogma of man's unity in Christ, confirming most of the positions we had taken. Far from rendering useless and out of date the work then undertaken, it seems to us that it has

¹⁰ In this rapid glance at the works devoted to the study of the Mystical Body, we could also cite others of secondary importance or that deal with our subject only in an indirect manner, that is from the practical point of view, which is also rich in significance for the spiritual life. Let us cite in passing: Mgr. Duperray, *Le Christ dans la Vie Chretienne* (1922); Mgr. Ceriani, *Dottrina e Vita del Corpo Mistico* (1939); R. Plus, *Dans le Christ Jesus*, and *Le Christ dans nos Frères*; Gasque, *L'Eucharistie et le Corps Mystique*; Msgr. Piolanti, *Il Corpo Mistico et le sue relazioni con l'Eucaristia in S. Alberto Magno* (1939); Cardinal Mendoza, *De naturali cum Christo unione* (edited in 1947 by Msgr. Piolanti at the Lateran); Daniel Culhane, *De Corpore Mystico Doctrina Seraphici* (Mundelein, 1935).

Culhane's treatise could have provided an interesting monograph. We regret that it is marred by inaccuracies and even by serious theological errors. According to the author, to be part of the Mystical Body one must be in the state of grace! Whence the logical conclusion: "Sinners are not members of the Mystical Body." No one will accept such an assertion in our own day.

Introduction

made the need for a theological synthesis of this great dogma more strongly felt. The American edition which we are presenting fills a great need. Although it is true that professional theologians easily make use of foreign language works, the fact remains that educated laymen and laywomen, whom Pope John XXIII invites to study this dogma, and souls seeking food to nourish their interior life are frustrated in their need to know the great mystery. And yet St. Paul earnestly wished that his faithful should have knowledge of the Gift of God and besought the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to give them the spirit of wisdom and of revelation, the eyes of their minds being enlightened (cf. Eph. 1:17-18), so that they might know the riches for them contained in Christ and in their union with him (cf. Eph. 3:14-19; Col. 1:25-28).

The unity of the total Christ and his supernatural activity are the two aspects of the theology of the Mystical Body. The present study limits itself to the first aspect,¹¹ which is the most delicate problem of all: "*Vos estis Corpus Christi!*"—"You are (the) Body of Christ!" (I Cor. 12:27). How are we to understand this bold assertion made by St. Paul? The question has been asked by a number of persons who have not attempted to answer it, perhaps through fear of marring with overly human explanations the transcendent beauty of the dogma of our incorporation into Christ Jesus. They do not tell us wherein consists the organic and vital cohesion that makes of Jesus and ourselves a single "total Christ." Bishop Duperray asks himself:

How can we define this union according to St. Paul? Is it an essential (*informativa*) union, as the scholastics say, such as the substantial union of soul and body in the human being? Evidently not. Is it a personal union like the hypostatic union of Christ¹² with the Word? Again no. Is it a moral or a physical union? When St. Paul

¹¹ Namely, the problem of the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is the author's hope that Volume II of his work, *Le Corps Mystique du Christ*, on the activity of the Mystical Body will be published in English at a later date.

¹² The author means the union of the human nature of Christ with the Word. It is through a slip of the pen that this Nestorian expression has slipped into the author's text.

Introduction

compares the union of the Christian to Christ with the moral union of husband and wife in marriage, he says that the union of the faithful to Christ is still closer than that of two spouses.¹³

Father Plus in his turn discreetly tries to determine the nature of our incorporation into Christ. He says: "We are one with him in every sense of the word. It is not a simple imputation, or a pure abstraction. It is a reality [and here he cites Father Prat], because it is the subject of attributions, of properties, and of rights"

He goes on to say: "It is not a physical union rather than a moral union, at least in the sense habitually given to this word. It is an organic and living union, absolutely *sui generis*, for which we possess no analogous term. Such is the nature of our mystical union with our Lord."¹⁴

Father Prat, in his invaluable work on the theology of St. Paul, to which Father Plus was referring, expresses himself in this way: "It is a reality of the moral order indeed, but a genuine reality. . . . Mystical is not the opposite of real, and there are realities outside of what can be touched and weighed. Let us remark, however, that this reality is expressed by a metaphor, like all immaterial and transcendental objects."¹⁵ Then the author clarifies his thought by showing how the analogy of the human body is verified in the mystical Christ.

Father Mersch proposes as equally good two explanations of the unity of the Mystical Body: the Mystical Body as a purely moral union or as a union of the ontological order. His personal preference leans toward the latter more difficult but more profound explanation.¹⁶

As we can see, this supernatural reality of the Mystical Body is situated in an order apart, and theological authors hesitate to

¹³ *Le Christ dans la vie chrétienne*, Chapter 1, par. 2. This interesting monograph by Bishop Duperray was written in 1922 and deals with the Christian life in the context of the Mystical Christ.

¹⁴ Raoul Plus, S.J., *Dans le Christ Jesus*, Chapter 2, par. 1.

¹⁵ *The Theology of Saint Paul* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1952), pp. 300-1.

¹⁶ Emile Mersch, S.J., *Le Corps mystique du Christ: étude de théologie historique*, Introduction, p. xxiii ff.

Introduction

give a precise formula and an adequate expression of its nature. Moreover, the various explanations put forward, which we have barely outlined, do not seem at first sight to agree.

In reality, all the solutions sketched above contain a portion of truth. Their differences stem from the complex nature of the unity of the total Christ which we form in union with Jesus. It is a unity both moral and physical, and even the physical unity, as we shall see, is of several sorts. There is not just one principle of unity between Jesus and man. As many as seven distinct principles of unity exist, which, like mysterious ligaments and mystical arteries, bind the members of the total Christ to one another and to their divine Head, and cause a single stream of supernatural and divine life to flow throughout the organism.

The presentation of these seven principles of unity is the purpose of this work. Fully aware of our weakness and limitations, we shall faithfully follow the teaching of the Doctors of the faith, and primarily the doctrine of the great Apostle of the Gentiles and the very luminous principles of St. Thomas Aquinas. In order to carry out our plan, conceived for the greater glory of the Most Blessed Trinity, we implore the grace and light of the Holy Spirit, the help of Jesus, our divine Head, and the assistance of Mary our Mother.

We would like to give an over-all view from the start of the whole doctrine that we are about to present, in order to reveal more clearly its order and structure. To this end, the Table of Contents, which is a condensation of the doctrine, should be studied. It will facilitate the understanding of the subject matter and help in assimilating the ideas to be presented, by showing the place of each one in the total doctrinal picture.

When viewed from this vantage point of synthesis, the building up of the Mystical Body will appear to us as the great recapitulation in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10), to which all the works of God are ordered for the salvation of the human race. Once they are seen in their relationship to this total doctrine, the revealed truths that are most familiar to us take on a breadth, a supernatural

Introduction

beauty, and a practical significance that we did not suspect. A few examples will illustrate what I mean.

The notion of grace, considered in itself as a supernatural entity and a participation in the divine nature, is certainly not lacking in grandeur. But when it is considered in its relationship to the doctrine of the Mystical Body, does it not become more comprehensive, more intelligible? It is not only the life of God but the life of the first-born Son that we receive in participation; for the eternal plan of the Father has been to incorporate us into the Word Incarnate, into his only-begotten Son, so that he might make us his adopted sons through this union: "*He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons*" (Eph. 1:5). And he has made of us as it were "*joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 3:6).¹⁷ Thus, our sanctifying grace becomes the fullness of Christ in us his members, and our Christian life, the blossoming of this grace, is nothing but the manifestation of the life of Jesus in our fragile nature, "*that the life . . . of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh*" (II Cor. 4:11).

Baptism likewise, when considered in the context of the Mystical Body, appears not only as the sacrament of our supernatural regeneration, an individual and personal matter, but also as our entrance into this divine Body of the mystical Christ, the act of our incorporation into the total Christ, and the point of departure of our life in Jesus and in his grace. How great is the Christian when seen in this light, and how important is what we may call "the science of his baptism," for it is the science of Christian and eternal life! *Quicumque in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis!*

Finally, the dogma of the spiritual motherhood of Mary shines brilliantly when considered in the context of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. As proof of this we need only meditate upon the theologically sound statement of Father Bainvel: "As long as we hold fast to the theology of St. Paul on the Mystical Body of Christ and on our incorporation into Jesus Christ, we shall find

¹⁷ According to the Greek, the sense is: "*Graticavit nos in Dilecto suo.*"

Introduction

in Mary's consent to and cooperation in the Incarnation, the consent to and cooperation in our rebirth in Jesus which constitute her spiritual motherhood."¹⁸ The reason for this is that Jesus was not born for himself alone but for us, so that he might become "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), the Head of the redeemed human race. Father Bainvel goes on to say: "This is the explanation of Mary's motherhood in relation to men. As the mother of Christ, of God-made-man, she is by that very fact the mother of Christ the Head of the human race, the mother of Christ in his members, the mother of all who possess supernatural being only in virtue of their union with Christ."¹⁹

May the divine heart of Jesus, the fountain of life and holiness, bestow his blessing upon this humble work, so that every page, every line, every word of it, may inspire souls, by showing them the wonders of his divine charity, to a livelier faith, a more ardent love, and thus contribute to the perfection of his Mystical Body, for the greater glory of the Most Blessed Trinity.

¹⁸ *Marie, Mere de grace*, Part II, par. 6.

¹⁹ Bainvel, *loc. cit.*

CONTENTS

Introduction: vii

PART ONE

The Doctrine of St. Paul on the Mystical Body

Introduction: 3

- I The Origins of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Our Lord's Teaching: 7
- II The Various Expressions of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in St. Paul: 14
- III The First Epistle to the Corinthians: 22
- IV The Epistle to the Ephesians: 32
- V The Epistle to the Colossians: 47

PART TWO

Theological Notions on the Nature of the Mystical Body

Introduction: 59

Article I

The Constitutive Principles of the Unity of the Mystical Body

- VI On the Unity of the Mystical Body in General: 63
- VII Union in Christ, the Universal Final Cause: 73
- VIII Union of the Juridical Order: 80
- The Dependence of the Members upon Christ their Head: 82
- SATISFACTION: 84
- REDEMPTION OR DELIVERANCE: 86
- CHRIST'S MERIT FOR US: 87
- Relationships of the Members among Themselves through the Communion of Saints: 95
- PRAYER: 96
- MERIT: 97
- SATISFACTION: 100

Contents

- ix Sacramental Union: 105
 Our Incorporation into Christ through Baptism: 107
 Union through the Eucharist: 113
 The Other Sacraments in their Relationship to the Eucharist: 119
x Union through Efficient Causality: 126
xi Union in the Holy Spirit, the Soul of the Mystical Body: 139
 Testimony of Scripture and Tradition: 140
 Theological Exposition: 149
xii Union in Christ, the Exemplary Cause: 164
 Christ our Exemplar in His Divine Nature: 165
 Christ our Model in His Human Nature: 171
xiii Moral Union in Faith and Charity: 176
 The Union of Minds through Faith: 177
 The Union of Wills through Charity: 179
 THE UNION OF THE FAITHFUL WITH CHRIST THEIR HEAD: 182
 THE UNION OF THE FAITHFUL AMONG THEMSELVES: 185
xiv The Mystical Person of Christ: 189
 Article II
 The Various Parts of the Mystical Body:
 The Head and the Members
xv The Head of the Mystical Body: 201
 Pre-eminence of Order: 203
 Pre-eminence of Perfection: 206
 THE GRACE OF CHRIST: 208
 THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS: 211
 PRIMACY OF INFLUENCE: 213
xvi The Members of the Mystical Body: The Church Triumphant: 215
 Mary, the Heart of the Mystical Body: 216
 St. Joseph: 224
 St. John the Baptist: 228

Contents

- The Angels: 234
The Saints in Heaven: 237
xvii The Members of the Mystical Body: The Church Suffering: 243
 The Condition of the Suffering Souls: 244
 Communion with the Souls in Purgatory: 251
xviii The Members of the Mystical Body: The Church Militant: 257
 The Hierarchy of Order and Jurisdiction: 259
 THE HIERARCHY OF JURISDICTION: 260
 The Simple Faithful: 264
xix Outside the Church: 270
 The Schismatics: 271
 The Heretics: 278
 The Unbelievers: 282
 THE JEWS: 283
 THE MOHAMMEDANS: 284
 THE PAGANS: 285
Conclusion: 289
 The Life of the Head: 290
 The Life of the Members: 292

The Nature of the Mystical Body

the glorious Queen of Heaven and of Earth, is also the clement Sovereign of purgatory. Under whatever aspect we consider the admirable reality of the Communion of Saints, we always find Mary *at the heart* of this mystery, while Jesus, her divine Son, remains its Head and crowning glory.

CHAPTER XVIII

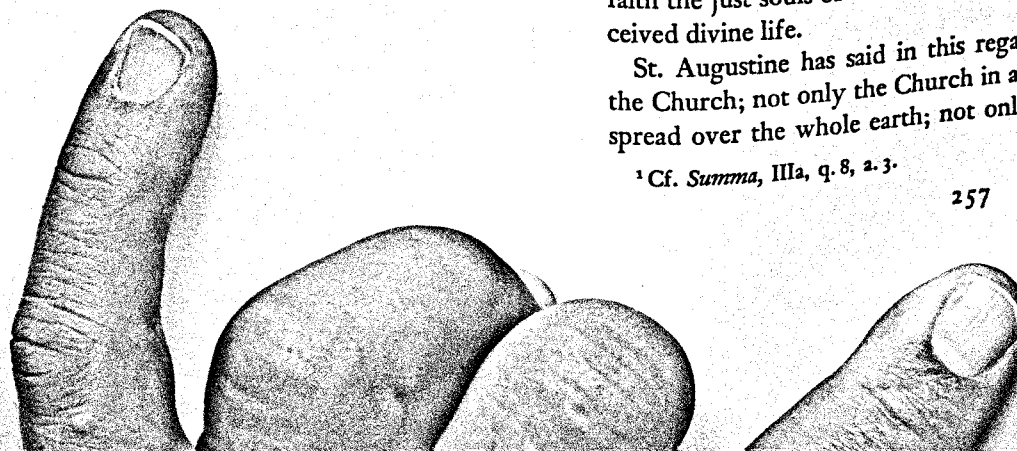
The Members of the Mystical Body: The Church Militant

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN, the poor souls in purgatory, and the faithful still battling here on earth make up one Church by reason of their union to their common Head, Christ Jesus. But whereas the saints in heaven cleave to Christ irrevocably and possess God through the beatific vision, the suffering souls and the exiles of this world know him only in the dim light of faith. It is true that the holy souls in purgatory have a decided advantage over the faithful here on earth. No faltering of their will can make them lose the object of their hope. Wayfaring man, on the contrary, regardless of the assurance he has from divine promises, can lose heaven through his infidelity. His union with Christ is not yet definitive, as is that of expiating souls. The latter are incorporated forever in their divine Head, even if in an essentially imperfect manner. Only the blessed in heaven belong to Christ totally and forever.

Let us now pause to consider the Church Militant and the diverse conditions of men living on earth in terms of their incorporation into Christ. First of all, we must observe with St. Thomas that the Mystical Body does not possess all its parts simultaneously as does the natural body.¹ The life of the Body of Christ extends through the centuries, and the Church embraces in her unity men of the past, of the present, and of the future. No one is saved except through the grace of Christ; by cleaving to him through faith the just souls of the Old Testament attained salvation and received divine life.

St. Augustine has said in this regard: "The Body of Christ is the Church; not only the Church in a given place, but the Church spread over the whole earth; not only the Church of the present

¹ Cf. *Summa*, IIIa, q. 8, a. 3.



The Nature of the Mystical Body

time, but the Church that extends from Abel to those who will be born in the last days and who will believe in Christ."² But the holy Bishop asks himself how the saints of the Old Law can belong to Christ. He answers his own question, pushing the analogy of the human body even further, with a certain realism. He says: "Certain members of Christ preceded the Incarnation of Christ, just as, at the birth of a child, the hand sometimes appears before the head, even though the hand is joined to the head. Do not think, Brothers, that the just who suffered persecution, even among those who preceded and announced the coming of the Lord, do not belong among the members of Christ."³

Even among those who make up the Mystical Body at a given period of time, all do not belong to it by the same right. St. Thomas tells us that some are members of Christ only in potency, inasmuch as they are deprived of habitual grace.⁴ We may add that these souls belong to Christ by right, juridically, although they do not in fact acknowledge this necessary subjection to their divine Redeemer. For some of these, this potency will never be reduced to act, because they will not submit to the beneficent rule of the divine King. Others on the contrary are destined to be incorporated into the Body of Christ in a more effective manner.

Among those actually united to the Head of the Mystical Body, St. Thomas tells us there are three categories. Some are united to him by faith alone, others by grace and charity, and finally, still others through glory.

There are some who no longer cleave to Christ except by faith. Their souls are dead because of sin. They have lost sanctifying grace and divine charity, as well as the other infused virtues. Only faith, like a valuable cargo saved from a shipwreck, still subsists in them, as often supernatural hope does. However, their faith and hope can no longer carry them to the shores of eternal salvation. If death surprises them in this sad state, they lose the little

² *Enarr. in psalmos*, Ps. 90:1, PL 37:1159.

³ *Ibid.*, Ps. 61:4, PL, 37:731.

⁴ Cf. *Summa*, IIIa, q. 8, a. 3.

Theological Notions

that remains of their supernatural riches and are cut off completely and forever from the Body of Christ.

Others are united to the Savior by grace and charity. They are members of Christ in the full sense of the word. They live by his life; they bear his divine likeness within them; they are quickened by his Spirit, who is the soul of the Mystical Body; they receive all the sanctifying influences of their divine Head.

The last group mentioned by St. Thomas are the blessed who have already been established in love of God through glory. We have already spoken of them with reference to the Church Triumphant.

In addition to these absolutely essential distinctions made by the Angelic Doctor, however, many others must be clarified, in order to have a more complete and enlightened idea of the harmonious totality of the Mystical Body.

First we shall consider the various degrees among the ministers that the twofold hierarchy of order and jurisdiction sets up in the Body of the Church. Then we shall speak of the noble rank that belongs to the ordinary faithful in the whole Christ. In the next chapter we shall point out the relationships that can exist between the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ and schismatics, heretics, and unbelievers.

The Hierarchy of Order and Jurisdiction

Holy Scripture recounts in III Kings that the Queen of Sheba, having come to see Solomon, whose magnificence and wisdom had been told her, was charmed to the point of losing her breath: "*et non habebat ultra spiritum*"—"she had no longer any spirit in her" (III Kings 10:5). She was struck by the admirable order that the great king, in his wisdom, had established in his palace and in the service of the royal household: the ordering of his table; the disposition of the apartments reserved for the servants; the various gradations of ministers and servants. This magnificent array enraptured her and she said to the king: "The report is true, which

I heard in my own country, concerning thy words and concerning thy wisdom. And I did not believe them that told me, till I came myself, and saw with my own eyes, and have found that the half hath not been told me. . . . Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always, and hear thy wisdom" (III Kings 10:6-8).

We do not envy the happiness of the Queen of Sheba, nor that of the servants of the great king of Jerusalem. For we remember the words of our Savior, referring to himself: "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42). It is Jesus, the true King of Peace, who has set laudable and heavenly order in the organization of his Church; we are the daily witnesses and fortunate beneficiaries of this work of his divine wisdom.

His wisdom shines forth especially in the variety and subordination of the ministers of his spiritual kingdom. A twofold hierarchy, one of order and the other of jurisdiction, assures the government of the Church and the wise administration of the supernatural treasures that her divine Founder has bequeathed her.

THE HIERARCHY OF JURISDICTION

The hierarchy of jurisdiction consists in the attribution of the power to govern, to rule the Body of the Church. It includes two degrees: (1) the sovereign pontiff, and (2) the bishops, who are the pope's brothers and subordinates in the spiritual governance.

The sovereign pontiff, the visible Head of the whole Church, who represents Christ the invisible Head, has received from Christ the fullness of royal power. It must be noted, however, that Jesus possesses a more extensive power than that he gave to Peter, for Christ is the spiritual and temporal King of the whole human race.⁵ He has delegated only his spiritual kingship to his Church, leaving the temporal scepter in other hands. But all the power conferred upon the Church is in the hands of Peter and of his successors to the See of Rome. All the branches of supernatural

⁵ Cf. encyclical *Quas primas*, December, 1925; cf. also the author's *Le Corps Mystique du Christ*, Volume II, Chapter 7, on the Kingship of Christ.

activity converge toward this apostolic See. From the Chair of the Roman pontiff the voice of Peter is heard throughout the world. On that Chair sits the oracle of truth, without which there is no divine life. From it the word which commands in the name of Christ rings out, reaching out all over the world. From this Chair come the words that enlighten and the counsel that inspires. Whoever hears the voice of Peter hears the voice of Jesus himself (cf. Luke 10:16). In the realization of God's works, our Savior's promises apply only to those who are completely obedient to Peter.

Even if the Roman pontiff has power over the whole Church and over each of her members, he cannot govern her alone in every detail. The Lord has given him aides to share his burden and to exercise pastoral authority within specific areas: the bishops. They were instituted in the beginning by our Savior himself. Since then, however, they have been named individually by the supreme pontiff or in his name by those to whom he delegated the power. Thus the bishops receive their authority from Christ, without any diminution of the power of the sovereign Shepherd. What the bishop can do for each of the faithful in his jurisdiction, the pontiff of Rome can also do for all the faithful of the world, without need of any intermediary. Direct and often opportune intervention, however, will never take the place of the role of the individual bishops or render their mission useless. Thus Jesus provided both for the wise guidance of the Church through a multiplicity of pastors, and for the unity of his Mystical Body by the institution of a supreme and universal authority.

Beneath the bishops no ministers have the power of jurisdiction by divine right, even though the supreme pontiff or the bishops can and do habitually delegate a part of their authority to subordinate aides. Thus the pastors of parishes were set up to provide, in the name and place of the bishop, for the welfare of the souls entrusted to their care. Thus too, those religious institutes whose purpose is apostolic usually receive from the Holy See the official mission that authorizes and legitimizes their holy labors in the vineyard of the Lord. These are the chosen workers,

The Nature of the Mystical Body

less burdened by the worries of the world, who devote their efforts, at the command of the leaders, to the various parts of the sacred field that call for their particular care.

The hierarchy of order consists of the ministers to whom the administration of the sacraments and the celebration of the divine mysteries have been entrusted. It is identified with the highest degree of the hierarchy of jurisdiction, that is, with the episcopacy. It is distinguished from and subordinate to the episcopacy in all the other degrees of priestly power. In this way also the unity of the Mystical Body of the Church is guaranteed.

According to the actual economy of the Church of the Latin Rite, priestly power is divided into seven degrees, including the three major orders and the four minor orders. At the top of this mystical ladder is the priesthood whose sublime functions relate to the Body of Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and to his members, the faithful, as they participate by Holy Communion in this august sacrifice.

The episcopacy, considered as a power of order, is simply the priesthood in its fullness. Although it involves a more extensive power than that of simple priests, it does not constitute a distinct order nor does it confer a new character.⁶ It perfects the priestly character and extends its power to new ministerial acts, notably the power to confer sacred ordination. Because of this the bishops are the born leaders of the priesthood and of the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy, and are the principle of its perpetuation.

The other orders are hierarchized according to their more or less direct relationship to the Eucharist. This divine sacrament is the center of all the functions of the priestly ministry and the *raison d'être* of all the powers of order.⁷ The diaconate confers on the minister who receives it the safeguarding of the Eucharist and gives him the right to administer it to the faithful, at least when the priest is unable to do so. In the churches of the Eastern

⁶ The reason is that there is no power of the ministry *above* that of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which specifies the priesthood.

⁷ Cf. *Summa*, Suppl., q. 37, a. 2.

Theological Notions

Rite he presents to the communicants the cup containing the precious Blood.

The subdeacon does not have the right to dispense the sacred mysteries, but he is entrusted with the care of all that immediately relates to the Eucharist. He cares for the sacred vessels, he purifies the linens used on the altar, he prepares the bread and the wine for the Holy Sacrifice.

These, then, are the three major or sacred orders, whose bearers are dedicated exclusively to the service of the God of the Host, and form the immediate retinue of the divine Solomon. Hence the Church wants them to consecrate their person to Christ irrevocably by the solemn vow of perpetual chastity, so that they may be worthy ministers of the God of holiness and faithful dispensers of sacred things: "*Be holy because I am holy*" (Lev. 11:44; 19:2).

The minor orders are related also, but in a more remote way, to Eucharistic worship. The acolyte presents the wine and the water for the sacrifice to the sacred ministers, and carries the candle before them, as a symbol of the spiritual light with which he must, by his example and teaching, illumine the minds of the faithful. The exorcist, the lector, and the porter, each according to his special grace, dispose the Christian faithful to participate worthily in the divine mysteries. The porter convokes the faithful to the holy place, and keeps out of the holy assemblage unbelievers, excommunicates, and public sinners. The lector teaches the rudiments of the faith and the doctrine of Sacred Scripture to the catechumens, to the neophytes, and to Christian children. The exorcist drives out the spirits of evil who seek to trouble and sully souls by their evil suggestions.

Minor orders, so-called in relation to the sacred orders, are lofty and sublime when considered in absolute terms. They make of their bearers princes of the house of God, eminent members of the Mystical Body. The same is true of simple clerics who, although they have not yet received any orders, have, by their tonsure, become the heritage of the Lord, according to the beautiful

The Nature of the Mystical Body

name they bear. *Cleric* actually derives from the Greek word *κληρικός* which means "heritage." Those who are associated with members of the clergy are the chosen portion of the Lord. Separated from the world, they profess by their very habit the state of death to the world, to which those who live only for God pledge themselves.

The Simple Faithful

Beneath the hierarchy of order and jurisdiction come the *simple faithful*. Among them we must distinguish two different states: the religious state and the lay state. The first is the state of perfection in which generous souls, free from obligations in the world, publicly profess their resolve to follow the way of the evangelical counsels. The second is the way of the faithful who remain in the world and who, while equally obligated to tend toward perfection,⁸ do not pledge themselves to pursue it through the observance of the vows of religion.

In the first place let us point out the special place held by *consecrated souls* in the Mystical Body of Christ. Consecrated souls are those whom the Savior invites to a more complete renunciation, so that they can follow him more closely (cf. Matt. 19:12; 16:24). They are the virgins who, as St. Paul says, think only about the things of the Lord, how they may please God (cf. I Cor. 7:32-35), and whose hearts are not divided between God and the world. They are the chaste souls whom St. John saw following the Lamb, singing a canticle that they alone can sing (cf. Apoc. 14:1-4). They are the honor of the Church and the adornment of the Mystical Body of Jesus. Our Savior has such a predilection for the state of holy virginity that he chose to come into the world only through it, suspending in its favor the most immutable laws of nature and granting his Blessed Mother the glory of a divine fruitfulness together with the honor of virginal integrity.

The virginal fruitfulness of Mary, the symbol of the spiritual

⁸ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3.

Theological Notions

and most pure motherhood of the Church, is honored in various ways by the faithful, some imitating her holy virginity by perfect continence, others honoring her fruitfulness in the state of marriage. St. Augustine writes:

Mary is the one woman who is mother and virgin at once, not only spiritually but also corporeally. She is not spiritually the mother of our Head, who is the Savior. For spiritually she is born of him, since all who believe in him—and she among them—are rightly called the sons of the Bridegroom. But she is spiritually the mother of his members, whom we are, for she cooperated by her charity in bringing forth the faithful who are his members. The fact remains that corporeally, she is the mother of our Head.

Indeed, it was necessary that our Head be born corporeally of a virgin by a wonderful miracle. Only Mary is Mother and Virgin in mind and body, both the mother of Christ and the virgin of Christ. Spiritually, the Church, in the person of the saints called to the kingdom of God, is totally the mother of Christ, totally the virgin of Christ. But corporeally, the Church is not totally one and the other. In some she is the virgin of Christ, and in others she is a mother, but not the mother of Christ.⁹

This beautiful passage, which specifies the role and place of Mary in the Mystical Body of Christ in such a precise and beautiful way, clearly shows the eminent rank of consecrated souls in this spiritual organism. They honor the sacred virginity of Mary, they prolong it, they extend it, and perpetuate it in Holy Mother Church. Mary was the first to raise the banner of virginity. She is the virgin par excellence, the one whom we call by her right name, the Blessed Virgin. After her, drawn by the odor of her virginal purity, virgins consecrate themselves to the heavenly Bridegroom in great numbers. *Adduncentur Regi virgines post eam*. We must repeat to the faithful whom grace invites to this lofty state the words of our Savior: "*Qui potest capere, capiat*"—"Let him accept it who can" (Matt. 19:12). Let him who can, accept for himself this precious heritage.

We would only like to point out that, after virginal chastity, which is the most excellent of all, there is a place for holy widow-

⁹ St. Augustine, *De sancta Virginitate*, n. 6.

The Nature of the Mystical Body

hood, and for the chastity restored by tears of repentance. But the Lord's preference goes to the souls that have consecrated to him the first-fruits of their life and the flower of their youth.

After religious, we must speak of those who are called the *laity*, the faithful who form the greatest part of the Church taught, those who on the one hand are not called to enter the sacred hierarchy through the reception of holy orders, and who on the other hand do not follow the evangelical counsels which Jesus addresses to everyone in general without obligating anyone in particular.

The word layman, according to the Greek etymology, signifies one who belongs to the people. The laymen in the Church are those who form the Christian people, the holy people, those whom St. Peter calls in his first epistle, "a chosen race . . . a holy nation" (I Pet. 2:9), a people purchased by Jesus Christ. Therefore the name "layman" is an honorable and glorious one. It has nothing in common with the unfavorable sense often attached to the words "secularism" and "secular," used to designate neutral or even atheistic institutions which exclude any profession of religious faith.¹⁰

In speaking of the faithful who make up the Christian people, the laity, St. Paul uses a term that should make them proud of their state of life. He calls them *saints*.¹¹ Are they not members of Christ? And even though their rank in the bosom of the Church is outwardly more lowly, they can still be higher in God's eyes, through grace, than the ministers of the Lord. Their greatness and nobility come from the divine life which quickens them, from the adopted sonship that makes them sons of the

¹⁰ According to the Code of Canon Law, the term "laity" sometimes designates in a general way all who are not clerics, that is to say, religious not in holy orders and Christians living in the world. For example, Canon 107: "*Sunt in Ecclesia clerici a laicis distincti.*" Elsewhere it applies to the faithful who have remained in the world, excluding all religious, as in Canon 471, par. 1: "*Religiosi praecedunt laicis.*" We are here using the more restricted sense of the word.

¹¹ Cf. Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 9:1, etc.

Theological Notions

Father, from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that pours grace and charity into their souls (cf. Rom. 5:5).

Furthermore, it is for their sake, "in order to perfect the saints" (Eph. 4:12), St. Paul says, that the various ministries of the ecclesiastical ministry were instituted to build up the whole Christ, "the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). For this reason the elect of the sanctuary should glory less in their precedence, which involves so many serious responsibilities, than in the gift of divine grace that they possess in common with all the faithful and that alone will make them princes in the heavenly city. On the contrary, their dignity and the holy attributions of the sacred ministry belong to the order of graces called gratuitous or *gratis datae*. They are conferred upon them less for their personal advantage than for the spiritual benefit of the entire flock. They are ordered, as to their proper end, to the grace *gratum faciens*, which alone can make them pleasing to God.

In the participation in the divine nature, there are many degrees and measures, according to the gratuitous favors of divine largess and to the way souls respond to the invitations of grace. What admirable variety exists in the supernatural world; it ranges from the newborn infant emerging from the baptismal fount to souls eminent in virtue and perfected in transforming love. Hagiography teaches us something about it, constantly revealing wondrous new facets of holiness.

This diversity is essential to the harmony of the Mystical Body. Even when we make allowance for the negligences and infidelities that prevent many souls from attaining the summit of perfection to which God invites them, all are not called to the same holiness. God, who is the master of his gifts, dispenses them with a wise inequality. No one can accuse the heavenly Father of injustice. Each one has cause to thank him for what he receives gratuitously, and should rejoice in the honorable place he occupies in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Our ultimate place among the saints of God, however, does not depend altogether upon us. It is untrue to say, as some do, that

The Nature of the Mystical Body

we can decide for ourselves whether we shall attain the holiness of a Thomas Aquinas or of a Francis Xavier. It is up to us to be faithful to our own grace, which is certainly a grace of holiness. Beyond that, God will always answer our desires of perfection with new gifts and increasing largess. Nevertheless, every saint has his own measure fixed in the eternal decrees, and it is not within the scope of our free will to rise to the summit of perfection of the apostles. Jesus said to the sons of Zebedee: "That is not mine to give you, but it belongs to those for whom it has been prepared . . ." (Matt. 20:23). To God alone belongs the right to order the members of Christ in the organism of the Mystical Body, according to the exigencies of the supernatural beauty he intends to give them and to the demands of multiplicity, inequality, and proportion among its various parts. For as Scripture expresses it, God does all things "in measure, and number, and weight" (Wisd. 11:21). It is up to us to lend our support to God's merciful plans by our own fidelity.

Since this is the supereminent grandeur that the gift of grace confers even upon the simple faithful, we understand the terrible evil that poor sinners bring upon themselves when they kill divine life in their souls. They betray their vocation to become saints. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (I Thess. 4:3). They received men by ceasing to be inwardly what their outward profession of Christianity makes them seem to be. As withered members of Christ, they are no longer quickened by his Spirit, and receive only rare life-giving influences from their Head.

However, they remain united to the Church, to the Mystical Body of Christ, and this cleaving to their divine Head, imperfect though it be, is still very precious. It will greatly facilitate their return to the life of the Body and their reanimation by the Spirit of grace. Although deprived of supernatural charity, poor sinners still benefit in a reduced measure from the ineffable advantages of the Communion of Saints. The prayers of the faithful, the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the intercession of the saints, and the infinite merits of Jesus draw divine mercy upon them and keep them immersed in a supernatural current under the wind of grace.

Theological Notions

Unless they resist stubbornly, this will reawaken dead love in their souls and restore them to the divine life of the Mystical Christ.

Far more deplorable is the condition of those wretched men who bear the character of Christ engraved in their souls, but are separated from the Mystical Body by schism or heresy. Even more to be pitied are those whom unbelief or idolatry shut off from the life-giving influences of the one who is rightfully their Head, but to whom they have never been incorporated by the sacrament of regeneration. All of these will remain outside the vital unity of the whole Christ, deprived of the many benefits of the Communion of Saints until the day when their aggregation into Catholic unity makes of them members of the true Church, *outside of which there is no salvation.*

CHAPTER XIX
Outside the Church

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US to look upon the total Christ and delight in the harmonious unity of his Head and members, without also turning our compassionate attention to the vast multitude of those who are still far from Christ, separated from him by error, discord, or unbelief? Did not Jesus shed all of his Blood for them? They are sheep that follow other shepherds, flocks that have strayed into poisoned pastures, but Christ never tires of calling them. He invites them to come to his one fold, to fall into ranks under his crook, and to recognize him, and him alone, as their one Shepherd (cf. John 10:1 ff.).

The Church, the Spouse of Christ and his mystical perpetuation, shares her Head's loving solicitude for the great erring mass of redeemed men who are still separated from the One who is her life. She holds out her arms to them with motherly charity, she sends her apostles and missionaries to them, she enlightens and instructs them, and every day brings forth a goodly number of them to divine life by incorporating them into Christ the Savior.

In union with the Church our mother, we who are members of Christ the Redeemer must have the most lively supernatural concern and affectionate compassion for all these separated souls, many of whom, in darkness or in the dawn of approaching day, seek Christ, "the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world" (John 1:9). The doctrine of the Mystical Body, which is the doctrine of the fullness of Christ, wages us in a special way to work for the completion of the whole Christ. The dogma is also a light capable of showing the path of truth to those who, tired of their isolation or starving for the bread of holy doctrine, have set out in search of the kingdom of God.

Among those who are outside the Church, separated from the

Theological Notions

great unity of the Mystical Body, we must distinguish three principal categories: 1) *Schismatics*—those who, while they retain or think they retain the integral faith, break the bond of ecclesiastical communion.¹ 2) *Heretics*—those who directly contravene the revealed truth proclaimed by the magisterium of the Church, and thereby break the unity of belief. 3) *Unbelievers*—those who have never belonged to the visible unity of the Mystical Body, inasmuch as they have never received the sacrament of incorporation into the Church, namely baptism. We must take a Christian interest in the fate of all of these groups. Let us now consider their diverse attitudes toward Christ and the Church.

The Schismatics

Jesus founded his Church on unity, and he willed that she should form a single Body of which he was to be the Head. "That they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22), was his prayer to his Father the night before he died. The question here is not one of an invisible unity such as certain heretics have imagined. Jesus asks a grace of unity for all those who belong to him which is, by reason of its miraculous nature, a visible and manifest sign to the world of the Church's divine origin and mission: ". . . even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

But how would the world believe if the sign Christ requested, namely the unity of his Church, were not a patent fact visible to all eyes? Jesus asks perfect union for his disciples: "*ut sint consummati in unum*"—"that they may be perfected in unity" (John 17:23). But could it be called a perfect union if the members of his supposedly invisible Church were mutually unaware

¹ Actually, schism can no longer exist without also being a heresy, by reason of the negation it implies of the primacy of Peter, now a defined dogma of faith.

of each other? There must be not only unity of Spirit, but also unity of Body: UNUM CORPUS, UNUM SPIRITUS (Eph. 4:4). This is the adequate formula given us by St. Paul.

As we have already seen, many of the elements, including the most valuable element of ecclesiastical unity, are interior and hidden. The secret action of the Head in all his members, the influence of the Holy Spirit who quickens the organism of the Church, the supernatural gifts which are poured into the souls of all the faithful from the moment of their baptism—all these things remain secret and are visible only to the eye of faith. They all reside, however, in a visible Body, which is made up of members known as such and governed by an equally manifest head, in dependence upon the Head who is Christ. This twofold character of ecclesiastical unity, at once interior and exterior, visible in some respects and hidden in others, enables the Church to reproduce and to represent in some manner the theandric unity of Christ, God and man, who is visible in his Humanity, invisible in his Godhead.

To quote the words of Pope Leo XIII: "Just as Christ, the Head and Exemplar of the Church, is not complete if we consider in him only his human and visible nature, following the error of the Photinians and the Nestorians, or if we consider only his divine and invisible nature, as do the Eutychians, and as we must on the contrary consider him as one in two natures, one visible and the other invisible; so his Mystical Body constitutes the true Church only because her visible elements have also a supernatural power and life. . . ." ²

Jesus himself has marked out the generative principles of this exterior and visible unity. Neither baptism alone, the exterior sign of aggregation to the Church and the necessary condition of salvation, nor the profession of a common faith could assure the perfect unity of the Church of Christ. There is need of a principle essential to every truly unified society: unity of government, the authority of a single Head whom all obey. Jesus must have been thinking of this when he said to the Prince of

² Encyclical *Satis cognitum*, June 29, 1896.

the apostolic college: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matt. 16:18).

From this follows a rigorous and ineluctable conclusion: anyone who withdraws from the authority of Peter, who breaks away from the communion of the universal pontiff, incurs the stigma of being *schismatic*.³ He is separated; he has ceased to belong to the Body of Christ. This inevitable conclusion is painful for anyone who realizes that it is the condition of the great number of baptized souls who have been separated by discord from Catholic unity.

Some may say that all recognize Christ as their Head, and are thus united in a superior, invisible, and mystical unity. This is the view of a number of our separated brethren, who found consolation from the division even yesterday. Today, however, there are many for whom this spiritual unity no longer suffices. Indeed, this is a sign of progress. For union with Christ and in Christ, without membership in the visible Body established by Christ, can be only an illusion. Jesus tells us that it is useless for us to appeal to our faith in him, and to cry out "Lord, Lord!" if we do not conform to his will. Christ will say he does not know us (cf. Matt. 7:21). The will of Jesus is clear; if we are to obey him, we must submit to his Church: "He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me" (Luke 10:16). Only one Church of Christ exists, the one he calls *his* Church: *Ecclesiam meam*—the Church that he built on Peter for all eternity.

By renouncing visible unity, the benefit of invisible unity is

³ Theoretically there are two ways of becoming a schismatic: either by refusing to acknowledge the authority of the successor of Peter; or by breaking away from any part of the Catholic Church. Fundamentally, however, the second mode implies the first, for the refusal to be in communion with a particular Church involves schism only because a particular Church is part of the universal Church, although only by its submission to the apostolic Chair. That is why Pope Leo XIII wrote in his encyclical on the unity of the Church (*Satis cognitum*, June 29, 1896): "Just as the unity of the Church, inasmuch as it is the assembly of the faithful, requires unity of faith, so, inasmuch as it is a divinely instituted society, it demands by divine right the unity of government that includes and creates unity of communion."

lost. In fleeing from the crook of Peter, whom Jesus named the shepherd of his lambs and of his sheep (cf. John 21:15-17), a man also flees from the one who called himself the Good Shepherd and who wants all of us to be gathered together in his one sheepfold (cf. *ibid.*, 10:11-16). Our vital union to Christ is conditioned upon our incorporation into the Church. This is according to divine order, and we cannot modify it. To remain outside the divine order is to remain outside the Church, and outside of Christ. To cleave to Christ by a sincere and efficacious love is to cleave to all the members of Christ. True love excludes schism, just as schism excludes authentic love. Thus St. Augustine was able to say, in commenting on the First Epistle of St. John:

Spread your charity over the whole earth if you want to love Christ. For the members of Christ are spread out over the earth. If you love only one part, you are divided. If you are divided, you are not in the Body. If you are not in the Body, you do not cleave to the Head. What good does it do you to believe, if you blaspheme? You adore Christ in his head and you blaspheme him in his Body. He loves his Body. Even though you break away from his Body, he cannot separate himself from his Body. "It is vain for you to honor me, you speak foolish things, for you honor me without my Body." It is as if someone wanted to kiss your head while he crushed your feet. Would you not, amid such protestations of honor, cry out: "What are you doing? You are crushing my feet." You would not say: "Trample my head," while he honored it, and yet the head would cry out more for its trampled members than for itself overwhelmed with honor.⁴

Hence those whom schism has separated from the Body of the Church no longer cleave to the Head, Christ. They belong to him by right, for they are his conquest by the right of Redemption. Even more, they bear, engraved in their souls, the baptismal character that indicates their belonging to the divine Shepherd. But they are sheep separated from the faithful flock, who cannot listen docilely to the voice of the Good Shepherd. "Those who do not have the Church as their mother, cannot have God as their Father."⁵

⁴In 1 Joan. V, tract. 10.

⁵St. Cyprian, *De unit. Ecclesiae*, Chapter 6.

Does this mean that in the vast multitude of separated Christians there are none who possess grace and charity, and who by reason of this fact are vitally united to Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body? Certainly not. For when these recalcitrants left the true Church, they took with them precious relics of their ancient riches. They kept the divine oracles, the treasure of revealed truths, which is the wellspring of light and of life for souls of good will.

Simple schismatics, for the most part, have taken with them, along with the sacrament of orders, the wellspring of sacramental graces. The invaluable riches of the Church, especially the Holy Eucharist and the Eucharistic Sacrifice, are not sterile for all schismatics.

Admittedly our separated brothers hold these treasures illegitimately. Admittedly the sacraments, valid though they may be, confer grace only upon well-disposed souls. It is true also that the sin of schism, which excludes charity, is opposed to the fruitful reception of the divine mysteries. The fact remains that among our separated brothers many are in good faith, having been separated through the fault of their fathers and forefathers. Many schismatic laymen have never fully understood the state of schism in which they find themselves. Others, even when they study the painful problem, do not grasp the truth all at once. All of them benefit provisionally—and this, in the case of the first case mentioned at least, can last a lifetime—from the privilege of their good faith which, because it leaves them with the conviction that they are in the path of truth, exempts them from formal sin and enables them to receive the sacraments of the Church fruitfully.⁶

Even when good faith excuses them from the sin of schism and allows charity and divine life to subsist in them, separated Christians do not belong effectively to the Body of the Church.

⁶As a rule we must make exception of the sacrament of penance, which requires for its validity not only the power of order but also the power of jurisdiction. Since jurisdiction resides only in legitimate pastors, it follows that schismatics are habitually deprived of it and cannot absolve validly except in danger of death, when the Church grants jurisdiction to all priests.

The Nature of the Mystical Body

They belong to it in desire, *in voto*,⁷ according to the teaching of Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*: “. . . by an unconscious desire and longing they have a certain relationship to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer” (par. 103). And this desire, implicit in every act of supernatural charity, already places them under the life-giving influences of Christ the Head, and of the Holy Spirit the soul of the Church. But juridically, effectively, they do not belong to the Church because they retain an attitude of declared opposition to the principle of unity proclaimed by Christ, which is union to the visible Head of the Church.⁸ This is also what the above-mentioned encyclical also teaches: “Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed” (par. 22).

The fact remains that there are—and this point has too often been overlooked—even among the schismatics as well as among the heretics who validly administer baptism many subjects who are Catholics by right and in fact. They are the baptized children who have not yet reached the age of reason. Baptism belongs by right to the Catholic Church alone. Whether the minister who confers it is a schismatic, a heretic, or even an unbeliever, he affiliates the baptized person to the Catholic Church, and this incorporation remains intact as long as the subject in question has not, through a personal profession of schism or heresy, broken the exterior bond that unites him to the true Church. It follows

⁷ Every soul in the state of grace has at least the implicit desire to belong to the true Church. For true charity implies the will to conform in all things to the order willed by God.

⁸ Can we say that they belong to the soul of the Church? We have already remarked (cf. p. 145 above) that it is dangerous to differentiate the soul and the Body of the Church to the point of separating them. According to the doctrine of St. Augustine, we can be vivified by the Spirit of Christ only by belonging in some manner to the Body of Christ. Concerning belonging to the Body of Christ, which is the Church, it remains imperfect and the implicit desire for it conceived by a soul of good will but incompletely enlightened on the Mystery of Christ, may not attain its realization and normal fruition.

Theological Notions

from this that, in calculating the number of Catholics now alive, in order to make a strict count, we would have to add all the very young children who have been baptized in schismatic or heretical lands. They are all, even visibly, members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ and benefit from the life-giving influences that come to us from the Head.

Doubtless many, in fact most of them, when they reach the age of discretion, will fall from this condition outwardly, even while retaining inwardly, at least for a time, the privilege of good faith of which we have just spoken. But many die before having reached this age, and they die as visible members of the Mystical Body, in the Catholic Communion, in the Church into which their baptism incorporated them.

However this thought does not suffice to console the Church for the vast multitude of faithful that schism has snatched from her. She grieves and weeps over her separated sons. She addresses to God her fervent supplications that his divine Goodness may deign to enlighten their minds, touch their hearts, and finally bring them back to Catholic unity. Speaking the language of the heart, which is born of a burning charity, she urges them to return to the Church of their forefathers, to the Church of Rome that the Fathers and the councils of the East as well as of the West, have recognized as the mother and teacher of all the Churches, whom they have honored as the oracle of truth, and invoked as the born-arbiter of all dogmatic and religious controversies.

Borrowing the words of St. Paul, she says to them: “*Os nostrum patet ad vos*”—“Our words are addressed to all of you” who belong to the Greek rite or to any other Eastern rite separated from the Catholic Church. May it please God to listen graciously to your own supplications:

Grant, Lord, that there may be an end to the schisms of the Churches. Gather together those who are dispersed, bring back those who are lost, and unite them to your holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church! May you thus be restored to this one and holy faith that has been transmitted from the earliest times to us as well as to you; this faith

The Nature of the Mystical Body

that your fathers and forefathers have preserved inviolably; that has been given luster by the splendor of their virtue, the greatness of their genius, and the excellence of their doctrine—by Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, the two Cyrils, and other great personages whose glory belongs both to the East and to the West as a common heritage! ⁹

What Christian heart could fail to make its own the hopes expressed in this appeal by Pope Leo XIII, hopes that our Holy Father John XXIII held and revived with the burning flame of his own universal charity. This he made known on the feast of Pentecost, 1960, in St. Peter's Basilica. Pointing to the tombs, close by, of two great Doctors of the Greek Church—St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom—placed there, he said, as if "to implore the return of the Eastern Churches to the bosom of the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." And he added:

Oh! what a prodigious event it would be, what a flower at once of human and heavenly charity, would be this beginning toward the reunion of the separated brothers of the East and of the West within the one fold of Christ the eternal Shepherd! This should be one of the most precious fruits of the forthcoming Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, for the glory of the Lord on earth and in heaven, amid universal rejoicing over the consummation of the mystery of the Communion of Saints (*Allocution* of May 21, 1960, on the forthcoming Council, *Acta Apos. Sed.*, 1960, p. 526).

The Heretics

The obligation to believe the whole of revealed truth is the fundamental command that our Lord gave his apostles when he was about to ascend into heaven: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Thus, from the beginnings of the Church the attention of the

⁹ Apostolic letter *Praeclara*, of Pope Leo XIII, June 20, 1894.

Theological Notions

apostles and preachers of the Gospel has been centered on the transmission of an unchanged deposit entrusted to their watchful care.¹⁰ Whence every adulteration of the faith received the name that it still retains as a sign of reprobation: *heresy*.¹¹

Heresy like schism, and even more than schism, is contrary to the unity of the Mystical Body. However, it does not destroy this unity. It simply excludes itself from it, and by that very fact allows the full unanimity of the faithful to subsist in the matter of the profession of faith. Heresy could not possibly destroy the undivided unity of the Mystical Body, which survives, often stronger and, as it were, with renewed vigor, all the shocks and painful amputations to which the heresiarchs subject it. The latter, together with their followers, break away from the total Christ, taking with them fragments of the truth, like the soldiers who divided our Savior's garments among themselves at the foot of the Cross but who were powerless against the seamless tunic that has remained undivided and has been preserved by divine decree for the Catholic Church alone.

St. Augustine asks: "What is this tunic if not charity that no one can divide? What is this tunic, if not unity? Lots are cast upon it, but no one divides it. The heretics have been able to divide the sacraments among themselves, but they did not divide charity.¹² And because they were unable to divide it, they withdrew. But charity remains whole. . . . He who possesses it is secure. No one will snatch him away from the Catholic Church."¹³

Heresy is the expression of a private judgment that contradicts a truth revealed by God. And this revealed principle must be one

¹⁰ Cf. I Tim. 1:18-20; 4:1-7; 6:20-21; II Tim. 1:13-14; 3 to 4:6; I John 4:1-2; II John 7-11; Jude 3 ff.

¹¹ That is to say, a choice, an arbitrary division of the integral truth, which, by rejecting a part of Revelation, destroys the very principle of the faith, namely, unconditional submission to the authority of the divine testimony.

¹² Charity, as used in the passage of St. Augustine, who broadens its meaning, becomes the synonym of the unity of the Mystical Body considered integrally, because, according to the holy Doctor, it is one of the most essential principles of this unity.

¹³ In *Psalm. XXI*, enarr. IIa, verse 19, PL 36:176.

The Nature of the Mystical Body

that is universally recognized as such by the teaching authority,¹⁴ whether it be the object of a conciliar or pontifical definition, or whether it be commonly taught by the ordinary magisterium, that is to say, by the entire body of bishops spread out over the world.¹⁵

To renounce this rule of faith is to renounce the unity of the Mystical Body and to cut oneself off from the Communion of Saints whose foundation and guarantee it is. Holy Scripture remains of course, but it too must be interpreted in its true meaning as guaranteed by the doctrinal authority of the Church. St. Augustine said to the heretics of his century and of every century: "Holy Scripture itself, if you do not understand it correctly, profits you nothing. All the heretics who accept its authority are convinced that they are cleaving to the truth, whereas they are pursuing their own errors. It is not because they scorn Holy Scripture but because they misinterpret it that they are heretics."¹⁶

These remarkable words could have been addressed to the disciples of Luther and Calvin, and are calculated to give pause to those who, although outside the Catholic Church, still claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. As the Doctor of Africa so cogently says: "In name only, Christ is found among certain heretics who want to be called Christians. In reality, he is no longer among them."¹⁷ In truth, union with Christ is accom-

¹⁴ There are other truths taught by the Church that do not belong directly to the deposit of Revelation, although they are quite closely related to it. These include, for example, the theological conclusions that follow from revealed premises. They also include historical data, dogmatic facts concerning the virtue of a servant of God proposed to the worship of the faithful, the meaning of an author or of a book, or the worth of a scriptural translation. These are all matters that concern dogma itself in a more or less direct way. In these questions the Church also has the authority to make decisions and to impose an obligatory rule upon the faithful. However she cannot transform these related truths into dogmas of faith. He who deviates from them, although he sins seriously, does not become a heretic because of it.

¹⁵ On the nature of the Magisterium of the Church, cf. the author's *Le Corps Mystique du Christ*, Volume II, Chapter 23.

¹⁶ *Epist.* 120, n. 13, *PL* 33:459.

¹⁷ *Enchiridion*, n. 1.

Theological Notions

plished by charity, and charity is founded on truth. In vain do some who are Christians in name only assert their baptism. They have renounced their Mother who gave them life. "A single word, a single sacrament brought you forth. But you will not attain the heritage of life if you do not return to the Catholic Church."¹⁸

St. Augustine's solemn words remain true for every generation. There is but one Ark to save us from the waters of the flood. In order not to be cast out of it, we must hold fast to the rule of faith, without which "it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Many of those whose forefathers left the Church some four-hundred years ago feel the need to return to one Church. Some among them, the more sincere and more generous, take the saving step and return to the Church of their fathers; others would like to reconstitute the unity of the Church without going so far, by what they call the union of the Churches. Alas! however laudable their intentions, they are pursuing an unrealizable goal. For if the Church is one, she can be so only through the oneness of her Creed. How can souls who do not profess the same dogmas be united in Christ? In the words of His Holiness Pope Pius XI: "How could charity turn to the detriment of faith?"¹⁹ How can there be molded into one Body those who adore Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar and those who see in the Eucharist merely a sign of the absent Christ?

Some have attempted to restore the unity of faith by the common profession of what they call "the fundamental articles." When God has spoken, however, his creatures may not distinguish between what they will believe and what they will reject. Pope Pius XI also says: "The virtue of faith has as its motive the authority of God the Revealer, who does not brook any distinction of this sort."²⁰ Besides, among the articles set aside would be one of the most important, the primacy of Peter and of his infallible Magisterium, which necessarily condemns those attempts

¹⁸ St. Augustine, *Sermon* 3, *PL* 38:33.

¹⁹ Encyclical, *Mortalium animos*, January 6, 1928.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

at a false unity in opposition to the will of the divine Founder of the Church.

Under the circumstances all we can do is pray to God that his goodness may bring back "to the port of truth and to the unity of faith" those whom discord and error have snatched from the bosom of the Church. "Oh! May our divine Savior, he who wills that all men be saved and attain to the recognition of truth, deign to hear our fervent prayers and bring back all who err to the unity of the Church."²¹ May our separated brothers also, if they sincerely desire the great treasure of unity, beg in humble prayer for light and grace from above, and take to heart the words that St. Francis de Sales addressed to the heretics of his own time: "I adjure you, in the name of God, to take time and leisure to set your judgment aright, and pray to God that he may help you through his Holy Spirit in a judgment of such great moment, so that it may lead you to salvation. But above all, I pray you, let no passion enter your minds but that of our Savior and Master Jesus Christ."²²

The Unbelievers

As we consider the mystery of the whole Christ, to whom it is our good fortune to be incorporated, at a moment when the entire Church, under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, is penetrated with a new flame of zeal to bring the precious gift of faith to all the nations, can we remain indifferent to the fate of the countless multitudes of men who live outside the vital unity of the Mystical Body, many of whom do not even know the name of our divine Savior, or if they do know it, use it only to curse or to persecute true worshippers?

²¹ *Ibid.*, conclusion.

²² *Book of Controversies*, Dedication.

THE JEWS

The sons of Israel have rejected the Messias promised to their fathers; the followers of Mohammed rank Christ merely as one of their prophets and deny his divinity and his redemptive mission; idolaters of every name and belief are spread over the earth. All these unbelievers are still deprived of the light of the Gospel and are habitually excluded from the current of grace that flows so abundantly within the bosom of the Catholic Church.

And yet we must not imagine the condition of all of these unbelievers to be the same with respect to the means of salvation and the possibility of entering the Church. St. Thomas long ago distinguished the unbelief of the Jews from the unbelief of the pagans. To his mind, the former have already received the faith germinally in the figures of the Old Testament, whereas the latter have not received it in any form.²³ Even though the former are closer to evangelical truth, whose basic elements they possess in a certain respect in the prophetic Books of the Old Law, however, their case is also more serious and their guilt greater than that of the Gentile because of their stubbornness in denying and in persecuting their Savior and their Christ.

The Church, however, does not despair "of the children of this people once the most favored" of God. In her prayers she frequently implores divine mercy in their favor, "that upon them also may descend, but this time in the baptism of life and redemption, the blood that they once called down upon their own heads."

Words of great hope have been bequeathed to the Church concerning the sons of Jacob: "For the gifts and the call of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). If God has permitted a few branches of the ungrafted tree to be cut off so that the branches of the wild olive might be engrafted upon its trunk, the day will come when the branches that have been cut away will again be

²³ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 10, a. 5.

joined to the tree which originally gave them life (cf. Rom. 12:11-14). The mystical Spouse of Christ lives in this hope. Each year, in her solemn prayers on Good Friday, she begs God to finally remove the veil from the eyes of this people so that, in renouncing their blindness, they too may recognize Jesus Christ our Lord in the light of truth. "For to this day," says St. Paul, "when the Old Testament is read to them, the selfsame veil remains, not being lifted to disclose the Christ in whom it is made void" (II Cor. 3:14), and in whom the spiritual content of the Mosaic Law is revealed. "Yes, down to this very day, when Moses is read, the veil covers their hearts; but when they turn in repentance to God, the veil shall be taken away" (II Cor. 3:15-16; cf. 3:7-18).

Until the general return of Israel, which will bring the Mystical Christ to fullness at the end of time, individual Jews, many of them chosen souls, will continue to enter the Church from the bosom of this mysterious people. They are still a divine sign in the face of the world because they remain unchanged in the midst of other peoples; they mingle without ever losing their identity. The Jews will be witnesses of Christ by their very denials of him, until the day they become his glorious conquest.

THE MOHAMMEDANS

Outside the descendants of Abraham, who hold a place apart among the unbelievers, the disciples of the Koran likewise make up an almost impenetrable mass whose fanaticism shuts them out from the light of divine Revelation. The incomparable Francis of Assisi once dreamed of bringing them the torch of faith, or at least of winning the palm of martyrdom on their soil which was so impervious to the sowing of the seed of the Gospel. His virtue was great enough to make these rebellious spirits venerate his own person, but not enough to make them accept the law of Jesus. And the great Lover of Christ was obliged to turn back without the apostolic conquests of which he dreamed or the glorious death to which he aspired.

The military power of the Crescent was for a long time a threat

to the Christian kingdoms. Divine Providence, however, which makes all things work to the good of his elect (cf. Rom. 8:28), made use of these perils to bring to the East valiant phalanxes of crusaders determined to regain possession of the Holy Places. Thus the crusaders were made confessors of the faith and martyrs of Christ.²⁴

But what is the fate, from the point of view of eternal salvation, of the millions of unbelievers who follow Mohammed? Do not souls of good will among them have some chance of attaining to the truth and being saved by cleaving to Christ? We know that God never turns away anyone of good will, and that "in every nation he who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35).

Assuredly in order to be saved under the present dispensation of the supernatural order, it does not suffice to know the one God, as is the case of Islam, solely in the light of natural reason. It is necessary to cleave through faith to the God of Revelation.²⁵ And yet fragments of revealed truths can be found here and there even in the Koran. And these fragments, seen in a special light of the Holy Spirit, will allow a few souls of good will and eager for God to attain to salvation through Christ, until such time as the compact mass of Islam lets itself be penetrated by the leaven of the Gospel.

THE PAGANS

After the sect of Mohammed, a great variety of forms of unbelief present themselves among the many peoples of the earth. And the parcels of truth hidden under the grossest errors become increasingly rare as we descend the ladder of civilization to the most degenerate tribes of the human family. All of these men, according to the powerful words of Scripture, "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79). The great majority of them

²⁴ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 124, a. 5 ad 3.

²⁵ Cf. Letter of the Holy Office of August 8, 1949, on the axiom: "Outside the Church there is no salvation," with reference to the controversy between Boston College and St. Benedict's Center.

are completely ignorant of supernatural truths, and many do not have even a confused knowledge of the essential truths concerning God and the life to come which unaided natural reason enables us to discover. Moral degradation and servitude to the material life have, as it were, clouded the capacity of these uncultivated souls to grasp even the most fundamental philosophical concepts.

Even from their extreme spiritual poverty, that deserves the greatest compassion, however, it is still possible for these men to attain salvation. Even for them, the Apostle's words remain true: "God . . . wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). By mysterious ways that escape our powers of investigation, the God of goodness and mercy knows how to insinuate himself into these rough and ignorant souls to remind them at least of the necessity of being faithful to the observance of the natural law. For every man, even if he has only a most rudimentary concept of God, knows through natural law his duty of submission to him, and has some conception of the just judgment the Supreme Arbiter will give on good or evil acts.²⁶

* There is no doubt that the idea of moral good, with the obligation incumbent upon us to accomplish it, presupposes the knowledge of God. God is indeed the term of this relationship of dependence that we call obligation. And moral good, according to St. Thomas, exists only as a function of our submission to the will of God. "Every created will has rectitude of act so far only as it is regulated according to the divine will, to which the last end is referred: as every desire of a subordinate ought to be regulated by the will of his superior" (*Summa*, Ia, q. 63, a. 1).

In consequence, in order to know this relationship of dependence we must of absolute necessity know the Superior, namely God, whose will is our rule, and toward whom we are obligated. All the more does the natural law present itself to us as an order of right reason. Now reason is a perceptive faculty which must see what it imposes. It cannot impose upon man a law whose constitutive element it does not know, namely the formal element of moral obligation, the duty of dependence upon God. This fundamental concept of the moral order has sometimes been forgotten in efforts to demonstrate inversely the existence of God by the existence of the law. According to St. Thomas, there is no moral rectitude without the formal conformity of our will to that of God, and hence without a knowledge of God's will as such. Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 19, a. 10; *ibid.*, aa. 4 and 9; articles by Cardinal Billot in *les Etudes*, (1923), on "La Providence de Dieu dans le salut des infidèles."

Certainly, the observance of the natural law does not suffice for salvation, which is of the supernatural order. To be saved it is necessary to know God through faith and to love him with a love of charity, which presupposes a certain knowledge of Revelation. But fidelity in observing the natural law, with the help of the grace that God places at the disposal of all, prepares the soul for new graces and for the gift of faith. God has a thousand means by which to lead well-disposed souls to faith, and we must hold it certain that no one is deprived of faith except by his own fault, for not having responded to the first advances of grace.

It is not for us to search into these secret ways of God's saving providence, whose Wisdom is never hampered in its merciful designs by any human obstacle. But we know St. Thomas' statement that if a savage in the forest proved himself faithful in observing the natural law as he knew it, God would see to it that he be informed, through an angel if need be, of the elements of Revelation indispensable to salvation.

The account of the Martyrs of Uganda, who were beatified in 1922, contains an interesting note that illustrates in a remarkable way the above assertion by the Angelic Doctor. The father of one of these martyrs, who died before the preachers of the Gospel came to that region, had announced to his son on his deathbed the approaching arrival of the missionaries. In substance he said to him: "White men will come who will announce the knowledge of the true God and the manner of honoring him. You will follow them and you will do what they teach you." One after the other, Mohammedan Arabs and Protestant ministers came into the country. The young man, believing he recognized in them heralds of the true God announced by his father, took instructions from them and became successively Mohammedan and Protestant. Nevertheless, an indefinable something was missing to give his soul perfect tranquillity until the White Fathers finally arrived in Uganda. Manifestly these were the missionaries whose coming his father had announced. From them the young man obtained, together with the true faith, the Christian courage that made a

The Nature of the Mystical Body

martyr of him. But what of his father? Had he not been instructed himself, through an angel, of the elements of Christianity and of the means of saving his soul?

Such possibilities of salvation in pagan lands are of course extremely limited. While they suffice to allay the doubts that some might conceive on the justice and goodness of God toward all redeemed souls, they should not lessen the zeal that every member of the Mystical Body should have to bring succor, according to his means, to so many souls in distress. Our love for God, if it is sincere, obligates us to this apostolic collaboration.

In his encyclical on the missions, His Holiness Pope Pius XI declares:

The duty of our charity toward God demands that we strive to increase the number of those who know him and adore him in spirit and in truth, and that we try to bring the greatest possible number of subjects under the dominion of our most loving Redeemer. . . . What greater charity can we exercise toward our neighbor than by laboring to snatch him from the darkness of superstition in order to obtain for him the possession of the true faith of Christ? ²⁷

²⁷ Encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*, February 28, 1926.

Conclusion

Qui manet in me . . . hic fert fructum multum—"He who abides in me . . . he bears much fruit" (John 15:5).

To abide in Christ and to act in Christ are two complementary aspects of the mystery we are studying. To abide in Christ is to belong to the Mystical Body in its constitution, in its being. To act, to bear fruit in Christ, is to share in the operations of the Mystical Body. To be and to act are two mutually complete activities. Of what use is it to be rich, to be learned, if we do not turn these talents to advantage, if we do not make them bear fruit for ourselves and for the good of society? Likewise in the Mystical Body, of what use is it to be engrafted upon Christ, to possess Christian grace, to be quickened by the Holy Spirit, if this divine wealth remains unproductive? Does this not lay one open to the Lord's curse, like the sterile fig tree of the Gospel? Christ himself has said: "In this is my Father glorified, that you may bear very much fruit, and [thus prove that you have become] my disciples" (John 15:8).

In the present study we have devoted ourselves to a presentation of the Mystical Body in its static state—*secundum esse*, as the philosophers say. Our work, however, remains incomplete. It calls for another to explain the Mystical Body in its dynamic aspect—*secundum operari*—the divine and supernatural activity of Christ and of his members.

The supernatural dynamism of the Mystical Body reveals all that is most wonderful in the life of the Church and in the heroic actions of her saints; this life and these actions both springing from the redemptive and sanctifying activity of her divine Head, Christ—King, Priest, and Prophet.

In conclusion, we shall merely give a brief sketch of the holy activity of the Mystical Body in its Head and members. It is our fervent hope that a full presentation of this subject will be made

The Nature of the Mystical Body

available in an American edition of Volume II of our work *Le Corps Mystique du Christ*.

The Life of the Head

At the end of his earthly existence, our divine Savior raised his eyes to heaven and declared to his Father that he had completed the work for which he had come into this world: "Father . . . I have glorified thee on earth; I have accomplished the work that thou hast given me to do" (John 17:1, 4).

In this sublime prayer the Word made flesh gives us a glimpse into the profound life of his soul before God. It is an adoring and loving life, a life that makes reparation by perfect worship in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23, 24) for the crime of revolt committed by man in the very beginning. But from the instant Christ entered the world, as St. Paul testifies, he offered himself up to the Father to accomplish the work of love, to do his holy will: "Therefore, in coming into the world, [Christ] says, 'Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me: in holocausts and sin-offerings thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Behold, I come . . . to do thy will, O God'" (Heb. 10:5-7).

Adoration, total submission to the will of the Father, was the dominant note of the interior life of Christ from the moment of his Incarnation—a submission and an adoration beyond any human comprehension. In the words of Dom Marmion: "From the instant the Humanity was joined to the Word, this Humanity, in Jesus, was lost in profound adoration, in self-annihilation, before the divine Majesty of the eternal Word whose infinite perfections it contemplated through the beatific vision."¹

Christ's interior life was to be, throughout his earthly existence and even after his ascension into heaven, the profound source of his mediatory and redemptive activity as our divine Head. For it

¹ *Christ in His Mysteries* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1931), p. 82.

Theological Notions

was for us and for our salvation that the Son of God descended from heaven.² He came to adore his Father for us. He came to glorify him for us. Finally, he came to expiate in our place our sin of revolt, our refusal to obey. Then, when he had completed this expiation amid the pains of Calvary by his death on the cross, he reconciled us with the Father, making us his adopted children and heaping his graces upon us.

The mediative activity of Christ is one in its source, namely, the grace of the hypostatic union. In its unfolding, however, it takes on three different forms, which constitute the three prerogatives of our Head: he is *King*, *Priest*, and *Prophet*. He himself told us during his life that he was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Since he is our Way, he guides our steps toward eternal life. The mark of royal authority is to rule and to govern, to lead toward the term. As the Truth of our intellects, he teaches us in the name of God; this is his role as Prophet, the mouthpiece of God. Finally, he is our Life by his priesthood, by obtaining for our souls the sanctifying grace that is a participation in the life of God himself.

Jesus willed that his divine mother should share in this three-fold prerogative. Mary is the new Eve who stands by the side of the new Adam, and as such is present everywhere in the activity of the Mystical Body, inwardly associated with the work of her Son. One of the best subjects of contemplation for Christian souls is Mary's role as universal Mediatrix by the side of the one Mediator.

The participated Queenship of Mary, recently proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Pius XII, is of a very special nature and needs to be studied with great care. Even more does her spiritual motherhood, which is associated with the priestly activity of Christ her Son, concern in the highest degree the knowledge of what has been called the Mystery of Mary and of our filial relationship toward the one who is the Mother of Divine Grace.³

² The Nicene Creed.

³ Cf. R. Bernard, O.P., *The Mystery of Mary* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1960).

The Life of the Members

The life of Christ becomes the life of his members. For, as the great Apostle declares: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Thus we enter into the analysis of the greatest, richest, and most consoling aspect of Christian life. Dom Marmion, the eminent master of the spiritual life, was well justified in writing to a religious:

I rejoice to see that the Holy Spirit has made you understand that we have everything in Jesus Christ. For this knowledge is the mustard seed of which our Lord speaks, that is very tiny at first, and then, when it is cultivated, becomes a great tree.

Jesus Christ is infinite holiness: *Tu solus sanctus, Jesu Christe*. But He is not only holy in himself. He has been given to us in order to be our holiness: *Christus factus est nobis sapientia a Deo, et justitia, et sanctificatio, et redemptio*.⁴

This life of Christ Jesus in us begins with baptism, the act which incorporates us into Christ and makes us one of his members. From that moment grace erupts into our soul, and we become the living temples of the Blessed Trinity. In its turn, sanctifying grace deploys its power in us through the action of the three theological virtues, which introduce us to the relationship of close friendship with the Three Divine Persons.

On a lower level, the infused moral virtues sanctify and deify our activity, in dependence upon Christ and in conformity with him, in the most varied manifestations of human life. Thus is fulfilled the Apostle's wish that "every man [may become] perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28).

But this life of Christ in regenerated man is not merely the individual life of each Christian (cf. Eph. 3:16); it is also and more excellently the life of the whole Church. The Church, in the image of Mary who is her prototype, participates in the priestly mission of her divine Head. The unfolding of liturgical worship, whose center is the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is the continuation and

⁴Dom Thibault, *L'Union à Dieu dans le Christ*, Volume II, Chapter 4

application in time of the one priesthood of Christ the High Priest. The Church is likewise clothed with the royal power of Christ the King. In his name she rules and governs the Lord's sheep (cf. John 21:15-17); by his power she binds and looses (cf. Matt. 16:19; 18:18); by his authority she judges and condemns (cf. I Cor. 5:3-5; 6:2-6). Finally the Church, through her magisterium, exercises the prophetic function of Jesus. For when he was about to return to his Father, he commanded her: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. . . . I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20; cf. also Mark 16:15).

Faithful to his command, the Church has been carrying on for twenty centuries, continually opposed and yet always victorious, through the grace of her Spouse, in the work of conquering and of regenerating the world. From century to century the Mystical Body has continued to grow, to attain perfection, and to extend over new lands and among peoples not yet won over to Christian grace. Meanwhile the enemy rages and organizes his forces against her. Against the City of God, which looks toward heaven, the devil opposes the City of the World, whose vistas are purely of this earth. And while the latter claims to make history without God and against God, the Church pursues the meaning of her divine history—the only real meaning of history because it is centered in God and in his Christ, the immortal King of the centuries (cf. I Tim. 1:17). Divine history, whose alpha and omega, whose beginning and end is Christ the Redeemer (cf. Apoc. 1:8; 21:6), began with the Creator's *fiat*, and will reach its term when Christ will have returned the kingdom to God his Father (cf. I Cor. 15:24).

It is our task to work, each one according to his grace, for the completion of the Mystical Christ, "in order to perfect the saints . . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13).

May our humble efforts help in this work by revealing to souls the great plan of God for the Mystical Body of Christ.