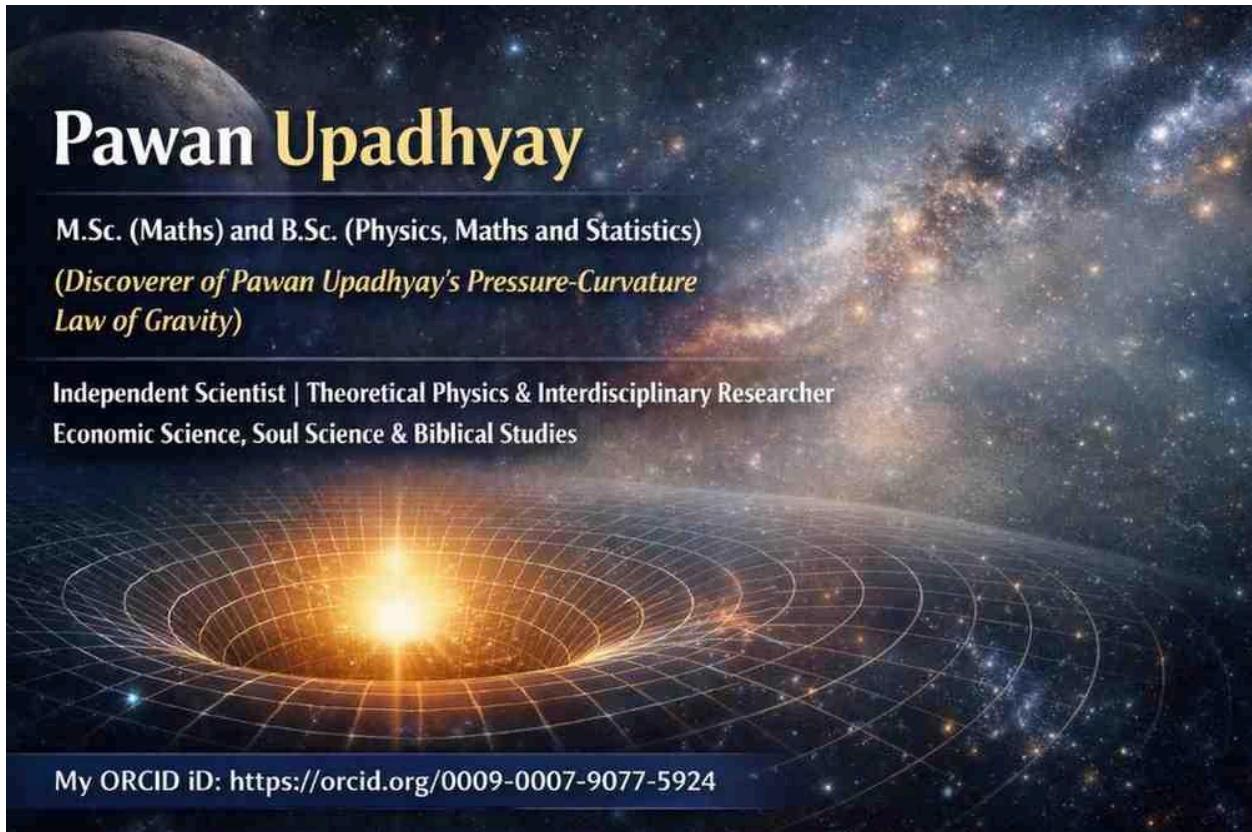


Outer Defilement and Inner Purity: The Church and the Body of Jesus Christ

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Abstract

This research paper examines the theological distinction between outer defilement and inner purity in Christian doctrine, as applied to both the Church and the Blessed Holy Lord Jesus Christ. While the sins of individuals may corrupt the visible, external dimensions of the Church, its inner spiritual reality remains pure because it is founded in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. In the same manner, although Jesus Christ endured persecution and suffering in His human body, His inner being—His divine nature—remained eternally holy and undefiled. This

study explores biblical foundations, theological implications, and spiritual meaning of this distinction.

1. Introduction

Throughout Christian history, the Church has wrestled with the tension between human sinfulness and divine holiness. Scandals, failures, and persecutions affect the outward appearance of the Church, yet Scripture consistently affirms the Church's inner sanctity as the Body of Christ. This same paradox is seen most profoundly in the life of Jesus Christ Himself: His body was persecuted and wounded by human sin, yet His inner divine holiness remained untouched. This paper explores this theological parallel.

2. Outer and Inner Dimensions of the Church

2.1 The Outer Church

The outer part of the Church refers to its visible and institutional aspects:

- Church structures and buildings
- Leadership and administration
- Public practices and historical actions of believers

Because these elements involve human participation, they are vulnerable to sin, corruption, and failure. The sins of individuals can therefore defile the outward witness of the Church.

2.2 The Inner Church

The inner part of the Church represents its spiritual essence:

- The communion of true believers
- The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit
- Christ as the living foundation of the Church

This inner Church remains pure because its holiness does not originate from human merit but from Christ Himself. Scripture affirms that Christ sanctifies the Church from within so that it may be presented holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25–27).

3. The Body of Jesus Christ: Outer Suffering and Inner Holiness

3.1 The Outer Body of Jesus Christ

The outer body of Jesus Christ refers to His true human flesh, which was:

- Scourged and beaten
- Mocked and humiliated
- Crucified and killed

These sufferings were inflicted by human sin, injustice, and hatred. In this sense, the sins of humanity persecuted the outer body of the Blessed Holy Lord Jesus Christ.

3.2 The Inner Being of Jesus Christ

Despite this persecution, the inner being of Jesus Christ—His divine nature and perfect obedience—remained completely pure. He committed no sin, spoke no deceit, and remained faithful to the Father even unto death. His holiness was not diminished by suffering but revealed through it.

4. Biblical Foundations

4.1 Christ's Inner Purity

Scripture testifies to the undefiled holiness of Christ:

- Hebrews 7:26 describes Him as holy, innocent, undefiled, and separated from sinners.
- 1 Peter 2:22–24 affirms that He committed no sin, even while suffering unjustly.

These texts confirm that external persecution could not corrupt Christ's inner divine holiness.

4.2 Outward Hypocrisy and Inward Purity

Jesus Himself distinguished between outward appearance and inward reality. In Matthew 23:27, He rebukes religious hypocrisy that appears righteous outwardly but is inwardly corrupt. This teaching reinforces the principle that true purity is inward and spiritual.

4.3 Christ's Sanctification of the Church

Ephesians 5:25–27 presents Christ as the one who loves the Church, gives Himself for her, and cleanses her so that she may be holy and without blemish. This cleansing is an inner, spiritual act that transcends outward human failures.

5. Theological Parallels Between Christ and the Church

A deeper theological parallel can be drawn between the glorified body of the Blessed Holy Lord Jesus the Nazarene Christ and the Holy Church.

5.1 The Glorified Resurrected Body of Christ as the Heavenly Church

The holy resurrected and glorified heavenly body of the Blessed Holy Lord Jesus the Nazarene Christ may be understood as the perfect and everlasting Church. In His resurrection, Christ's body is no longer subject to corruption, suffering, or death. This glorified body represents the ultimate, purified communion of God with His people.

The earthly Church participates in this heavenly reality but does not exhaust it. The true Church exists most perfectly in the risen Christ, whose glorified body remains holy, incorruptible, and everlasting.

5.2 The Church Building as an Earthly Symbol

The holy Church building on earth functions as a visible symbol of the Holy Church. While consecrated and sacred, the building itself remains a material structure entrusted to human stewardship. Because of human weakness and sin, the outward holiness of the Church building can be defiled by sinful actions, irreverence, or injustice.

However, the holiness of the Church does not ultimately depend on stone, structure, or external form, but on Christ Himself.

5.3 Inner Purity of the Holy Church

The inner part of the Holy Church always remains pure because it is sanctified by the holy words of the Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Through the ministry of the holy priest, Christ's words, sacraments, and prayers continually purify, renew, and sustain the Church.

Even when the outward witness of the Church is damaged by sin, the inner spiritual reality remains holy, because Christ is present and active within it.

5.4 Christ's Earthly Body: Tolerance of Sin and Inner Divine Purity

During His earthly life, the Blessed Holy Lord Jesus Christ tolerated the sins of humanity upon His body. His holy body was insulted, abused, mocked, scourged, and crucified. Human sins inflicted real damage and suffering upon His physical body.

Yet His spirit—His divine nature—remained eternally pure, holy, and undefiled. Sin could wound His flesh but could not corrupt His divinity. His tolerance of human cruelty reveals divine patience and redemptive love.

5.5 Human Sin and the Defilement of the Body of Christ

The sins of persons defiled the holy body of Jesus Christ externally through mockery, violence, and extreme cruelty. This external defilement parallels how human sin can damage the outward life of the Church.

Nevertheless, just as Christ's inner divine holiness was never corrupted, so the inner sanctity of the Church can never be destroyed. The Church's holiness flows from Christ's resurrected and glorified body, not from human moral perfection.

6. Implications for Faith and Ecclesiology

This distinction has important implications:

- Believers must acknowledge and repent of sins that harm the Church's outward witness
- Faith should not be abandoned because of human failure within the Church
- Holiness must be sought inwardly, not merely outwardly

Understanding this distinction helps preserve faith in Christ while honestly confronting human weakness.

7. Conclusion

The sins of individuals may defile the outer part of the Church, but its inner sanctuary remains ever pure because Christ Himself dwells within it. In the same way, although the outer body of the Blessed Holy Lord Jesus Christ was persecuted by human sin, His inner being—His divine nature—remained eternally holy and undefiled. This truth safeguards Christian faith by affirming that divine holiness is never overcome by human corruption.

Keywords

Church holiness, Body of Christ, inner purity, outer defilement, Jesus Christ, ecclesiology

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